

WARRINGTON

Borough Council



ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2016

SEPTEMBER 2016

Warrington Council is committed to the highest standards of corporate governance.

Governance is about how bodies ensure that they do the right things, in the right way, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

It comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which bodies are directed and controlled and through which they account to, engage with and, where appropriate, lead their communities.

A key aspect of governance is the requirement to put into place “effective risk management systems, including systems of internal control”.

This Annual Governance Statement supports the Council’s Statement of Accounts and outlines how it manages its affairs to deliver high quality services and ensure that public money is spent effectively.

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1. Scope of Responsibility

Warrington Borough Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Warrington Borough Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In discharging this overall responsibility, Warrington Borough Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

Warrington Borough Council approved and adopted a revised local Code of Corporate Governance on 20 April 2016 which is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Framework: *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*. A copy of the Code is on our website at: http://www.warrington.gov.uk/info/200355/budget_and_spending/35/governance_statements_and_reports or can be obtained from: Democratic & Member Services, Warrington Borough Council, West Annexe, Town Hall, Sankey Street, Warrington, WA1 1UH. The 2015/16 governance arrangements in Warrington Council are described in detail in Annex 1 of the Code of Corporate Governance. This statement explains how the Council has complied with the Code and also meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011, regulation 4(3), which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an annual governance statement.

A description of the key elements of the Council's assurance and internal control environment is detailed at Appendix 1.

2. The Purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the Council is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads its communities. It enables Warrington Borough Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide

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reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Warrington Borough Council's policies, aims and objectives; to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and their impact should they be realised; and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. It takes into account the increased difficulty in maintaining financial resilience as the Council continues to deliver efficiency savings, and the increased risk level which is reflective of the evolving environment in which the Council has to operate.

The governance framework has been in place at Warrington Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2016 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and statement of accounts.

3 The Governance Framework

The Council's control environment encompasses: strategies; policies; plans; procedures; structures; and processes required to assure the people of Warrington of the Council's sound governance. This document covers those arrangements which were in place during 2015/16. The key elements are noted below and further detail is provided in Appendix 2.

The Council maintains high standards of governance:

- The Council strategy 2015-2018 sets out the vision and key priorities for the Council over a 3 year period. The strategy is informed by development of strategic commissioning intentions.
- Warrington's Performance Management framework ensures that progress against key plans and strategies is monitored routinely in order that timely action can be taken to address any performance issues.
- The Council's Constitution includes details of the role and responsibilities of the full Council; the Executive Board; Committees; Chief Officers; and the rules under which they operate. The Council's Constitution provides the framework for the decision making process. The current version of the Constitution was agreed at full Council in May 2016.
<http://www.warrington.gov.uk/info/200349/committees/664/constitution>
- The Solicitor to the Council & Assistant Director Corporate Governance is the appointed Monitoring Officer for the Council whose functions include maintenance of the Constitution, supporting the Standards Committee and ensuring lawfulness of decision making. The Legal Service is accredited and annually assessed against national governance and performance criteria as part of the Law Society 'Lexcel' standard.

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- The Council has Codes of Conduct for both members and officers together with induction processes and a range of policies and procedures including the requirement for members and officers to make declarations of interests.
- The Director of Finance & Information Services is the responsible officer to the Council for the proper management of its financial affairs in order to meet the statutory requirements of Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Director of Finance & Information Services complies with the governance requirements of the 2010 CIPFA statement on the: *Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government* and, as required by the guidance, is a member of the senior management team and has access to the Chief Executive and to other executive directors.
- The Audit and Corporate Governance Committee is politically balanced and does not include any Executive Board members. The Committee has a dedicated programme of training; during 2015/16 this included financial management training and themed updates.
- The Council has a proven track record of financial management and robust monitoring arrangements in place to manage its finances in year. A new process for Outcomes Based Budgeting (OBB) was established during 2014/15 and has continued to be developed during the year.
- The Council has a comprehensive framework for the management of risk and has a risk management strategy, policy and guidance document in place. A strategic risk register is in place and is updated quarterly.
- The Council has a Chief Internal Auditor who leads the internal audit team. The Chief Internal Auditor has direct access to the Chair of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee and the role conforms to the guidance laid down in the *CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit (2010)*. The service operates in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.
- An officer Governance Group meets, chaired by the Solicitor to the Council and Assistant Director Corporate Governance and attended by Director of Finance & Information Services and senior officers across Audit; Legal; Information Governance; Performance; and other directorates as required for assurance purposes. The group maintains a clear improvement plan.
- The Warrington Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB) is the key strategic partnership that coordinates and ensures the effectiveness of what is done for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in Warrington. It provides strong, forward thinking, outcome focused, visible leadership ensuring the delivery of continuous improvements in the care and protection of our children and young people. The Board publishes an annual report in September each year.

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- The Warrington Safeguarding Adults Board (WSAB) is a strategic board set up as a statutory body under the Care Act (2014) and is responsible for ensuring that local safeguarding arrangements are effective and that partners act together to help and protect adults at risk of abuse or neglect. All statutory agencies in Warrington are signed up to the WSAB's multi-agency policies, procedures and practice guidance in order to ensure consistency and quality. In addition, all commissioned health and social care providers, as part of their contractual arrangements, also ensure their processes and practices are concordant with the multi-agency policy.
- 2015/16 saw the first year of operation of the Better Care Fund (BCF). At the oversight of the Integrated Commissioning Governance Board, a sub-committee of the Health and Wellbeing Board, £26.5m of health and social care budget was pooled in order to minimise the use of acute hospital provision by encouraging collaborative provision for preventative and community based alternatives. The BCF enables the acceleration of Warrington's Health and Social Care Transformation Programme which is designed to action Warrington's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the 'Together we' strategy, which has been developed led by five major funders: the three major health provider organisations in Warrington; the Council; and NHS Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).
- A refresh of the joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Warrington is underway with extensive consultation taking place with all key stakeholders. The Integrated Commissioning Team has led on the development of the refreshed strategy with support from colleagues in the Council and the CCG.
- A whistleblowing procedure is in place in the Council together with a separate schools' procedure. The procedure supports the Council in its obligations in respect of the Bribery Act 2010.
- The Council's anti fraud, bribery and corruption statement and policy incorporates the requirements of the Bribery Act and is updated regularly. Regular reports are provided to the Audit and Corporate Governance committee on the work undertaken in the Council to combat fraud and corruption.
- The Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy has been refreshed as part of the Customer Strategy.
- Equality and Diversity delivery plan in place. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 we have also published equality monitoring information on our population, our services and who uses them, and our workforce.

