

Annual Governance Statement 2021/2022

The Council's Annual Governance Statement (AGS) follows the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK 2021/22 and comprises the following sections:

- Scope of responsibility
- The purpose of the governance framework
- The governance framework
- Review of effectiveness
- Update on the significant governance issues that were declared last year
- Significant governance issues for the year-end 2021

Scope of responsibility

Belfast City Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and is used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under Part 12 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 to make arrangements for continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of strategic effectiveness, service quality, service availability, fairness, sustainability, efficiency and innovation.

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

The Council has prepared an Annual Governance Statement, which is consistent with the principles of the new CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016 edition)*. This statement explains how the Council has complied with the code and meets the requirements of the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland 2015) in relation to the publication of an annual governance statement.

The purpose of the governance framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and the activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads its communities. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The governance framework continues to be in place at Belfast City Council for the year ending 31st March 2022 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Governance Statement

and statement of accounts. The following section sets out the key elements of the governance framework.

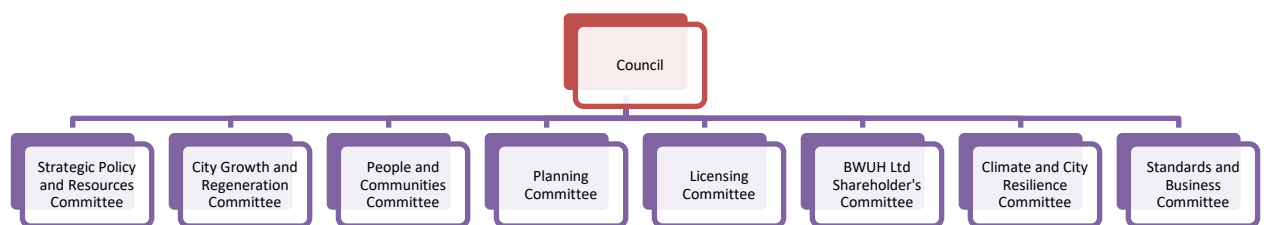
The governance framework

As reported in last year’s statement, a process for committee decision making under delegated authority was in place for the period March 2020 – June 2020 in response to the pandemic and the need to follow guidance on social distancing and essential travel.

The process for committee decision making under delegated authority was reintroduced on 4th May 2021 following the expiry of the legislation permitting the hosting of remote meetings from 6th May 2021. This process involves continuing to hold remote committee meeting, with the committee making recommendations to the Chief Executive or appropriate Chief Officer to exercise delegated authority to implement the recommendations. New legislation came into effect on 27th August 2021 providing for the return of remote/hybrid committee meetings with full decision making authority.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Extension of Provisions Relating to Local Authority Meetings) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022 provides councils with the flexibility to hold meetings by remote or hybrid means until 24 September 2022. The extension is an interim measure until such time as permanent legislation can be made.

Our committee structure, which is based on the full council and eight standing committees is illustrated and described below.



Through the work of committees, our Members oversee the work of the council. All committee decisions need to be ratified by the full council except where committees have been granted delegated authority to make decisions.

The full council, which consists of all 60 elected representatives, is the overarching decision-making body.

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for setting the strategic direction of the Council through the development of its corporate plan and other key corporate and cross cutting strategies and policies. It will also ensure effective use of resources and value for money for ratepayers, and oversee the Council’s relationship with a number of key agencies and partners.

The City Growth and Regeneration Committee is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects directed to the regeneration and growth of the city in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategy.

The People and Communities Committee is responsible for the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and projects aimed at improving life at a local level in the context of the outcomes agreed in the community and corporate plans and other corporate strategy.

The Planning Committee is responsible for all of the Council's planning functions, except those matters, which are delegated to officers or reserved to full Council.

The Licensing Committee is responsible for the consideration of all matters pertaining to policy and legislation in relation to licensing issues.

The Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd Shareholders' Committee is responsible for making the decisions required by the Shareholders' Agreement and ensure that the company complies with the contract for the operation of the venues.

