

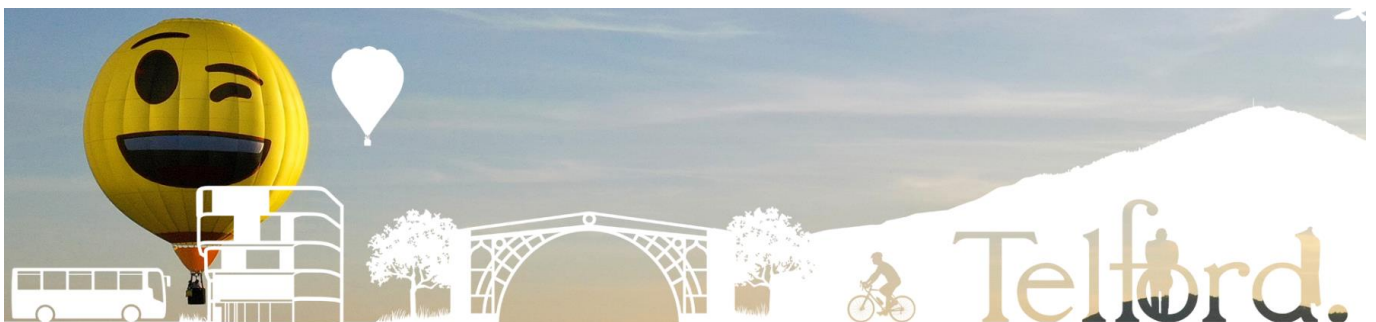


Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Annual Governance Statement

1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025

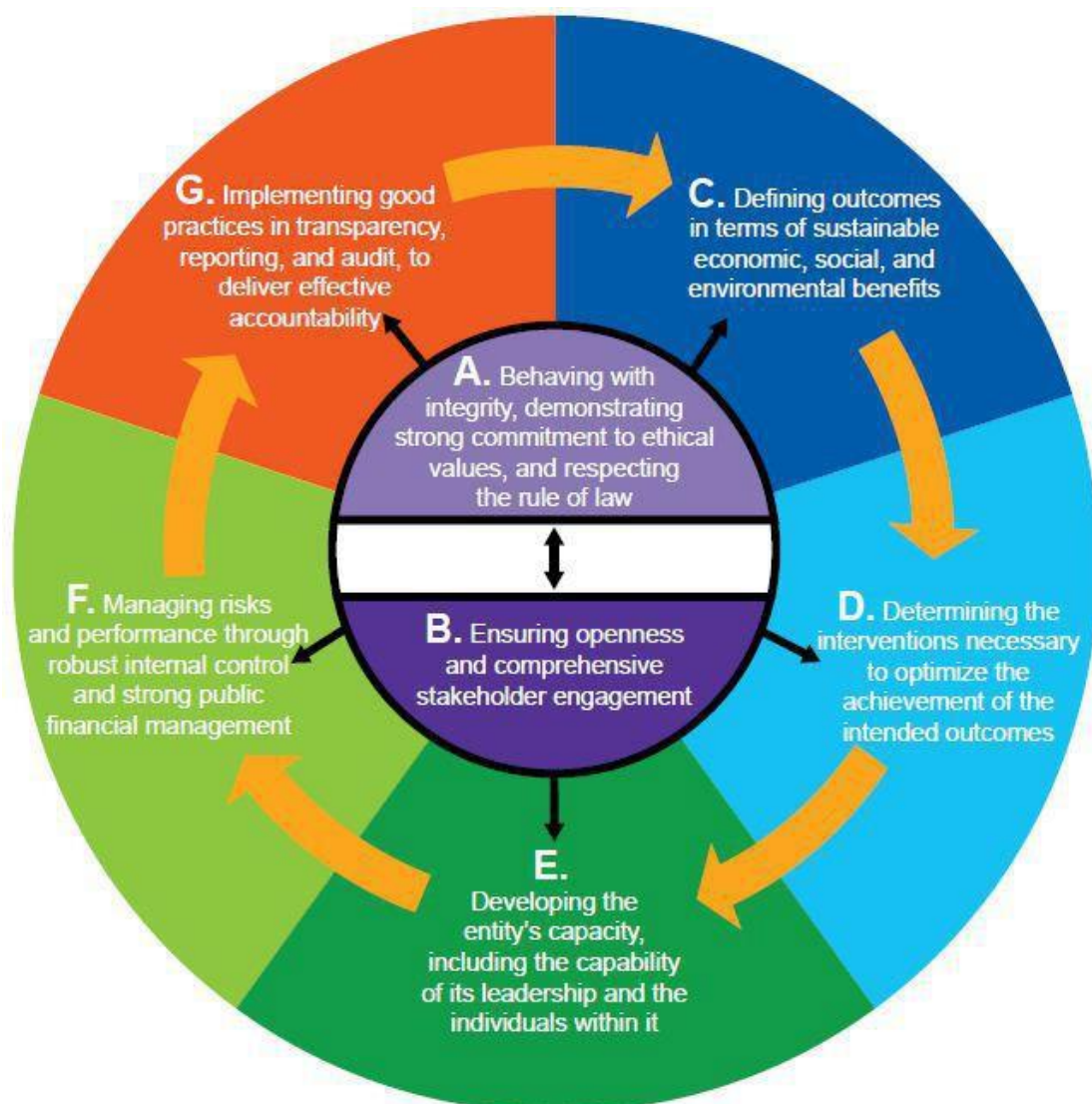


1. Introduction

- 1.1 Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 the Council is required to produce an Annual Governance Statement to accompany the Statement of Accounts which is approved by the Audit Committee.

The Annual Governance Statement outlines that the Council has been adhering to the Local Code of Corporate Governance, continually reviewing policies and procedures to maintain and demonstrate good corporate governance and that it has in place robust systems of internal control.

The Council has adopted the Code of Corporate Governance which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework – Delivering Good Governance in Local Government.



2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Telford & Wrekin Council's vision is to protect, care and invest to create a better borough. The Council wants the borough to be a place in which to grow up, work, prosper and grow older. The [Council Plan](#) provides a medium-term view of what it plans to do to achieve this ambition and sets out 5 priorities to underpin this work. In the longer term the Council also has set out its 10 year vision/Vision 2030 which details borough aspirations for the Council and its partners.
- 2.2 To achieve this ambition the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive recognise the importance of having a solid foundation of good governance and sound financial management.
- 2.3 2024/25 has seen continued key challenges around financial management which have been addressed by the Council. It has, and continues to, put in place robust savings and financial management plans which seek to minimise any impact on frontline services.
- 2.4 The past 12 months has seen some notable successes for the Council and its community. The Council continues to be a high performing local authority that places the community in the centre of everything it does. Particular highlights in 2024/25 included:
