



Coventry City Council

Public report

Report to

Audit and Procurement Committee

19th October 2020

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership – Councillor G Duggins

Director approving submission of the report:

Director of Finance and Corporate Services

Ward(s) affected:

City Wide

Title:

Annual Governance Statement 2019-20

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive summary:

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the Annual Governance Statement, which forms part of the Statement of Accounts for 2019-20.

Recommendations:

Audit and Procurement Committee is recommended to consider and approve the Annual Governance Statement (attached at Appendix One), which accompanies the 2019-20 Statement of Accounts.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix One – Annual Governance Statement 2019-20

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents:

Annual Governance Statement 2018-19

<https://edemocracy.coventry.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=553&MId=12088&Ver=4>

Annual Governance Statement 2018-19 – Update on Planned Actions

<https://edemocracy.coventry.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=553&MId=12092&Ver=4>

Has it or will it be considered by scrutiny?

No

Has it, or will it be considered by any other council committee, advisory panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title:

Annual Governance Statement 2019-20

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 Coventry City Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. In discharging this responsibility, the City Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.2 To demonstrate such arrangements, the City Council has adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles reflected in the CIPFA / SOLACE framework and guidance 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' (2016).
- 1.3 The Annual Governance Statement ('AGS') explains how Coventry City Council has complied with the Code and in doing so, reflects the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement. The AGS also details key governance / control issues that the Council faces in the coming year.
- 1.4 As a result of the pandemic, the statutory date for the production of the draft Statement of Accounts and AGS for 2019-20 was delayed until the 31st August 2020. However, the Council have endeavoured to maintain business as usual in relation to this activity and worked in advance of this deadline. Notwithstanding this, the impact of the pandemic clearly created challenges in the Council's approach to producing the AGS at this time, both in undertaking the review of effectiveness and the ability to meaningfully identify the key governance issues for 2020-21. Consequently, an interim version was initially published in May 2020, with a clear intention that it would be updated further, in order for gaps in process to be addressed. It is also important that the Statement is current at the time of final publication, so this approach has allowed the Council to keep the Statement up to date in the intervening period, where there has clearly been much uncertainty and emerging actions/ issues which need to be considered. The Statement presented to the Audit and Procurement Committee as part of this report is now the final version of the AGS for 2019-20.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Whilst processes are in place to assess key elements of the system of internal control / governance framework through-out the year, for example through the work of Internal Audit, the Corporate Governance Steering Board and the Council's Audit and Procurement Committee, an annual review is also undertaken as part of the production of the AGS for the year. The purpose of the review is to provide assurance that arrangements continue to be fit for purpose and identify key governance issues for the forthcoming year. This annual review incorporates a number of processes with the outcomes reviewed and agreed by the Corporate Governance Steering Board, including:
 - The outputs from the Internal Audit Service, reflected in an annual report that identifies those issues, which in the opinion of the Chief Internal Auditor, should be considered when producing the Annual Governance Statement.
 - Reports from external bodies during the year, including those from the Council's external auditors and other inspection agencies.

- Consideration of the Council's Corporate Risk Register.
- An annual review against the principles and best practice set out in the Code of Corporate Governance.

Consideration has also been given this year to the implications of the pandemic on the governance framework / system of internal control. Details of changes to existing arrangements and new areas of activity linked to the Council's response to the situation are provided in section 5.2 of the Statement, attached at Appendix One.

Whilst the review has in all significant aspects, been completed as normal for 2019-20, there are two areas which have not been carried out this year, due to the impact of Covid-19. Specifically:

- We have not undertaken an assessment of the role of the Chief Financial Officer and have relied on the assessment undertaken in 2018-19. Given that the postholder has not changed, and the new senior management structure within the Council has further strengthened governance in respect of reporting lines, this is not viewed as significant.
- We have not sought an annual assessment of the adequacy of internal controls / governance arrangements by the Chief Executive / Deputy Chief Executive. In addition to the impact of the pandemic, work is required to align the assessments to the new Council structure following the departure of the Place Deputy Chief Executive.

Given that the governance framework is assessed throughout the year and all other processes linked to the annual review have been undertaken as normal, it is viewed that these limitations do not have a significant impact on the ability to reach a conclusion on the adequacy of the governance arrangements in place for 2019-20.

2.2 A key element of the AGS is to identify the key governance / control issues that the Council faces in the coming year. Section 5 of Statement, attached at Appendix One, provides details of these areas. Whilst the process of identifying the issues is co-ordinated by the Chief Internal Auditor, it also incorporates the views and opinions of senior officers and the Council's Governance Steering Board. The key disclosures come from the following processes:

- A review of progress against disclosures highlighted in the Annual Governance Statement 2018-19.
- New disclosures identified as part of the assessment process outlined in section 2.1.

The outcomes from these processes are expanded upon below.

2.3 **Update on disclosures made in the Annual Governance Statement 2018-19** – An update on the progress against planned actions in relation to the disclosures made in the 2018-19 AGS is provided in section 5.1 of the Statement attached at Appendix One. A review of the ten disclosures highlighted in the AGS for 2018-19 has found that the disclosures fall into two categories, namely:

2.3.1 Closed from the 2018-19 Statement – One disclosure has been closed as it is no longer viewed as a significant governance / control issue facing the Council and will not be carried forward to the 2019-20 Annual Governance Statement:

- Delivery of the ICT Strategy: The revised ICT Strategy was approved by Cabinet in October 2019 and is aligned to the One Coventry approach. It also reflects requirements stemming from the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, the One Coventry Council Plan, City of Culture and the Digital Coventry Strategy, whilst also recognising the need for robust cyber security arrangements. The Strategy now forms part of the business as usual activity of the Council.

