

Annual Governance Statement 2019/20

What is Governance?

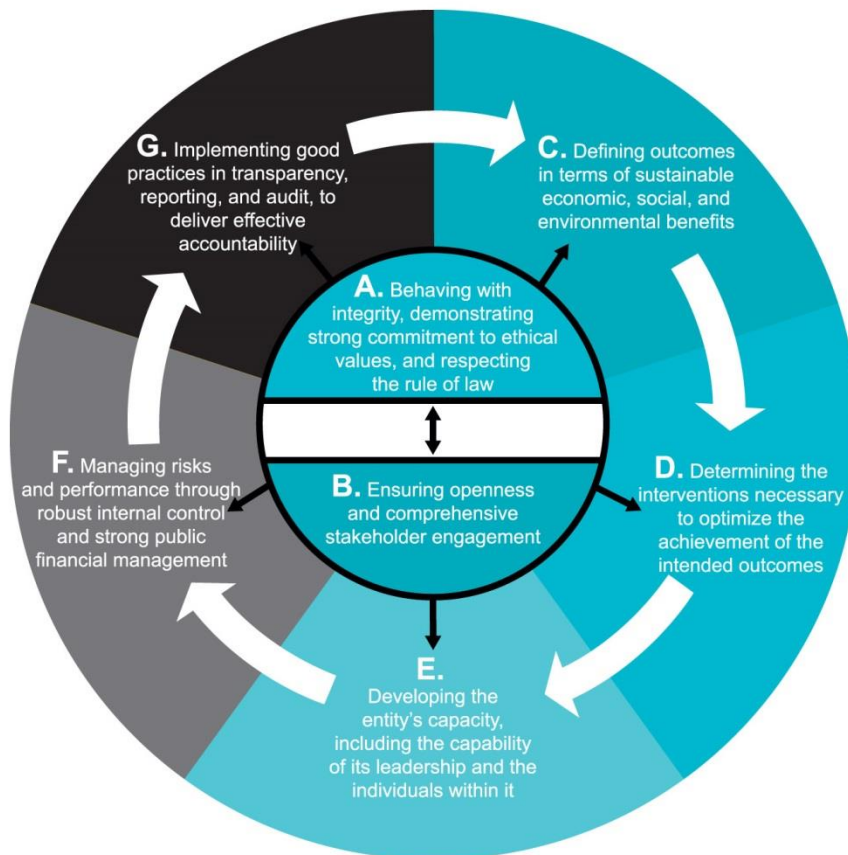
Governance comprises the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved.

To deliver good governance in the Authority, both governing bodies (Members) and individuals working for the Authority must try to achieve the Authority's objectives whilst acting in the public interest at all times.

Acting in the public interest implies primary consideration of the benefits for society, which should result in positive outcomes for service users and other stakeholders.

The Core Principles of Good Governance

The diagram below, taken from the International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector, illustrates the various principles of good governance in the public sector and how they relate to each other.



Responsibility

The Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is completed in line with the law and statutory legislation, and that public money is spent wisely and properly accounted for. We will ensure that we continually improve the way we provide our services whilst taking into account value for money.

We will ensure that we put in place proper arrangements to ensure our risks are managed, and that controls and the governance process are in place.

We have approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance which is consistent with principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*. The Code demonstrates the supporting principles which underpin the core principles and identifies the assurance as outlined in the Framework. It also demonstrates what level of assurance we get and thus, identifies any areas for improvement. This forms the assurance framework for good governance and demonstrates that we know our governance arrangements are working. Links to all supporting evidence identified in the assurance framework are contained within the Code of Corporate Governance and are not repeated in this statement. The Code of Corporate Governance document is available on the Council's website.

Our Outcomes

Our desired outcomes for 2019-22 are detailed in the Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan details our Vision and sets out our Thematic Priorities. Under each thematic priority, we detail our ambitions and how we are going to realise these. All outcomes we aim to achieve, along with changes we want to see and supporting information are detailed in the Corporate Plan.

