

# ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2022/2023



## Scope of Responsibility and Purpose of the Governance Framework

### Scope

Plymouth City Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 2000 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

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

This Annual Governance Statement explains how the Council has complied with the Code of Corporate Governance and also how it meets the requirements of Regulation 6(1) of the Local Government, England and Wales Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an annual governance statement.

### Purpose

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authority 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 on-going 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 has been in place at Plymouth City Council for the year ending 31 March 2023 and up to the date of the approval of the Statement of Accounts.

## Statement of Assurance and Certification

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the matters described at page seven onwards, 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 operation as part of our next annual review.

Councillor Tudor Evans OBE  
Leader of Plymouth City Council

Tracey Lee  
Chief Executive

David Northey  
Director for Finance (Interim)

Dated:

Dated:

Dated:

# The Corporate Plan

The Plymouth City Council Corporate Plan 2023-2026 sets out our mission to ‘build a better Plymouth’. It was approved by Council in June 2023, and replaced [the plan in place since 2021](#).

The new Corporate Plan priorities will be delivered through specific programmes and projects which are coordinated and resourced through the [Plymouth Plan](#), capital investment, directorate business and delivery plans.

The [Corporate Plan Performance Report](#) is updated on a quarterly basis and presented to Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and Scrutiny committees.

## OUR PLAN BUILD A BETTER PLYMOUTH



### CITY VISION: Britain’s Ocean City

One of Europe’s most vibrant waterfront cities, where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone



**OUR MISSION:** Making Plymouth a fairer, greener city, where everyone does their bit

### WE BELIEVE IN:

<p><b>DEMOCRACY</b> Because we listen and hear what people want</p>	<p><b>RESPONSIBILITY</b> Because we care about the impact of our decisions and actions</p>	<p><b>FAIRNESS</b> Because we want to address inequality and inequity in our city</p>	<p><b>CO-OPERATION</b> Because we achieve more together than we would alone</p>
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### WE WILL:

Make Plymouth a great place to grow up and grow old  
Minimise the impact of the cost of living crisis

#### OUR PRIORITIES:

- Working with the Police to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour
- Fewer potholes, cleaner, greener streets and transport
- Build more homes - for social rent and affordable ownership
- Green investment, jobs, skills and better education
- Working with the NHS to provide better access to health, care and dentistry
- Keeping children, adults and communities safe

#### DOING THIS BY:

- Providing quality public services
- Trusting and engaging our communities
- Focusing on prevention and early intervention
- Spending money wisely
- Empowering and engaging our staff
- Being a strong voice for Plymouth

[www.plymouth.gov.uk/ourplan](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/ourplan)

## The Assurance Framework - The Three Lines of Defence

The Three Lines of Defence Assurance Model is used as the primary means to demonstrate and structure roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for decision making, risk and control to achieve effective governance and assurance. The diagram below shows the relationship between these functions:-

**First Line of Defence – Management Controls and Internal Control Measures**

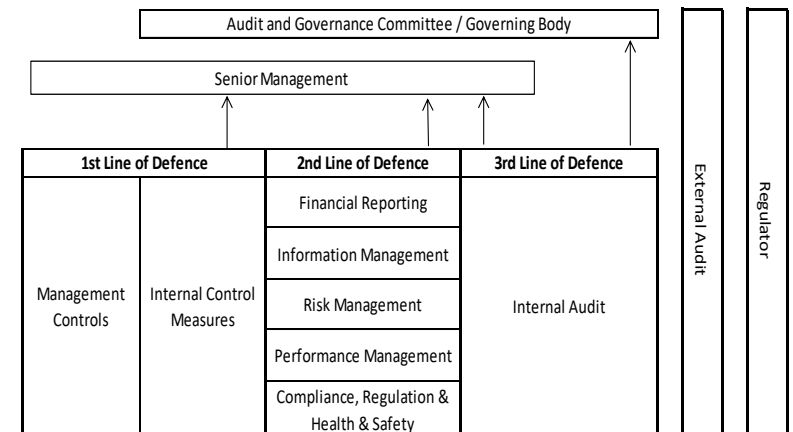
Line management are responsible for ensuring that a risk and control environment is established as part of day to day operations. Line management should be adequately skilled to create risk definitions and make risk assessments. The risk profile needs to be proactively reviewed, updated and modified for changes to the business environment and emerging risk changes. Active risk management and periodic reporting on risk is crucial to quick identification and response. The first line of defence provides management assurance by identifying risks and business improvement actions, implementing controls and reporting on progress.