2.3.2 Carry forward to the 2019-20 Statement - A number of governance / control issues remain in the Annual Governance Statement. These are detailed in section 5.3 of the Statement attached at Appendix One, along with the actions the Council plans to take in 2020-21 in relation to these issues. In summary, the disclosures that have been carried forward to the 2019-20 Annual Governance Statement are as follows:

- Sustainable improvement in Children's Services.
- Ensuring delivery of the Council's vision and corporate objectives, in line with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- Raising educational standards.
- Implementation of the Information Management Strategy.
- Delivery of the People Plan.
- Management of increasing demand in relation to homelessness and the associated costs of housing families in temporary accommodation.
- Development of a corporate data access standard.
- Governance over relationships with partners and outside bodies.
- Governance over the programme of capital projects.

2.4 **New Disclosures** – Seven new disclosures have been identified for the Annual Governance Statement 2019-20. These are also detailed in section 5.3 of the Statement attached at Appendix One, along with the actions the Council plans to take in 2020-21 in relation to these issues. These issues were identified as part of the review undertaken to support the production of the AGS as detailed in 2.1 and are summarised below:

- Developing a legacy for the City of Culture.
- Acting on the outcomes of the review of the Council's Scrutiny function.
- Strengthening arrangements linked to the programme of health and safety audits undertaken.
- Further development of the Council's IT disaster recovery plans and processes.
- Review and update of the Social Value and Sustainability Policy.
- Implementation of the Local Government Ethical Standards Best Practice from the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

- Implementation of the Redmond Review into the oversight of local audit and the transparency of local authority financial reporting.

2.5 Clearly, the pandemic will continue to have an impact in relation to the Council's governance framework and system of internal control during 2020-21, including challenges to the delivery of planned actions and emerging issues. The effect of the pandemic will continue to be monitored throughout the year and will be considered in the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement for 2020-21.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

3.1 None

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

4.1 There is no implementation timetable associated with this report.

5. Comments from the Director of Finance and the Director of Law and Governance

5.1 Financial Implications

There are no specific financial implications associated with this report. Internal control / governance have clear and direct effects on finance within the Council. Since these vary widely, it is not useful to attempt to summarise them here, beyond noting that all systems and controls are designed to help improve value for money obtained, the probity and propriety of financial administration, and / or the management of operational risks.

5.2 Legal implications

The City Council is required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to approve, and subsequently publish, the Annual Governance Statement alongside the Statement of Accounts.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council Plan?

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes (i.e the internal control environment), and culture and values, by which the authority is directed and controlled, and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

The key risk that exists is that planned actions are not implemented. This risk is managed through the Council's governance framework which includes arrangements to provide oversight of planned actions through reporting to senior management and designated committees / boards. Defined processes also exist to gain assurance that agreed actions arising from the work of Internal Audit, External Audit or another external agency have been implemented on a timely basis.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

None

6.4 Equalities / EIA

None

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

No impact

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

None

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Barry Hastie	Director of Finance and Corporate Services		1/10/2020	6/10/2020
Julie Newman	Director of Law and Governance		1/10/2020	2/10/2020
Councillor G Duggins	Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership	-	8/10/2020	8/10/2020

This report is published on the council's website:

www.coventry.gov.uk/meetings

Appendix One – Annual Governance Statement 2019-20

1. Scope of responsibility

- 1.1 Coventry City Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Coventry City 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.
- 1.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, Coventry City Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3 Coventry City Council has an approved Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles reflected in the CIPFA / SOLACE framework and guidance *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016)*. A copy of the Code is available on our website at:
http://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/file/3639/code_of_corporate_governance_2017
or can be obtained from Democratic Services.
- 1.4 The Annual Governance Statement explains how Coventry City Council has complied with the Code and also meets the requirements of Regulation 6(1) (b) of The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement and the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020.

2. The purpose of the governance framework

- 2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money.
- 2.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can, therefore, only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Coventry City Council policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood and potential impact of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.
- 2.3 The governance framework has been in place at Coventry City Council for the year ended 31st March 2020 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts.

3. The governance framework

The key principles, approach and review processes that comprise the authority's governance arrangements are set out in the City Council's Code of Corporate Governance. Key elements include the following:

- 3.1 There is a governance / internal control environment that supports the Council in establishing, implementing and monitoring its policies and objectives. The Council's overarching objectives are contained in published policy documents including the Council Plan. These high-level plans are supported by a range of thematic policies, strategies and delivery plans, service plans, and detailed work programmes.
- 3.2 Coventry's Council Plan sets out the Council's long-term vision and priorities for the city for the period 2016-2024. In 2018, the Plan was reviewed and rebranded in line with the Council's emerging One Coventry approach and a revised performance management framework has been introduced to improve transparency and streamline performance reporting with more regular information updates about the performance of the city. To deliver the Council's long-term vision and priorities, the Council Plan affirms the Council's commitment to do this by maximising the use of its assets and reducing its operating costs, and through active communities and empowered citizens. The Council Plan is part of the Council's overall performance management framework designed to help the Council deliver its services and use its resources effectively in a planned and systematic way. A copy of the plan is available on our website at www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/ and the performance management framework is at: http://www.coventry.gov.uk/downloads/download/5245/performance_management_framework
- 3.3 Throughout this process, clear channels of communication exist with all sections of the community and other stakeholders, to ensure the Council considers local needs and communicates both expected and actual outcomes for citizens and service users. This is evidenced through the Council's formal decision-making and performance management processes.
- 3.4 In October 2015, Coventry City Council agreed to join the proposed West Midlands Combined Authority, which is a model of governance for local authorities to act together to drive economic prosperity for the area. A Combined Authority is a statutory body in its own right supported by a devolution agreement with the Government and a constitution which sets out the terms of their funding and powers.
- 3.5 In December 2017, it was announced that Coventry had been named the UK City of Culture for 2021. The aim of this programme is to encourage the use of culture and creativity as a catalyst for change, to promote the development of new partnerships and to encourage ambition, innovation and inspiration in cultural and creative activity. This activity will make significant contributions to the delivery of the Council Plan and corporate priorities. Coventry City of Culture Trust has been set up to organise and deliver this activity and has been formally incorporated and received charitable status. Financial responsibility for the Trust's activities lie with the Chair and Trustees, with an independent Audit Committee providing scrutiny and oversight. As accountable body and guarantor for delivery of the UK City of Culture 2021 programme, Coventry City Council is a principal partner in supporting the work of the Trust and ensuring that there is good governance around the Trust meeting the City of Culture programme delivery and legacy ambitions.
- 3.6 The control environment to ensure delivery of the Council's objectives is laid down in the Council's Constitution and performance management framework. The Constitution sets out how the Council operates, including:
- Roles and responsibilities of both Councillors and officers, including the Head of Paid Services, Monitoring Officer and Chief Financial Officer.