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- The Council has a robust process for responding to Freedom of Information requests that are received. As part of the Open Data transparency agenda the Council has also published items of expenditure over £500 online.
- The people and workforce strategy links directly to the corporate priorities. Staff appraisal processes are in place and new learning and development priorities have been set out.
- The Council has an established joint consultation framework with its recognised Trade Unions and this provides a sound basis for effective debate, discussion and full consultation on the introduction of new operational policies and the review and refresh of existing policies.

4 Review of Effectiveness

The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the managers within the Council, the Chief Internal Auditor's annual report, and also by reports and comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates. The Council is advised on the effectiveness of the governance framework by the work of the Scrutiny committee; the Audit and Corporate Governance committee; the officer Governance Group; and the Corporate Risk and Business Continuity group. The officer Governance Group maintains a comprehensive action plan to ensure continuous improvement of the governance arrangements are in place.

The Audit and Corporate Governance Committee oversees the work of Internal and External Audit, and promotes and maintains high standards in relation to the operation of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance. The Committee ensures that an adequate risk management framework and associated control environment is in place and that the Council's financial and non-financial performance is properly monitored. In line with CIPFA best practice guidance, the Committee performs an annual self-assessment of their own effectiveness and acts on recommendations identified; the Committee Chair also produces an annual report to full Council of the work performed by the Committee during the year.

The Standards Committee has continued to promote high standards of ethical behaviour by refreshing the Code of Conduct for members and officers. Building on developments in 2015/16 it is proposed to enhance the role of the Independent Persons who support the work of the Standards Committee.

The Standards Committee meeting on 25 January 2016 considered a paper prepared by the Solicitor to the Council detailing proposed amendments to the Code of Conduct for members. A revised Code of Conduct for Councillors was

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approved by the Standards Committee and submitted to Annual Council for adoption in May 2016.

The current structure of four Policy Committees and one Scrutiny Committee will be assessed in a planned review of effectiveness of arrangements as part of the review of the Constitution during 2016.

Executive Directors and Assistant Directors have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment and provide formal assurance to Directorate Management Teams by their responses to the assurance statement questionnaires. The process of self assessment for 2015/16 has been subject to review and challenge at Directorate Management Team meetings and evidence to support the assessment collated. Where gaps have been identified, action plans have been, or are in the process of being, prepared.

Internal Audit Services examine the effectiveness of the Council's internal controls. Based on evidence from planned audits and any special investigations, the Chief Internal Auditor reports to each meeting of the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee on any major weaknesses that have been identified and highlights where improvements are considered necessary. Based upon the work undertaken during 2015/16 the Chief Internal Auditor provided the Council with an overall 'substantial' assurance opinion on the arrangements for gaining assurance through the governance framework and on the controls reviewed as part of the internal audit work. The opinion reflected areas (as identified in this statement) where inadequate design and/or inconsistent application of controls put the achievement of particular objectives at risk, and action plans have been agreed to improve controls.

Value for money is vitally important to the Council at a time of increasing financial pressures and uncertainty regarding future Central Government funding. We know that the majority of our services perform well and that in cost comparators many are (by way of need) in the lowest cost bracket. Value for money is an important component of the internal and external audit plans that provides assurance to the Council regarding processes that are in place to ensure effective use of resources. Internal audit reviews of key financial systems along with detailed substantive testing to support the annual accounts 2015/16 provided assurance that controls are in place and operating satisfactorily.

A comprehensive action plan is in place to address sickness absence, this is monitored by the officer Governance Group and regularly by the Organisational Improvement and Development Policy Committee. Two significant actions in progress are the development of a business case to consider the introduction of a new absence management system and process in ERGE (as a Pilot) due to commence 1 August 2016; and the temporary recruitment of a Staff Welfare Officer to support the council's approach to managing absence

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The risk around Management Capacity has been captured on the Risk Register and is regularly reviewed by Senior Management Team. An E-learning package has been procured jointly with Cheshire West and Chester Council and following its launch in November 2015 is being rolled out to all staff. The package means that the delivery of training can be done in a more efficient way, and also allows for more sophisticated targeting and reporting. In addition, a review of the appraisal process is underway, and scheduled for completion by 31 December 2016.

In March 2015 Ofsted conducted an inspection of services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after; and care leavers. The review concluded that the Council 'required improvement' overall. The Council was judged to be 'good' in three areas: children achieving permanence; adoption performance; and experience of care leavers. The report noted that improvements were needed in two areas and the Warrington's Safeguarding Children's Board was also judged to 'require improvement'. The report did not highlight any serious failures and Ofsted said: *"No children or young people were found to be unsafe and not being supported during the course of this inspection."* The Council has developed improvement plans to address the recommendations. Progress is reported via Directorate Management Team meetings and Senior Management Team meetings.

The Council's appointed auditors Grant Thornton issued their Annual Findings Report 2014/15 in September 2015 which contained an unqualified opinion on the financial statements. Grant Thornton also gave an unqualified value for money conclusion on the Council's arrangements to secure economy efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources and noted:

'The Council continues to demonstrate good financial performance despite the financial and demographic pressures facing Local Government and has sound financial governance arrangements and financial controls in place. The Council has delivered £76.8m savings by constantly challenging the way it delivers its services.'

During 2014/15 the Council achieved a credit rating from Moody's, one of the world's leading credit rating agencies. The credit rating was published in May 2015, awarding Warrington one of the highest ratings available of Aa2. The Aa2 rating was again assigned by Moody's in May 2016 following a further assessment. The assessment noted that the Council *'has a track record of increasing its own source revenues, reducing dependence on declining central government grants.'*

All eligible schools submitted full Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) returns. These are reviewed and queries are raised as necessary; queries have been raised on the submissions from three schools which will be subject to further review. The completion of returns in line with the Standard allows the Director of Finance & Information Services to gain assurance on their financial management and the regularity and propriety of their spending. Children and

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Young People's Services also maintain a "Keeping all schools under review" process which is a comprehensive review and uses information from internal audit reviews, the SFVS returns and other sources, to identify schools at risk.