The Brexit Committee which was responsible for researching, monitoring, and reviewing the financial, resource or operational impact upon the council and the district as a result of the UK leaving the European Union and for making recommendations to council on such issues (or the relevant standing committee where appropriate), was reconfigured as the Climate and City Resilience Committee with effect from 9 February 2022.

The Climate and City Resilience Committee is responsible for political oversight of the resilience strategy for Belfast, liaising with Belfast Resilience and Sustainability Board who are responsible for monitoring and delivery with the support of Belfast Climate Commission, supporting a targeted approach through existing structures to those issues which pose the greatest risk to the city, its economy and its people. This includes considering the potential implications of climate change for the city of Belfast and for making recommendations to the Council on Belfast City Council's approach to addressing the climate crisis and Council's role and responsibilities at city level.

The new Standards and Business Committee had its first meeting in October 2021. The terms of reference of the committee are to: promote, sustain and safeguard the conduct of Councillors within the Council; promote a collaborative working relationship between senior officers and Members; ensure the probity of all the council's proceedings; and review and improve processes in relation to bringing business before the Council, including review of all Notices of Motion, any review of Standing Orders and the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

In addition to the Committees listed in the diagrams above there are 14 Working Groups established which include the Audit & Risk Panel and four Area Working Groups. In addition there is a Party Leaders' Consultative Forum.

The Audit & Risk Panel provides an independent assurance on the adequacy of the Council's risk management framework and associated control environment. It provides an independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance, which is relied upon by the Council, to the extent that it exposes it to risk and weakens the control

environment. The Panel reports to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. The Audit & Risk Panel met four times during 2021/22.

The Council's Code of Governance is based on the seven core principles set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework (2016 edition). How we meet these seven core principles is reviewed and updated annually, and in particular for this year, ensuring that our update reflects Covid-19 related changes to our governance arrangements. A summary of the key elements of our governance framework are set out in the following table:

Our seven principles of good governance

A: Behaving with integrity

- Shared values communicated via corporate plan, community plan and key strategies
- Codes of conduct for Members & staff
- PDP / appraisal process for Members & staff
- Gifts and hospitality and conflicts of interest policies & registers in place
- Fraud & whistleblowing (raising concerns) policies and investigations
- Good Relations Unit
- Equality & Diversity Framework
- Council constitution, standing orders & scheme of delegation
- Expert professional advice
- Partners and contractors required to comply with relevant policies
- Achieving Through People Framework and development of organisational values and behaviours
- Establishment of Standards and Business Committee
- Accessibility Statement for the updated website

B: Ensuring openness

- Council / committee meetings open to the public and agendas / minutes on website
- Belfast Agenda developed via extensive consultation and engagement.
- Corporate plan and annual improvement plan are subject to consultation before agreement
- Statement of Community Involvement for production of the Local Development Plan
- Ongoing consultation and engagement with staff & trade unions
- Corporate communications
- Annual financial report published on the BCC website
- Annual report to Equality Commission available through the BCC website
- Partnership / legal agreements with GLL, Active Belfast, arc21, BWUH Ltd, Visit Belfast, Innovation City Belfast
- "Your Say" consultation hub
- Working with Belfast Region City Deal partners

C: Defining outcomes

- Belfast: Our Recovery plan
- Belfast Agenda outlines long term economic, social and environmental benefits and is refreshed every 4 years
- Development of a Belfast Region City Deal Investment Plan
- Cultural Strategy
- Corporate plan outlines the annual contribution to the Belfast Agenda
- City centre regeneration & investment strategy
- Physical Investment Programme
- Leisure transformation programme
- Grant funding processes
- Equality Impact Assessments
- Belfast Resilience Strategy – the city's first climate plan

D: Optimising the achievement of outcomes

- Corporate plan aligned to delivery of Belfast Agenda and Belfast: Our Recovery
- Key partner in the Belfast Region City Deal
- Consultation and engagement processes
- Strategic financial management framework in place, including quarterly challenge process.
- Performance management framework
- Regular reports on progress of our performance improvement plan to CMT and SP&R
- Risk management strategy & framework

