

Dear Members

Audit and Accounts Committee

A meeting of the Audit and Accounts Committee will be held in the **Craddock Room, Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford** on **Tuesday 27 July 2021 at 6.30pm** to deal with the business as set out on the agenda.

Please note that this meeting will be recorded.

Members are reminded that contact officers are shown in each report and members are welcome to raise questions etc in advance of the meeting with the appropriate officer.



Head of Law and Administration

**AUDIT AND ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE -
27 JULY 2021**

Chair - Councillor A M Loughran

A G E N D A

- 1 Minutes of 6 April 2021 as circulated and published in Digest No 277 on 11 June 2021
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Officers' Reports

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Membership

Chair - Councillor A M Loughran

M G Dodson	P W Jones
I D Fordham	A M Loughran
R A James	J A Nixon

Cabinet Member - Councillor R M Smith

[Item No 3\(a\) Stafford Borough Council Audit Plan -
Year Ending 31 March 2021](#) - linked separately due to
accessibility issues.

Pages 3-23

ITEM NO 3(b)**ITEM NO 3(b)**

Report of:	Chief Internal Auditor
Contact Officer:	Stephen Baddeley
Telephone No:	01543 464415
Ward Interest:	Nil
Report Track:	Cabinet 10/06/21 Audit and Accounts 27/07/21

AUDIT AND ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**27 JULY 2021****Strategic Risk Register**

The following matter was considered by Cabinet at its meeting held on 10 June 2021 and is submitted to Committee for approval.

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To set out details of the Council's Strategic Risk Register as at 1 April 2021.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Committee note the Strategic Risk Register and considers the progress made in the identification and management of the strategic risks.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendation**Key Issues**

- 3.1 All strategic risks and associated action plans have been reviewed and the Council's risk profile is summarised in the table below:

Risk Status	Number of Risks 30 November 2020	Number of Risks 1 April 2021
Red (High)	4	3
Amber (Medium)	6	6
Green (Low)	0	0
TOTAL	10	9

Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.2 Committee are required to approve the Strategic Risk Register.

4 Relationship to Corporate Business Objectives

4.1 This report supports the Council's Corporate Priorities as follows:

- (i) Risk management is a systematic process by which key business risks / opportunities are identified, prioritised and controlled so as to contribute towards the achievement of the Council's aims and objectives.
- (ii) The strategic risks set out in the Appendices have been categorised against the Council's priorities.

5 Report Detail

5.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 state that:

"A relevant body must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control which:-

- (a) facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and the achievement of its aims and objectives;
- (b) ensures that the financial and operational management of the authority is effective; and
- (c) includes effective arrangements for the management of risk."

5.2 Risk can be defined as uncertainty of outcome (whether positive opportunity or negative threat). Risk is ever present and some amount of risk-taking is inevitable if the council is to achieve its objectives. The aim of risk management is to ensure that the council makes cost-effective use of a risk process that has a series of well-defined steps to support better decision making through good understanding of risks and their likely impact.

Management of Strategic Risks / Opportunities

5.3 Central to the risk management process is the identification, prioritisation and management of strategic risks / opportunities. Strategic Risks are those that could have a significant impact on the Council's ability to deliver its Corporate Priorities and Objectives.

5.4 A fundamental review of the strategic risks/opportunities facing the Council was undertaken in May 2021 to take account of the impact that the pandemic and the lockdown arrangements. The risk register has been monitored at intervals and actions progressed to manage the risk. The risk register has been updated as at 1 April and a summary is attached as **APPENDIX 1**. The 1 April review has aligned the risks to the new Corporate Plan priorities.

5.5 The risk summary illustrates the risks / opportunities using the “traffic light” method i.e.

RED	risk score 12 and above (action plan required to reduce risk and/or regular monitoring)
AMBER	risk score 5 to 10 (action plan required to reduce risk)
GREEN	risk score below 5 (risk tolerable, no action plan required)

5.6 There has been a reduction in the overall number of risks as risk C8 “Failure to put in place safe working practices and social distancing measures to protect employees and the public” has been deleted with risk C6 being expanded slightly to cover the residual elements. There has also been a reduction in the number of Red Risks as Risk C6 has moved from a 15 - Red to a 9 - Amber.

5.7 Although there haven’t been any changes to the risk status for the remaining risks, actions have been progressing to deal with the risks that have been identified. The changing nature of the current pandemic means that even though work has been undertaken the full impact and timescales when progress can be made on addressing the risks is difficult to determine at this time.

5.8 Three risks have been reworded to better reflect the current situation:

- Risk C3 has been reworded from “The failure to manage the changes to town centres as a result of changes arising from the pandemic/lockdown” to “The failure to manage the changes to town centres as a result of changes arising from the local and national restrictions”
- Risk C6 has been reworded from “The Council doesn’t have sufficient officer capacity to deliver essential services, key projects and support work on recovery together” to “Reduced Organisational resilience will lead to insufficient resources to support the Council’s transformation and recovery agenda in dealing with the implications of Covid-19.” and expanded to take in the Health and Safety issues from C8 which has now been deleted.
- Risk 40b has been reworded from “Failure to deliver phase 2 of the Stone Leisure Strategy” to “Failure to deliver Westbridge Park Open Space transformation” to refocus the risk to the remaining elements of the project.

5.9 The detailed actions plans for each risk are set out in the full strategic risk register attached at **APPENDIX 2**. This includes a progress update. The action plans are closely aligned to the Council’s Recovery plans and will be kept under review.

6	Implications
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6.1	Financial	Nil
	Legal	Nil
	Human Resources	Nil
	Human Rights Act	Nil
	Data Protection	Nil
	Risk Management	Nil

6.2	Community Impact Assessment Recommendations	<p>The Borough Council considers the effect of its actions on all sections of our community and has addressed all of the following Equality Strands in the production of this report, as appropriate:-</p> <p>Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.</p>
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Previous Consideration - Cabinet - 10 June 2021 - Minute No CAB6/21

Background Papers - File of papers kept in the Chief Internal Auditor and Risk Manager's office

Appendices to the Report –

APPENDIX 1 - Summary of Strategic Risks - 31 October 2020

APPENDIX 2 - Strategic Risk Register - 31 October 2020

Stafford Borough Council
Summary of the Strategic Risk Register as at 1 April 2021

Risk No.	Risk Description	Risk Impact / Consequences	Risk Date	Gross Risk Score	Residual (Net) Risk Score	Residual (Net) Risk Score	Direction of Travel
RED RISKS					November 2020	April 2021	
C1	The Council's financial stability is adversely affected in the short and medium term	This could result in the Council being unable to achieve the objectives and priorities of the Council, to provide desired levels of service and have an impact on major redevelopment proposals	May 2020	20 RED	20 RED	20 RED	↔
C2	The economy of the Borough is adversely impacted limiting the ability to deliver the Economic Growth Strategy for the Borough	This could potentially lead to business failure or inability to grow; failure to secure investment in infrastructure and major projects; adverse impacts on the rural economy; unemployment; and, adverse impacts on town centres and the wider visitor economy	May 2020	15 RED	15 RED	15 RED	↔
C5	The Council's key contractors remain sustainable and continue to provide value for money	This could result in additional cost to the Council and may limit the delivery of the services	May 2020	20 RED	15 RED	15 RED	↔

Risk No.	Risk Description	Risk Impact / Consequences	Risk Date	Gross Risk Score	Residual (Net) Risk Score	Residual (Net) Risk Score	Direction of Travel
AMBER RISKS							
C3	The failure to manage the changes to town centres as a result of changes arising from the local and national restrictions	Lack of community confidence in accessing retail, leisure and other services within the town centre may reduce spending and add to the decline of the northern town area. This in turn will affect the amount of Business Rates collected.	May 2020	12 RED	9 AMBER	9 AMBER	↔
C4	Failure to work in partnership to sustain support to vulnerable residents post Covid-19	Existing service provision may not meet the need because of the increases in the range of vulnerabilities that people are experiencing.	May 2020	12 RED	9 AMBER	9 AMBER	↔
C6	Reduced Organisational resilience will lead to insufficient resources to support the Council's transformation and recovery agenda in dealing with the implications of Covid-19.	This could result in projects being delayed or not delivered. There is also a risk to employees' health & wellbeing.	May 2020	20 RED	15 RED	9 AMBER	↓

Risk No.	Risk Description	Risk Impact / Consequences	Risk Date	Gross Risk Score	Residual (Net) Risk Score	Residual (Net) Risk Score	Direction of Travel
C7	Failure to repel or recover from a Cyber-attack including targeted ransomware, malware and Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks. The move to home working has increased the vulnerability to malware issues.	This could result in the Council not being able to deliver services	May 2020	20 RED	9 AMBER	9 AMBER	↔
38b	Failure to minimise the impact on the environment from the construction and operation of HS2	This could result in a reduction in the air quality, excessive noise/vibration from the construction activities which may have an impact on people's health and wellbeing	2014	15 RED	10 AMBER	10 AMBER	↔
40b	Failure to deliver Westbridge Park Open Space transformation	This could affect the Council's ability to deliver its Health and Wellbeing agenda, which may impact on people's health.	2016	20 RED	6 AMBER	6 AMBER	↔

GREEN RISKS

There are no current Green Risks

DELETED RISKS

C8 Failure to put in place safe working practices and social distancing measures to protect employees and the public

↓	Risk has decreased	↔	Risk level unchanged	↑	Risk has increased
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STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Ref No: C1	Risk: The Council's financial stability is adversely affected in the short and medium term
Risk Owner: Head of Finance	Cabinet Member: Cllr Smith

Gross Risk Score (i.e. without controls)	Likelihood: 4	Impact: 5	Total Score: 20 - RED
Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)	Likelihood: 4	Impact: 5	Total Score 20 - RED

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
Determine a Financial Recovery Strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Recovery work stream Agree Terms of Reference Determine work programme 	Chief Executive/Head of Finance	Complete Terms of Reference and Work Programme Agreed
Monitor Financial Impact of COVID-19	Head of Finance	Ongoing Monthly monitoring in place
Implement Interim Financial strategy	Head of Finance	Complete Interim Financial Strategy considered by Cabinet
Update Financial Plan in relation to the deferment of 75% Business Rates Retention and Fair Funding by a year	Head of Finance	Scenarios developed reflecting potential treatment of growth and levy Details awaited of new timescale for implementation
Refresh Medium Term Financial Plan based upon alternative scenarios of short /medium and long term impact of in relation to external funding sources	Head of Finance	Ongoing Financial Plan approved by Cabinet 5 November 2020 New Financial Plan to be completed in 2021/22

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
Lobby MHCLG via MP/DCN and LGA re financial impact of COVID 19 on SBC	Chief Executive/Head of Finance	Ongoing contact with M.P.s, DCN, West Midland Chief Executives, LGA and directly with ministers.
Determine feasibility of extending Business Rates Pool into 2021/22 Monitor impact of COVID 2019 on pool by authority on a month by month basis Liaise with S and Sot Business Rate Pool Members re options to maintain viable pool for 2021/2022 Prepare options report to Leaders and Chief executives	Head of Finance	Pool established for 2021/22
Determine impact of Government proposals for key funding regime changes for 2022/23	Head of Finance	Ongoing
Implement a rolling programme of service reviews to ensure that resources are aligned to business objectives and are operating as efficiently as they can be	Chief Executive/Head of Finance	To form part of 2022-23 Budget Process

Overall Progress Summary:

Monitoring of the Financial impact of Covid -19 is ongoing. The estimated impact of the pandemic has been reflected in the Medium-Term Budget as approved by Council with a balanced budget in place for 2021-22.

