

WARRINGTON
Borough Council



**ANNUAL GOVERNANCE
STATEMENT
2017-2018**

CONTENTS

	Page
1. Corporate Governance	1
2. The Annual Governance Statement	2
3. The Governance Framework	2
4. Review of Effectiveness	4
5. Significant Governance Issues	5
6. Future Developments	7
7. Conclusion	7
Appendix 1 Assessment of Effectiveness	
Appendix 2 Actions from 2016-2017 Annual Governance Statement	
Appendix 3 Framework of Assurance	

Warrington Borough Council Vision Vision for 2020:

We will work together with our residents,
businesses and partners to create a place that works for all

1. Corporate Governance

Corporate Governance is about how the Council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. Good governance ensures that the Council provides for effective leadership and management in the use of public money; ensures the delivery of high quality services to all taxpayers and citizens; and achieves the desired outcomes for service users and communities.

Warrington Borough Council acknowledges its responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of governance. The Council has developed a Local Code of Corporate Governance that defines the principles that underpin the governance of the organisation. The Code can be accessed on the Council's website at: http://www.warrington.gov.uk/info/200355/budget_and_spending/35/governance_statements_and_reports or can be obtained by writing to the Council's Director of Corporate Services. The principles upon which it is based are summarised in this Statement.

2. The Annual Governance Statement

The Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations 2015 require the Council to prepare and publish an Annual Governance Statement. This is a public document that reports on the extent to which the Council complies with its own Code of Corporate Governance. The Annual Governance Statement explains how the Council makes decisions; manages its resources in line with the Council's priorities; and achieves the required outcomes for service users and communities.

In the Annual Governance Statement the Council:

- Acknowledges its responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of governance
- Summarises the key elements of the governance framework and the roles of those responsible for the development and maintenance of the governance environment
- Describes how the Council has monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of its governance arrangements in the year, and on any planned changes in the coming period (appendix 1)
- Provides details of how the Council has responded to any issue(s) identified in last year's governance statement (appendix 2)
- Reports on any significant governance issues identified from this review and provides a commitment to addressing them

3. The Governance Framework

Scope of Responsibility:

Warrington Borough Council is responsible for ensuring that:

- Business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards
- Public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively

The 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, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

Purpose of the Governance Framework:

The Council's governance framework comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values by which the Council is directed and controlled and activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money. The framework aims to ensure that in conducting its business the Council:

- Operates in a lawful, open, inclusive and honest manner
- Makes sure that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively
- Has effective arrangements for the management of risk
- Secures continuous improvements in the way that it operates

The Governance Framework:

The governance framework sets out how the Council is operating in order to demonstrate compliance, ongoing improvement, its commitment to maintaining the highest ethical standards and levels of governance. The governance framework has been in place at Warrington Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2018 and up to the date of approval of the statement of accounts.

The Council has based its governance framework on the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance 2016 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'. The framework sets out seven core principles for good governance. Appendix 1 provides a summary of key elements of the Council's governance framework and how they relate to the seven principles.

4. Review of Effectiveness

Warrington Borough 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 Senior Management Team who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Internal Audit's annual report and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

In April 2018 a full review against the Code of Corporate Governance was carried out. This review was undertaken by Senior Management Team and overseen by the Council's Director of Corporate Services.

This draft Governance Statement has been reviewed by the Senior Management Team; Director of Corporate Services; the Monitoring Officer; and the Head of Internal Audit before being presented to the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee for approval.

