

Powys County Council
Annual Governance Statement 2020-2021

Section 1. Executive Summary

This Annual Governance Statement (AGS) provides an account of the processes, systems and records the council has in place to demonstrate effectiveness of its governance arrangements. It principally covers the period April 2020 to March 2021. However, during the period to September 2021, when the accounts are signed, it is updated. The Statement therefore includes details of the Council's response to the COVID19 Coronavirus pandemic.

Powys County Council adopted a system of corporate governance in June 2008, which is consistent with the seven principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016 Edition). This statement is structured around the seven core principles, which are set out in Section 3, and gives an account of how the Council has discharged its responsibilities during 2020-21 as well as recommendations for development.

Based on the evidence set out in this annual governance statement, including the impact of the pandemic on our governance framework, we consider the level of assurance to be **Reasonable**.

Assurance levels for annual opinion:

Level	Description
Substantial	We are able to offer substantial assurance that the Council's arrangements adequately reflect the principles of good governance as indicated in the CIPFA Governance Framework. Processes are in place and operating effectively and risks to effective governance are well managed.
Reasonable	We are able to offer reasonable assurance that the Council's arrangements adequately reflect the principles of good governance as indicated in the CIPFA Governance Framework. Generally, risks are well managed, but some processes could be improved.
Partial	We are able to offer partial assurance that the Council's arrangements adequately reflect the principles of good governance. Some key risks are not well managed and processes require the introduction or improvement of internal controls to ensure effective governance.
None	We are not able to offer any assurance. The Council's arrangements were found to be inadequately controlled. Risks are not well managed and processes require the introduction or improvement of internal controls to ensure effective governance.

Section 2. Introduction

2.1 Ensuring Good Governance

Powys County Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards; that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for; and is used economically, efficiently and effectively. Powys County Council also has a duty under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised.

In discharging this overall responsibility, Powys County Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

This Annual Governance Statement will explain how Powys County Council has complied with the code.

Powys County Council is the Administering Authority for the Powys Pension Fund (the Pension Fund). The governance arrangements detailed in this Annual Governance Statement apply to the council's responsibilities to the Pension Fund. There are further specific requirements for the Pension Fund which are:

- The Investment Strategy Statement
- Funding Strategy Statement
- A full Actuarial Valuation to be carried out every third year

2.2 The Governance Framework

Powys County Council's governance framework comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and through which it engages, leads and is accountable to residents and communities. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of outcome-focused and cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk at 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 Powys County Council's policies, aims and objectives. In addition, it assists in evaluating the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The following sections summarise the governance framework and the system of internal control, which has been in place in Powys County Council for the year ended 31 March 2021. In addition, the Council's constitution can be found at: [Link to Council Constitution](#).

The COVID19 Coronavirus pandemic did not change the Council's governance frameworks until the last few weeks of the 2019-20 financial year, but it has had a significant impact on them in the first six months of 2020-21. As the Annual Governance Statement covers the control / governance framework in operation up until the date that accounts are signed off the changes to our control framework are set out in Appendix 6. The relevant regulator guidance which has affected or directed changes to control frameworks is also shown here.

There may be a delay in achieving some of the actions and outcomes for 2020-21 identified below due to the pandemic and the period of recovery thereafter. In addition, the Council will need to take economic, environmental and social factors into account as part of the recovery process which may result in other changes to governance arrangements during the year.

Section 3. The Core Principles

3.1 Core Principle A

Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.

How we do this:

Our Values

The Council places a high value on upholding the highest standards in public office for both Members and officers.

Creating a Council of the future that is driven by the right culture and behaviours is important. The Council wants to deliver high performance and value for communities by listening to, and working with, the public as well as private, voluntary and community sectors.

The Council has a set of values that underpin all the work of the Council and guide the behaviours that are expected of everyone engaged in our work, or working with us. Our values are embedded into staff appraisals. Awareness of the values are tested out by means of the Council's staff survey conducted every two years.

Professional	Whatever role we play in the council, we act with professionalism and integrity
Positive	We take a proactive attitude in all we do
Progressive	We take a proactive and responsible approach to planning for the future
Open	We keep each other informed, share knowledge and act with honesty and integrity
Collaborative	We work constructively and willingly on joint initiatives

These values are detailed in [Vision 2025](#) (See item 9 in the agenda) our Corporate Improvement Plan (CIP) for 2021-25 which was updated and approved by Council on 4 March 2021.

Members' Code of Conduct / Standards Committee

For elected Members, the Council has adopted the Model Code of Conduct for County Councils in Wales, which came into force on 1 April 2016. Conduct of Members is monitored by the Public Services Ombudsman and the Council's Standards Committee. The Council has adopted other protocols for elected Members such as one relating to gifts and hospitality and in respect of Planning Applications / Matters. Mandatory training for Members in relation to the Code of Conduct was undertaken following the election in 2017 and repeated in 2020. The Council, following the recommendation of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, has adopted a Local Resolution Process whereby low-level complaints between Members (or between officers and Members) can be resolved locally rather than being referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

The Standards Committee is active in trying to assist Members, either individually or collectively, in taking part in discussions where they might otherwise be debarred from taking part by the Code of Conduct by the granting of individual or general dispensations. By this means, the Standards Committee seeks to ensure that the representative role of Members is protected as well as protecting the Council's decision-making processes from being brought into disrepute.

The Standards Committee will also monitor attendances at Mandatory Member Development Sessions to ensure that Members complete the Mandatory Training.

The Standards Committee monitors the attendances of Members at committees. Failure to comply with the 60% attendance requirement will lead to the Member having to account for their absences to the Committee.

Officers' Code of Conduct

For officers, the Council follows the statutory Code of Conduct. Conduct and behaviour is the responsibility of the individual officer and a breach may constitute a disciplinary matter. In addition, the Council has within its Constitution a protocol for Member and officers relations as well as relationships between officers and political groups.

Anti-Fraud / Anti-Corruption and Whistleblowing

The Council has an Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy and a Whistleblowing Policy, which allows matters of concern to be raised and sets out how they will be investigated.

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee is responsible for examining, approving and reviewing the adequacy of risk assessment, risk management and internal controls, including compliance.

Compliments and Complaints

The Council has a formal compliments and complaints procedure that enables complaints to be escalated and investigated independently of the service concerned.

[Link to Complaints Policy](#)

Information Governance

Powys County Council continues to develop its information governance maturity working to its agreed framework, to initiate, develop, and monitor policies and practices in relation to information security, management, assurance and risk, in order to improve and ensure on-going compliance with relevant information legislation and standards.

The Council has robust information personal data breach reporting and management processes in place, which ensures swift containment action, enables informed identification of information risks and mitigation, and supports regulatory reporting requirements.

The Council continues to provide those who choose to exercise their right of access to information held by the Council, or who choose to exercise their data protection rights with an effective and professional service. Further reporting has been developed to not only identify timeline compliance for requests for information, but also includes disclosure and exemption data, indicating the extent of disclosure of information to the public.

The training of staff in the basics of data protection and information security continues to be an important reported measure in the Council's information assurance design.

Powys County Council continues to progress its information management, assurance and governance policies, procedures, and practices. In addition, the Corporate Governance Information Group comprising of the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) and Directors developed appropriate planning and response strategies to the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulations and the UK Data Protection Act 2018.

The SIRO receives an annual Information Governance Report.

Review of effectiveness:

In the 2019-20 Annual Governance Statement the following areas for development were identified for 2020-21:

Development Action:	Lead / deadline	RAG
Review the arrangements for Members' Code of Conduct training for TCC Members	Clive Pinney 30 September 2020	
Review Employees Code of Conduct	Clive Pinney 31 March 2021	
Refresh County Councillor training in 2020-21	Clive Pinney 31 March 2021	
Complaints and Compliments Policy to be reviewed in the light of any updates in the PSOW guidance	Diane Reynolds 30 June 2020	
Local Resolution Process to be reviewed	Clive Pinney October 2020	

An assessment of effectiveness against Core Principle A during 2020-21 is set out below.

Our Values

Please see results of 2020-21 staff surveys in Appendix 1.

Members' Code of Conduct / Standards Committee

During 2020-21, 72 Members completed mandatory mid-term training on the Members' Code of Conduct.

In relation to the monitoring of attendances at committees, there are few Members who fall beneath the 60% requirement, and those that do have valid reasons such as

a period of illness. Due to the pandemic and the Council concentrating on business-critical work, the Standards Committee did not meet during 2020-21.

During 2020-21 the Standards Committee was informed by email of the numbers of referrals to the Ombudsman. There were four complaints against Members referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales in 2020-21. Three were closed following receipt by the Ombudsman's Office (i.e. no evidence that there was a suggested breach of the Code of Conduct) and one is being investigated.

Officers' Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct for employees will be reviewed in 2020-21.

Anti-Fraud / Anti-Corruption and Whistleblowing

In 2019-20 the Council introduced a new [Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy](#) (See Item 9). This has been supported with a further policy on money laundering. The introduction of the new policies was not supported by an awareness campaign due to capacity of the Team during the pandemic, this will be addressed during 2021 together with routine performance reporting to EMT and the Governance and Audit Committee on the fraud that is being prevented and what recovery is taking place. There were no referrals in the year under the Whistleblowing Policy.

Audit Committee

The Committee met on nine occasions, one of which was in seminar mode to consider the draft Statement of Accounts. During the year the Committee and its Working Group considered a number of Internal Audit reports. Members of the Audit Committee undertook training in Treasury Management and finance and budget alongside other Council members utilising the support of experts from Link and CIPFA.

Compliments and Complaints

The Council has a formal compliments and complaints procedure that enables complaints to be escalated and investigated independently of the service concerned.
[Link to Complaints Policy](#)

Local Resolution Process

There was one complaint dealt with under this process in 2020-21. This was not resolved.

Information Governance

There were 199 (to 08/03/21) information security incidents reported during 2020-21, with 6 requiring notification to the Information Commissioner. No further regulatory action was considered necessary in any of these cases.

In 2020-21 the Council has retrained 76% of employees in Cyber Security and GDPR following the introduction of new mandatory annual training in April 2019.

In 2020-21 (as of 08/03/21) the response rate to:

- Freedom of Information requests was 85% against 69% in 2019-2020
- Environmental Information Regulations was 93% against 58% in 2019-2020
- Data Subject Access Requests was 47% against 29% in 2018-2019

The Council achieved Cyber Essentials Plus and IASME Gold accreditations.

Conclusion

The Council can offer **substantial** assurance that the Council's arrangements adequately reflect the principles of good governance as set out in Core Principle A: *Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.* Processes are in place and operating effectively and risks to effective governance are well managed.

Recommendations for further development in 2021-22:

During 2021-22 the following developments will be undertaken:

Development Action:	Lead / deadline
Review the Membership and Terms of Reference of the Governance and Audit Committee to meet the requirements of the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021	Clive Pinney December 2021
Review the effectiveness of the Governance and Audit Committee and undertake some refresh training for members as to the role of the Committee	Jane Thomas/Wyn Richards 30 th May 2021
Raise the profile and awareness of the new Anti-Fraud policies and develop the reporting of fraud activity and performance.	Jane Thomas 31 st December 2021

3.2 Core Principle B

Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

How we do this:

Engagement and consultation

Powys County Council is signed up to the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales¹ to ensure conversations with our stakeholders are meaningful, timely and appropriately resourced.

We believe all our citizens, partners and businesses should be engaged and consulted so their voice influences future decisions and service provision. While we continue to engage citizens using both traditional methods like surveys, focus groups and meetings, we are increasingly also investing in and using digital tools such as online platforms, survey software and social media channels to listen to residents' voices.

The Council has corporate Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Flickr accounts and its own YouTube channel. A proactive approach to the use of video, animations, and infographics to promote key campaigns like #SupportLocalPowys has resulted in the growth of followers on both our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts and we monitor and share posts from partner organisations wherever relevant to ensure our residents gain access to information that may be useful to them.

LinkedIn and Facebook are both used to advertise job vacancies so residents who may not look at our website can see what's on offer. The Chief Executive has her own Twitter account as do some of the Strategic Directors and Heads of Service alongside several key services, providing choice and a voice so Powys residents are kept up to date about the design, planning, and delivery of our services.

During the year, several consultation and engagement exercises were conducted to seek views from the residents of Powys on a range of policy and service matters.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and Welsh Government lockdown regulations, face-to-face focus groups, on-street surveys, and public events, have been unable to take place during the past twelve months. This means that the consultation and engagement exercises conducted in 2020-21 have been primarily online and printed copies only distributed if/when required.

In the summer, following the first national lockdown, the council was keen to find out what effect COVID-19 was having on Powys businesses and what support they required. The feedback from the survey was used in discussions with the Welsh Government, Business Wales, and our partner organisations.

¹ <https://www.participationcymru.org.uk/national-principles/>

Given the unprecedented year, and the global pandemic, the council is having to deliver things very differently and is asking residents to support it in future-proofing Powys.

Previous budget consultations have focused on specific service provisions, but this year, with the aim of future-proofing Powys post Covid, we wanted to engage residents on a longer-term vision for Powys County Council as a whole.

To start Powys on the road to recovery post COVID-19 and work towards “Powys 2025 - Our vision for the future” some research surveys have been conducted, around health and care and cultural services, to gain the views of external stakeholders, what motivates the respondents, what barriers they are experiencing, if any, and their opinions on digital solutions the council could implement in the future.

During the past year, internal engagement activities have been completed to monitor the wellbeing of staff. The survey was our opportunity to ask staff opinions on how they are finding work at the moment, whether they are working from home or on the front line. Originally shared in June 2020, the survey was reissued towards the end of the year to understand how staff wellbeing has changed, if at all, as the pandemic has continued to influence the way we live and work. The feedback and ideas from both surveys is being used to ensure we can continue to support staff across the whole Council whilst coronavirus remains a part of all our lives, and to help us to shape our new ways of working.

The Welsh Language

To ensure the impact of our services in the Welsh language is considered, all surveys now incorporate three standard questions to capture feedback on how our decisions impact the Welsh Language and how they could be changed to ensure a more positive outcome.

A summary of some of the key consultations conducted during the year is contained in Appendix 1.

An exercise was conducted with third party providers to measure their ability to provide the Active Offer of a service in Welsh, with spot-checks on a selection of providers looking at services and information provided in Welsh by telephone, email and on their websites. Following the spot checks, communication was sent to all contractors providing services on behalf of the Council to outline the requirements, and to share information about resources and tools to enable them to offer more services through the medium of Welsh. A series of sessions were also conducted for third party providers, in collaboration with PAVO, on Welsh Language Awareness and providing the Active Offer.

Cabinet Forward Work Programme

In 2019-20 the Head of Democratic Services became accountable for maintaining and updating the Cabinet Forward Work Programme 18 months ahead, in consultation with the Senior Leadership Team. This has improved the completeness and quality of the Forward Work Programme. The work programme is reviewed with the Chief Executive on a fortnightly basis and the programme also includes details of

the scrutiny work programme and details of other committees and meetings so that a wider view of forthcoming meetings is available.

Committee Agendas and Reports

In 2020-21 the Council published all the agendas, reports and minutes of the Council, the Cabinet and committees on its public website within timescale. In addition, all Council meetings were webcast and a new and improved webcast system was introduced.

Members' Annual Reports

In 2020-21 all Members produced an Annual Report on their activities and these are all published on the Council's public website. [Councillor Annual Reports](#)

Public Participation at Council Meetings

Due to the pandemic and the Council undertaking business critical work no questions were sought from the public during this period.

Conclusion

The Council is able to offer **substantial** assurance that the Council's arrangements adequately reflect the principles of good governance as set out in Core Principle B: *Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement*. Processes are in place and operating effectively and risks to effective governance are well managed.

Recommendations for further development in 2021-22:

During 2021-22 the following developments will be undertaken:

Development Action:	Lead / deadline
Implementation of new consultation software Engagement HQ in partnership with PTHB and PAVO.	John Evans March 2021
Publication of a Public Participation Strategy	John Evans April 2022

3.3 Core Principle C

Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits

How we do this:

Corporate Planning Cycle

The Council has a set process in place for annually reviewing its objectives and corporate plans to ensure that they remain relevant and focussed on improving the right outcomes for residents and communities.

Vision 2025: Our Corporate Improvement Plan (CIP)

The Council's long-term vision and objectives for improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Powys are set out in Vision 2025: Our Corporate Improvement Plan.