The medium-term financial stability of the Council is however dependent upon changes arising from the future funding regime for local government. Details in relation to the implementation of 75% Business Rates Retention and Fair Funding and Business Rates Reset are still awaited.

A consultation document in relation to the Future of New Homes Bonus, beginning in 2022/23, was published on the 21 February 2021 (a response from the Council was submitted in advance of the closing date of 7 April 2021).

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Ref No: C1
Risk: The Council's financial stability is adversely affected in the short and medium term
<p>Consequences of Risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to provide desired levels of service • Major redevelopment proposals are impacted • Council size becomes too small to sustain a viable organisation
<p>Links to Corporate Business Plan – Objective 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be a well-run, financially sustainable, and ambitious organisation, responsive to the needs of our customers and communities and focussed on delivering our objectives
<p>Key Controls in Place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium term financial plan in place • Annual Financial Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2023/24 in place • The Revenue Budget for 2021/22 is balanced with a potential deficit of £1,003,000 for 2022/23 if a new regime is implemented • Working Balances maintained • Comprehensive Service Review being undertaken to re-align resources to Corporate Plan • Corporate Budget Monitoring • Evaluation of consultations on changes to government funding regimes

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Ref No:C2	Risk: The economy of the Borough is adversely impacted limiting the ability to deliver the Economic Growth Strategy for the Borough
Risk Owner: Head of Development	Cabinet Member: Cllr Beatty

Gross Risk Score (i.e. without controls)	Likelihood: 3	Impact: 5	Total Score: 15 - Red
Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)	Likelihood: 3	Impact: 5	Total Score: 15 - Red

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
Complete an Economic Recovery Strategy	Completed Head of Development/Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager	The adopted Economic Growth Strategy and draft Implementation Plan have been reviewed in light of Covid and reported to Cabinet October 2020 which acts as the Economic Recovery Strategy for the Borough and partners.
Deliver the opportunities for growth through the new Local Plan process	2021-22 Planning Policy Manager	The first stage of the new Local Plan was consulted on in February and March 2020. Critical elements of the evidence base are currently delayed due to the implications of recent Government policy changes and the economic uncertainty arising from the Covid pandemic. Therefore the ongoing timetable for progression to adoption is under review.
Continue with major projects as programmed, review detail to see if need to change in context of Covid 19	In accordance with individual project plans Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager	Minimal disruption to project plans since March 2020. Scheduled works under weekly review to identify potential delays

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
Future High Street Fund programme plan to be reviewed to respond to the outcome of the bid	June 2021 Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager	Provisional award announced December 2020 and further work submitted to MHCLG February 2021. Formal confirmation of award due imminently. Programme governance in place and inception meetings scheduled April 2021.
Review the objectives of the Stafford Town Centre Strategic Framework commission to reflect recent changes to the economy and deliverability of strategic projects	Completed Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager	Amended scope agreed following the outcome of the FHSF bid and work commenced April 2021.
Implementation of a discretionary financial support grant scheme (funded by Government) to mitigate the impacts of Covid 19	April 2021 Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager	The Additional Restrictions Grant Policy is available online and a programme of business support has been agreed with Cabinet April 2021

Overall Progress Summary: Immediate and longer terms interventions identified and being implemented; minor disruption to major projects and Future High Streets Fund bid updated to reflect impact of Covid-19. Local Plan progression under regular review.

Ref No: C2	Risk: The economy of the Borough is adversely impacted limiting our ability to deliver the Economic Growth Strategy for the Borough
Consequences Of Risk:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council's ability to deliver the objectives as set out in the Economic Growth Strategy is adversely impacted potentially leading to business failure or inability to grow; failure to secure investment in infrastructure and major projects; adverse impacts on the rural economy; unemployment; and, adverse impacts on town centres and the wider visitor economy; Adverse impact on growth in revenue from Business Rates and Council Tax Failure to maximise the economic benefits associated with HS2 related development Increase in demand on Housing and Revenues services

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Ref No: C2	Risk: The economy of the Borough is adversely impacted limiting our ability to deliver the Economic Growth Strategy for the Borough
Links to Corporate Business Plan – Objective:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1, 2, 3
Key Controls in Place:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project plans and governance arrangements for the Garden Community, Stafford Town Centre Transformation and Stafford Station Gateway projects • SGRIP group well established and key stakeholders are represented in the Economic Recovery work stream • Visitor Economy recovery work part of the overarching Recovery Strategy • The Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Team has a dedicated Senior Investment Manager working directly with the private sector and dedicated Project Managers to implement the major schemes • The Stafford Town Centre Strategic Framework will respond to the outcome of the Future High Streets Fund bid to ensure the maximum amount of development remains viable • Market appraisals for emerging development schemes have been refreshed since March 2020 • Homes England are fully appraised of emerging development schemes that will require additional Government funding to attract private investment and tackle viability issues • The new Local Plan remains ambitious and will act as a portfolio for development; key evidence base studies are being updated to reflect recent economic changes

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Ref No:C3	Risk: The failure to manage the changes to town centres as a result of changes arising from the local and national restrictions
Risk Owner: Head of Development	Cabinet Member: Cllr Beatty

Gross Risk Score (i.e. without controls)	Likelihood: 4	Impact: 3	Total Score: 12 – Red
Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)	Likelihood: 3	Impact: 3	Total Score: 9 - Amber

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
Complete an Economic Recovery Strategy	Completed Head of Development/Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager	The adopted Economic Growth Strategy and draft Implementation Plan have been reviewed in light of Covid and Brexit and reported to Cabinet October 2020 which acts as the Economic Recovery Strategy for the Borough and partners.
Submission of Future High Streets Fund bid	Completed Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager	Provisional award announced December 2020 and further work submitted to MHCLG February 2021. Formal confirmation of award due imminently. Programme governance in place and inception meetings scheduled April 2021.

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
Supporting town centre groups in Stafford, Stone and Eccleshall to operate our high streets in a Covid Secure way	Ongoing Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager	2 ERDF funded Business Support Officer posts created and filled; 5 bespoke marketing campaigns launched from November 2020. In April 2021 Cabinet agreed to extend the 2 posts to continue to support our local businesses for a further 12 months confirmation of award due imminently. Programme governance in place and inception meetings scheduled April 2021.

Overall Progress Summary: Economic Recovery via the Growth Strategy Implementation Plan underway; ongoing liaison with Stafford Town Centre Partnership, Stone Traders Group and Destination Eccleshall.

Ref No: C3 Risk: The failure to manage the changes to town centres as a result of changes arising from the local and national restrictions
Consequences Of Risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of community confidence in accessing retail, leisure and other services within town centres will reduce spending and add to the decline of the northern town area of Stafford. • This in turn will affect the amount of Business Rates collected.
Links to Corporate Business Plan – Objective : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1, 2, 3
Key Controls in Place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with stakeholder groups in key town centres of Stafford, Stone and Eccleshall to support safe-opening of businesses and ensure that the wider community is aware of the measures in place to manage health and safety concerns • Development schemes submitted to Future High Streets have been revised with reference to the impact of Covid-19

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Ref No: C4	Risk: Failure to work in partnership to sustain support to vulnerable residents post Covid-19
Risk Owner: Head of Development/ Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager	Cabinet Member: Jeremy Pert

Gross Risk Score (i.e. without controls)	Likelihood: 4	Impact: 3	Total Score: 12 - RED
Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)	Likelihood: 3	Impact: 3	Total Score: 9 - AMBER

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
Community Recovery and Resilience group is being set up to look at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lessons learnt • How the level of support can be sustained going forward • Planning for the future 	Completed Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager	Community Recovery Group in place and meeting on a regular basis.
Community Recovery and Resilience TOR have been produced	Completed Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager	Terms of Reference agreed with Cabinet and implemented
Community Recovery Project Plan formulated and agreed	Completed Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager	A comprehensive evaluation has been conducted and report has been written. Recovery work will concentrate on 4 individual strands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications and Engagement • Community Need • Support for the Voluntary Sector • Partnerships

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
		This work will ensure that consideration for any Brexit related issues are encompassed within the planning for each of the individual strands.
Structures agreed and in place to support vulnerable residents for further local and national lockdowns and movements through different tiers restrictions	Completed Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager	Ward based model of support in place and regular meetings being held with parish councils and community groups. Work monitored by the recovery working group under the Support for the Voluntary Sector strand.
Review the Community Wellbeing Partnership to ensure that the membership is representative and is able to take responsibility to plan and deliver services for issues that reduce crime, anti-social behaviour and improve health and wellbeing	Completed Corporate Partnerships Manager	Community Wellbeing Partnership membership reviewed and new board now in place and regular meetings scheduled. Community Safety and Wellbeing Strategy reviewed to take into consideration the impact of Covid and Brexit.
Economic Recovery group meets monthly	Ongoing Economic Growth and Strategic Projects Manager	The group interrogates local and national data to identify priority areas for intervention, including the prioritisation of funding applications.
Review of housing assistance policy to ensure responsive to needs resulting from higher unemployment	July 2021 Health and Housing Manager	Housing assistance policy to be ready for consultation in July 2021

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
Extend commissioned services that provide lower level support to individuals experiencing drugs and alcohol use and mental health; outreach support for anti-social behaviour; and sanctuary provision for domestic abuse	June 2021 Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager	Commissioned contracts extended and scheduled to be renewed from June 2021
DFG commissioned service to be closely monitored and managed to accelerate delivery in light of delays partly caused by lockdowns	May 2020 onwards Health and Housing Manager	Contract amendments being made to allow additional capacity for Millbrook to tackle the backlog.
Housing standards risk assessment to be developed to ensure safe completion of remedial works where possible. Approach to be developed for those residents where significant hazards to health exist, but works cannot be completed safely.	Completed Health and Housing Manager	Risk assessment in place and being used. For cases where significant hazards to health exist site visits are continuing if safe for officers and residents.
Housing Options prepared for increase in demand as economic impact of the pandemic unfolds and short-term measures to prevent evictions are lifted.	September 2020 onwards Health and Housing Manager	Proactive campaign with partner agencies to get residents to seek help early. Early options support for households who have been identified as being in rent arrears prior to action being taken. Close working with MHCLG and probation on additional supported accommodation options. Cross county working on new approach to support rough sleepers. Enhanced training of options officers with partner agencies to ensure they are prepared to deal with the changing caseload. Revision to Deposit Guarantee Scheme to increase access to the private rented sector.

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Overall Progress Summary: Good progress is being made in relation to the community recovery work.

- A comprehensive evaluation of activities has been conducted which has informed response activities during the current lockdown. Meetings are taking place with partner organisations including parish councils and community groups – who continue to support vulnerable residents in the borough.
- The council have assumed the role of anchor organisation for the borough and are triaging calls for clinically extremely vulnerable residents and locally, this support will continue until the end of June 2021 with the potential to extend further. Council webpages have been updated and now encompass a broad range of signposting information for residents under the 'Tell Us' pages and also information for community groups and parish councils.
- Webinars have been specifically designed for community groups, parish councillors and elected members based on their feedback received during the evaluation of the Community HUB.
- There is an open invitation to parish councils to ask for support from SBC when they are developing their resources. Specific projects are being developed, for example, Stepping Stones programme will be updated soon. This programme supports people in regaining their confidence in leaving the house and going on a walk. Involvement with parish councils with setting up walks in their local area.