E: Developing capacity & capability

- Achieving Through People Framework and development of organisational values and behaviours
- Benchmarking activity
- Efficiency programme
- Regular performance monitoring of the delivery of improvement objectives
- Learning and development policy
- Health and wellbeing strategy
- Appraisal scheme in place for Chief Officers, Operational Directors / Heads of Service and Senior Managers
- PDPs for officers and Members
- Member capacity building delivered in 2021/22
- Continuing Development Programme in place for the Planning Committee
- Party group briefings

F: Finance, performance and risk management

- Five Step Financial Strategy to address impact of the pandemic
- Strategic financial management framework in place
- Assessment of compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code
- Efficiency programme
- Performance management framework
- Financial resilience review
- Risk management strategy
- Corporate risk management framework
- Regular reporting of finance, risk & performance
- Audit and Risk Panel
- Internal audit function / annual internal audit strategy & plan in place
- Recommendations Monitor process
- Data protection policy and procedures
- Corporate Fraud Risk Assessment
- Increased data security controls

G: Transparency, reporting & effective accountability

- BCC website regularly updated
- Publication of key reports including the annual financial report; annual governance statement; performance improvement report and annual report to Equality Commission
- Committee support framework to approve papers prior to submission to Members
- AGRS (internal audit) annual assurance statement within the annual governance statement
- Internal Audit effectiveness annually reviewed against public sector internal audit standards, with an independent external review every five years
- Internal / external audit recommendations followed up as part of recommendations monitoring process every six months

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources is the Council's designated Chief Financial Officer under the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, responsible for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs.

The Council's financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016).

We have re-assessed our compliance with the principles of the CIPFA Financial Management Code and have reached the overall conclusion that we are compliant, with improvement identified over better integration of strategic plans and resources and more robust option appraisal. The work for the 2022/23 year will include the integration of strategic plans and resources through the alignment of reserves and the preparatory work for the revenue estimates and medium term financial plan process for 23/24 will also follow these principles. In addition it is hoped that the implementation of a new financial system will aid whole life costing, medium term planning and scenario planning .

Having considered all the principles of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (2014), subject to the implementation of the Corporate Fraud Risk Action Plan, the Council has adopted a response that is appropriate for its fraud and corruption risks and commits to maintain its vigilance to tackle fraud.