Vision 2025 is the Council’s vision for the future. Within it are our four Well-being Objectives: Economy; Health and Care; Learning and Skills; and Residents and Communities. These are supported by a ‘Making It Happen’ objective which focuses on engagement and communication; leadership and governance; and changing how we work.



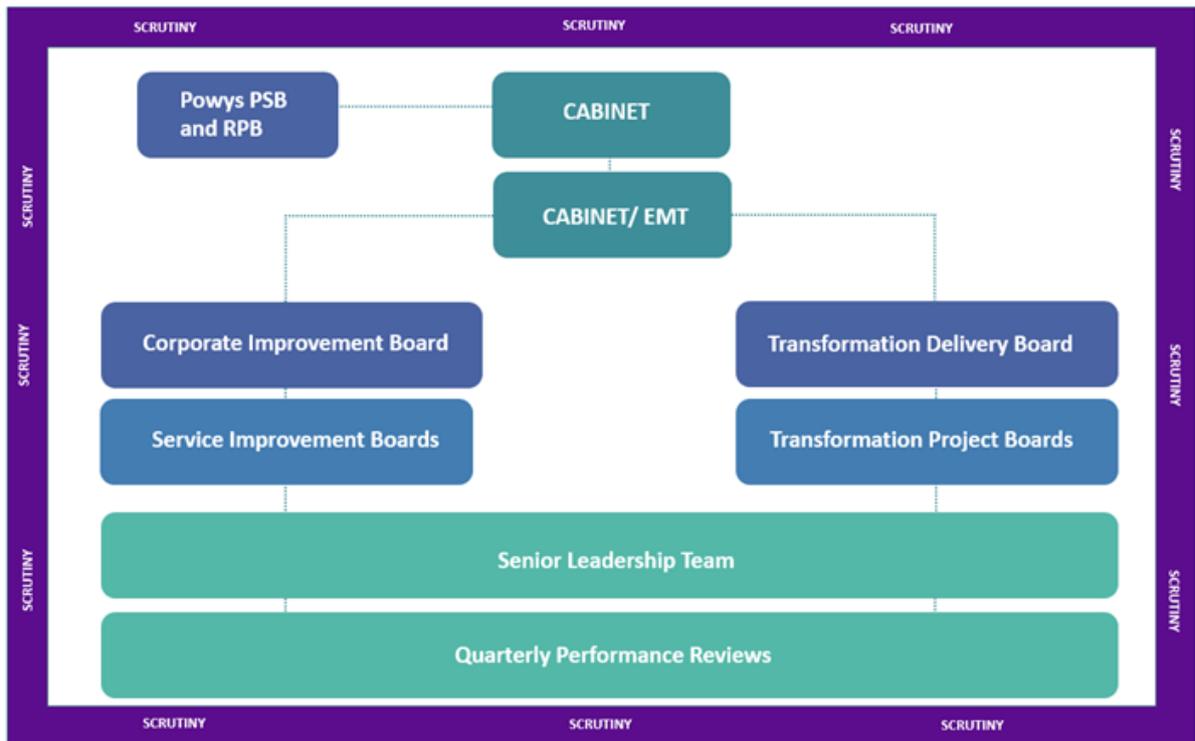
In 2020, for the first time, we also incorporated our Strategic Equality Objectives into Vision 2025 to ensure they are fully embedded in our plans. The Council published 6 new Equality Objectives within Vision 2025 in March 2020. Each objective has an action plan for making Powys a fairer place to live where people can achieve their potential, thrive and prosper.

Vision 2025 provides an important framework for engaging residents, councillors, staff and other stakeholders, such as regulators, in the vision and the Council’s key objectives. It sets out a series of aspirational outcomes for improving well-being for Powys residents, communities and businesses. The plan is reviewed and updated annually and an Annual Report of progress is published in July each year.

Our Corporate Improvement Plan integrates with our partnership plans including the Powys Public Service Board well-being plan *Towards 2040*, and the Powys Regional Partnership Board Joint Area Plan *Healthy Caring Powys*.

Vision 2025 also shows how we are embracing the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, by ensuring that our objectives contribute to the seven national well-being goals and that we are considering the five ways of working in the way we plan our services.

The diagram below outlines the governance of transformation within the Council.



Vision 2025 Transformation Programme

The Vision 2025 outcomes are being delivered by the Transformation Programme which consists of eight core projects together with service transformations:



Integrated Impact Assessments

The Council undertakes Integrated Impact Assessments for all significant service, financial or policy changes to ensure the implications are understood, to support effective decision making and to ensure compliance with respective legislation, including the Well-being of Future Generations Act, the Equalities legislation which includes the Socio-Economic Duty and the Welsh Language Measure. Impact assessments ensure the Council considers any potential impact (positive or negative) before decisions are made and help ensure decisions optimise the achievement of intended outcomes. In 2021 these documents will be digitised, to improve the quality and consistency of the documents.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Council's [Medium-Term Financial Strategy](#) (MTFS) (Please See Item 5 – Appendix A) articulates how the Council plans to use its resources (revenue and capital) to support the achievement of its corporate priorities as well as the management of its statutory and core duties, known pressures and risks. The MTFS helps the Council to work more effectively with partners in other sectors and provides a strategy for the use of reserves to meet changes in resources, risks or unforeseen demands from year to year without impacting unduly on services or council taxpayers. It includes a set of principles that will govern the strategy, a five-year Financial Resource Model, Capital and Treasury Management Strategies and a Capital Programme.

Scrutiny Functions

In February 2019 the Council introduced three new scrutiny committees to align more closely to Vision 2025:

- Health and Care Scrutiny Committee
- Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee
- Economy, Residents, Communities and Governance Scrutiny Committee

At the same time, the Audit Committee remit was focused on the Committee's statutory financial functions while the Finance Scrutiny Panel was renamed the Finance Panel, with a focus on strategic financial scrutiny only and scrutiny of individual services being undertaken by the three scrutiny committees. In addition, a Co-ordinating Committee was established comprising representatives of the Cabinet, Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Scrutiny and Audit Committees and representatives of the Executive Management Team to undertake the development of the Scrutiny Forward Work Programme.

The Constitution sets out clear terms of reference for all Committees of the Council. The Cabinet, and the Scrutiny and Audit Committees have rolling work programmes.

Scrutiny committees undertake reviews and inquiries, within the Committee as a whole or within Working Groups. The findings of Scrutiny reviews and inquiries are presented to Cabinet with recommendations for action. Since December 2016, greater emphasis is now placed on pre-decision scrutiny of significant strategic policy issues and service changes.

The Health and Care and Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committees have overseen the Council's recovery plans following adverse reports by external regulators to ensure that the required improvement is achieved. This work is ongoing.

The Audit Committee oversees the work of Internal Audit, Risk Management and receives the reports of the Wales Audit Office. It has responsibility for approving the Council's Accounts.

The Council's scrutiny committees also include some representatives who are not County Councillors. The Audit Committee has an independent "lay" member, the Learning, Skills and Economy Scrutiny Committee has co-opted Members in respect of education scrutiny. The Economy, Residents, Communities and Governance Scrutiny Committee has a co-opted member in respect of crime and disorder matters, although this role is currently vacant.

Public Service Board Scrutiny

The Council supports a PSB Scrutiny Committee comprising those agencies who currently make up the PSB. Its role is to scrutinise the implementation of the Powys Well-being Plan as well as integration projects between the Council and the Powys Teaching Health Board.

Review of effectiveness:

In the 2019-20 Annual Governance Statement the following areas for development were identified for 2020-21, under Core Principle C:

Recommended Action	Lead/deadline	RAG
Review Vision 2025 and the Council's operating model to embed good practice developed during the COVID19 pandemic	Emma Palmer 31 March 2021	
Quality assurance process for Integrated Impact Assessments	Emma Palmer 30 September 2020	

An assessment of effectiveness against Core Principle C during 2020-21 is set out below.

Corporate Planning Cycle

In March 2020 the Council invoked its Business Continuity Plan to respond to the extraordinary challenges presented by novel coronavirus (COVID-19). This meant that a range of services were either adapted, suspended or, in some instances, established for the first time. The following principles and priorities were established by the Cabinet to plan the council's response to COVID-19.

OUR COVID-19 RESPONSE

CORONAVIRUS HAS HAD AN UNPRECEDENTED IMPACT ON LIFE AS WE KNOW IT. We're here to help Powys through these difficult times. As an open and enterprising council, we have embraced new ways of working and delivering services. **WE ARE WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES, RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES TO HELP GET POWYS ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY.**

For more information please visit www.powys.gov.uk/coronavirus

1 RESPONDING TO COVID-19

ADULT SOCIAL CARE working with the health board to support those with the virus, providing care at home and residential care.

CHILD CARE establishing safe child care for key workers and vulnerable children.

CONTINUITY OF LEARNING ensuring pupils continue to learn and have access to educational resources and support.

Reopening our **SCHOOLS**

HOMELESSNESS people who are homeless (sofa surfing or rough sleeping) need to be brought indoors and adequately housed.

PUBLIC PROTECTION maintaining public health which includes enforcing closures of premises where necessary, and managing regional contact tracing.

2 KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES SAFE AND RESILIENT

Providing care and support for **EXTREMELY VULNERABLE RESIDENTS**

SUPPORTING BUSINESSES and the self-employed in line with Welsh Government guidance.

Providing **REFUSE AND RECYCLING** services including Household Waste Recycling Centres.

Maintaining an emergency **HOUSING REPAIRS** and maintenance service.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE ensuring essential repairs are carried out and an emergency response is available.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES ensuring children are protected and safeguarded.

LIBRARIES re-opening in a phased manner.

OUR VALUES

- Professional**
Whatever role we play in the council, we act with professionalism and integrity
- Positive**
We take a positive attitude in all we do
- Progressive**
We take a proactive and responsible approach to planning for the future
- Open**
We keep each other informed, share knowledge and act with honesty and integrity
- Collaborative**
We work constructively and willingly on joint initiatives

Powys

3 RUNNING THE COUNCIL

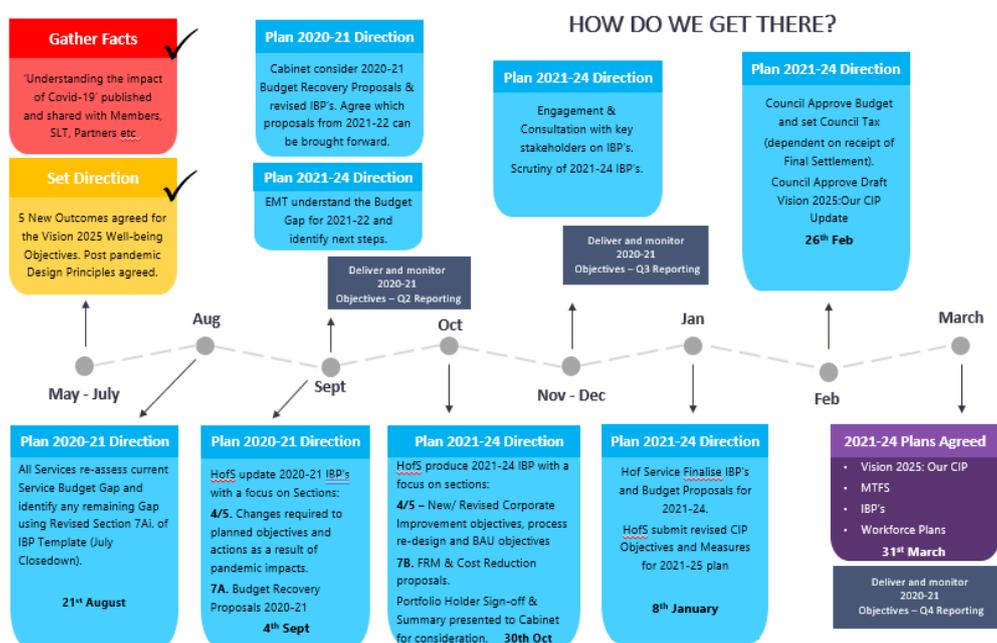
FINANCIAL Management and Reporting.

CUSTOMER SERVICES AND COMMUNICATIONS ensuring that the public, our councillors and our staff are regularly updated and informed.

Maintaining our essential **CORPORATE SUPPORT SERVICES** including workforce, finance and ICT.

The council set up a Recovery Coordination Group and five dedicated Recovery Planning sub-groups, each aligned to one of the Vision 2025 Well-being objectives. The purpose of these groups was to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the provision of services and to identify new and revised improvement objectives, that embrace the new opportunities presented by the pandemic as well as support effective recovery.

During 2020-21 the Council's five stage corporate planning cycle was used as the framework for COVID-19 Recovery Planning and Budget Recovery Planning. A detailed timeline for reviewing IBPs was agreed, as set out below:

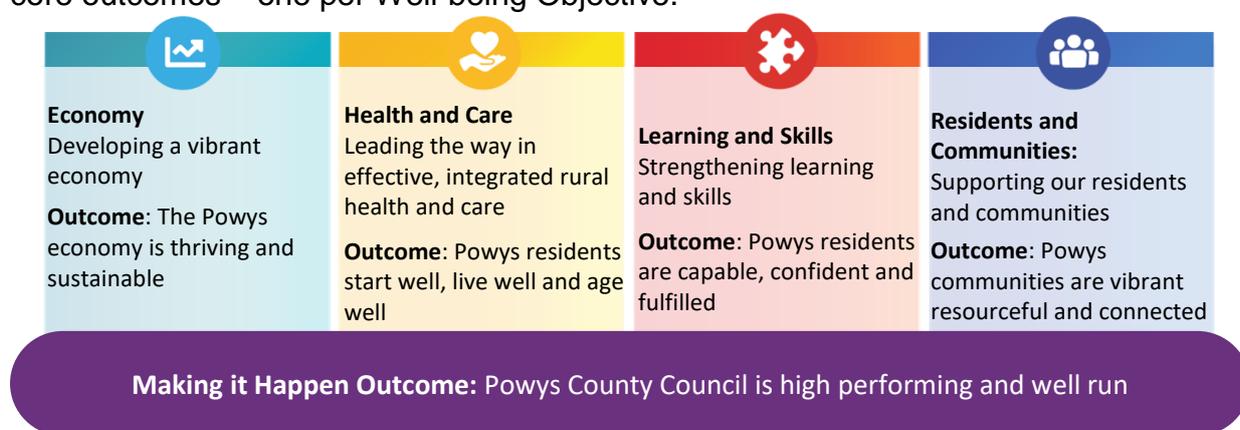


In order to inform the 2020-21 Corporate Planning Cycle the Council undertook an analysis of the Recommendations that were set out in the Future Generations Commissioners Report 2020. Each service considered the recommendations relevant to their service and prioritised those for implementation in the short term.

Due to the pandemic, limited progress has been made on the transition to Outcomes Based Budgeting as part of the Integrated Business Planning Transformation Programme.

Vision 2025: Our Corporate Improvement Plan (CIP)

During 2020-21 the Cabinet reviewed and refined the 40 Outcomes it had originally set out in Vision 2025 back in 2017/18. Recognising the importance of focussing on the things that matter most to our communities, the Cabinet agreed to focus on five core outcomes – one per Well-being Objective.



In line with the Recovery Planning approach and Corporate Planning cycle (outlined above) a review of the Vision 2025 activities and measures has been undertaken (including our six Strategic Equality Objectives), and the 2021 Annual update to Vision 2025 Our Corporate Improvement Plan was approved by full Council on 4 March following engagement with Members, scrutiny and consultation with services.

The Council published its 2019-20 Annual Report on Vision 2025 in July 2020.

Vision 2025 Transformation Programme

In 2019-20 the Council consolidated its arrangements for planning and delivering Vision 2025 with the establishment of the Vision 2025 Transformation Programme and the Transformation Delivery Board. This has helped the Council to focus on key projects on which Vision 2025 outcomes depend.

The Transformation Programme is governed by the Transformation Delivery Board, comprising Cabinet / EMT and includes programmes that will have the most dramatic impact on the Powys population, including schools' transformation, a well-being programme for the whole of North Powys, a Mid Wales Growth Deal and investment in extra care and affordable housing. There are also three cross cutting programmes around workforce, digital technology and integrated business planning which are focused on transforming the way in which the Council works. The Vision 2025

Transformation Programme governance is proportionate and consistent across the programme and the focus is on delivery.

