WARRINGTON
Borough Council

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT
2019-2020

CONTENTS

Warrington Borough Council Vision
Corporate Strategy 2020-2024:
Our residents live healthy, happy and independent lives; everyone benefits from our thriving economy; communities are safe, strong and our most vulnerable are protected; our town is clean, green and vibrant.

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 Deputy Chief Executive and 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, including the revised arrangements from March 2020 as a result of Covid-19, 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 (section 5)

3. The Governance Framework including Covid-19 Governance Arrangements

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 2020 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.

Covid-19 Governance Arrangements:

The governance framework has been amended to include the arrangements put in place to ensure effective governance during the Coronavirus pandemic between March and the approval of the accounts. The Council recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic presented a considerable risk to its operation as well as to the safety and security of Warrington residents. Government guidance meant that Committee meetings would be unable to be held, in accordance with social distancing guidelines, until legislation came into force on 4 April 2020 to allow remote virtual committee meetings.

The Council had effective urgency provisions to carry out its decision making virtually and introduced Microsoft Teams at pace for part of the organisation to support the broadcast of Cabinet and Committee meetings. Enabling our communities to continue to engage with our democratic processes has been of vital importance:

- Amendment of the Council's Constitution to allow remote/virtual formal council meetings, including Cabinet and Development Management Committee in accordance with the statutory requirements set out in the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. NOTE – the provision to call a Scrutiny Committee meeting in the event of a call-in of a Cabinet decision was in place.
- Development of new procedures / incorporating new technology for Committees to take place whilst allowing all relevant parties to contribute and therefore ensure fair and transparent decision-making.
- A series of Leader question time telephone and Teams meetings where all Borough Councillors were invited and able to ask question to the Leader with contributions from other Cabinet members and senior officers.
- A standard Cabinet report to formal Cabinet meetings to set out clearly any emergency decisions/procurements required during the pandemic to keep the Cabinet up to date and ensure transparency.
- Temporary changes to the Constitution to allow councillors to seek dispensations from attendance (the six month rule), make changes to the diary of meetings and allow appointments to Chair committees and represent the Council on Outside bodies if required in the absence of full Council meetings to determine these matters. Such emergency powers to be undertaken in

consultation with respective relevant councillors such as the Leader of the Council, the Mayor, the Leader of the Opposition and the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

- Further, in the absence of formal full Council meetings; leader and portfolio holder updates and the opportunity for Councillors and members of the public to ask questions of the Leader and Cabinet. This process is normally a standard part of full Council meetings.
- Remote meetings of the schools admissions appeal panel using amended legislative procedures.
- Process for ongoing review of the need for Care Act Easements developed and in place.
- Worked with the courts to continue important cases digitally, including virtual court hearings.

The structures and governance we have followed as part of the wider system are tried-and-tested, responsive and part of our normal emergency planning arrangements. We have absolute confidence that these existing systems and processes have proven their value and importance throughout this pandemic:

- From 11 March, the Council participated in weekly strategic coordinating group (SCG) meetings across Cheshire.

- Following the Prime Minister's announcement on 23 March, which detailed the government's response to the pandemic, our participation in SCG meetings changed to twice-weekly.

- From 25 March to the end of April, SCG met daily. This reduced again to twice weekly from 8 June. Tactical command groups, which report to the SCG, also followed this pattern. This ensured that there was continuous, up-to-date sub-regional awareness and response.

- This aligned to the council's own Major Emergency Plan and we have worked with our multi-agency partners across the system to deliver our statutory responsibilities (and beyond).

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 Leadership 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 March 2020 a full review against the Code of Corporate Governance was carried out. This review was undertaken by Senior Leadership Team and overseen by the Council's Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services.

This draft Annual Governance Statement has been reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT); Deputy Chief Executive & 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; Cabinet; Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.
• **Management** - The Senior Leadership Team has responsibility for developing the Risk Management Strategy and processes, including the communications and reporting structure for strategic risk.
• **Management** - Directors and Deputy 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 2019/20 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 Review** – The Governance Group maintains a comprehensive action plan to ensure continuous improvement of the governance arrangements are in place.
• **Internal Audit** – Internal Audit Services examine the effectiveness of the Council's internal controls. Based upon the work undertaken during 2019/20 the Head of Internal Audit provided the Council with a 'satisfactory' assurance opinion on the control framework and on the controls reviewed as part of the internal audit work. The opinion for 2019/20 has not been able to consider key assurances from the Council's external auditors in relation to the 2017/18 or 2018/19 accounts.
• **External Audit** - The Council's appointed auditors are Grant Thornton. The audit of the 2017/18 and 2018/19 accounts has not been concluded. This was due to a public objection to the accounts, resolution of this is presently ongoing. Grant Thornton have subsequently not issued their Annual Findings Report and Annual Audit Letter for 2017/18 or 2018/19 which gives an opinion on

the financial statements. Grant Thornton have also not issued their Value for Money Opinion for 2017/18 or 2018/19 which gives a 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 2019-20 are set out in the table in Appendix 1.

5. Significant Governance Issues including Covid-19 Impact

Appendix 2 sets out the governance issues that the Council raised as part of the 2018-19 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.

Appendix 3 sets out the governance issues below that the Council has raised as part of this 2019-20 Annual Governance Statement. These actions have been combined with additional work being undertaken by the officer Governance Group to form a comprehensive improvement plan.

Significant governance issues at the current time are as follows:

Annual Accounts - The audit of the 2017/18 and 2018/19 accounts has not been concluded. This was due to a public objection to the 2017/18 accounts that was received by the external auditors during the public period of inspection; resolution of this and a subsequent objection to the 2018/19 accounts is presently ongoing. Grant Thornton have subsequently not issued their Annual Findings Report and Annual Audit Letter for 2017/18 and 2018/19, which gives an opinion on the financial statements. Grant Thornton have also not issued their Value for Money Opinion for 2017/18 and 2018/19 which gives a conclusion on the Council's arrangements to secure economy efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Opinions on the financial statements and Value for Money Conclusion cannot be provided until the objection process has been completed.