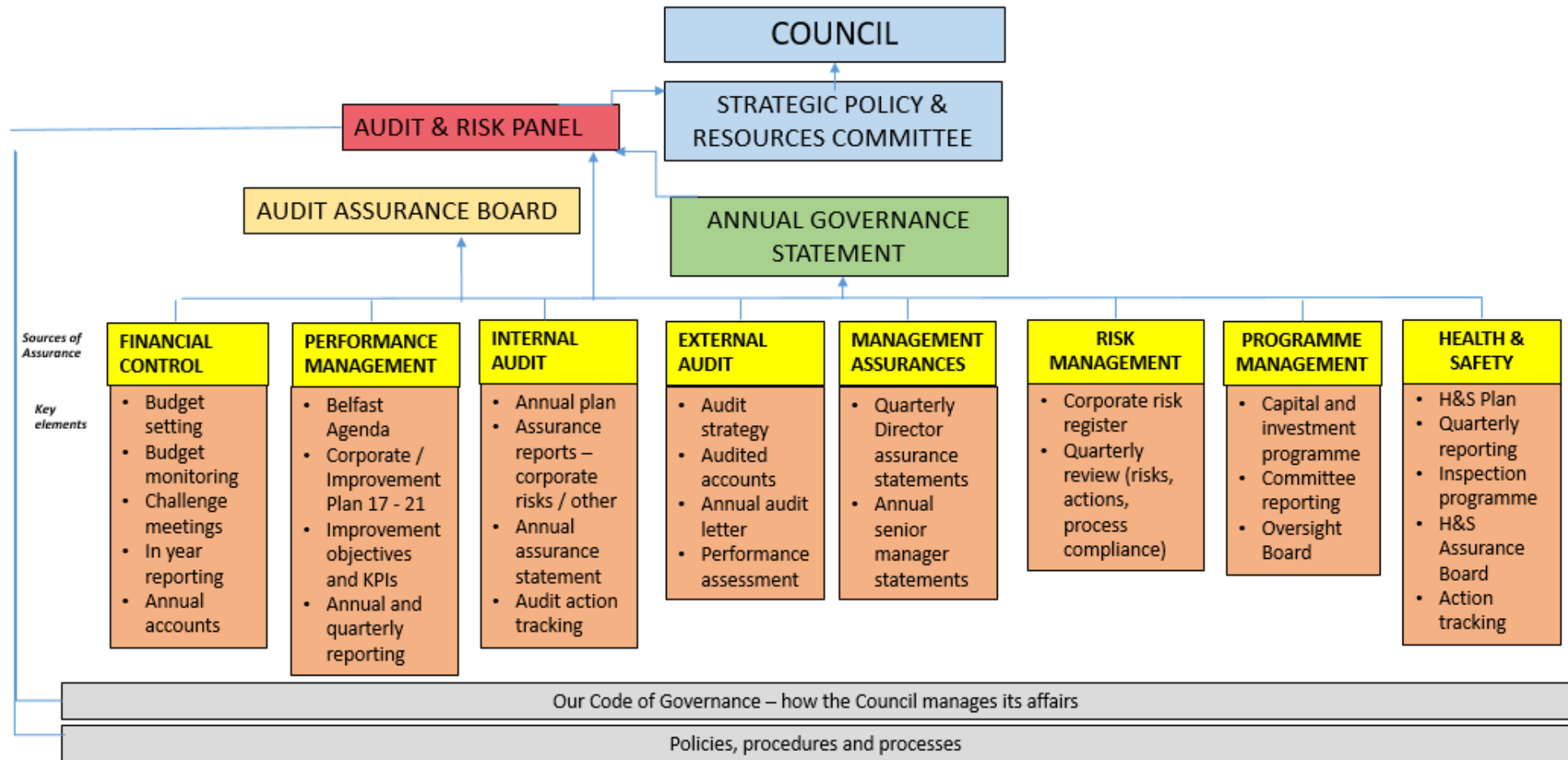
The CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit (2019) outlines the five principles that set out the organisation's responsibilities to ensure the Head of Internal Audit (HIA) is able to operate effectively and perform their core duties. The Statement also sets out the core responsibilities of the HIA along with the personal skills and professional standards expected of the HIA. The Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS), and the supporting operational arrangements in place, conform to the five principles set out in the CIPFA Statement. This is demonstrated through a self-assessment exercise undertaken by the Head of AGRS. While the principles state that the HIA should not be responsible for preparing the annual governance report, the arrangements within the council, involve AGRS co-coordinating the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement which is then reviewed and agreed by the Corporate Management Team, Audit Assurance Board and Audit and Risk Panel, before being reviewed by Strategic Policy and Resources committee and signed by the Chair of Strategic Policy & Resources, the Chief Executive and the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources.

The Council reported one breach of personal data involving six members of staff to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) during 2021/22. The ICO took no regulatory action.

Review of Effectiveness

The following diagram illustrates the Assurance Framework in place that provides information on compliance with the various elements of the Council's Governance Framework, including performance reports, health and safety reports, finance reports, internal audit reports and risk management reports.

Key Components of the Council's Assurance Framework



The various in year and year-end reports arising from the Assurance Framework are reviewed and approved by the Audit and Risk Panel and Strategic Policy and Resources Committee annually.

In addition, the review of the effectiveness of the Governance Framework is also informed by:

- the annual review and update of the Code of Governance;
- comments or recommendations made by the external auditors during their annual audit; and
- the Head of Audit Governance and Risk Services (AGRS) annual assurance statement for the period ending 2021/22, which gives an opinion on the Council's risk and control environment.

Head of Internal Audit Opinion

An extract from the Head of AGRS Annual Assurance Statement for the period ending 2021/22 is given below:

As Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS), on the basis of work carried out, I can provide a reasonable assurance regarding the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control.