- How decisions are made and the procedures in place to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local citizens. The Constitution includes the Council's senior management structure and a scheme of delegation which sets out the principles for decision making and responsibility for functions. The Council facilitates policy and decision making via a Cabinet structure with Cabinet Member portfolios. There are scrutiny boards covering all portfolios and an overarching Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee. The Member decision making, advisory and scrutiny bodies are shown at <http://www.coventry.gov.uk/howthecouncilworks>
- 3.7 Coventry City Council has developed a comprehensive set of policies and procedures, including those relating to the standards expected of Members and officers. These are subject to regular review to ensure the Council continues to enhance and strengthen its internal control environment. Systems exist to ensure compliance with policies and procedures, including statute and regulations. Internal Audit, through its annual risk-based plan assesses compliance with key procedures and policies.
- 3.8 The Council has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commitment which is available on our website at: [EDI Commitment | Equality and Diversity | Coventry City Council](#). This sets out the Council's commitment to meeting all areas of the public sector equality duty and to ensure equality of opportunity, both as a provider and commissioner of services and as a large employer. The commitment is implemented through setting equality objectives linked to the Council Plan. [Equality Objectives | Equality and Diversity | Coventry City Council](#). Progress is monitored and reported to the Cabinet Member (Policing & Equalities). The latest progress report can be found here (item 17): <https://edemocracy.coventry.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=653&MId=11969&Ver=4>. In addition, the Council carries out Equality and Consultation Analysis on all key decisions taken by Cabinet or Cabinet Members.
- 3.9 The Council's Risk Management Strategy defines processes for identifying, assessing, managing and monitoring financial and operational risks. The Strategy recognises the need for risk registers at directorate and corporate level which are updated and reviewed regularly. The Council is looking for continuous improvement throughout the Council in the management of risks, and this is being monitored through the Strategic Management Board.
- 3.10 The Council, through its Whistleblowing and Complaints Procedures, has documented processes in place to deal with concerns raised by both employees and members of the public. These policies have been widely communicated and are subject to regular review to ensure they are working effectively. In addition, the Council's Fraud and Corruption Strategy reinforces the Council's commitment to creating an anti-fraud culture, whilst having effective arrangements in place in responding to allegations of fraud and corruption.
- 3.11 An Audit and Procurement Committee provides independent assurance to the Council on various issues, including risk management and control and the effectiveness of the arrangements the Council has for these matters. The Committee's terms of reference were developed in conjunction with CIPFA guidance, and the Committee carries out a periodic self-assessment to measure its effectiveness, based on recommended CIPFA practice.
- 3.12 For the financial year 2019-20, the Director of Finance and Corporate Services was the nominated Section 151 Officer, with the delegated responsibility for ensuring there are arrangements in place for proper administration of financial affairs. The Council last

carried out an assessment of the role of the Section 151 Officer against the requirements stated in the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016) in March 2019. This assessment concluded that the Authority meets the five principles laid out in the CIPFA statement, namely:

- The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in a local authority is a key member of the Leadership Team, helping it to develop and implement strategy and to resource and deliver the authority's strategic objectives sustainably and in the public interest.
- The CFO in a local authority must be actively involved in, and able to bring influence to bear on, all material business decisions to ensure immediate and longer-term implications, opportunities and risks are fully considered, and alignment with the authority's overall financial strategy.
- The CFO in a local authority must lead the promotion and delivery by the whole authority of good financial management so that public money is safeguarded at all times and used appropriately, economically, efficiently, and effectively.
- The CFO in a local authority must lead and direct a finance function that is resourced to be fit for purpose.
- The CFO in a local authority must be professionally qualified and suitably experienced.

The S151 Officer is a key member of the Corporate Leadership Team. During 2019-20, the senior management structure was reviewed. As from December 2019, the S151 Officer now reports directly to the Chief Executive and from March 2020 also became a member of the Council's Strategic Management Board. These changes further strengthen the arrangements that were already in place, with regular reviews of the senior management structure helping management team to focus on the current challenges and opportunities as well as to look ahead. Changes to the Strategic Management Board in 2019-20 have provided a more robust structure to support the delivery of priorities, with the Monitoring Officer and Director of Human Resources also joining the Board, alongside the S151 Officer. Improvements have also been made to the way the Corporate Leadership Team, which consists of all the Directors of the Council, works in collaboration to develop and deliver the One Coventry Plan.