**Second Line of Defence – Oversight Functions**

The second line of defence consists of activities covered by several components of internal governance. This line of defence monitors and facilitates the implementation of effective risk management practices by operational management and assists the risk owners in reporting adequate risk related information up and down the organisation. These are usually management functions that may have some degree of objectivity, but are not entirely independent from the first line.

**Third Line of Defence**

Internal audit forms the third line of defence. An independent internal audit function will, through a risk-based approach to its work, provide assurance to the organisation’s senior management. This assurance will cover how effectively the organisation assesses and manages its risks and will include assurance on the effectiveness of the first and second lines of defence. It encompasses all elements of the Council’s risk management framework (from risk identification, risk assessment and response, to communication of risk related information) and all categories of organisational objectives.



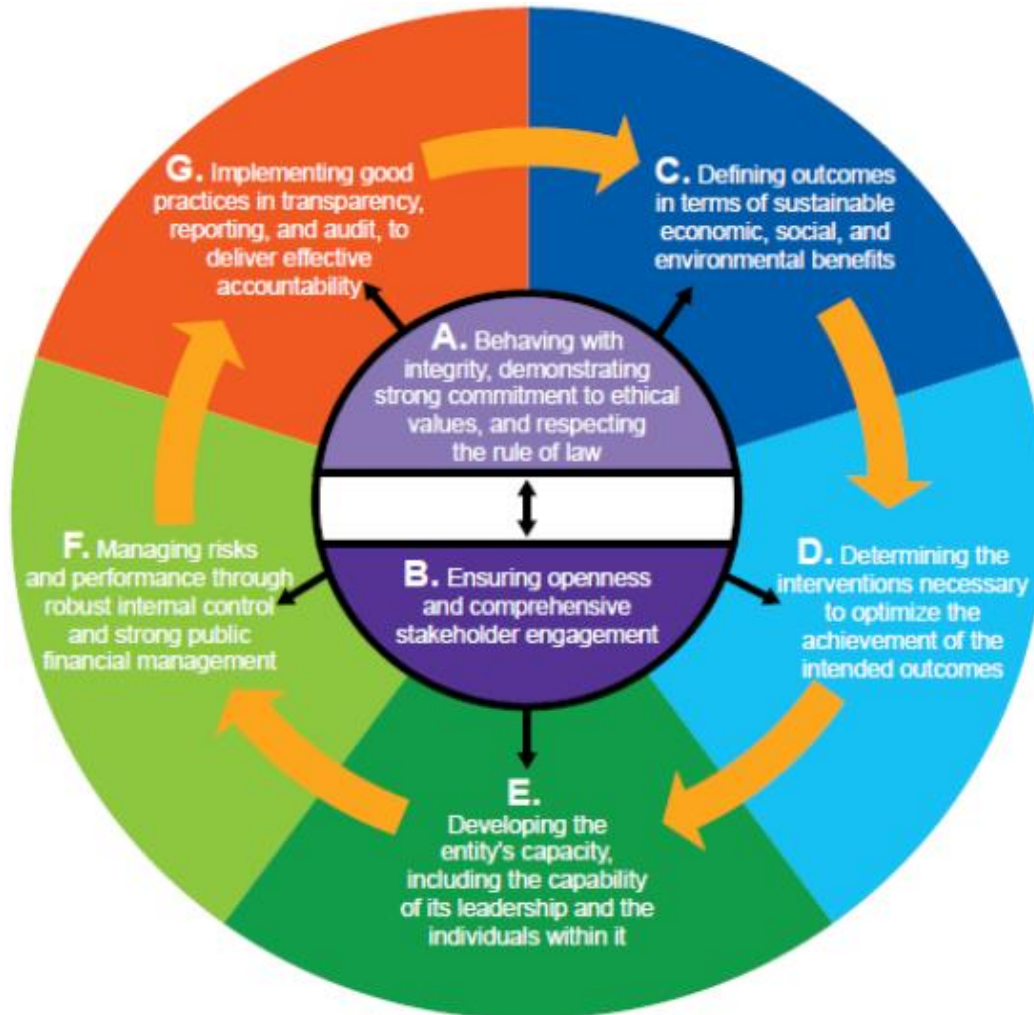
**External Auditors and Regulators**

External auditors and regulators reside outside the council structure but have an important role in the overall governance and control structure by providing an independent and objective function to assess the whole, or some part of the first, second or third line of defence.

**Audit and Governance Committee’s Role**

All three lines of defence have specific tasks in the internal control governance framework. It is the Audit and Governance Committee’s role to maintain oversight and to monitor the effectiveness of internal controls and risk management processes, as well as internal audit activities.