During 2019 - 20 a review of the Vision 2025 programme was undertaken by Audit Wales. The review concluded that, overall, the Council is well placed to deliver its transformation programme, however COVID-19 presents new challenges and risks to the programme. We reached this conclusion because:

- The Council has comprehensive project plans and clearly identifies the aims of its transformation programme
- The Council has put in place arrangements to deliver its transformation programme, however some arrangements are stronger than others
- COVID-19 has had an impact on the pace of some transformation projects and this will be an ongoing risk for the delivery of the overall transformation

The beginning of 2020-21 saw the programme enter the implementation phase however when the council entered into Business Continuity mode in March 2020 due to the global pandemic the following projects were placed on hold:

- North Powys Wellbeing Hub – due to re-prioritisation of resource within the Powys Teaching Health Board (PTHB) this project had to be placed on hold
- Workforce Futures – a high number of staff from the workforce development team were redeployed and this project was therefore placed on hold

The Brecon Place-Based project was closed down due to uncertainty over what the demand for office accommodation and extra care would be after the pandemic. The extra care aspect has since been picked up again by the Extra Care project whilst the office accommodation review has been subsumed into the new council project “New Ways of Working”.

The digital project largely benefitted from the increased requirement for digital support services both internally and externally within the council.

The remaining projects have continued during 2020/21 and have largely been unaffected by the impact of the pandemic.

During 2020/21 the programme management has been light-touch as the Programme Manager was redeployed to the Test Trace Protect project and the supporting officer was redeployed to the Transforming Education programme.

Progress has been made in terms of reporting with a newly digitised highlight report and dashboard now ready for roll-out for Quarter 4. End of year reviews have also been completed with all project managers and an associated report will be issued to the Transformation Delivery Board in April.

A communications planning sprint has also been established during Quarter 4 with the communications plan, branding toolkit and website all due to be updated for the

end of the quarter. Enhanced communications activities will take place in the new financial year across the programme and in-line with the Welsh Audit Office recommendations.

During the next financial year the programme management will be re-established with quarterly review meetings taking place with each project manager. The “virtual vision 2025 project team” sessions will also be re-introduced to help and support all of the project managers together. Project managers will also be encouraged to participate in the council’s Transformation Approach training if they have not already done so.

Integrated Impact Assessments

The process of assessing how our services and policies might impact upon different types of people and communities and developing proposals in line with relevant legislation has been further embedded in the Council. During 2020-2021 as well as adapting to deliver virtual Impact Assessment training, we successfully digitised the Impact Assessment form providing services with a more efficient and user-friendly method enhancing robustness, introducing an automated flow process to support governance and a central repository of impact assessments for members and staff to access, to aid in developing proposals and share information, evidence and good practice. The new system allows the Council to interrogate the data from multiple impact assessments, to look at the cumulative impact of decisions on particular geographic areas or groups within the community, as well as identifying changes that can be made to the proposal to improve the impact of an element of the assessment. The digital platform will also enable publishing the impact assessments to the web giving the public access when it is appropriate to do so, to provide transparency within the Council’s decision-making process.

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

Council approved the MTFS for 2020-25 on 28 February 2020 and this can be found [here](#) (See Item 5 Appendix A).

Integrated Business Planning has been adopted since April 2019 Moving the Council away from traditional budget planning to one that focuses on how best to use our resources to make the biggest impact on the outcomes the Council is seeking to achieve, informed where available by comparative performance and unit cost data and feedback from regulators and customers. In May 2019 services were given notional budget allocations for 2020-23 to work from, but through an iterative process of challenge and engagement over a number of months the final allocations reflect as well as possible how the Council should use the resources available to it to achieve Vision 2025. As such the Council has moved away from salami slicing.

There is further work to do to move properly away from incremental budgeting and to Outcome Based Budgeting (OBB) and this work is planned, starting with a project focused on setting outcome-based budgets for a number of services who will pilot the process, with a plan over the period of the MTFS to move fully to OBB as part of our Integrated Business Planning Programme.

2020-21 has seen much a higher level of engagement in the development of the budget and the MTFS with staff, members, stakeholders and the public. Use of the

budget simulator, numerous member engagement sessions, staff engagement events, meetings with stakeholders and scrutiny of the Draft 2020-21 budget and the 2020-25 MTFs have all helped to bring greater openness and transparency to the financial planning process.

For 2020-25 the MTFs has been strengthened to include key principles that will guide the Council’s financial planning and management over the medium term. The Council’s capital strategy has been amalgamated with the Treasury Management Strategy for 2020-21 and are now integral to the Integrated Business Planning process. The strategy facilitates a seamless interface between business planning within the Council and the management of assets and capital resources. The introduction of a new governance framework for the inclusion of projects in the capital programme supported by CIPFA training for key staff in business case development has helped to improve the quality of business cases and decision making around capital investment.

Scrutiny

The new scrutiny committees have been bedding in during 2019-20 and an interim review of them was conducted in September 2019. The results of the review were considered by the Co-ordinating Committee in December 2019 and concluded that the majority of responses regarding the way that scrutiny was operating were positive.

A full review was due to take place in April 2020, but this has been deferred due to the Coronavirus pandemic and the need for the Council to focus on its response to that.

Conclusion:

The Council is able to offer **substantial** assurance that the Council’s arrangements adequately reflect the principles of good governance as set out in Core Principle C: *Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits*. Processes are in place and operating effectively and risks to effective governance are well managed.

Recommendations for further development in 2021-22:

During 2021-22 the following developments will be undertaken:

Development Action:	Lead / deadline
Working with partners to update the Well-being Assessment and Population Assessment	Emma Palmer
New Vision 2025 communications campaign in accordance with the WAO recommendations	Emma Palmer
Implementation of the Socio-Economic Duty through effective Impact Assessment process and on-going training	Emma Palmer

3.4 Core Principle D

Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended *outcomes*

How we do this:

Strategic plans

The Council's Corporate Improvement Plan, Vision 2025, was developed taking account of evidence gained through a population needs assessment and a well-being assessment. This plan identifies the interventions necessary to achieve the outcomes set out in the document. With its partners on the Regional Partnership Board the Council has also developed a Health and Care Strategy for Powys and with its Public Service Board Partners, Towards 2040, our Well-being Plan. These strategic plans all align and are designed to ensure the Council focuses its activities and resources on optimising the achievement of its intended outcomes.

Integrated Business Plans

In 2020-21 all the Council's services have an Integrated Service Business Plan to show how they will deliver outcomes and continuous service improvements in Vision 2025. They are completed as part of the budget setting and workforce planning process.

Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework

The Council has a Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework in place to ensure a consistent approach and clear accountability for performance improvement. Our organisation is large, complex and needs to work with multiple external partners to deliver overall results for our residents. A performance management framework is therefore essential as it lays out the common system and methods needed to perform and improve, helping us to work as one 'joined up' community rather than separate services. The framework ensures that staff can clearly understand their responsibilities regarding performance management on which the Council's governance arrangements will hold them to account.

Management Information and Business Intelligence

The Council has a Business Intelligence Team which is responsible for the development of management information through the collection, collation and analysis of data to aid decision making and performance management.

Improvement and Assurance Board

The Improvement and Assurance Board (IAB) was established in April 2018 by the Welsh Government to provide challenge and support to the Council to assist the Leader in driving forward required change and improvement, particularly in respect of corporate governance, social services and in 2019-20 education improvement was added. Part of its remit has been to support the Council in identifying and pursuing the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes. The Board was stood down in September 2020, in recognition of progress made by the council, and alternative arrangements were agreed (as set out in the next paragraph).

Corporate Improvement Board and Service Improvement Boards

Following agreement to step down the Improvement and Assurance Board (IAB) the council proposed a new Assurance Framework to continue the pace of progress made by the IAB. This framework consists of the following:

Corporate Improvement Board - To provide leadership as a lever for improvement, with focus on the Council's improvement plans (Social Services, Education, Housing and Highways, Transport and Recycling). To engage in strategic dialogue, and progress issues and opportunities regarding collective impact. To receive a written Executive summary of performance from each Service Improvement Board Chair and feedback any concerns the board may have.

Service Improvement Boards - To provide Council led improvement, with a focus on the Council's improvement plans for Social Services, Education, Housing and Highways, Transport and Recycling. Ensuring there is a well-documented plan of action with clear milestones and targets for improvement that has been endorsed from the outset by Corporate Improvement Board. Driving positive performance outcomes through regular monitoring and reporting against agreed plans and targets.

Review of effectiveness:

In the 2019-20 Annual Governance Statement the following areas for development were identified for 2020-21:

Objective	Responsible Service	RAG
Review and strengthen Improvement and Assurance arrangements to take account of recommendations from the Sean Harriss review	Caroline Turner July 2020	Blue
Understanding the Impact of the pandemic on Powys (short/medium/long term)	Emma Palmer June 2020	Blue
Evaluate with stakeholders where possible, all pre-COVID19 Council activities to determine changes to services and activities required during the recovery phase	Caroline Turner July 2020	Green
Adjust 2020-21 content of Integrated Business Plans to include short term recovery action	Heads of Service July 2020	Blue
Produce 2021-24 Integrated Business Plans to include medium term recovery action	Heads of Service September 2020	Red

Strategic plans

The Council continues to work with its Public Service Board (PSB) partners on the delivery of Towards 2040 and with its Regional Partnership Board partners on the Joint Area Plan priorities. In November 2020 the Council facilitated a PSB Recovery Workshop to support PSB members in reviewing their current 12 Well-being Steps and to consider if they are still the most appropriate for delivering the intended outcomes and in prioritising recovery. As a result the PSB agreed that all 12 Steps

were still relevant but chose to focus its priorities on 3 steps moving forward, leaving the remaining to be driven by other existing partnerships.

Integrated Service Business Plans

In 2020-21, all twelve services had an Integrated Business Plan (IBP) setting out the Vision 2025 improvement/transformation objectives they are responsible for delivering, as well as business as usual activity that they manage day to day and workforce plans. During the year all services reviewed and adjusted the content of their IBP's for the 2020-21 year to include short term recovery action. All services also undertook a thorough review of their IBP's and produced 2021-24 Plans to include medium term recovery action. The Council's Transformation and Communications Team undertook a quality assurance exercise of all IBP's using the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) methodology. The findings of the exercise were fed back individually to each Head of Service through dedicated sessions with the Head of Transformation and Communications.

During 2020-21, Children's Services, Adult Services and the Education Service all had specific improvement plans to respond to recommendations made by regulators. These plans were overseen by the Improvement and Assurance Board (see below).

Adults Services

Through 2019-21, there has been consistent leadership within Adult Services, with a permanent senior leadership team in place. This continues to provide the stability in leadership required to further the vision for continued transformation of the service as well as managing day to day sustained improvements. The service has further embedded a strengths-based approach to its work and has invested jointly with Powys Teaching Health Board to develop the community connector capacity with partners in the voluntary sector. ASSIST, our adult services front door, has increased its ability to respond to initial calls for information and advice, resolving issues at the earliest opportunity.

Our partnership working with PTHB has also seen a refinement of our hospital discharge pathways and improved performance in transferring people from hospital back into the community at the earliest opportunity.

There has been a dramatic improvement in ensuring availability of domiciliary care where and when required during the year. The numbers waiting reached single figures at the beginning of 2021, this follows the rolling out of the dynamic purchasing system, development of micro enterprise domiciliary care provision and significant increase in use of direct payments. Powys County Council's Cabinet agreed the Powys Pledge at the end of 2020 and its implementation in 2021 and onward will see even greater support for domiciliary care agencies and care staff. Using the strengths-based approach, integrated reablement service, and technology enabled care, the service has reduced the average size of domiciliary care packages and is delaying the need for residential care. The Service has developed excellent working relationships with statutory partners and made significant progress in early 2020 in reducing Delayed Transfers of Care and lengths of stay in hospital.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic placed the service in business continuity from mid-March 2020 onwards, the many developments continued and some significant

developments were realised, with two supported living developments opening in early 2021 (in Welshpool and Brecon), enabling service users to return to Powys from placements out of county; and planning and funding of two extra care schemes agreed in March 2021 (Ystradgynlais and Welshpool), with funding for another extra care scheme agreed for 2021-22 development (Brecon).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also enabled more rapid developments in some areas, with integrated overview of care home provision with the Powys Teaching Health Board realised through the Care Homes Section 33.

Children's Services

Throughout 2019-21 there has been consistent leadership across Children's Services with all Senior Manager posts appointed permanently. This has established a clear strategic vision for improving the service. The Service is two years into a journey of improvement. Key areas of improvement to date are:

The restructure of the Service from one based on generic teams where workers were required to undertake tasks from referral to adoption to specialist teams. The restructure enables workers to have clarity of role and manageable workloads and makes Children's Services in Powys an attractive place to work. The specialist teams are now made up of the following:

- Early Help and Assessment
- Intervention and Prevention
- Care and Support
- Corporate Parenting
- Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

Following the restructure, staff morale has improved and colleagues report feeling better equipped to undertake their roles. The restructure also included a big focus and investment in Early Help Services and Intervention and Prevention Services. The Intervention and Prevention Service works directly with children, young people and their families to help keep families together wherever it is safe and in the child's best interests and with foster carers to stabilise placements which may be at risk of breaking down and prevent escalation. Since these services began the number of children becoming looked after has reduced. This can directly be attributed to the work of the Early Help and Intervention and Prevention Services and is evidence that the restructure has positively changed the way we work.

The practice framework Signs of Safety has been rolled out and embedded across the service. Training for all staff has been implemented and a Signs of Safety Implementation Group was established and meets monthly to review all the forms the services use to ensure they are in line with Signs of Safety. The Group is attended by staff from all aspects of the Service and examples of good practice are shared. Team Managers report that using Signs of Safety has transformed the way they work with families and the focus is on developing family support networks and keeping children safely at home wherever possible.

The number of qualified social work vacancies have reduced along with the reliance on agency staff. The Service has undertaken several recruitment drives and initiatives to raise the profile of the Service and these are contributing to the steady permanent recruitment.

The Service is implementing a Closer to Home strategy to increase the supply of a range of placements that will meet the needs of children and young people while enabling them to live in their communities. We have reduced the number of children who are looked after and have established supported accommodation for care leavers in the North and South of Powys so that young people no longer have to go out of county, as well as opening a training flat to begin preparing young people for life as tenants of social housing. We have acquired a property which is being prepared as a children's home which will be able to accommodate two children. We have consulted with foster carers and reviewed the support offer, whilst working with national colleagues on the harmonisation of fees for foster carers across Wales.

We have worked with Housing colleagues to establish a Housing Gateway Panel so that our care leavers no longer have to present as homeless in order to access social housing (the previous process). Further work is currently being undertaken to purchase a property in partnership with the Powys Teaching Health Board and Welsh Government to provide safe accommodation for individuals aged over 16.

The voice of the child and young person has been at the forefront of the restructure and the change in the way we work. All appointments are made with a young person's panel. The creation of the Children's Services Participation and Engagement Officer who will mentor and line manage the Participation and Engagement Care Leaver apprentice post, is linked to the youth work pathway. We have also re-established the Children in Care and Care Leaver fora. The service has invested in the app Mind of My Own which helps children and young people express themselves and communicate with professionals making sure they are heard. This app is currently being rolled out with training being provided to practitioners across the service.

The Service has established a quality assurance framework and audits are regularly taking place with a quarterly theme. The Service has integrated the Social Services and Well-being Act and is continuing to develop practice standards for every part of the service.

We are proud of the fact that children's services continued to fully function and visit children and families throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and continues to do so, ensuring that children are seen and supported.

Education Service

Powys Local Authority Education Service was inspected by Estyn in July 2019 and its report was published in September 2019. The inspection team concluded that "...there are many areas of the authority's work causing significant concern, such as those relating to school organisation, financial management, school governance, lack of action regarding schools causing concern and the co-ordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs or who may require extra support. These

issues affect school leadership, staffing structures, curriculum planning and staff morale.”

The Council was required to prepare a Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) in response to the recommendations made and in November 2019 a Post Inspection Improvement Conference was held, chaired by Estyn to seek assurance that the Council had:

- identified and understood the current issues
- coherent plans to address these issues
- enough resources to implement its plans
- rigorous processes in place to monitor the implementation of its plans and evaluate the impact.