3.13 The Annual Governance Statement also includes a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control within group activities, where the Council is in a relationship with another entity to undertake significant activities. The following describes the group activities for the year ended 31st March 2020:

- The Coventry and Solihull Waste Disposal Company Limited is owned jointly by Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Warwickshire County Council and Leicestershire County Council. A formal agreement sets out the governance arrangements between the shareholders. The Company is subject to the Industrial Emissions Directive and the conditions of its Environmental Permit issued by the Environment Agency. Furthermore, the Company monitors its activities through an Environmental Management System accredited to the ISO 14001 standard, its Health and Safety Management System which is certified to the OHSAS 18001 standard and the Cyber Essentials accreditation it has achieved for its IT systems. The Company has appointed Ernst & Young LLP as its external auditors. The last published Annual Report and Financial Statements, for the year ended 31st March 2019, did not highlight any concerns.

- North Coventry Holdings (NCH) Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Council. All the Directors of the Company are senior officers of Coventry City Council. All transactions are processed using the Council's financial systems and such activities are subject to an annual audit by the Council's Internal Audit Service. The Company has LDP Luckmans as its external auditors. There was an unqualified audit opinion for the last published Annual Report and Accounts, for the year ended 31st March 2019. The company's main purpose is to hold shares in Coventry North Regeneration Limited, although it is also engaged in providing business development services to the City Council.
- Coventry North Regeneration (CNR) Limited is a wholly owned subsidiary of NCH Limited. The main activity of the Company was the construction of the Ricoh Arena. All the Directors of the Company are also senior officers of Coventry City Council. All transactions are processed using the Council's financial systems and such activities are subject to an annual audit by the Council's Internal Audit Service. The Company has LDP Luckmans as its external auditors. There was an unqualified audit opinion for the last published Annual Report and Accounts, for the year ended 31st March 2019.
- Coombe Abbey Park Limited (CAPL) is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Council, which acquired 100% of the ordinary share capital of the company in December 2017. Three of the four Directors of the Company during 2019/20 are senior officers of Coventry City Council. As part of the original acquisition, the Council secured external independent advice from a number of sources to support the financial and legal due diligence assessment which resulted in a programme of changes including the restructuring of the Board, as well as recruitment of a new senior Operations Manager and finance staff. The Company has appointed RSM UK Audit LLP as its external auditors. The last published Annual Report and Financial Statements, for the year ended 31st December 2018, did not highlight any significant concerns.
- The UK Battery Industrialisation Centre Ltd was incorporated on 27th February 2018 and the Council is currently the sole shareholder with 1 share which has a nominal value of £1. The purpose of the company is to run the proposed National Battery Development Facility which is currently under construction. The Council has appointed two of its officers as directors on the board. The company will ultimately become a Joint Venture Private Limited Company with the Warwick Manufacturing Group. The City Council is initially purchasing all land and equipment in relation to the facility with funding coming from Innovate UK which is a Government backed agency. As a result, activity within the company has been minimal to date.
- The Friargate Joint Venture Project Ltd was incorporated 17th December 2018. This is a 50/50 joint venture with Friargate Holdings 2 Limited, established to develop new buildings within the Friargate district of the city. Each of, Coventry City Council and Friargate Holdings 2 Ltd have been issued 1 Ordinary Share for a value of £10m each. The Council has appointed three of its officers as directors of the board. The company is still very much in its infancy and as a result, activity within the company has been minimal to date.
- Tom White Waste Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Council, having acquired 100% of the shares in the company in March 2020. Two of the three Directors of the Company are senior officers of Coventry City Council, the third being a senior officer of North Coventry Holdings. The Council's decision to acquire was based on securing advice from independent external legal and financial advisers to carry out

the necessary due diligence to determine an appropriate investment cost and de-risk the Council from known and potential liabilities. The board are now reviewing the management structure based on this advice and the potential integration of the Council's existing commercial waste function. The company's existing auditors, Baldwins have been retained for the audit of 2019/20 financial accounts. Their previous audit for the published Annual Report and Financial Accounts dated 31 March 2019 delivered an unqualified opinion.

4. Review of effectiveness

4.1 Processes are in place to assess key elements of the governance framework throughout the year, for example, through the work of Internal Audit and the Council's Audit and Procurement Committee. A review of the effectiveness of the governance framework is also undertaken annually as part of the production of the Annual Governance Statement. This is informed by the work of senior managers within the authority, who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Chief Internal Auditor's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of Coventry City Council's internal control environment, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

4.2 Arrangements to assess the effectiveness of the governance framework include:

- Regular and detailed monitoring of the Council's performance, by both Strategic Management Board and Members against targets and objectives set out in the Council's Plan.
- Regular meetings of the Council's Governance Steering Board to consider on-going and emerging governance issues and co-ordinate actions required. Updates on this work are provided to Strategic Management Board every month.
- Consideration of ethical governance matters by the Ethics Committee, including reflecting on national governance failings to identify if there are any lessons learnt for the Council to take forward.
- On-going reviews of the Council's Constitution, overseen by the Constitution Advisory Panel and subject to approval by Full Council. These reviews include areas such as standing orders, financial procedures and the scheme of delegation.
- Regular reviews of the Council's strategies and procedures to ensure they continue to reflect the needs of the Council.
- An annual review against the principles and best practice set out in the Code of Corporate Governance and which is used to identify improvements to strengthen the Council's governance arrangements.

4.3 The review of effectiveness has also been informed by:

- Reports from the external auditors and other inspection agencies.
- The Council's Corporate Risk Register.
- The work of the Internal Audit Service during 2019-20. The Service works to a risk-based audit plan, which is approved annually by the Council's Audit and Procurement Committee. An annual report is also produced and presented to the Committee. The

report identifies those issues, which in the opinion of the Chief Internal Auditor, should be considered when producing the Annual Governance Statement.

- 4.4 For 2019-20, there have been some limitations to the approach taken in conducting the review of effectiveness due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and a more focused review has been undertaken which has placed reliance on existing reports and assessments.
- 4.5 We have been advised on the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by the Audit and Procurement Committee. This includes limitations to the review outlined above. We are satisfied that these limitations do not materially affect the overall outcome of the review and can provide reasonable assurance that the Council's governance arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.