## The Governance Framework



The Council's Code of Corporate Governance is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE 2016 Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government.

This diagram illustrates how the various principles for good governance in the public sector relate to each other. To achieve good governance the Council should seek to achieve their intended outcomes while acting in the public interest at all times.

As overarching requirements for acting in the public interest, principles A and B apply across all other principles (C - G).

A high-level summary of the Council's local arrangements in place for 2021/22 to comply with each of the principles is set out within the Code.

Details within the Code and The Annual Governance Statement aim to provide assurance that:-

- the Authority's policies have been complied with in practice;
- high quality services are delivered efficiently and effectively;
- ethical standards are met;
- laws and regulations are complied with;
- processes are adhered to;
- Performance statements are accurate.

## **Section One**

This section details the Strategies / Plans / Processes which have supported our system of internal control throughout the 2022/23 financial year, alongside some examples of their use.

Principle A – Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law

- Council's [Constitution](#)
- Committee [Structure](#)
- Corporate [Plan](#)
- Code of Corporate Governance
- Codes of Conduct
- Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy
- Whistle Blowing Policy
- S151 Officer
- Head of paid service
- Monitoring Officer
- Executive arrangements
- Register of Interests/Hospitality

- The Council's organisational values are underpinned by its system of internal control and governance arrangements to ensure compliance with its Code of Corporate Governance.
- The [Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance](#) as described in this Governance Statement has been reviewed in line with CIPFA/Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016 and the core principles contained in this Framework.
- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law is acknowledged as key to the delivery of good governance and underpins the delivery of council priorities and services for the community.
- The standards of conduct and personal behaviour expected of Members and Officers, its partners and the community are defined and communicated through Codes of Conduct and Protocols within the Council's Constitution. Arrangements are in place to ensure that Members and Officers are aware of their responsibilities under these Codes and Protocols. The Monitoring Officer is responsible for ensuring that decisions are made in accordance with the Constitution.
- Elected Members and statutory officers are collectively responsible for the governance of the Council. Decision making and scrutiny of decisions has been separated through the executive arrangements introduced by the Local Government Act 2000.
- Ward-based governance and engagement arrangements for Councillors, multi-agency problem solving arrangements, reliable casework handling and feedback and customer insight to inform decision-making are all elements of our plans, equipping Councillors to do their job. The Councillor's toolkit can be accessed [here](#).
- The Head of Devon Audit Partnership has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of the whistleblowing policy. This includes monitoring the policy and maintaining a record of the concerns raised and outcomes, which will be reported to the Audit and Governance Committee in an anonymised format.
- Arrangements are in place for Members and Officers to declare gifts and hospitality and to register interest and manage conflicts of interest.
- Following a motion on notice agreed at Council in the 2022/23 municipal year, care experienced people are considered as if it were a protected characteristic within our Equalities Impact Assessments.



Principle B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

- Thrive [Plymouth](#)
- Customer complaints
- Committee meetings [webcast](#) and [agendas](#) published
- Open data information available on [website](#)
- [Plymouth City Survey](#)
- Annual Reports
- Partnerships
- Social media pages

- Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement is considered essential in meeting the Council's corporate ambitions and framework of values and regarded as key to effective service delivery. Communication supports the decision-making process and helps to improve service quality and foster good relationships between staff, Members and stakeholders.
- The [Statement of Community Involvement](#) provides consistent standards for involvement in decision making in the city. It sets a minimum standard for engagement and is for everybody who wants to get involved in shaping Plymouth's future.
- Plymouth City Council [has a programme of Community Empowerment](#) to enable communities to increase control over their lives. Plymouth City Council is committed to supporting local communities to do things for themselves, and to make their voices heard in shaping the services they use and the places they live.
- Partnerships including; [Safer Plymouth](#), [Safeguarding Adults partnership](#), [Plymouth Safeguarding Children's Partnership](#) continue to review its representation and broadened this to include greater community and voluntary sector representation.
- The Council has a system for recording Customer Feedback which enables learning from feedback and complaints to facilitate effective monitoring of information provided by customers to review future service delivery. There is a formal process for corporate complaints as well as for Children's and Adults Statutory complaints, complaints and compliments are reported to the Corporate Management Team on a monthly basis.
- Plymouth City Council, along with other Councils with Adult Social Services Responsibilities are required to conduct an annual postal survey of those to whom they provide services. The survey asks users about their quality of life, the impact of services on their quality of life, and their general health and well-being, the output of the survey is provided to decision makers and overview and scrutiny.
- Committee meetings, including Full Council and Cabinet are webcast live and archived as part of our drive to make our decision making more open and transparent. Performance information, including financial performance is regularly review by the Executive and Scrutiny in public.
- As part of our commitment to be accountable and transparent we have put together a range of open data information (Data Plymouth) on the Council's website,