Following the conference, a PIAP was agreed and shared with all key stakeholders. Over the last 18 months, the service has worked closely with schools and other partners to deliver the improvements that were outlined in the PIAP and a range of other initiatives needed in order to provide a more effective, cohesive, resilient and sustainable service to support learners across Powys. There have been regular scrutiny and improvement board sessions to monitor progress along with a significant series of cabinet reports on matters relating to service improvement and transformation. Through links with Estyn’s local authority link inspectors there have been regular meetings, and a further improvement conference in November 2020 the overall view from Estyn is that *‘ the local authority demonstrated that it has begun to make sound progress since the inspection. It is showing a clear commitment to addressing the issues that were raised as well as evaluating its progress against its plans. Importantly, it is building leadership capacity which has the potential to secure sustainable improvements. Overall, the local authority has identified sufficient resources to implement its plans as well as considering the barriers to progress and associated risks appropriately.’*

Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework

The Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework (PMQAF) has continued to be implemented to embed a refreshed approach to improving and maintaining service performance.

The method of reporting through an AIA (Achievements, Issues, Actions) approach is now well embedded across the organisation and provides a clear and succinct way of communicating key information to strategic decision makers.

At the beginning of the year the council revised its Performance Measurement Framework to remove duplication in reporting and to ensure its measures/ data sets are clearly aligned to the ‘Golden Thread’ of plans. This resulted in the removal of the ‘Top 20 Indicator Set’ and strengthening of other existing indicator sets. During 2020-21, the following framework was used to report quarterly performance to the Executive Management Team, Cabinet and scrutiny committees. Detailed reports are collated setting out an analysis of the following information, The report on the Vision 2025 and Public Accountability Measures (PAM) performance is also available in the public domain:

Performance Measurement Framework



Management Information and Business Intelligence

During 2020-21 data analytics and insight has strengthened and been integral to our response to the pandemic. We have developed numerous automated reports to provide insight on vulnerable people and those shielding, and supported an integrated approach to ensure we assist those most at need. We have produced reports for our local Test, Trace and Protect so that they can effectively target their approach. We developed a COVID19 Well-being Assessment, analysing the impact of COVID19 on the economy and the services provided by the council, whilst also highlighting what the short, medium and long-term impacts could be. We have provided an update of this and plan to monitor these key indicators quarterly.

We have developed a Corporate Scorecard which integrates workforce, compliance, finance and audit. This supports Senior Leadership Team and Executive Management Team with their work and provides a health check of the organisation. We worked on a proof of concept with the NHS Wales Informatics Service to better integrate health and social care. This work led to the creation of reports that focused on Care Homes, COVID19 testing, out of hours GP calls, hospital admissions and ambulance calls. The work has been presented across Wales and there are discussions taking place to identify how this can be upscaled nationally.

We have focused on maintaining and adding new reports to our Well-being Information Bank, such as homelessness and the number of furloughed people within the county. The team have upskilled during the year and have developed a style in their reporting.

We have met with many other Welsh local authorities and organisations such as Microsoft to demonstrate the journey that we have been on and are due to conduct a webinar for the Local Area Research and Intelligence Association (LARIA) in May 2021.

Improvement and Assurance Board (IAB)

The IAB met monthly up to September 2020, to monitor the Council's improvement journey in respect of corporate governance, adults' and children's services and the education service. The independent members of the board provided advice and guidance to officers on strategic and operational aspects of their plans throughout this period. In March 2020, a review was undertaken by Sean Harriss of the effectiveness of the Improvement and Assurance Board which concluded that "the Council, Improvement Board and Welsh Government should be commended for the progress made over the past two years. There is much still to be done but the Council is in a much stronger position to drive its own improvement; and the continuation of the Improvement and Assurance Board for a further six months in a revised form should provide both an appropriate level of ongoing support while providing the Council with a sufficient period of time to put in place its own alternative arrangements".

Both Adult Social Care and Children's Services had CIW (Care Inspectorate Wales) monitoring visits during September 2020. Both services also had improvement conferences facilitated by CIW in October. The outcome of these events was CIW finding that Social Services in Powys no longer required the enhanced monitoring arrangements that had been in place since 2017. CIW said they now had confidence that the Organisation had the capability and leadership to oversee its own improvement journey.

Corporate Improvement Board and Service Improvement Boards

During 2020-21 the council has established new governance arrangements for securing continued improvements in key service areas. Service Improvement Boards have been established for Social Services, Education, Housing and Highways, Transport and Recycling, all of which are accountable to the overarching Corporate Improvement Board. These boards have focused on identifying the interventions needed to drive rapid improvements in service performance.

Conclusion:

The Council is able to offer **substantial** assurance that the Council's arrangements adequately reflect the principles of good governance as set out in Core Principle D: *Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes*. Processes are in place and operating effectively and risks to effective governance are well managed.

Recommendations for further development in 2021-22:

During 2021-22 the following developments will be undertaken:

Development Action:	Lead / deadline
Transition the Service Improvement Boards to form part of the quarterly review meetings held as part of the Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework	Corporate Directors December 2021
Continuation of the Integrated Business Planning Transformation Project and deliver OBB pilots	Jane Thomas
Implementation of Part 6 of the new Local Government and Elections Wales Act	Emma Palmer

Service Performance Panels to be undertaken to assess each services performance and review Integrated Business Plans	Dr Caroline Turner
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3.5 Core Principle E

Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the *individuals within it*

How we do this:

Constitution

The Council's Constitution sets out the roles and responsibilities of Members and officers so that accountability for decisions made and actions taken are clear. The Council has processes in place for the appointment by political groups to committees, as well as processes for the appointment of the Parent Governor Representatives onto the Learning, Skills and Economy Scrutiny Committee and the appointment of Independent "Lay" Members on the Standards Committee and Audit Committee.

There are clear schemes of delegation to officers, which are being revised as a result of a revision to the Council's Senior Management Structure, as well as limits to such delegation set out within the Constitution. The Council's constitution is published on the public website. Revisions of the Constitution are ongoing and future changes are incorporated in a new full version being published each time which will make easier the identification of versions in force at a particular point in time, which was not the case previously. The ninth version of the Council's constitution was approved by full Council on the 26 November 2020.

Council

The Council has seventy-three elected members. The current political composition of the Council is: Independent (23); Conservative (15); Liberal Democrat / Green (15); Welsh Labour (8); Plaid Cymru (2); Action for Powys (8); New Powys (2). The ruling administration is a coalition between the Independent and Conservative Groups.

Cabinet

The Council operates a Leader and Cabinet model of governance. The Council is responsible for appointing the Leader. The Leader appoints the remainder of the Cabinet. The Council retains responsibility for approving the council's CIP and the annual budget.

The Cabinet has delegated responsibility for some functions, including:

- Strategic leadership and direction
- Developing and proposing to Council for approval the CIP, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the Annual Budget
- Ensuring delivery of the CIP
- Consulting with relevant Scrutiny Committees in the development of policy
- Delivering services in line with adopted policies and budgets.

In addition, the Leader has delegated authority to individual Cabinet members to take decisions on all matters within their individual Portfolios, and there is a process set out in the Constitution so that the decision-making process is open and transparent.

Member Development

The Council provides a wide range of opportunities to support Members' development. All newly elected Members receive induction training. There is also specific training relating to whichever committees they are appointed. Powys County Council is accredited with the Wales Charter for Member Support and Development. An annual Member Development Programme is in place and the Council has identified mandatory and discretionary training as well as possible sanctions which can be utilised by the Standards Committees for Members failing to achieve mandatory training set by the Council. Members in receipt of Senior Salaries (e.g. Cabinet Members and Committee Chairs) have undertaken personal development reviews (PDRs) to assess their individual training needs. This is undertaken on a two-yearly basis or within three months of their initial appointment.

A Member Development Working Group consisting of Councillors and officers develops and monitors the implementation of the Member Development Programme. The programme is reviewed and amended on a regular basis with input from the Council's Senior Leadership Team to ensure that it includes the current areas of priority for the Council.

Partnership Working

The Council works closely with key partners through statutory and non-statutory arrangements. The Council is a member of the Regional Partnership Board, established under the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 to drive the strategic regional delivery of social services in close collaboration with health. We are also a member of the statutory Public Service Board established under the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 to improve joint working across all public services in the local authority area. These arrangements enable the Council to achieve more for our residents through joint planning and co-ordination of our shared resources.

The Council also has a number of Section 33 Agreements with Powys Teaching Health Board in relation to the provision of health and care services as well as ICT. The Section 33 Agreements are governed by a Joint Partnership Board (JPB) which also oversees our ambitious change shared agenda set out in the Area Plan and our CIP.

Improvement and Assurance Board

See Core Principle D above for details

Senior Officer roles and responsibilities

The Chief Executive is the Head of Paid Service who leads the Council's officers. She is responsible for signing the Council's Annual Governance Statement

During 2019-20, the following officers held statutory roles:

- The Head of Legal and Democratic Services was the designated Monitoring Officer and the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO)
- The Head of Financial Services was the designated Section 151 Officer, responsible for certifying that the Council's Accounts present a true and fair view of its financial position and income and expenditure
- The Corporate Director – Children and Adults was the designated Statutory Director for Social Services, responsible for an annual review of the Council's social services under the ACRF
- The Interim Chief Education Officer was the designated Chief Education Officer from 30 July 2019 to the present
- The Corporate Director – Children and Adults was the designated Lead Director for Children and Young People for the period
- The Scrutiny Manager was the designated Head of Democratic Services

Workforce Planning and Development

All staff have clear conditions of employment and job descriptions which highlight their roles and responsibilities. This is supported by a range of Human Resources policies.

Effective workforce planning and development is in place to ensure the Council has the workforce it needs to deliver its statutory functions and improvement outcomes.

All new employees receive induction training and are required to complete corporate mandatory training and any other related to their role. A range of role-based training is available across the Council to ensure staff operate in a safe manner to protect themselves, the public and their colleagues.

The Council has an extensive Leadership Programme for managers at all levels as well as a coaching programme.

There is an annual appraisal system through which individuals' objectives are agreed, training needs are identified and performance assessed. There is a full appraisal once a year and an interim appraisal after six months. The appraisal process helps managers and staff have a greater focus on performance management to ensure work is directed towards achieving the goals of the individual services and the organisation as a whole. Therefore, the golden thread linking the Council's strategic plans to the work of individual officers and operational staff is ensured. The appraisal process was deferred in the early part of 2020/21, whilst the Council operated under its emergency plan. Appraisals were then held from September with a healthy 85% of the workforce participating in an appraisal. The process is due to be undertaken again for 2021/22 and will commence immediately following the Easter break.

Digital Services

The Council has a well developed digital infrastructure which facilitates the work of its employees and services, using the latest technology to enhance our residents' and employees' experience of engaging with the Council. The Council's digital strategy can be found as follows:

<https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/8236/Read-our-Digital-Strategy---its-interactive>

Review of effectiveness:

In the 2019-20 Annual Governance Statement the following areas for development were identified for 2020-21:

Objective	Responsible Service	RAG
To implement new member development strategy and programme	Clive Pinney 31 March 2021	
Deliver planned 2020-21 leadership development programme, using e-learning where possible	Paul Bradshaw 31 March 2021	

Constitution

In November 2020 Sections 4 – Full Council and 7 - Scrutiny Committees were updated.

Cabinet

In 2020-21 there were eight Cabinet Members, including the Leader. The Cabinet portfolios are as follows:

- Leader - Councillor Rosemarie Harris
- Portfolio Holder for Education and Property - Councillor Phyl Davies
- Portfolio Holder for Young People and Culture - Councillor Rachel Powell
- Portfolio Holder for Finance, and Transport / Deputy Leader - Councillor Aled Davies
- Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care and Welsh Language - Councillor Myfanwy Alexander
- Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Engagement and Regulatory Services - Councillor Graham Breeze
- Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Planning and Housing - Councillor Iain McIntosh
- Portfolio Holder for Environment - Councillor Heulwen Hulme

During 2020-21 relationships between the Cabinet and opposition groups has been developing. The Leader held regular meetings with all Group Leaders throughout the year, providing an opportunity to give updates on Covid, but also to discuss a wide range of issues.

The relationship between the Cabinet, Scrutiny Committees and the rest of Council needs further development so that all elected members value their respective roles and responsibilities. In April 2020 a new member development framework and programme was introduced which will include further opportunities to develop Members' understanding and recognition of scrutiny as a catalyst for improvement and an essential part of the democratic process; the ability to fully implement the framework programme was impacted by Covid, but this work will recommence during 2021-22.

Partnership Working

The Council continued to strengthen its partnership working through 2020-21 as evidenced under Core Principle D above. Weaknesses identified in an internal audit report on Section 33 Agreements with Powys Teaching Health Board have been addressed. Reductions in the number of Delayed Transfers of Care across the health and care system in the final quarter were a testament to the strong working relationships that have been developed across the Council and Powys Teaching Health Board.

Member Development

During 2020-21 70 Members completed mandatory training and development in Treasury Management, 57 Members completed mandatory training in Corporate Safeguarding and 55 completed mandatory training in Corporate Parenting. However, it should be noted that it has been found that attendance figures stored on Teams may be inaccurate. Since this has been identified officers are now manually recording attendance figures. Those Members that did not attend a session have been given access to the recordings of the sessions and asked to watch this and complete a short questionnaire.

In 2020-21 Member Development has been strengthened with a comprehensive programme including sessions on: financial planning and management (led by CIPFA); Service Improvement Plans; the 2020-25 MTFS and 2020-21 budget; the Vision 2025 transformation programme; the Estyn report and Post Inspection Action Plan; and schools' transformation (including presentation of data). The full Member Development programme for 2020-21 is at Appendix 2.

These new arrangements have strengthened the understanding of Members and the quality of scrutiny of Council business, but further improvement is required consistently to provide the level of challenge and assurance needed for the wider political membership to hold the Executive to account and to help drive further improvement and transformation across the Council.

A new Member Development strategy and programme was in development for 2020-21 but was delayed by the Council's focus on responding to the Coronavirus pandemic; this will be reinstated during 2021-22.

Senior Officer roles and responsibilities

The Executive Management Team comprises the CEO, two corporate directors two Heads of Service with statutory roles (i.e. S151 and Monitoring Officer) and the Head of Transformation and Communication and the Strategic Lead for Education.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) which includes EMT and the other nine Heads of Service is now complete albeit one role is interim with an officer on promotion into the role (Education Service). Of the 16 roles in the SLT seven have been filled with external appointments and of the remainder eight have been promoted within the Council in the last two years. One is an external temporary appointment to assist the Education Service. These appointments have created a healthy balance with the team of external officers with considerable improvement and transformation

experience with talented internal officers with strong corporate memory and local knowledge. The Corporate Director for Resources and Transformation left the authority in November 2020, and some changes in responsibilities and line-management took place as a result. A review of SLT is currently on-going; the review began during the Autumn of 2020 but was delayed due to the increased focus on responding to Covid over the winter, but was recommenced during the Spring of 2021.

Workforce Planning and Development

The revised Annual Appraisal process is ensuring individuals are accountable for and receive feedback on their performance. The organisation is becoming more attractive to work for, and attracting new recruits, is reducing agency staff reliance. The Workforce Analysis Report presented to the Improvement and Assurance Board regarding Children’s Service Performance contains a high level of analysis of performance and is being used as a benchmark by other local authorities. The organisational culture is changing as a result of the performance and workforce improvement work, and this is evidenced in the enhanced challenge happening in EMT on a fortnightly basis, and will continue as new posts are appointed to enhanced job descriptions with a strong focus on performance.

In 2019-20 the Council developed a workforce strategy, supported by a Workforce Futures Programme which includes developments in leadership training, development and coaching as well as improved staff engagement and workforce planning all of which are designed to support the development of a highly skilled and productive workforce.

Every service area has undertaken their second round of workforce planning for 2021/22 as part of the Integrated Business Planning process and an individual service and organisation wide Training Needs Analyses (TNA) has been undertaken. A corporate training plan and individual service training plans have been developed as a result of the TNA.

As part of the Workforce Futures Programme a new Leadership Development Programme has been developed and will be offered largely through the Welsh Government apprenticeship programme.

The Council has also developed, with Regional Partnership Board partners, a strategic framework for the health and care workforce in Powys, with a new joint health and social care faculty due to open shortly.

The table below outlines the number of Council staff who completed Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) programmes during 2020-21.

Programme	Completed course
ILM Coaching and Mentoring	6
ILM2 Team Leader	3
ILM Level 3 in Leadership & Management	8
ILM Level 4 in Leadership & Management	7
ILM Level 5 in Leadership & Management	21

ILM Level 7 – Leadership & Management (Powys Executive Programme)	12
Total	48

Conclusion:

The Council is able to offer **substantial** assurance that the Council’s arrangements adequately reflect the principles of good governance as set out in Core Principle E: *Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.* Processes are in place and operating effectively and risks to effective governance are well managed.