- The Council has been shortlisted for 3 national awards including Council of the Year
 - The Care Quality Commission assessed the Council's Adult Social Care services as GOOD
 - Ofsted rated the Council's Children's services as OUTSTANDING
 - National recognition for the Council's work within the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) arena
 - National recognition for the Council's response to the independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation that it commissioned in 2018.

See paragraphs 6.6 and 7.3.13 for more detail on the Council's key achievements.

- 2.5 Overall this statement provides a **reasonable level of assurance** that the Council's governance arrangements including internal systems of control are fit for purpose.

3. Standards of Governance

- 3.1 The Council expects all of its members, officers, partners and contractors to adhere to the highest standards of public service with particular reference to the employee and Members' Code of Conduct, Council vision and priorities as well as applicable statutory requirements.

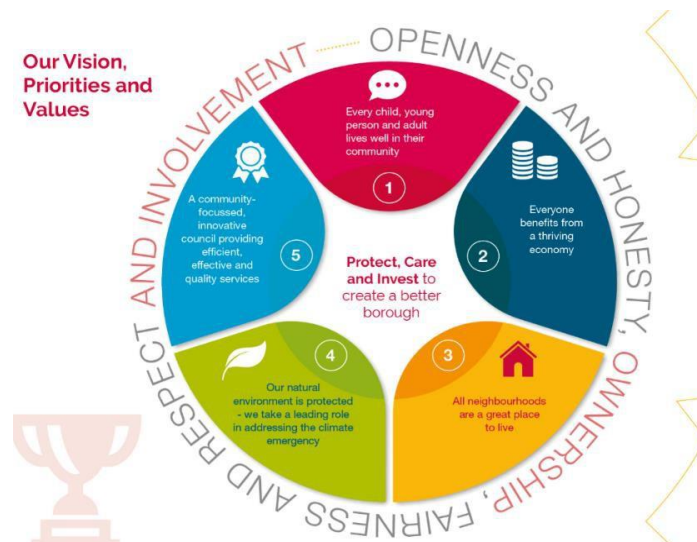
4. Scope of Responsibility

- 4.1 Telford and Wrekin Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. The Council needs to demonstrate that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively to secure continuous improvement.
- 4.2 To meet this responsibility, the Council puts in place proper arrangements for overseeing what it does including arrangements for the governance of its affairs including risk management, compliance with regulations and ensuring the effective exercise of its functions.

- 4.3 The Council must do the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, transparent and accountable manner. The Council takes into consideration all systems, processes, policies, culture and values that direct and control the way in which it works and through which it engages and leads its community.
- 4.4 The Council is aware that it does not get everything right 100% of the time. But through consultation, lessons learnt and a robust complaint handling process, it is always looking to develop and be better in everything that it does.