The Council relies on the following sources of assurance in order to maintain and review the effectiveness of the system of governance:

- **Member scrutiny** – Standards Sub-Committee; Overview and Scrutiny function; Constitution Sub-Committee; Executive Board; Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.
-
- **Management** - The Senior Management Team has responsibility for developing the Risk Management Strategy and processes, including the communications and reporting structure for strategic risk.
-
- **Management** - 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 2017/18 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** – Internal Audit Services examine the effectiveness of the Council’s internal controls. Based upon the work undertaken during 2017/18 the Head of Internal Audit provided the Council with an overall ‘satisfactory’ assurance opinion on the arrangements for gaining assurance through the governance framework and on the controls reviewed as part of the internal audit work.
- **Internal Review** – the Governance Group maintains a comprehensive action plan to ensure continuous improvement of the governance arrangements are in place.
- **External Audit** - The Council’s appointed auditors Grant Thornton issued their Annual Findings Report 2016/17 in September 2017 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
- **External Review** – review and any findings and feedback from external inspectorates.

The results of the annual review of the effectiveness of the key elements of the Council’s governance processes during 2017-18 are set out in the table in Appendix 1.

5. Significant Governance Issues

Significant governance issues at the current time are as follows:

Budget / Savings Programme / Council Transformation / Commercialism - Government funding is progressively decreasing to virtually zero and the Council will need to continue to make efficiency savings. To support this, the Council has progressed with outcome based budgeting for 2017-18. 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 financial plan.

Sound financial and governance processes are required in the new ways of funding. The Outcome Based Budgeting programme approach includes a set of programmes and projects for the transformation of services across the Council.

The Council is classed as one of the top ten commercial Councils nationally by the Local Government Association. During 2017/18 the Council invested in two major commercial schemes. The Council took a 33% shareholding in Redwood Bank a new challenger bank whose business focus is lending to Small medium Sized Enterprises. The Council also purchased Birchwood Park a 123 acre Warrington Business Park; strong Governance underpinned these investments. Redwood Bank was subject to a comprehensive business case and risk assessment that was scrutinised and agreed by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority. A full business case was produced for Birchwood Park with expert consultants contributing to it. The Due Diligence and Governance process followed by the Council with regards to Birchwood Park was used as a good practice case study in the CIPFA publication "The Practicalities of Prudence Key principles of due diligence for local authorities." Strong ongoing governance structures are also in place to monitor these investments.

Information Governance and Cyber Risks - Ongoing development of the information governance framework for the Council, supported by an implementation and improvement plan, is a key focus area of the Senior Information Risk Officer and the Information Governance Group. The Council reported four breaches to the Information Commissioner's Office during 2017/18; in all cases the Information Commissioner was satisfied with the action that the Council had taken. The implementation of the new European General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) is an extensive project for the council. The GDPR work has the support of the SIRO and Deputy SIRO, with regular reports via the SIRO briefing and a paper to SMT in April 2018. The Council has an action plan and working groups to support action tasks identified in the plan.

Cyber attack is recognised as a key risk to the Council. 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 Regulations.

Project Governance - 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, entrepreneurial 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 including: improved monitoring arrangements; improved management information; improved reporting arrangements; and appropriate risk escalation.

Health & Social Care Integration - Warrington has submitted its Integration /Better Care Fund Plan for 2017-2019 which sets out the case for change and its plans for implementing integration through supporting the development of an Accountable Care Partnership 'Warrington Together'. On presentation of the delivery model for the Accountable Care Partnership, it is likely that further consideration will need to be given by both the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Local Authority as to how commissioning and delivery will be aligned.

Appendix 2 sets out the governance issues that the Council raised as part of the 2016-17 Annual Governance statement. A description of the issue along with details of the actions undertaken to date, and any further actions required to manage the issue is also given.

6. Future Developments

Strategic Development - The changing nature of the Council's business means that partnership working including: work with the Cheshire and Warrington Enterprise Partnership; new commercial developments; and complex contracts for delivery of services, continue to increase. It is recognised that as such arrangements develop, then robust financial management and monitoring of the arrangements needs to be in place. The strength of the Council's governance processes and systems around commercial schemes is best evident by the Council being one of the first councils to adopt and publish, from 1st April 2018, a Capital Strategy that fully complies with the latest MHCLG Investment Guidance published in January 2018.

Workforce - Continued consideration of the impact of Brexit and the potential loss of staff in services provided directly by the Council or in services provided by partners. New developments in agile and dynamic outcomes based working, which will support the move to the new Council offices.

