

Annual Governance Statement – 2020/21 Financial Year

1. Executive Summary and Approval

- 1.1 Each year the Council produces an Annual Governance Statement (“AGS”) that explains how it manages its corporate governance arrangements, makes decisions, manages its resources and promotes values and high standards of conduct and behaviour.
- 1.2 The Annual Governance Statement reports on:
- How the Council complies with its own governance arrangements;
 - How the Council monitors the effectiveness of the governance arrangements; and
 - Improvements or changes in governance arrangements proposed for the forthcoming year.
- 1.3 The Internal Auditor’s opinion on the Council’s internal control environment:

Overall, for the financial year 2020/21, the auditors are able to provide Moderate Assurance that there is sound system of internal control, designed to meet the Council’s objectives and that controls are being applied consistently.

- 1.4 As the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive we have been advised on the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by the Audit and Governance Committee and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.
- 1.5 It is our opinion, based upon the content of this AGS that the Council’s governance framework is robust and that the governance arrangements have proved to be highly effective during 2020/21.

1.6 The Council has previously recognised a number of governance issues in previous Statements, all of which have now been resolved.

1.7 The Council has devised an action plan for the financial year 2021/22 and will monitor progress during the year.



Leader of the Council

Councillor Susan Brown

Date

7th July 2022



Chief Executive

Caroline Green

Date

7TH July 2022

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Oxford City 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. It 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.
- 2.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs to facilitate the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.
- 2.3 The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 (“the Regulations”) require that:-
- The Council must conduct a review, at least once a year, of the effectiveness of its system of internal control;
 - Findings of this review should be considered by the Council;
 - The Council must approve an Annual Governance Statement; and
 - The Annual Governance Statement must accompany the Statement of Accounts.

- 2.4 The Audit and Governance Committee has delegated authority to undertake these duties on behalf of the Council. This statement explains how the Council meets the requirements of the Regulations.
- 2.5 Once approved by the Audit and Governance Committee the AGS will be signed by the Leader and the Chief Executive. It will then be published alongside the Statement of Accounts.

3. The Purpose of the Governance Framework

- 3.1 The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values by which the authority is directed and controlled and activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.
- 3.2 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 on-going process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council’s policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be

realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

- 3.3 The governance framework has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31st March 2021 and up to the date of the approval of the accounts.

4. Policies, Procedures, Laws and Regulations

- 4.1 The Head of Law and Governance is designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer. It is the function of the Monitoring Officer to ensure compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations.
- 4.2 The financial management of the authority is conducted in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution and the Council's Finance Rules. The Council has designated the Head of Financial Services as the Chief Finance Officer in accordance with section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 4.3 The Council has robust policies and procedures relating to the use of resources and the corporate governance framework, including Finance Rules, Contract Rules, scheme of delegation, IT strategy, Avoiding Bribery Fraud and Corruption Policy and Whistleblowing Policy.
- 4.4 The Audit and Governance Committee approved an updated Anti-Money Laundering Policy on 10 January 2019 and a new Avoiding Bribery, Fraud and Corruption Policy on 11 March 2019 as well as a refreshed

Whistleblowing Policy on 29 July 2021. The Audit and Governance Committee will be asked to consider an updated Bribery policy on 20 October 2021.

5. The Governance Framework

Council Strategy 2020/24

- 5.1 The Council Strategy 2020-2024 came into force on 1 April 2020, replacing the Corporate Plan 2016-2020. The Council Strategy 2020/24 sets out, at a high level, the aims for the council and what outcomes it aims to have achieved by the end of 2024.
- 5.2 The strategy highlights the developments and changes the Council wants to make and as such does not include current ongoing areas of work that might be considered business as usual.
- 5.3 The Council Strategy 2020-2024 is a public document and is presented in a way that is easy for people to understand.
- 5.4 The Council's vision is "Building a world-class city for everyone". By creating successful places in which to live and work, supporting its communities and addressing the climate emergency, it aims to build a fairer, greener city in which everyone can thrive.
- 5.5 The Council has set four key priorities over the next four years – all of equal importance. The four priorities are all

interconnected, and the Council will work to achieve them in a joined-up way:

- Pursue a zero carbon Oxford
- Enable an inclusive economy
- Support thriving communities
- Deliver more affordable housing

5.6 The Council is committed to a “customer-first” approach. It works innovatively and efficiently as a flexible and customer-focused team offering high quality services that meet people’s needs. It works to tackle inequality through its employment practices and the ways in which services are delivered aim to provide equality of opportunity and access for all.

5.7 The Council’s investments and policy-making are all designed to address the social and financial inequalities across Oxford. The Council values diversity and seeks to build a greater sense of togetherness across the city’s communities. It wants to ensure all of Oxford’s citizens, including those who are harder to reach, have fair opportunities and a real share in the city’s future.

5.8 The Council works in partnership with others – other councils, businesses, communities, the voluntary sector, Oxford’s universities, the Government and other public sector bodies to ensure the way it shapes services and directs investments is joined-up with others.

5.9 The Council uses its commercial assets for the benefit of local people. It uses the wholly-owned companies and

the commercial properties it owns to create jobs, support the local economy and provide additional funds that support delivery of public services. This is called the “Oxford Model”.

5.10 The Council is a campaigning organisation, working actively to engage with residents, businesses, stakeholders and Government and use its influence to help achieve the aims set out in the Strategy.

5.11 For each of its four priorities, the Council has set out the outcomes it would like to see achieved over the four years, and some of the headline actions it believes will be required to help deliver this.

5.12 The Council Strategy is complemented by an annual business plan that sets out the key priorities and specific actions and milestones the Council will undertake for the year ahead and reports on progress against agreed key performance indicators. This strengthens the prioritisation of key areas of work and supports collaboration among officers and with external partners. The first Business Plan covering the period 2020/21 was published in September 2020.

5.13 The Council continues to use CorVu for financial reporting and for integrated financial, performance and risk reporting to the Cabinet on a quarterly basis.

5.14 Following the review of governance structures during 2018/19, resulting in the disestablishment of programme boards and the establishment of a Development Board

and an Operational Delivery Group, work has continued to embed the Council's project management process supported by the Project Management Office (PMO)). This structure has continued to be embedded during 2019/20 and 20/21. The Development Board has oversight of all capital projects submitted to it by the Development Review Group and the Asset Review Group. The Development Board and the Operational Delivery Group provide effective oversight of the large number of Council projects.