Ref No: C4

Risk: Failure to work in partnership to sustain support to vulnerable residents post Covid-19

Consequences Of Risk:

- Potential of core support services being withdrawn, for example, substance misuse services, domestic abuse, mental health, impacting on a person's health and wellbeing and potentially on their housing situation.
- Vulnerable people at risk of not receiving help and support therefore increasing issues such as poverty, poor housing conditions, homelessness, rough sleeping, family breakdown, loneliness and isolation, suicide, safeguarding issues relating to child abuse, domestic abuse, exploitation, mental health, drugs and alcohol, self-medicating, anti-social behaviour
- Relationships with partners at risk because of failure to deliver services because of financial and resource difficulties therefore affecting community confidence and resilience

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Ref No: C4 Risk: Failure to work in partnership to sustain support to vulnerable residents post Covid-19
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socio- economic impact in terms of job losses, closure of premises and the level of funding available for community groups may impact on reductions in service provision, increases in support needs, tenancies not being sustained, increases in hazards for health
<p>Links to Corporate Business Plan – Objective : 1 and 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver sustainable economic and housing growth to provide income and jobs To improve the quality of life of local people by providing a safe, clean, attractive place to live and work and encouraging people to be engaged in developing strong communities that promote health and wellbeing.
<p>Key Controls in Place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Wellbeing Partnership in place that can escalate any issues to Local Strategic Partnership Commissioned services in place to support with mental health and substance misuse, antisocial behaviour and domestic abuse. Representation at County, Regional and National level multi-agency partnership meetings in respect of Voluntary Sector, Parish Councils, Community Safety, Economic Growth, Housing, DFG's, Rough Sleeping and Homelessness, Anti-social Behaviour, Earned Autonomy, Food Bank Forum, Domestic Abuse; Needs assessments in place for health, community safety, homelessness that identify areas of concern in the Borough to enable the targeting of resources Multi-agency place based model of support in place in Doxey, Rising Brook and Highfields Parish Council Forum in place Support for Clinically Extremely Vulnerable residents in place until June 2021, regular welfare calls being made to those indicating they are in need and Rising Brook Baptist Church and Stone Community HUB supporting residents with food parcels and prescriptions Food schemes and food banks in place, foodbank forum meets on a regular basis

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Ref No: C4**Risk: Failure to work in partnership to sustain support to vulnerable residents post Covid-19**

- Community Recovery Group now set up and in place, project plan produced and being monitored
- Additional support for DFG delivery being put in place.
- Proactive work to identify those at risk of eviction, when ban is fully lifted.
- Additional units of refuge accommodation operational
- Multi-agency strategies in place for Community Safety and Wellbeing, Economic Growth

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Ref No: C5	Risk: The Council's key contractors remain sustainable and continue to provide value for money
Risk Owner: Head of Operations	Cabinet Member: Cllr Smith

Gross Risk Score (i.e. without controls)	Likelihood: 4	Impact: 5	Total Score: 20 - RED
Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)	Likelihood: 3	Impact: 5	Total Score: 15 - RED

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
All contracts being monitored by appropriate Head of Service/Service Manager.	On-going Heads of Service Service Managers Contracts and Procurement Manager	Regular virtual meetings with contractors. Contracts exhibiting greatest risk are additionally being monitored by the Council's Contract and Procurement Manager
Assistance with financial management being offered by the Council to individual contractors	On-going Chief Executive Head of Finance Head of Operation Chief Accountant	Management payments being made in advance to assist with cash flow. Additional payments may be made subject to an "Open book" process to assist cashflow.
Information sharing with other Councils and Local Government Association	On-going Heads of Service Contracts and Procurement Manager	Contact with other Councils that have contracts with SBC contractors
Lobbying of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) via Members of Parliament, District Council Network and Local Government Association re financial impact of COVID 19 on SBC	Ongoing Chief Executive Head of Finance	Information provided regarding the financial impact of Covid 19 on contracted services

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
Ensuring timely applications are submitted for any available Government Grant funding	On-going Heads of Service Head of Finance Service Managers Contracts and Procurement Manager Chief Accountant	<p>A successful application was made by our Leisure and Culture Contractor for an Arts Council grant of £250,000 for the Gatehouse Theatre to cover some of the losses incurred and to make building adaptations to ensure Covid-19 compliance.</p> <p>The Council has been successful in its application for a maximum amount of £260,000 from the National Leisure Relief Fund to cover losses that Freedom Leisure have incurred over Stafford Leisure Centre, Stone Leisure Centre and Rowley Park. Additionally, the Council has also been awarded a “top up” sum of £17,851.</p> <p>Freedom Leisure have recently be awarded additional funding for the Stafford Gatehouse Theatre of £124,950 from the second round of the Government’s Culture Recovery Fund. The second round of awards made today will help organisations to look ahead to the spring and summer and plan for reopening and recovery. After months of closures and cancellations to contain the virus and save lives, this funding will be a much needed helping</p>

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
		hand for organisations transitioning back to normal in the months ahead The Cabinet on 4 March 2021 considered a confidential report on Financial Support to Freedom Leisure which was scrutinised by a special Resources Scrutiny Committee on the 25 March 2021.
Evaluation of Government guidance on Covid 19 on service that can be delivered	On-going Heads of Service Service Managers Contracts and Procurement Manager	Services have been reintroduced as Government restrictions have been lifted. Recovery plans being developed by Contractors in consultation with the Council to respond to further lifting of restrictions. Prioritisation of service reintroduction.

Overall Progress Summary:

- Risk is not at the same level with all contractors.
- We are concentrating on the monitoring and financial support to the Leisure contractor which currently carries the highest risk.
- Services being re-introduced following the lifting of Government restrictions/return of work force.
- Prioritisation of service reintroduction on “open book” process.

Management of this risk is largely outside the control of the Council as it is a national issue and depends on the Government's plans for easing lockdown and support to businesses. However, the Council is working with its contractors to support them during lockdown and in implementing their recovery plans in accordance with Cabinet Office Action Note PPN04/20 Procurement Policy Note - Recovery and transition from COVID -19.

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Ref No: C5 Risk: The Council's key contractors remain sustainable and continue to provide value for money
Consequences of Risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varying degree of risk dependant on contract • Potential for an individual contract failure resulting in a defined Council service not being delivered • Financial loss • Reputational damage locally and nationally
Links to Corporate Business Plan – Objective 3: To be a well-run, financially sustainable and ambitious organisation, responsive to the needs of our customers and communities and focussed on delivering our objectives
Key Controls in Place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular contact with key personnel associated with each contractor • Regular discussion at Leadership Team and Cabinet level • “Open book” financial monitoring introduced on selected contracts • Corporate Budget Monitoring • Contract monitoring • Sharing of information with other authorities who have same contractors

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Ref No: C6	Risk: Reduced Organisational resilience will lead to insufficient resources to support the Council's transformation and recovery agenda in dealing with the implications of Covid-19
Risk Owner: Chief Executive	Cabinet Member: Cllr Smith

Gross Risk Score (i.e. without controls)	Likelihood: 3	Impact: 5	Total Score: 15- RED
Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)	Likelihood: 3	Impact: 3	Total Score 9- Amber

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
Use planned review of the Corporate Business Plan to reassess objectives for the next 3 years to reflect the impact of COVID-19, the likely recession that will follow and the financial consequences.	Chief Executive/Head of Finance/Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager	Completed Corporate Business Plan has been approved at Council.
Implement the revised Corporate Business Plan	Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager From April 2021	Delivery Plans and performance framework are being formulated
Recovery Programme in place and governance structures implemented in relation to 4 workstreams: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Recovery • Community Recovery • Financial Recovery • Organisational Recovery 	Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager	Completed Governance structure has been implemented and meetings on-going in relation to the Strategic Oversight Board; Recovery Management Board and 4 workstreams. Initial Recovery work plans are in place.
Continue to monitor the impact of Covid through the Recovery Programme	Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager Ongoing	Capacity to deliver continues to be highlighted as an issue across the 4 workstreams and this continues to be monitored closely by Leadership Team and Cabinet.

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
Organisational Recovery work stream – to provide a co-ordinated approach to operational and transformational recovery taking into account service delivery priorities, timescale and capacity to deliver	Head of Human Resources and Property Services June 2020	Completed Organisational Recovery Group established. High level Action/Implementation Plan agreed. Governance arrangements provided by establishment of Recovery Management Board and Recovery Oversight Board. Visioning session by Leadership Team took place on 7 April 2021 to approve recovery overview. Action plan and priorities to be delegated to the ORG.
Monitoring – Continued monitoring of impact of health and wellbeing of staff both in general and directly linked to COVID-19.	Group HR and Payroll Manager – on-going	On-going reporting via Managers/HR Services
Review Transformation Plans to take into account the impact of, and living with COVID-19, including health and safety regulations, preferred ways of working and business case.	Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager	Completed Transformation plans have been reviewed and have been incorporated into the overall Recovery Programme for the authority.
Formulate organisational framework that sets out the future vision and ways of working.	Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager From March 2021 onwards	Covid Future Planning is being formulated at present which will set out and detail the Organisation Visioning Framework.
Ensure the effective and timely preparation of Risk Assessments, procedures and guidance to enable safe work practices to be implemented in line with HSE and Government Guidelines	Service Managers and H&S Adviser – on-going	Risk Assessments completed and published in line with Government Guidance and local decision making
Consult with employees and Trade Unions to provide “buy-in” to a joined-up approach to future ways of working	Chief Executive Head of HR and PS	On-going as required

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Overall Progress Summary: During the first phase of COVID-19 lockdown capacity to support Council priority areas and community support and the overall response to COVID-19 was achieved by redeploying internal resources as required and the goodwill and dedication of staff. The majority of the Council's workforce continue to work remotely in order to continue to provide services. All workplaces are subject to COVID-19 risk assessments to ensure the health, safety and well-being of officers who cannot or are unable to work from home. Work going forward will need to focus on recovery and how the Council will operate whilst living with the on-going impact of COVID taking account of local and national priorities.

Ref No: C6 Risk: Reduced Organisational resilience will lead to insufficient resources to support the Council's transformation and recovery agenda in dealing with the implications of Covid-19."
Consequences Of Risk: This could result in the following:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service delivery/Projects impacted by delays, reduced quality or not delivered • Increased costs due to delays and project inertia • Increased risk to employees' health, safety and wellbeing due to changes in circumstances • Failure to meet health and safety standards could lead to prosecution. • Unable to restore some services effectively • Risk of illness to staff and visitors
Links to Corporate Business Plan – Objective 3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be a well-run, financially sustainable and ambitious organisation, responsive to the needs of our customers and communities and focussed on delivering our objectives
Key Controls in Place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sickness Absence and Welfare Monitoring by Managers in line with Council Policies • Co-ordinated support and guidance to managers and employees by Human Resources • Use of Occupational Health and external Counselling support services • Regular discussion at Leadership Team meetings. • Health and Safety controls (including risk assessment) in place in line with Government Guidance and best practice • Organisational Recovery Group – High Level Action/Implementation Plan in place and under regular review • Government Guidance as and when published Health and Safety Advice provided through H&S shared service arrangements – inbuilt resilience

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Ref No: C7	Risk: Failure to repel or recover from cyber-attack including targeted ransomware, malware and DDoS attacks		
Risk Owner: Head of Technology	Cabinet Member: Cllr Smith		
Gross Risk Score (i.e. without controls)	Likelihood: 4	Impact: 5	Total Score: 20 - RED
Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)	Likelihood: 3	Impact: 3	Total Score 9 - AMBER

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
Information Risk Management- Continuous review and work on our information risk management regime	Ongoing/ Head of Technology	Policies under review.
Monitoring – External and Internal checks. Threat and vulnerability assessment and remediation including Annual IT Health Check by CLAS approved consultant with remedial work carried out	Ongoing/ Head of Technology	Annual Health check completed in August 2020. Follow-up check is planned for November 2021.
Application Security Assessment and Remediation action taken	Annually Head of Technology	The health check will produce an action plan to feed into this.
Limit the access to critical systems and data by non-corporate devices.	September 2021 Head of Technology	During 2020 we have been able to increase the number of corporate laptops that access the internal systems.
Exploring options to improve security for sharing information with external partners	Ongoing Head of Technology	Further use of Teams to provide secure access to data for our partners.
The move to home working has increased the vulnerability to malware issues. The use of cloud technology has reduced the likelihood due to the data being segregated across systems and devices.	On-going Head of Technology	Email mailboxes are now held in the cloud. Data files will also be moved during 2021/22
Add Geo restrictions to O365 and Virtual office.	Systems Manager	Complete
Require one-time passwords for all network connections.	Systems Manager	Complete

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Overall Progress Summary: Work has been completed and actions are in progress. However, the environment means that new risks and challenges are always developing and attacks are becoming more sophisticated.