For each activity or process we complete, we ensure that the appropriate governance arrangements are in place.

Towards the end of 2019/20, we together with the rest of the UK, have faced an unprecedented global crisis in the Coronavirus pandemic. While the impact was felt latterly in 2019/20, this has been and will remain, a significant factor affecting our operations in 2020/21 and beyond. As part of the Staffordshire wide Civil Contingencies Unit, the Council has evoked business continuity arrangements to enable the continuation of business critical operations. While the Corporate Plan remains relevant to our future outcomes, these will no doubt be affected by the Covid-19 situation and will be dealt with as part of the councils emerging recovery plan.

TAMWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2019-2022

TAMWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL: VISION

To put Tamworth, its people and the local economy at the heart of everything we do

OUR PURPOSE IS TO:

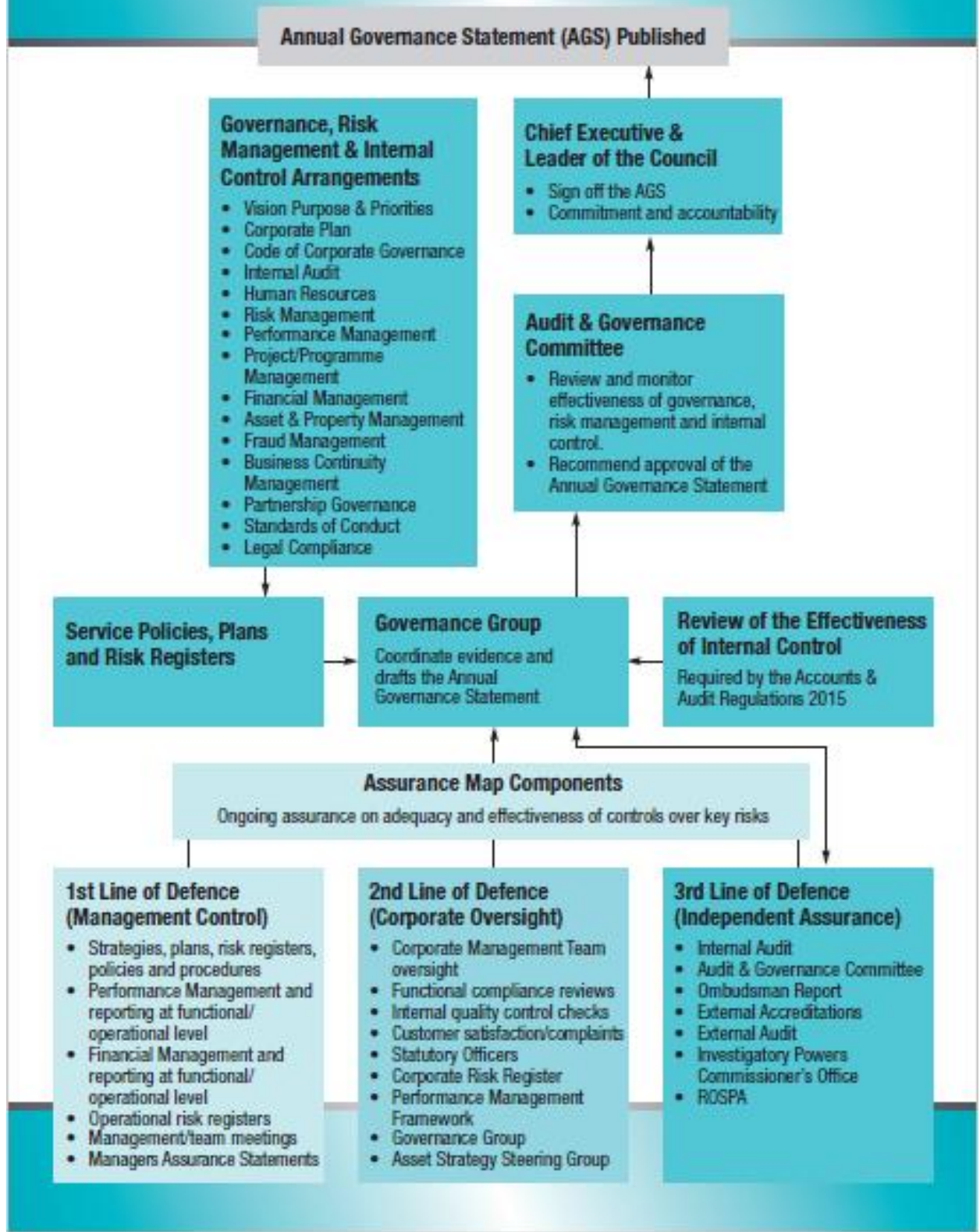
- ▶ help tackle causes and effects of poverty and financial hardship
- ▶ increase all residents' resilience and access to information
- ▶ engage with our residents to promote community involvement and civic pride
- ▶ support the development of Tamworth now, and in the future
- ▶ help the local economy to grow in a way which benefits our residents and businesses
- ▶ utilise Council resources effectively
- ▶ help tackle the causes of inequality and increase opportunities for all residents and businesses
- ▶ help protect, nurture and celebrate our local heritage
- ▶ help prevent homelessness and help people access suitable housing
- ▶ help build resilient communities
- ▶ help develop and safeguard our environment and open spaces

