



Telford & Wrekin
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest
to create a better borough

Annual Governance Statement

1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

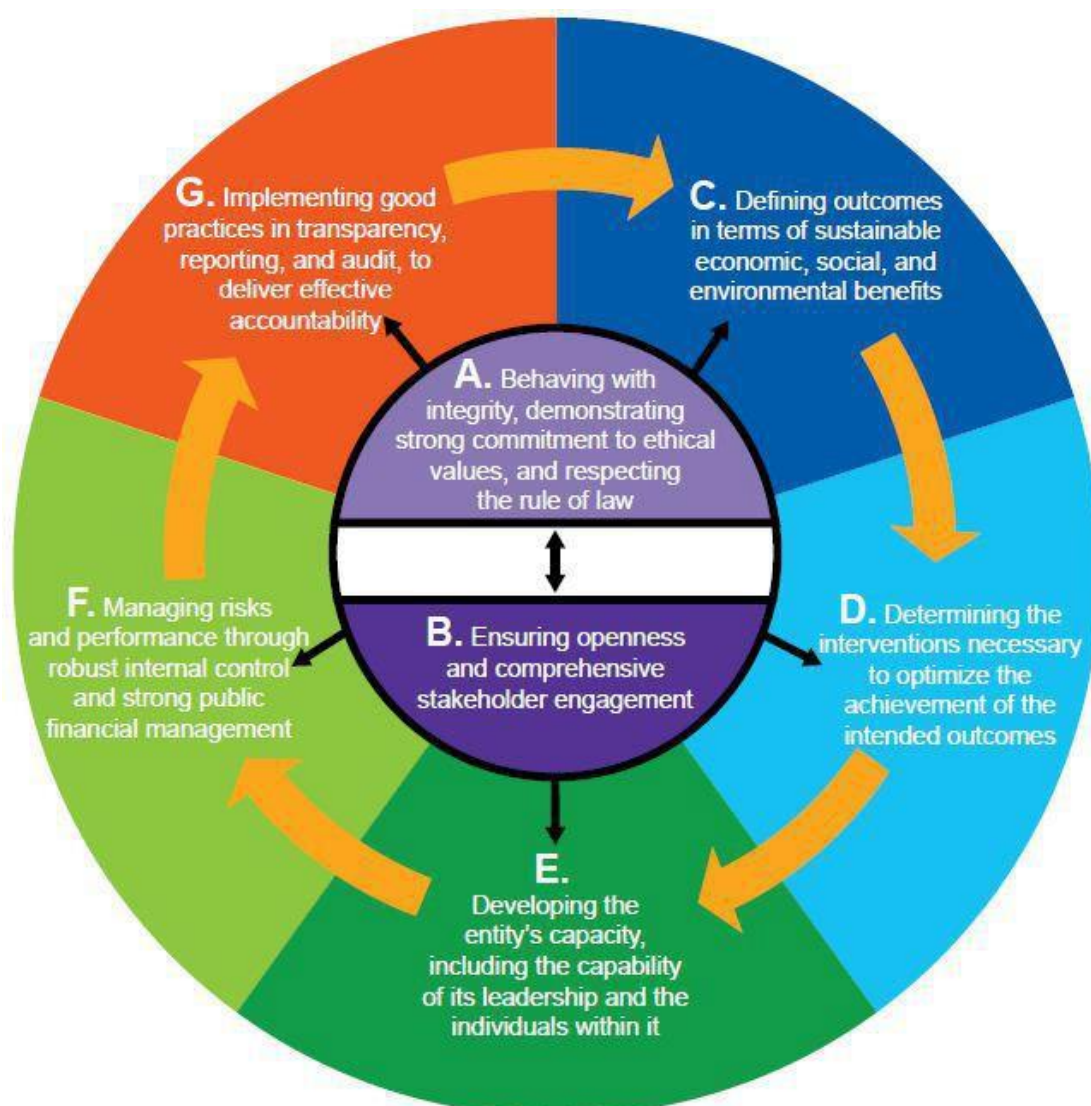


1. Introduction

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, shown below.



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 positive 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 articulates borough aspirations for the Council and its partners.
- 2.2 To achieve this vision, 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 2025/26 has seen continued challenges around financial management which have been appropriately 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 2025/26 included:
 - The Local Government Chronicle awarded the accolade of Council of the Year 2025 to Telford & Wrekin Council;
 - The Council was awarded funding to create the first Valour-recognised armed forces centre in the West Midlands, one of only 14 in the country;
 - The Council's My Options Supported Housing Team received an 'Outcome 1' Ofsted report. This is the highest rating the service could be given.

See paragraphs 6.10 and 7.3.11 for more detail on the Council's key achievements.

- 2.5 Overall this annual governance 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 has a responsibility to ensure that public money is safeguarded, 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 what it does and how it does things.