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. In February 2019 the Council approved a budget for 2019/20 of £132.998m which included £22.2m savings. The robust monitoring of achieving this financial plan has commenced in the

current financial year via the Outcomes Based Budgeting Board and a monthly financial dashboard is under development to ensure wider more holistic financial monitoring is available to senior officers and members at an appropriate level of detail. SLT review the financial position on a monthly basis with the Section 151 Officer reviewing more regularly; ongoing budget monitoring will link to the work underway to transform services.

Since 2010/11 and including 2019/20, the Council has made over £159m of savings and had its budget cut by around a third. Over the next four years to 2023/24, and before taking into account the financial impact of COVID-19, the Council has to achieve a further £43m in order to balance the budget with £21.6m of the savings being required in 2021/22. Significant challenges remain in both achieving the challenging financial targets set for the 2020/21 financial year and also addressing the savings requirement. The Council continues to pursue innovative opportunities within corporate finance, treasury and traded services. These opportunities have provided significant financial benefit to the Council during very challenging times and created additional time for effective planning and rollout of the transformational change required to secure a sustainable financial future. The Council recognises that sound financial and governance processes are required in the new ways of funding and that the expanding and diverse nature of projects require new skills and sufficient staff capacity; further external support has been commissioned to support this. An independent review of the commercial governance arrangements has also been commissioned. The Council's Commercialism programme, and governance around it, is covered in detailed in the Council's Capital Strategy agreed by full Council in February 2020.

Information Governance and Cyber Risks - Ongoing compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) remain a key focus area of the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO), the Information Governance Team and the Information Governance Group. The Council reported two breaches to the Information Commissioner's Officer (ICO) in 2019/20. All of the incidents were closed with no with regulatory action taken and in all cases the Information Commissioner was satisfied with the action that the Council had taken. The increased awareness of the ICO's position as regulator has seen an increase in both requests relating to individual rights, but also complaints to the ICO on how the Council has dealt with their queries such as freedom of information requests or subject access requests. With the Covid-19 pandemic, the information governance team saw an increased number of requests for advice and guidance often with shorter than usual timescales for turnaround. This increase in demand impacted on the team's resources for dealing with the existing workload, business as usual and non-planned requests. Regular reporting to the SIRO is in place and SMT reports at appropriate intervals. The data protection mandatory eLearning course has been updated to ensure that it covers the Data Protection Act 2018.

Cyber-attack is recognised as a key risk to the Council. Revised guidance from the UK government now states this is amongst the biggest emerging threats to the UK and alongside terrorism and a flu pandemic is among the key dangers to UK security. The volumes of cyber-attack keep increasing and the cyber-attack capabilities are continually evolving, so this is an area which needs constant vigilance and a continuous improvement approach. There is a rolling programme of work that identifies and remediates potential vulnerabilities in our technology estate and mitigation of risks.

Project Governance - Work continues to maintain robust performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms for all major projects. Capital Investment Planning Group (CIPG) meet regularly and progress against capital schemes is reported to each CIPG meeting. CIPG ensure key reports and decisions are scheduled appropriately. The Environment & Transport and Growth Directorates report regularly into the CIPG meetings. The larger projects continue to be supported by their own scrutiny processes and the Project Managers include corporate governance in all of their plans. They also react as required to enquiries from Members, MPs and the public when appropriate.

Health & Social Care Integration - The Council has developed a Joint Commissioning Strategy with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to support delivery of the Warrington Together Programme. This Prospectus sets out the Council and CCG's core design principles, and how Warrington Together can seek to work as one effective, combined team to deliver our population health outcomes.   The Health and Wellbeing Board, the Integrated Commissioning Transformation Board, (ICTB) and the Provider Alliance, all work together through a Whole Systems Transformation Programme with all partners signed up to planned changes. The Integrated Commissioning and Transformation Board is responsible for the development and implementation of joint health and social care commissioning across the NHS & LA in Warrington and the system wide Provider Alliance has been established to drive real change, accelerate integration and deliver against the commissioning priorities.

Terms of reference for Boards sets out the duties of the Boards in relation to the joint working arrangements. The majority of joint working arrangements are managed operationally through the Better Care Fund Steering Group reporting into the Integrated Commissioning and Transformation Board with relevant legal and financial support arrangements.   Formal partnerships are set out in contractual frameworks and have appropriate legal agreements in place. Work planned during 2020 to review and develop joint commissioning arrangements with Health have been delayed due to Covid-19 but will be covered in the emerging recovery plans. Local health merger plans have also been put on hold impacting on the ability of the council to progress any parallel structural integration work.

Workforce and Brexit - It has been recognised by the Council that a key risk which should continue to be monitored, due to the changing nature of the Council's business and the expanding and diverse nature and complexity of activities, is whether the capacity of officers across the organisation is sufficient for them to be able to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Demand for services continues to increase and is recognised as a national issue. Continued consideration is given to the impact of Brexit and the potential loss of staff in services provided directly by the Council or in services provided by partners. Staffing structures are under constant review and new developments in agile and dynamic outcomes based working will support the move to the new Council offices.

Covid-19 Impact - The Council, like all other Councils nationally, is currently facing significant financial challenges in respect of the response to Covid-19 and the impact on service delivery in terms of both increased costs and lost income. This is likely to have a significant impact in the financial year 2020/21 and an impact on budget setting and resilience in the medium term.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been classified as a major incident and the Major Emergency Plan has been invoked across the Council, supported by risk specific plans including those for Flu Pandemic and management of excess deaths. This resulted in the closure of face to face services and changes to service arrangements across the Council. Following activation of the Major Emergency Plan and critical service business continuity plans, the office transition project has been suspended for the time being and office based staff are now working from home wherever possible and in line with government guidance.

Service specific pressures across adults' and children's social care and education; homelessness; and planning have all been affected by the pandemic. Covid-19 has placed significant pressures on adult social care and several workstreams are in place to manage this and business as usual has been truncated to accommodate the additional demand. Whilst the introduction of some initiatives has had to be delayed, a clear and continuing focus on early intervention and prevention; managing and prioritising need; and capacity building, overseen by strong governance arrangements, has enabled essential service delivery to be maintained.
A number of actions were taken in response to the impact of the pandemic including:

- The council made use of its existing business continuity arrangements and its emergency preparedness which has been tested to the full.