- 5.15 The Council continued to use the principles of "Projects In Controlled Environments" ("Prince 2") in its approach to project management along with the introduction of Agile principles of project management. Both of these methodologies are widely used in government and the public sector.
- 5.16 The Capital Gateway framework has continued to operate during the 2020/21 year with on-going involvement in programme and project delivery. Project Managers and other officers involved with the delivery of the Council's Capital Programme are encouraged to engage with and draw on support from the PMO, which now has additional resources and provides support and guidance in both the documentation required and the tasks demanded at each stage (gateway) of delivery.
- 5.17 The Capital Gateway framework is intended to establish whether ideas for projects should be developed, and then reconsidered at feasibility and design stages. A Development Review Panel and Asset Review Group,

with representation of Officers across the Council, provides this peer review and challenge on proposals and business cases for the Development Board and Operational Delivery Group.

- 5.18 All capably funded schemes are prioritised and enter into the Council's annual budget setting process. The revised processes enhance both Project Sponsors' and Project Managers' compliance with excellent project management practices, together with ensuring greater successful delivery of the Council's capital projects.
- 5.19 The PMO has an agreed a protocol with Oxford Direct Services Limited (ODSL) to ensure that the procurement and management of the relationship between the Council and ODSL complies with the relevant governance processes. This protocol is being followed by Project Managers where they are working with ODSL.
- 5.20 Oxford Direct Services Limited and the on-going work to deliver affordable homes through the Oxford Housing Company have continued to be managed through their existing, respective, Company Board structures. Alongside this there are significant private and public sector investment proposals as well as the Housing and Growth Deal.

Review of Corporate Risks

- 5.21 The Council maintains a corporate risk register that reflects strategic and operational risks that have been identified as well as proposed actions to mitigate or

manage those risks in the council's activities. The Audit and Governance Committee and the Cabinet receive a quarterly report on progress against the risk registers.

Partnerships

5.22 The Council works with a wide range of organisations through a number of city and county-wide partnerships to deliver its corporate objectives.

5.23 The Council's Leader and Chief Executive represent the Council on the following formal partnership:-

- The Leader is a board member of OxLEP. Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership ("OxLEP") which since its launch in March 2011, has played a key role in driving forward a dynamic, growing and sustainable economy for Oxfordshire. OxLEP meets quarterly. The Leader also sits on the Oxfordshire Skills Board.
- The Council's Leader and the Chief Executive represent the Council in the Oxford Strategic Partnership ("OSP") which was founded in 2003 and brings together senior representatives from the public, business, community and voluntary sectors. The OSP helps to provide direction for the city's future, respond to local priorities and engage more effectively with local concerns. This partnership for the city promotes collaboration and openness and provides opportunities to access funding and share resources more easily. Currently the partnership contains several key organisations and individuals, all

with a specific interest or experience in improving quality of life across the Oxford. The OSP meets quarterly.

- The Leader of the Council is a board member of Future Oxfordshire Partnership, the recently confirmed name of the Oxfordshire Growth Board. The Future Oxfordshire Partnership is a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire together with key strategic partners and meets four times a year. Its purpose is to coordinate local efforts to manage economic, housing and infrastructure development in a way that is inclusive and maximises local social and environmental benefits.

5.24 Other formal countywide partnerships which have member representation from the Council include the Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership, the Oxfordshire Health and Well Being Board, the Health Improvement Board and the Children's Trust. Council officers sit on the Health Protection Board and Oxfordshire Gold meeting, both system-wide bodies involving partners from health, local government, police and other agencies to coordinate the response to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

5.25 In addition, the Council has established and supported two further partnerships in the last year, the Zero Carbon Oxford Partnership, bringing together key organisations in the city to coordinate action to reduce carbon emissions; and the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership to coordinate action on tackling economic inequalities.

The Council's Companies

- 5.26 During the year 2019/20 the Council's three housing companies (Oxford City Housing Limited (OCHL) (Company number 10212716), Oxford City Housing (Investment) Limited (OCH(I)L) (Company number 10370637) and Oxford City Housing (Development) Limited (OCH(D)L) (Company number 10370647)) continued to develop their conjoined operation with a view to increasing affordable housing availability in Oxford and becoming a significant supplier of housing in their own right. OCHL is wholly-owned by the Council, and OCH(I)L and OCH(D)L are both wholly-owned subsidiaries of OCHL.
- 5.27 Capitalised expenditure across the companies totalled £17.1m on acquisitions and development activities compared to £7.39m in the previous year. This is mainly due to increased development activity. The spending for the year by both the development and investment company are in line with the estimated figures for the year.
- 5.28 During 2020/21 the investment company OCH(I)L took handover of an additional 27 dwellings from the housing scheme at Barton Park, taking the cumulative total now managed by the company to 95 at year end. The remaining balance of the first phase of the Barton Park development of 27 dwellings is expected to be handed over in the 2020/21 financial year.
- 5.29 Through OCH(D)L work started on a number of sites, delivering 61 units with 17 additional sites planned for 2020/21 and a further 170 units on completion. Through OCH(D)L work continued with 148 homes under construction by March 2021. The Company's business plan assumes 1,902 units in total over the next 10 years and the handover of 365 units at Barton Park. The business strategy is still to build a range of dwellings, the majority of which will be social dwellings and which will subsequently be sold to the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- 5.30 Gross profit for the OCHL group of three companies totalled £629k, up from £424k last year. The profit was mainly derived from rental income, although a net loss of £1.4m up from £565k last year was generated mainly due to the increase in finance costs as result in additional loans from the Council. After taking into account property re-valuations the total comprehensive profit for the Group was £120k compared to £1.5m last year.
- 5.31 With regard to the Council's two wholly-owned direct services companies – Oxford Direct Services Limited (Company number 10719214) ("ODSL") and Oxford Direct Services Trading Limited (Company number 10719214) ("ODSTL") – the year 2020/21 represented their third year of trading.
- 5.32 ODSL holds "Teckal" status, and as such can enter into contracts with the Council without the requirement to comply with the Public Contract Regulations 2015. The

Council therefore let a substantial service contract to ODSL, under which many of the Council's statutory and other direct service operations are to be performed by ODSL, with effect from 1st April 2018. This involved a "TUPE" transfer of some 670 Council staff to the employment of ODSL. In return, with effect from the same date and to support ODSL's operation, the Council entered into a support services contract with ODSL under which ODSL receives a range of key support services. ODSL trades exclusively with third parties and in its first year of operation has provided commercial waste collection services to its commercial clients.