5 Significant Governance Development Areas

Major Capital Schemes

The Council is committed to high standards of governance and has continued to develop robust governance and risk management arrangements for schemes to deliver regeneration, and innovative invest to save schemes. It has been recognised by officers that robust programme management arrangements are needed and work continues to develop improved programme governance and monitoring arrangements:

- The Council's Regeneration Board has met regularly throughout 2015/16 and has received updates on the major capital regeneration schemes, including specific risks and decisions taken by officers, some of which have been undertaken under delegated authority from the Executive Board.
- The Council has been providing loans to Registered Providers since 2009 to stimulate house building in the borough and the surrounding area. At 31st March 2016 the Council had £269m of loan facilities in place with six regional registered providers; to date £46.9m has been drawn down from the facility. The Council at the 31st March 2015 also had two other commercial loan facilities in place with Warrington Borough Transport of £1.150m and OMEGA Warrington Ltd of £7.5m. The Council has stringent corporate governance arrangements in place around the granting and monitoring of these loans. All loans are agreed by the Council's Executive Board after the carrying out of an independent due diligence exercise. Robust contract management arrangements are in place and the loan contracts are monitored on an ongoing basis by the Council's Corporate Finance Team. Regular monitoring reports are taken to the Treasury Management Board, Audit & Corporate Governance Committee, Capital Investment Planning Group and Directorate Management Team on an on- going basis. The risks of the programme are also dealt with by the Council's Corporate Loans Group consisting of specialists from the various departments of the Council. An internal audit review, completed in January 2016, provided substantial assurance that major capital loans are suitably documented and are subject to appropriate monitoring and reporting arrangements. The assurance opinion was based upon the processes in place and supporting documentation for the loans included within the specific audit sample and testing restrictions. It was based upon a specific point in time, during which loans to Registered Providers represented 97% of the total approved loan facilities. Given the value and high profile nature of these transactions, Internal Audit anticipate full implementation of the recommendations upon follow up in 2016-17.

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Academy Schools

The government directive for all schools to become Academies by 2020, or have plans to do so by 2022, is recognised. Building on the strong relationships in the borough the Families and Wellbeing Directorate will work with schools and settings to address the associated issues, ensuring that the drive for continued school improvement is maintained. The Operational Plan is being evaluated for effectiveness and revised to reflect the changing educational landscape. The operation of the Warrington Education Board will also be reviewed so that it continues to strengthen, effectively supporting and challenging schools and settings.

Client Finances

The Council has a duty of care to protect vulnerable adults in the community from financial abuse and to provide support to those who no longer have capacity to manage their own finances in cases where there is no alternative (ie. family, friends). Following an internal audit review an internal investigation was undertaken to review the management of client funds; detailed testing of a sample of client accounts was undertaken by the Council's financial investigators to gain further assurance around the integrity of the fund balances. The Office of Public Guardian carried out an external inspection and has concluded its report into client finances; the actions from the report are being addressed. As a result of the report from the Office of Public Guardian, a new Visiting Officer post has been established within the team to monitor the operation of the finances primarily of the Court of Protection clients, and also the Appointeeship clients.

Information Governance

The Council is committed to high standards of information governance and has made significant progress in developing the information governance framework particularly the elements of data breach reporting; data protection; consistency across all areas of the council; and staff training and awareness. During 2015/16, there have been no reportable information data breaches to either the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) or the Health & Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC). One of the key actions from the Commissioner's review dated August 2015 is the requirement to ensure that training is mandatory for all staff and that this programme needs to include both new and refresher training. The Information Governance team deliver bi-monthly 'Introduction to Information Governance' training sessions to supplement the eLearning content. Where there is a reported incident, the employee involved is booked onto the appropriate training session. Ongoing development of the information governance framework for the Council, supported by an implementation and improvement plan, is a key focus area of the SIRO and the Information Governance Group. We believe that the steps we are taking will further enhance our governance arrangements and are satisfied that these steps will continue to improve the processes in place in line with compliance requirements such as the new European Data Protection Regulation

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Management and Monitoring of Contracts

A fraud investigation into one of the Council's contracts, led by the Police with support from Council staff, highlighted the need for robust contract management processes. Police enquiries have been completed and lessons learned from the investigation have been acted upon during 2015/16.

6 Future Developments

Strategic Development

The Council continues to work with neighbouring Authorities in the Cheshire region through the Local Enterprise Partnership. The Council during 2015/16, together with the two other Cheshire Authorities, submitted a devolution bid to Government to set up a combined Authority. The Council are currently awaiting the outcome of that bid.

The changing nature of the Council's business means that partnership working and complex contracts for delivery of services continue to increase. It is recognised that as such arrangements develop, then robust management and monitoring of the arrangements needs to be in place.

Financial Management

A new process for Outcomes Based Budgeting (OBB) focuses on the long term sustainability of the Council by transforming service delivery and investing in preventative solutions to reduce future demand. Looking forward the Council still has to find a further £35m savings to 2017/18 and with Government funding progressively decreasing to virtually zero, other methods of funding such as retention of business rates, invest to save and generation of income are being explored. The generation of income and cost avoidance projects focus heavily in the Council's future financial plan. The Moody's Aa2 rating in May 2016 noted the financial outlook for the Council as 'stable'. The stable outlook reflects Moody's view that *'Warrington will continue to make the expenditure reductions necessary to maintain balanced operations given reduced government grant and limited growth opportunities in own source revenues.'*

Staff Development

As the Council's business changes and develops the need for highly trained, high performing staff continues to be a key requirement. Work continues to address training needs and robust appraisal systems continue to be implemented and will be improved further in 2016. Whilst improvements have been seen in the level of sickness absence it is accepted that further improvement is still required, with a target of 12.5 days set for 2016/17, and work will continue to support managers in managing and monitoring this closely.

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The areas noted above demonstrate that the Council continues to face a significant level of challenge given the requirement to deliver efficiency savings whilst maintaining services. Delivering the savings and maintaining financial resilience continues to be difficult for the Council and 2015/16 saw a static environment for the strategic risks that the organisation was required to manage.

Conclusion

The review of the Council's governance arrangements for 2015/16 has been undertaken in order to produce this statement. The review highlighted a number of governance issues that require attention and action is being planned and/or taken as noted in the statement. These actions have been combined with additional work being undertaken by the officer Governance Group to form a comprehensive improvement plan.

With the exception of the internal control issues that we have outlined in this statement, our review confirms that the Council has a generally sound system of internal controls that supports the achievement of its policies, aims and objectives and that those control issues have been or are being addressed.

Signed:

.....
Councillor Fitzsimmons
Chair of the Audit and Corporate
Governance Committee

Date:... ..

Signed:

.....
Timothy Date
Solicitor to the Council and Head of
Corporate Governance

Date:.....