- The Council utilised the resources and structures through the local resilience forum to ensure that all of the emergency planning functions could be delivered.

- A Covid-19 group was established using members of the existing Senior Leadership Team, with the inclusion of a number of additional senior people from finance; public health; the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG); trade union representation; and others which met weekly. A record of all actions and impacts was maintained.

- The Council's Data Protection Officer (DPO) was actively involved in providing guidance across the council in respect of data sharing to ensure that effective arrangements were implemented in line with the Information Commissioner's Office.

- The Council issued guidance regarding the use of skype and teleconferencing to facilitate virtual meetings. Other platforms such as Microsoft Teams was adopted for larger meetings.

6. Future Developments

Covid-19 Impact / Economic Impact - Covid-19 is likely to have a significant impact in the financial year 2020/21 and an impact on budget setting and resilience in the medium term. The pandemic has impacted the global social and economic conditions and, as at June 2020, a global recession is forecast to last approximately 2 years. Recession creates significant challenges for the local economy and the Council; shrinkage within the local business sector, potential job losses and risks of increasing inequality and deprivation will create demand on local services such as housing, benefits and social care services while reducing income from sources such as Council Tax, Business Rates and fees and charges. This could also increase health inequalities as reduced incomes impact on lifestyles and mental health is a particular area of concern.

Strategic Development - The generation of income and cost avoidance projects focus heavily in the Council's financial plan including an expanding property investment programme. The Council recognises that sound financial and governance processes are required in the new ways of funding and that the expanding and diverse nature of projects require new skills and sufficient staff capacity. Ongoing monitoring of the Investment Portfolio is carried out by the Property Investment Group which is made up of professional officers from across the Council. Birchwood Park which is the Council's largest property investment is monitored by a separate Birchwood Park Panel consisting of officers from across the Council and quarterly external monitoring reports are also completed. There will be greater focus on financial checks and ongoing due diligence as part of the pre-procurement process, particularly for large regeneration projects and schemes.

The Council also owns a 33% share in Redwood Bank. The Section 151 Officer has observer rights on the Board. All Board papers are presented to the Council's Corporate Loans Group.

The Council continues with its policy of giving loans to Housing Associations. All Loans granted are subject to independent due diligence and legal advice and a full business case is approved by the Executive Board. The Loans are monitored on an ongoing basis by the Council's Corporate Loans Group which is made up of senior professional officers from across the Council.

The Council's non-financial investments are reported in the quarterly Treasury Management monitoring reports to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.

Budgetary Position and Transformation of Services - There are severe financial risks attached to non-delivery of savings targets; transformation of services through demand management; commercialism; and digitalisation.

Housing Company - The Council formed two housing companies during 2018/19 which will once again enable the Council to build houses. 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 2019/20 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.

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: **Signed:**

………………………..   ……………………….
Councillor Fitzsimmons   Councillor Bowden
Chair of the Audit and Corporate   Leader of the Council
Governance Committee

Date:… ……………   **Date:**

Signed: **Signed:**

………………………..   ……………………….
Matthew Cumberbatch   Steven Broomhead
Monitoring Officer   Chief Executive

Date:………………   **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 2019-20**
Behaving with Integrity **Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values** **Respecting the rule of law**	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 2019. As set out in the main body of the Statement, temporary delegations have been put into the Constitution to address decision-making challenges during the lockdown. Greater use of Officer Decision Notices (ODNs) which can then be reported back to relevant meetings and published for greater transparency is taking place. 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 2019 following the release of the report of the Committee for Standards in Public Life (31st January 2019 release date). Work has been undertaken to make the process more robust and the role of the Independent Persons who support the work of the Standards Committee has been enhanced. The term of office of the Independent Persons was extended and further training provided for them; training was also provided for a number of parish councils. New procedures were agreed and the Constitution amended and agreed at full council. A procedure is in place for investigations and a revised Member/ officer protocol developed. In addition the Standards Sub-Committee have approved both a protocol on the use of social media and a gifts and hospitality policy (which includes a gift and hospitality register) which has been shared with all Councillors and forms part of the Code of Conduct training. 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. Plan to go out to Parish Councils to get more convenient training for Parish Councillors and Clerks had been put in place but will now be rescheduled due to lockdown restrictions.

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.

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 July 2020. CIPFA issued the "Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption" in 2014 and internal assessment against the Code indicates 80% compliance which is classed as a "Good" level of compliance. The annual report concluded that "the Council had effective measures in place during 2019-20 to enable the prevention and detection of inaccuracies, fraud and error. Work will continue in 2020-21 to ensure that the Council responds effectively to all fraud risks, including those arising from the COVID-19 pandemic."

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 Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services is the Council's Senior Information Risk Owner.

The Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy has been refreshed as part of the Customer Strategy.

Every contract that the Council enters into adheres to the Public Procurement Regulations and requires high standards of transparency and ethics.

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 2019-20**
Openness **Engaging comprehensively with other organisations that the Council needs to work with to improve services and outcomes** **Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively citizens**	The Corporate Strategy 2018-2020, which was refreshed during 2019-20, following the Peer Review, sets out a new vision and set of pledges and priorities developed to cover the period 2020 – 2024. The high level strategy was agreed by Cabinet in March 2020. The strategy is informed by development of strategic commissioning intentions. 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. A new Health and Wellbeing Strategy has been produced for 2019-2023. 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. The Council has developed a Joint Commissioning Strategy with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to support delivery of the Warrington Together Programme. This Prospectus sets out the Council and CCG's core design principles, and how Warrington Together can seek to work as one effective, combined team to deliver our population health outcomes. The Health and Wellbeing Board, the Integrated Commissioning Transformation Board, (ICTB) and the Provider Alliance, all work together through a Whole Systems Transformation Programme with all partners signed up to planned changes. The Integrated Commissioning and Transformation Board is responsible for the development and implementation of joint health and social care commissioning across the NHS & LA in Warrington and the system wide Provider Alliance has been established to drive real change, accelerate integration and deliver against the commissioning priorities. The Council works with a number of other key partners to deliver services including: the 3rd Sector Alliance, Warrington Borough Transport; LiveWire / Culture Warrington; and Torus Housing Group. The statutory multi agency safeguarding boards for Adults' and Children's services through the Adult's Safeguarding Board, Warrington Children's Safeguarding Partnership and the Early Help Partnership 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 of neglect.