5.33 The loss for the year amounted to £155k, compared to a profit of £1.06m last year. No dividend payments were made and retained earnings totalled £1.5m. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has delayed any payment of dividend until later in the 2021/22 financial year when it is expected that there will be more certainty about the financial environment. Overall the financial year 2020/21 proved to be a difficult one especially for building services, with significant numbers of operatives having to be furloughed. Early signs in 2021/22 are positive with a number of major contracts won and a return to some sense of normality although the recent implementation of the QL housing system programme is hampering the production of financial management information to confirm this.

5.34 The Council also holds a 50% share in Oxford West End Development Limited ("OxWED"), a company jointly owned with Nuffield College. The objective of OxWED is

to develop and regenerate the Oxpens area of the city centre. The loss in the Company for the 12 month period totalled £2.3m an increase from last year of £1.1m largely from an increase in administrative costs and additional financing costs. Retained losses at the year-end total £6.6m. The shareholders have recently agreed that the Company will take forward work on the project brief and the masterplan, rather than this work being undertaken by a development partner, to de-risk the delivery risk of the site.

5.35 In 2011 the Council entered into a Joint Venture ("JV") with Grosvenor Developments Ltd, known as Barton Oxford LLP (BOLLP) to enable the delivery of a new housing development at Barton Park. When construction is complete the 885 home development will include 354 homes for social rent which will be purchased and managed by OCH(I)L.

5.36 At the end of the financial year 2020-21 there had been 225 completions in Phase 1 out of a total development of 237 and all the 76 social dwellings had been purchased by Oxford City Housing Investment Ltd. A further 10 units (3 private sale) had been handed over and occupied in phase 2 out of the total of 207 units. Contracts have recently been exchanged for the development of Phase 3.

5.37 Each of the Council's companies held regular Board meetings throughout the year 2020/21. In addition representatives of the housing companies and the direct service companies attended periodic reporting meetings

with their shareholders. For the year 2021/22 these shareholder meetings are to be regularised into quarterly reporting meetings and combined with the scrutiny function, reporting on the activities of all interests of the Council in wholly owned companies and joint ventures, at which decisions on matters reserved for the shareholder can be made.

Data Protection

5.38 Through leaving the European Union and the Covid-19 pandemic there has been a need for the Council to review its current practices and respond to new data sharing arrangements. It has undertaken the following activities in respect of data protection governance:

- Introduced new iLearn mandatory data protection training for officers (two modules rather than one depending on type of job role held)
- The Data Protection Team researched and attended training on the fallout from the Schrems II case, specifically learning about the necessity of standard contract clauses plus other governance requirements, identifying another work stream yet to be commenced.
- Engaged with new Community Hub provision to allow for the sharing of data to provide support to the most vulnerable members of the community during the pandemic
- Engaged with the Oxfordshire County Council on the Extremely Vulnerable List and managed the Council's responsibility about handling this data

- Worked with the Council's ICT Team to establish secure ways of working at home for officers. All staff were given guidance on how to manage data compliantly at home.
- Worked with different sections of the Council building on the work highlighted from the emergency response to the pandemic to ensure that data is used properly whenever the delivery of further support to individuals is contemplated.

Council Housing

5.39 The Council owned housing stock totals 7682 units which comprises 7264 of general needs social rented properties, 44 general needs affordable rent properties, 291 sheltered accommodation units, 1 shared ownership property and 66 properties used as homeless temporary accommodation. The Council also has 16 properties leased to external organisations and a further 701 leaseholder properties.

5.40 During the financial year 2020/21 the Council successfully collected 97.80% of rental income due in respect of its rented housing.

Constitution

5.41 The Constitution forms a key part of the Council's governance framework, setting rules, principles and procedures to enable the Council to take decisions and conduct its business effectively, including executive arrangements, committee structures, finance and

contract rules, schemes of delegation and clear opportunities for public and councillor engagement in Council decision making.

- 5.42 The statutory roles of the Head of the Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer are described in the Constitution, as are the responsibilities for providing robust assurance on governance, ensuring lawful expenditure in line with approved budgets and procurement processes.
- 5.43 The Constitution is reviewed annually to take account of changes to regulations and other developments in the Council's governance arrangements. In 2020/21 this work was overseen by a cross-party group of councillors which held a series of meetings to consider and shape proposals from officers. The outcomes of this work were reported to the Council on 25 January 2021 when a revised version of the Constitution was approved.
- 5.44 The revisions approved by the Council included a change to the planning committee structure to have a single area planning committee (previously two) and changes to planning delegations to provide for a manageable workload for that committee. Further changes included provisions for single cabinet member decision making, provisions for the Council to consider emergency cross-party motions and changes to financial thresholds to align with the Find a Tender Service (FTS) threshold.

5.45 The Monitoring Officer retains delegated authority to amend the Councils' Constitution to correct clerical mistakes and to make it follow the law. The Monitoring Officer can also change Section 4 of the Constitution (who carries out executive responsibilities) and Section 6 (roles of Cabinet members) to reflect the wishes of the Leader of the Council.

5.46 On 31 March 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic the emergency powers delegated to the Chief Executive in the Constitution were used to adopt a business continuity version of the Constitution. This provided for continuity of decision making while it was not possible to convene meetings. These changes were reversed prior to the Annual Meeting on 20 May 2020 by which time the Council was successfully operating remote meetings under new Regulations passed in April 2020.

5.47 The Council continued to operate remote/virtual meetings with access available to members of the public until 6 May 2021 when the ability to do so was withdrawn. Since that time the Council has introduced a phased return to physical meetings with appropriate social distancing measures

Standards

5.48 The Council has arrangements in place to enable the public to make a formal complaint that a councillor, parish councillor or co-opted member has failed to comply with the Members' Code of Conduct.

5.49 The Standards Committee met twice during 2020/21 to oversee the numbers of complaints about councillors and any requests for dispensations, which allow a member to participate and vote on an item notwithstanding the existence of disclosable pecuniary interest. The Committee also considered and approved the Council's response to the Local Government Association's consultation on the Draft Model Member Code of Conduct.