5. Significant governance issues

- 5.1 Table one below provides an update on the governance issues that were raised in the 2018-19 Annual Governance Statement.

Table one

No	Governance issues identified in 2018-19	2019-20 update
1	Sustainable improvement in Children's Services	<p>The Children's Improvement Executive has been established with an independent chair and attended by member and exec level representation. It is meeting regularly and supporting the continued improvement of Children's Services.</p> <p>The revised Children's Services arrangements were launched within timescale and in accordance with statutory guidance. The review of the redesign has been completed and has seen resource shifted within Children's Services to reflect changes in demand. This has contributed to delivering required savings.</p> <p>Service performance reviews have been implemented and take place twice yearly. Quality Assurance visits involving the entire Children's Service senior leadership team have commenced. The first one took place at the Coundon office and included the lead member for Children's Services. Further visits are planned for 2020.</p>
2	Ensuring delivery of the Council's vision and corporate objectives, in line with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy	<p>The Government Spending Round announced in September 2019 indicated an improved resource position for the Council compared with previous assumptions. This has been built into the Pre-Budget Report taken to Cabinet in November 2019. Together with a modest set of savings and additional income proposals this leaves the budget close to being balanced for 2020/21.</p> <p>The Provisional Local Government Settlement announced in December 2019 provides further grant funding above the levels assumed and the impact of this flexibility is being considered as part of the process to finalise the Council's 2020/21 Budget.</p> <p>There continues to be no information in relation to the future of local government spending beyond 2020/21. Without this, the</p>

		<p>risk remains that the Council is faced with significant future budget gaps. In order to address future budget pressure the Council is currently pursuing transformation programmes under the 'One Coventry' approach including the key themes of Commercialisation, Digitalisation and Place Based Services.</p> <p>The 2020/21 Budget Report was taken to Council in February 2020. The Budget Report contained a range of savings proposals which resulted in a balanced overall position which did not require the use of one-off reserves.</p> <p>The One Coventry themes remain in place, but the Council is also considering new circumstances emerging from the Covid situation including cost pressures and opportunities from new ways of delivering services.</p>
3	Raising educational standards	<p>Termly meetings continue to take place with Primary Networks and Secondary Collaboratives to both review and monitor data trends and predictions, which ensures city priorities are reflected at school level.</p> <p>Early Years: Good Level of Development (GLD) improved at a faster rate than national for the second consecutive year. Primary: Improvements at a faster rate than national in Key Stage 2 "Writing at expected standard and at greater depth" Secondary and 16-18: Key Stage 4 Progress 8 showed a small decline and with no national change. The gap has therefore widened marginally. However, the more acute measure of % of strong passes in English and Maths improved faster than national. For 16-18 year olds the trend was downward in English and upwards in Maths.</p> <p>Special Educational Needs (SEN): There is a widening gap at Early Years Foundation Stage for pupils identified at SEN support and with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). However, Key Stage 1 shows a narrowing of the gap in most subjects with SEN support above national in reach of Reading, Writing and Maths and also for Year 1 phonics. At Key Stage 2, the strengthening position continues with SEN support now within 1% of national for the combined measures of Reading, Writing and Maths. EHCP pupils narrowed the gap by over 2%. 10 SEN Support Key Stage 2 progress scores for Writing are now above national, and although remaining below for Reading and Maths, the gap has closed. EHCP Key Stage 2 progress scores remain below national, having considerably widened for all 3 subjects. This is viewed in the Coventry context of the needs of the EHCP cohort. At Key Stage 4 there was a widening of the gap for EHCP but the improvements in SEN Support saw the gap narrowed.</p> <p>Disadvantaged: The gap narrowed with national in all the Primary School Key Stages - Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. In secondary, Key Stage 4 progress slowed and with some national improvement, no change locally saw a small widening of the gap.</p>
4	Implementation of the Information Management Strategy	<p>A review has taken place of the Information Management Strategy and the latest version went to the Information Management Strategy Group for approval in October 2019. Contribution from the Group has been requested to ensure it</p>

		<p>accurately reflects the Group's intentions/objectives. Formal agreement is pending. (Meeting to approve was postponed due to the pandemic but has now been re-arranged.)</p> <p>The Information Management Training Strategy has been reviewed and its current progress mirrors that of the Information Management Strategy. As part of this, the mandatory Data Protection related training courses have been reviewed by the Data Protection Team (December 2019/January 2020) and a new course has been tested by the Team and other service areas, with very positive feedback received. The Information Governance recommendation is to switch training, this is subject to Senior Management Board approval.</p>
5	Delivery of the Workforce Strategy	<p>The new post of Director of Human Resources commenced in July 2019 and immediately developed a clear plan of action for HR over the next two years with the development and introduction of the People Plan (replacing the Workforce Strategy.) The Plan identified 6 key objectives across 5 areas of work, which has been remained the focus of work despite the pandemic. Maintaining some of the timelines for actions has been impacted as Human Resource has responded to the organisational need to support the workforce and services and continues to do so,</p> <p>The Human Resources scorecard to inform strategic decision making and to track progress has been embedded over 2019/20 and continues to be developed through the introduction of the new recruitment system which was introduced at the beginning of March 2020. The development of increased employee engagement has been enhanced by the introduction of the Staffapp, the launch brought forward to provide information to staff on Covid-19. The Health and Well-Being group have produced a Healthy Guide for all staff available online, as well as on the Staffapp and continue to develop a wider strategy.</p> <p>The Council is working hard to deliver its commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion through establishing a project board and agreed action plan of priorities. The Council continues to build on its digitalisation programme through the introduction of Microsoft Teams to support staff to work more flexibly and efficiently. The Digiknow service is helping to share knowledge and skills through both face to face support at induction as well as video and e-learning to increase digital skill levels across the Council.</p>
6	Delivery of the ICT Strategy	<p>The revised ICT Strategy was approved by Cabinet in October 2019.</p> <p>The Strategy is based on the key principles of "Coventry as a Platform" which seeks to streamline and modernise processes and systems and the "Digital Workforce", ensuring staff have the relevant skills and tools to make the best use of the technologies available. The Strategy is aligned to the One Coventry approach and reflects requirements stemming from: - Medium Term Financial Strategy - One Coventry Council Plan - Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 - Digital Coventry Strategy for the city.</p>