5. The Governance Framework

- 5.1 The governance framework allows the Council to monitor how they are achieving its strategic aims and ambitions and how this contributes to the delivery of its vision, priorities and values, see below.



- 5.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve priorities and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.
- 5.3 The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to appropriately identify, quantify and manage the risks to the achievement of the Council's priorities, objectives and policies.

6. Review of Effectiveness

- 6.1 The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of the governance arrangements including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by:



- 6.2 The Council has faced a continued challenging financial environment during 2024/25 due to the funding constraints it is working within, coupled with ongoing rising costs that has been experienced nationally. The Council has met these challenges and continues to deliver services against the backdrop of realising considerable savings.
- 6.3 The Council recognises the ongoing importance of information governance and formalised its Information Governance Framework. The main focus of the Information Governance Team in 2024/25 has been to:
- Ensure the Council's continued compliance with the requirements of the UK Data Protection Act/General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018
 - Updating relevant training, policies and procedures
 - Managing risks associated with the implementation of new systems
 - Facilitating appropriate and secure information sharing where there is a legal basis to do so
 - Support the prevention/investigation of data breaches ensuring lessons are learnt

The Information Governance Team has continued to report to the Audit Committee and Senior Management Team on information rights requests and data incidents . During 2024/25 no enforcement action has been taken by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) against the Council.

- 6.4 The Chief Executive, Executive Directors, Directors and Service Delivery Managers have signed annual assurance certificates confirming that the governance framework has been operating effectively within their area of responsibility, subject to the actions outlined in Annex 1.

Internal Audit undertake sample testing of completed certificates to provide additional assurance that adequate controls/risk management measures have been operating in 2024/25.

- 6.5 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control. This review is informed by the work of Internal Audit, management, other internal assurance activities and the External Auditors' review. The Internal Audit Annual Report 2024/25 will set out the Chief Internal Auditor's opinion.

- 6.6 The Council has been advised on the implications of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by Cabinet, Standards Committee, Audit Committee, Scrutiny, Senior Managers, Internal Audit and external review.

The Chief Internal Auditor concludes that the Council is committed to maintaining the highest ethical standards and levels of governance and that the review of governance arrangements provides a **reasonable level of assurance** that these arrangements are effective and continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.

Internal Audit Work

One of Internal Audit's key objectives, as detailed in the Internal Audit Charter is *'To review the effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes of the Council to aid improvement, provide a level of assurance and an opinion on them to the Council.'*

The work of Internal Audit is based on risk and the scope of each audit assignment as a minimum, includes assessment of the governance, risk management and control arrangements put in place by management.

Internal Audit have completed 93% (23/24 – 90%) of the revised risk-based Annual Internal Audit Plan together with some additional ad-hoc work as required.

Internal Audit have ensured that the Chair/Audit Committee and Senior Management Team have been kept informed of audit resource/work throughout the year.

Other Sources of Assurance

As stated above, reliance has been placed on other sources of assurance in 2024/25 with respect to the Chief Internal Auditor's opinion. Other sources of assurance have been obtained from in-year activity but also by reflecting on past opinions and the basis of these.

2024/25 has seen the Council consistently recognised as a well performing Council by a number of external bodies. Below is a summary of the recognition received.

- The Council has been shortlisted for 3 awards including Council of the Year, the Environmental Services Award (for organising Reuse events to cut waste) and Public Partnership Award (for its response to child sexual exploitation).
- The Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessed the Council's Adult Social Care services as GOOD. CQC recognised that Adult Social Care was performing well and meeting their expectations.
- Ofsted rating the Council's Children Services as OUTSTANDING – the second consecutive outstanding judgment. Ofsted praised the way that the Council put young people at the heart of everything we do and highlighted its approach to participation and co-production as a real strength.
- The Council's Lets Dine Team achieved the bronze standard award catering mark, awarded by the Soil Association Food for Life.
- Telford Town Park ranked the cleanest park in England by LitterBins.co.uk

- The Council's Station Quarter project has been nominated for the Regeneration & Sustainability Project of the Year by the Insider West Midlands Property Awards.
- There has been national recognition for the Council's work within the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) arena.
- There has also been national recognition for the Council's response to the independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation that it commissioned in 2018.