5.50 The Standards Committee has a role in advising the Monitoring Officer on the Council's arrangements for training councillors. The Committee endorsed the revised arrangements for member training following the postponement of the local elections originally scheduled for May 2020.

Members' Allowances Scheme

5.51 The Council's Members' Allowances Scheme forms Part 26 of the Council's Constitution. The scheme will operate for four years, until the end of March 2023.

5.52 There was an internal audit carried out of the procedures for the operation of the Members' Allowances Scheme during 2018/19 and spot checks continue to be undertaken periodically on the allowances paid to members.

Dispensations for Members

5.53 The Localism Act 2011 requires that the Members of the Council must disclose Pecuniary Interests as defined in the Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012. Individual dispensations, which allow a member to participate and vote notwithstanding existence of disclosable pecuniary interest, can be granted in the discretion of the Monitoring Officer.

5.54 On 1st October 2018 the Council granted generic dispensations to all Members for a period of 4 years in respect of:

- Determining an allowance (including special responsibility allowances), travelling expense, payment or indemnity given to Members;
- Housing: where the Member (or spouse or partner) holds a tenancy or lease with the Council as long as the matter does not relate to the particular tenancy or lease of the Member (their spouse or partner);
- Housing Benefit or Universal Credit: where the Councillor (or spouse or partner) receives housing benefit and/or Universal Credit;
- Any Ceremonial Honours given to Members - Mayor-making, conferring the title of alderman/woman or admitting freemen/women;
- Setting the Council Tax or a precept under the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 (or any subsequent legislation); and

- Setting a Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme or Local scheme for the payment of business rates (including eligibility for rebates and reductions) for the purposes of the Local Government Finance Act 2012 (or any subsequent legislation).

Complaint Handling Arrangements

- 5.55 The Council has arrangements in place to enable the public to make a formal complaint that a councillor, parish councillor or co-opted member has failed to comply with the Members' Code of Conduct. In 2018/19 the Monitoring Officer reviewed the Council's complaint handling arrangements after operating the system for a period of time and in response to feedback from the Standards Committee, with a view to making the process more open and efficient whilst continuing to ensure it remained fair and independent. As a result of this exercise and recommendations from the Standards Committee revisions were made to these arrangements by Council on 29 April 2019. Initial assessment criteria have been included to guide the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with an Independent Person, when establishing whether there are valid grounds to investigate a complaint or take other action.
- 5.56 Other notable changes are the inclusion of indicative timescales for each stage of the complaints process and changes to the complaints form to require complainants to specify which part(s) of the Code they believe have been breached and what remedy they are seeking. The

Council recruited four independent persons for a four year term each from 25 November 2019.

Procurement

- 5.57 The Council's Procurement Team has transferred the Council's contract register and pipeline into Sharepoint to enable better contract management and monitoring of the Council spend. The register enables the Council to fulfil its obligations under the transparency agenda. The Contract register and pipeline is a live document meaning that as soon as a contract is updated any reports subsequently derived from the register are also updated.
- 5.58 A new Procurement Strategy was approved the Council's Cabinet September 2020 to run for 2 years until September 2022.
- 5.59 Officers from the Council's legal and procurement teams have recently undertaken an exercise to update the standard form of terms and conditions for contracts below the Find a Tender (the government's e-notification scheme "FTS") thresholds and those above the FTS thresholds. Other contract templates are consistently reviewed and updated when required.
- 5.60 Procurement officers have reviewed the government's Green Paper "Transforming Public Procurement", published in December 2020 and have highlighted the potential changes and impact to the Council's Finance Panel. Officers will continue to monitor the situation.

Member Training

- 5.61 During 2020/21 the Council conducted a review of its established framework for inducting and training councillors and adopted a Member Training and Development Scheme 2020-24. This work was overseen by the Standards Committee. The Scheme aims to equip all elected members with the basic skills, knowledge and resources they need to perform their duties and responsibilities as a councillor during their term of office.
- 5.62 A key change from the previous framework is the expansion of the compulsory induction programme for new members to include a wider range of training topics such as finance, safeguarding and values and behaviours. This expanded induction programme was delivered following the May 2021 local elections and sessions were well attended.
- 5.63 The Scheme also includes an indicative programme of optional training to support Members with their specific roles and responsibilities, such as training on appointments, audit, chairing, leadership, media and scrutiny. In response to feedback from Members the Scheme also includes an offer of personal safety training prior to the Council elections.
- 5.64 As 2020/21 was a non-election year for the Council following the postponement of the local elections the Standards Committee agreed that compulsory training would not be required until May 2021. Non-compulsory

training took place on the topics of safeguarding, inclusive behaviours and the Oxford Local Plan. Training, equipment and support was offered to all councillors in accessing meetings held remotely on Zoom under temporary coronavirus regulations passed in April 2020.

- 5.65 Members are able to access externally facilitated training sessions with the agreement of their Group Leader. For example a Member attended a BAME into Leadership Conference.

Officer Training

- 5.66 Council officers are also encouraged to access internal training courses as well as specific professional development. All new starters are required to undertake the corporate induction and to understand key policies on data protection, code of conduct and ICT security, as well as to undertake safeguarding awareness training as a minimum. Appraisals are conducted in relation to the performance of each member of staff on an annual basis.

Inclusion and Diversity

- 5.67 On 9 December 2020 the Cabinet approved the Workforce Equality Report 2018-2020, considered current progress on the development of the draft Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy where it related to Workforce Equality. It also considered those

actions that fall out of the draft EDI strategy but that will support the Council to develop relationships with local communities realise its employee representation aspirations. In January 2021 The Workforce Equalities Report 2018 to 2020 which includes its Gender Pay Gap Report and its Ethnicity Pay Gap Report was published in January 2021.

Appointments

- 5.68 The Appointments Committee is responsible for appointing executive directors and assistant chief executives and for undertaking the recruitment and selection process for the Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer and recommending these appointments to Council. The Committee also receives reports from the Head of Paid Service on senior management arrangements, to include any change. It also considers appeals from post holders in roles deemed to be politically “sensitive” who wish their post to be exempt from the Council’s list of Politically Restricted Posts. The Committee met four times in 2020/21.
- 5.69 The appointment of councillors to outside bodies such as trusts, charities and community associations is the responsibility of Cabinet. The Council currently has representatives on a total of 57 outside bodies. Those appointed to charities and trusts serve as trustees of those organisations which comes with a particular set of responsibilities. Guidance to assist Council

representatives on these organisations is provided upon appointment to ensure that all appointees understand their role and responsibilities in representing the Council on the organisation.