Principle C – Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

- The Plymouth [Plan](#)
- [Plymouth Report](#)
- [Statement of Accounts](#)
- The [Plymouth Local Care Partnership System Plan](#)
- The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local [Plan](#)
- [Treasury Management and Capital Strategy](#)
- [Plymouth City Council Social Value Policy](#)

- Our Corporate Plan is focused on our vision to be ‘one of Europe’s most vibrant waterfront cities, where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone’. That means everyone working together towards our shared ambition to be a democratic, responsible, fair and collaborative city.
- The Plymouth Plan provides the strategic direction for decision making in the city. It brings together all statutory and non-statutory plans forming a holistic strategy for people and place.
- The Council uses its operating model to develop more appropriate outcomes for people and more effective service delivery, standardising, simplifying and sharing wherever possible, through the Plymouth Family or wider partnerships.
- The Plymouth Local Care Partnership System Plan sets out ambitious plans to improve health and care services for people across Devon in a way that is clinically and financially sustainable.
- The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan looks at the big issues, including where to build homes, where roads should go and how to ensure economic growth and prosperity for Plymouth residents and those living in the towns and villages of West Devon and the South Hams. We carried out a major consultation asking people where land should be set aside for homes and work and what should be protected as green space. Legislation requires that the JLP will be reviewed in 2024.
- Action 3.6.1 of the [Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan 2022](#) committed the Council to implementing a Climate Decision Wheel (Climate Change Impact Assessment) for all key decisions and all capital project business cases. An online tool has now been developed and will be implemented across the 2023/24 municipal year to assess the impact of forthcoming decisions.
- The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, implemented in January 2013, placed an obligation on the Council to take into account social economic and environmental wellbeing considerations as part of its pre-procurement deliberations. Plymouth City Council’s Social Value Policy sets out our approach in respect of this duty.

Principle D – Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of the intended outcomes

- [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#)
- Business Planning
- [Cabinet](#)
- [Overview and Scrutiny Committees](#)
- [Performance and Accountability Framework](#)
- Corporate Plan Performance [Reports](#)
- Service Standards
- Portfolio Holder meetings
- [Complaints](#) procedure
- Audit [reports](#)

- The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out how the Council will finance the priorities for the Council, having regard to the Plymouth & South West Devon Joint Local Plan and the Corporate Plan.
- The system of internal financial control is based upon a framework of regular management information, financial regulations, Contract Standing Orders, administrative procedure and a structure of delegation and accountability.
- The Section 151 officer, as documented in the Constitution, has responsibility for ensuring that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, for keeping proper financial records and accounts and maintaining an effective system of internal financial control.
- Cabinet is our main decision making body, made up of the Leader of the Council and a number of Councillors.
- The scrutiny function is delivered through the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Scrutiny provides an important check and balance within the governance system on the decisions of Cabinet and the Leader and acts as a 'critical friend' to the Cabinet and other decision makers in order to promote better services, policies and decisions.
- The Corporate Fraud Team fulfils the Council's statutory obligation to ensure the protection of public funds and to have an effective system of prevention and detection of fraud and corruption.
- Key performance indicators are used to track performance of the Council's priorities as outlined in the Corporate Plan. The Performance and Accountability Framework underpins this approach and is due for review in 2024.
- Service Standards have been implemented across the Council to improve the way we listen and respond to our customers.
- Internal Audit partners undertake an annual review of audits to identify key themes, themes that are considered for action by Corporate Management Team. This is considered good practice.

Principle E – Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

- Organisational Design
- Smart working
- People Strategy
- Staff survey
- eLearning
- Councillor Development Programme
- Apprenticeship Programme
- Management Driving Licence eLearning Package
- Staff performance discussions
- Staff Wellbeing and Resilience Survey