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR 2019-2022

People and Place	Organisation
 To meet housing needs through a variety of approaches and interventions	 To be financially stable
 To facilitate sustainable growth and economic prosperity	 To ensure our employees have the right skills and culture to help our residents, visitors and businesses
 To work collaboratively and flexibly to meet the needs of our communities	 To ensure our service delivery is consistent, clear, and focused
 To create a new and developing vision for the continued evolution of Tamworth, including a town centre fit for the 21st century	 To ensure our decisions are driven by evidence and knowledge

The Assurance Framework

The diagram below shows how the Assurance Framework is made up



What have we done to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of our governance arrangements during 2019/20.

The Authority has the responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by:

- The work of Internal Audit which is detailed in the Head of Audit & Governance's Annual Report.
- Responsibility of Corporate Management Team for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment.
- Reports received from our External Auditors and any other review agencies or inspectorates.

During 2019/20, the following actions have contributed to the evaluation of the effectiveness of the governance arrangements:

- The Code of Corporate Governance, set out in line with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*, has been reviewed and updated.
- The Head of Audit & Governance reports to the Audit & Governance Committee on a quarterly basis and provides an opinion on the overall effectiveness of the system of internal control based upon the work completed. The statement for the 2019/20 financial year is as follows.
"I am satisfied that sufficient internal audit work has been undertaken to allow us to draw a reasonable conclusion as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's risk management, control and governance processes. Overall in my opinion, based upon the reviews performed during the year, the Authority has:
 - ✓ adequate and effective risk management arrangements;
 - ✓ adequate and effective governance; and
 - ✓ adequate and effective control processes.
- Our External Auditors report to each Audit & Governance Committee. In their Annual Audit Letter (2018/19), they gave an unqualified opinion on the Statement of Accounts and an unqualified conclusion in respect of the Authority securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- The Corporate Risk Register is owned and reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Corporate Management Team and reported in the Quarterly Health Check to Cabinet. It is also reported in the risk management update to the Audit & Governance Committee. There were no significant risks on the Corporate Risk Register during 2018/19, however the changing risk landscape post Covid-19, will be an area of risk focus moving into 2020/21.
- Managers Assurance Statements have been completed by Executive Directors and Assistant Directors and have not identified any significant control issues.
- Financial Guidance and Financial and Contract Procedure Rules are reviewed on a regular basis, the latest review being approved by the Audit & Governance Committee in June 2019, subject to the full review of the constitution which has been completed

and is expected to go to Full Council in September 2020 (due to interruptions in the usual Council and Committee schedule arising from Covid-19).