Decision Taking

- 5.70 All decision reports are subject to a robust clearance procedure to ensure that decision makers are presented with the best organisational advice and that the risks and legal, financial and equalities implications of proposals are identified and explained. All decision reports to the Cabinet are accompanied by a risk register and, where equalities impacts are identified, an equality impact assessment. Report writing guidelines and clear deadlines are in place to guide report authors and this guidance was updated and refreshed in 2019/20. The Council’s Forward Plan provides at least a four month forward view of upcoming decisions to assist councillors and the public in engaging with council decision making. The Council also maintains a focus on ensuring that decisions taken by officers are recorded and published on the Council’s website.

Scrutiny

- 5.71 The Council has a mature Scrutiny function that benefits from the active engagement of members, dedicated officer resource and a positive organisational culture that is conducive to effective scrutiny. The work of Scrutiny is prioritised and agreed through a work planning process while remaining flexible and responsive to emerging

issues, priorities and Cabinet decisions. In 2020/21 topics suggested for scrutiny to consider were ranked using the Council's TOPIC methodology with points awarded for timeliness, organisational priority, public interest, influence (the ability to) and cost. As a special measure to reflect the extraordinary workload on the Council arising from the Covid-19 pandemic preferential weightings were also given to Cabinet reports, which generate less additional officer work to produce for Scrutiny, allowing Scrutiny to navigate the balance of continuing to consider topics of particular importance whilst not overburdening the organisation at a time of acute stress.

- 5.72 In addition to considering reports at meetings on a wide range of issues and decisions that affect the city and its communities and making recommendations to Cabinet on the majority of these, Scrutiny commissioned two major pieces of review work in 2020/21. The topics chosen for review were a wide ranging review of the ways in which the Council could prevent domestic abuse and mitigate its effects through its housing function, grant-giving and procurement, partnerships and its internal policies, and the annual review of the Council's budget and medium term financial strategy. Each review resulted in an evidence based report to Cabinet containing a series of recommendations for improvement.

Audit and Governance Committee

- 5.73 The Council has an established Audit and Governance Committee with terms of reference that comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy ("CIPFA") guidance. The Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for setting the Council Tax base, approving the Annual Statement of Accounts, reviewing quarterly risk management reports and noting and commenting on the work plans and reports of the Council's internal and external auditors. The Committee monitors the implementation of audit actions. In 2020/21 the Committee also received reports from officers on the performance of the Council's fraud investigations team as well as a report on the Redmond Review into Local Audit and Local Authority Financial Reporting.
- 5.74 The Audit and Governance Committee receives quarterly reports on all allegations of fraud or corruption once any on-going investigation is complete as well as those Ombudsman complaints for which a Public Interest Report is issued.

Financial Planning

- 5.75 The Council has a coherent accounting and budgeting framework which includes the monthly monitoring and publication of spend against budget. The Medium Term Financial Plan and budget setting are underpinned by the prioritisation and savings plans which are regularly reviewed and updated by the Cabinet.

Emergency Planning

5.76 The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 establishes a clear set of roles and responsibilities for those involved in emergency preparation and response at the local level. It requires the Council and other organisations to prepare for adverse events and incidents. The Council is a category one responder and as such has continued to work with other agencies to build resilience on emergency planning functions. Officers have been identified to undertake silver and gold level response roles within the Council. The emergency planning documentation held by the Council is updated as required.

5.77 During 2020/21 the Council set up a working group for to emergency planning drawing on the expertise of all those involved in any emergency event within the City. The Council did the following:

- Introduced a new Flooding Protocol
- Introduced a new Sandbag Policy
- Commenced work on the Council's Crowded Places Plan
- Responded to the Prevent Legislation consultation
- Set up Gold and Silver level training for relevant officers in conjunction with Oxfordshire County Council
- Attended all relevant Thames Valley Local Forum Group online meetings to update on the Council's flooding and pandemic response

- The Council and ODSL responded proactively to the flooding events in Oxford over the 2020 Christmas period and again in Spring 2021, preventing properties from flooding and providing support to those households at risk.
- Worked with the County Council on documents and plans in relation to the Death of a Senior Figure.

Statutory Officer Reports

5.78 The Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer have had no cause to issue reports in exercise of their statutory powers in the 2019/20 financial year.

Whistleblowing

5.79 The Council has adopted a Whistleblowing Policy. The Policy is published within the Council's Constitution and is periodically reviewed by the Monitoring Officer and was reviewed in July 2021.

Corporate Complaints

5.80 The Council also operates a comments, compliments and complaints system ("the 3 Cs"). The Council received 19 "stage 3" complaints. 17 of these were not upheld and 2 were partially held.

5.81 There were no formal Public Interest Reports issued by the Housing Ombudsman or the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman against the Council in this year. Four complaints against the Council were upheld

by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, three of which related to the same issue. In all cases the suggested remedy of a policy/procedure change, and in one case financial redress, were implemented.

- 5.82 The Council has undertaken a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code for registered providers of social housing and is taking steps to ensure full compliance with the requirements of the Code. The Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT) has agreed in principle to adopt a two stage procedure for all complaints across the Council and ODS and to update and expand the 3 Cs documentation. A cross-service officer group has been formed to progress this work and report back with a proposed new policy and procedure for comments, complements and complaints.

Fraud and Corruption

- 5.83 The Counter-Fraud team continued to provide an effective fraud prevention, detection and investigation capability for Oxford City Council. Charged with safeguarding Council services, the team has a remit to ensure that processes and controls are robust and protected from exploitation by fraudsters.
- 5.84 Working in tandem with a number of Council departments and external organisations, the team ensures that vulnerabilities are addressed and where appropriate, civil and criminal action is taken against those who deceive and defraud the organisation. In the

financial year 2020-2021, the team were responsible for preventing losses and increasing revenue, to the value of £9.73m for the Council.