Transformation of Services - There are severe financial risks attached to non-delivery of transformation of services through demand management, commercialism and digitalisation.

Housing Company - The Council during 2018/19 will form two housing companies which will enable the Council to build houses again. These companies were subject to a comprehensive business case agreed by the Executive board at their January 2018 meeting and ongoing strong governance.

7. Conclusion

The review of the Council’s governance arrangements for 2017/18 has been undertaken in order to produce this statement and to ensure the effectiveness of governance arrangements in place and compliance with the code of corporate governance. 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:

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

Date:

Signed:

.....
Matthew Cumberbatch
Monitoring Officer

Date:.....

Signed:

.....
Steven Broomhead
Chief Executive

Date:.....

CORE PRINCIPLE A	
Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.	
Supporting Principles	Assessment of the effectiveness of key elements of the Council's governance processes during 2017-18
<p>Behaving with Integrity</p> <p>Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values</p> <p>Respecting the rule of law</p>	<p>The Council has a robust Constitution in place that sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that these are efficient, proportionate, transparent and accountable. The current version of the Constitution, with updates and revisions, was agreed at full Council in May 2018.</p> <p>The Constitution contains the Code of Conduct for staff and members. A revised Code of Conduct for Councillors was approved by the Standards Committee and submitted to Annual Council for adoption in May 2016. It is proposed to enhance the role of the Independent Persons who support the work of the Standards Committee. The term of office of the Independent Persons has been extended and further training has been provided for them.</p> <p>The Code of Conduct for employees was reviewed and updated early in 2017 and a section was added to provide advice and guidance to employees who may be approached in the course of their duties to be the executor or beneficiary of a service user's will and to make it clear that this is not permitted. An additional appendix was also added to provide detailed advice and guidance around gifts and hospitality. Registers of gifts & hospitality and member & officer interests were maintained. Individual member's interests are published on the Council's website. Elected members receive a reminder annually to review and, if necessary, update their declaration of interests forms.</p> <p>An Annual Fraud Report has been produced by the Internal Audit manager which demonstrates the work that the Council has undertaken in the year to investigate instances of fraud and whistleblowing allegations and to highlight the proactive levels of work being undertaken. This was presented to the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee in May 2018. CIPFA issued the "Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption" in 2014 and internal assessment against the Code indicates 78% compliance which is classed as a "Good" level of compliance. Having considered all the principles in the Code the Internal Audit manager is "satisfied that the organisation has adopted a response that is</p>

	<p>appropriate for its fraud and corruption risks and commits to maintain its vigilance to tackle fraud.”</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer’s 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. The Director of Finance & Information Services is the Council’s Senior Information Risk Owner.</p> <p>The Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy has been refreshed as part of the Customer Strategy.</p> <p>Every contract that the Council enters into adheres to the Public Procurement Regulations and requires high standards of transparency and ethics.</p>
--	--

CORE PRINCIPLE B	
Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	
Supporting Principles	Assessment of the effectiveness of key elements of the Council's governance processes during 2017-18
<p>Openness</p> <p>Engaging comprehensively with other organisations that the Council needs to work with to improve services and outcomes</p> <p>Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively</p>	<p>The Council strategy 2015-2018, which was refreshed in 2017-18, 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.</p> <p>The Health and Wellbeing Board agrees the Warrington Health and Wellbeing Strategy; the strategy provides the overarching vision and priorities for Warrington and is used to direct strategic decisions across all partner organisations in the borough. There are a range of multi-agency groups and sub-groups that support the delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the Corporate Strategy and other strategic plans.</p> <p>The Accountable Care Partnership Senior Change Team ensures both the Better Care Fund (BCF) Programme and the Accountable Care Partnership development are aligned to the joint transformation strategy 'Together We'. Several workshops have taken place to assist in developing a delivery model for the Accountable Care Partnership supported by the Advancing Quality Alliance (AQuA). A Board has been set up with an independent Chair.</p> <p>The Council works with a number of other key partners to deliver services including: Warrington Clinical Commissioning Group; Warrington Borough Transport; LiveWire / Culture Warrington; and Torus Housing Group.</p> <p>Warrington's Safeguarding Children Board and Safeguarding Adults Board are responsible for ensuring that local safeguarding arrangements are effective and that partners act together to help and protect children and adults at risk of abuse or neglect.</p> <p>The Council developed an engagement process with residents through its 'Growing a Strong Warrington' programme (including communications & digital strategies). The Council has a Customer Strategy, charter and standards in place. The Customer Strategy 2016-2020 is central to ensuring our customers are at the heart of delivering our vision of 'Growing a Strong Warrington'. It helps ensure that service</p>