Recommendations for further development in 2021-22:

During 2021-22 the following developments will be undertaken:

Development Action:	Lead	Deadline
The number of staff attaining digital core skills (bronze level) will reach 100%	Diane Reynolds	March 2023
The percentage of our leaders who are digitally capable and reach the Gold Standard will increase to 100%	Diane Reynolds	March 2022

3.6 Core Principle F

Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

How we do this:

Risk Management

We are continuously improving and updating our approach to risk management to help better understand and manage the risks the Council faces, prepare for future challenges and to increase the likelihood of achieving objectives. Risk management is a core management discipline that supports organisational delivery. The risks that the organisation faces are changing all the time, so the art of good risk management is to combine planning for what we know might happen with preparation for unknown situations, to safeguard the organisation and in turn make it more resilient.

The Portfolio Holder for Risk Management is also the Portfolio Holder for Finance and is updated on the progress of the risk management programme on a quarterly basis. The Strategic Risk Register is also reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis.

Consideration of risk is an integral part of quarterly performance reviews held with Portfolio Holders, Directors and Heads of Service. The Audit Committee has a key role in monitoring and challenging the Council’s risk register. The committee are asked to review the reports considered by Cabinet and the arrangements in place to ensure that there is an appropriate understanding and management of risk and that

these and the actions in place to mitigate the risks are monitored and regularly reviewed.

Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework

See Core Principal D for details on the PMQAF.

We monitor a set of Public Accountability Measures which consist of “outcome focussed” indicators. They reflect those aspects of local authority work which local authorities agree are considered to be important in terms of public accountability. For example, Social Care, educational attainment and waste. This Data allows us to compare our performance in key areas, against the 21 other local authorities in Wales.

Financial Management

The management of the Council’s financial affairs are conducted in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules set out in Section 16 of the Constitution. This sets out the financial management standards for staff and members and their duty to abide by the highest standards of probity in dealing with financial issues and the use of the public’s money. This is facilitated by ensuring everyone is clear about the standards to which they are working and the controls that are in place to ensure that these standards are met.

The Financial Procedure Rules set out the systems and procedures, key controls, and responsibilities for Financial Management, Financial Planning and Risk Management and the Control of resources.

The Council has well established budget monitoring and internal control arrangements and these act as an effective early warning system in identifying potential problems and for managing potential areas of risk.

Monthly reports are prepared in conjunction with Budget Holders and Heads of Service who calculate the forecasts with their accountants, these reports populate the formal reports to Directors and Cabinet. The reports monitor performance against budget with full year forecasting and variance reporting. The delivery of savings and the forecast use of reserves are also included.

Budget Challenge events are undertaken throughout the year to challenge financial performance at a service level. No service area should plan to overspend, all expenditure must be consistent with approved service priorities and the overall approved budget.

The impact of the pandemic on the council Budget was quickly considered early in the financial year and an initial briefing presented to Cabinet on the 5 May 2020 providing an early indication of the potential impact the COVID-19 pandemic could have on the Council’s revenue budget for 2020/21. This early assessment identified the main areas of financial impact for the Council as a result of responding to the pandemic and the restrictions that were being enforced.

- Additional Costs
- Loss of Income

- Council Tax and Non Domestic Business Rates Collection Rates
- Increased demand on the Council Tax reduction Scheme
- Impact on the Delivery of savings –
- Cost Reductions/Underspends - reduced levels of activity and the suspension of some services will result in some budgets not being spent.
- Specific Grant Support from Welsh Government
- Other Grant funding

The assessment identified a number of measures to be explored to mitigate the financial loss to the Council.

- Furloughing of Council Staff
- Assessment of the Delivery of Budgeted Cost Reductions
- Limit expenditure – to freeze expenditure on all but business critical activity.
- Supplier relief in response to PPN2-20
- An assessment of the Capital Programme to better understand the impact on the delivery of projects. The availability of Contractors, sub-contractors and the sourcing of materials will all affect project delivery. This includes a review of the sale of assets and the impact on anticipated capital receipts. Projects that have not yet started may have to be re considered.

The Section 151 Officer engaged in weekly discussions with the Society of Welsh Treasurers (SWT), the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) and the Welsh Government (WG) as the funding arrangements were developed and put in place to support Local Government through the ongoing pandemic.

The financial position was reviewed and reported monthly throughout the year with updates and information provided weekly into SLT. the projected position improved as the mitigating action was implemented and the ongoing support from the WG Hardship fund was confirmed.

The Council recognises that financial management across the organisation can be improved. The conclusions and recommendations from the commissioned CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Financial Management assessment carried out several years ago have been used to develop a plan for improvement across the organisation. The delivery and monitoring of the programme is governed through the Finance Transformation Board.

From 2021-22 the Council will be required to become compliant with the CIPFA Financial Management Code.

The Financial Management (FM) Code is designed to support good practice in financial management and assist local authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability. It is up to each authority to determine the extent to which it complies with the Code and to identify what action it may wish to take to better meet the standards that the FM Code sets out. The FM Code has several components,

including CIPFA 6 Statement of Principles of Good Financial Management. The principles are as follows:

- Organisational leadership – demonstrating a clear strategic direction based on a vision in which financial management is embedded into organisational culture.
- Accountability – financial management is based on medium-term financial planning, which drives the annual budget process supported by effective risk management, quality supporting data and whole life costs.
- Financial management is undertaken with transparency at its core using consistent, meaningful and understandable data, reported with appropriate frequency and with evidence of periodic officer action and elected member decision making.
- Adherence to professional standards is promoted by the leadership team
- Sources of assurance are recognised as an effective tool mainstreamed into financial management and include political scrutiny and the results of external audit, internal audit and inspection.
- The long term sustainability of local services is at the heart of all financial management processes and is evidenced by prudent use of public resources.

The CIPFA Financial Management Code translates the principles of good financial management into a series of standards. These standards address the aspects of an authority's operations and activities that must function effectively if financial management is to be undertaken robustly and financial sustainability is to be achieved. The areas covered by the standards are:

The responsibilities of the chief financial officer and leadership team

- Governance and financial management style
- Long to medium-term financial management
- The annual budget
- Stakeholder engagement and business plans
- Monitoring financial performance
- External financial reporting.

An assessment against the code will take place throughout 2021 to establish the position of the Council, this will build on the previous assessment and will provide a good opportunity to review the progress made since then, whilst identifying actions that need to be delivered to further improve, evidence good practice and support our sustainability.

Budget Setting

The Council's budget planning has traditionally been determined using an incremental budgeting approach and has tended to focus on one year with limited development over the longer term. This will not deliver a sustainable financial position for the Council going forward. The Council is therefore moving to an Outcome Based Budgeting approach, focused on the medium to long-term and aligned to service and workforce planning.

The strategy is based on an approach which brings together all elements of the Council activity to deliver Vision 2025, a programme of transformation, and one which encompasses service improvement and delivers appropriate levels of statutory service. It will better align revenue and capital to ensure that our limited resources are prioritised to achieve maximum effectiveness and based on securing outcomes that matter to our residents.

The strategy is supported by a detailed five year budget model, this has been strengthened in recent years with the development of service financial models which inform the corporate plan. The budget model has been improved with scenario planning across Best, Most Likely and Worse case scenarios.

Integrated Business Plans were introduced in 2019/20 and have been developed by each service building on previous Service Improvement Plans and capturing all service objectives, expenditure and workforce implications.

Service Evaluation is key to the process: performance, cost analysis, benchmarking, regulatory recommendations, proposals for improvement and Service User / Resident Feedback all feature. The objectives for the services which align to the 5 ways of working and the 7 Well-being goals of The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and meet statutory requirements and legislative changes are defined.

Building on the work we have already done the further development of Integrated Business Planning and Outcome Based Budgeting is captured in the Council Transformation Programme.

The development of the revenue budget for 2021/22 was significantly delayed due to the response to the pandemic and out of necessity our planning again focused on one year with limited work undertaken across the subsequent years of the plan. We need to quickly turn our attention to this as it is fundamental in supporting our financial resilience over the Medium and Longer Term and our ability to approve and deliver balanced budgets.

Powys Pension Fund

The Fund's Governance Policy and Compliance Statement sets out in detail the Governance arrangements of the Fund.

[DRAFT GOVERNANCE COMPLIANCE STATUTORY GUIDANCE
\(powyspensionfund.org\)](https://www.powyspensionfund.org)

Powys is one of eight LGPS Administering Authorities in Wales who make up the Wales Pension Partnership. A Joint Governance Committee (JGC) for the Partnership was formally established in 2017/18 and comprises of one elected member from each of the Authorities. The JGC oversees the operations of the Partnership and is supported by an Officer Working Group.

Internal Audit (SWAP)

The detailed review for SWAP is set out in Appendix 5. During the year we have collaborated with SWAP to include the internal audit tracker within our Corporate Scorecard. This will make it easier for the Senior Leadership Team and Executive Management Team to monitor and manage audits within the organisation.

Responding to external regulatory inspections

The Council recognises the value of regulatory inspections in helping to drive improvement. Our core regulators are Care Inspectorate Wales, Audit Wales, Health and Safety Executive, and the Social Housing Regulator and Estyn, who carry out routine inspection on our services. Services are required to embed any recommendations they receive into their Integrated Business Plans to ensure that they are being addressed through appropriate improvement objectives. The objectives then get monitored quarterly to ensure the necessary improvement is being made.

Review of effectiveness:

In the 2019-2020 Annual Governance Statement the following areas for development were identified for 2020-21:

Objective	Responsible Service	RAG
Transfer risk management to Financial Services	Jane Thomas 31 May 2020	Blue
Establish and maintain risk register for pandemic response and recovery	Jane Thomas 31 March 2021	Green
Ensure reporting and analysis is made simple for the user, and integrated reporting links performance data to ease forecasting that they will deliver each month and measured through improving data (revenue & capital)	Jane Thomas 31 March 2021	Green
Ownership and accountability for financial performance developed. Budget holders complete revenue and capital budget forecasts, that include savings assumptions, which are challenged to ensure improvements as the budget holders get better at this role	Jane Thomas With effect from 1 April 2020 with ongoing development throughout the year	Blue
Delivery of the Finance Transformation Project	Jane Thomas 31 March 2023	Yellow
Balance sheet management more effectively managed through the year and reported widely	Jane Thomas 30 September 2020	Yellow

Risk Management

The Risk Officer and the oversight of Risk for the Council transferred to Finance in 2020. In order to effectively identify and manage risks relating specifically to the COVID-19 pandemic, a separate risk register was created to provide clarity and oversight for Gold and Silver Command. These risks are reviewed and monitored

regularly and have been separated into response and recovery risks, using a matrix developed specifically for assessing COVID-19 related risks.

The Council's risk management arrangements have continued to be significantly improved during 2020-21 in response to a follow up internal audit report of risk management in March 2020. The Council's risk management system holds all risk registers and is where all strategic, service and transformation programme risks are registered, mitigated actions are identified and risks monitored. Risk management reports are presented to Cabinet quarterly and are reviewed by the Audit and Scrutiny Committees.

Performance Management and Quality Assurance

See Core principal D for details.

Quarterly Performance Reports detailing progress against Vision 2025: Our Corporate Improvement Plan as well as the Council COVID-19 Recovery priorities were presented to the Cabinet during 2020-21 and can be found on the Council's website:

[Link to Cabinet meetings page](#)

Reporting and Analysis - There were some developments in linking financial data and performance data by way of presenting dashboard information to Heads of Service. This includes forecasts and delivery of savings as agreed with Heads, aged debt analysis, level of local spend and the percentage of creditors paid within 28 days

Ownership and Accountability - At the start of the pandemic we extended the closedown period to provide more time for the Heads of Service to work with their managers to review and agree the financial forecasts, Heads of Service were responsible for providing the service commentary within the Cabinet budget monitoring reports. This has improved the ownership and accountability of budget managers and Service leads who can now more readily report their financial position and respond to challenge by their Portfolio Holders and Scrutiny committees.

Through 2020-21 the Finance Transformation programme was placed on hold due to the need to focus all Finance resource on supporting COVID-19. Additional resource has been sourced for 2021 when the programme will recommence.

Our Balance Sheet management review has progressed through the year with inroads made into reviewing historic entries and codes that need to be addressed. This provides confidence that the figures presented in the accounts have been scrutinised before sign off.

Feedback from our regulators

Appendix 4 detail the key feedback that we have received from our regulators during 2020-21 and the plans we have in place to address them to ensure continuous improvement.

Conclusion:

The Council is able to offer **reasonable** assurance that the Council's arrangements adequately reflect the principles of good governance as set out in Core Principle F: *Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management*. Processes are in place and operating effectively and risks to effective governance are well managed.

Recommendations for further development in 2021-22:

During 2021-22 the following developments will be undertaken:

Development Action:	Lead / deadline
Develop OBB pilots across service areas to feed into the budget /IBP process for 2022/23	Jane Thomas
Restart the Finance Transformation Programme delivering the identified objectives of the business case and improved financial acumen council wide	David Morris / Anne Phillips
Develop and implement the main drivers within the Capital and Treasury Management Strategy including the Schools financial strategy and updating the MRP policy	James Chappelle
Identify level of compliance with Financial Management Code and additional activities required to ensure adequate standard can be achieved when this becomes mandatory in 2021/22.	Dan Paley
Continue to embed a risk managed approach to decision making and good governance of the Council, to ensure everyone manages and understands risks which could prevent us from achieving our objectives.	Anne Phillips/Bets Ingram
Develop a Regulatory Tracker to keep a central record of the regulatory recommendations the Council receives and an overview of progress against them.	Emma Palmer

3.7 Core Principle G

Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

How we do this:

Constitution

The Council's Constitution sets out how the Council operates and the process for policy and decision making. Within this framework, decisions are taken by Council, Cabinet, individual Cabinet Members and Officers. Certain specific decisions are taken by the Planning, Taxi Licensing and Rights of Way Committee, The Licensing Act 2003 Committee, Pensions and Investment Committee and the Employment and Appeals Committee.

Meetings and Reporting Documents

The Council presumes that reports will be publicly available unless certain, specific tests are met. There are seven categories of exempt information and these include:

- Information relating to a particular individual
- Information relating to legal matters

For information to be treated as exempt, an assessment of public interest has to be made, to ensure proper balance is achieved between the right to know, the right to personal privacy and the delivery of efficient government.

Agendas, reports and minutes of the Council's committees are published online and are accessible to the public unless an item contains information which is classed as exempt.

There is a presumption that most meetings will be open to the public, again except where information is to be discussed which is classed as exempt.

The Council now webcasts all Council and Cabinet meetings and is considering whether other meetings could also be webcast in the future.

Quarterly and Annual Performance Reporting

As outlined in Core Principle F, the Council publishes its quarterly performance reports on its website as part of the Cabinet Meeting agendas. This ensures transparency and accountability.

In line with the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 and Well-being of Future Generations Wales Act 2015, the Council also publishes an annual Performance Report (Well-being Report) which sets out an open and honest assessment of performance against the Well-being objectives, Equality Objectives, activities and performance measures in its Corporate Improvement Plan. Powys County Council agreed its 2020 Annual Performance Report in July 2020 and this detailed performance against the Corporate Improvement Plan that was implemented during 2019-20.

The Council normally contributes to a set of Public Accountability Measures (PAM) which compare performance of all 22 Welsh local councils in delivering key services. However due to the COVID-19 pandemic the Local Government Data Unit took the decision to step down the publication of this data for 2020-21, recognising that council's may not be collecting this data during Business-Critical mode. The council has however, been collecting the PAM data where available and this has been reported as part of the quarterly Corporate Performance Report that is considered by the Cabinet.

Scrutiny

See Appendix 3.

Internal Audit

From 1 April 2017 the Council's internal audit service was provided by South West Audit Partnership (SWAP). SWAP is a not-for-profit organisation that was originally set up in 2003 and the arrangement sees Powys County Council become a partner in the company that provides audit services to various public sector bodies including Somerset County Council and Herefordshire Council.

In accordance with the recognised standards, the Head of Audit is required to give an opinion on the overall internal control environment based on the work undertaken throughout the year.