- 5.85 The team also tackles abuse in social housing by preventing fraudulent and irregular applications for housing from progressing, and by recovering Council properties that are being illegally sublet, misused or abandoned. There were 16 instances of this in the year.
- 5.86 At the start of the financial year, the team formed a shared-services partnership with the Counter-Fraud Team of Reigate and Banstead Borough Council. Both teams work in a commercial manner, supplying a range of services to client organisations and both teams have unique areas of specialisms. Additionally, both teams have been winners of the last two Excellence in Counter Fraud Awards in the IRRV Performance Awards Scheme.
- 5.87 In the year of a global pandemic, the team demonstrated dynamic agility by responding to new remote working arrangements and delivering the highest annual value outcomes since the inception of the team. Resources were refocussed in the year to design and implement secure and robust verification and validation processes in connection with Covid-19 Business Support Grants. This preventative activity resulted in £6.5 million worth of fraudulent, duplicate and irregular grants from being awarded ensuring only legitimate applications were paid.

Employment

- 5.88 The Council has a comprehensive range of policies, procedures and processes that combine employment legislation with best practice and organisational norms. Supplementary to these and for the purposes of monitoring and transparency, is a suite of reports and reporting tools. Together these inform and govern how the Council manages people related matters whilst also ensuring that the organisation achieves this in a fair, consistent and legally compliant manner. The policies and procedures cover the whole employee lifecycle, ranging from recruitment and selection and career development, to performance, conduct and capability issues and there is a regular cycle of review to ensure they are up to date and fit for purpose.
- 5.89 All policies and procedures are available for employees and managers to see on the Council's intranet. Additional guidance and support is accessed through the Council's Human Resources Team, ("HR") which provides training, coaching and ad hoc support and advice. The HR Business Partners and Advisors also work closely with Service Areas to deal with people related matters in a consistent manner and in line with the agreed policies and processes.

Business Continuity Planning

- 5.90 Towards the end of the 2019/20 financial year, throughout the 2020/21 financial year and into 2021/22, the Council's response to a business continuity incident

was tested in reality when the country went into full lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in compliance with Government guidelines. All Council offices were closed with most staff working from home and all work which couldn't be carried out within Government guidelines was ceased.

- 5.91 The Council's Corporate Business Continuity Plan anticipated that if main Council offices were not available then alternative accommodation would be needed for office based staff. Due to the nature of the pandemic, the use of alternative corporate accommodation was not possible and in the event it was proved that this accommodation wasn't needed through the use of ICT and remote working solutions.
- 5.92 The Council's corporate and service business continuity plans have been reviewed and, where appropriate, updated in line with the findings from these events. Additionally, as a result of the almost universal remote working by staff, the Council is reviewing its business model and the need for office space now and in the future by operating a hybrid working model with more emphasis on working from home.
- 5.93 The business continuity plans currently still contain reference to alternative sites and this is reflective of those services that cannot be carried out remotely. The precise nature of these alternative accommodation arrangements will need to be reviewed in the future when longer terms needs can be identified and assessed.

- 5.94 Business Continuity continues to be a focus for regular review. Service Area Business Continuity Plans are reviewed and tested on a regular basis with the most recent exercise being undertaken in February 2021 and focusing on the loss of ICT. This exercise was facilitated by the council's insurer Zurich Municipal and was successful with higher attendance than previously, probably due to the flexibility offered by running the event remotely.
- 5.95 There were a number of actions which arose from the exercises and the discussions around them. The recommendations arising from those exercises have been implemented by officers and the key learning points and recommendations around ICT have been implemented by the Chief Technology and Information Officer in conjunction with Heads of Service and the Council's Operational Delivery Group. The Corporate Business Continuity Plan was been updated following these reviews and tests.
- 5.96 Zurich Municipal also undertook a desk top review of all business continuity plans and provided feedback to the Council on those plans. These findings and the findings from the February 2021 exercise were fed back to managers to inform their business continuity plan updates.
- 5.97 The evidence provided by the continued delivery of services to the public during the pandemic indicates that the Council's business continuity processes held up well

and that the Council can adapt well and quickly to changing circumstances.

Freedom of Information

- 5.98 The Council is required to provide certain information on request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Requests are considered and, if held, information is disclosed unless an exemption or exception applies. During the financial year 2020/2021 the Council received 859 requests for information, eight of which were subject to an internal review. One case was referred to the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) and the Council's decision was upheld, this case then went to 1st Tier Tribunal (Appeal result not yet available).
- 5.99 It is clear that the types of request are becoming more complex with requesters using the FOI route to ask questions and opinions of officers rather than for recorded information.

6 Review of Effectiveness

- 6.1 The Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of senior officers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Internal Audit's annual report

and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

- 6.2 In preparing this statement each Head of Service has completed an assurance questionnaire. The questionnaire asked each Head of Service to draw attention to any matters in respect of which internal controls were not working well and required a positive assurance that apart from those areas which were identified for improvement that the controls within the service had been, and are, working well.
- 6.3 A number of actions have taken place and are planned within various of the Council's Service Areas and these are summarised in the Action Plans attached as Appendix 1 to this statement. Milestones will be added to this Action Plan as the work to achieve the tasks progresses.

7 CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer

- 7.1 In assessing the effectiveness of the Council's Annual Governance Statement the Chief Financial Officer is required to review how their role in the authority meets the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government. Key to this assessment are a number of principles:
- The Chief Financial Officer ("CFO") in a local authority is a key member of the leadership team, helping it to

develop and implement strategy. In the Council the CFO is a key member of the Corporate Management Team with direct access to the Chief Executive, members, Audit & Governance Committee and internal and external audit

- The CFO in a local authority must be actively involved in, and able to bring influence to bear on, all material business decisions to ensure immediate and longer term implications, opportunities and risks are fully considered, and alignment with the authority's overall financial strategy. In Oxford the CFO is responsible for Risk Management, has the ability to influence decisions through meetings and reporting to members and also has a statutory requirement to advise members of the robustness of estimates and the level of reserves and balances
- The CFO in a local authority must lead the promotion and delivery by the whole authority of good financial management so that public money is safeguarded at all times and used appropriately, economically, efficiently, and effectively. The CFO has a personal responsibility for financial stewardship and their prime responsibility is to the citizens to manage resources prudently, both within the authority and extending into partnerships, joint ventures and companies in which the council has an interest e.g. Oxford Direct Services Group, Oxford City Housing Limited, Oxford West End Development Limited (OxWED) and Barton LLP

- The CFO in a local authority must lead and direct a finance function that is resourced to be fit for purpose. In Oxford the CFO currently has sufficient resources to undertake the Finance function and this is subject to review
- The CFO in a local authority must be professionally qualified and suitably experienced. The CFO and a number of key staff within the Finance Team are suitably qualified. Deputising for the CFO on matters of financial accounting is undertaken by the Financial Accounting Manager and Management Accountancy Manager, with additional posts taking responsibility on matters relating to Procurement and Revenues.