A statutory SEND inspection by Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) In December 2018 resulted in assurance around leadership in service provision.

There has been a review of our Children's Residential Homes, all are registered with Ofsted and subject to regulatory annual inspection.

A review is ongoing of Intermediate Tier Services within Adults – all are registered with CQC and subject to inspection.

The Council developed an engagement process with residents though 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 provision is designed and delivered to meet local needs and that service improvements are customer-led and outcome focused. Residents' forums with the Leader commenced in 2019.

The Central Six Masterplan is the culmination of over two years work that constitutes the largest non-statutory consultation (excluding survey based consultations) undertaken by the Council in over 20 years with over 2500 responses collated over a 3 stage consultation process. This is designed to ensure there is a co-ordinated programme of improvements of the place, the health and well-being of residents and the ability to better access the economic growth of the town.

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.
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.

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 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. In March 2019, the Council participated in a Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge. The Peer Challenge is an improvement tool offered by the LGA to help councils improve and focus on what is important at a local level. The peer review team spent four days on a site visit to Warrington and held numerous interviews and focus groups with staff, trade unions, elected members and partners. The LGA peer review endorsed the development of a wider budget monitoring and reporting framework. Further areas for consideration and improvement which have been addressed during 2019/20 include: developing a new Vision and priorities for the Council; taking a "One Council" approach and enhancing internal and external corporate communication and engagement; and re-invigorating our communication with residents to understand their priorities.

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 2019-20**
Defining outcomes **Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits**	The Corporate Strategy is supported by a Performance Management Framework; Directorate plans; Service Plans; and Change Projects as appropriate. 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. Outcomes Based Budgeting (OBB) is a continuous Member led process overseen by the Council's Senior Leadership 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. 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. The development of Warrington's fourth Local Transport Plan (LTP4) is now complete and was approved by Cabinet and Full Council in December 2019. The LTP4 was subject to public consultation in parallel with the draft Local Plan during May and June 2019. The Warrington Local Plan Core Strategy was adopted by Warrington Borough Council on 21 July 2014 and is available to view online. Following a successful high court challenge to the Plan's housing target, the Council is now preparing a new Local Plan. The Proposed Submission Version Local Plan was published on 15th April 2019 for a 9 week period of statutory consultation. Several events have been arranged across the town to provide an opportunity for residents and businesses to learn more about the Plan and to ask for further information. It is anticipated the new Local Plan will be adopted in late 2020. Further, the policy and programme context to the Council's regeneration and growth activities and

priorities is clearly outlined in the following strategic documents (all published and on-line):

a. The Cheshire and Warrington Strategic Economic Plan, Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership 2017, Cheshire & Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Area Strategy.
b. Warrington Means Business – Warrington's Economic Growth & Regeneration Programme, Warrington BC, updated document approved by WBC Cabinet – November 2019.
c. Warrington City Centre Masterplan – Warrington BC, updated document approved by WBC Cabinet – January 2020.

The Local Enterprise Partnership feeds in (business) Brexit intelligence to central government via the Greater Manchester Growth Hub. We have agreed to send it to the Local Enterprise Partnership who will collate for Cheshire before sending to the Greater Manchester Growth Hub.

Warrington & Co is a council department within the Council's Growth Directorate. Its function is to work with partners in Government and in the private sector to enable investment, development and growth. It has the advantage of an established public sector / private sector Board which it uses for guidance and advice – however, Warrington & Co reports to the Council's Senior Leadership Team and the Cabinet and is governed by the Governance structures of the Council.

Key infrastructure projects to enable economic growth and open up land for development are led and managed by the Council's Director of Environment and Transport through its Infrastructure Delivery Team.

The role of the officer Capital Investment Planning Group is to be reviewed to further enhance governance arrangements, ensure robust programme management arrangements are in place and maintain robust performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms for all major projects.

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 2019-20**
Determining interventions **Planning interventions** **Optimising achievement of intended outcomes**	The Council's Constitution includes details of the role and responsibilities of the full Council; the Cabinet; Committees; Chief Officers; and the rules under which they operate. The Council's Constitution provides the framework for the decision making process. 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. Recently when a risk workshop was undertaken to assess a new commercial venture, the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee was invited to observe the discussions and scrutinise the process. The Council took account of the updated CIPFA Treasury Management Code in the production of the 2020/21 Treasury Management Strategy and refresh of the Treasury Management Practices. In accordance with the updated Code, the Council's Treasury Policy Statement acknowledges the importance of suitable Treasury Management Practices (TMPs) for effective treasury management. 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. 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. 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 Leadership Team and Cabinet; 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. https://www.warrington.gov.uk/corporate-strategy-2018-20. Work continues to ensure that robust management information supports informed decision making.

CORE PRINCIPLE E	
Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	
Supporting Principles	**Assessment of the effectiveness of key elements of the Council's governance processes during 2019-20**
Developing the entity's capacity **Developing the entity's leadership** **Developing the capability of individuals within the entity**	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. The Council has a Leadership Development Forum which incorporates regular meetings held by the Chief Executive for Directors, Deputy 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. The risk around workforce capacity has been captured on the Strategic Risk Register and is regularly reviewed by Senior Leadership Team. Senior Leadership Team monitors recruitment and retention on a monthly basis and Directorates undertake service specific monitoring and review. The Council has a specific recruitment and retention strategy for Children's Social Workers and a number of policies and programmes (i.e. Market Supplement Policy, Training and Development programme) which are used across the workforce. The most recent HR strategy was agreed by the Senior Leadership Team and published to all staff in

	2018; this links directly to the corporate priorities and a new strategy will be proposed in 2020 alongside the new council strategy and COVID-19 recovery plan. Staff performance management processes are in place and a new learning and development prospectus for the organisation continues to be published each year. An e-learning package has been rolled out to all staff including a number of mandatory courses as agreed by the Senior Leadership Team. The Council has a recruitment and retention policy and strategy. 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. 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.