We developed our audit plan in consultation with management to ensure that our audit work was focussed on the areas where assurance was most valuable and was timed and conducted in a way that minimised interruption, while complying with public health guidelines. Member and management agreement of this plan combined with delivery of the majority of this plan, during a time when the organisation was continuing to operate while responding to and recovering from the impact of the pandemic, signifies members and managers recognition of the importance of receiving independent assurance over the council's risk, control and governance frameworks and provided me with sufficient evidence to support my assurance statement. As such there is no limitation of scope on my assurance statement.

My opinion is based on completion of audits in the audit plan for 21/22; programme and project assurance and advisory work undertaken for a number of fundamental corporate IT projects; other advisory work completed in relation to new processes and; quarterly assurance statements from senior management on compliance with risk management and internal control systems.

Specifically my opinion is based on the following:

- Evidence from areas subject to detailed internal audit during 2021/2022, in that AGRS has been able to provide positive statements of assurance with the majority of audits falling into the 'some improvement needed' category - the 2nd tier of assurance in the four tier model.
- Provision of assurance and advisory work for major programmes and projects in addition to real time advisory work on key processes.
- The work that was undertaken to support management in their quarterly review and update on the management of the corporate risks that could potentially impact on delivery of our corporate plan and priorities.
- The work that was undertaken to complete the review of the Corporate Fraud Risk Assessments in the light of the impact Covid-19 and to support management in the development of associated fraud risk mitigation plans.
- Completion of the National Fraud Initiative for 2020/21.

- Quarterly assurances from senior management on the management of key risks and maintenance of internal control systems during the pandemic response and recovery efforts.
- The evidence set out in the review of the Council's Code of Governance and Annual Governance Statement regarding the range of key assurance and governance arrangements that the Council has in place to direct / oversee its activities.

However, some weaknesses and areas for improvement have been identified through audit work. These have been reported in detail to the Council's Audit Assurance Board and Audit and Risk Panel during 2021/22 through quarterly progress reports. In addition, I have highlighted, where appropriate, where further action is required to implement agreed audit actions. The key issues I would highlight in this statement are as follows:

While AGRS was able to provide positive statements of assurance in the majority of audits completed in 2021/22, three areas resulted in 'major improvement' assurance levels:

- Fleet management
- Income and Accounts Receivable
- Developers Contributions (Planning)

It is important that the action plans to address these are implemented in as timely a manner as possible.

In addition, while our audit of the grant funding provided to support communities and businesses during the pandemic resulted in an overall opinion of some improvement, it is important that the level of control that was acceptable during the emergency situation is not be seen as acceptable on an ongoing basis and I have highlighted this to management.

Looking ahead, the ongoing recovery from the pandemic, changes at Chief Officer level and the planned implementation of a number of major IT systems during 22/23, has the potential to affect the adequacy and effectiveness of the councils risk control and governance arrangements. It is important that; management continue to place importance on maintenance of these risk, control and governance arrangements and that they have sufficient oversight of the effectiveness of these arrangements; that audit recommendations to address control weakness are implemented timely; and that AGRS continue to receive cooperation on delivery of the audit plan throughout 22/23.

I can confirm that the AGRS Service has conformed to Public Sector Internal Audit Standards during 2021/22. A quality assurance and improvement programme is in place including internal review of work, annual assessment against professional standards, quarterly progress and performance reporting to the Assurance Board and Audit & Risk Panel. An external review of AGRS took place in 2017/18 and this confirmed the Service's compliance with professional standards. An external quality assessment of AGRS commenced in May 2022 and will be reported to the next Audit & Risk Panel.

Continued effort has been put into developing and implementing the key elements of an assurance framework within the Council with the key elements being:

- a process whereby senior managers are required to sign annual assurance statements;
- a process whereby Directors are required to sign quarterly assurance statements;
- embedding risk management and developing the arrangements for oversight of the management of these risks;
- business planning and related performance reporting arrangements;
- an Audit and Risk Panel;
- a professional internal audit function, which has been reviewed for effectiveness against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards; and
- a Health & Safety Assurance Board.

Update on the Significant Governance Issues that were declared last year

Seven issues were declared last year and four of these continue to be declared as issues in this year's statement. An update on the work that was completed last year to manage the three issues that are no longer considered significant, is set out below.