	<p>provision is designed and delivered to meet local needs and that service improvements are customer-led and outcome focused.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>We are committed to ensuring that equality and diversity is at the heart of our organisation and responds to the needs of all our customers and communities. These values are set out in our new equality objectives for 2016-2020. We are required by the Equality Act 2010 to publish these at least every four years. We developed these objectives by undertaking a public online consultation, talking to our partners and staff and researching emerging national and local equality trends and needs.</p>
--	---

CORE PRINCIPLE C	
Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	
Supporting Principles	Assessment of the effectiveness of key elements of the Council's governance processes during 2017-18
<p>Defining outcomes</p> <p>Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits</p>	<p>The Council Strategy is supported by a Performance Management Framework, Service Plans and Change Projects as appropriate.</p> <p>The Corporate strategy is refreshed each year and is linked to the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan; this ensures that our plans are realistic in the context of the continued funding constraints placed on the Council.</p> <p>A refreshed joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Warrington was developed following extensive consultation with all key stakeholders. The Integrated Commissioning Team led on the development of the refreshed strategy with support from colleagues in the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group.</p> <p>Outcomes Based Budgeting (OBB) is a continuous Member led process overseen by the Council's Senior management Team. The Council's Budget and Outcomes Based Budgeting framework underpins our decision making. All Council decisions are required to comply with the budget and Outcomes Based Budgeting framework.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Improvements continued to be made to the financial and project monitoring systems surrounding the whole capital programme during 2017/18. The role of the officer Capital Investment Planning Group has been refreshed to enhance the governance arrangements.</p>

CORE PRINCIPLE D	
Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	
Supporting Principles	Assessment of the effectiveness of key elements of the Council's governance processes during 2017-18
<p>Determining interventions</p> <p>Planning interventions</p> <p>Optimising achievement of intended outcomes</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>The Council operates an Overview and Scrutiny function. Members, who are not members of the Scrutiny Committee can "call in" decisions that have been made but not yet implemented, to enable them to consider whether the decision has been taken in accordance with the Council's decision making principles. The four Policy Committees monitor and scrutinise the performance and decision making of the authority.</p> <p>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. Compliance with the new CIPFA Code in 2018/19 will be ensured. 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.</p> <p>The Council seeks to obtain value for money which is supported through effective commissioning and procurement arrangements, a robust procurement strategy, business plans and scrutiny of decision making.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 and</p>

	<p>Executive Board; 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.</p>
--	---

<p>CORE PRINCIPLE E Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</p>	
<p>Supporting Principles</p>	<p>Assessment of the effectiveness of key elements of the Council’s governance processes during 2017-18</p>
<p>Developing the entity’s capacity</p> <p>Developing the entity’s leadership</p> <p>Developing the capability of individuals within the entity</p>	<p>A corporate Member’s induction programme is in place with ongoing training for Members. Members and officers meet at the Member Development Forum to review training and develop/improve the member training offer.</p> <p>The Council has a Leadership Development Forum which incorporates regular meetings held by the Chief Executive for Directors, Assistant Directors and Heads of Service on key relevant strategic topics. They offer an opportunity for the Council’s leaders to come together to innovate, inspire and engage in an informal, creative and supportive environment.</p> <p>The risk around management capacity has been captured on the Strategic Risk Register and is regularly reviewed by Senior Management Team. An e-learning package is being rolled out to all staff including a number of mandatory courses as agreed by the Senior Management Team. A review of the appraisal process was undertaken in 2016/17 and SMT agreed a new approach to managing individual performance/development needs for employees, which was rolled out in 2017.</p> <p>The Council has a recruitment and retention policy and strategy.</p> <p>A new HR strategy has been agreed by the Senior Management Team and will be published to all staff in 2018, which links directly to the corporate priorities. Staff performance management processes are in place and a new learning and development prospectus for the organisation has been produced for 2018.</p>