5. The Governance Framework

- 5.1 The governance framework allows the Council to monitor how it is 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 is not possible to eliminate all elements of risk that might result in a failure to achieve priorities and objectives and, therefore, these systems of internal control, and this annual governance statement can 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 continued to face a challenging financial environment during 2025/26 due to the funding constraints it is working within, coupled with ongoing rising costs and demand that has been experienced nationally. The Council has met these challenges and continues to deliver quality services against this backdrop and in the context of having delivered £195.3m savings annually since 2009.

6.3 The Council recognises the ongoing importance of information governance and has an established Information Governance Framework in place. The main focus of the Information Governance Team in 2025/26 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 including AI based products;
- Facilitating appropriate and secure information sharing where there is a legal basis to do so; and
- Supporting 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 2025/26 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 Heads of Service 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 Appendix 1. The Internal Audit team undertakes sample testing of completed certificates to provide additional assurance that adequate controls/risk management measures have been operating effectively within the organisation.

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 2025/26 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

6.7 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 the Internal Audit team is based upon risk. The scope of each audit assignment, as a minimum, includes assessment of the governance, risk management and control arrangements put in place by management. Work undertaken by Internal Audit complies with the Global Internal Audit Standards – UK Public Sector.

6.8 The Internal Audit team has 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 has 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

6.9 As stated above, reliance has been placed on other sources of assurance in 2025/26 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.

6.10 Throughout 2025/26, the Council has consistently been recognised as a well performing Council by a number of external bodies. Below is a summary of the recognition received.

- The Council was crowned 'Council of the Year 2025' by the Local Government Chronicle. This is one of the most prestigious awards in UK local government and recognised the Council's organisational excellence, leadership, performance, culture and outcomes.
- The LGC also asked the Council to present as part of a national webinar hosted by the LGC on excellence in local government.
- The Council was awarded funding to create the first Valour-recognised centre in the West Midlands
- The Council's My Options Supported Housing Team received an 'Outcome 1' Ofsted report. This is the highest rating the service could be given.
- The UK Ministry of Defence re-accredited the Council with the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Award.
- 8 of Telford's parks and local nature reserves earned the prestigious Green Flag Award.

- The Council's Communication's Team were named 'Comms Team of the Year' at the Comms 2.0 Awards.
- 2 Council teams were shortlisted for APSE awards – these were awards for:
 - Best Community and Neighbourhood Initiative – for the Street Champions scheme
 - Best Building and Housing Initiative – for bringing Octavia Court and the former Red Lion public house site into better use for specialist and supported housing
- The Council received the Institute of Customer Service's (ICS) Service Mark accreditation in July 2025. The Council is the first local authority in the UK to achieve this.
- 2 Council teams were shortlisted for Local Government Chronicle awards – these awards were for:
 - Small Team of the Year – for the Customer Relationship Team's work on gaining ICS accreditation
 - Housing awards – for work by the Strategic Housing and Regeneration Team in transforming empty properties
- The Telford & Wrekin Bike Hub was crowned Community Engagement Project of the Year' at the National Travel Awards
- The Local Government Association undertook a corporate peer challenge in September 2025 and found that the Council is a high-performing Council with its leadership being identified as confident and credible.

6.11 Other examples of assurance obtained in year include:

- 1:1 supervision and team meetings
- Case file audits
- Monitoring of service plans
- Regular contract review meetings
- Regular financial monitoring
- Completion of statutory returns
- Quality checks undertaken
- Completion and approval of regular reconciliations
- Lexcel re-accreditation in Legal
- Annual Scrutiny Work Programme
- Quality Assurance Improvement Plan
- Quarterly statutory officer's meetings
- External audit of Housing Benefit Subsidy Claim
- CQC/Ofsted inspection
- Accounts completed within statutory timescale with an unqualified opinion

6.12 KPMG has been the Council's External Auditor for 2025/26. They have presented to the Audit Committee throughout 2025/26. The following is a summary of KPMG's findings contained in their Annual Auditor's Report 2024/25 for that reporting period:-

- No material inconsistencies had been identified.
- In respect of governance, no significant risks have been identified.
- In respect of value for money, no significant weakness had been identified in the Council's arrangements during the work that had been completed thus far.
- The executive summary also set out actions available as part of their wider powers and it was confirmed that no actions had been taken during the current year.
- A risk assessment had also been completed in order to look at the Council's financial position which considered three key areas – financial sustainability, governance and economy, efficiency and effectiveness and that no weaknesses in these areas had been identified.

6.13 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 identified that would lead the Chief Internal Auditor to believe poor governance practices have been in place.

6.14 As part of the AGS certification process and ethics-related audit checks throughout the year, a small number of areas have been identified that require some further development. Attached as Appendix 1 is an agreed action plan to address these areas for development and ensure continuous learning and improvement. Matters identified in the previous AGS action plan (2024/25) that have been addressed or mainstreamed have been deleted and those that continue to be addressed are included in the 2025/26 action plan.