Ref No: C7 Risk: Failure to repel or recover from cyber-attack including targeted ransomware, malware and DDoS attacks
<p>Consequences Of Risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data, Systems and Applications inaccessible • Inability to deliver Council services • Cybercrime/ Fraud/ Ransom demands/ Financial harm • Reputational damage locally and nationally • Data Loss and breach of Data Protection Act (DPA) • Financial Loss
<p>Links to Corporate Business Plan – Objective 3: To be a well-run, financially sustainable and ambitious organisation, responsive to the needs of our customers and communities and focussed on delivering our objectives</p>
<p>Key Controls in Place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Risk Management Regime – Assess the risks to our information assets, effective governance structure, Leadership Team engagement with cyber risk, produce supporting information management policies. • Secure configuration – Corporate policies and processes to develop secure baseline builds • Network Security – Protection and secured perimeter of external security threats and untrusted networks • Managing user privileges – All users of ICT systems provided with privileges suitable for their role • User education and awareness – Security policies that describe acceptable and secure use of ICT assets • Incident management – Incident response and disaster recovery capabilities that address the full range of incidents that can occur • Malware prevention – Produce policies that directly address the business processes (such as email, web browsing, removable media and personally owned devices) • Monitoring – Established monitoring taking into account previous security incidents and attacks. Annual IT Health Check and penetration testing conducted by a Council of Registered Ethical Security Tester (CREST)/Communications-Electronics Security Group (CESEG) Listed Advisor Scheme (CLAS) - accredited Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ) approved consultants.

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Ref No: C7 Risk: Failure to repel or recover from cyber-attack including targeted ransomware, malware and DDoS attacks			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removable media controls – Produce removable media policies that control the use of removable media for the import and export of information Home and mobile working – Assess the risks to all types of mobile working including remote working and develop appropriate security policies 			
Ref No: 38b		Risk: Failure to minimise the impact on the environment from the construction and operation of HS2	
Risk Owner: Head of Operations		Cabinet Member: Environment	
Gross Risk Score (i.e. without controls)	Likelihood: 3	Impact: 5	Total Score: 15 - RED
Residual/Net Risk Score (i.e. with controls in place)	Likelihood: 2	Impact: 5	Total Score 10 - AMBER
Actions Planned		Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
Monitor any preparation work being carried out by HS2 contractors		Completed Regulatory Services Manager	Preparation work undertaken by HS2 monitored without any adverse effect or complaints.
Continued participation in HS2a Environmental Health Sub-Group covering Noise, Air Quality and land contamination implications		Ongoing Regulatory Services Manager	Have attended and participated in all scheduled meetings
Watching brief on the House of Commons Select Committee and House of Lords Select Committee proceedings and the publication of Royal Assent		Completed Regulatory Services Manager	To ensure officers and elected members are updated on any changes to the scheme
Evaluating the outcome of Independent Review into HS2 project		Completed Regulatory Services Manager	To ensure officers and elected members are updated on any changes to the scheme

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
Responding to consultation from HS2 Ltd on the draft Local Authority Environmental Management Plan (LEMP) for Stafford Borough which outlines mitigation measures for adverse effects of the construction phase.	Completed Regulatory Services Manager	Response sent to the consultation
As we receive Section 61 Notices the Council will provide a response	Q1 + Q2 2021-22 Regulatory Services Manager	New control

Overall Progress Summary:

Information obtained by officer's participation in HS2 working groups to address noise, environmental, air quality and planning elements of the route alignment, during construction and subsequent operation, has assisted them in providing an input into the Council's petitioning document. Continued liaison between the Council's Development Manager and Regulatory Services Manager has enabled better shared understanding of the issues/risks; and the use of appropriate mechanisms to try and address the areas of concern.

The hybrid bill has received Royal Assent

Officers are now working closely with HS2 on the mechanism associated with section 61 notices under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 which require contractors to state mitigation measures for adverse effects of the construction phase.

Concern has been expressed to HS2 by both the Chief Executive of Stafford BC, and via the MP for Stafford on the resource implications of section 61 notices being served by HS2 contractors on the Council. At a time when resources have been allocated to and will continue to be allocated to both the response and recovery stage of the Covid 19 pandemic, it does not leave much spare capacity to respond to the additional workload of responding to these notices. Additionally, there is difficulty in securing additional resources to carry out this work as recruitment is very challenging at this time as there is a national shortage of suitably qualified staff. This could result in delays to construction and a deterioration in partnership working.

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Ref No: 38b Risk: Failure to minimise the impact on the environment from the construction and operation of HS2
<p>Consequences of Risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reduction in the air quality from the construction activities. This could arise directly from the construction sites and indirectly from changes in the volume, composition, and location of traffic on the highway network. • Excessive levels of Noise and vibration from construction and operation activities could lead to a significant effect on the residential amenity to domestic premises close to the proposed line. • The negative effects associated with the off-site disposal to landfill of solid waste that will be generated by the construction and operation of the proposed scheme. • The adverse effect of contaminant mobilisation.
<p>Links to Corporate Business Plan – Objective 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the quality of life of local people by providing a safe, clean, attractive place to live and work and encouraging people to be engaged in developing strong communities that promote health and wellbeing
<p>Key Controls in Place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead officer nominated • Close working relationship with Staffordshire County Council and other District Council's in Staffordshire on the route • Partnership in forums and working groups to maintain influence with major construction leads – Arup

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Ref No: 40b	Risk: Failure to deliver Westbridge Park Open Space transformation		
Risk Owner: Head of Development	Cabinet Member: Leisure		
Gross Risk Score (ie without controls)	Likelihood: 4	Impact: 3	Total Score: 12 - RED
Residual/Net Risk Score (ie with controls in place)	Likelihood: 2	Impact: 3	Total Score: 6 - AMBER

Actions Planned	Timescale/Person Responsible	Progress/Comments
A detailed consultation exercise has been completed on the future play and leisure needs for Stone and a Masterplan for Westbridge Park developed for consideration by the Stone Leisure Strategy Board.	Q2 2020-21 Cultural Services Manager and Planning Obligations Monitoring and Implementation Officer	Completed
Following development of the Masterplan for Westbridge Park detailed designs and a funding strategy to be developed.	Q4 2020-21 to Q2 2021-22 Head of Development/Leisure Projects Manager	Progressing
Detailed mapping of S106 funding availability to support project completed.	Completed Head of Development	Completed and under regular review
Sale of Tilling Drive complete. Capital receipt to be invested in leisure provision in Stone.	Q3 2020-21 Head of Development	Planning Application for Tilling Drive approved. Compensatory playing field provision being progressed.
Procurement of playing pitch strategy	Q2 2019 / Head of Development	Playing pitch strategy completed
Alleyne's School have bid for funds from DoE to re-purpose swimming pool building, using SBC monies to decommission the pool as match funding.	Q3 / Head of Development	Awaiting the outcome of the bid.

As at May 2021

STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER AS AT 1 APRIL 2021

Overall Progress Summary:

Sale of Tilling Drive completed. Planning permission granted for Tilling Drive and works on compensatory sporting provision are progressing.

Ref No: 40b Risk: Failure to deliver Westbridge Park Open Space transformation.
Consequences Of Risk: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputational damage • Impact on delivery of Health and Wellbeing agenda. • Unable to deliver corporate plan objectives
Links to Corporate Business Plan – Objective 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve the quality of life of local people by providing a safe, clean, attractive place to live and work and encouraging people to be engaged in developing strong communities that promote health and wellbeing.
Key Controls in Place: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Board in operation which manages financial and legal controls • Project Plan – currently being reviewed. • Professional experts brought in as required (Consultants) • A detailed consultation exercise has been completed on the future play and leisure needs for Stone and a Masterplan for Westbridge Park developed. Work on detailed designs and funding strategy to commence.

As at May 2021

ITEM NO 3(c)**ITEM NO 3(c)**

Report of:	Chief Internal Auditor
Contact Officer:	Stephen Baddeley
Telephone No:	01543 464415
Ward Interest:	Nil
Report Track:	Audit and Accounts 27/07/21 (Only)

AUDIT AND ACCOUNTS
27 JULY 2021
Internal Audit Annual Report 2020-21

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2020-21.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee note the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2020-21.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 Based on the work undertaken during the year and the implementation by management of the audit recommendations, Internal Audit can provide Partial assurance that the Council's governance arrangements including systems of internal control were operating adequately.

4 Relationship to Corporate Business Objectives

- 4.1 The system of internal control is a key element of the Council's corporate governance arrangements which cuts across all corporate priorities.

5 Report Detail

- 5.1 Management are responsible for the control environment and should set in place policies and procedures to help ensure that the system is functioning correctly. Internal Audit review, appraise and report on the effectiveness of the system of internal control.

- 5.2 The Internal Audit Annual Report (attached as **APPENDIX 2**) is the culmination of the work of the Section during the course of the year and seeks to:-
- provide an opinion on the adequacy of the control environment;
 - comment on the nature and extent of significant risks; and
 - report the incidence of significant control failings or weaknesses.
- 5.3 The report is a snapshot view of the areas at the time that they were reviewed and does not necessarily reflect the actions that have been or are being taken by managers to address the weaknesses identified. The inclusion or comment on any area or function in this report does not indicate that the matters are being escalated to Members for further action. Internal Audit routinely follow-up the recommendations that have been made and will bring to the attention of the committee any relevant areas where significant weaknesses have not been addressed by managers.
- 5.4 The coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on the work of the team and caused some disruption to the completion of the Audit Plan. The Team have worked remotely to complete as many audits for 2020-21 as possible but some have had to be delayed.
- 5.5 Work completed in Quarter 4 has not previously been presented to committee; information for work completed in Quarter 4 is attached as **APPENDIX 1**.
- 5.6 The Internal Audit Annual Report is one of the sources of assurance that is used to support the Council's Annual Governance Statement

6	Implications	
6.1	Financial	Nil
	Legal	Nil
	Human Resources	Nil
	Human Rights Act	Nil
	Data Protection	Nil
	Risk Management	Nil
6.2	Community Impact Assessment Recommendations	<p>The Borough Council considers the effect of its actions on all sections of our community and has addressed all of the following Equality Strands in the production of this report, as appropriate:-</p> <p>Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.</p>

7 Appendices to the Report



APPENDIX 1 - Summary of Significant Findings Quarter 4 Audits





APPENDIX 2 - Internal Audit Annual Report for 2020-21


Previous Consideration - Nil

Background Papers - File available from the Chief Internal Auditor

Summary of Significant Findings for Audits Issued in Quarter 4**Audits Completed in Quarter 4**

Audit	Head of Service	Number of High/Medium Recommendations	Assurance	Comments & Key Issues
Cyber & Network Security	Technology★	6	Limited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of older servers were found to still be in use due to legacy applications. • A large number of users had full access rights to the network. • Some laptops had not been updated with recent virus protection due to not connecting to the network for a significant period. • More work was needed to ensure the network access was properly controlled and restricted to authorised devices. • Better records were required for the set-up and purpose of the firewall rules. • Only 50% of employees had completed the Cyber Security training
National Non-Domestic Rates	Financial Management	1	Partial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User accounts were found not always to be deleted promptly when staff no longer need access and one user had higher access rights than their role required.