- An organisation wide transformation project has been mobilised to deliver the outcome to ‘create new ways of working’, this project is called ‘The Way We Work’.
- Digital Services is now fully owned and operated from within the Resources Directorate and is continuing to improve digital activities for customers and staff through website improvements, digital processes and workflows created and improved reporting mechanisms being used.
- Opportunities for commercialisation and new income streams are reviewed regularly by all services.
- A new approach to internal communications was established in 2021 has improved employee engagement with key corporate messaging. The focus of the new approach is two way communication facilitated by new technology. The Corporate Management Team receive regular updates on internal communications.
- Local authorities may be required to establish a company to undertake certain activities or where circumstances dictate that operating through a company may be advantageous. Plymouth City Council is currently involved in 19 companies which are either wholly owned, teckal (with joint public sector ownership) or in which it has shares/is a member of. These companies have enabled the Council to sell services to third parties, develop, manage and invest in revenue generating assets and the delivery of shared service agreements.
- Our People Strategy is our high level medium term plan for how we will provide a motivated, engaged and skilled workforce focused on meeting the needs of the citizens of Plymouth.
  - Annual staff survey
  - Management Fundamentals Training Programme
  - Annual Staff ‘Star Awards’
  - Induction training carried out for new Members and employees
  - E-Learning utilized
  - Apprenticeship Programme
  - Management Driving Licence (compulsory E-Learning to be completed by all current managers and available for aspiring managers)

Principle F – Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

- Performance and Accountability Framework
- Corporate Plan performance report
- Corporate Plan performance report
- Departmental Performance Scorecards
- Risk and Opportunity Strategy
- Strategic Risk Register
- Operational Risk Register

- The Council consider and counter risk across a broad range of areas. An approved Risk Management Strategy and Policy and guidance are available for staff on the Council's website together with E-Learning.
- Risks are formally reviewed and monitored quarterly by the Corporate Management Team and reported to the Audit and Governance Committee.
- Risks to planned outcomes are considered as part of the business planning process.
- Alignment of risk information with performance management has been improved this year with strategic risk updates now being included within operational performance reports, scrutinised monthly by services.
- A Joint Integrated Commissioning Risk Management Framework has been developed with NHS Devon ICS to support our joint co-operative commissioning approach.
- Information Lead Officer Group direct work streams within the overall governance of information assets and the Management of Information Security Forum ensure there is clear direction and visible management support for security initiatives.
- Project Management requirements are outlined in the constitution as part of financial and contract standing orders. A suite of templates are used to ensure consistency and project management advice and support is provided to staff where necessary.
- Risks that threaten the health, safety and wellbeing of employees and other people using Council premises are monitored by the Health, Safety & Wellbeing Steering Group via HSW risk register.

Principle G – Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

- The Devon Audit Partnership Internal Audit Plan
- External Audit
- The Audit and Governance Committee
- Overview and Scrutiny Committees

### **Internal and External Audit**

The Devon Audit Partnership (DAP) has been formed under a joint committee arrangement comprising of Plymouth, Torbay and Devon Councils. DAPs Internal Audit Plan is based on the high risks reported within risk registers and is presented to and approved by the Audit Committee in March. The plan is published on the Council's website with the Audit Committee agenda. The Council's arrangements for providing economy, efficiency and effectiveness are reviewed by the external auditors on an annual basis. Their Annual Report provides a summary of the activity undertaken during the year. They also review the Annual Governance Statement.

### **Audit and Governance Committee**

An effective Audit Committee is in place whose purpose is to provide independent assurance of the adequacy of the internal control environment, and to oversee the financial reporting process. The Committee has two independent members and a vacancy for one other.

The Audit Committee monitor and review the Council's corporate governance arrangements, financial reporting, internal control system, risk management system and internal and external audit functions. In line with good practice, Audit Committees should assess their effectiveness annually.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committees**

The scrutiny function is delivered through the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, and is another way to monitor audit reviews and associated recommendations. The Overview and Scrutiny Committees for 2022/2023 were;

Growth and Infrastructure

Education and Children's Social Care

Health and Adult Social Care

Performance, Finance and Customer

## **Section Two**

This section details governance issues that have arisen throughout the year, alongside an assurance statement and plans to address these issues where appropriate.

## Key Governance and Delivery Areas

Overall we can confirm that the Council has the appropriate systems and processes in place to enable good governance. Whilst we are satisfied that these work well, reviews have identified the following governance issues and key delivery areas of concern. These are areas of concern that may impact on our governance structures. These are presented alongside an assurance statement on how we will manage the issues raised.