Other examples of assurance obtained in year include:

- 1:1 supervision and team meetings
- Case file audits
- Regular contract review meetings
- LGA service review
- Completion of statutory returns
- Quality checks undertaken
- Completion and approval of regular reconciliations
- Lexcel re-accreditation in Legal
- Inspection by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office
- Annual Scrutiny Work Programme
- Quality Assurance Improvement Plan
- Quarterly statutory officer's meetings
- External audit of Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim
- DWP audit
- CQC inspection

KPMG have been the Council's External Auditor for 2024/25. They have stated that:

- There are no significant issues identified in their value for money risk assessment to date
- The 2023/24 accounts have been signed off (CIPFA state over 200 disclaimed or qualified opinions have been issued across England) with good relationships forged with the Council's Finance Team
- They expected that there would be very few corrections required to the Statement of Accounts
- No financial management issues had been found by KPMG or the previous External Auditor (Grant Thornton) in the years preceding 2024/25

6.7 In the Chief Internal Auditor's opinion, the above assurance activity reflects that sound governance arrangements are in place as a number of the points above would not have been possible without adequate governance foundations being in place and embedded.

There has been no significant instances of fraud, poor risk management and/or poor financial management that would lead the Chief Internal Auditor to believe poor governance practices have been in place.

However, as part of the AGS certification process and ethics-related audit checks throughout the year, there have been a small number of areas identified that do require further development. Attached as Annex 1 is an agreed action plan to address these areas for development and ensure continuous improvement.

- 6.8 Issues from the previous AGS action plan (2023/24) that have been addressed or mainstreamed have been deleted and those that continue to be addressed are included in the 2024/25 action plan.
- 6.9 The Senior Management Team has monitored implementation of the 2023/24 actions and progress has been reported to the Audit Committee at the January 2025 meeting.
- 6.10 Detailed below is a statement explaining how the Council has complied with the Code of Corporate Governance and meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and CIPFA Code on the Principles of Good Governance.

7. Statement of Compliance

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

- 7.1.1 Members and officers recognise the importance of compliance with the Council's Constitution, specifically the Financial and Contract Rules; Procurement Regulations, Scheme of Delegation, Codes of Conduct and Gifts & Hospitality Policy.

However, some improvements are needed in this area and recommendations have been included in the 2024/25 AGS action plan.

- 7.1.2 There is ongoing training for Code of Conduct, Equality Awareness, Leadership and Governance and Contract Procedure Rules/Procurement.

- 7.1.3 The Council has an Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy, supported by the Whistleblowing (Speak Up) Policy, encouraging internal referrals.

The Council has a zero-tolerance policy in relation to fraud and corruption and it is service management's responsibility to ensure there are adequate controls in their areas to ensure the opportunities for fraud are minimised. It is everyone's responsibility to report suspicions and the Whistleblowing (Speak Up) Policy supports this internally.

Internal Audit, along with the Investigations Team, undertakes proactive fraud work based on a fraud risk register and/or other intelligence. Other specific anti-fraud and corruption activities are undertaken by Trading Standards.

An annual report on anti-fraud and corruption activities and an update to the Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy and Whistleblowing (Speak Up) Policy is presented to the Audit Committee.

- 7.1.4 As well as complying with the Council's Employee Code of Conduct, Council officers also comply with their own professional bodies' code of conduct when delivering services.
- 7.1.5 All Internal Audit reviews consist of an ethics questionnaire that is sent to a sample of staff in specific teams to demonstrate their understanding of key corporate policies.

Ethics questionnaire findings have been shared when discussing individual audits with relevant Service Delivery Managers and Directors and taken to SMT as part of reporting corporate recommendations. Identified improvements required highlighted from findings from the ethics work have been included in the 2024/25 AGS action plan.

- 7.1.6 There are both internal and external reviews in social care to monitor compliance with the law, e.g. the Care Act, Deprivation of Liberties, Safeguarding and Mental Health Act.
- 7.1.7 Human Resource and recruitment policies and processes ensure the Council is fully compliant with employment law. Annual audits are undertaken in these areas and ongoing checks take place to ensure compliance with IR35 legislation.
- 7.1.8 Senior officers meet regularly and work closely with members to ensure that they understand and can undertake their roles effectively and legally.
- 7.1.9 Cabinet monitors the effectiveness of the governance framework through the consideration of regular service and financial management information reports from senior management.
- Individual Cabinet Members receive regular feedback from senior officers in respect to their areas of responsibility on the progress of priorities and objectives. Issues of strategic and corporate importance are referred to Cabinet.
- 7.1.10 Statutory responsibilities across the Council are discharged openly and proactively, examples include having key statutory officers in place, i.e. Head of Paid Service, Data Protection Officer, Section 151 Officer, Monitoring Officer, Director of Children Services, Director of Adult Services, Director of Public Health and Scrutiny Officer.

7.2 Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

- 7.2.1 To plan for the next ten years, Vision 2032 was developed to describe what the borough would be like to live-in in 2032 presenting a clear ambition and direction of travel for the borough. It was developed through:

- wide ranging engagement with residents;
- analysis of data about our communities and economy; and,
- collaboration with key strategic partners.