	<p>A planned programme of internal courses is provided to the organisation in addition to external provision commissioned as required in order to ensure that all employees are equipped to carry out their roles and to ensure compliance with regulatory and statutory requirements.</p> <p>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, the review and refresh of existing policies and all other staffing matters.</p>
--	--

CORE PRINCIPLE F	
Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	
Supporting Principles	Assessment of the effectiveness of key elements of the Council's governance processes during 2017-18
Managing risk Managing performance Robust internal control Managing Data Strong public financial management	<p>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 and reports are provided to the Senior Management Team; Executive Board and Audit & Corporate Governance committee receive half yearly updates. Senior Management Team undertook a full review of the Strategic Risk Register during 2016-17 to ensure that new and emerging risks were included for 2017.</p> <p>The Council has a well established Audit & Corporate Governance Committee which met regularly during 2017-18. The Committee has clearly defined terms of reference and responsibilities for the oversight of internal control, governance, risk management and the approval of the Council's Annual Accounts. The Audit & 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.</p> <p>The Council maintains a Head of Internal Audit and an Internal Audit section which complies with the Standards set out in the UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Internal Audit examine the effectiveness of the Council's internal controls. Based on evidence from planned audits and any special investigations, the Head of Internal Audit reports to each meeting of the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee on any major weaknesses that have been identified and highlights where improvements are considered necessary.</p> <p>The Senior Management Team is responsible for ensuring that it establishes and maintains effective systems of internal control, complying with legislation, the Council's Constitution, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.</p>

	<p>The implementation of the new European General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) is an extensive project for the council. The Information Governance Team has led a series of GDPR awareness briefings since October 2017 and has covered over 335 people, presented 3 schools specific briefings covering primary, secondary and academy schools, and also delivered a specific session for 15 elected members. The GDPR work has the support of the SIRO and Deputy SIRO, with regular reports via the SIRO briefing and a paper to SMT in April 2018. The Council has an action plan and working groups to support action tasks identified in the plan.</p>
--	--

CORE PRINCIPLE G	
Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability	
Supporting Principles	Assessment of the effectiveness of key elements of the Council's governance processes during 2017-18
<p>Implementing good practice in transparency</p> <p>Implementing good practices in reporting</p> <p>Assurance and effective accountability</p>	<p>The Council makes as much information as possible available on its website. Support is also available to those residents who cannot access the internet.</p> <p>The Council publishes its governance reports and its statement of accounts on the website.</p> <p>The Council's external auditors Grant Thornton issued their Annual Findings Report 2016/17 in September 2017 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</p> <p>The Senior Management Team is responsible for responding to recommendations made by Internal Audit, External Audit and other Inspectorates such as CQC and OFSTED. Where necessary and appropriate they will take advice from Legal Services.</p> <p>Progress made against the issues identified in the 2016-17 Annual Governance Statement action plan has been monitored by the Governance Group.</p> <p>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 & Corporate Governance committee on the work undertaken in the Council to combat fraud and corruption.</p>

The table below sets out the progress made against the significant governance issues identified in the 2016-2017 Annual Governance Statement.