Governance Issue	Lead Officer	Assurance Statement and Recommendations for 2023/24	Reporting Through
<p><b>External Auditor Review</b></p> <p>Work conducted by Grant Thornton in 2020/21 and 2021/22 focussed on developing a deep understanding of the governance arrangements in place at Plymouth City council and the changes instigated.</p> <p>Overall external auditors found no evidence of significant weaknesses within the Council's Governance arrangements for ensuring that it made informed decisions and properly manages its risk. Three improvement recommendations were made.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the Strategic Risk Register informs the annual overview and scrutiny work programme so that risk management is properly embedded in members decision making.</li> <li>2. That more granular level of information by costs centre is included in monthly finance monitoring reports so senior officers and members can see the level of variances at an</li> </ol> </div>	<p>Ross Jago / David Northey</p>	<p>In response to recommendations from external audit –</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Scrutiny Committees currently receive the Strategic Risk Register as a standing item on all business meetings. The register has been used to populate work programmes through 2022/23 and will continue to be used in 2023/24.</li> <li>2. Following consideration of monitoring reports issued by CIPFA comparator authorities it is considered that the current levels of transparency within the finance monitoring reports meet the requirements of Cabinet and Scrutiny. Financial Monitoring reports for consideration in the democratic governance structure are the culmination of a robust framework of financial reporting in the Council.</li> </ol> </div>	<p>Audit and Governance Committee</p> <p>Portfolio Holder</p> <p>Scrutiny Committees</p> <p>Corporate Management Team</p>



activity level which will better inform decisions making around local services.		3. A report is being prepared for a future meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee.	
3. That the council carries out a self-assessment against the CIPFA financial Standards, produces a robust action plan with SMART targets to achieve full compliance by the deadline and Reports this to the Audit and Governance Committee.			
<p><b>Internal Audit</b></p> <p>Work undertaken by Devon Audit Partnership during 2022/23, reviews the performance and effectiveness of the Internal Audit service, and provides an audit opinion on the adequacy of the Authority's internal control environment.</p>	Corporate Management Team	<p>Based on work performed during 2022/23 and previous years' audit, the Head of Internal Audit's opinion is of "Reasonable Assurance" on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's internal control framework.</p> <p>"Reasonable Assurance" means that there are generally sound systems of governance, risk management and control in place across the organisation. Some issues, non-compliance or scope for improvement were identified which may put at risk the achievement of some of the strategic and operational objectives.</p>	<p>Cabinet</p> <p>Audit and Governance Committee</p> <p>Corporate Management Team</p>
<b>Key Delivery Area</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Assurance Statement</b>	<b>Reporting Through</b>
<p><b>Corporate Peer Challenge</b></p> <p>Plymouth City Council undertook an LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) between 7–10 February 2022 and promptly published the full report as part of the agenda for the meeting of Cabinet on 7 July 2022 along with an action plan.</p>	Corporate Management Team	Plymouth City Council has progressed its response to the recommendations arising from the Peer Challenge through an Action Plan.	<p>Corporate Management Team</p> <p>Cabinet</p>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Capture the learning from the positive engagement the council undertook with partners through Covid and ensure it's not lost – take time to pause and reflect after a period of unprecedented activity and demand, and ensure the approach to consultation, engagement and customer experience is consistently positive.</li> <li>2. Review key plans and strategies to reflect the post pandemic 'new normal' i.e. increases in service demand, taking the opportunity to review ambition to ensure it aligns with capacity and resources. Developing a more consistent approach to using data and intelligence (including community insight) to drive service delivery and improvement and inform financial decision making will be fundamental to this.</li> <li>3. Build on the effective relationships with external partners across a larger geographical footprint to maximise opportunities, especially those offered through the emerging County Deal, and support political leaders to enhance their visibility in these partnerships. As part of this, the council should consider reviewing the Terms of Reference of the Boards and their strategic rationale in order to simplify channels of engagement for all external stakeholders.</li> <li>4. Continue to move forward proposals to review the electoral cycle to help to reach a lasting conclusion.</li> <li>5. Undertake an external review of Scrutiny, looking to enhance opportunities for all members to engage with, and influence the</li> </ol>		<p>The action plan was shared with the peer team ahead of a progress review in February 2023 and sets out in some detail the progress made by the council against each of the original recommendations.</p> <p>During the progress review the peer team reported a strong sense of the council working collaboratively to maintain the direction of travel, despite an ever changing political and financial landscape.</p> <p>The most recent progress report <a href="#">is available at this link</a>.</p>	<p>Overview and Scrutiny</p>
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<p>policy agenda. Look to support this by refreshing the council's on-going member development offer so that all members can develop and maintain high levels of skills and knowledge.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Promote and embed risk awareness across the organisation and continue to address and report progress against key financial risks and external audit requirements.</li> <li>7. Review capacity and clarity of purpose within the Change Programme to secure wider buy-in and consider securing transformational IT capacity when reviewing current contractual arrangements.</li> <li>8. Develop a stronger corporate asset management approach/strategy, building in a stronger focus on delivering social value alongside the Growth Dividend and seeking to facilitate and maximise community capacity.</li> <li>9. Continue to embed rigour and transparency in budget setting and monitoring – both revenue and capital – to ensure that financial challenges and risk are consistently understood and mitigated across the organisation.</li> <li>10. Embed the workforce strategy including recruitment, retention, and succession planning, and continue to ensure sufficient organisational capacity to satisfy external audit requirements.</li> </ol>			
<p><b>Children's Services</b></p> <p>Following an Ofsted Focused Visit to Plymouth's Front Door to Children's Services on 13/14 December</p>		<p>An Improvement Board was established in March 2023 in advance of an Improvement Notice issued by the Department for Education (DfE) on 19 May 2023. The</p>	<p>Strategic System</p>