Annual Report of the Director of Social Services / Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF)

Under the Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 the Director of Social Services is required to produce and publish an annual report of the impact and performance of the work of social services and demonstrate how the Council has promoted well-being and accounted for the delivery of the well-being standards contained within the Social Services and Well-being Act

Review of Effectiveness

In the 2019-20 Annual Governance Statement the following areas for development were identified for 2020-21:

Objective	Responsible Service	RAG
Continue to improve the effectiveness of scrutiny	Clive Pinney 31 March 2021	Yellow
Continue to improve the Cabinet Forward Work Programme and links to the Scrutiny Work Programme	Clive Pinney 31 March 2021	Blue
Continue to embed a Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework to ensure our decisions are underpinned by accurate information which are aligned to the Council's vision and priorities	All Heads of Service 31 March 2021	Green

Constitution

The Council is using the new model Constitution provided by Welsh Government with amendments to suit Powys County Council. The Constitution is kept under constant review by officers and the Democratic Services Committee and amended when required, in particular taking into account the learning from difficulties as experienced from time to time.

Meetings and Reporting Documents

All agendas are issued within the required legal timescales. There are only a few committee reports which are deemed to be confidential during the year which have been assessed using the public interest test. Therefore, the majority of documents and meetings are open to the public. The Council is continuing to webcast Council and Cabinet meetings. Following the implementation of Regulations by Welsh Government allowing remote meetings to take place other meetings have also been webcast during the pandemic and the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act makes further provisions relating to the ongoing broadcasting of meetings.

Quarterly and Annual Performance Reporting

During 2020-21 the Council continued to embed the new method for reporting performance information through the use of Microsoft SharePoint Lists. Services take ownership to update the necessary performance information in a central SharePoint list, and then it is imported to Power BI to create interactive dashboards. The dashboards have been made accessible to all services, Members and the public using Microsoft SWAY, where filtering and drill-down capabilities allow the user to focus on specific issues and actions. During the year, quarter by quarter trend data has been added to the Power BI dashboard to allow Senior Leadership Team and Cabinet to understand fluctuations in performance over time.

Each service continued to have a Quarterly Performance Review meeting, where performance data is presented, analysed and discussed between the Head of Service, relevant Director(s) and Cabinet Member(s), An independent member of the corporate strategic planning and performance management team also attend to provide constructive challenge.

During the year a new timetable was developed to ensure each Scrutiny Committee gets the opportunity to scrutinise relevant quarterly performance information (against Vision 2025 Our Corporate Improvement Plan). A pro-forma was developed to support scrutiny with their challenge, and feedback received through these pro-formas is fed back to relevant Directors and Cabinet Members.

Scrutiny

The review of Scrutiny for 2020-21 is set out in Appendix 3.

Internal Audit

The Head of Audit's opinion on internal control for 2020-2021 is as follows (See Appendix 5 for the detailed opinion): On the balance of the 2020/21 audit work for Powys County Council that SWAP have undertaken, enhanced by the work of external agencies, I am able to offer a **Reasonable Assurance** opinion in respect of the areas reviewed during the year.

Annual Report of the Director of Social Services / Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF)

The 2019-20 Annual Director's Report on Social Service in Powys (ACRF) was presented to Full Council in September 2020. It provided an objective assessment of the impact and performance of the work of social services and demonstrated how the Council has promoted well-being and accounted for the delivery of the well-being standards contained within the Social Services and Well-being Act.

Conclusion:

The Council is able to offer **reasonable** assurance that the Council's arrangements adequately reflect the principles of good governance as set out in Core Principle G: *Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability*. Processes are in place and operating effectively and risks to effective governance are well managed.

Recommendations for further development in 2021-22:

During 2021-22 the following developments will be undertaken:

Development Action:	Lead / deadline
Continue to strengthen the performance of scrutiny in particular the scrutiny of performance and risk	Clive Pinney March 2022
Review the effectiveness of Internal Audit with a greater focus on improvement across the organisation	Jane Thomas March 2022

Section 4. Conclusions – Main Governance Issues Facing the Council and Requiring Action

The table below identifies the most significant governance issues (prioritised from the recommendations for development outlined in section 3 above) and how we will address them during 2021 / 22.

Governance Issue	How we are addressing the Issue
<p>Core Principle A: <i>Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the effectiveness of the Governance and Audit Committee and undertake some refresh training for members as to the role of the Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member Development Sessions Committee self assessment with third party support from WLGA, Audit Wales and others
<p>Core Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of new consultation software Engagement HQ in partnership with PTHB and PAVO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchase Engagement HQ Implement Engagement HQ Train staff Analyse findings to inform decision making
<p>Core Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with partners to update the Well-being Assessment and Population Assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the Well-Being and Population Assessment Public Engagement Publish final assessments
<p>Core Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Part 6 of the new Local Government and Elections Wales Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the first Self-Assessment Consult with the public Consider when to engage with Panel Assessment during the next electoral period Report to the Governance and Audit Committee Use findings to inform 2022-23 onwards Corporate Improvement Plan

Governance Issue	How we are addressing the Issue
<p>Core Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The percentage of our leaders who are digitally capable and reach the Gold Standard will increase to 100% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of Digital Competencies Framework Development of Digital Literacy Training Programme Develop Digital Skills Gap Analysis Leaders' Digital Needs
<p>Core Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify level of compliance with Financial Management Code and additional activities required to ensure adequate standard can be achieved when this becomes mandatory in 2021/22. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completing a self assessment with the Senior Leadership Team, Cabinet with scrutiny by the Finance Panel Develop an Improvement Plan to ensure compliance with the Code
<p>Core Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to strengthen the performance of scrutiny in particular the scrutiny of performance and risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the understanding of roles and responsibilities Respond to the findings of the Audit Wales review Review the role of the Finance Panel Member Development Review the effectiveness of scrutiny Review public participation and increase involvement of scrutiny in selection of own work programme

Section 5.

Certification of the Annual Governance Statement 2020-2021

Signed on behalf of Powys County Council:

.....
 Chief Executive
 Date: 30 September 2021

.....
 Leader of the Council
 Date: 30 September 2021

Section 6. Appendices

Appendix 1: Engagement and Consultation Exercises 2020-21

Economy:

Powys Businesses COVID-19 Survey

In the summer of 2020, Powys County Council was keen to know what effect the coronavirus is having on businesses across the county and what support they might need then and in the future. The council continues to work closely with the Welsh Government to support businesses through this difficult time. The survey was heavily promoted through the council's social media channels as well as a press release, Portfolio Holder video blog, and email distribution.

The response: There were 1,016 responses in total. A wide range of businesses from all over the county completed the survey - big and small, old, and new – 63% of whom consider their business to be tourism related. The most common ways businesses were impacted were identified as temporary closures and reduced sales. The main actions taken by businesses for their workforce included furloughing staff and reducing staff hours, 96 businesses responded to say they had laid off staff permanently. Half of respondents were worried about their business surviving at the time the survey was conducted. Most respondents had accessed business support of some kind during the pandemic. Whilst many were grateful for this, they felt more financial help was needed to sustain their business. Feedback from this consultation exercise has been used in council discussions and work with Welsh Government, Business Wales and partner organisations.

Council Tax Premium – Long-term Empty Properties

Since 1 April 2017, long-term empty properties in Powys are subject to a Council Tax premium of 50%, resulting in a total Council Tax charge of 150%. Regulations allow for a 100% Council Tax premium to be charged on long-term empty properties resulting in a total charge of 200%.

In Powys we have 996 properties that are classed as long-term empty (as of April 2020). More than 100 of those properties have been empty for 10 years or more. This consultation was conducted to understand why properties are left empty, the benefits of fewer empty properties within local communities and what impact increasing the premium may have on numbers of long-term empty properties.

The response: There were a total of 274 responses to this consultation, with 68% of respondents identifying as being responsible for paying Council Tax on a long-term empty property in Powys. When specifically asked what the most appropriate course of action would be regarding the Council Tax premium, 49% wanted to leave it at a 50% premium, 30% of respondents answered to increase it to 100% once a property has been empty for 2-3 years. The results from this consultation will help the Council determine the appropriate premium charge on long-term empty properties in Powys.

Council Tax Premium – Periodically Occupied Properties

On 24th September 2020, the Council considered a notice of motion to increase the Council Tax premium for periodically occupied properties to 75%. A consultation was conducted to find out the impact these properties have within local communities with regards to tourism and the local economy, the impact on the availability of affordable housing and what impact increasing the premium may have on numbers of periodically occupied properties in the future.

The response: There were 780 responses to the consultation, with 74% of respondents identifying as being responsible for paying Council Tax on a periodically occupied property in Powys. When specifically asked what the most appropriate course of action would be regarding the Council Tax premium, 79% wanted to leave it at a 50% premium, 3% of respondents answered to increase it to 75% and 18% of respondents answered to increase it to a 100% premium. The results will help the Council to determine future policy in relation to council tax premiums on periodically occupied properties.

Future-proofing Powys

Given the unprecedented year and the global pandemic of COVID-19 we have to deliver things very differently and ask residents to support us in future-proofing Powys and getting the county on the road to recovery. Previous budget consultations focused on specific service provisions, but this year, with the aim of future-proofing Powys, we wanted to engage residents on a longer-term vision for Powys County Council to deliver sustainable and effective services for the next five to 10 years.

The response: There were 205 responses to the online survey, with respondents sharing their opinions on the council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, business and the economy, health and wellbeing, council offices, digitalisation, Council Tax, and the future, post COVID-19. The consultation report was presented to Cabinet in January and the feedback used in budget discussions and decisions for 2021-22.

Health and Care:

Deaf – Hard of Hearing Survey

Deaf and hard of hearing people in Powys were asked for their views on how the council can communicate with them. The online survey asked residents how easy - or otherwise - they have found it to communicate with the council when discussing or requesting services. A British Sign Language (BSL) video - the first time the council has asked questions using BSL - was available for people who use this language with respondents offered a variety of ways to respond.

The response: There were 42 responses to this survey, with 65% of respondents over the age of 56. Many respondents reported only being able to communicate with help from a support worker or family member and explained that their first language is BSL and that they struggle with the English language. Respondents called for a greater use of text messaging to contact the council and the introduction of video calling with BSL signers (including the use of Whatsapp). Sense Cymru were cited

as an organisation which is good to communicate with, along with banks, PAVO and the RNIB.

Digital Research Questionnaire

A digital research study was conducted by the council involving two versions of the same survey – one specifically for voluntary organisations. The aim of the survey was to find out what motivates respondents, what barriers they are experiencing, if any, and if Digital Solutions could help overcome them.

The council were particularly looking for the views of volunteers providing home support in Powys or are thinking about providing home support, care providers or those who are thinking of starting their own business in this area and anyone aged 50+ looking for someone to help support them with basic tasks or care in their home or thinking about this for the future.

The response: The main research questionnaire had 49 responses, with three voluntary organisations answering the survey specific to them. Information gathered included how many hours respondents volunteer, if they were looking for paid employment as a carer, how they find people needing support and if they would consider registering on an online platform to advertise their support, and if yes, who they would prefer to manage that platform.

Bannau/Camlas Quality of Care

An anonymous survey was conducted on behalf of Children's Services to review the quality of care at Bannau/Camlas in Brecon. The survey asked for satisfaction feedback and gave opportunities for respondents to express their views on how the service could improve.

The response: The survey, sent out to parents, carers, staff and other stakeholders, was completed by 26 people, 73% of whom stated they are satisfied with the quality of care received by children/young people in Bannau/Camlas. Overall, all responses to questions relating to satisfaction were positive throughout the survey. Many useful suggestions and comments were also received and passed onto the Children's Services.

Learning and skills:

Governor Questionnaire

As part of the review into how we deliver governor training, the bulletins and the briefing sessions, School Governors and Clerks to the Governors were invited to complete an online survey, asking for their views. The responses to this survey were collated during the first national lockdown and were to be used to help the council plan for when schools were able to return to normal.

The response: A total of 188 people completed the survey, the majority of whom stated that they have attended School Governor Service training sessions within the past two years. When asked if they would like to see more training courses available via e-learning the majority agreed with some commenting that anything that can be delivered effectively this should be. Those who had attended the Governor Briefing Sessions found them useful to meet other Governors and share ideas,

experiences and best practise. The new Welsh Curriculum and schools post covid, were highlighted as a preferred topic at future briefing sessions.

Transforming Education Programme

A variety of consultations took place throughout 2020-21 to inform the council's transforming education programme:

The Funding Formula for the financing of schools (2021 - 2022): Additional Learning Needs

Prior to the pandemic, the intention had been to review the whole fair funding formula that distributes funding to Powys schools to ensure that the distribution formula meets the needs of the schools in the future, during and following the Transforming Education programme. However, reluctantly, it was agreed (through the Head of Finance, the interim Chief Education Officer, Schools Forum and the Formula Review Group) that this review would need to be postponed during the pandemic period (where the Council was operating on a Business-Critical basis) and would not take place during 2020. Work on this will begin in the new year.

An ALN formula sub-group was established to work through the current issues and a range of options for improvement. The council considered all of the views given by the group and put forward this consultation which set out the proposed changes.

The response: This consultation ran for one month and the majority of respondents were neither supportive nor unsupportive of most of the proposals listed in the survey. All proposed changes and any transitional arrangements will have to be managed within the same overall budget amount.

The future of Special Educational/Additional Learning Needs in Powys

On the 23rd of June 2020, the Council's Cabinet approved an engagement exercise on a draft vision for SEN/ALN provision in Powys. The draft vision for SEN/ALN in Powys is:

- All pupils across Powys will receive high quality provision that meets their needs, no matter where they live,
- Most pupils with SEN/ALN will be taught in their local mainstream school
- All pupils with SEN/ALN will be placed in a provision that meets their needs, as near to home as is practicably possible, with the appropriate specialist teaching, support and facilities that enables every learner to meet their potential
- There will be a comprehensive range of specialist provision, including special schools, PRU, specialist centres, satellite centres and early assessment provision
- This will include both English and Welsh medium provision
- Special schools will cater for those pupils who have the most complex needs, for example severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and complex ASD
- Schools within and across geographical areas will support each other and share effective practice

The response: During the engagement period, a number of issues were raised about our current ALN / SEN provision. This included that pupils had different quality and type of provision depending on where they lived, some had to travel long distances to reach provision that meets their needs while the access to provision through the medium of Welsh is inconsistent. Following the consultation, a report was prepared summarising the feedback received, and the document updated as needed. These documents were to be considered by the Council's Cabinet in November 2020. The proposed strategy has been shaped thanks to feedback from the engagement exercise where people were given the opportunity to have their say on a draft vision for SEN / ALN provision.

Home to School/College Transport Policy

The Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 states that all local authorities have a duty to transport learners to their nearest suitable school if they meet the qualifying distance criteria. The Council's current Home to School Transport Policy was approved in 2018, however since its implementation in September 2019, it became apparent that there was a need to further review the policy to reduce ambiguity in order to ensure that the policy can be applied consistently.

The proposed changes include:

- Removal of the practice of reimbursing 16 - 19 aged learners who travel out of county to study
- Removal of the practice of providing transport following a change of ordinary place of residence for learners in years 10,11,12 and 13
- Clarified the appeal process to make it clearer.

The response: Following the consultation, a Consultation Report was prepared summarising the issues raised during the consultation period and the Policy updated as needed. The Consultation Report and the post-consultation version of the policy was considered by the Cabinet in September 2020. It is intended that the updated policy will be implemented from September 2021.

Establishment of a new all-age school in Llanfair Caereinion

Powys County Council is consulting on proposals to establish a new all-age school for pupils aged 4-18 in Llanfair Caereinion. The proposals are as follows:

- To close Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School
- To establish a new bilingual all-age school for pupils aged 4-18 on the current sites of Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School

The current target date is to close the two schools on 31st August 2022, with the new school opening on 1st September 2022.

The response: A total of 111 respondents completed the consultation. In addition, 8 written responses were received from respondents, including Estyn. Officers from the council met with the School Council of Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School to get their views on the proposals. Consultation meetings were held with the staff and governors of both schools. The consultation report

including responses from the above engagement exercises is published on the council website.

Further to a decision made by Cabinet, the council published a Statutory Notice proposing to merge Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School in order to establish a new all-age school for pupils aged 4-18 in Llanfair Caereinion. At the time of writing, the Objection Period was due to end on 23rd March 2021.

Change of language category of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen

Powys County Council consulted on a proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Bro Hyddgen. The proposal was as follows:

- To make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Bro Hyddgen to Welshmedium.

This would be introduced on a phased basis, year-by-year, starting with Reception in September 2022.