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 2019-20**
Managing risk **Managing performance** **Robust internal control** **Managing Data** **Strong public financial management**	The Council has a comprehensive framework for the management of performance and risk and has a risk management strategy, policy and guidance documents which were updated during 2018-19. A Strategic Risk Register is in place and is updated quarterly and reports are provided to the Senior Leadership Team. Cabinet and Audit & Corporate Governance committee receive half yearly updates. Senior Leadership Team reviewed the Strategic Risk Register during 2019-20 to ensure that new and emerging risks were included. The Council has a well established Audit & Corporate Governance Committee which met regularly during 2019-20. 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. 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. The Senior Leadership 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. The implementation of the European General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) was an extensive project

	for the Council. The eLearning course has been replaced by a course specifically for the Data Protection Act 2018. The Information Governance Team have led a series of Data Protection briefings as well as GDPR specific sessions. The team are continuing with business as usual activities to maintain compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the GDPR. Where appropriate, sessions are held for teams to assist with specific pieces of work or where resources allow, to attend team meetings. Where there are areas of focus that need additional specialist resources such as processes for managing subject access requests, face to face sessions are provided for key staff, which allows knowledge to be cascaded across a wider area. The GDPR work has the support of the SIRO and Deputy SIRO, with regular reports via the SIRO briefing. There continues to be an increase in the complexity of subject access requests and complaints about the use of individual's data. The Information Governance team after a successful trial is also providing an advice and guidance service to a number of primary schools. Caldecott Guardians are in place for children and adults service and have attended relevant training. Refreshed information and guidance on the role of the Caldecott Guardian has been circulated.

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 2019-20**
Implementing good practice in transparency **Implementing good practices in reporting** **Assurance and effective accountability**	The Council makes as much information as possible available on its website. Support is also available to those residents who cannot access the internet. The Council publishes its governance reports and its statement of accounts on the website. The Council's appointed auditors are Grant Thornton. The audit of accounts for 2017/18 and 2018/19 has not been concluded. This was due to a public objection to the 2017/18 accounts that was received by the external auditors during the public period of inspection; resolution of this and a subsequent objection to the 2018/19 accounts is presently ongoing. Grant Thornton have subsequently not issued their Annual Findings Report and Annual Audit Letter for 2017/18 and 2018/19, which gives an opinion on the financial statements. Grant Thornton have also not issued their Value for Money Opinion for 2017/18 and 2018/19 which gives a conclusion on the Council's arrangements to secure economy efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Opinions on the financial statements and Value for Money Conclusion cannot be provided until the objection process has been completed. The Senior Leadership 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. Progress made against the issues identified in the 2018-19 Annual Governance Statement action plan has been monitored by the Governance Group. 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.

The table below sets out the progress made against the significant governance issues identified in the 2018-2019 Annual Governance Statement.

Improvement Action	Action Undertaken
Annual Accounts The audit of 2017/18 accounts was not concluded before 31 July 2018. This was due to a public objection to the 2017/18 accounts that was received by the external auditors during the public period of inspection; resolution of this is presently ongoing. Grant Thornton have subsequently not issued their Annual Findings Report and Annual Audit Letter for 2017/18 which gives an opinion on the financial statements. Grant Thornton have also not issued their Value for Money Opinion for 2017/18 which gives a conclusion on the Council's arrangements to secure economy efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Opinions on the financial statements and Value for Money Conclusion cannot be provided until the objection process has been completed.	The audit of the 2017/18 and 2018/19 accounts has not been concluded. This was due to a public objection to the 2017/18 accounts that was received by the external auditors during the public period of inspection; resolution of this and a subsequent objection to the 2018/19 accounts is presently ongoing. Grant Thornton have subsequently not issued their Annual Findings Report and Annual Audit Letter for 2017/18 and 2018/19, which gives an opinion on the financial statements. Grant Thornton have also not issued their Value for Money Opinion for 2017/18 and 2018/19 which gives a conclusion on the Council's arrangements to secure economy efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Opinions on the financial statements and Value for Money Conclusion cannot be provided until the objection process has been completed.
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. Following a number of spotlight sessions with Members, the Council approved a balanced budget for 2019/20 in February 2019. The robust monitoring of achieving this financial plan has commenced in the current financial year via the Outcomes Based Budgeting Board and a monthly financial dashboard is under development to ensure wider more holistic financial monitoring is available to senior officers and members at	Since 2010/11 and including 2019/20, the Council has made over £159m of savings and had its budget cut by around a third. Over the next four years to 2023/24, and before taking into account the financial impact of COVID-19, the Council has to achieve a further £43m in order to balance the budget. Significant challenges remain in both achieving the challenging financial targets set for the 2020/21 financial year and also addressing the savings requirement. The Council continues to pursue innovative opportunities within corporate finance, treasury and traded services. These opportunities have provided significant financial benefit to the Council during very

an appropriate level of detail. SMT review the financial position on a monthly basis with the Section 151 Officer reviewing more regularly; ongoing budget monitoring will link to the work underway to transform services.

In March 2019, the Council participated in a Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge. The Peer Challenge is an improvement tool offered by the LGA to help councils improve and focus on what is important at a local level. The peer review team spent four days on a site visit to Warrington and held numerous interviews and focus groups with staff, trade unions, elected members and partners. The LGA peer review endorses the development of wider budget monitoring and reporting framework which will be available from Quarter 1 of the new financial year.