8 Awards/Recognition

- 8.1 The Council wishes to ensure that it remains up to date with best practice and standards of performance so it regularly enters competitions against its peers and has achieved standards and won awards as set out in Appendix 2 to this statement.

9 Significant Governance Issues

- 9.1 The control framework described above facilitates the identification of any areas of the Council's activities where there are significant weaknesses in the financial controls, governance arrangements or the management of risk.

- 9.2 The Council's internal auditors are BDO LLP who are required to provide the Audit and Governance Committee, and the Section 151 Officer with an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, governance and internal control processes, as well as arrangements to promote value for money.
- 9.3 The annual report from the Council's internal audit provides an overall opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's risk management, control and governance processes, within the scope of work undertaken by the firm as outsourced providers of the internal audit service. It also summarises the activities of internal audit for the period. Overall the annual report from the Council's internal auditors, which was reported to the Audit and Governance Committee in July 2021, provides that, based on the evidence of the audits conducted, moderate assurance is given that there is a sound system of internal control, designed to meet the Council's objectives and that controls are being applied consistently.
- 9.4 In giving its opinion BDO LLP has stated that assurance can never be absolute. The internal audit service provides the Council with Moderate assurance that there are no major weaknesses in the internal control system for the areas reviewed in 2020/21. Therefore, the statement of assurance is not a guarantee that all aspects of the internal control system are adequate and effective. The statement of assurance should confirm that, based on the evidence of the audits conducted,

there are no signs of material weaknesses in the framework of control.

9.5 In assessing the level of assurance to be given, BDO LLP has stated that the following matters were taken into account:

- The Council has seen a sharp increase in expenditure to support those in need, together with a sharp reduction in income from leisure centres, town hall room hire, car parks, rents from commercial premises, and earnings from its wholly owned companies Oxford Direct Services Ltd (ODS) and Oxford City Housing Ltd (OCHL). The overall adverse impact on the Council's general fund, in this year alone, is estimated at around £12 million, with a further £17 million over the following four years. The Council has used their reserves to plug this gap, noting that this is a one-off measure. The Council is proposing £9.57 million of efficiencies and increased income over the 4 year period.
- The Council has implemented all recommendations due. In 2020-21, the escalation process for follow up was refined to improve effectiveness. All non-responses and recommendations with several revised due dates were reported to the Operation Delivery Group (ODG) meeting each quarter. This has improved the follow up process and implementation of recommendations.

- Some audits planned have been deferred to 2021-22 as a result of the impact of Covid 19 but overall they were able to perform sufficient work to provide an annual opinion. All of their reports this year which contained an opinion, have provided substantial or moderate assurance, including three with substantial assurance on design and effectiveness (Payroll and Overtime, Treasury Management and Income Collection & Cashiers) and three with moderate assurance on design and effectiveness (Data Analytics, Companies Oversight and Accounts Receivable). The Council need to achieve substantial assurance on both design and effectiveness on a majority of their audit reviews in 2021-22 to achieve a substantial opinion overall. However, Covid 19 has presented control challenges for all Councils and the Council has done well to maintain its control environment under these circumstances.

9.6 The BDO LLP auditors have clarified that they have taken the following into account in reaching their conclusion:

- All internal audits undertaken by BDO LLP during 2020/21
- Any follow-up action taken in respect of audits from previous periods for these audit areas
- Whether any significant recommendations have not been accepted by management and the consequent risks

- The effects of any significant changes in the organisation's objectives or systems
- Matters arising from previous internal audit reports to the Council

- Any limitations which may have been placed on the scope of internal audit – no restrictions were placed on their work

Appendix 1

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTION PLAN 2020/21

Action Required	Deadline	Responsibility	Comment	Action Completed
1 All Heads of Service to review service area processes and procedures following response to Covid-19 pandemic to ensure that they still meet the business needs taking account of any new ways of working e.g. local schemes of delegation and authorised signatories.	31/3/21	Head of Law & Governance	To be followed up with Heads of Service through the Operational Delivery Group.	Complete
2 Update business continuity plans in line with the lessons learned from the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.	31/12/20	Head of Financial Services	To be followed up with Heads of Service through the Operational Delivery Group. Business continuity plans were all updated in Autumn 2020 incorporating lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic. The revised plans were sent to the Council's insurers, Zurich Insurance, to check for completeness and consistency. A further update was provided to ODG in July 2021.	Complete
3 Undertake a further test of Business Continuity Plans.	31/3/21	Head of Financial Services	To ensure that business continuity plans are robust and reflect lessons learned from the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. A business continuity exercise was undertaken on 21 February 2021 using	Complete

			<p>revised business continuity plans as a basis. The exercise was facilitated by Zurich Insurance and was attended by heads of service and senior managers from every service area. Updated service area IT system recovery requirements were produced following the exercise which will feed into the ICT disaster recovery plans.</p> <p>BDO will review these plans as part of their audit plan for this area in 2021-22 and report back to Audit and Governance Committee</p>	
4	31/3/21	Executive Director Development	<p>Following mitigating action with regard to the Council's capital programme in response to the Covid-19 pandemic as set out in the report of the Head of Financial Services - Financial Monitoring Report – April 20 considered by the Cabinet on 24 June 2020.</p> <p>This was incorporated into the budget setting process for the financial year 2020/21</p>	Complete
5	31/3/21	Head of Business Improvement	<p>Policy training is delivered as required. Health and Safety training to be provided in the current financial year. Other policy advice and guidance provided on the intranet.</p>	Ongoing