6.15 The Senior Management Team has monitored implementation of the 2024/25 actions and progress reported to the Audit Committee at its January 2026 meeting.

6.16 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. Some improvements are needed in this area and recommendations have been included in the 2025/26 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. It is important to note that the Council has a zero-tolerance policy in relation to fraud and corruption and it is the responsibility of Heads of Service 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.

- 7.1.4 The Internal Audit team, along with the Investigations Team, undertakes proactive fraud prevention, detection and investigation 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.
- 7.1.5 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.
- 7.1.6 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. Ethic questionnaire findings have been shared when discussing individual audits with relevant Heads of Service 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 2025/26 AGS action plan.
- 7.1.7 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.
- 7.1.8 The Human Resources team and the Council's 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.
- 7.1.9 Senior officers meet regularly and work closely with members to ensure that they understand and can undertake their roles effectively and legally.
- 7.1.10 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.
- 7.1.11 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. The Corporate Peer Challenge reported a strong "golden triangle" of Head of Paid Service, section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer which is considered the backbone of robust governance.

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 by 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.
- 7.2.2 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.

7.2.3 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. A Vision 2032 Partnership Annual Review took place and the outcome of this was reported to Cabinet in April 2025. Since then, a pilot partnership project has commenced to help address inequalities in those areas of the Borough which face greatest challenge with impact being monitored and reported upon the conclusion of the pilot.

7.2.4 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.

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

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

7.2.7 Annually the public is consulted on the budget proposals for the forthcoming year.

7.2.8 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.

7.2.9 The Scrutiny provision has looked at the development of policy, the decision-making process and areas of concern. The subject areas for review are 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.

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

7.3.1 The Council 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 drive economic investment into, and grow employment opportunities within, the borough which, in turn, generates income to invest in frontline services mitigating financial uncertainty caused by global volatility, cost of living and Government funding reform. The Council has a commercial/investment strategy that demonstrates clear visions, objectives and outcomes. This includes financial, economic, social and environmental issues whilst its economic growth strategy supports and drives increased economic productivity.

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 is currently undertaking a review of the Local Plan and has carried out extensive consultation exercises on this. The Local Plan has been formally submitted to the Planning Inspectorate and is currently being examined by independent Planning Inspectors.
- 7.3.4 All service areas have their own service plans (refreshed in 2025/26) 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 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.
- 7.3.6 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.
- 7.3.7 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. Additionally, the Children's Services service area also have a cost improvement plan which is overseen by SMT and members on a regular basis throughout the year.
- 7.3.8 All reports to members (Committee reports, Cabinet reports and Council reports) show relevant legal and financial implications and risk.
- 7.3.9 Implementation of the IDT Strategy has continued, including infrastructure upgrades and further security improvements particularly in response to spam, phishing and ransomware attacks. The strategy also encompasses the expanded use of AI and governance is in place to ensure AI is implemented safely, ethically and transparently.
- 7.3.10 An Artificial Intelligence Board has been established to ensure that any AI projects are appropriately governed. In addition, AI specific assessment templates are used to assess risks and ensure ethical implementation of any approved AI technology, being mindful of information governance principles.
- 7.3.11 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:
- Securing £6.7m in Warm Homes Local Grant Funding to retrofit low-income homes, improving energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty.
 - Continued to deliver affordable warmth through Nuplace, completing energy-efficient homes with solar panels and EV charging.

- The Council has reported a 63% carbon reduction achievement and set a target for 70% for 2026/27.
- Continued transition of Council fleet vehicles to fully electric vans.
- Promoted active travel programmes including investment in cycling and walking infrastructure and school travel behaviour projects to reduce car use.
- The Corporate Carbon Neutral Action Plan was updated in October 2025 including risk register updates and annual reporting arrangements.
- Wellington Pool work completed with the pool reopening in August 2025. The work included a £1.1m package of energy efficiency improvements.
- Through the LED Bulb Distribution Scheme, the Council has provided 16,184 energy saving LED bulbs to the borough.
- Awarded £683,370 from the On-street Residential Charge Point Scheme for the installation of 70 dual fast EV charge points in Council car parks

7.3.12 Many more activities have taken place in 2025/26 to support climate adaption and biodiversity.

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

7.4.1 The 2025/26 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 Council's Workforce Strategy is available to all employees on the intranet. The strategy consists of 6 priorities which reflect the Council's aims to be an employer of choice. The Council is refreshing this strategy in 2026, encompassing outcomes from Strategic Workforce Planning which the Council has recently been undertaking.

7.5.2 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.

7.5.3 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 2025/26 with approximately 250 Team Leaders/Managers taking part.