		<p>The Strategy also recognises the priority of protecting the Council's technology estate, data and users from cyber-threats through robust and proactive approaches to the Council's cyber security measures.</p> <p>Consequently, as the Strategy now forms part of the business as usual activity of the Council, this has not been carried forward as a significant governance issue for 2020-21.</p>
7	Management of increasing demand in relation to homelessness and the associated costs of housing families in temporary accommodation	<p>The new five-year Housing and Homeless Strategy was agreed by Council in March 2019. The revised strategy seeks to address the challenges and opportunities of the entire Housing System, from the prevention of homelessness to the provision of housing.</p> <p>Over 2019/20 there has continued to be a significant increase in demand, in line with the Housing Reduction Act (2017). However, new initiatives such as the introduction of Housing First and the council's new temporary accommodation solutions (e.g. Caradoc, Frank Walsh House) are expected to make significant inroads on the Council's financial pressures in late 2019/20 and over 2020/21, as well as providing more suitable temporary housing for residents.</p>
8	Development of a corporate data access standard	A working group has met to review standards and facilities in key systems. A checklist and protocol have been drafted for review. Once agreed, appropriate action will be taken to implement the standard for all systems holding personal data.
9	Governance over relationships with partners and outside bodies	Partners have welcomed and embraced the development of a One Coventry approach. The People Partnership has developed into a One Coventry partnership group which is leading the development of a One Coventry approach beyond the Council. A number of strategic plans are being aligned through the review of the One Coventry Council Plan and this is being used to achieve more strategic planning coherence with key partners. This is also supporting the revisions to governance arrangements for key priorities e.g., city of culture, health and wellbeing.
10	Governance over the programme of capital projects	Governance arrangements continue to be in place and embedded, including the City of Culture Readiness Board and the Place Programme Delivery Board which meet regularly.

5.2 The Council recognises that the Annual Governance Statement should be current at the time of publication. Consequently, it is important to acknowledge that the coronavirus pandemic has had an immediate impact since March 2020 in respect of governance, both in terms of existing arrangements and new areas of activity linked to the Council's response to the situation. This includes:

- The Council has made use of provisions within its own constitution and the legislative framework in regards to decision making. Specifically, paragraph 3.8(a) of Part 2M of the Council's Constitution enables the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader to make decisions required in an emergency. All elected members have been informed of these decisions as they have been taken and to ensure transparency, these decisions are also formally reported to Council. In addition, all of the decisions have been published on the Council's website for public scrutiny. During this period,

the Council has continued to take decisions in line with its scheme of delegation, for example in relation to changes to arrangements for service delivery to reflect government guidance. Regular briefings have taken place with Cabinet Members individually and collectively and decisions taken by officers have been reported to all Members on a regular basis by the Director of Law and Governance as part of her briefings on the Council's response to the pandemic.

- On 4 April 2020, temporary regulations came into force which allow local authority meetings to be held remotely in line with national guidance on public health and restrictions on activity. The Council has developed a set of procedures and protocols to support the running of remote meetings in line with these regulations and an interim schedule of meetings in place. These interim arrangements will be kept under regular review in the light of local and national developments.
- Throughout the pandemic the Council has maintained and kept under review Covid 19 risk registers. Initially these concentrated on the delivery of the Council's statutory functions. The high-level themes were the safeguarding of vulnerable children, adult social care, decision making and governance, the financial implications, staff support and health and safety, data compliance and support for the homeless. As the pandemic has continued other risks have been considered such as the economic impact on the city and the reopening of schools. Data to support this process has been gathered through a series of virtual meetings with the Directors of the Council and the outcomes are reported to the senior management team. These are in addition to the service and corporate risk registers. Equality Impact Assessments are also being undertaken to identify and evaluate potential impacts on staff from protected groups and key protected groups from communities within the City.
- To manage the financial impacts of the pandemic and support the management and reporting of the numerous grant schemes, a number of Covid specific cost centres have been created in the Council's financial system. This is enabling specific Covid related costs to be easily identified and tracked enabling the relevant funding to be used to resource it. These are subject to regular review to ensure any new financial issues are linked into the wider COVID financial impact tracking.
- A log of internal control issues which have arisen during the pandemic is being maintained by the Internal Audit function to ensure the effectiveness of the overall system of internal control is kept under review and compensating controls agreed where required. This will also help to inform the focus of Internal Audit work in the forthcoming year.
- In July 2020, the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Resilience Team with support from Public Health conducted a desk top exercise across the three beacon authorities to test their Local Outbreak Management Plans. The exercise used a number of different outbreak scenarios to facilitate a discussion on the potential responses and escalation options that may be required to deal with outbreaks in different settings and with varying degrees of complexity. The exercise provided an opportunity for the Council to incorporate lessons learnt from the initial pandemic into its future plans and arrangements.

5.3 The Council is seeking to continuously enhance its management arrangements to improve service delivery, efficiency and value for money, whilst achieving its objectives. The review of effectiveness and further consideration of the implications of the coronavirus pandemic has informed identification of the following key challenges for 2020-

21 (table two), along with the actions planned to address these matters to further enhance our governance arrangements.