Significant challenges remain in both achieving the challenging financial targets set for the 2019/20 financial year and also addressing the savings requirement of £45m for the next four year budget setting period. The generation of income and cost avoidance projects focus heavily in the Council's financial plan including an expanding property investment programme. The Council recognises that sound financial and governance processes are required in the new ways of funding and that the expanding and diverse nature of projects require new skills and sufficient staff capacity. The Council's Commercialism programme, and governance around it, is covered in detailed in the Council's Capital Strategy agreed by full Council on 28th February 2019.

challenging times and created additional time for effective planning and rollout of the transformational change required to secure a sustainable financial future. The Council recognises that sound financial and governance processes are required in the new ways of funding and that the expanding and diverse nature of projects require new skills and sufficient staff capacity; further external support has been commissioned to support this. An independent review of the commercial governance arrangements has also been commissioned. The Council's Commercialism programme, and governance around it, is covered in detailed in the Council's Capital Strategy agreed by full Council in February 2020.

The Outcomes Based Budgeting (OBB) process is constantly under review and the financial pressures require a tightening of reporting and accountability of the financial position via the OBB board. The outcome of the LGA review has been reported to the Cabinet and a proposed action plan approved. The Authority will continue to review the effectiveness of the aims and the outcomes of the OBB process and wider financial governance arrangements to ensure it continues to deliver the financial resilience required in the current financial climate.

The Council is facing significant demographic and demand pressures already in year that are proving challenging to manage. Therefore a pragmatic approach to reporting the forecast has been taken with Directors working to identify mitigating savings and cost reduction proposals to offset the overspend. Any mitigations or changes to current proposals would follow the OBB process and formal approval routes as required.

Information Governance and Cyber Risks

Ongoing compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) remain a key focus area of the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO), the Information Governance Team and the Information Governance Group. The Council reported four breaches to the Information Commissioner's Officer (ICO) in 2018/19. All of the incidents were closed with no with regulatory action taken and in all cases the Information Commissioner was satisfied with the action that the Council had taken. The increased awareness of the ICO's position as regulator has seen an increase in both requests relating to individual rights, but also complaints to the ICO on how the Council has dealt with their queries such as freedom of information requests or subject access requests. Regular reporting to the SIRO is in place and SLT reports at appropriate intervals. The data protection mandatory eLearning course has been updated to ensure that it covers the Data Protection Act 2018.

Cyber-attack is recognised as a key risk to the Council. Revised guidance from the UK government now states this is amongst the biggest emerging threats to the UK and alongside terrorism and a flu pandemic is among the key dangers to UK security. The volumes of cyber-attack keep increasing and the cyber-attack capabilities are continually evolving, so this is an area which needs constant vigilance and a continuous improvement approach. There is a rolling programme of work that identifies and remediates potential vulnerabilities in our technology estate and mitigation of risks. Progress in implementing the Cyber Security Development Programme is being prioritised and accreditation under

Ongoing compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) remain a key focus area of the Senior Information Risk Owner, the Information Governance Team and the Information Governance Group. The Council reported two breaches to the Information Commissioner's Officer in 2019/20. All of the incidents were closed with no regulatory action taken and in all cases the Information Commissioner was satisfied with the action that the Council had taken.

The risk score for cyber-attacks has been uprated to 20, putting it on a par with other top-rated Council risks. There is a rolling programme of work that identifies and remediates potential vulnerabilities in our technology estate. Independent assessments have recommended some areas of improvement that SLT are being asked to support, mostly in areas around end user awareness and behaviours.

Our existing technical treatment and controls are deemed appropriate. They have so far withstood the cyber-attacks we have been subject to and we are constantly looking at new and changing guidance with relevant authorities to understand new attack types and protection measures available both preventative and detection/defensive. On-going improvement opportunities are identified and implemented, such as:
- Further training and communications to raise awareness of cyber risks and control measures.
- Strengthened reporting arrangements into SLT and the ICT portfolio holder.
- Tightened controls over the commissioning and procurement of technology.

The Council has Information Security training in place via elearning including a DPA 2018 new course, supplementary face to face sessions and dedicated Winnie Information Governance pages.

the Government's Cyber Essentials Scheme is also being explored.	
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 essential and work continues to maintain robust performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms for all major projects. Capital Investment Planning Group (CIPG) meet monthly and progress against capital schemes is reported to each CIPG meeting. CIPG ensure key reports and decisions are scheduled appropriately. The Environment & Transport and the Growth Directorate operate a sub group of CIPG which reports regularly into the CIPG meetings. The larger projects continue to be supported by their own scrutiny processes, including Time Square, Great Sankey Hub and the housing company. The Project Managers include corporate governance in all of their plans, they also react as required to enquiries from Members, MPs and the public when appropriate.	Work continues to maintain robust performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms for all major projects. Capital Investment Planning Group (CIPG) meet regularly and progress against capital schemes is reported to each CIPG meeting. CIPG ensure key reports and decisions are scheduled appropriately. The Environment & Transport and Growth Directorates report regularly into the CIPG meetings. The larger projects continue to be supported by their own scrutiny processes and the Project Managers include corporate governance in all of their plans. They also react as required to enquiries from Members, MPs and the public when appropriate. The initial phase of Time Square is complete, however this continues to produce its own, comprehensive risk register and a programme that meets monthly. Ongoing themes will include health & safety, occupancy and cost. The Great Sankey Hub enjoys similar levels of control, as will the Stadium Quarter when the Youth Zone begins construction in January/February. Additional projects will be incorporated into Growth as the directorate takes on Strategic Partnerships & Commissioning and Development Management. For example, Warrington will host a stage finish for the Tour of Britain in September which will require a high degree of governance. These projects will utilise Time Square and others as sources of best practice.
Health & Social Care Integration The Council has developed a Joint Commissioning Strategy with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to support delivery of the Warrington Together Programme. The Health and Wellbeing Board, the Integrated Commissioning Transformation Board, and Warrington	Development of the Frailty Storyboard by the CCG and Commissioning Prospectus has identified key factors across the health system which impact on service delivery and can be addressed through Warrington Together. Terms of reference for Boards sets out the duties of the Boards in relation to the joint working arrangements.