- The Chief Finance Officer and Head of Internal Audit & Governance are suitably experienced and qualified and comply with the CIPFA Statements on their respective roles.
- No issues were raised through the Counter Fraud and Corruption and Whistleblowing Policies.
- There were no data security breaches/lapses during the financial year.
- Internal Audit are required to comply with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. As part of this requirement, Internal Audit are required to complete an annual self-assessment against the Standards and produce a Quality Assurance & Improvement Programme(QAIP) which identifies areas for improvement both to ensure compliance with the Standards and other quality areas. The self-assessment against the standards and the QAIP are reported to the Audit & Governance Committee.
- The Ombudsman report on the enquiries and complaints received in 2018/19 was reported to the Audit & Governance Committee in October 2019.
- The Performance Management Framework ensures that the Financial Health Check is reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis and made readily available on the Authority's website.
- The Authority is currently compliant with the PSN Code of Connection. The compliance process includes assessments against governance, service management and information assurance conditions and assures access to the Public Services Network. Our current compliance certificate expires in October 2020, the renewal process will be started prior to that to ensure continuity of PSN services.
- A quarterly update report is presented to the Audit & Governance Committee on the use of RIPA powers. During 2018/19, no RIPA authorisations were made.
- To assist in a more co-ordinated approach to managing projects, a Corporate Project Management template and process is now in place.
- A self-assessment of the Audit & Governance Committee's effectiveness was completed in February 2020.
- The Chairs of the Audit & Governance and Scrutiny Committees submitted their Annual Reports to Full Council.
- The Authority complies with the Transparency Code.
- Counter fraud work continues to be completed with the retained expertise of in-house staff to investigate corporate fraud.
- Internal Audit completes an annual assessment of the risk of fraud which is reported to the Audit & Governance Committee. Assessments against the CIPFA Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption, the Fighting Fraud & Corruption Strategy & Checklist have been completed. Having considered all of the principles, we are satisfied that the Authority has adopted a response that is appropriate for its fraud and corruption risks and commits to maintain its vigilance to tackle fraud.
- In compliance with the Localism Act 2011, a report was presented to Full Council in May 2019 advising them of the number of complaints received regarding Members Conduct.
- The review of the Constitution and Scheme of Delegation was approved by Council in May 2019. It has been refreshed again and is due to go to Council in September 2020.

- The Anti-Money Laundering Policy was reviewed and approved by the Audit & Governance Committee in November 2019.
- The Diversity & Equalities Scheme 2015-19 was approved by Cabinet in July 2017, the formal review is underway, but has been delayed due to COVID-19, this review will be complete by August 2020. The Pay Policy 2018 was approved by Council in July 2019.
- The authority has continued to progress implementation of the organisation's response to the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). The Data Protection Officer continues to raise its awareness of GDPR across the authority. As part of wider IT Governance work, policies and procedures have been reviewed or are being developed to meet our obligations under the GDPR and to ensure a robust governance framework is in place for our ICT systems and information assets. The Information Security Policy has been rolled out across the authority with this becoming a mandatory requirement for new starters. The authority's Corporate Privacy Notice along with Departmental Fair Processing Notices have been developed with reviews being undertaken when necessary. Information on our website has been reviewed and is due to be updated with guidance to support our customer's rights of access to their data. Work is progressing with suppliers to ensure the security and compliance of personal data held within our software systems. A programme of cyber security training has been completed across the authority with further bite size communications to be issued over the coming months.
- Partnership working arrangements continue to strengthen and further develop with both our statutory and community and voluntary sector partners. We value our community and voluntary sector and the work they do within our community. In 2019/20 we continued award grants through our Community and Voluntary Sector Grant Programme, Sports, Festive, business and Arts Grant Programme. Full details can be found on our website:
https://www.tamworth.gov.uk/sites/default/files/misc_docs/Grants_2019-20.pdf
- Through the Staffordshire Commissioner's Office Locality Deal Funding the Community Safety Partnership, various organisations were funded. A total of £63,954 was allocated to address domestic abuse, hate crime and social isolation. Diversionary holiday schemes also took place and the Summer Space Scheme funded 4 organisations a total of £14,407.80.
- The Place Based Approach continues to grow and further develop; this is a collaborative partnership approach that uses multi skilled teams, universal services, voluntary sector organisations, and communities at the right time to improve outcomes for children, young people, vulnerable people and our community. As part of this Place Based Approach we have been working in partnership to identify community and voluntary sector organisations that can offer children, families and vulnerable people help and support at the earliest opportunity. Grant funding has been awarded to the value of £30,000 for community projects during 2019/20 and 2020/21.
- Financial resilience is and has been the key requirement for local authorities at any time, but in the current crisis it has assumed unprecedented importance. Perhaps the biggest difficulty with the pandemic is that there is no certainty about time scales; it is impossible to draw any conclusions about how long it will continue to impact on and the lasting effect for the Councils finances. During the Covid-19 crisis the Council will have lost income and other resources which will significantly impact on the potential sustainability of the organisation and the impact is likely to be long term, as will be the case across many Local Government organisations. Whilst the full extent of this