Signed:

.....
Councillor O'Neill
Leader of the Council

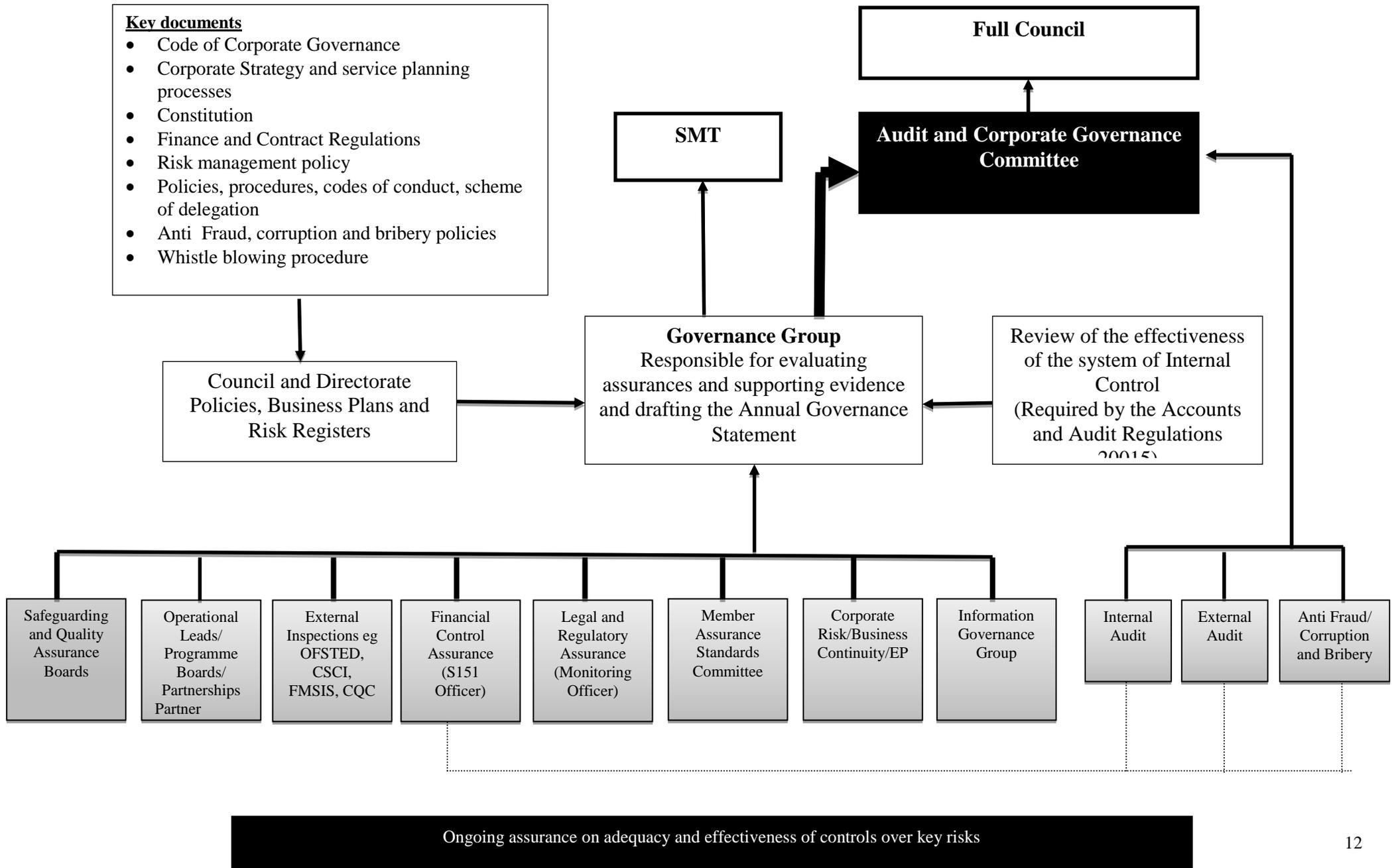
Date:

Signed:

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Steven Broomhead
Chief Executive

Date:.....

Annual Governance Statement Assurance Framework



The Detailed Governance Framework

The 2015/16 governance arrangements in Warrington Council are described in the paragraphs below and are also set out in further detail in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

1.1 Vision and Aims for the Community

Warrington Borough Council, as a public organisation, is committed to ensuring the highest possible standards of governance in order to fulfil its vision:



The Council has developed a new corporate strategy 2015-18, informed by development of strategic commissioning intentions to ensure that we deliver our vision and goals for the community. The Corporate Plan is linked to the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP); this ensures that our plans are realistic in the context of the continued funding constraints placed on the Council. The council has developed an engagement process with residents through its 'Growing a Strong Warrington' programme (including communications & digital strategies). <http://www.warrington.gov.uk/strongwarrington>

The Customer Strategy 2014-2017 is central to ensuring our customers are at the heart of delivering our vision of "Growing a Strong Warrington". It will help ensure that service provision is designed and delivered to meet local needs and that service improvements are customer-led and outcome focused.

The Council's strategic plans are communicated to the community through a number of media events. Regular forms of communications such as briefings and reports are issued. All of the Council's major plans and strategies are published and available for download on the website/intranet.

Warrington's Performance Management framework ensures that progress against key plans and strategies is monitored routinely in order that timely action can be taken to address any performance issues. A Performance Management Framework is in place across the Council supported by a Corporate Information Assurance and Data Quality Strategy. Quarterly monitoring takes place at Directorate Performance Boards / Management Teams and formal performance reports are submitted on a quarterly basis to the Strategic Management Team (SMT); Executive Board; and Scrutiny Committee who use performance data to help determine their work programme and challenge performance. Quarterly performance reports are also available for the public to view on the Council's website. Work continues to ensure that robust management information supports informed decision making.

1.2 Financial Management

The Council has a proven track record of financial management and robust monitoring arrangements in place to manage its finances in year. This has been evidenced by the

turnaround in the forecast financial position from Quarter 1 which was around £3.475m, with all Directorates forecasting an overspend, to outturn which is an overspend of £0.832m.

Outcomes Based Budgeting (OBB) reviews commenced in 2015/16 to determine whether the outcomes of delivery areas provide value for money. This is an ongoing process with around 3-4 reviews taking place each year. The Council recognised that its previous medium term financial strategy for delivering savings, although previously very effective, could no longer be sustained in times of continued austerity. OBB focuses on the delivery of strategic objectives that ensures the Council's agreed outcomes can be delivered. OBB will continue to be implemented through a phased approach with a hybrid of the existing financial strategy e.g. service challenge, and new proposals operating for the next two years. OBB is a continuous Member led process overseen by the Council's SMT. A new strategic governance structure has been established to report progress although existing governance structures are being utilised for operational monitoring and reporting. OBB is predicated on six delivery themes rather than across the traditional Directorate structure (which remains in place) to ensure a more holistic and joined up approach to service delivery which will result in less silo thinking and generate additional cashable and non-cashable efficiencies. Where the delivery of services does not contribute to effective and efficient outcomes, those services will be challenged as to their value. As part of OBB, delivery reviews will be undertaken of all services over a phased rolling programme to ensure the Council can demonstrate their effectiveness and where they cannot, an improvement action plan will be established.