In response to the previous significant governance issue around **Organisational Recovery** management put in place governance arrangements over the recovery process; agreed a recovery approach; sought specialist advice / support and; put in place operational support. In April 2022, Strategic Policy and Resources Committee agreed a phased approach to recovering frontline services followed by a wider return to office, in line with the review of the relevant risk assessments.

In response to the previous significant governance issue around **City and Community Recovery**, management are put in place programmes of work to support city and community recovery which are now mainstreamed into corporate and departmental plans and are being monitored through the relevant governance structures.

In response to the previous significant governance issue around **the relationship between Elected Members and officers**, management continue to recognise the crucial strategic importance of maintaining good working relationships between Members and officers. To help ensure this relationship is maintained there is regular reporting to standing committees and Party Leaders' Forum; Established political management arrangements; Member development programme (including media training) and Members and Officers Codes of conduct, working relationship protocol and dispute resolution protocol (which are communicated via the Member Development Programme). Management have also established the Standards & Business Committee and a process for managing Notices of Motion; .

Significant Governance Issues for the year-end 2022

The significant governance issues for the year-end 2022 were identified through a fundamental review of the risks in the Corporate Risk Register and review of the Directors' Annual Assurance Statements.

The most significant issues for the Council are listed below and include four issues carried over from last year (issues one – four) and one new issue:

1. Financial planning
2. Digital information security
3. Brexit implementation programme for Port Health

4. Recruitment challenges
5. Belfast Region City Deal

More information on these significant governance issues is provided on the following pages.

1. Financial Planning

Our financial planning processes take on greater importance given the current economic climate and the local government elections in 2023.

It is critical that we have adequate financial resources in place to fund the councils future requirements, ambitions and priorities regarding waste management, climate, innovation, and capital investment. In addition, we are cognisant of the current economic backdrop and the impact this will have on future pay negotiations as well as other cost implications. The implementation of a new financial accounting system by 1st April 2023 adds another layer of complexity to our financial planning processes.

Work is now underway for capital programme planning over a longer timeframe. Thematic sessions have been held exploring capital requirements in line with the refreshed Belfast Agenda priorities. The information gathered, along with an assessment of other financial factors, will enable the production of a new medium term financial plan.

Project management and governance arrangements are in place to support the delivery of the new financial accounting system.

2. Digital Information Security

Digital Information Security will continue to be a significant governance issue and is overseen through the Council's risk management processes by the Council's Corporate Management Team. There has been a major increase in security threats from March 2020, and this is set to continue. The National Cyber Security Centre has provided advice to public sector organisations to continue to take action to improve their cyber resilience due to the heightened cyber threat due to the war in Ukraine.

Digital Services has already implemented additional controls to deal with and have better visibility of the growing threats including:

- Two factor authentication across Office365 accounts
- Logons to Office365 accounts have been blocked outside UK and Ireland
- Logons to VPN accounts have been blocked outside UK and Ireland
- Two factor authentication for F5 VPN accounts for all Council staff
- Covid19 themed phishing exercise
- Initial stages of implementing a PKI infrastructure to enhance network access control
- Weekly information sharing across local government
- Regional WARP (Warning, Advice and Reporting Point) in place

Delivering a secure infrastructure is a constantly evolving process and consideration is being given to changing threats and risks which must be aligned the delivery of the council's goals and objectives. Consequently, after the completion of a refreshed maturity assessment of our security controls with

our contracted external security specialists, a new security strategy and a revised programme of work is being implemented.

The Digital information Security programme will continue to focus on priority areas from the maturity assessment that are most important to enhance the council's Cyber security controls.

These areas will include:

- Cyber Security Incident Response
- Identity management
- Cloud Strategy
- Maturity Assessment Priorities

A desk based Cyber Incident response exercise has already taken place with key services and a follow-up presentation has been given to the Council's critical services to ensure a co-ordinated corporate response to any cyber incident. All critical services are in the process of reviewing their business continuity plans with particular focus on the actions required in the event of a serious cyber incident. Feedback from the refreshed business continuity plans will be used to ensure alignment with the council's emergency, cyber incident response and critical services business continuity plans.