In recognising some of the key challenges facing the borough, the fundamental goal of the vision is “to build a more inclusive borough” through four ambitions.

- All neighbourhoods are connected, safe and clean;
- Everyone is able to live a healthy, independent life;
- Everyone benefits from good education and can fulfil their potential in a thriving economy; and,
- The environment is protected for the benefit of everyone.

Against each ambition the Vision describes the ambitions and aspirations for what will be achieved by 2032. Delivery of the Vision is driven through a partnership of key strategic organisations which meet three times each year to evaluate progress in delivering the Vision and to identify new or emerging challenges and opportunities. The latest update report went to Cabinet in March 2025.

- 7.2.2 The Council actively contributes to, and collaborates with, partners to promote good governance and achieve the delivery of outcomes through increased joint working. The Council is a member of a number of sub-regional partnerships and groups.

Many of our services are delivered in partnership with other organisations such as West Mercia Energy, Town and Parish Councils, voluntary groups, etc.

7.2.3 Regular meetings take place between Children's Safeguarding and key partner agencies such as the police, Education and Health.

7.2.4 All Council services feed into transparent reporting processes through Council committee meetings and this is further supported by the transparency agenda.

7.2.5 Annually the public is consulted on the budget for the forthcoming year.

7.2.6 The Council works in partnership with a range of local health partners. This includes TWC being represented on the Integrated Care Board, T&W Health and Wellbeing Board and TWC's Chief Executive chairing the Telford & Wrekin Integrated Place Partnership (TWIPP), which is now a formal sub-committee of the ICB.

7.2.7 The Scrutiny provision has looked at the development of policy, the decision-making process and areas of concern. The subject areas for review will be informed by community engagement, direct feedback to members from within the community, the results of review and inspection (both internally and externally) and areas of policy being developed by the Council.

7.2.8 The Council undertook a customer survey in 2024 to obtain views from citizens as to how they perceived the Council's service delivery. Survey findings included:

- 85% of respondents were satisfied with the Council's access channels
- Customer satisfaction score increased from 72.1 in 2022 to 74
- The Council had a score of 4.3 for effort customers have to make to access Council services (therefore a lower score is positive. This compares to a national average of 5.8

7.2.9 In addition to 7.2.8 above, the Council undertook a resident's survey to obtain the views of residents over a number of areas. A targeted approach was undertaken for this survey with households across all wards being represented.

7.2.10 The Council also undertook a young person's online survey for 11-18 year olds. The Council used its existing youth engagement groups to encourage participation.

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

7.3.1 The Council Plan was refreshed in 2024. The plan identifies 5 priorities to deliver the Council's vision to 'Protect, Care and Invest to Create a Better Borough'. The Council continues to develop commercial projects to generate income to invest in frontline services to mitigate increases in the cost of living and the ongoing impact of Government funding.

7.3.2 Digital transformation, the ethical and appropriate use of artificial intelligence and changes in the way we work are intrinsic to the Council's service delivery model.

7.3.3 The Telford and Wrekin Local Plan sets out the Council's vision and strategy for the physical planning of the borough up to 2031.

The Council are currently undertaking a review of the Local Plan and have completed consultation exercises on this. The Local Plan is now being finalised prior to the plan being submitted to the Government's Planning Inspectorate for independent examination.

- 7.3.4 All service areas have their own service plans (refreshed in 2024/25) which details how they intend to deliver their service for the coming year and the risks/challenges they face in meeting their service objectives.
- 7.3.5 The Council has a commercial/investment strategy that demonstrates clear visions, objectives and outcomes. This includes financial, economic, social and environmental issues.
- 7.3.6 The Council's economic growth strategy supports and drives increased economic productivity.
- 7.3.7 The financial strategy sets out the short and long term implications for service delivery across the Council. The Service & Financial Planning reports include various papers to Cabinet regarding the budget and sets out short/medium and long-term implications, including capital strategy and savings strategy.
- 7.3.8 Adult Social Services, in respect of financial management and the implementation of the cost improvement plan, have continued to provide updates during the year to SMT and members.
- 7.3.9 Children's Services have partnered with IMPOWER to embed Valuing Care across multiple services. Valuing Care looks to support a needs focused, outcomes driven approach across all of Children's Services. This work also looks at cost savings / avoidance including saving of £9.6m related to changes in placement costs. Other savings streams are also being explored.
- 7.3.10 All reports to members (Committee reports, Cabinet reports and Council reports) show relevant legal and financial implications and risk.
- 7.3.11 Implementation of the IDT Strategy has continued, including infrastructure upgrades and further security improvements particularly in response to spam, phishing and ransomware attacks.
- 7.3.12 An Artificial Intelligence Board has been established to ensure that any AI projects are appropriately governed.
- 7.3.13 The Council has implemented a number of climate actions which contribute to its aims of becoming carbon neutral by 2030.