The response: Feedback from the consultation will be collated and summarised, and a consultation report will be produced and shared with stakeholders. The Cabinet will consider the consultation report and whether or not they wish to proceed with the options outlined in the consultation document. This was expected to happen in the spring of 2021.

At the time of writing, two other transforming education consultations are in progress and both are due to close on Thursday 15 April 2021.

Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon

Powys County Council is consulting on a proposal to change the language category of Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon. The proposal is as follows:

- To make a regulated alteration to alter the medium of instruction at Ysgol Dyffryn Trannon from dual stream to Welsh-medium

This would be introduced on a phased basis, year by year, starting with Reception in September 2022.

This consultation is being held in accordance with the School Organisation Code (2018) and School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

Consultation started on the 25 February 2021 and will end on the 15 April 2021.

Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School in Brecon, and Cradoc C.P. School

Powys County Council is consulting on proposals to amalgamate Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School to establish a new primary school for pupils aged 4-11 on the three current sites. The proposals are as follows:

- Phase 1:

- To close Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School
- To establish a new English-medium primary school for pupils aged 4-11 on the current sites of Mount Street Infants School, Mount Street Junior School and Cradoc C.P. School.

The current target date is to close the three schools on the 31 August 2022, with the new school opening on the 1 September 2022.

- Phase 2:
- To make a regulated alteration to transfer the new school to a new school building on a new site in Brecon.

The current target date for this phase is September 2024 at the earliest.

This consultation is being held in accordance with the School Organisation Code (2018) and School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013.

Consultation started on the **25 February 2021** and will end on the **15 April 2021**.

Residents and Communities:

Active Travel – October 2020 and March 2021

The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 aims to make Wales a walking and cycling nation. To achieve this the legislation is placing a duty on local councils to identify, improve and promote designated "active travel routes" within any town that has a population of over 2000 residents. Eleven Powys towns were identified by the legislation. This survey aims to find out local resident's walking and cycling habits in those areas with a view to identifying popular routes and destinations and helping to establish an active travel network in the town.

The response: Following the first occurrence of the Active Travel consultation in October 2020 there were 193 responses to the survey. Responses highlighted preferred methods of travel within the eleven designated towns and views of what would be done to help respondents walk or cycle short journeys more often, themes including map of routes, better signage, and reduction of town speed limits. Alongside this survey the Active Travel Network Map Stakeholder Engagement is also running. This initiative provides the opportunity for stakeholders and residents to update and develop the aspirational active travel network they previously identified in their town during the Integrated Network Map process of 2016/2017.

Digital Services for Archives, Museums and Libraries

The coronavirus pandemic has changed the way the Council plans and delivers its services. It has been recognised that digital services have to take a prominent role in transforming the future of our archives, museums, and libraries in Powys.

The council are looking for views on how we can develop our digital resources so that we can deliver improved and more efficient services. This includes using technology to connect with communities, offering more services online and helping

people to use those services with confidence. This survey closes at midnight on Sunday 11 April 2021.

Making it Happen:

Staff Wellbeing Survey June 2020 and December 2020

COVID-19 continues to influence the way we live and most noticeably, for some of us, the way we work and the location we work from. Working in a different way can be a huge challenge, ensuring we have the right equipment to do our jobs, maintaining productivity and looking after our wellbeing. It is easy to work longer hours and take fewer breaks and it can also feel lonely sometimes. Equally it has its potential advantages including reduced travelling and fuel costs, more family time and flexible working hours.

For employees who work on the front line, the COVID-19 outbreak continues to have a big impact on the way they work, taking account of social distancing, considering their wellbeing, access to the correct PPE and reducing any risks there may be in regard to their family or personal circumstances.

Staff were originally asked to complete this survey in June 2020. The survey was sent out again at the end of the year, slightly amended, to understand whether staff wellbeing has changed over the past few months as we headed into winter months and the New Year. It was advertised to all Powys County Council staff through internal communications channels including the intranet, all staff emails and manager cascade.

The response: The summer survey had 1,006 responses and the winter survey 872 responses. Staff working from home have seen an increase in productivity since the summer with 74% feeling more productive and able to get a lot done, an increase of 5% from the summer. The majority (80%) of staff working from home say they are able to juggle their work-life balance well and are enjoying the flexibility. The biggest noted key advantage of working from home remained the same following both surveys, with 'less or no travel' highlighted. The biggest challenge faced when working from home was highlighted as lack of social interaction/loneliness.

An increase in staff working on the front line (+13%) agree they have the correct PPE to allow them to work safely, bringing the total to 95%. 93% of frontline workers (+6%) and 93% of staff working from home (+1%) say that the communication about COVID-19 has been clear and timely. When asked if the support received from managers/supervisors has differed since lockdown, the majority of respondents (63%) said that the level of support has stayed the same, with 28% noticing an increase (down 1% from the summer).

The feedback and ideas from both staff surveys is being used to ensure the council can continue to support staff whilst coronavirus remains a part of all our lives, and to help us to shape our new ways of working.

Engineering customer satisfaction feedback surveys - contractors, and clients were asked to rate the quality of workmanship, regard to health and safety and overall

satisfaction with works completed via an online survey. Overall ratings have consistently been above 5 where 0 = poor and 10 = high

Appendix 2: Member Development

Core Principles to which this section relates: Core Principle E
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A programme of Member Development Sessions / Seminars has been delivered for 2020 - 2021 which included:

- Mandatory development
- Code of Conduct mid-term
- Corporate Safeguarding and Corporate Parenting
- Equality & Diversity training
- Treasury Management
- Cyber security and GDPR

- Finance
- Budget seminars x 3
- Finance and budget training - facilitated by CIPFA
- Draft 2021-24 Medium Term Financial Strategy and Draft 2021-22 Budget

- Service and Service Improvement Plans – due to the pandemic the scheduled programme was curtailed to enable service areas to concentrate on business critical work
- Education – Post Inspection Action Plan update

Briefings

- V2025 Transformation – update
- Mid Wales Growth Deal
- Direct Payments
- Digital services – accessibility
- Equalities and diversity in response to Black Lives Matter
- Emergency planning
- Welsh Language Standards
- Internal Audit
- Census 2021
- National Trading standards and Letting Agency
- Planning Service update – Phosphates and Rivers
- Understanding Climate change and the path to a sustainable future.

Other topics

- Children's Rights and the UNCRC

Following a review of the Council's Corporate Governance, the Member Development Strategy has been reviewed and revised. This document together with the Member Development Framework will be further reviewed during 2021-22 in preparation for the County Council elections due in May 2022.

Appendix 3: Scrutiny

Core Principles to which this section relates:
Core Principle C
Core Principle E
Core Principle G

Following the revision to the scrutiny committee structure in January 2019, the Co-ordinating Committee undertook a review of the operation of those committees in October 2019. The results were reported to the Co-ordinating Committee in December 2019 and were included in the Annual Governance Statement 2020-21.

A more detailed review was to have been undertaken during 2021-22 but due to the pandemic has not commenced. During 2020-21 despite the pandemic the level of scrutiny activity has increased with 47 Scrutiny Committee and Finance Panel meetings held, compared with 27 in 2019/20. i.e. a 74% increase

Reports from Scrutiny reviews containing the findings together with any recommendations are presented to Cabinet for their consideration. The Cabinet is expected to produce an action plan to respond to any recommendations made by Scrutiny. In respect of pre-decision Scrutiny the comments of the Scrutiny review group are made to the Cabinet / Executive Management Team meetings to provide an opportunity for the final report to Cabinet to take account of Scrutiny's comments. In 2020-21 the Scrutiny Committees have made 29 recommendations to Cabinet of which 23 have been accepted in full, 4 partially accepted and 2 rejected. In addition the Scrutiny Committees have made 142 observations to Cabinet.

The following are examples of areas which were scrutinised / pre-scrutinised during 2020/21:

Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee:

- School Transport Policy
- The Future of Additional Learning Needs / Special Educational Needs in Powys Strategy
- Revenue Outturn and Capital Position
- Decision in relation to the 4 week Term in July and the Autumn Term Break
- Report of the Children's Commissioner in Wales regarding Vulnerable Learners
- Decisions taken during the COVID-19 outbreak period
- Delegated School Budgets 2020-21
- Draft Performance Reports and Strategic Risk Register
- Progress on Schools Causing Concern
- Amendments to the School Funding Formula
- Draft 2021 – 22 Budget
- Call-In of Cabinet Decisions – Llanfair Caereinion C.P. School and Caereinion High School
- Estyn Review of Local Authorities Work in Supporting their Learning Communities 2020

Economy, Residents, Communities and Governance Scrutiny Committee:

- Vision for Growing Mid Wales
- Welfare Call Monitoring
- Automobile Palace, Llandrindod Wells
- General Centre for Rail Excellence
- Support for Shielding Individuals during the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Performance and Risk Reports
- Freedom Leisure Annual Report
- Resolution of Contractual Issues with the Heart of Wales Property Services
- Draft 2021-22 Budget
- Digital Strategy 2021-25

ERCG Working Groups:

- Vision 2025 Update and Annual Report
- Car Parking Review
- HOWPS (Heart of Wales Property Services)

Finance Panel:

- Financial Overview and Forecast Reports – revenue, capital and cost reductions
- Draft budget
- Budget development
- Furlough/HR frequently asked questions
- Initial Financial Impact on the Council's Revenue Budget for 2020/21 arising from the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Recovery Planning

Public Service Board Scrutiny Committee:

- Progress on the Well-Being Steps

- **Audit Committee:**
- Audit Wales Annual Audit Plans
- Audit Wales – Raising our Game – Tackling Fraud in Wales
- Annual Governance Statement - draft
- Internal Audit Annual Plan
- Internal Audit Reports – Risk Management, HOWPS, Capital payments to Theatr Brycheiniog, Conflicts of Interest, Welshpool High School, Brecon High School, Employee Development and Housing Voids.
- Treasury Management quarterly reports
- Closure of Accounts
- Strategic Risk Register
- Covid Risk Register
- Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement
- Annual Audit Opinion
- Internal Audit – Performance Monitoring
- Internal Audit Work Plan
- Internal Audit Review
- Anti Money Laundering Policy

- Anti Fraud Policy
- Fraud Prosecutions and Sanctions Policy
- Capital Programme
- CIP Annual Performance Report
- Review of Internal Audit Service
- Capitalisation Directive

In addition, during the pandemic where the Council has focussed on business critical activities, the scrutiny committees have undertaken the scrutiny of those business critical activities and the Council's responses to the delivery of services during the pandemic. Examples include:

Learning and Skills:

- Emergency Childcare Hubs;
- Continuity of Learning Plans;
- Free School Meals;
- Edtech Programme update;
- Transforming Education programme;

Economy, Residents, Communities and Governance:

- Homelessness; Public Protection; Support for Businesses;
- Homelessness; Household Waste Recycling Centres;
- Reopening of Libraries; Grass Cutting;
- Business Support; Contact Tracing;

Health and Care:

- Childcare briefings – May – September
- Performance Report – April
- Child Care Hubs
- Child Exploitation Policy
- Safe accommodation for children with complex needs
- Early Help Strategy
- Decision making tree and risk assessments
- Guidance for home care workers and workers in residential settings
- Surge Modelling
- PtHB/PCC Integrated Care Home Policy
- Short term recovery plan
- Choice Policy Adult Social Care
- CMHT Improvement Plan
- Carers Respite Policy
- Valuing Care – Residential
- Valuing Care – domiciliary care
- Improving the Cancer Journey
- Transfer of Neuadd Maldwyn for Extra Care Housing
- Powys Health and Care Academy
- Social Services Complaints – annual report
- Financial Outturn 2019/20
- Director of Social Services Annual Report

- North Powys Wellbeing Project Business Case
- Budget Proposals
- CIW feedback on Performance Evaluation Inspection and Improvement Conference

Appendix 4: Regulator Reports 2020-21

We are answerable to a number of external regulatory bodies who perform inspections on our services, these are:

	<p>Audit Wales is the public sector watchdog for Wales. Their aim is to ensure that the people of Wales know whether public money is being managed wisely and that public bodies in Wales understand how to improve outcomes.</p>
	<p>Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) encourages the improvement of social care, early years and social services by regulating, inspecting, reviewing and providing professional advice to ministers and policy makers.</p>
	<p>Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales. Their mission is to achieve excellence for all learners in Wales through raising the standards and quality in education and training. Estyn has a wide range of statutory inspection and reporting responsibilities which include inspection of all publicly funded education and training across Wales.</p>

We will continue to embrace the findings of our regulators and work in partnership with them to ensure our plans deliver the required service improvements.

Outlined below are key audit reports that we have received from regulators during 2020-21. We have used the findings in the reports to strengthen our plan for 2021 onwards.

Health and Care

CIW – Performance Evaluation Inspection (September 2020)

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) convened an Improvement Conference on 9 October 2020. The purpose of the Improvement Conference was for CIW to seek assurance that the local authority, through its senior officers and elected members, recognises and thoroughly understands the concerns held by CIW about its performance, provision or leadership and is able to demonstrate improvements have been made.

“Overall, we found the local authority has made significant progress since our last inspections. People in Powys can be assured the local authority is committed to enabling their voices are heard and ensuring they receive the care and support they need. There was a collective willingness to focus on prevention as a means of ensuring communities and services become sustainable for the future. Senior managers and lead members have raised the standards expected in social care”.

Colleagues from PTHB, Education, Dyfed-Powys Police, Audit Wales and the Improvement and Assurance Board provided their views. This allowed us wider insight into how Powys County Council is advancing on practice, corporate oversight, scrutiny and partnership working.

Frontline staff continue to receive regular supervision sessions to guide and support their practice and relevant training is available to them. Recruitment continues to be a challenge in children's services, despite efforts made by the local authority. Powys County Council has developed very good performance data and quality assurance reports, which enable officers and councillors to see where progress has been made or sustained and identify areas for further development.

Outcome: Given the information gathered from our work over the last three years, including speaking to people using services and engagement with our partners, we conclude Powys County Council has made substantial progress since their last inspections and that enhanced monitoring arrangements at Powys County Council social services are no longer required.

An Improvement and Assurance Board for Social Care was previously set up in 2018 to provide challenge and support following CIW's reports relating to Children's services and Adult services. Following an Independent Review of progress made on organisational improvement and following the Minister for Housing and Local Government's approval, the Improvement and Assurance Board formally met for the last time at the end of September 2020. Alternative arrangements are now in place at the Council to replace the Improvement and Assurance Board and for the Council to manage its own improvement.

Learning and Skills

Estyn – Post-inspection progress conference (November 2020)

In November 2020 Estyn held a virtual post-inspection progress conference with Powys County Council. The purpose of the progress conference was to review the extent to which the local authority has progressed its plans in addressing the five recommendations identified by the inspection in 2019.

Following the progress conference Estyn concluded the following:

“The local authority demonstrated that it has begun to make sound progress since the inspection. It is showing a clear commitment to addressing the issues that were raised as well as evaluating its progress against its plans. Importantly, it is building leadership capacity which has the potential to secure sustainable improvements. Overall, the local authority has identified sufficient resources to implement its plans as well as considering the barriers to progress and associated risks appropriately. We are aware that COVID-19 has meant that the local authority has had to divert considerable time and attention to managing and supporting its learning communities. Taking into consideration all of the above, we will reconvene in around six months to consider whether it is likely that the local authority could be removed from follow-up at a point six months from that visit through a monitoring visit”.

Estyn - Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19 (January 2021)

In January 2021, Estyn released a report on 'Local authority and regional consortia support for schools and PRUs in response to COVID-19'. The report covers the ways councils across Wales have adapted their work to respond to the challenges from COVID-19. Although the report is a national report, it does reference Powys County Council's work during the pandemic. For example the report includes reference to the Council's work around support and learning for post-16 learners. This includes work to support pupils through the Powys Learning Pathways website, bridging units for pupils about to start post-16 courses and the streaming of online learning to pupils accessing classes from teachers based outside their main school campuses.

The Report can be viewed here: [Thematic survey report \(gov.wales\)](#)

Estyn - Preparing for the Curriculum for Wales – case studies and cameos from secondary, all-age and special schools (November 2020)

The Report can be viewed here: [Thematic survey report \(gov.wales\)](#)

Making It Happen

Audit Wales – Audit of Powys County Council's 2019-20 Accounts

the Auditor General gave an unqualified true and fair opinion on the Council's financial statements on 30 September 2020. The Auditor General for Wales' opinion is that the financial statements give a TRUE and FAIR view of the Council's finances. Key facts and figures from the 2019-20 financial statements can be accessed [here](#).