Together, all work together through a Whole Systems Transformation Programme; all steering group partners signed up to planned changes. Development of the Frailty Storyboard by the CCG and Commissioning Prospectus has identified key factors across the health system which impact on service delivery and can be addressed through Warrington Together. Terms of reference for Boards sets out the duties of the Boards in relation to the joint working arrangements. Joint working arrangements eg. Warrington Together and Better Care Fund (BCF) are supported by legal and financial agreements as appropriate. Formal partnerships are set out in contractual frameworks and have appropriate legal agreements in place.	The Integrated Commissioning and Transformation Board is responsible for the development and implementation of joint health and social care commissioning across the NHS & LA in Warrington and the Provider Alliance has been established to drive real change, accelerate integration and deliver against the commissioning priorities. There is a need to further develop joint commissioning arrangements with Health to support the delivery arm of Warrington Together and strengthen multi-agency governance arrangements for integrated service models where they emerge.
Workforce and Brexit It has been recognised by the Council that a key risk which should continue to be monitored, due to the changing nature of the Council's business and the expanding and diverse nature and complexity of activities, is whether the capacity of officers across the organisation is sufficient for them to be able to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. Demand for services continues to increase and is recognised as a national issue. Continued consideration is given to the impact of Brexit and the potential loss of staff in services provided directly by the Council or in services provided by partners. Staffing structures are under constant review and new developments in agile and dynamic outcomes based working will support the move to the new Council offices.	The Monitoring Officer has an overall responsibility to provide the Council with legal advice on the implications of Brexit as they emerge. Developments are monitored and specific impact assessments undertaken as details emerge. Regular briefings maintained for senior management and members, regular weekly briefings at SLT. Senior managers were requested to feed into SLT any issues in their Directorates. Weekly teleconferences take place at a Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Tactical level in addition to a number of other teleconferences at SCG, LRF Chairs, LRF Secretariat to assess preparedness of LRF responders, submit weekly RAG assessments and to feed back any issues / concerns identified by the LRF to MHCLG. The Chief Executive is the nominated Brexit Lead Officer and is also directly tied into reporting to MHCLG and in receipt of information through designated networks. An internal Brexit Advisory Group has been established and meets frequently, the Chief Executive also engaged the services of a temporary Brexit Advisor whose role was to concentrate on

	engagement with local Third Sector and key partners to understand planning, concerns and issues where WBC may be able to assist or provide reassurance. At the current time no issues are being reported by WBC services that are outside the capability of business continuity arrangements to cope. Work has been ongoing with local service providers (Social Care, Third Sector, key partners and wider local businesses) to ascertain the impact which again is considered to be low at this point. Contingency arrangements are in place and have been shared in relation to schools meals provision. The Chief Executive / Deputy Chief Executive / Monitoring Officer are briefed immediately following the weekly teleconferences to ensure any actions are taken forward at SLT / discussed with wider SLT members. Regional Chief Executives' group / information sharing network also shares information on a weekly basis at Chief Executive level. Technical notices have been cascaded through SLT for consideration by relevant service managers which in turn will inform their BC planning arrangements. Governance Group is monitoring preparations across the Council. Given the uncertainty of BREXIT and the potential implications, particularly in the case of a no deal, at this stage the Council is as assured as it can be that impact will be limited

The table below sets out the significant governance issues identified in the 2019-2020 Annual Governance Statement.

Improvement Action	Lead Officer / Deadline
Covid-19 The Authority is currently facing significant financial challenges in respect of the response to Covid-19 and the impact on service delivery in terms of both increased costs and lost income. This is likely to have a significant impact in the financial year 2020/21 and an impact on budget setting and sustainability in the medium term. The Authority is continually assessing these risks against current and future financial sustainability.	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services March 2021
Annual Accounts The audit of the 2017/18 and 2018/19 accounts has not been concluded. This was due to a public objection to the 2017/18 accounts that was received by the external auditors during the public period of inspection; resolution of this and a subsequent objection to the 2018/19 accounts is presently ongoing. Grant Thornton have subsequently not issued their Annual Findings Report and Annual Audit Letter for 2017/18 and 2018/19, which gives an opinion on the financial statements. Grant Thornton have also not issued their Value for Money Opinion for 2017/18 and 2018/19 which gives a conclusion on the Council's arrangements to secure economy efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. Opinions on the financial statements and Value for Money Conclusion cannot be provided until the objection process has been completed.	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services March 2021
Budget / Savings Programme / Council Transformation / Commercialism Since 2010/11 and including 2019/20, the Council has made over £159m of savings and had its budget cut by around a third. Over the next four years to 2023/24, and before taking into account the financial impact of COVID-19, the Council has to achieve a further £43m in order to balance the budget. Significant challenges remain in both achieving the challenging financial targets set for the 2020/21 financial year and also addressing the savings requirement. The Council continues to pursue innovative opportunities within corporate finance, treasury and traded services. These opportunities have provided significant financial benefit to the Council during	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services Deputy Director Corporate Services March 2021

very challenging times and created additional time for effective planning and rollout of the transformational change required to secure a sustainable financial future. The Council recognises that sound financial and governance processes are required in the new ways of funding and that the expanding and diverse nature of projects require new skills and sufficient staff capacity; further external support has been commissioned to support this. An independent review of the commercial governance arrangements has also been commissioned. The Council's Commercialism programme, and governance around it, is covered in detailed in the Council's Capital Strategy agreed by full Council in February 2020. The Outcomes Based Budgeting (OBB) process is constantly under review and the financial pressures require a tightening of reporting and accountability of the financial position via the OBB board. The outcome of the LGA review has been reported to the Cabinet and a proposed action plan approved. The Authority will continue to review the effectiveness of the aims and the outcomes of the OBB process and wider financial governance arrangements to ensure it continues to deliver the financial resilience required in the current financial climate. The Council monitors its financial position on a monthly basis at OBB Board and monthly to SLT. Cabinet receive formal reports on a quarterly basis. Delivery projects and savings targets are monitored through these formal routes and also in more detail at the project level through monthly programme meetings. The ability to sustain a balanced budget in the current year is increasingly difficult with current levels of funding available. The Council is facing significant demographic and demand pressures already in year that are proving challenging to manage. Therefore a pragmatic approach to reporting the forecast has been taken with Directors working to identify mitigating savings and cost reduction proposals to offset the overspend. Any mitigations or changes to current proposals would follow the OBB process and formal approval routes as required.	
Information Governance and Cyber Risks Ongoing compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) remain a key focus area of the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO), the Information Governance Team and the Information	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services