Tackling climate change is one of the priorities set out in the Council Plan. Throughout its partnerships, the Council is also playing its part in helping the wider borough to achieve the same targets the Councils has set for itself.

Key actions have included:

- The Council has achieved an overall reduction of 61% in CO2 emissions from a baseline of 2018/18
- Installation of solar panels, electric vehicle charging points and battery storage at Horsehay Village Golf Course
- Decarbonisation work at Oakengates Leisure Centre including the installation of heat pump technology and installing an energy efficient roof covering
- Orchard Business Park development included the installation of solar panels
- Through the Council's Warm and Well Telford fund, grants are given for climate change work in households

- Nuplace, the Council's wholly owned housing company, developed energy efficient properties for rent
- Providing over 9,000 energy saving lightbulbs to the community
- Replacing Council fleet vehicles with electric versions (currently there are 15 electric vehicles in operation), where possible, as existing vehicles reach the end of their useable life
- Creation and maintenance of the Climate Change Adaption Risk Register

Many more activities have taken place in 204/25 to support climate adaption and biodiversity.

7.4 Determine the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcome.

7.4.1 The 2024/25 Service & Financial Strategy including the Treasury Management Plan are aligned to the refreshed Council Plan. The strategy sets out how our financial resources will be used to deliver the Council vision and priorities.

7.4.2 Budget plans are produced for all service areas for planning purposes. Budget consultation is undertaken annually with Council Members and members of the public.

7.5 Developing the Council's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

7.5.1 The Workforce Strategy was approved in 2021/22 and is available to all employees on the intranet. The strategy consists of 5 priorities which reflects the Council's aims to achieve its objectives.

The Council is currently refreshing this strategy and will look to encompass feedback from the recent employee survey into an updated version in 2025/26.

7.5.2 The Council undertook a survey of all of its employees in 2024/25. A total of 1,405 responses were completed. The survey identified that:

- 84% of employees would recommend the Council as a great place to work
- 95% of employees are interested in their work
- 92% of employees understand how their work contributes to the Council's priorities

7.5.3 Officers understand their respective roles and these are set out in job descriptions. The Constitution, Scheme of Delegation and Contract Procedure Rules clearly details roles and responsibilities, specifically with regard to delegation and authorisation.

7.5.4 There are various training methods available to staff such as mentoring, OLLIE (On-line learning platform), virtual and face to face. The Leadership & Management Programme continued in 2024/25 with approximately 250 Team Leaders/Managers taking part.

7.5.5 Managers continue to be encouraged to look for apprenticeship opportunities for their team. In addition, the Council organised a Skills Show (annual event) with over 50 exhibitors and 4,000 visitors attending. Apprenticeship opportunities were promoted at this show.

7.5.6 An induction programme is in place for members and officers.

7.5.7 The action plan at *Annex A* of this statement details areas of improvement in this area identified from the results of the annual governance certification process and the ethics questionnaire used in audits.

7.6 The Council continues to manage risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.

7.6.1 Risk management is an integral part of good management and corporate governance and is at the heart of what the Council does. A number of governance documents details the Council's approach to risk including the Risk Management Framework, Risk Management Strategy and Risk Management Policy.

7.6.2 The Council has a Corporate Strategic Risk Register which details key risks that could stop the Council achieving its objectives. This risk register is presented to the Audit Committee 4 times a year.

7.6.3 The Internal Audit plan is informed by the Council's service and financial planning processes, Corporate Strategic Risk Register, external inspection reports, external networking intelligence and comments/opinions from senior management on the current state of governance, risk and control environment. Each area on the plan is risk rated.

7.6.4 During 2024/25 the Internal Audit team achieved 93% of their revised planned work and this has been used, in part, with the relevant output from unplanned work to help form their opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk management and internal control framework.

All Internal Audit reports produced are given an assurance rating (from poor to good) and each recommendation in the audit reports are risk assessed and given a risk rating.

7.6.5 The Chief Internal Auditor has undertaken checks on the work of Internal Audit as part of the Quality Assurance Improvement Program. No significant issues have been found during these checks but a small number of minor issues have been fed back to the Internal Audit Team to assist in their continuous improvement.

7.6.6 Internal Audit reports to the Audit Committee 4 times a year. The reports include all internal audit activity throughout the year including reports produced and follow up reviews undertaken. The Audit Committee also approved the Internal Audit Charter for 2024/25.

7.6.7 Large projects require the maintenance of a project risk register, this is a working document that is reviewed and amended throughout the lifecycle of the project. Where projects involve the processing of personally identifiable information, a Data Protection Impact Assessment is also completed which requires risks and risk treatment to be documented.