For 2015/16 it was assumed that around 25% of the savings proposals would be realised from an OBB perspective, however the actual value was around 40% which demonstrates how well staff have engaged with the process and are adapting to an innovative and transformation culture shift. In March 2016, the Council approved the 2016/17 budget which included £16m of savings for the year.

The Council fully complies with all elements of the CIPFA Treasury Management code to ensure effective governance arrangements are in place for its treasury management operations. The Audit & Corporate Governance committee are the body charged with the scrutiny of Treasury Management. The Council have also set up a Treasury Management Board consisting of lead members of the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee to provide further scrutiny around the Council's Treasury Management activities. Financial procedure rules are in place and contract procedure rules are currently being revised to incorporate the new OJEU regulations. A reminder to staff of their responsibilities to make a disclosure of related party transactions was issued in April 2016.

1.3 The Constitution and Decision Making

The Council's Constitution includes details of the role and responsibilities of the full Council; the Executive Board; Committees; Chief Officers; and the rules under which they operate. The Council's Constitution provides the framework for the decision making process. Following the review of Committees in Autumn 2012 and establishment of Policy Committees, work programmes have been established with links from Scrutiny Committee to the Policy Committees and quarterly meetings with chairs of Committees. The current version of the Constitution was agreed at full Council in May 2016.

<http://www.warrington.gov.uk/info/200349/committees/664/constitution>

The Council's political structure and roles and responsibilities of Executive Members are detailed on its website. There is an annual schedule of meetings for all committees agreed at the start of each municipal year. The Constitution defines the process for making key decisions. Continual

review of legislation is carried out to advise any required changes to the Constitution; the full Council of democratically elected members approves all changes to the Council's Constitution annually. The Council's Constitution defines how the Council operates and takes decisions regarding, for example the:

- Strategic aims and objectives of the Council
- Political management organisational structure
- Financial and other procedure rules
- Scheme of delegation to members and senior officers

The Executive Board takes executive decisions jointly. The Executive Board receives regular reports on the overall performance of the Council. Executive members hold regular meetings with their respective portfolio Executive Director in order to ensure effective liaison on key issues and major projects and programmes.

The Council is responsible for a range of functions which cannot by law be dealt with by the Executive. These matters are broadly described as 'regulatory' and include functions relating to planning; licensing; (eg. alcohol licensing, gambling) and road traffic (eg. road closures, speed limits, traffic restrictions.) These functions are discharged through committees established for the purpose.

The Monitoring Officer and officers from Democratic and Member Services monitor reports to members to ensure: propriety of decision making; legal advice is included where necessary and appropriate; consideration has been given to risk; and equality and diversity issues are addressed. Council lawyers are involved in policy development and scrutiny processes. There are regular meetings of officers with statutory responsibility for conduct and ethics issues.

The Council actively uses a wide range of mechanisms to promote consultation and engagement with local stakeholders i.e. residents, community groups, business etc. We use the Internet to promote our resources and have developed a dedicated web page for consultation (www.warrington.gov.uk/consultation) to raise awareness of what engagement and involvement activity is taking place.

The Customer Strategy incorporates an online community engagement portal for receiving information, being consulted or finding out about what is going on and getting involved in the local community. Particular effort is made to reach the views of those who tend to be excluded from the decision making process or who have very specific needs. This is particularly relevant in terms of consultation and engagement activity which underpins service re-designs relating to vulnerable residents i.e. Big Care Debate. A random sample of the resident population is surveyed at least every 2-3 years in order to gauge levels of satisfaction with the local area, services and local priorities.

1.4 Working with Key Partners

1.4.1 Warrington Borough Transport (WBT)

WBT was set up in accordance with the provision of the Transport Act 1985 to take over the Council's passenger transport undertaking. The Council wholly owns WBT but is not liable for any losses; WBT is a company limited by share capital, governed by the Companies Act, and subject to different statutory rules and accounting policies than the Council. The Council appoints up to 7 elected members to the WBT Board; 6 elected members and 1 parish councillor are on the Board currently and the Council's Director of Finance and Information Services attends Board meetings.

The Council has used its powers as shareholder to provide expert advice and support to the company in the form of commercial loans; and administrative, secretarial/legal support.

1.4.2 Torus

Torus is the new housing group that was formed in early 2015 by Golden Gates Housing trust and Helena Partnership.

1.4.3 Wire Regeneration Ltd

The Joint Venture Company was set up on a 50:50 shareholding basis between Warrington Borough Council and Langtree Land and Property PLC. Wire Regeneration Ltd is a company limited by share capital, governed by the Companies Act, and subject to different statutory rules and accounting policies than the Council. The company has changed form during 2015/16 following the re-organisation of Langtree Land and Property PLC. The Wire Regeneration Board comprises 2 elected members of the Council and the Council's Chief Executive along with 3 members from Langtree Land and Property PLC.

1.4.4 LiveWire Community Interest Company / Culture Warrington

LiveWire is a not for profit distributing organisation which became operational in May 2012 reflecting the Council's priorities in providing leisure, libraries, lifestyles and well-being services. Culture Warrington Trust was also formed in May 2012 to provide culture services previously provided by the Council, including the Parr Hall, Pyramid and museum. The Company and the Trust operate under a shared management team and provide regular reports to the Council's senior management team and Scrutiny Committee on performance and outcome measures.

1.4.5 Catalyst

Catalyst is a staff-led social enterprise which was established on 1 February 2015. Catalyst works in partnership with the Council's adult social care services, to provide delivery of a number of day and residential services for older people, and people with disabilities.

1.4.6 Warrington Partnership

Warrington Partnership is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for Warrington. The Partnership Agreement is updated and approved by the Partnership Board on an annual basis. There are a range of sub groups and Boards that support the work of the Partnership. This includes the Community Safety Partnership, the Delivering Wellbeing in Bewsey and Dallam Programme Board, and the Homelessness Priority Action Group. Warrington Partnership Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board jointly agreed the Warrington Strategy for Wellbeing; the strategy provides the overarching vision and priorities for Warrington and is used to direct strategic decisions across all partner organisations in the borough. A community Safety Partnership Board reports into the LSP. The priorities for this board are informed by annual community safety threat and needs assessment.