Improvement Action	Action Undertaken
<p>Council Transformation - A programme for transformation of services across the Council is being developed. There are severe financial risks attached to non-delivery of transformation of services through demand management, commercialisation and digitalisation.</p>	<p>The Outcome Based Budgeting Board has re-established its terms of reference as a key change board, which reports into the Strategic Management Team. The programmes and projects which are delivering the council's transformation, covering digitalisation, management of demand and enterprise, all report into this board including their financial progress.</p>
<p>Budget/Savings Programme - Government funding is progressively decreasing to virtually zero and the Council will need to continue to make efficiency savings. To support this, the Council has progressed with outcome based budgeting for 2016-17. 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 financial plan. Sound financial and governance processes are required in the new ways of funding.</p>	<p>Government funding continues to decrease to virtually zero and the Council will need to continue to make efficiency savings. To support this, the Council has progressed with outcome based budgeting for 2017-18. 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 financial plan. Sound financial and governance processes are required in the new ways of funding.</p> <p>The Outcome Based Budgeting programme approach includes a set of programmes and projects for the transformation of services across the Council. There are severe financial risks attached to non-delivery of transformation of services through demand management, commercialisation and digitalisation.</p>
<p>Information Governance and Cyber Risks - Ongoing development of the information governance framework for the Council, supported by an implementation and improvement plan, is a key focus area of the Senior Information Risk Officer and the Information Governance Group. The Council reported two breaches to the Information Commissioner's Office during 2016/17 however the results of the review indicated that the Information Commissioner was satisfied with the action that the Council had taken. Cyber attack is recognised as a</p>	<p>The implementation of the new European General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) is an extensive project for the council. Comprehensive action plan in place. Awareness sessions for GDPR have been undertaken during 2017/18.</p> <p>There is mandatory training for all staff and new starters in place (re-launched 30th October) and covers three key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Information Governance, ○ Introduction to Information Security ○ Data Protection <p>Internal Audit work noted good progress in preparing for the</p>

<p>key risk to the Council. 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 Regulations.</p>	<p>implementation of the GDPR, with work undertaken to address the requirements of Information Commissioner’s Office’s GDPR “12 Key Steps” document. The Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) and Information Governance team are aware of the areas that still need to be addressed and an action plan, including timescales, is in place.</p>
<p>Project Governance - 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 including: improved monitoring arrangements; improved management information; improved reporting arrangements; and appropriate risk escalation.</p>	<p>Work continues to develop improved arrangements. Financial regulations have been updated and the role and remit of the Capital Investment Planning Group has been strengthened. Capital Investment Planning Group meetings schedule receipt of reports and decisions, and receive progress against schemes.</p>
<p>Health & Social Care - The Health & Wellbeing Board have identified key areas for further development. Members of the Board agreed, at their November 2016 meeting, to the plan for a pilot Warrington System Leadership Development Programme. At the December 2016 meeting Board members agreed that integration would be progressed and that an Accountable Care Organisation for Warrington would be developed.</p>	<p>Warrington has submitted its Integration /Better Care Fund Plan for 2017-2019 which sets out the case for change and its plans for implementing integration through supporting the development of an Accountable Care Partnership (ACP). The plans include how additional ‘improved Better Care Funding’ (iBCF) will be utilised to support whole system change particularly pressures in NHS services and adult social care. The plan has now been fully approved by NHS England. Quarterly returns are being submitted to both NHS England and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). A BCF Steering Group meets monthly to monitor the detailed delivery of the plan with high level monitoring through the Integrated Commissioning and Transformation Board meeting on a bi-monthly basis.</p> <p>The lead officer for the Better Care Fund is a key member of the Accountable Care Partnership Senior Change Team which ensures both the BCF Programme and the ACP development are aligned to the</p>

	<p>joint transformation strategy 'Together We'. Several workshops have taken place to assist in developing a delivery model for the Accountable Care Partnership supported by the Advancing Quality Alliance (AQuA) with the last one taking place in January 2018. A Board has also been set up with an independent Chair.</p> <p>On presentation of the delivery model for the ACP, it is likely that further consideration will need to be given by both the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Local Authority as to how commissioning and delivery will be aligned.</p>
--	--

Annual Governance Statement Assurance Framework