cannot be known at present it will be necessary for the Council to take an accelerated approach towards the development and implementation of an effective sustainability strategy.

- The Authority has both a moral and legal obligation to ensure a duty of care for children and adults with care and support needs across its services. We are committed to ensuring that all children and adults with care and support needs are protected and kept safe from harm whilst engaged in services organised and/or provided by the Council. We do this by:
 - Having a Safeguarding Children & Adults at Risk of Abuse & Neglect Policy and procedures in place;
 - Having Safeguarding Children & Adults Processes which give clear, step-by-step guidance if abuse is identified;
 - Safeguarding training programme in place for staff and members;
 - Carrying out of the appropriate level of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on staff and volunteers;
 - Working closely with Staffordshire Safeguarding Children's Board & Staffordshire & Stoke-on-Trent Adult Safeguarding Partnership; and Staffordshire Police.
- The Authority recognises that it has a responsibility to take a robust approach to slavery and human trafficking. In addition to the Authority's responsibility as an employer, it also acknowledges its duty as a Borough Council to notify the Secretary of State of suspected victims of slavery or human trafficking as introduced by section 52 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The Authority is committed to preventing slavery and human trafficking in its corporate activities and to ensuring that its supply chains are free from slavery and human trafficking. The Authority has included modern slavery and human trafficking information within the corporate safeguarding policy and training. The Council will continue to develop and strengthen its approach to modern slavery and trafficking in 2019/20. The Tamworth Vulnerability Partnership continues to meet each morning to ensure that partner organisations are working together to coordinate efforts to support children, young people, families and vulnerable people across Tamworth.
- Finally, full Council in March 2019 approved urgency provisions regarding governance for urgent decision making in light of the Covid-19 crisis and the Council has gone on to fully adopted the provisions included within the Regulations for The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, by holding virtual meetings from June 2020.

Declaration

We have been advised on the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the Governance Framework by the Audit & Governance Committee and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose. The issues which remain outstanding from previous years' Annual Governance Statements are detailed at **Annex 1** with actions to address them. No additional governance issues were highlighted during 2019/20. Other minor issues highlighted through the assurance gathering process have been noted with planned actions to address these issues. Monitoring of the completion of all these issues will be completed through reporting to the Audit & Governance Committee.

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address those matters raised to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operations as part of our next review.