1.4.7 Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) / Health and Wellbeing Board / Integrated Commissioning Governance Board

A Health & Social Care Transformation Programme was developed led by a Transformation Director funded by the three major health provider organisations in Warrington and the Council and the CCG. The postholder worked closely with the Assistant Director for Integrated

Commissioning to align the programme with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Better Care Fund and has helped to further develop the governance architecture required across the system to enable transformational change.

Health and Wellbeing Board in September 2015 agreed to pursue wholesale pooled budgets, where appropriate. There has been an increased BCF for 2016/17 agreed by the Health and Wellbeing Board in April 2016 with a commitment to single joint commissioning process.

Since establishment of the Better Care Fund on 1st April 2015:

- Emerging accountable care organisation established across social, community, primary and acute.
- Single contract for our of hospital contract.
- Direct hospital attendances and admissions down by 5.5% and 28.6% respectively
- Readmissions of over 65s after 30 and 90 days reduced by 5% and 13% respectively.
- 150 less delayed transfers of care per 100,000 population (best in North West)
- 45 less permanent admissions per month into residential and nursing care.

1.4.8 Warrington Schools Forum

The schools forum is an independent statutory body whose main purpose is to be consulted by and advise the local authority on issues relating to the funding of schools. The Council has recognised the risks in the limited influence in respect of school improvement support for schools which have converted to academy status. The Council maintains oversight to ensure that governing bodies are effectively discharging their duties including their statutory responsibilities.

1.4.9 Warrington Sports Holdings Ltd (Warrington Wolves)

The Council holds a 12.81% shareholding in Warrington Sports Holdings Limited. The purpose of the shareholding in the company is intended as a long term investment to support a community asset, the rugby club, and as such is not held for income generation.

1.5 Risk Management / Resilience and Business Continuity / Emergency Planning

The Council has a comprehensive framework for the management of risk. Further revision of the strategic risk register has taken place during 2015-16 to include greater focus and requirements around project risk management. Risk management training was delivered throughout 2015/16 as part of the New Managers training course. The strategic risk register identifies risks to the achievement of strategic priorities as set out in the corporate plan. The strategic risk register was presented to the Strategic Management Team on a quarterly basis during 2015/16 in addition to Executive Board at quarters 2 & 4. The strategic risk register was also presented to the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee in June 2015 and January 2016 for their assessment of required assurance on key risks. The annual risk management report for 2014/15 was presented to Senior Management Team, Executive Board and the Audit and Corporate Governance committee in September 2015.

The Risk Management and Business Continuity group meets quarterly and reviews both the strategic and directorate risk registers. The group is supported by Directorate risk groups and receives updates from the Directorate leads on the risk registers and the business continuity plans. The group acts as a forum to facilitate discussion to monitor existing risks and the Council's general risk environment, ensuring new risks are identified and considered as part of the horizon scanning process. The group also monitors incidents, and the response to incidents, to identify corporate learning and ensure business continuity and recovery plans are fit for purpose.

The group provides assurance to the officer Governance Group that risk management processes are embedded and risks are regularly reviewed and updated.

2015/16 saw a fairly static environment for the strategic risks that the organisation was required to manage. Example of the broad range of risks monitored at the strategic level include: responding to the changes outlined within the Education Bill; unstable financial position in the medium to long term; failure of Safeguarding arrangements for vulnerable adults and children; ability to deliver the major capital programmes within timescale and budget whilst ensuring good governance and risk management; and failure to reduce community level inequalities. New risks included potential lack of management capacity resulting in non-compliance with council policy and procedures.

Emergency Plans were continually updated throughout 2015/16 in line with plan anniversaries and statutory timeframes. Work continued to increase organisational resilience in relation to emergency preparedness and response.

1.6 Information Governance

The Council has stated a commitment to high standards of governance, including information governance; this is of greater importance to the Council as more data is shared with external partners including health, and other blue light services. The Director of Finance & Information Services is the Council's Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO); the Assistant Director Partnerships and Performance is deputy SIRO; and a dedicated information governance manager is in place. The Information Governance Group (a collaborative group with representation across all directorates and key areas of WBC) monitors the required actions to address information governance risks. Areas for improvement, which have been included in the information governance action plan and associated risk register have been worked through during 2015/16. Training and awareness raising is a key part of the ongoing work including a programme to work with the information asset owners to populate the information asset register. The Information Governance team conducted its annual review against the Information Governance Toolkit during 2015/16 and obtained satisfactory outcomes against all 28 requirements. Following on from an internal audit review of the data breach procedure in 2015-16 improvements to the rating, reporting and logging of data breaches are being rolled out.

1.7 Planning, Projects and Programmes including Regeneration Schemes

Improvements continued to be made to the financial and project monitoring systems surrounding the whole capital programme during 2015/16. The close scrutiny by the officer Capital Investment Planning Group has ensured that issues have been addressed early and no unexpected issues have arisen.

Warrington & Co brings together the private and public sector to promote economic development and physical regeneration in Warrington, under the guidance of a private sector-led board. The Managing Director is a Council officer and Warrington & Co's main function is to steer and monitor the implementation of the regeneration framework, as well as providing a forum for all the key agencies involved in regeneration in the town, both public and private sector, to co-ordinate their activities. The Board includes 2 elected members of the Council; the Council's Chief Executive is Chair of the Board in a personal capacity.

The Time Square Development (previously referred to as the Bridge St Regeneration Scheme) has made substantial progress in 2015/16. Planning consent for the vast majority of the scheme is now in place. Demolition has commenced and construction of the temporary market is underway. Market Multi-Storey Car Park contract for demolition and construction has been let.

Cinema operator, as anchor for the scheme, has been secured and marketing of the restaurant opportunities is underway. The Executive Board has been in receipt of several reports throughout 2015/16 relating to the Time Square Development. Elected Members have had a series of briefings in relation to planning applications and place rebranding exercises.

The vision of the Stadium Quarter providing Warrington's Central Business District remains in place. Development on the Stadium Quarter phase 1 has seen marked progress in 2015/16 with the construction and opening of the business incubator – The Base. The construction of UTC Warrington also commenced in 2015/16 and is due to open in September 2016. Further office development is being explored along with a refreshed masterplan in the next 12 months.

Southern Gateway masterplanning is nearing completion, delivered through Wire Regeneration Ltd, land assembly planning is now underway.

Plans are progressing well to deliver a bridge (Centre Link Bridge) across the River Mersey to the south of Centre Park. Proposals were subject to extensive consultation in 2015/16 with Elected Members, businesses and the public.

The re-development of the Cabinet Works is making progress with a planning application being made in 2016. A masterplanning exercise of the wider area surrounding the Cabinet Works will be undertaken in 2016/17.