Table Two

Ref	Governance issue	Planned actions 2020-21	Responsible officer	Timescale
1	Sustainable improvement in Children's Services	<p>The new local arrangements for the multi-agency safeguarding partnership have been launched in line with revised statutory guidance. A review of the re-design of the service has been concluded and small service changes have now been made in response. A further phase of transformational activity will commence to support further improvement activity. Service Performance reviews take place twice a year as do Quality Assurance visits by the Children's Services Leadership Team.</p> <p>A comprehensive quality assurance system and annual schedule is evidencing improvement. This includes comprehensive auditing of cases on a monthly basis.</p> <p>A Children's Services workforce strategy has been implemented to ensure that a competent and confident workforce is available to meet the needs of vulnerable children and families, recognising the specific sector challenges regarding availability of social workers and the demand that the service experiences.</p>	Director of Children's Services	Ongoing
2	Ensuring delivery of the Council's vision and corporate objectives, in line with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy	<p>The 2020/21 budgetary control position is being closely monitored to ensure that the financial impact of COVID-19 can be managed alongside the other financial pressures being experienced by the Council. Early indications within period 2 and quarter 1 monitoring are that Government emergency funding should enable the Council to move towards delivering a balanced 2020/21 budgetary position.</p> <p>A re-valuation of the Council's 2021/22 financial position is being undertaken assessing a range of scenarios. This incorporates the current and future impact</p>	Director of Finance & Corporate Services	<p>July 2020</p> <p>September 2020</p>

		<p>of Covid and the potential outcomes from the forthcoming Government spending review. This position, including the need to manage cost pressures and identify savings proposals, will be considered by Corporate Leadership Team, Strategic Management Board and then Cabinet.</p> <p>These proposals will be formalised through the 2021/22 Pre-Budget Report.</p>		November 2020
3	Raising educational standards	<p>A decision has been made to delay the co-creation of the annual actions and key principles for Education Standards and Improvement until September 2020. Whilst the Council would normally have some indicative results for the key year groups that would set the direction for the improvement statements by this time, this year the information is not available as a result of COVID 19. Whilst there are 'outcomes' of a type for older children at GCSE and at A level, the Council does not have results for Reception Good Level of Development, Year 1 phonics or Key stage 1 or 2 Standard Assessment Tests, beyond school held predictions, which may not be an accurate reflection given the time some children have had out of school.</p> <p>Work has commenced on proposed actions from a secondary perspective, which are focused in some regard around the reset and recovery needed in September 2020, and feedback is being sought on these from Secondary Headteacher colleagues. The Council will work on developing these for all phases in September 2020.</p>	<p>Director of Education & Skills</p> <p>Head of Education Improvement & Standards 0-19</p> <p>Senior Adviser Education Improvement 11-19 (25)</p>	Ongoing
4	Implementation of the Information Management Strategy	<p>The following actions are planned for 2020/21:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm and approve: the Information Management Strategy Group terms of reference, the updated Information Management Strategy and the new Training 	Senior Information Risk Owner/ Head of Information Governance / Information Management Strategy Group / Data Protection Team	December 2020

		<p>Strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senior Information Risk Owner and Head of Information Governance to drive the imbedding of Data Security and Information Risk Management across the organisation. • Implement new mandatory training; subject to Senior Management Board sign off. 		<p>December 2020</p> <p>March 2021</p>
5	Delivery of the People Plan	<p>During 2020/21 the following actions are planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The further development and implementation of the workforce created values to embed the Council's One Coventry approach • Continued development of the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy and a related action plan • Introduction of an electronic case work system to improve the management of casework • Introduction of a new reward platform for employees • Extending the opportunities for talent mapping and career progressions at all levels across the organisation • Improved Employee Engagement which can be measured through job satisfaction • Continued development of employee relations including continuing to revise core policies and procedures and providing supporting training • The continuation of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our employees • Increasing the numbers of apprentices joining the council and securing substantive roles. <p>The People Plan is in the process of being reviewed to ensure it continues to meet the organisational need post Covid-19.</p> <p>The introduction of the values was delayed to the pandemic but will be going to vote in September 2020 which will be the revised start of the employee engagement strategy.</p> <p>The pandemic has greatly impacted on the Human Resources service and resulted in some significant</p>	Director of Human Resources	On-going

		<p>changes; reduction in recruitment but increase in the volume of applicants and online interviewing for example, the work undertaken by Occupational Health to continue to provide support to staff remotely, extending service hours, development of Covid-19 specific risk assessments etc.</p> <p>The Council has continued to develop and deliver its commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion through relaunching the employee support networks and introducing the women's network. As a result of an external survey of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion work to date, the Council is developing a strategy to address areas of weakness.</p>		
6	<p>Management of increasing demand in relation to homelessness and the associated costs of housing families in temporary accommodation</p>	<p>A range of actions have been planned to mitigate the cost of temporary accommodation (TA). These actions have led to a forecast of a balanced budget at Quarter 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure 90% occupancy of Caradoc Hall and Cornerstone TA contract. • Delivery of up to 74 Private rented properties to end homelessness duties. • The purchasing of HMOs to accommodate single people in TA. • Continue no families in B&B accommodation and eliminate the use of B&Bs for single people. • Negotiated reductions in nightly rates and secured a number of HMOs through TA providers. • Implement the TA charging policy <p>The impact of Covid-19 has added greater risk and complexity and is an actively moving picture at this time.</p> <p>Although demand on the Housing service has reduced during the pandemic, it is anticipated that a sharp increase in demand for services will be forthcoming over the coming months.</p> <p>The service has made a number of operational changes to ensure that the ability to prevent homelessness increase significantly.</p>	<p>Director of Housing & Transformation</p> <p>Head of Housing & Homelessness</p>	Ongoing