<p>2022, an Improvement Plan was devised in response to Ofsted’s report of the visit (dated 30 January).</p>		<p>Board will provide system leadership for working together and provide challenge and rigour to the process and have a collective responsibility to ensuring collaboration to achieve and sustain continuous improvement with a focus on core standards, performance, quality, impact and effectiveness of improvement activity.</p> <p>In addition to the Improvement Board existing governance controls will continue to be applied, this will include but is not limited to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic System Leadership Board</li> <li>• Plymouth City Council Children’s Programme Board</li> <li>• Children and Quality assurance Board</li> <li>• Children’s Safeguarding Partnership</li> </ul>	<p>Leadership Board                  Plymouth City Children’s Improvement Board                  Plymouth City Council Children’s Programme Board                  Plymouth City Council Children’s Programme Board                  Plymouth Safeguarding Children Partnership (PSCP)                  Corporate Management Team                  Cabinet Overview and Scrutiny</p>
<p><b>Oversight and Governance / Legal Services</b>                  Throughout the year 2022/23 several components of the city councils constitution were found to be sub-optimal. This has led to misunderstandings amongst multiple stakeholders as to the processes and procedures of the Council.</p>	<p>Ross Jago /                  Alison Critchfield</p>	<p>A constitutional review is planned for the 2023/24 municipal year. The Audit and Governance Committee will lead the review and will make recommendations to Council for changes.</p>	<p>Governance Stakeholder Group                  Audit and Governance Committee</p>

		An Officer Governance Stakeholder group has been established to support this and other governance and process improvements.	Constitutional and Civic Sub-committee.
<p><b>Legal Services / Oversight and Governance</b></p> <p>Following the implementation of a new councillor code of conduct in 2022, new arrangements for dealing with complaints under the code of conduct were agreed by the Audit and Governance Committee.</p>	Alison Critchfield	Following the approval of a new code of conduct and new arrangements for dealing with complaints under the code a new Standard Committee will need to be established in the 2023/24 municipal year.	Council Audit and Governance Committee
<p><b>General Governance Controls</b></p> <p>In response to the senior leadership team (SLT) survey, several senior leaders have reported the implementation of improvements to control systems or governance.</p> <p>Areas which have been impacted include –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Connections - Review of the Safer Plymouth Partnership.</li> <li>• Finance - Review into internal audit recommendations concerning virements.</li> <li>• Office of the Director of Public Health - changes to governance arrangements following reductions in Covid-19 rates.</li> <li>• Economic Development – development and implementation of new governance controls in support of the Freeport and National Marine Park.</li> </ul> <p>Whilst some areas of the Council have some form of internal scheme of delegation / records of officer</p>	Ross Jago / John Finch	<p>All senior leaders will be reminded of the requirements concerning operational and administrative decision making.</p> <p>Previously issued guidance will be reviewed to ensure decisions are recorded within robust record systems established within each department and in line with the information management requirements published on staff room.</p> <p>Decision records will show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the date of the decision;</li> <li>• who took the decision;</li> <li>• any conflicts of interest, and how these were managed;</li> <li>• what was decided;</li> <li>• the main reasons for the decision ;</li> <li>• the factors that the decision maker considered or decided to disregard;</li> </ul>	Corporate Management Team