The Omega Development has continued well in 2015/16 with the construction and opening of a manufacturing facility, the opening of new road infrastructure and opening for improvement to Junction 8 of the M62. Plans have been submitted for second manufacturing facility and a speculative logistics development. A new school is under construction due for opening in September 2016.

1.8 Assurance in relation to the improvement actions identified in the 2014/15 Annual Governance Statement

Specific improvement actions were highlighted from the 2014/15 Annual Governance Statement, these are included in the officer Governance Group action plan for continual monitoring and improvement of governance issues in the Council. These include the following:

Improvement Action	Action undertaken
Improved programme governance arrangements for major regeneration schemes	Work continues to establish robust performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms for all major projects.
Monitoring of loans to RSLs and other Corporate Loans	A dedicated officer has been permanently appointed to monitor the activity of the organisations we have provided loans to, to ensure we can demonstrate that they continue to be sustainable. The corporate loans group receive regular updates on continuing loans drawdown and new loans and discuss the risks associated with offering loans. The loans monitoring officer (Qualified Senior Accountant) is a member of the corporate loans group. Regular reporting to Treasury Management Board which is a sub group of the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee.

Improvement Action	Action undertaken
Develop more robust controls over the management of Client Finances	Following the internal audit investigation a comprehensive action plan was developed and agreed. Finance managers and Internal Audit provided senior management with regular updates on progress and any issues arising from the work undertaken. The OPG concluded its report and the actions are being addressed. The management of the client finances service transferred to the Resources and Strategic Commissioning Directorate on 1 January 2016 and is being managed by the Exchequer and Benefits Service. The structure of the team has been reviewed and strengthened and recommendations from both an internal audit review and review by the Office of the Public Guardian have been applied.
Information Governance	The Information Governance Team continues to be involved in a number of communications and awareness sessions and deliver bi-monthly 'Introduction to Information Governance' training sessions to supplement the eLearning content. Education and training has been delivered to staff as part of the New to Management course. During 2015/16, there have been no reportable information data breaches to either the Information Commissioners Office or the Health & Social Care Information Centre. One of the key actions from the Commissioner's review was the requirement to ensure that training is mandatory for all staff and that this programme needs to include both new and refresher training. Ongoing development of the information governance framework for the Council, supported by an implementation and improvement plan, is a key focus area of the SIRO, the officer Governance Group and the Information Governance Group. We believe that the steps we are taking will further enhance our governance arrangements and are satisfied that these steps will continue to improve the processes in place in line with compliance requirements such as the new European Data Protection Regulation.
Robust contract management and monitoring of contracts	An OBB project reviewed the commissioning, procurement and contract management process within the Council. The project took into account the recommendations of the internal audit report as well as the wider context of how the Council procures goods and services. A project team was established and produced a summary report of findings that are in the process of being actioned.

1.9 Internal Assurance and External Inspections of Governance Arrangements

1.9.1 SAP System and ICT Governance

The Council's key ICT system SAP underpins the Finance, Payroll, Procurement and Human Resources functions. The external auditors Grant Thornton reported issues in the range of

access to the system in April 2015. An implementation plan was produced to address the issues raised in the report.

During 2015/16 ICT Governance good practice has been sustained and weaker areas strengthened. The certification of conformance to the best practice ISO27001 information security management standard has been revalidated by external accreditation and re-accreditation attained. The management of ICT risks and ICT security incidents continues to be robust and has been highlighted as good practice by external auditors. PCI DSS standards are fully adhered to with three clear technical vulnerability scans in past year. Business continuity / disaster recovery is aligned to ISO27001 / ISO27031.

The Council continued the work to comply with increased compliance requirements, mandated by the Cabinet Office, in order to allow continued connection to the government's Public Services Network (PSN). The enhanced requirements included the removal of all unsupported software, and software with any security vulnerabilities, from all machines that access the Council's data network. A large number of staff use PSN (formerly known as the Government Connect Secure Extranet, GCSx) to access central government ICT systems and allow secure data sharing with partners. The Council achieved PSN Accreditation in July 2015 and PCI DSS accreditation in May 2016.

A value for money exercise was undertaken during 2015/16; the Society of IT Managers (SOCITM) value for money review and SOCITM benchmarking review provided good feedback. Actions from the reviews will be worked through during 2016/17.

1.9.2 Families and Wellbeing

Families and Wellbeing was formed in October 2013, bringing together the functions of the former children and young people's services, adult services, housing, neighbourhoods and public health directorates. The Executive Director for Families and Wellbeing encompasses the statutory roles of both the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) and the Director of Children's Services (DCS), and has line management of the statutory role of Director of Public Health. The combined structure and roles of DCS and DASS have resulted in a range of benefits, including:

- The ability for strong and clear leadership through a 'people champion' at the executive leadership team;
- Use of a whole system approach to addressing the needs and demands of our most vulnerable families;
- Greater ability to take a shared view of the needs of our residents and the services that they use and access;
- Improved and consolidated procurement and commissioning with external providers and partner organisations;
- Improved transition between children's and adult services, mental health, drugs and alcohol services;
- Stronger focus on social work practice, particularly in relation to safeguarding with strengthened reporting arrangements to the Director role;
- Strengthened partnership with health services, public health and developing the strong strategic partnerships which are in place within adult services;
- Strengthened the Council's ability to influence and respond to sub-regional and local people agendas;
- Provided the opportunity to review and consolidate business support and other core functions across the combined service; and
- Provided the opportunity to develop a whole service workforce development plan to ensure key skills, experience and knowledge are in place.

Ofsted in their visit in February 2015 praised the combined directorate. The Executive Director's Assurance Statement sets out arrangements providing assurance that sufficient existing and additional safeguards are in place to ensure the continued delivery of the Council's overarching responsibilities for all children and vulnerable adults, and furthermore that the specific responsibilities for vulnerable children are not compromised by the breadth of the combined role.

In 2015/16 the total budget for the directorate was £92,595K and the total spend was £95,418K; there was an over spend of £2,823K equating to 3.05% of the overall budget. As part of the MTFP the service challenge savings target for 2015-16 for the directorate was £6,126K, through a combination of means £5,831K was delivered.

The main priority outcome areas for the Directorate in the upcoming year are:

1. Ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults
2. Manage demand through focus on prevention and early intervention
3. Help people to live in decent homes
4. Promote and support healthy and prosperous communities
5. Ensure access to quality care, support, education and learning provision
6. Make best use of limited resources.

Children and Young People's services

The majority of regulated services for children and young people in Warrington have 'good' or 'outstanding' judgements from Ofsted, specifically:

- 16 schools were inspected in the period 01 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. All of these schools were judged either Good or Outstanding.