Signed

D Cook

A Barratt

Leader

Chief Executive

Date

On behalf of the Authority

Significant Governance Issues

The significant governance issues identified in relation to previous iterations of our Annual Governance Statement, which remained significant issues for us during 2019/20 and are detailed below:

No	Issue	Previous Action	Update 2019/20
1	<p>Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)</p> <p>Whilst actions have been taken to ensure that the MTFS remains balanced, this is still a significant risk to the Authority. Revenue Support grant will be removed around 2020. Opportunities and risks associated with the 100% Business Rates Retention will need to be identified. The increasing demands of our customers also need to be considered.</p>	<p>Work is continuing on a number of actions to address the financial position in future years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering Quality Services Project – the demand management approach to shift demand to more efficient methods of service delivery – online and automation (Interactive Voice Response). A savings target of £100k p.a. has already been included within the MTFS together with reduced CRM costs of £62k p.a. from 2019/20; • Recruitment freeze – where possible, temporary 12 month 	<p>When the budget and MTFS were approved in February 2020, future levels of funding for the Council were uncertain pending the most significant changes in Local Government funding for a generation. The reforms were planned to be in place by 2020/21 but were deferred until 2021/22.</p> <p>Following the period of lockdown to counter the Covid-19 pandemic, there are now questions over the timing (and likely period) of the planned Spending Review and the Government has confirmed that the longer-term reforms for the local government finance system (including the move to 75% Business Rates Retention and Fairer Funding Review of Relative Needs and Resources) will be deferred again as a result of the current situation, although no timescales have been released. In addition, the next planned national Business Rates Revaluation, planned for 2021 will take effect from</p>

No	Issue	Previous Action	Update 2019/20
		<p>appointments are now only being made; there is a robust challenge / re-justification process in place for all vacant posts with a requirement to investigate alternative options including restructuring to fill vacancies / looking at what we can stop doing. This means we have the opportunity to increase the vacancy allowance from 5% to 7.5% c. £45k p.a. year on year for the General Fund (£14k p.a. – HRA); It should be noted that staffing in some services e.g. planning, are key to the delivery of the Council's economic growth agenda and have significant demand from the public and local businesses but can also experience severe recruitment difficulties – which may lead to the use of market supplements to attract staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend freeze – Managers have previously been required to 	<p>2022.</p> <p>The Government has said it will keep an open dialogue with the local authorities about the best approach to the next financial year, including how to treat accumulated business rates growth of £2m p.a. (pending the planned business rates baseline reset) and the approach to the 2021/22 local government finance settlement. It is also the Government's intention to look again at the New Homes Bonus for 2021/22 and explore the most effective way to incentivise housing growth. They planned to consult widely on proposals prior to implementation.</p> <p>In the longer-term, the Government remains committed to reform and want to take time to work with local authorities to make sure that the approach is right.</p> <p>Service provision, in the main, has continued through workable day-to-day agile working policies. It's also the case that a large proportion of income comes in automatically by way of direct debits. The pandemic's timing at the very end of the financial year is, in part, helpful as most taxation income was already collected for 2019/20.</p>

No	Issue	Previous Action	Update 2019/20
		<p>restrict / limit spending to essential spend only (there was a £1.6m underspend in 2016/17 – although the majority was windfall income, c. £0.57m was lower level underspend). Savings of over £150k p.a. have been included within the MTFS;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative investment options arising from the Commercial Investment Strategy (as well as the Treasury Management Investment Strategy, including any prudential borrowing opportunities) to generate improved returns of c. 5% p.a. (plus asset growth) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Set up of trading company to develop new income streams; ○ Local investment options – Lower Gungate / Solway Close development including the potential to 	<p>Government has provided additional funding of c.£0.9m (from the national allocation of the £4.3bn to Local Government). However, the funding is still very unlikely to be sufficient and the LGA and SDCT will continue to lobby and provide evidence to MHCLG of the income and expenditure pressures that Council's face.</p> <p>Financial resilience is and has been the key requirement for local authorities at any time, but in the current crisis it has assumed unprecedented importance. Perhaps the biggest difficulty with the pandemic is that there is no certainty about time scales; it is impossible to draw any conclusions about how long it will continue to impact on and the lasting effect for the Councils finances.</p> <p>During the crisis the Council will have lost income and other resources which will significantly impact on the potential sustainability of the organisation and the impact is likely to be long term, as will be the case across many Local Government organisations. Whilst the full extent of this cannot be known at present it will be necessary for the Council to take an accelerated approach towards the development and implementation of an effective sustainability strategy.</p>

