



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT - 2018-19

The Accounting and Audit Regulations 2015 (at section 6.1 a) require a local authority to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

At Wokingham Borough Council, good governance is everyone's responsibility. However, the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive acknowledge their leadership role in relation to good governance.

The Council has defined its governance arrangements in its ***Local Code of Governance: Delivering Good Governance in Wokingham Borough Council***. This details how the Council has operated its governance arrangements in the past year. The Council has undertaken a review of its governance arrangements via management assurance statements completed by Directors (including statutory officers), Internal Audit and external agencies.

This process has identified the following improvements:

Corporate Services

- Updating the Constitution regularly through the year by Council to ensure it remains fit for purpose.
- Strengthening Overview & Scrutiny processes.
- Responding to Data Protection Act Subject Access requests and Freedom of Information Act requests more efficiently through the allocation of additional resource.
- Improving governance to manage technical change and decision making by the strengthening of the IT Boards and Technical Working Group.
- Reinvigorating the Change Board through weekly 'Core Group' sessions, reporting templates and clear escalation mechanisms.
- Strengthening Human Resource management through the creation of a Corporate People Dashboard and improved guidance for managers on the Intranet.
- Establishing a Contract and Commissioning Board; introducing additional governance arrangements aligned to the Council's procurement contracts rules and procedures.
- Reviewing control mechanisms for the Public Health Grant and agreeing improved governance arrangements for 2020/21. This will address the accountability issues and rebalancing the contribution to reflect the reduction in the grant.
- Reviewing contract and quality assurance functions, commissioned activity within Children's and Adults services.
- Introducing through the Strategy & Commissioning function a Quality Assurance Framework for Adult Services.
- Reviewing Care Governance Arrangements.
- Implementing strong governance arrangements for the Continuous Improvement Programme (new 21st Century Council programme).

- Refreshing the Corporate Risk Register in 2018 with strong oversight by the Audit Committee.

Locality & Customer Services

- Fine-tuning SDL (Strategic Development Locations) governance and management arrangements to ensure that they are working effectively.
- Strengthening the terms of reference for the Tenant Landlord Improvement Panel in light of data protection breach and complaints received.
- Establishing strong Highways Alliance governance arrangements with the Council's new Highways Partnership Alliance.
- Monitoring the Grounds Maintenance contract through the grass-cutting season through fortnightly contractor meetings.
- Regular partnership meetings with the Council's parking management contractor.

Children's Services

- Revised and refreshed the Supervision Framework including learning from Practice Weeks.
- Review of Quality Assurance Board and Quality Assurance Framework.

Adult Services

- Action Plan in place following ADASS (Association of Directors of Adult Social Services) Peer Review, monitored monthly.
- Monthly Continuous Improvement Board with action log.
- Regular attendance at the SAB (Safeguarding Adults Board) with active participation.

This process has also identified the following exceptions:

- Internal Audits of the following areas concluding a third level of assurance indicating that a range of risk mitigation controls were incomplete and risks not effectively managed. Action plans are in place to improve these areas-
 - Housing Rent
 - Debtors
 - Shared Building Services
- A delay in the implementation of the finance module for Technology Forge has limited the information of rental payments due impacting the effective management of the property portfolio. This will be addressed in 2019-20.
- In Children's Services, staffing turnover and the use of agency staff has adversely impacted the service.
- In Adult Social Care, the fragmented statutory pathway has meant a less effective service for residents. The Executive decision in June 2019 to transfer some functions from Optalis to the Council is designed to address this.

- During the last year, the Council’s senior leadership team has seen significant turnover and positions occupied by interim staff. However, all posts (Chief Executive and Director level) are now filled by permanent appointments.

The Chief Executive has identified the actions required to strengthen these areas of governance and will monitor their implementation.

Overall, the governance arrangements are substantially complete and generally effective but with some improvements required. This is a reflection of the Council’s governance framework and the management assurance statements, together with assurances from Internal Audit work and external agencies, and supported by the systems and procedural controls in place against identified risks and mitigating treatment measures.

The Council, therefore, concludes that its governance arrangements are fit for purpose.

Signed:

Leader of the Council:

Date: 31 July 2019

Chief Executive:

Date: 31 July 2019

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