



# TRAFFORD COUNCIL

## ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020/21

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## **Executive Summary**

In response to the Covid-19 Pandemic Trafford Council has continued to meet its responsibilities for Governance and its commitment to good Governance as laid out within CIPFA's Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016. This has been demonstrated through the efforts across of all of the Council's departments throughout the year.

The Council's Governance team working in collaboration with the Council's IT department, Members, and Officers enabled the delivery of a full calendar of Public Meetings through the utilisation of Government legislation, which enabled virtual meetings during the extended lock down periods. This ensured that Trafford Council's decision-making process remained open and transparent throughout the Pandemic and enabled the Council to provide communications and leadership during the crisis.

The Council's Adult Services managed a full-scale shift in delivering services by adapting to changes in guidance as soon as they were identified, thus ensuring that the impact of the pandemic on residents was kept to a minimum. This included the establishment of Community Hubs which have been a remarkable success during a period of unrivalled challenge to the Council and the community. The Local Care Alliance Board performed a critical role during the pandemic in holding a leading position in the coordination of the Trafford Health and Social Care response to the pandemic.

The changes to the leadership structure in Children's Services made in response to the Ofsted report 2019 aided the Council to respond quickly to the pandemic. The governance structures developed proved robust and enabled Children's Services to continue to deliver the Service Improvement Plan at pace while shifting delivery to a more remote model in response to Covid 19. The pandemic raised considerable challenges to the service, which have been addressed through a strong partnership approach between Trafford Council, Trafford Schools, and the Health Services within Trafford. The strong connections made during this time will be maintained and utilised in the Council's continued improvement journey to deliver the highest level of services for Children and Young People.

Trafford's Public Health team have supported the whole organisation in ensuring that services were delivered safely throughout the pandemic. The work of the team runs throughout this document which reflects the scale of their role in the past year. Some key points of note have been the team's collaboration with colleagues from Adult Services to support the safety of Trafford's care homes; the work with Children's Services and Trafford schools to ensure schools re-opened safely and to manage outbreaks; support for the licensing team in supporting business to re-open; and the support for the vaccination programme delivered by the Council's NHS partners. Their work

demonstrates the strong leadership role that the Council has played in Trafford's response to the Pandemic.

Finance colleagues worked tirelessly throughout the year to track the Council's financial position, providing regular reports to both the Council's leadership and external bodies, and managing the multiple funding streams received by the Council over the course of the year. Their work led the Council to end the year with a £2.8M underspend which will aid the Council in facing the financial pressures identified in the Council's Medium Term Financial Position. 2020/21 was also the shadow year for the CIPFA Financial Management Code and the Finance team have ensured that the Council are in a strong position to be fully compliant within 2021/22.

Information, Communication, and Technology Services in collaboration with the Council's Human Resources department have delivered the largest shift in the Council's ways of working since its inception. This has enabled the Council to continue to function throughout the Pandemic and to accelerate a number of key plans, such as the digital strategy, during a time when many other plans have had to be put on hold. This shift in working is a key enabler in the Council's recovery plan to build back better and has forever changed the shape of the Council's service delivery.

The Place directorate continued the council's review of support services delivered through the one Trafford Partnership. The Council's capital programme and Investment Strategy continued to be key elements of the Council's financial position both during the year and in facing the financial challenges ahead. The development of the Council's active transport links during the year have proven a great challenge which the team have risen to and learned from, especially in the development of the Council's approach to consultation.

Next year is set to provide yet more challenges to the Council as Trafford continues its recovery from the pandemic. The Council has identified the key areas of concern for the coming year through the robust risk management strategy and plans are in place to mitigate those risks. However, continued national challenges are also reflected with the significant issues for 2021/22 with Covid 19, the continuing impact of Brexit, and the Climate Emergency all representing significant external pressures which will affect the Council's response to the internal governance issues the Council needs to address.