No	Issue	Previous Action	Update 2019/20
		<p>drawdown funding from the Local Growth Fund / Local Enterprise Partnerships (GBS and Staffordshire);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Investments in a Diversified Property Fund; <p>Note: these would represent long term investments of between 5 – 10 years (minimum) in order to make the necessary returns (after set up costs).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of reserves / creation of fund for transformation costs (if needed), and • Targeted Savings – to identify potential areas for review in future years. <p>Uncertainty remains over the work progressing with regard to business rates retention (and the associated impact on the Council’s business rates</p>	<p>Work is also continuing on a number of actions to address the financial position in future years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment freeze – there is a robust challenge / re-justification process in place for all vacant posts with a requirement to investigate alternative options including restructuring to fill vacancies / looking at what we can stop doing; • Spend freeze – A review of the underspend position is undertaken annually with a view to drive out as many savings as possible. In addition, it has been recommended that there is an immediate suspension of all non-essential spending and that the budget be revised to remove these budgets following the preparation the first quarterly monitoring report. Managers were required to review their budgets and identify all non-essential spending for 2020/21 as part of the quarter 1 projections at 30 June 2020. • Alternative investment options to generate improved returns of c. 4% to 5% p.a. (plus asset growth); • Review of reserves (including ensuring adequate provision for the funding uncertainties) / creation of fund for

No	Issue	Previous Action	Update 2019/20
		<p>income and associated baseline and tariff levels) – it has recently been announced that Councils will be able to retain 75% of business rates collected from 2020/21 rather than 100% as previously planned. In addition, the Government are also consulting on a review of the distribution methodology, the ‘Fair Funding Review’ as well as the planned Business Rates Reset (when a proportion of the growth in business rates achieved since 2013/14 will be redistributed) - both of which will also take effect from 2020/21. There is a high risk that this will have a significant effect on the Council’s funding level from 2020/21;</p>	<p>transformation costs (if needed);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeted Savings – to identify potential areas for review in future years; and • Review and rationalisation of IT systems.
2	<p>Regeneration/Capital Projects</p> <p>The Authority needs to ensure that capital projects are managed effectively to ensure that they are delivered and grant monies are spent appropriately and</p>	<p>Significant re-profiling of capital scheme spend is forecast for 2017/18 into 2018/19 – c.£20m relating mainly to Housing Regeneration Schemes, works to High Rise flats and the works at the Assembly Rooms.</p>	<p>Re-profiling of capital scheme spend from 2019/20 into 2020/21 is forecast at c. £21m (c.£39m 2018/19) relating mainly to Housing Regeneration Schemes, Acquisitions and Commercial Investments.</p>

No	Issue	Previous Action	Update 2019/20
	<p>timely.</p> <p>There is a risk that developers will not develop timely in accordance with the Local Plan need.</p>	<p>The majority of this is beyond the control of the Council and has been forecast with the reasons understood.</p> <p>It is anticipated that this spend will now occur during 2018/19 with firm plans in place for such but the situation will be closely monitored and any potential issues will be highlighted at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Review of Asset Holdings and Asset Management Plan</p> <p>The Council's Asset Management Plan will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. This will identify any assets held by the Council that are no longer either required or fit for purpose and appropriate recommendations made regarding retention for alternative use or disposal.</p> <p>The Corporate Asset Management Strategy was last updated in 2015 relating to the following assets:</p>	<p>It is anticipated that this spend will now occur during 2020/21 but the situation will be closely monitored and any potential issues will be highlighted at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>As part of the MTFs, Council in February 2020 approved the updated Capital Strategy which sets out the Council's approach to capital investment and the approach that will be followed in making decisions in respect of the Council's Capital assets.</p> <p>Capital investment is an important ingredient in ensuring the Council's vision is achieved and given that capital resources are limited it is critical that the Council makes best use of these resources – including the development of a long term strategic plan to address the identified maintenance and repairs backlog for corporate assets.</p> <p>It is recognised that significant further work is required in this area in order to deliver a robust capital strategy, in 2020/21, the Asset Management Plan is to be reviewed and updated, with an up to date stock condition survey (with appropriate budget provision approved within the MTFs). This should set out the detailed capital resources/expenditure required to maintain assets, together with the associated timeframe, to inform</p>