Audit	Head of Service	Number of High/Medium Recommendations	Assurance	Comments & Key Issues
Staff Expenses	HR★	5	Partial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A significant number of mileage forms were poorly completed and did not contain sufficient information to allow mileage claims to be adequately verified. A number of forms were found not to have supporting VAT receipts for fuel meaning VAT could not be reclaimed. One form was not certified by a person who was authorised to approve mileage payments.
Tree Management	Operations	2	Partial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work was not always carried out within agreed timescales and some priority work from the 2015 survey had not been actioned at the time of the audit. Requests for work were being closed without indication that they had been examined or if work was required.
Housing Benefits	Financial Management	0	Substantial 	
Payroll	HR★	0	Substantial 	

Audit	Head of Service	Number of High/Medium Recommendations	Assurance	Comments & Key Issues
Covid Response Review	Corporate	0	Substantial 	

Follow Ups Completed in Quarter 4

Audit	Head of Service	Original Assurance	High/Medium Risk Recommendations				Revised Assurance	Comments & Key Outstanding Recommendations
			Implemented	In Progress	Not Implemented	Total		
Information Governance 2nd Follow Up	Governance & Corporate Services	Partial ▲	1	0	4	5	Partial ▲	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A draft information Governance Framework has been produced but put on hold during the pandemic. • Training for Senior Information Risk Owners still needs to be provided. • The Publication Scheme needs to be updated • Work on a Protective Marking Scheme has not been progressed.
Waste & Recycling	Operations	Partial ▲	3	0	0	3	Substantial ✓	

Stafford Borough Council Internal Audit Annual Report 2020-21

July 2021



working together

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Appendix

Audits Planned and Completed in 2020-21 by Classification:-

1a	Limited	9
1b	Partial	10
1c	Substantial	12
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Internal Audit Service is a shared service with Cannock Chase District Council. This report highlights the work carried out by Internal Audit to deliver the Annual Audit Opinion for Stafford Borough Council.

The Annual Reporting Process

- 1.2 Internal Audit is an assurance function that primarily provides an independent and objective opinion to the Council on its governance arrangements comprising of risk management and internal control. Internal Audit objectively examines, evaluates and reports on the adequacy of the Council's governance arrangements as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources. Responsibility for governance rests fully with Managers, who should establish and maintain an adequate system of internal control to enable them to discharge their responsibilities and to ensure that the Council's resources are properly applied in the manner and on the activities intended.
- 1.3 This report is the culmination of the work of the Internal Audit Section during the course of the year and seeks to:
- provide an opinion on the adequacy of the control environment;
 - comment on the nature and extent of significant risks; and
 - report the incidence of significant control failings or weaknesses.
- 1.4 It provides a summary of the work of the Section throughout 2020-21. As such it presents a snapshot picture of the areas at the time that they were reviewed and does not necessarily reflect the actions that have been or are being taken by Managers to address the weaknesses identified. The inclusion or comment on any area or function in this report does not indicate that the matters are being escalated to Members for further action. Internal Audit routinely follow-up the recommendations that have been made and will bring any relevant areas where significant weaknesses have not been addressed by managers to the attention of the Audit and Accounts Committee if and when it is deemed appropriate.
- 1.5 Internal Audit has adopted an exception based reporting methodology, as such only those areas where weaknesses have been identified are reported on.

Requirement for Internal Audit

- 1.6 The requirement for an Internal Audit function derives from local government legislation, including section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 which requires authorities to "make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs". Proper administration is interpreted in this legislation to include Internal Audit. More specific requirements are detailed in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, in that a relevant body must "undertake an effective internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal audit standards or guidance".

Review of Internal Audit

- 1.7 A review of the Internal Audit has been undertaken within the year as part of the Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme as required by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.
- 1.8 There were two key elements to the review this year:-
- i. the Chief Internal Auditor has conducted a self-assessment of the section in relation to compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and the Local Government Application Note (LGAN); and
 - ii. reference to the External Quality Assessment (EQA) carried out by Cipfa in November 2016. The outcome of this review was presented to the Audit Committee in March 2017. The next EQA is due to be completed in 2021-22.
- 1.9 The review concluded that Internal Audit is effective and conforms sufficiently with the requirements of PSIAS/LGAN to ensure that the opinion given in this Annual Report can be relied upon for assurance purposes. Where actions have been identified these are attached in Appendix 3 at the end of this report.
- 1.10 One area of significant non-conformance with the standards was identified and this relates to PSIAS 1110 Organisational Independence. The standards require the “Chief Audit Executive” to report functionally to the Board and indicate that this includes the Audit Committee Chair and Chief Executive commenting on the Performance Development Review and the Audit Committee setting remuneration for the “Chief Audit Executive”.
- 1.11 This is not a common practice in Local Government where Members do not routinely get involved in detailed employment matters. It is felt that sufficient other safeguards to the independence of Internal Audit are currently in place within the Council such as allowing the Chief Internal Auditor the unfettered right of access to the Audit Committee Chair and Chief Executive to raise any concerns. It is therefore felt that this area of non-conformance does not compromise the effectiveness of Internal Audit although PSIAS/LGAN requires it to be disclosed in the Annual Audit Report.
- 1.12 The External Auditors, Grant Thornton, have concluded that “the internal audit service continues to provide an independent and satisfactory service to the Council and that internal audit work contributes to an effective internal control environment at the Council”.
- 1.13 In order to ensure the quality of each audit, the Senior Auditor, the Principal Auditor or the Chief Internal Auditor carries out a file review for each audit prior to the reports being issued. The Chief Internal Auditor also reviews and signs-off every report before it is issued. These processes form part of the internal quality assurance process and helps to provide a consistent approach between the auditors.

2. REVIEW OF CONTROL ENVIRONMENT

How the Control Environment is Reviewed

- 2.1 Internal Audit operates to a risk based audit plan. The audit plan is risk assessed each year to ensure that suitable audit time and resources are devoted to reviewing the more significant areas of risk.
- 2.2 This risk based approach to audit planning results in a comprehensive range of audits being undertaken during the course of the year to support the overall opinion on the control environment.
- 2.3 The Audit Plan for 2020-21 had to be revised in-year due to the impact of the pandemic. The plan was scaled back with resources focussed on new work areas needed to support the response to the pandemic and changes to key systems arising from the move to homeworking. Sufficient work has been undertaken on which to provide an opinion.

Internal Audit Opinion for 2020-21 and the Annual Governance Statement (AGS)

- 2.4 Regulation 3 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations require that the Council:-
“must ensure that it has a sound system of internal control which—
(a) facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and the achievement of its aims and objectives;
(b) ensures that the financial and operational management of the authority is effective; and
(c) includes effective arrangements for the management of risk.
- 2.5 In addition regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 requires that the Council:-
“must, each financial year—
(a) conduct a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control required by regulation 3; and
(b) prepare an annual governance statement;”
- 2.6 Internal Audit has a responsibility to provide assurance from the work they undertake during the year in respect of the control environment operating within the Council to feed into this review.
- 2.7 Alongside the traditional audit work undertaken, the opinion this year has also placed reliance on observations and awareness of the Council’s processes from work undertaken by the Internal Audit Team in supporting front-line services and on the advice and guidance given to services in revising processes to cope with the Covid pandemic.

2.8 Based on the work undertaken during the year and the implementation by management of the audit recommendations, Internal Audit can provide **partial assurance** that the Council's governance arrangements including risk management and systems of internal control were operating adequately and there were no instances where any breakdown of control resulted in a material discrepancy.

The Council's response to Covid allowed most services to operate well throughout the year with new working methods and processes adopted to cope with the move to homeworking for the majority of the workforce. Some services were reduced or ceased to be provided during the lockdowns where the risks were felt to be significant, all decisions were based on risk assessments and compliance with Government guidelines.



2.9 Two systems have been given limited assurance:

- (i) Critical Information Systems not supported by IT
- (ii) Cyber and Network Security.

2.10 Due to the Council's reliance on IT and the increasing threat of attack the Cyber and Network Security Audit has been deemed to be a significant governance concern and will be flagged up for consideration in the Annual Governance Statement.

2.11 The Critical Information Systems finding have not been classified as significant in terms of the Council's overall governance arrangements. However it is essential that the deficiencies identified are addressed in order to prevent future material discrepancies.

2.12 From March 2020 we saw a large scale move to homeworking due to the Coronavirus pandemic. This persisted throughout the 2020-21 year and to date a significant number of employees are still predominantly working from home. This has led to a rapid revision of some key processes especially where there was reliance on physical signatures as part of the process e.g. Creditor Payments, HR processes as well as the rapid introduction of new processes such as the Community Hub and Business Grants. Internal Audit was involved in advising on some of these processes and some have been reviewed as part of the 2020-21 internal audit work or reliance placed on the knowledge of the systems through consultancy work.

2.13 No system of control can provide absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss, nor can Internal Audit give that assurance. This statement is intended to provide reasonable assurance that there is an ongoing process for identifying, evaluating and managing the key risks. These risks are reflected in the audit plan and are the subject of separate reports during the course of the year.

3. SIGNIFICANT ISSUES ARISING 2020-21

- 3.1 Each system/area audited is given a level of assurance based on the presence and effectiveness of the controls in place. Four levels of assurance are currently used and the definitions for each are contained in appendices 1a to 1d.
- 3.2 A summary of the level of assurance given to each audit is given in the table below.

	Assurance				
	Substantial	Partial	Limited	No Assurance	No Opinion
Number of Audits	5	6	2	0	3
Reference for further information	See Appendix 1d	See Appendix 1c	See Appendix 1b	See Appendix 1a	See paragraph 0

- 3.3 Three areas were reviewed but the nature of the work meant that it was not appropriate to issue a formal opinion on the level of assurance. These were:
- (i) Pensions Assurance for Staffordshire County Council
 - (ii) Operations Major Projects; and
 - (iii) Economic Development Major Projects
- 3.4 The Internal Audit Section did not identify any significant weaknesses in relation to any of the Council's key financial systems and core governance processes which were examined in 2020-21.
- 3.5 In addition to the main audit work the section also followed-up the progress made in relation to Audit Recommendations where the audit was not issued with a Substantial opinion. Follow-ups are generally undertaken around 6 months after the report has been finalised.
- 3.6 Follow-ups were completed for three areas. After the follow-up had been completed two areas had improved from Partial to Substantial and one remained Partial Assurance. In total 9 recommendations were followed-up of which 5 were found to been implemented (56%).
- 3.7 More details on the follow-ups can be found in Appendix 2.