## **1. Scope of Responsibility**

- 1.1 Trafford Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. The Council are also responsible for ensuring that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. Trafford Council has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to continuously improve how its functions are exercised, with regards to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2 This overall responsibility requires Trafford Council put in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3 Trafford Council has approved and adopted a corporate governance code, consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'. A copy of the Authority's code is available at: <http://www.trafford.gov.uk/about-your-council/budgets-and-accounts/downloadable-documents.aspx>. This statement explains how Trafford Council has complied with the code and meets the requirement of Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, regulation 6, that all relevant bodies have to prepare an annual governance statement.

## **2. Purpose of the Governance framework**

- 2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the Authority is directed and controlled. The framework covers the Council's activities through which; it is accountable to, engages with, and leads its communities. It also enables the Authority to monitor performance against strategic objectives and evaluate whether those objectives are fit for purpose.
- 2.2 The system of internal control forms a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk. However, it can only reduce risk of failure and provide reasonable, not absolute, assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise risks to the achievement of Trafford Council's policies, aims and objectives. The system also ensures that identified risks are evaluated, according to their likelihood and potential impact, and managed efficiently, effectively, and economically.
- 2.3 The governance framework has been in place at Trafford Council for the year ending 31 March 2021 and up to the date of approval of the statement of accounts.

### 3. The Governance Framework

3.1 The Authority has adopted a local governance framework consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' 2016 edition. Trafford Council's Corporate Governance Code details how the Authority meets the requirements of the framework and is aligned to the principles of good governance in local government set out in the CIPFA framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA, IFAC, 2014):

- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law
- Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
- Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
- Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of leadership and the individuals within it
- Managing risk and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
- Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

3.2 The Annual Governance Statement sets out how the Authority has complied with the Code and also meets with the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021 which have amended the Accounts and Audit Regulations (England and Wales) 2015. The Coronavirus amendment revised the deadlines applicable to Local Authorities as follows:

- Approval of Draft Accounts 31 July 2021 (previously 31 May)
- Public Inspection Period to start on or before first working day of August 2021
- Publish Final Audited Accounts 30 September 2021

The Authority meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021 in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control. It is subject to detailed review by the Accounts and Audit Committee when they consider the final Statements of Account but before they approve the Statement of Accounts.

3.3 The Authority's financial management arrangements are continually assessed and during 2020/21 due regard has been placed on compliance with CIPFA's Financial Management Code. They are also consistent with a number of the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016). The key principles for which there is compliance are that the Chief Financial Officer (Director of Finance and Systems):

- is actively involved and is able to bring influence on the Authority's financial strategy;

- leads the whole Authority in the delivery of good financial management;
- directs a fit for purpose finance function; and
- is professionally qualified and suitably experienced.

In addition, the Statement requires that the Chief Finance Officer should report directly to the Chief Executive and be a member of the leadership team, with a status at least equivalent to others.

The Director of Finance and Systems (the Chief Finance Officer and designated Section 151 officer) is a member of and attends the meetings of the Corporate Leadership Team.

- 3.4 The key elements of the system and processes that comprise the Authority's governance framework are outlined in this Annual Governance Statement. The Statement demonstrates the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements during 2020/21 in line with the seven governance principles

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CIPFA SOLACE Principle A.	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
<p><b>Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitution</li> <li>• Members Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Member/Officer Relations Protocol</li> <li>• Register of Interests</li> <li>• Standards Committee</li> <li>• Corporate Governance Code</li> <li>• Employee Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Disciplinary Policy</li> <li>• ICT Acceptable Use Policy</li> <li>• Anti-Fraud &amp; Corruption Strategy</li> <li>• Confidential Reporting Code</li> </ul>
<p><b>How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2020/21</b></p>	
<p>An Extraordinary meeting of <a href="#">Council on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020</a> passed arrangements to enable Trafford Council to continue to function throughout the Pandemic. These arrangements included arrangements for dealing with delegated decisions and urgent actions. Those powers remained in place until the meeting of Annual Council on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and were then extended until 24 June 2021.</p> <p>The Standards Committee continued to oversee the Council’s response to the report on Local Government Ethical Standards by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, which was published in January 2019. A report was delivered at the <a href="#">Standards Committee 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020</a> which covered all the proposed changes to the constitution for Trafford Council to meet the 15 Areas of Best Practice. The implementation of the actions were delayed due to the impact of COVID-19 and were agreed at the <a href="#">Annual Meeting of Council on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020</a>.</p> <p>The LGA published the New Model Code of Conduct for Members in December 2020. The New Model Code and a timetable for review of Trafford Council’s Code of Conduct was submitted to the <a href="#">Standards Committee on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021</a>. The review and subsequent update of Trafford’s Code of Conduct for Members was scheduled for Completion by June 2021 but due to a delay in the release of guidance from the LGA the timeline has been moved back.</p> <p>The 2019/20 Annual Report for the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Team was presented to the <a href="#">Accounts and Audit Committee on 26 November 2020</a> outlining fraud prevention and detection activities and further planned work in 2020/21. Details of how to report suspected fraud are included on the Council website. During 2020/21, the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Team have investigated errors/irregularities in relation to Council tax, social care finance and business rates. In addition, during 2020/21 they have also carried out a number of investigations in relation to COVID-19 Business grants applications. A report on outcomes from 2020/21 counter-fraud activity will be provided to the Accounts and Audit Committee at its meeting in September 2021.</p>	