<p>6 Whistle Blowing and Anti - Fraud and Corruption procedures - Need to provide refresher courses on policies to ensure consistent knowledge on when and how to apply or engage with the policies.</p>	<p>31/3/21</p>	<p>Head of Law & Governance and Head of Financial Services</p>	<p>There is a need to keep such policies in the awareness of all employees.</p> <p>Due to the pandemic and the revised priorities that came with it, this was one of the areas that was subject to slippage and we weren't therefore able to adhere. We are going to be reintroducing Fraud Awareness Training across the organisation for the next financial year. The content of the Whistleblowing Policy as well as the Anti-Bribery, Fraud and Corruption Policy are referenced during the training.</p> <p>Proposed new date 31/03/2022</p> <p>The Whistleblowing Policy was updated in July 2021.</p>	<p>Part complete</p>
<p>7 Refresh the corporate arrangements for recording complaints ensuring that the complaint is responded to comprehensively and that lessons learnt are captured and acted upon.</p>	<p>31/3/21</p>	<p>Head of Business Improvement</p>	<p>The Council's current system for customer service case management is currently being replaced. Once the new system is implemented the corporate arrangements for recording complaints will need to be refreshed.</p> <p>Aereon QL is being presented to Customer Services management on 17th September as a suitable system for recording 3C's, If we agree that it is suitable then we will explore any costs to set up and ongoing costs related to the whole organisation</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

			adopting this product as a recording mechanism.	
8 New online training module on Data Protection for all staff.	31/3/21	Head of Law & Governance (Data Protection Officer)	New modules of training have been rolled out across the Council. New process for monitoring uptake of training also introduced	Complete
9 Ensuring that adequate processes are in place in respect of Data Protection for officers working from home.	31/3/21	Head of Law & Governance (Data Protection Officer)	Ensure the ICO guidance and best practice are followed with regard to data protection practices and data security. Guidance issued to all officers on best practice and this was reiterated through ODG etc.	Complete
10 Raising awareness of the need for good quality Equality Impact Assessments in respect of policy or service delivery changes.	31/3/21	Head of Business Improvement	To raise awareness building on good practice to date. The Council is currently undertaking a strategic review of its equality, diversity and inclusion strategy. A key aspect of this refreshed work will be the bringing together of a Business Intelligence Unit to provide intelligence and encourage officers to collate insights from those people that share protected characteristics to improve the quality of Equality Impact Assessments.	In progress
11 Practical implementation of the delivery of social value through contract procurement	31/3/21	Head of Financial Services	Revised procurement strategy to be implemented reflecting current practice.	In progress

activity – to be captured in revised procurement strategy.			The revised strategy was signed off by Cabinet in September 2020 incorporating social value through procurement.	
12 To review the governance arrangements for oversight of Oxford Direct Services Limited and Oxford City Housing Limited work streams by the Council's Corporate Management Team prior to consideration at formal shareholder meetings.	31/3/21	Chief Executive	To ensure that proposed action is consistent with the group position. This has now been established and is working well with MD's from the Councils wholly owned companies attending CMT on a monthly basis	Complete
13 Implement a Conflicts of Interests Protocol to deal with crossover of roles now that there have been further appointments to the Boards of the Council's companies.	31/3/21	Head of Law and Governance	To ensure guidance to officers in situations of potential conflicts of interest.	In progress
14 The Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM) compliance.	31/3/21	Executive Director Development	Ensure that the Council's responsibilities under CDM are understood and addressed and staff appropriately trained so that the risks involved in construction are managed from start to finish of a project. The Council has been undertaking a training needs analysis across the directorates to establish what level of training is required. Actions to raise awareness of CDM have included presentations to Heads of Service which has identified some additional target	In progress

			<p>groups and monitoring of major projects to ensure duty holders have been appointed.</p> <p>Support has been given to project managers at the feasibility and design stage of projects to ensure that CDM arrangements are compliant. Specialist CDM training was completed for Property Services and workshops were undertaken with ODS and other directorates to ensure are fully aware of responsibilities under the regulations.</p> <p>Further work is planned with Procurement to strengthen CDM requirements during the tender stage of projects to ensure compliance is maintained through the supply chain.</p>	
15 Member Code of Conduct	31/3/21	Head of Law & Governance	<p>Submit response to consultation</p> <p>To consider the outcome of the Local Government Association consultation on a model code and implement any resultant changes as required.</p> <p>This was considered by the Standards Committee. The Oxfordshire authorities are currently collaborating on a refreshed Code of Conduct taking into account the Local Government Association's Model Code of Conduct.</p>	Complete

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTION PLAN 2021/22

Action Required	Deadline	Responsibility	Comment	Action Completed
1 Integrate data protection training into staff induction	31/3/22	Head of Law & Governance and Head of Business Improvement	There is a need to ensure that all new staff participate in the relevant data protection training module for their role as part of their induction programme. Envisaged that this will inform the probation period for new employees	
2 Practical implementation of Council's revised retention schedule	31/3/22	Head of Law & Governance and Head of Business Improvement	Each service area to be responsible for compliance with data retention rules and policies to include a reduction in the number of emails stored as unstructured data in outlook accounts.	
3 Review of data protection practices within the organisation	31/3/22	Head of Law & Governance	Project to consider the work undertaken by the Council in relation to its data protection practices. This will be in line with the Information Commissioner's accountability tracker on compliance with the data protection principles in the UK GDPR Article 5.	
4 Review handling of freedom of information requests	31/3/22	Head of Law & Governance	Review to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the handling of FOI requests particularly in dealing with information held by the council's companies	

Appendix 2

Awards/Recognition for 2020/21

The awards/external accreditations earned by the Council in the year April 2020 – March 2021 are as follows:

- All five OCC leisure facilities and Rose Hill Community Centre are quality assured to the UK Quality Award Scheme for Sport & Leisure, QUEST
- Parks and Green Spaces are accredited to the Green Flag Award® scheme; recognising well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces across the United Kingdom and around the world;
- National Youth Agency Accreditation Framework.
- Town Hall has achieved AIM Accreditation. This is a formal accreditation provided by the MIA (Meetings Industry Association) and is UK's only recognised accreditation scheme for the meetings and events industry. More about the accreditation you can read their website <https://www.mia-uk.org/AIM>.
- Arts Council England awarded its Museum Accreditation (ACE) to the Museum of Oxford;
- Community Services received the Investors in Volunteers accreditation; and
- The Council's Youth Ambition Team received the National Youth Agency accreditation.

The awards/external accreditations retained by the Council in the year April 2020 – March 2021 are as follows:

- The Active Communities Team continues to achieve Active Communities Quest Stretch at 'Outstanding'
- Customer Service Excellence accreditation for the entire organisation;
- The legal team within Law & Governance retained its LEXCEL accreditation and was commended as no non-compliances were identified during the assessment;