4 AUDIT PERFORMANCE

- 4.1 The table below indicates the Section's performance against the audit plan for 2020-21. Performance for 2020-21 Audit year was adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic which saw major disruption to the operation of the Council – a revised plan was approved by Committee on 6th April 2021.

	2020-21				2019-20
	Planned	Actual	Actual %	Target %	Actual
Revised Plan	18	16	89%	90%	86%

- 4.2 Sixteen audits were completed in the year out of the eighteen planned for in the 2020-21 Audit Plan.
- 4.3 A further three audits had commenced but not been completed in the year. These are:
- Forward Planning
 - IT Asset Management
 - Cloud Strategy and Security
- 4.4 One audit planned for the year had not commenced at the end of the year, IT Asset Management. This will be rolled-over to 2021-22.
- 4.5 Included in the completed audits figure above are three audits which were originally part of the 2019-20 audit plan but were not completed in that year. The audits completed this year from the 2019-20 Audit Plan were:
- Sundry Debtors;
 - IT Capacity Management and Resilience; and
 - Critical Information Systems not supported by IT/Corporate Department
- 4.6 In addition to the audit plan the Section has also carried out a number of other pieces of ad hoc work and consultancy exercises during the year, these included advice on system changes and new systems implemented as part of the Covid response and recovery arrangements.
- 4.7 Members of the Internal Audit Team were deployed to support front line services and Covid response work for part of the year which impacted on performance. This included validation work for Covid Grants.

5 FRAUD and IRREGULARITY WORK

Pro-active Fraud work

5.1 The Internal Audit section takes a proactive approach to the prevention / detection of fraud and corruption, however it is noted that there are limited resources to devote to fraud risks in the team. During the year it has:-

- Continued membership of the Midlands Fraud Sub Group, and sharing of information at Internal Audit Management Groups;
- Carried out Verification work of Covid Grants and followed up on a number of alleged fraudulent applications.
- Been alert to fraud risks in the audits carried out in the year

Fraud/Irregularity Investigations

5.2 The team has not been involved in any special investigations relating to fraud or irregularities in the year relating to Stafford Borough Council

5.3 One allegation was received through the Council's Confidential Reporting Process. This matter is still in progress and the outcome will be reported to committee later in the year.

National Fraud Initiative Datamatching

5.4 The Council is a statutory participant in the Cabinet Office's National Fraud Initiative (NFI) exercise which is carried out every 2 years. The 2020-21 matches were released in January 2021 and are being reviewed by relevant departments. No significant issues have been identified from the work carried out to date.

Audits Planned and Completed in 2020-21 by Assurance Level

No Assurance

Definition



One or more High (Red) risks are lacking appropriate controls and/or controls are not operating effectively to manage the risks.

Immediate action is required by management to address the weaknesses identified in accordance with the agreed action plan

There were no audits which were classified as No Assurance in the year.

Limited Assurance Audits

Definition



One or more Medium (Amber) risks are lacking appropriate controls and/or controls are not operating effectively to manage the risks. The residual risk score for the affected Medium risks are 9 or higher.

Prompt action is required by management to address the weaknesses identified in accordance with the agreed action plan.

Audit Area	Service Lead Officer	No of High/Medium Recommendations
Critical Information Systems not supported by IT	Technology	3
Cyber and Network Security	Technology	6

Partial Assurance Audits**Definition**

One or more Medium (Amber) risks are lacking appropriate controls and/or controls are not operating effectively to manage the risks.

Prompt action is required by management to address the weaknesses identified in accordance with the agreed action plan.

		No of High/Medium Recommendations
National Non-Domestic Rates	Financial Management★	1
Creditors	Financial Management★	1
Debtors	Financial Management★	5
Staff Expenses	HR	5
IT Capacity Management and Resilience	Technology	7
Tree Management	Operations	2

★Services led by Cannock Chase District Council as part of Shared Services

Substantial Assurance Audits**Definition**

All High (Red) and Medium (Amber) risks have appropriate controls in place and these controls are operating effectively.

No action is required by management.

Audit Area	Service Lead Officer
Housing Benefits	Financial Management ★
Council Tax	Financial Management ★
Council Tax Reduction Scheme	Financial Management ★
Payroll	HR
Housing Strategic Function	Development
Covid Response Review	Corporate

★ Services led by Cannock Chase District Council as part of Shared Services

Appendix 2

Results of Follow-ups Undertaken in the Year By Assurance Level

This table shows the assurance level at the end of the year. Where a more than one follow-up of the same audit has been carried out only the assurance level at the end of the latest follow-up is shown.

Audit	Head of Service	Original Assurance	High/Medium Risk Recommendations				Revised Assurance
			Implemented	In Progress	Not Implemented	Total	
Homelessness and Housing Advice	Development	Partial ▲	1	0	0	1	Substantial ✓
Waste and Recycling	Operations	Partial ▲	3	0	0	3	Substantial ✓
Information Governance 2nd Follow Up	Governance	Partial ▲	1	0	4	5	Partial ▲

Appendix 3

IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR INTERNAL AUDIT – 2020-21

Source	Actions	Person Responsible for Implementation	Timescale
Annual Review	Internal Audit will review working paper design and use of technology to move closer to having a totally electronic audit file. Some progress has been made but the Section is considering purchasing an Internal Audit Working Paper System which could improve efficiency in the team.	Chief Internal Auditor and Risk Manager	Jan 2022
Annual Review	Internal Audit will look at progressing some mapping of Assurance provided by others and how this can be taken into account	Chief Internal Auditor and Risk Manager	Ongoing
Annual Review	Internal Audit will continue to explore ways of utilising Computer Assisted Audit Techniques into their work	Chief Internal Auditor and Risk Manager	Ongoing

ITEM NO 3(d)**ITEM NO 3(d)**

Report of:	Head of Governance
Contact Officer:	Judith Aupers
Telephone No:	01543 464411
Ward Interest:	Nil
Report Track:	Audit and Accounts 27/07/21 (Only)

AUDIT AND ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE
27 JULY 2021
Annual Governance Statement 2020-21

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To set out the Annual Governance Statement for the year 2020-21.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee approves of the Annual Governance Statement for 2020-21.

3 Key Issues and Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Council to review the effectiveness of its system of internal control and to prepare an Annual Governance Statement (AGS).
- 3.2 The Council's draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2020-21 (which is current up to July 2021) is attached as **APPENDIX 1**.
- 3.3 The draft AGS has been compiled by the Leadership Team. The AGS has been drafted using various sources of assurance which together form the review of the Council's governance arrangements. The key sources of assurance are:
- (i) assurances from Heads of Service and Leadership Team;
 - (ii) assurances from the 3 statutory officers;
 - (iii) the risk management reports;
 - (iv) the annual internal audit report / opinion; and
 - (v) external assurance reports.

3.4 The review of the Council's governance arrangements has identified areas for improvement and these are set out in the action plan contained within the AGS at **APPENDIX 1**.

3.5 An update on the progress in actioning the issues from the 2019-20 AGS is attached at **APPENDIX 2**. In summary, of the 7 items:

- 5 items have been completed or are on target to be completed; and
- work is in progress on 2 items.

A number of these issues are ongoing due to the nature of the pandemic and have also been included in the AGS for 2020-21.

4	Relationship to Corporate Business Objectives
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4.1 The Council's corporate governance arrangements and internal control framework cuts across all corporate priorities.

5	Report Detail
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5.1 annual governance statement is necessary to meet the statutory requirement set out in the Audit and Accounts Regulations 2015 which requires authorities to "conduct a review of the effectiveness of system of internal control" and to "prepare an annual governance statement".

5.2 Following approval of the Annual Governance Statement it will be signed by the Chair of the Audit and Accounts Committee, the Leader and the Chief Executive.

5.3 The Annual Governance Statement has been prepared using information from the sources of assurance outlined in 3.3. The Leadership Team has been consulted on the draft AGS to ensure that:-

- all of the significant issues have been identified and included, so far as is reasonably possible; and
- all of the issues included are considered to be significant.

5.4 It is not possible to give a single definition as to what constitutes a "significant governance issue" and judgement has to be exercised. Cipfa/SOLACE has not provided guidance on this in their new Framework so reference continues to be made to the guidance given in the previous framework. Factors used in making such judgements include:-

- the issue has or could seriously prejudice or prevent achievement of a principal objective;
- the issue has or could result in a need to seek additional funding to allow it to be resolved, or has/could result in significant diversion of resources from another service area;
- the issue has or could lead to a material impact on the accounts;

- the Chief Internal Auditor has reported on it as significant, for this purpose, in the Internal Audit Annual Report;
- the issue, or its impact, has or could attract significant public interest or seriously damage the reputation of the Council;
- the issue has resulted in formal action being taken by the Chief Financial Officer and/or the Monitoring Officer.

5.5 Progress in addressing the significant issues identified in the Annual Governance Statement will be monitored through reports presented to the Audit and Accounts Committee.

6	Implications
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6.1	Financial	Nil
	Legal	Nil
	Human Resources	Nil
	Human Rights Act	Nil
	Data Protection	Nil
	Risk Management	As set out in report and Appendices

6.2	Community Impact Assessment Recommendations	<p>The Borough Council considers the effect of its actions on all sections of our community and has addressed all of the following Equality Strands in the production of this report, as appropriate:-</p> <p>Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.</p>
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Previous Consideration - Nil

Background Papers – Annual Internal Audit Report 2020-21, Strategic Risk Register

7	Appendices to the Report
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APPENDIX 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2020-21

APPENDIX 1, ANNEX 1 – Summary of Governance Framework

APPENDIX 2 - Progress Report for AGS 2019-20

<p style="text-align: center;">AUDIT AND ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">27 JULY 2021</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">Annual Governance Statement 2020-21</p>

**STAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL
ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR 2020-21**

1. Scope of Responsibility

- 1.1 Stafford Borough Council (the 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. 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.
- 1.2 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, and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3 The Council has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*. This statement explains how the Council has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, regulation 6(1)(b), which require all relevant authorities to prepare an annual governance statement.

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 its communities. 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 that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood and potential impact of those risks being realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.
- 2.3 The governance framework has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31 March 2021 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Governance Statement.
- 2.4 At the point that the first national lockdown came into effect, the Council had to make a number of changes to its normal governance arrangements and many of these have remained in place since that time. The modified arrangements have adequate controls in place and have been kept under review.

3. The Governance Framework

- 3.1 The Council has adopted a local Code of Governance, which can be found on the Council's website. The Code is comprised of 6 key principles:
1. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
 2. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
 3. Defining the vision and outcomes for the local area and determining the actions necessary to achieve the intended outcomes.
 4. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
 5. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
 6. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.
- 3.2 The key components of the Governance Framework are summarised in the diagram at Annex 1.
- 3.3 A key element of the Council's governance arrangements concerns safeguarding. Stafford Borough Council has both a moral and legal obligation to ensure a duty of care for children and vulnerable adults across its services. We are committed to ensuring that all children and vulnerable adults are protected and kept safe from harm whilst engaged in services organised and provided by the Council.

We do this by:

- Completion of the statutory annual Section II Audit
- Having a Child and Adult Protection Policy and procedure in place endorsed by the Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board and Staffordshire and Stoke Adult Safeguarding Partnership
- Having child and adult protection processes which give clear, step-by-step guidance if abuse is identified
- Safeguarding training programme in place for staff and members
- Carrying out the appropriate level of DBS checks on staff and volunteers
- Working closely with Staffordshire Safeguarding Children Board and Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership

4. Review of effectiveness

4.1 The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is led by the Head of Governance who has responsibility for the development and maintenance of the Code of Governance. The review is informed by the work of Members, the senior officers within the Council and also by comments made by the External Auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates. The process that has been applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance framework is set out below.