7.6.8 The Council has adopted the CIPFA Code of Practice for managing the risk of fraud and corruption and this has been reflected in the Council's Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy and Whistleblowing (Speak Up) Policy.

7.6.9 Services report regularly to Council committees such as the Audit Committee, Planning, Licensing, Cabinet, etc. These reports detail any impact assessment, including risk and opportunity. Financial decisions are reported to Cabinet, Full Council and Audit

Committee, who often challenge to ensure appropriate financial management and to demonstrate transparency.

- 7.6.10 Financial Regulations set out our financial management framework for ensuring the Council make best use of the money they have available. Financial roles and responsibilities are clearly shown in the regulations and it provides a framework for financial decision-making.
- 7.6.11 The Treasury Management Strategy and regular updates on treasury matters are provided to Audit Committee. This information clearly details investments, loans and the financial position of the Council. The Council uses external treasury advisors, Link, to support its activities.
- 7.6.12 The Council's financial strategy identifies the short term budget plan and long term aspirational plan linked to the Council plan to be a self-sustaining Council.
- 7.6.13 The Council complies with the Principles and Standards set out in the CIPFA Financial Management Code appropriately and proportionately demonstrating sound financial management and providing the expected assurance.
- 7.6.14 The Council has continued to make savings in light of ongoing financial pressures. £181.7m of ongoing savings/additional income will have been delivered by the end of 2024/25 with a further £13.1m to be delivered by the end of 2025/26. As part of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025/26, the Government announced its intention to move to multi-year settlements from 2026/27 onwards alongside a reform of the formula funding allocations and a reset of the Business Rates system, both of which will be consulted on throughout 2025.

However, it is unlikely that the Council will know what its funding settlement is for 2026/27 and future years until December 2025, just 3 months before the start of the new year. This makes it challenging to forecast the level of savings required from April 2026 onwards.

7.7 Implement good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

- 7.7.1 The Council endeavours to be open and transparent in its activities and reporting. Specific examples of this include:
- All Council/Committee agendas, papers and minutes are published on its website
 - Public consultation is undertaken on the budget
 - All expenditure over £100 is published on the Council website
 - Publication of the Complaints and Compliments annual report
- 7.7.2 The Audit Committee has responsibility for internal and external audit matters, the Council's arrangements for corporate governance and risk management.
- 7.7.3 In 2024/25, the Council continued to be the lead authority for the West Midlands Audit Committee Chairs Forum (WMACCF). The Council's Chairperson of the Audit Committee is also the Chairperson of the WMACCF.

The WMACCF is sponsored by the Local Government Association and is a forum where Audit Committee Chairs from across the West Midlands meet to share good practice.

- 7.7.4 The Audit Committee terms of reference also incorporate the review and monitoring of the Council's Treasury Management arrangements. Members of the committee are kept up to date through awareness training on factors that influence/affect delivery of the strategy and during the year were provided with an update on these matters by MUFG Treasury Services, the Council's Treasury Management advisors.
- 7.7.5 There are various committees, all with their own terms of reference and areas of responsibility, i.e. Licensing Committee, Planning Committee, etc, and there are elected members who are responsible for service areas within the Council.
- 7.7.6 Arrangements are in place to ensure Internal Audit fully complies with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). The Internal Audit team complete self-assessments against the standards and the outcome of this is reported to the Audit Committee.

The next internal self-assessment will be completed in 2025/26 against the new revised global audit standards. The next external assessment will take place in 2026/27.

- 7.7.7 The Internal Audit plan is developed using a risk-based approach taking into consideration the Corporate Strategic Risk Register, Service Plans and other relevant information. Audit recommendations made are communicated to the relevant Service Delivery Managers and relevant Senior Management representatives for consideration and implementation of recommendations.

Internal Audit will share best practice in the duty of their work. The Audit Plan is reviewed regularly to ensure it is still relevant and any changes to the plan are reported to the Audit Committee.

- 7.7.8 The Council's Communication Team works with officers and members to ensure key messages are easy to understand and in accessible formats to meet the diverse needs of our borough.
- 7.7.9 The Council's performance management framework is monitored by the Senior Management Team and has procedures in place that drive continuous improvement in performance.
- 7.7.10 The Council has identified lessons learnt from corporate complaints and complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman and implemented measures accordingly.
- 7.7.11 The Council continues to meet its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010. The Council has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and publishes an annual EDI report. Key EDI activity undertaken in 2024/25 included:

- Delivery of tailored training programme for elected members, managers and employees to enhance their understanding of the Equality Act 2010, their responsibilities and how they can meet their duties effectively.
- Employee led support groups continue to provide a voice and safe space for employees who share protected characteristics, and their allies, whilst delivering a range of awareness and well-being initiatives for the workforce.
- Residents who share a range of protected characteristics have influenced development of policy and practice through proactive engagement and involvement. This has included amongst others the design of the new Theatre Telford, co-design of Adult Social Care self-service portal and delivery of an inclusive leisure strategy.