<p>decision making in place the approach across the council is not consistent. There are legal and reputational risks if we cannot evidence decisions that have been taken and the reasons for them.</p> <p>There remains large sections of the organisation who are not familiar with governance controls which can lead to difficulties in processing decisions and use of urgency provisions.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether the decision maker took advice, from whom, and (where appropriate) their reasons for not following any advice they took.</li> </ul> <p>Recording decisions in this way will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• help to ensure certainty about what was decided;</li> <li>• help to resolve different recollections about the decision;</li> <li>• reduces the likelihood that the decision could be successfully challenged;</li> <li>• help show that you have acted properly and complied with their duties.</li> </ul> <p>A Governance Stakeholder Group of officers from across the breadth of the City Council’s services has been established to assist with the development of new systems and processes, ensuring that they work in practice and are fit for purpose. This group will play a key role in the communication of governance processes within the officer corps.</p> <p>The Democratic Support Team have developed a suite of tools and information to be delivered through a SharePoint site. The work has focused on the automation of processes and opportunities that automation / AI / chatbot’s will be further developed.</p> <p>Prioritisation of training/identification of training staff capability in IT / technology skills will be addressed through a risk informed process.</p>	
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<p><b>Family of Companies</b></p> <p>Some respondents to the SLT survey hold responsibility for companies within the family of companies. All reported compliance with guidance set out in the Local Authority Owned Companies: A good practice guide.</p> <p>Whilst some areas are able to provide evidence of key governance documents (Annual Reports, Articles of Association etc) in relation to individual companies, not all are easily accessible.</p>	<p>David Northey / Alison Critchfield / Ross Jago</p>	<p>Further actions based on identified risks to governance within the family of companies, specifically focussed on the role of shareholders will be developed in 2023/24.</p>	<p>Cabinet Audit and Governance Committee Corporate Management Team</p>
<p><b>Authority's Vision and Strategic Objectives</b></p> <p>A business planning cycle is in place to ensure the operation of council services aligns with the Authority's Vision and Strategic Objectives.</p> <p>The expectation is for service areas to have business plans which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explain what the service area does;</li> <li>• set out the services' priorities, in the context of the Corporate Plan, Corporate Priorities and bridge the gap between budget setting and corporate performance monitoring.</li> </ul> <p>Principles of business planning are for the approach to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be clear, simple and meaningful;</li> <li>• be proportionate;</li> <li>• respect organisational diversity;</li> <li>• encourage consistency;</li> <li>• and minimise duplication of effort.</li> </ul>	<p>Ross Jago</p>	<p>The business planning process and cycle was reviewed the Corporate Management Team in 2022/23.</p> <p>Following the Local Election in May 2023 and subsequent approval of a new Corporate Plan, departmental business plans are now under review and due to be agreed by the Corporate Management Team at the end of July 2023.</p> <p>To support the delivery of the Corporate Plan a review of the key elements of our engagement with the public, such as the City Survey, will be reviewed.</p>	<p>Corporate Management Team</p>



<p><b>Risk and Performance Management</b></p> <p>Clear processes for the collation and reporting of risk and performance issues are established in the Performance Management Framework and the Risk and Opportunity Management strategy.</p> <p>An external review of risk management approaches have concluded the systems and processes to support risk management are appropriate and that the appropriate risk culture is in place at senior management level.</p> <p>There remains issues in the delivery of the Corporate Operational and Strategic Risk Registers and the processes to support it.</p> <p>Lack of capacity hinders the ability of Risk Champions to fulfil their requirements as set out in the Risk and Opportunity Management Strategy.</p> <p>Several respondents to the SLT survey highlighted that performance information about outcomes, achievements and service satisfaction are not easily accessible for all parts of the business.</p>	Ross Jago	<p>Key performance documents are regularly report to both Cabinet and Scrutiny. Following the change of administration in May 2023 a review of the current performance framework is underway and the resulting updated reports will be considered at future Cabinet and Scrutiny Meetings.</p> <p>Further work required on overt description of risk appetite in specific areas, capacity of risk champions and risk collation will be considered as part of the review of the Risk and Opportunity Management Strategy.</p>	
<p><b>Overview and Scrutiny</b></p> <p>Plymouth City Council commissioned an external review by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) following. The review focused on –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisational commitment and clarity of purpose;</li> </ul>	Ross Jago	<p>The Overview &amp; Scrutiny function took immediate action in 2022 to address the initial findings of CfGS. This has involved reviews of prioritisation tools, more timely production of actions in advance of minute publication and a reduction in agenda items which are for noting / require no action.</p>	<p>Audit and Governance Committee</p> <p>Portfolio Holder</p> <p>Scrutiny Committees</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Members Leading and Fostering good relationships;</li><li>• Prioritising work and using evidence well;</li><li>• Having an impact.</li></ul> <p>The full report from CfGS is available <a href="#">at this link</a>.</p>		Significant consideration has been given recommendations for longer term improvements, the output of which will be fed into the constitutional review to take place in 2023/24.	Corporate Management Team
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