4.2 **The Authority** - the Head of Governance and the Monitoring Officer, on behalf of the Council, undertake reviews of the Council's governance arrangements on an ongoing basis. Work to support this includes a self-assessment review against the Code of Governance, reviews of the Constitution, Financial Regulations, the Scheme of Delegation and policies, processes and practices throughout the year. No new issues have been identified in 2020/21.

4.3 **The Executive** - the Cabinet monitors the effectiveness of the governance framework through the consideration of regular performance, financial and strategic risk management reports. Individual Cabinet members receive regular feedback from senior officers on the delivery of services and the achievement of objectives and targets. Issues of strategic and corporate importance are referred to the Cabinet.

As a result of the need to make urgent decisions during the pandemic, meetings were held with all political group leaders to brief them and take decisions where necessary.

4.4 **Overview and Scrutiny Committees** - the Council has 3 Scrutiny Committees. The Scrutiny Committees review decisions made by Cabinet and areas of concern. They can "call-in" a decision that has been made by the Cabinet when they consider the decision is not in accordance with the Council's Constitution.

The Scrutiny Committees:

- (i) determine their own work programme at the beginning of each year and this includes the provision of updates, briefings and reviews of services/activities; and
- (ii) consider regular performance management information from senior management.

4.5 **The Audit and Accounts Committee** - is responsible for overseeing the Council's governance arrangements. The Committee monitors the effectiveness of risk management, reviews corporate governance issues, the work of Internal Audit and the anti fraud and corruption arrangements throughout the year. The Audit and Accounts Committee receives quarterly reports on:

- the work of internal audit in reviewing the systems and processes to ensure that they are adequate; and
- updates on the management of the Council's strategic risks. A strategic risk register is in place, which identifies and evaluates the risks faced by the Council in delivering its objectives. Work is ongoing to review and address these risks and update the risk register accordingly.

4.6 **The Standards Committee** - is responsible for the ethical framework of the Council. The Committee works closely with the Monitoring Officer in dealing with complaints about Members conduct and promoting high standards of conduct.

4.7 **Internal Audit** – is responsible for reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements, including the system of internal control, and reporting on its adequacy. Internal Audit is a key source of assurance for the Annual Governance Statement and operates in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Internal Audit reviews the internal control system following an audit plan based on an assessment of the potential risks for the various systems and procedures. The Audit Plan for 2020-21 was revised as a result of the pandemic with work focussed on systems where controls were changed to support the move to homeworking and new areas of work arising from Covid response and recovery work. This work has been used to provide an independent view on the adequacy of the governance framework.

In the annual report to the Audit and Governance Committee, the Chief Internal Auditor has independently assessed the Council's internal control environment and given a "**partial assurance**" opinion that the Council's governance arrangements were operating adequately and there were no instances where any breakdown of control resulted in a material discrepancy. The Chief Internal Auditor has identified Cyber and Network Security as a significant issue for inclusion in the Annual Governance Statement. Where deficiencies in internal control were identified during reviews, assurance was provided that these had been or would be resolved in an appropriate manner. Such cases will continue to be followed-up as part of the routine operation of the Internal Audit function.

- 4.8 **Risk Management** - during 2020-21 the Audit and Accounts Committee received regular progress reports regarding the management of strategic risks. The strategic risks facing the Council were reviewed as at 1 April 2021 and as there are currently 3 red risks for inclusion as significant governance issues:
- The Council's financial stability is adversely affected in the short and medium term;
 - The economy of the Borough is adversely impacted limiting the ability to deliver the Economic Growth Strategy for the Borough
 - The Council's key contractors are adversely affected by lockdown and cease to operate

- 4.9 **Statements of Assurance from Heads of Service** - assurances were sought from the Heads of Service as to the effectiveness of a number of aspects of the Governance Framework as it operates in their service areas. The following issues have been identified:

- Ongoing effect of the pandemic on the Borough's economy;
- Cyber security; and
- Ongoing support to the Council's key contractors.

- 4.10 **Assurance from the Statutory Officers** - assurances have been sought, through discussions with the Head of Paid Service (ie Chief Executive), the Monitoring Officer (Head of Law and Administration) and the s151 Officer (Head of Finance) with regard to their responsibilities for governance.

- The Head of Paid Service has overall responsibility for the organisation, appointment and management of staff.
- The Chief Financial Officer (s151 Officer) has overall responsibility for the financial management of the Council. Throughout the year the s151 Officer ensures that the financial position of the Council is monitored, that consideration is given to financial implications when taking decisions and with the support of internal audit that financial processes are complied with.
- The Monitoring Officer has overall responsibility for:
 - reporting on matters he/she believes are, or are likely to be, illegal or amount to maladministration;
 - matters relating to the conduct of Members and officers; and
 - the operation of the Council's constitution.

The Statutory Officers have identified the following as significant governance issues:

- Ongoing response and recovery from the pandemic;
- Financial pressures as a result of the pandemic;
- Officer capacity;

- Effect of the pandemic on the ability to hold decision making meetings
- The potential further sharing of services, including the Chief Executive, with Cannock Chase District Council; and
- Implementation of the new Finance system.

4.11 **External Audit / Other Review Agencies** - during the year the Council received the following key reports:

- (i) Audit Findings (dated 23 November 2020 and reported to Audit and Accounts Committee 25 November 2020; and
- (ii) Annual Audit Letter (dated 25 January 2021 and reported to Audit and Accounts Committee 2 February 2021).

The reports offered an unqualified opinion on the Council's financial statements and its arrangements for value for money and effective use of resources. No significant concerns were identified.

4.12 **Leadership Team** – in addition to the individual Heads of Service and Statutory Officers assurances, the members of Leadership Team have been consulted on the draft annual governance statement and the significant governance issues that should be included within it.

5. **Opinion on the Governance Framework**

- 5.1 The review of the effectiveness of the governance framework show that the arrangements continue to be fit for purpose and **reasonable assurance** can be given that the framework is operating adequately in practice.
- 5.2 No review can provide absolute assurance; this statement is intended to provide reasonable assurance that there is an ongoing process for reviewing the governance framework and its operation in practice.
- 5.3 Whilst the governance framework is considered to be adequate a number of issues have been identified that need to be addressed to further enhance the Council's governance arrangements. These are outlined in section 6 together with the actions to be taken.
- 5.4 The Audit and Accounts Committee will have responsibility for ensuring the delivery of the actions needed to improve the Council's governance framework.

6. **Significant Governance Issues**

- 6.1 The Council's key governance issues are outlined in the action plan below. The majority of the issues are ongoing from the previous AGS and relate to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. There are also 2 actions from the 2018-19 Annual Governance Statement which hadn't been fully completed and were deferred to allow resources to be focussed on response and recovery from the effects of the pandemic.

ISSUE and ACTION	OFFICER RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE
<p>6.1.3 The economy of the Borough and delivery of the Economic Growth Strategy</p> <p>The pandemic is having a considerable impact on the economy of the Borough and the Council's plans have been reviewed to reflect this. An Economic Recovery Strategy has been prepared and is being delivered. The Economic Growth Strategy Delivery Plan has been reviewed and amended and progress on delivery is monitored regularly by SBC and Partners at the Stafford Growth, Regeneration and Infrastructure Partnership. Work continues to be delivered on the key major projects being progressed by the Council including investment in Stafford Town Centre through the successful Future High Streets Fund bid, continued development of Stafford Station Gateway and the potential Garden Community at Meecebrook. Supporting local businesses affected by the pandemic through the delivery of the Additional Restrictions Grant support remained a key priority</p> <p>Key actions for 2021/22 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of the Stafford Town Centre Transformation Programme, including the year 1 delivery of the Future High Street Funds Projects • Phase 2 work on Stafford Station Gateway • Feasibility studies for potential Garden Community 	Head of Development	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>December 2021</p>
<p>6.1.4 The Council's Key Contractors</p> <p>The Council's key contractors have been adversely affected by the successive lockdowns.</p> <p>The Council is continuing to work to support them by providing financial assistance and in implementing their recovery plans.</p>	Head of Operations	Ongoing

ISSUE and ACTION	OFFICER RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE
<p>6.1.5 Officer Capacity</p> <p>Officer capacity has been stretched during the pandemic with the delivery of essential services, key projects and work on response and recovery. This has been managed throughout and accounted for in the new Corporate Business Plan for the next 3 years.</p> <p>The Operational Recovery work stream is continuing to provide a co-ordinated approach to operational and transformational recovery taking into account service delivery priorities, timescale and capacity to deliver.</p> <p>The development of the shared service business case will also take into consideration capacity and resilience (see also 6.1.9)</p>	Chief Executive	Ongoing
<p>6.1.6 Decision Making Meetings During the Pandemic</p> <p>The first lockdown during the pandemic affected the normal committee meeting cycle, with a number of meetings cancelled/postponed. The introduction of virtual meetings allowed for a settled calendar of meetings to be re-instated. However, since May 2021 the need for the physical attendance of Members at decision making meetings has been re-introduced. This presents a number of challenges to ensure that democratic processes can take place and safely.</p> <p>Risk assessments are being undertaken for each venue used. Virtual attendance is being considered where it is lawful to do so. Delegated authorities are kept up to date.</p>	Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer	Being kept under review

ISSUE and ACTION	OFFICER RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE
<p>6.1.7 Shared Services</p> <p>The Council's Financial Recovery Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy includes the potential for savings arising from further shared services. In particular the recommendations arising from the Environmental Services review are due to be reassessed by both Cannock Chase Council and the Borough.</p> <p>As a result of the resignation of the Managing Director at Cannock Chase District Council the Chief Executive is to be shared with Cannock Chase District Council pending the development of a business case to assess the potential for an extension to the existing sharing of services between the two Councils. The sharing arrangement is for a 14 month period wef 1 June 2021, including a handover period of 2 months, the development and consideration of a business case within a further 6 months, and then either confirmation of the ongoing sharing arrangements or a six month cover period whereby CCDC determine their own arrangements for the Head of Paid service role</p> <p>The business Case will include a review of the governance arrangements that would be needed to support the sharing of a Chief Executive and further services. The key actions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of the business case • Review of governance arrangements • Business case to be submitted to both Councils for consideration 	<p>Shared Services Board</p>	<p>January 2022</p>

ISSUE and ACTION	OFFICER RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE
<p>6.1.8 Cyber Security</p> <p>There is an increasing risk of cyber attacks. Work is planned to further enhance the Council's security arrangements and this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Cyber Security group to be formed. • Access to the network to be limited to corporate devices only. • a checklist of Cyber specific action to be added to the Technology Major Incident process for response in the event of an incident. • Cyber Awareness training made compulsory. • Protective Domain Name Servers used on all corporate devices. 	Head of Technology	November 2021
<p>6.1.9 New Finance System</p> <p>The Council has procured a new Finance system. The implementation timetable has been impacted by the pandemic and a phased implementation introduced. The main system went live on 1 April 2021 but other elements will be implemented over the coming months.</p> <p>Contingency plans were put in place to maintain the existing financial system for a 12 month period</p> <p>The core external elements of the system in terms of payments to creditors, etc and income collection were up and running from day one.</p> <p>Teething troubles are being experienced with the new internal accounting elements of the system and the following actions are planned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing project management • Testing and checking that the system is operating as expected • User training. • Post implementation review <p>The Council's financial accounts for 2020-21 are being closed down on the old system.</p>	Head of Finance	Ongoing