8 Looking Forward

- 8.1 Although the annual governance process reflects on the past year, it is also important that this statement looks forward to identify future factors that may impact its governance arrangements.

8.2 New Global Internal Audit Standards

- 8.2.1 The new Global Internal Audit Standards and the Application Note will form the basis of UK public sector internal audit effective from 1 April 2025. Therefore, the Council's Internal Audit operations must comply with these standards.

8.3 Local Government Reorganisation

- 8.3.1 The English Devolution White Paper published in December 2024 sets out the government's vision for simpler local government structures. Although, currently, this will not directly affect Telford and Wrekin Council, changes across the wider West Midlands region in particular will be monitored.

8.4 On-going financial challenges

- 8.4.1 Telford and Wrekin Council and other local authorities in England face continued financial challenges. The Council has a good record in meeting these challenges and continues to explore income generation as part of its financial management strategy.

8.5 Continued Customer Centric Services

- 8.5.1 The Institute of Customer Service has recently confirmed that it has awarded ServiceMark Accreditation to the Council. It was identified by the institute that the Council is meeting the National Customer Service Standard. The Council are only 1 of 69 organisations across the country to receive this accreditation and the first Council in the country to be accredited.

Sign-off of the 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement

Name/Role	Signed	Dated
David Sidaway Chief Executive		
Cllr Lee Carter Leader of the Council		
Cllr Helena Morgan Chair of Audit Committee		

AGS ACTION PLAN FOR 2024/25 FOR IMPLEMENTATION DURING 2025/26

Ref	Area identified for development and/or ongoing monitoring	Actions	Lead Officers
1	<p>Ongoing savings proposals, budget constraints and continued strategic management of organisational changes.</p> <p>Ongoing from previous AGS</p>	<p>Continued management of budgets, savings, revised structures and commercial/business approach which links to the continued development and implementation of revised governance arrangements.</p> <p>Delivery of in year savings is monitored on a regular basis at SMT.</p> <p>Further consultations on future savings will be undertaken where necessary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief Executive Senior Management Team
2	<p>All internal audits include sending ethics questionnaires to a sample of staff in the team/area being audited. This is to demonstrate their understanding of corporate policies and whether staff feel supported.</p> <p>In a small number of questionnaire responses completed it was noted that not all staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Had received an Annual Performance & Development Discussion Were familiar with particular Council policies 	<p>Report to SMT on the completion rate for Annual Performance & Development Discussion.</p> <p>Reports on the completion of essential learning will be presented to SMT periodically.</p> <p>A reminder will be sent to all staff on key corporate policies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Management Team

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had completed all essential learning requirements <p>These findings have been shared with Service Delivery Managers / Directors when discussing the audit report for their service with recommendations for rectification.</p>		
3	<p>The annual certification process highlighted that there had been some reduction in the number of appropriately skilled staff in some service areas although actions had been identified to address this.</p> <p>Recruitment of staff in local government, particularly in some professions, continues to be challenging. This results in some single points of failure or the use of temporary staff.</p>	<p>The Council continues to explore and implement a number of initiatives in respect to staffing including service and workforce planning, apprenticeship schemes, etc to support managers in addressing these areas.</p> <p>A revised workforce strategy will be launched in 2025 which will cover succession planning, single points of failure and 'growing our own'.</p> <p>The Leadership & Management training and learning programme continues for Team Leaders / Service Delivery Managers. The programme looks to support management development and to enable some resilience planning within the Council.</p> <p>The Council continues to monitor the effectiveness of different channels of recruitment it uses and is developing an employer value proposition, i.e. 'Why work for T&WC'.</p> <p>In 2024/25 the Council has continued to organise the Skills and Apprenticeship Show to support recruitment.</p>	Director: Finance, People & IDT

4	<p>Low/medium risk data breaches are being experienced in some Council Teams.</p> <p>Data breaches are reported to the Information Governance (IG) Team who investigate the circumstances of the breach, assess the associated risk and ensure lessons learnt are identified.</p> <p>The Information Commissioner's Office have not taken any action against the Council in 2024/25.</p>	<p>Incorporate data breach analysis into the Managing the Business dashboard presented to the Senior Management Team.</p> <p>Increase sharing of information internally of trends around data breaches and 'near misses'.</p> <p>IG Team support for services who process high volumes of personal data.</p> <p>Continue to develop/invest in the Council's secure email functionality (Zivver).</p>	Director: Policy & Governance
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