Currently:

- 64 (93%) of all primary schools across the Borough are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding'
- 1 of 1 (100%) maintained nursery school is rated as 'Outstanding'.
- 50% (2 out of 4) LA maintained secondary schools are rated 'good' or better, one is rated as 'requires improvement' and one has been judged as 'inadequate'.
- 63% (5 out of 8) of the academy and free schools are rated as 'good' or better (N.B. if an academy has not been inspected the judgement is based on their inspection when they were a school).
- 100% of the three special schools are rated as 'good' or better and the one Pupil Referral Unit is rated 'good'.
- 137 of 152 childminders (90%) received 'good' or better inspection results by Ofsted. None were rated as inadequate.
- 89 of 105 of childcare on non-domestic premises (85%) received 'good' or better inspection results from Ofsted. One setting was rated inadequate.

An internal audit of the systems of internal control in place in relation to the financial administration of children's residential and short break homes during 2013/14 contained a 'minimal' assurance opinion. Training has been provided by the Finance Team to each of the Registered Managers and all the recommendations have been addressed.

Further audit activity around the financial administration of children's centres during 2015/16 contained a 'limited' assurance opinion. A robust action plan has been established to address the recommendations and improve the controls in future.

Adult services

In Warrington over 93% of the Council's adult social care services are now commissioned from the independent sector. A staff owned, not for profit company, Catalyst Choices, was set up to protect £8.6 million worth of adult social care services and was launched on 1 February 2015. The company supports over 600 service users and employs over 300 staff. There are seven services commissioned from Catalyst Choices:

- Residential Care for older people (Woodleigh Care Home)
- Learning Disability respite accommodation (formerly at James Phoenix House and now in a refurbished part of the Woodleigh campus)
- Older people extra care (Mosslands, Broomfields, Sankey Manor and Woolston Hall)
- Supported Employment Service
- Learning Disability Supported Tenancies (13 properties)
- Shared Lives (Adult Placement) Service
- Specialist Day Services (Gorse Covert Centre and 15 community venues)

Catalyst Choices have a contract with Warrington Council to run up to five years, with a break clause after 3 and 4 years. Services are registered and inspected against national standards by the Care Quality Commission and all services are accessed through the Council's social work assessment and care management teams.

Externally commissioned or internally provided Adult Social Care services are subject to a range of robust governance measures that focus on developing partnerships, monitoring and improving and ensuring value for money. This is underpinned by a range of formal operational activities and forums including:

- Formal contract monitoring and compliance across all Adult Social Care services including scheduled, responsive and unannounced monitoring visits. This has been further developed with an integrated approach with the CCG and is underpinned by a robust multi agency information sharing framework, linked to the Safeguarding Adults Board.
- Regular performance monitoring reviews with provider agencies subject to service level agreements and contracts.
- Formal individual service risk assessments are in place for adults at risk accessing services.
- Performance reporting on commissioned services are provided to the Directorate Management Team on a regular basis.
- Key performance indicators relating to residential and nursing care and supported accommodation for adults with a learning disability are incorporated in the directorate performance scorecard.

A legal gateway was introduced for adult services this year in order to provide a formal framework for discussion and advice for cases that require legal and professional advice prior to a possible involvement of the Court of Protection. This helps to ensure legality, appropriateness and consistency of practice, including ensuring applications are lodged with the court in a timely manner and with sufficient evidence to support the application made.

The management of the client finances service transferred to the Resources and Strategic Commissioning Directorate on 1 January 2016 and is being managed by the Exchequer and Benefits Service. The structure of the team has been reviewed and strengthened and recommendations from both an internal audit review and review by the Office of the Public Guardian have been applied. The main priorities for the upcoming year are:

- A concentration on managing demand, strengthening the predictive capacity and relationship between activity and spend and tighter management of the efficiency programme.

- Implementing the new ICT system for children and adult services (MOSAIC).
- Increasing integrated working across health and social care and implementation of Better Care Fund priorities; integration at primary care level with cluster-facing structures; leading and modelling new cultures; preventing acute and unscheduled care; and new outcomes-based model in 'out of hospital care' (intermediate care).
- Achieving sufficiency, sustainability and quality in the community care market.
- Leading and delivering effective safeguarding, including managing the growing risk around Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLs).
- Continuing to embed the Care Act reforms, particularly concentrating on: a) prevention and early intervention; and b) information and advice offer.

Public Health, Housing and Neighbourhoods

The vision for Public Health is to help ensure "*Better health and well-being for all in Warrington through longer life, better quality of life, fair access, reduced inequalities and strengthened communities*".

Public health works in partnership with all key partners in the town to improve and protect health and to reduce inequalities. Warrington overall performance on many health outcomes is similar to or better than the national averages; yet one of the major issues is the extent and recurring pattern of inequalities within Warrington linked to socio-economic deprivation.

Public Health operates within the Public Health Outcomes Framework and Public Health England Guidance and the Health and Social care Act 2012, and the statutory role of the Director of Public Health. The Public health delivery plan meets the requirements of the JSNA and Health and Wellbeing Strategy and corporate objectives. Public health is governed by the Public Health Governance group which has a clear performance framework and dashboard which is updated monthly and managed by exception. The internal audit report in 2015/16 gave 'substantial assurance' to the organisation for finance and performance processes in public health.

The Housing team is primarily concerned with ensuring that all of Warrington's residents have access to decent quality and affordable housing. Housing complies with a wide range of statutory requirements operating within governance requirements. The Warrington Housing Partnership meets quarterly. The Draft Housing Strategy was produced including figures from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment for an updated assessment of affordable housing need. The Council has a statutory duty to provide temporary emergency accommodation for those who are homeless and in priority need. Good progress is being made in implementing the Homelessness Strategy; Warrington has so far bucked the national trend in increasing homelessness preventions, maintaining homelessness acceptances and rough sleeping at previous year levels.

The Neighbourhoods team work to maximise the resilience and wellbeing of residents, communities and neighbourhoods. It is driven by national policy, guidance and legislation and by local needs and priorities. Neighbourhood services support people within their own communities, most of whom do not meet the criteria for care management. In addition the Neighbourhoods in Warrington service has specific responsibility for community development and engagement; management of community centres, the administration of local area grant funding and the delivery of wellbeing and health inequalities programmes.

Neighbourhoods support people in making lifestyle changes including service delivered in prisons and at GP surgeries. Budget Booster clubs are delivering positive outcomes for employment, training, or voluntary work, and tips to save money, access benefits and manage the family budget. The team recognise and value the work of volunteers in the town, and have worked with 97 new community groups this year.