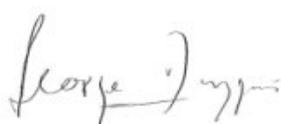
7	Development of a corporate data access standard	Development and implementation of a corporate access standard and protocol for all systems that hold personal data.	Members & Elections Team Manager	January 2021
8	Governance over relationships with partners and outside bodies	<p>During 2020/21, the following actions are taking place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Coventry approach continues to be developed through a shared partnership approach. • Covid-19 reset and recovery work utilised to confirm key shared priorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Economic recovery aligned to the West Midlands Combined Authority and Coventry & Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership strategies. ➢ Health and Well-being recovery aligned to health and care system and Coventry & Warwickshire joint Health & Well-Being strategies. • Development of a CEO led Anchor Leaders group across Coventry and Warwickshire to consolidate partnership working and key mutual priorities for action. • One Coventry Plan refresh planned for 2020/21 to capture and consolidate changes resulting from Covid-19 and Council policy direction. 	Deputy Chief Executive	On-going
9	Governance over the programme of capital projects	The Council has an ambitious programme of capital projects, which in 2020/21 will continue to accelerate in advance of the Council becoming City of Culture in Spring 2021. Whilst providing ongoing regeneration and redevelopment of the city and supporting business rate growth, the scale of the programme requires robust governance and strategic control to ensure that the programme is delivered successfully. This is particularly important as we deal with the effects of the Covid-19 epidemic. Governance arrangements are established with delivery overseen by project boards who report to the	Chief Executive	On-going

		<p>responsible cabinet members via established briefing and reporting mechanisms. Governance is also provided via the City of Culture Readiness Board and the Council's Capital Programme Delivery Board which is chaired by the Chief Executive. In 2020/21 the focus will be on ensuring that as the programme continues to move at pace, governance arrangements remain embedded and robust and programme delivery supports the Council's wider aspirations as well as supporting the local economy as we emerge from the Pandemic.</p>		
10	City of culture legacy	<p>To date, circa £90million of direct investment has been secured for the city through being awarded the title of UK City of Culture 2021. Of this funding £45million is being invested in the city's infrastructure (improving public realm and highways) and £19million is to be invested in the city's cultural assets (performance spaces, heritage venues and creative hubs.) Work on both these investment programmes has commenced, with the Box at FarGo and Belgrade Theatre Phase 1 works already completed.</p> <p>Work will continue to secure further programme and legacy investment from private and public sector sponsors and partners. The range and quality of visitor accommodation available in the city is being improved, including through new hotel developments, alongside the city's food and beverage sectors.</p> <p>The city's Cultural Compact, which brings together the Council's key partners in delivery of the City of Culture Legacy meets regularly. The Compact is in the process of refreshing the cultural strategy, to take account of recent changes such as the impact of Covid-19 and the imperative of Black Lives Matters on the cultural sector, and to ensure that the development of the City of Culture legacy is clearly rooted in a shared set of priorities and action plans. This work is funded by Arts Council England and will be linked to</p>	Strategic Lead, City of Culture / Head of Service Sports, Culture, Destination & Business in-conjunction with key stakeholders /colleagues	On-going

		an annual action plan and reporting cycle. Also under way is a consultancy project commissioned by the City of Culture Trust, to investigate the routes to a sustainable and impactful legacy. This is intended to be completed by the Summer of 2021.		
11	Acting on the outcomes of the review of the Council's Scrutiny function.	The planned final stage and subsequent follow up to the review planned for March 2020 was delayed by the Covid-19 situation. This is now being programmed again and will be built into the Scrutiny work programme which is being developed for this municipal year.	Members & Elections Team Manager	March 2021
12	Strengthening arrangements linked to the programme of health and safety audits undertaken.	A revised audit strategy for 2020-22 has been developed and a new set of audit protocols have been put in place. Whilst a resource assessment to underpin a risk-based audit programme for 2020/21 was developed in March 2020, the production and delivery of the programme has been significantly impacted due to the coronavirus pandemic and the refocusing of the priorities of the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service as a result. As such, it is recognised that embedding these arrangements may not be possible during 2020-21, although this will be kept under review for the remainder of the year.	Occupational Health, Safety & Wellbeing Services Manager	March 2021
13	Further development of the Council's IT disaster recovery plans and processes	A working group will be established to enhance understanding between ICT and the Resilience Team of business needs / ICT capabilities, which will support the development of robust and realistic plans and ensure that the disaster recovery and business continuity processes are more integrated and aligned. ICT disaster recovery processes will be enhanced, with supporting documents formalised and testing arrangements agreed.	Head of ICT & Digital	March 2021

14	Review and update of the Social Value and Sustainability Policy	A working group will review the Policy, consult on the revised Policy and then propose a final version of a new Policy for approval by Cabinet.	Head of Procurement & commissioning	December 2020
15	Implementation of the Local Government Ethical Standards Best Practice from the Committee on Standards in Public Life	Separate bodies which have been set up or are owned by the Council will be advised around the application of the Nolan principle of openness and requested to consider publication of their board agendas / minute and annual reports in an accessible place, whilst understanding any wider implications arising from this.	Director of Law & Governance	March 2021
16	Implementation of the Redmond Review into the oversight of local audit and the transparency of local authority financial reporting	Senior management and key stakeholders will consider the findings of the Redmond Review and develop arrangements to ensure the effective implementation of the report's recommendations from the Council's perspective and any future legislation arising from this.	Strategic Management Board / Corporate Governance Group in-conjunction with key stakeholders	March 2021

5.4 We acknowledge that the coronavirus pandemic will continue to have an impact during 2020-21, including creating challenges to the delivery of some of the planned actions which are highlighted in table two above. Notwithstanding this, we are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review and we will monitor their implementation and operation, as part of our next annual review.



Cllr George Duggins
Leader of Coventry City Council



Martin Reeves
Chief Executive of Coventry City Council