7.5.4 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 55 exhibitors and almost 3,000 visitors attending. Apprenticeship opportunities were promoted at this show.

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

7.5.6 The action plan at Appendix 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 detail 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 have potential to prevent the Council achieving its objectives. This risk register is presented to the Audit Committee for consideration and discussion 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 2025/26 the Internal Audit team achieved 93% of its revised planned work and this has been used, in part, with the relevant output from unplanned work to help form the 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 the Internal Audit team as part of the Quality Assurance Improvement Program. No significant issues have been found during these checks but a small number of minor improvements have been fed back to the Internal Audit Team to assist in their continuous development and learning.

7.6.6 The Internal Audit team 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 2025/26.

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 makes best use of the money available. Financial roles and responsibilities are clearly shown in the Regulations and this 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, MUFU, 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 mainly as a result of increased demand for services, in particular for Adult Social Care. £195.3m of ongoing savings/additional income will have been delivered by the end of 2025/26 with a further £16.7m ongoing savings/additional income to be delivered by the end of 2026/27. The Local Government Finance Settlement announced in December 2025 was the first multi-year settlement in nearly a decade with funding allocations provided for 2026/27 through to 2028/29. The settlement reflected the outcome of the Governments Fair Funding 2.0 Review and simplified the number of funding streams by consolidating several grants into the Revenue Support Grant and four main separate grants. It also simplified the formulas used in the needs assessment and updated the data used which hadn't been updated for decades.

7.6.15 Whilst the provisional settlement figures for future years provide more certainty over funding for the Council, it should be noted that the settlement will remain an annual event with figures for future years being subject to change until "locked down" by their own settlement. Due to the significant financial pressures facing the Council because of increased demand for services, it is anticipated that the need for future Council Tax increases and savings will continue. Savings targets will be allocated as part of the budget planning cycle for 2027/28 in June.

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 2025/26, the Council continued to be the lead authority for the West Midlands Audit Committee Chairs Forum (WMAACF). The Council's Chairperson of the Audit Committee is also the Chairperson of the WMAACF. The WMAACF 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, the Committee was provided with an update on these matters by MUFG Treasury Services, the Council's Treasury Management advisors.
- 7.7.5 There are various committees, each 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 the Internal Audit team fully complies with the Global Internal Audit Standards – UK Public Sector (GIAS-UK PS). The Internal Audit team completes self-assessments against the standards with the outcome of this reported to the Audit Committee. The next internal self-assessment will be completed in 2026/27 against the GIAS-UK PS. The next external assessment will take place in 2027/28.
- 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 Heads of Service and relevant Senior Management representatives for consideration and implementation of recommendations. Internal Audit shares 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 procedures are in place that drive continuous improvement in performance whilst also identifying challenges and opportunities.
- 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 2025/2026 included:
- Continued delivery of the Council's EDI strategy.
 - In May 2025, a dedicated Cabinet portfolio was created for Inclusion, Engagement, Equalities and Civic Pride.
 - Ongoing formal recognition of care experience and armed forces service as a protected characteristic.
 - Compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
 - Participation in the 'Everyone Belongs Here' campaign across Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin.
 - Chief Executive led cross-council internal EDI Steering Group in place

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 the Council's governance arrangements.

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 The local government sector within England and Wales faces 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 Global volatility

8.5.1 Current global volatility in areas such as Ukraine and the Middle East has been seen to impact upon global markets and the cost of things such as fuel, services and interest rates. Developments will be monitored by the Council, alongside its professional advisors to enable it to respond appropriately to any sustained impacts.

8.6 Continued Customer Centric Services

8.6.1 The Council continues to place the customer at the centre of everything it does. To supplement this approach, in September 2025, the Council published its Customer Strategy 2025-2030 – Delivering our Customer Experience.

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 2025/26 FOR IMPLEMENTATION DURING 2026/27

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 given the challenging local government landscape.</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 a small number of staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had not received an Annual Performance & Development Discussion • Were unfamiliar 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 not completed all essential learning requirements <p>These findings have been shared with Heads of Service / Directors when identified 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, although the work undertaken on the Workforce Strategy presents opportunity to address this challenge.</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 cover succession planning, single points of failure and 'growing our own' and there will be a need for ongoing work to ensure this is an embedded approach across the organisation.</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 2025/25 the Council has continued to organise, and expand, 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 has not taken any action against the Council in 2024/25.</p>	<p>Data breach analysis has been incorporated into the performance management reporting presented to the Senior Management Team.</p> <p>Increase sharing of information internally of any trends around data breaches and 'near misses'.</p> <p>IG Team support for services who process high volumes of personal data.</p> <p>The Council has continued to run mock cyber security exercises to ensure awareness is maintained of the risks posed by matters such as phishing.</p>	Director: Policy & Governance
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