No	Issue	Previous Action		Update 2019/20								
		<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="770 284 1079 320">Asset Description</th> <th data-bbox="1079 284 1317 357">Value (31/03/15)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="770 357 1079 437">Investment Properties</td> <td data-bbox="1079 357 1317 437">£14,588,052</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="770 437 1079 480">Land and Buildings</td> <td data-bbox="1079 437 1317 480">£6,537,500</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="770 480 1079 517">Total</td> <td data-bbox="1079 480 1317 517">£21,125,552</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Asset Description	Value (31/03/15)	Investment Properties	£14,588,052	Land and Buildings	£6,537,500	Total	£21,125,552		<p data-bbox="1339 284 2078 357">options appraisal and feed into the capital strategy for ASSG/CMT review of potential schemes.</p> <p data-bbox="1339 395 2078 501">The Tinkers Green and Kerria regeneration project is progressing with anticipated completion during 2020.</p>
Asset Description	Value (31/03/15)											
Investment Properties	£14,588,052											
Land and Buildings	£6,537,500											
Total	£21,125,552											
		<p data-bbox="770 555 1317 699">It details an estimated 10 year maintenance cost for each asset (totalling c.£8m) based on the inspections that had been undertaken.</p> <p data-bbox="770 737 1160 774">Long Term Strategic Plan</p> <p data-bbox="770 812 1317 1291">It has been identified that the Council, through the Corporate Capital strategy and through the development of a long term strategic plan, needs to take a longer-term view of the assets required to deliver its Corporate Plan priorities and to support its Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), including spend required (and associated potential funding streams) to address the identified maintenance and repairs backlog for corporate assets.</p>										

No	Issue	Previous Action	Update 2019/20
3	<p>Welfare & Benefit Reform</p> <p>There is a risk of reduced income corporately due to welfare reform changes (including council tax support scheme and Universal Credit with further austerity measures from the Welfare reform Act 2015). As well as the potential for reduced income and an increase in bad debts, there are additional impacts arising from increased needs in services – eg homelessness, requirement for additional support to vulnerable people, increased issues of ASB etc meaning an increase in demand on 3rd sector and statutory agency services.</p>	<p>The Authority will continue to proactively manage and monitor corporate income levels on a monthly basis and report this to CMT. Staff will be trained to deal with the impact and we will be commissioning 3rd sector support as well as providing additional resources in key service areas. In addition, we will provide financial advice and support for vulnerable clients.</p>	<p>The Council has experienced an impact from Welfare Benefit Reform and is able to evidence an increase in rent arrears to the implementation of Universal Credit. A Corporate Working Group has been established to ensure an organisation wide approach and the Council has been pro-active in seeking positive working relationships with DWP. The issue has been the subject of examination by the Council’s scrutiny committees. Any impact in relation to homelessness has been less apparent and the Council has been successful in its proactive approach to implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act and has achieved a significant reduction in the use of bed and breakfast accommodation thereby reducing costs and social harm.</p> <p>Income levels have been largely maintained without reduction in 2019/20 (due to the mitigations put in place) however, the Covid-19 crisis likely to now have a significant effect on future income and welfare spending (which we cannot quantify at the moment).</p> <p>Work is being commissioned around corporate debt to secure a one council approach focusing on not</p>

No	Issue	Previous Action	Update 2019/20
			<p>only the management of multiple debt households but seeking to understand how resources are better aligned to secure VFM.</p> <p>A corporate task and finish group is being established around vulnerability which will map base line data to support forecasting around likely impacts which will then inform actions.</p>