This work will enhance the security controls that are already in place which include:

- Regular vulnerability (internal and external) and penetration testing to determine vulnerabilities and issues
- Security contract with external security experts
- ICT Infrastructure designed for resilience, redundancy and security in conjunction with contracted security experts
- Business Continuity Plan in place and regularly reviewed
- Cyber Incident response plan
- Key support & maintenance contracts with key suppliers
- Robust change management controls
- Maintaining knowledge of advanced threats
- Regular staff phishing simulation exercises.

3. Brexit Implementation Programme for Port Health

Whilst the Council does not operate the Port of Belfast, it is responsible for making sure the port meets environmental health standards. The Council's duties include overseeing the import of food into Belfast, including checks on High Risk Food not of Animal Origin and fish and fishery products for human consumption. The Council is also responsible for carrying out inspections on board ships and other vessels to check they comply with food safety and hygiene standards and monitoring the Port of Belfast and George Best Belfast City Airport for infectious disease.

There has been a significant impact on these duties as a result of Brexit and the additional responsibilities resulting from the NI Protocol. Clarification will be required as to the roles and responsibilities of the central Competent Authorities in relation to funding, provision of IT systems and other responsibilities relating to carrying out inspections at Belfast Port.

Significant political uncertainty remains, and this has caused delays to completion of new inspection facilities, development of IT processes, and development of a sustainable resourcing model for the future.

In the interim the programme of work over the past year has focused on securing temporary funding for 2022/23, implementing and reviewing a temporary staffing model (including addressing

recruitment and retention issues relating to the professionally qualified specialist staff that are required to carry out its functions), and upgrading the temporary facilities at Corry Place to enable the Council to carry out its duties.

Further work being taken forward under this programme includes further development of processes and IT systems, inputting to the design and development of a new build purpose built inspection facility at Belfast Port, development of a longer term staffing model and securing a sustainable funding arrangement to support the service going forward.

The key strategic risks around EU exit and being accountable for the Port Health function remain in relation to political uncertainty, sustainable financial funding model, capacity and resilience of people. Our management of these risks are through a number of mechanism, CMT Brexit Board reporting, reporting to Brexit Committee / Climate and City Resilience Committee and having a SOLACE lead on DAERA Project Board.

4. Recruitment Challenges

There has been significant change at Chief Officer level and recruitment is either underway or being planned for a number of senior staff posts during 2022/23, including the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services, the Strategic Director of Place and Economy and the Strategic Director of Finance & Resources. The council has been unable to recruit the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services, following two previous recruitment exercises and there is a recognition that it may be difficult to attract people into these posts. In addition, there are other challenges around recruitment across the organisation, for example security staff, environmental health officers and quantity surveyors, combined with difficulties in engaging agency staff.

As we move forward there needs to be a stronger focus on attracting and recruiting a younger diverse pool of talent to the organisation and upskilling our existing talent to have adequate succession plans to fulfil vacancies at all levels including senior management. This action will be taken forward as part of the review and implementation of the People Strategy.

5. Belfast Region City Deal

Prior to the signing of the deal document for the Belfast Region City Deal, Outline Business Cases were required for each of the projects to be included in the deal and to have approvals in place for the most advanced projects across the programme. Alongside the challenges of creating the deal and progressing the business cases during the pandemic, this has delayed the signing of the deal document until December 2021.

Updated governance arrangements, including arrangements for the operation and financing of the accountable body for BRCD funds, have been developed for the next phase of the deal. However, these could not be finalised and implemented until agreement is reached on the Contract for Funding between government departments and the Accountable Body. The above mentioned delays in agreeing the deal and the need for specific arrangements to reflect the approach to City Deals in NI will prevent agreement on the Contract for Funding and implementation of the arrangements for the Accountable Body until the first quarter of 2022. Delays beyond this period would create additional costs and risks for the most advanced projects.

Signed:
Chair Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Signed:
Chief Executive Officer

Signed:
Chief Financial Officer