Governance Group. The Council reported two breaches to the Information Commissioner's Officer (ICO) in 2019/20. All of the incidents were closed with no with regulatory action taken and in all cases the Information Commissioner was satisfied with the action that the Council had taken. With the Covid-19 pandemic, the information governance team saw an increased number of requests for advice and guidance often with shorter than usual timescales for turnaround. This increase in demand impacted on the team's resources for dealing with the existing workload, business as usual and non-planned requests. Cyber-attack is recognised as a key risk to the Council. Revised guidance from the UK government now states this is amongst the biggest emerging threats to the UK and alongside terrorism and a flu pandemic is among the key dangers to UK security. The volumes of cyber-attack keep increasing and the cyber-attack capabilities are continually evolving, so this is an area which needs constant vigilance and a continuous improvement approach. There is a rolling programme of work that identifies and remediates potential vulnerabilities in our technology estate and mitigation of risks. Our existing technical treatment and controls are deemed appropriate. They have so far withstood the cyber-attacks we have been subject to and we are constantly looking at new and changing guidance with relevant authorities to understand new attack types and protection measures available: both preventative and detection/defensive. On-going improvement opportunities are identified and implemented, such as: • Further training and communications to raise awareness of cyber risks and control measures. • Strengthened reporting arrangements into SLT and the ICT portfolio holder. • Tightened controls over the commissioning and procurement of technology. The Council has Information Security training in place via elearning including a DPA 2018 new course, supplementary face to face sessions and dedicated Winnie Information Governance pages. GDPR and DPA 2018 are now business as usual activities and working groups/specific subject groups/supplementary training are	Deputy Director Corporate Services March 2021

delivered as and when required. Numbers of reportable breaches to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) remain low and the ICO have closed all breaches without action or penalty due to the mitigating controls in place such as encrypted laptops and mandatory data protection training.	
Project Governance Work continues to maintain robust performance monitoring and reporting mechanisms for all major projects. Capital Investment Planning Group (CIPG) meet regularly and progress against capital schemes is reported to each CIPG meeting. CIPG ensure key reports and decisions are scheduled appropriately. The Environment & Transport and Growth Directorates report regularly into the CIPG meetings. The larger projects continue to be supported by their own scrutiny processes and the Project Managers include corporate governance in all of their plans. They also react as required to enquiries from Members, MPs and the public when appropriate. The Department Management Team (DMT) for Growth incorporates the initial Capital Investment Planning Group (CIPG) so any potential projects are scrutinised before submission to full CIPG. This helps to establish a more robust financial model with clear outputs and outcomes. The initial phase of Time Square is complete, however this continues to produce its own, comprehensive risk register and a programme that meets monthly. Ongoing themes will include health & safety, occupancy and cost. The Great Sankey Hub enjoys similar levels of control, as will the Stadium Quarter when the Youth Zone begins construction in January/February. Additional projects will be incorporated into Growth as the directorate takes on Strategic Partnerships & Commissioning and Development Management. For example, Warrington will host a stage finish for the Tour of Britain in September which will require a high degree of governance. These projects will utilise Time Square and others as sources of best practice.	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services Director Environment and Transport Director of Growth March 2021

Health & Social Care Integration The Integrated Commissioning and Transformation Board is responsible for the development and implementation of joint health and social care commissioning across the NHS & LA in Warrington and the Provider Alliance has been established to drive real change, accelerate integration and deliver against the commissioning priorities. There is a need to further develop joint commissioning arrangements with Health to support the delivery arm of Warrington Together and strengthen multi-agency governance arrangements for integrated service models where they emerge.	Chief Executive Director Adult Social Care March 2021
Workforce and Brexit The Impact of BREXIT and the associated consequence management implications as we move through the transition period towards reaching future trade deals remains unclear. Operation Yellow Hammer has been stood down and weekly Resilience Forum teleconferences have ceased. The Chief Executive remains the nominated Brexit Lead Officer and will receive any information on an ongoing basis through the existing networks established through Yellow Hammer. The internal Brexit Advisory Group will remain in shadow form and will be convened when required once any impact to the operation of Council services or the local business community becomes clearer. Liaison will continue with local service providers (Social Care, Third Sector, key partners and wider local businesses) to ascertain any impact as we move beyond 31 January.	Deputy Director Corporate Services Director of Law & Governance March 2021

Annual Governance Statement Assurance Framework

Key documents
- Code of Corporate Governance
- Corporate Strategy and service planning processes
- Constitution
- Finance and Contract Regulations
- Risk management policy
- Policies, procedures, codes of conduct, scheme of delegation
- Anti Fraud, corruption and bribery policies
- Whistle blowing procedure

Full Council

SLT

Audit and Corporate Governance Committee

Council and Directorate Policies, Business Plans and Risk Registers

Governance Group
Responsible for evaluating assurances and supporting evidence and drafting the Annual Governance Statement

Review of the effectiveness of the system of Internal Control
(Required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015)

| Safeguarding Boards and partnerships / reporting to HWB / Adults & Children's Quality Assurance | CIPG / HWB/ Integrated Governance H&SC / ICTB / Operational Leads/ Programme Boards/ Partnerships | External Inspections eg OFSTED, CSCI, FMSIS, CQC | Financial Control Assurance (S151 Officer) / Investment Performance Group / Investment Performance Group | Legal and Regulatory Assurance (Monitoring Officer) | Member Assurance Standards Committee | Corporate Risk/Business Continuity/EP / Information Governance /Health & Safety | Covid-19 Group | Internal Audit | External Audit | Anti Fraud/ Corruption and Bribery |

Annual Governance S

Ongoing assurance on adequacy and effectiveness of controls over key risks