ISSUE and ACTION	OFFICER RESPONSIBLE	TARGET DATE
<p>6.1.10 Employees' Code of Conduct (deferred in 2020-21 due to pandemic)</p> <p>The review of the Employees' Code of Conduct has been completed. The revised Code has been agreed with Leadership Team. Managers and the Trade Unions need to be consulted before the Code is passed to Council for approval.</p> <p>The Code will be reviewed in light of the impact of COVID-19 to see if any changes need to be made before it is consulted on and passed to Council for approval.</p>	Head of Human Resources, Head of Law and Administration and Head of Governance	December 2021
<p>6.1.11 Information Governance (deferred in 2020-21 due to pandemic)</p> <p>An Information Governance Framework has been drafted to complement the existing policy documents. The next stage is for this to be considered by Leadership Team.</p> <p>The revision of the Retention of Documents Schedule needs to be completed and all employees made aware of it.</p>	Head of Law and Administration	December 2021

Signed:

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Chair of the Audit and Accounts Committee

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Date

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Leader of the Council

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Date

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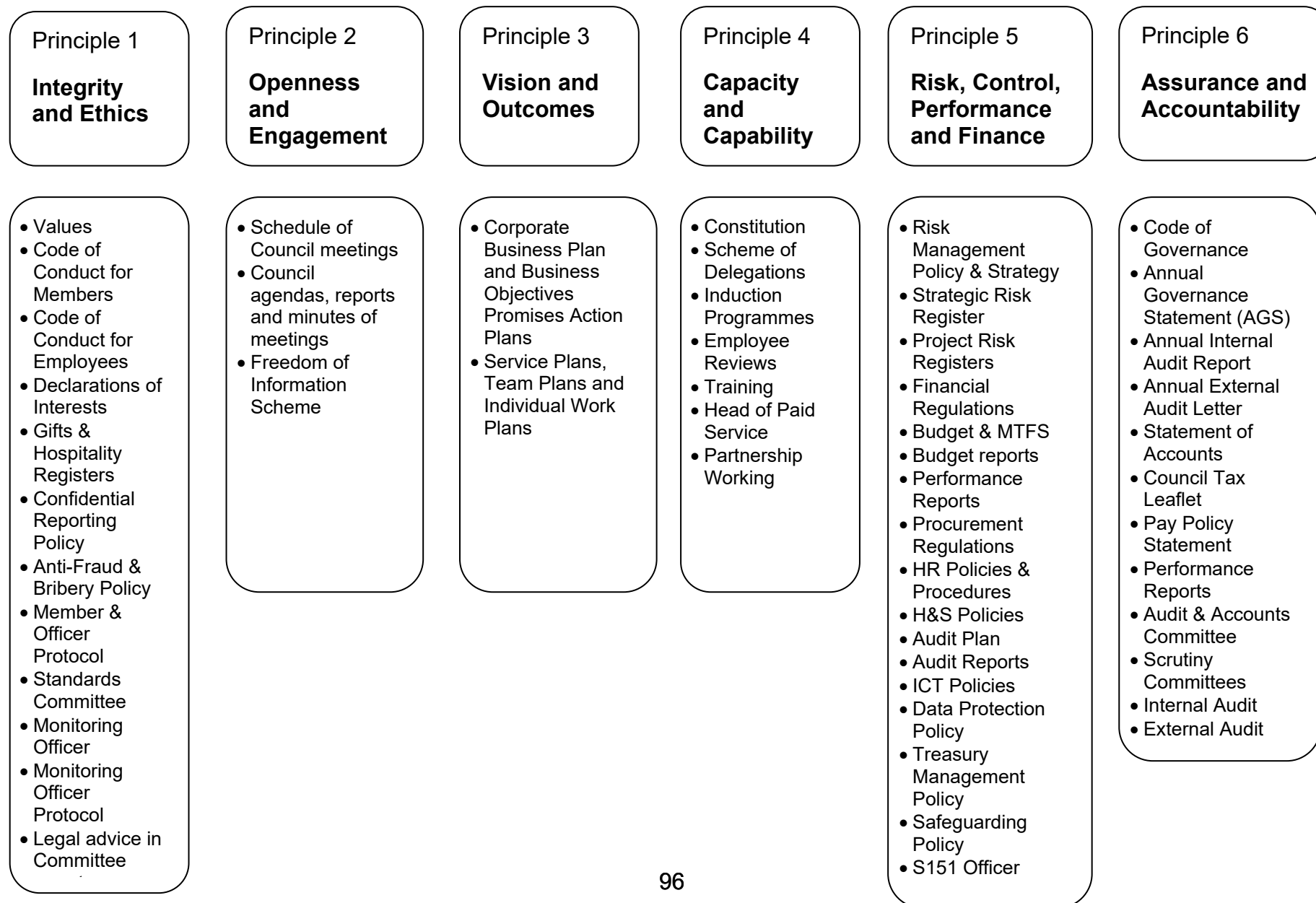
Chief Executive

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Date

on behalf of Stafford Borough Council


GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK






AUDIT AND ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

27 JULY 2021


Annual Governance Statement Progress Report as at 30 June 2021



No.	Issue / Action	Lead Officer and Timescale	Progress/Comments	Status
1	<p>Development of Recovery Strategy re Coronavirus Pandemic</p> <p>A Recovery Strategy is being prepared to deal with the effects of COVID-19 on the Borough. The strategy will focus on 4 key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic; • Financial; • Community; and • Organisational. 	<p>Leadership Team</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Recovery governance structures have been in place for the past 12 months and are operating well. Delivery plans are in for each of the workstreams and progress is reported through to Leadership Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny on a regular basis.</p>	

No.	Issue / Action	Lead Officer and Timescale	Progress/Comments	Status
2	<p>Financial Stability</p> <p>The Council has incurred both additional expenditure and a material loss of income from fees and charges etc. Despite receiving some additional grant funding, the pandemic is likely to have a significant impact on the Council's finances both in the current year and for the foreseeable future particular as a result of the impact on the Local Economy. This compounds the ongoing financial uncertainty regarding the future funding regime for local government.</p> <p>This will be addressed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring the Financial Impact of COVID-19 • Implementing an Interim Financial strategy • Refreshing the Medium Term Financial Plan • Determining a Financial Recovery Strategy 	<p>Chief Executive / Head of Finance</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Monitoring of the Financial impact of Covid-19 is ongoing. The potential impact of the pandemic has been reflected in the Financial Plan and Medium Term Strategy of the Cabinet (5 November 2020) and the Budget approved by Council at its meeting of 26 January 2021. As a result of additional government funding provided in 2020-21 and the compensation scheme for sales , fees and charges and local taxation the impact in 2020-21 has been addressed.</p> <p>In addition the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement (17 Dec 2020) enabled a balanced budget to be set for 2021-22 however the medium term financial stability of the Council is dependent upon changes arising from the future funding regime for local government.</p>	




No.	Issue / Action	Lead Officer and Timescale	Progress/Comments	Status
3	<p>The economy of the Borough and delivery of the Economic Growth Strategy</p> <p>The pandemic will have a considerable impact on the economy of the Borough and the Council's plans will need to be reviewed to reflect this. The key actions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete an Economic Recovery Strategy • Complete a review of the Economic Growth Strategy Delivery Plan • Continue with major projects as programmed 	<p>Head of Development</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The Implementation Plan for the Economic Growth Strategy, which also represents the Economic Recovery Strategy for Stafford Borough has been completed and was reported to Cabinet in October 2020. Delivery of the Implementation Plan is reviewed regularly by the Stafford Growth, Regeneration and Infrastructure Partnership. Major projects are progressing as programmed.</p>	
4	<p>The Council's Key Contractors</p> <p>The Council's key contractors have been adversely affected by lockdown and depending on easing arrangements they may not recover.</p> <p>The Council is working to support them during lockdown, providing financial assistance and in implementing their recovery plans.</p>	<p>Head of Operations</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>All of the Council's key contractors continue to provide services to the Council subject to any restrictions on service provision imposed by Government Guidance and legislation. Regular meetings continue with the contractors to support them on action plans and service implementation plans in accordance with Government Guidelines and legislation. Contact with other Councils that have contracts with SBC contractors continues in order to share intelligence.</p>	

No.	Issue / Action	Lead Officer and Timescale	Progress/Comments	Status
			<p>Risk is not at the same level with all contractors. We are concentrating on the monitoring and financial support to the Leisure contractor which currently carries the highest risk.</p> <p>Regular monthly finance meetings take place with our leisure services contractor with the implementation of the “open book” process. The Leisure Services Contractor and the Council have been successful in securing grant funding totalling £652,801 to support works to make venues Covid secure, to cover losses incurred by Freedom Leisure and to support re-opening and recovery. After months of closures and cancellations, this funding will be a much needed helping hand for organisations transitioning back to normal in the months ahead.</p> <p>The Council through the LGA continues to lobby the Government for financial support for the periods pre-December 2020 and post-March 2021.</p>	

No.	Issue / Action	Lead Officer and Timescale	Progress/Comments	Status
5	Officer Capacity & Financial Resources With the delivery of essential services, key projects and work on recovery resources are stretched. This is being managed through:	Chief Executive	The Corporate Business Plan has been approved and has been implemented. Delivery plans are now in place for all of the four business objectives.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A planned review of the Corporate Business Plan to reassess objectives for the next 3 years 	Corporate Business and Partnerships Manager		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Operational Recovery work stream is providing a co-ordinated approach to operational and transformational recovery taking into account service delivery priorities, timescale and capacity to deliver 	Head of HR & Property Services Ongoing	Organisational Recovery Group (ORG) in place and operating well. Initial Implementation/Action Plan agreed but kept under review as national response to the pandemic develops and revised guidance is issued. Governance through reports to Leadership Team, Recovery Management & Overview Boards and Resources Scrutiny Cttee.	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued monitoring of the impact on the health and wellbeing of staff 	Head of HR & Property Services Ongoing	On-going monitoring by HR Services in conjunction with line managers and use of employee focussed surveys. Corporate monitoring of absence levels, and health & well-being via direct employee support and/or liaison with line managers	

No.	Issue / Action	Lead Officer and Timescale	Progress/Comments	Status
6	<p>The return to normal democratic processes</p> <p>The lockdown affected the normal committee meeting cycle, with a number of meetings cancelled/postponed, and led to the introduction of virtual meetings. A settled calendar of meetings will be re-instated as lockdown is lifted. This includes consideration as to holding the Council's AGM and supporting other functions such as Scrutiny. This will link into the Organisational Recovery work stream.</p>	<p>Head of Law & Admin</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The Council has re-introduced a full committee meeting cycle, initially through the use of virtual meetings, and now following risk assessment of suitable physical venues.</p>	
7	<p>Implications arising from EU Exit</p> <p>There is uncertainty about the terms on which the UK will exit the EU and the effects on the Council.</p> <p>The effects of Brexit on legislation and how it affects the Council will be monitored and appropriate action taken to ensure continuing compliance.</p>	<p>Leadership Team</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Any implications arising from Brexit have been monitored by Leadership Team over the past 12 months. The arrangements through the Staffordshire Resilience Forum have been stood down and this action is now completed.</p>	

KEY TO STATUS INDICATORS:

STATUS	DESCRIPTION
	The action is making significant progress towards completion or has been completed
	The action is making some progress towards being completed
	Work has not commenced on the action