Audit Wales – Continuous Improvement (August 2020)

The Auditor General certified that the Council has met its legal duties for improvement planning and reporting, and believes that it is likely to meet the requirements of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009 during 2020-21.

Audit Wales - Financial Sustainability Assessment (June 2020)

During 2019-20 Audit Wales examined the financial sustainability of each Council in Wales. They concluded that due to the considerable challenges the Council has faced over recent years its financial performance has not been sustainable, however the Council understands the significant financial challenges it faces over the medium term and is working to strengthen its overall financial resilience.

The medium term financial strategy for 2020 to 2025 identifies significant funding gaps for future years (based on a number of scenarios) and the recently introduced integrated business planning process together with the transformation programme are key to the Council meeting these gaps.

- The Council has overspent in key service areas against its budget in recent years.
- The Council does not have a track record of delivering the totality of its planned annual savings targets.

- Although the level of the Council's general fund has remained stable over recent years, its level of earmarked reserves has declined.
- Council Tax income collection rates have been largely stable as the amount of Council Tax income increases.
- The Council's level of borrowing has increased in recent years and is forecast to increase further but remains within its Capital Finance Requirement.

The Report can be viewed [here](#).

Audit Wales – Review of Workforce Planning at Powys County Council (July 2020)

During 2018-19 Audit Wales reviewed workforce planning at Powys. They concluded that stronger workforce planning means the Council is better placed to support its transformation objectives. However, the following proposals for improvement were identified:

For the Council to consider improvements to the communication aspects of the workforce planning including:

- clarify how the three strategic-level documents will be communicated to the wider organisation;
- continue ongoing engagement with the wider workforce to communicate both the corporate and the service level vision for the workforce; and
- increase the engagement from services with the facilitated sessions.

The Council should action the improvement areas it has identified:

- ensure all 12 service level workforce plans are consistent and comprehensive;
- complete the analysis of the local labour market;
- complete a formal lesson learnt exercise;
- confirm the succession planning arrangements;
- improve workforce planning tools; and
- further integrate workforce planning with the Integrated Business Plans.

The Report can be viewed [here](#).

Audit Wales – Transformation at Powys County Council (December 2020)

Audit Wales reviewed transformation at the council during 2019-20. They found that, overall, the Council is well placed to deliver its transformation programme, however COVID-19 presents new challenges and risks to the programme. We reached this conclusion because:

- the Council has comprehensive project plans and clearly identifies the aims of its transformation programme
- the Council has put in place arrangements to deliver its transformation programme, however some arrangements are stronger than others
- COVID-19 has had an impact on the pace of some transformation projects and this will be an ongoing risk for the delivery of the overall transformation programme

The following proposals for improvement were identified:

- The Council should build on and develop its ongoing engagement with stakeholders. Key stakeholders include Powys residents, partners, schools, businesses, Council staff and County Councillors. This is to help ensure people are aware of developments within the transformation programme, particularly in light of challenges and changes coming from the pandemic.
- For the Council to aim to evaluate all projects and consider ways to demonstrate the impact the projects are having on local residents and communities in Powys.
- The Council should build on any learning from the COVID-19 pandemic. This is to help ensure the Council takes stock of its transformation progress so far and incorporates learning into future delivery.

Audit Wales – COVID-19 response and recovery

Since March 2020, Audit Wales have examined and reviewed arrangements in response to the COVID19 pandemic at each of the Councils in Wales.

Appendix 5: Internal Audit

Internal Audit is subject to the requirements and principles of:

- Public Sector Internal Audit Standards in the UK - 2017
- CIPFA Local Government Application Note – 2019

An Internal Audit Charter was agreed by the Audit Committee in 2019/20 that defines the purpose, authority and responsibility in terms which are consistent with the professional standards. A revised charter will be presented to Committee in May 2021.

Internal Audit agreed a programme of risk-based work, formulated using an approved planning strategy, to review the Council's internal control environment. Each audit undertaken contained an opinion on the control framework and agreed actions by Management to correct the areas of risk identified. Internal Audit undertake a programme of follow-up reviews on high-risk areas. The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the delivery of the 2020/21 audit plan. However, the Auditors will still provide an annual opinion on the control environment, but this will reflect the limitations caused by the Council reducing their activities to business-critical areas.

Internal Audit routinely considers the likelihood of fraud occurring within the systems being audited. Where requested, it undertakes investigatory work in respect of fraud and corruption which can result in a Police referral and/or disciplinary action.

SWAP have delivered a number of training sessions to Members during the year including "Helping Organisations to Succeed" and "Understanding Good Governance". Embedding an agile approach to planning and delivery remains an important step in identifying and mitigating risk in the areas of most priority. This is supported by the recent introduction of an action tracker that gave the Council greater visibility and assurance on the implementation of internal audit recommendations.

In accordance with the recognised standards, the Head of Audit is required to give an opinion on the overall internal control environment based on the work undertaken throughout the year. This report is presented to the Audit Committee annually.

There were no significant issues that Internal Audit were aware of that would require specific inclusion in the Council's Annual Governance Statement.

Appendix 6: COVID19 Coronavirus pandemic

Council's response to the COVID19 Coronavirus pandemic

During February and March 2020 the likely impact of Covid on the Council's activities was gradually becoming apparent. The Council established an internal Strategic Coordination group (GOLD Command) on 13th March 2020 and a Tactical Coordination Group (SILVER Command) on 16th March 2020. The Social Services Business Continuity Plan was invoked on the 16th March 2020.

The Council invoked its Corporate Business Continuity Plan on 18th March 2020, and remained in place for the whole of 2020-21. From this point the Council focused on Business Critical Activities (BCA), though some Transformation and Improvement activities were re-established from May 2020 onwards, as resources allowed. The Council began its recovery process over the summer of 2020, though the increased prevalence of Covid across the County during the Autumn of 2020 significantly slowed down the recovery process; this was subsequently impacted by the all-Wales Firebreak in November 2020 and the lock-down from 19th December 2020 onwards, which saw a renewed emphasis on the Council's Business Critical Activities.

The Council has kept its BCA activities under review and has updated these regularly since the Business Continuity Plan was invoked. The business critical activities from the 21st December 2020 were as follows:

Responding to COVID-19 (Protection of the most vulnerable in our society)

- Adult Services – maintaining Business Continuity Plan, roll out of Vaccination Programme with PtHB, roll-out of lateral flow testing
- Homelessness Service – maintaining the provision of housing for all homelessness presentations in both permanent and temporary accommodation
- Test Trace and Protect - delivering activities in accordance with the Prevention and Response plan
- Children's Services – maintain all services, including Safeguarding
- Mutual Aid, where appropriate (particularly to protect in-County provision)

Keeping our communities safe and resilient

- EU – Transition Period - adhere to all National Guidance and advice to ensure appropriate preparations for the end of the EU Transition Period
- Financial Support for Business - prompt and efficient delivery of all available financial Support for Business and commerce
- Support for Schools in keeping staff and learners safe (including School catering, cleaning and Transport)
- Recycling and waste services – all kerbside collection services to continue, and HWRC to remain open for essential use only (where safe to do so)
- Housing – emergency repairs and maintenance
- Highways – Winter Service, emergency response and essential repairs
- Corporate and Housing Property Checks and Compliance

Corporate – running the Council

- Workforce - maintain health and wellbeing of staff; maintain Health and Safety; management of response to redeployment activities; recruitment process for critical posts
- Financial Management and Reporting; maximise access to COVID-19 grants and support from UK Government and Welsh Government
- Corporate Support Services – IT, Information Management, Communications
- Delivery of time-critical grant projects

The Council has taken into account all advice and guidance from the Welsh Government and UK Government and regulators during the pandemic, including those relating to:

Physical distancing in the workplace; Funerals; Holiday Accommodation; Public Rights of Way; Meetings; Planning; Education and Schools; Social Care; Elections; Waste; Grants and Financial Assistance; Courts, Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

Cabinet and all Council committees were stood down between mid March and early May 2020 since legislation did not permit remote meetings at that time. During that time Cabinet and the Executive Management Team met weekly using Microsoft Teams. These weekly meetings continued throughout the year. The first public Cabinet meeting held using Microsoft Teams was on 5th May, 2020, and Cabinet has met regularly since that date.

Scrutiny committees resumed from 13th May, 2020 and have been held remotely, in public, focusing initially on activities relating to management of the pandemic. Other Committees such as the Planning, Taxi Licensing and Rights of Way Committee have been meeting since July 2020. Items relating to the scrutiny of Cabinet decisions and performance were re-introduced from September 2020 onwards.

All staff who can work remotely have been required to do so during the pandemic. Internal control arrangements have continued to work effectively during this time although no new internal audit reviews were undertaken until the Autumn of 2020 to allow the organisation to focus on BCA.

The Council has developed a COVID19 Risk Register which is monitored weekly by GOLD and SILVER Command and has been reviewed quarterly by the Audit Committee and Cabinet.

The Council has continued to monitor and report on performance during the pandemic and has kept to the statutory deadlines for the publication of annual reports in relation to the Corporate Improvement Plan, the Strategic Equalities Plan, the Welsh Language Plan and the Public Service Board Well-being Plan.

The Council established a Recovery Coordination Group, chaired by the Chief Executive on 11th June 2020; this was suspended during the Autumn of 2020 as the prevalence of Covid worsened across the County, but was re-established in April 2021.

Activity	COVID19 impact	Action Taken to mitigate
Members' Code of Conduct / Standards Committee	No committee meetings since mid March. Code of Conduct refresher training for Members delayed. Members being unable to attend meetings due to shielding and other restrictions	Members' Code of Conduct refresher training undertaken in December 2020. Electronic Committee meetings recommenced in February 2021.
Audit Committee	No committee meetings between mid March and early May	Electronic meetings started in May 2020.
Information Governance	No impact	
County Councillor Training programme	Formal programme suspended from March to August 2020.	Some training undertaken electronically to assist Members with use of technology for electronic meetings and guides provided to them. Mandatory training was restarted from September 2020 as well as Member briefing sessions.
Engagement and Consultation	Face to face consultation has not been possible during the period on the advice of Welsh Government	Consultation and engagement exercises have been conducted primarily online and printed copies distributed only if / when required.
Welsh Language Services	Simultaneous translation for meetings has not been possible due to a lack of capability within software packages.	A temporary "work around" was devised whilst a more permanent solution was found in consultation with Welsh Government and Microsoft. As this was not forthcoming within a specific timescale the Council purchased Zoom licences and training for members was undertaken and the software is being used at some meetings prior to roll out for Council meetings; limitations in Zoom's functionality restricted an earlier roll-out.

Cabinet Forward Work Programme	This was amended to deal mainly with business critical activities in May and June 2020; reports on Improvement, Performance and Transformation activities were re-introduced gradually from July onwards. The pre-election period restricted the scope of items from the 25 th March 2021 onwards.	Since the recovery phase started Cabinet is moving back to considering increasing numbers of business as usual items. The Forward Work Programme has been developed over the last year to allow scope for the scrutiny of Cabinet decisions and Performance and to identify other meeting activities to provide a more holistic view of meetings activities.
Committee Agendas and reports	Committees agendas have been published electronically as usual. However no new reports were commissioned between May and July 2020 and any information for consideration by committees was prepared in accordance with the Council's COVID-19 business continuity plan, with the exception of Cabinet and regulatory committees.	Cabinet, Council, Scrutiny and other meetings have been broadcast live to the press and public allowing accessibility to online meetings by the press and public. .
Members Annual Reports	No impact and work on compiling the reports is continuing	
Public participation at meetings	No Full Council meetings held between March and July 2020.	The first electronic Council meeting was held in July 2020 and others have been held since including the Annual Meeting and those setting the budget and Council Tax. It has not been possible to facilitate public participation at Council meetings over the year but this will resumed in 2021-22.
Scrutiny committees	No committees between mid March and early May	Remote meetings established on 13 th May and met fortnightly until September when the

		frequency of meetings was reduced to monthly but of longer duration. Meetings of each committee focused on BCA for most of 2020. Laptops provided to some Co-opted Members to allow ability to take a full part in electronic meetings
Corporate Planning Cycle	Focus on BCA has delayed the usual corporate planning timetable	The Recovery Coordination Group is overseeing the development of the 2021-24 integrated business planning process as part of recovery
Vision 2025, Our Corporate Improvement Plan	Some commitments in V2025 have been delayed	Please refer to published CIP for detail
Vision 2025 Transformation Programme	The Transformation Programme was suspended to focus on BCA although elements of individual projects have continued, e.g. schools, digital and the North Powys Wellbeing Programme	Transformation Delivery Board meetings recommenced during the Autumn of 2020
Medium Term Financial Strategy	Significant impact due to income loss and additional costs	Impact on 2020-21 mitigated by Welsh Government Hardship Fund
Strategic Equality Plan	Some commitments have been delayed	Annual Report will be published before end of July
2020-21 Integrated Business Plans	Some actions delayed for 2020-21	Being reviewed as part of recovery work
Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework	Staff appraisals delayed Spring 2020. One set of appraisals held during 2020-21	Staff appraisals restarted Autumn 2020.
Management Information and Business Intelligence	Work focused on COVID19 response	COVID19 dashboards produced to support GOLD and SILVER
Improvement and Assurance Board	No meetings between March and June.	IAB formally brought to an end by Welsh Government in September 2020 and

		replaced with internal monitoring arrangements.
Partnership Working	PRB and PSB meetings not held between March - June	PSB met remotely at end of June 2020 and has met regularly since then (though January 2020 meeting cancelled due to Covid). Joint Partnership Board met remotely in June 2020 and has met regularly since then (though January 2021 meeting cancelled due to Covid).
Workforce Planning and Development	Leadership development programme initially suspended	Whilst the programme was initially suspended, it recommenced during the second half of the year and 40 employees are currently undertaking the programme leading to accredited leadership and management qualifications
Digital Services	Work focused on COVID19 response	
Risk Management	Numerous risks to the Council due to COVID19	COVID19 risk register in place and regularly monitored
Financial Management	COVID19 pandemic requiring close continual financial monitoring and new returns to Welsh Government	Detailed review of quarter 1 to establish in-year and future years forecasts and actions required to mitigate
Powys Pension Fund	Impact on Fund value	Some equity protection has been put in place at the end of 2019-20
Internal Audit (SWAP)	New reviews delayed	SWAP 2020-21 programme to be reviewed as part of recovery
Responding to external regulatory inspections	No inspections undertaken during March to July 2020	CIW monitoring visits held Summer 2020 and improvement conference for adults and Childrens held in October 2020
Budget Setting	Slight delay to annual budget setting process due to delay in Welsh Government publication of budget	2020-21 budget review and 2021-24 budget setting to be worked through as part of recovery

Annual Report of the Director of Social Services / Annual Council Reporting Framework	Delay in reporting to Council which is usually scheduled for July each year	Report programmed for consideration by Cabinet and Council in September 2020.
Quarterly and Annual Performance Reporting	2019-20 reports unaffected. Impact in Quarter 1 – focus on COVID19 response performance	CIP reporting commenced in quarter 2 along with additional reporting on the Council's response to COVID19. Business as usual resumed on quarterly reporting.

Glossary

Acronym	Definition
ACRF	Annual Council Reporting Framework
AGS	Annual Governance Statement
BCA	Business Critical Activity
CIP	Corporate Improvement Plan
CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
CIW	Care Inspectorate Wales
CLA	Children Looked After
CLGP	Corporate Leadership and Governance Plan
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
EMT	Executive Management Team
ERW	Education through Regional Working
FSP	Finance Scrutiny Panel – now the Finance Panel from January 2019 (FP)
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulations
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
IAB	Improvement and Assurance Board
ILM	Institute of Leadership and Management
JCG	Joint Governance Committee (of the Wales Pension Partnership)
JMT	Joint Management Team (Powys County Council and Powys Teaching Local Health Board)
JPB	Joint Partnership Board
LDP	Local Development Plan
LGPS	Local Government Pension Scheme
MTFS	Medium Term Financial Strategy
OBB	Outcome Based Budgeting
PAM	Public Accountability Measures
PDR	Personal Development Review
PMAQAF	Performance Management and Quality Assurance Framework
PSB	Public Service Board
PTHB	Powys Teaching Health Board
SIRO	Senior Information Risk Owner
SOLACE	Society of Local Authority Chief Executives
SWAP	South West Audit Partnership
WAO	Wales Audit Office
WFG	Well-Being of Future Generations Act