The Council participates in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) data matching exercise. An update was provided by the Audit and Assurance Service to the [Accounts and Audit Committee on 3 February 2021](#) setting out work undertaken in supplying data for matching by the year-end for subsequent follow-up in 2021/22.

Anti-fraud and corruption training forms part of the induction programme for all new office based staff. A new Anti-Fraud e-learning module was introduced as part of the induction programme for new staff during 2020/21.

The Council has an agreed Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and Strategy, Fraud Response Plan and Whistleblowing Policy. Details of how to report suspected fraud are included on the Council website. Referrals of suspected fraud can be reported to the Council using an online form.

The Council's ICT Acceptable Use Policy remains current and accommodates the increase in home working during 2020. A comprehensive review and update of the IT Policies is scheduled for late 2021.

The Director of Finance and Systems is the nominated Chief Financial Officer in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. Internal Audit is provided in-house by the Audit and Assurance Service, supported by a partnership with Salford Council Internal Audit for Information Technology audits. As stated in the Annual Head of Internal Audit Report 2020/21, the Audit and Assurance Service carries out its work in general conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the CIPFA statement on the role of the Head of Internal Audit. The Audit and Assurance Manager has direct access to all members of CLT as well as all Members and has utilised this discretion when appropriate.

The system of internal financial control is based upon a framework of comprehensive financial regulations and procedures, within the Constitution, which comply with Good Practice. A review of The Finance Procedure Rules is undertaken annually as part of the update of the Council's Constitution. Control is based on regular management information, management supervision, and a structure of delegation and accountability. If there are fundamental failures in internal control these are subject to investigation.

CIPFA SOLACE Principle B.	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
<b>Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decision Making Protocols</li> <li>• Access to Information Procedure Rules</li> <li>• Consultation, including Budget Consultation</li> <li>• Public Engagement Board</li> <li>• Trafford Partnership Board &amp; Strategic Boards</li> </ul>

- Public Service Reform Board & Operational Group
- Building Strong Communities Strategy
- Locality Working Programme
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
- Local Care Alliance (LCA)
- Joint Commissioning Board
- GMCA

### **How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2020/21**

Trafford Council has seen a marked increase in public attendance and participation in the decision making over the past year. This was in part due to the switch to hold virtual meetings in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following the original halt of meetings Trafford Council agreed a schedule of meetings at the [Council meeting held on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020](#), which was further updated at the [Full Council meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020](#) and [Annual Council Meeting held on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020](#). All public meetings were held using Microsoft Teams or Zoom and broadcast live and made available for subsequent viewing on YouTube.

The creation of the Trafford COVID-19 Public Engagement Board has been an excellent example of the Council's commitment to public and stakeholder engagement. The Board has met every two weeks since the first meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> August 2020 and has had a strong membership made up of Councillors, Officers from Public Health, Trafford Council, Trafford CCG, Health and Social Care Providers, and representatives of Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations. The Board has served as an excellent conduit for information sharing during the pandemic and nowhere is this more evident than the role of the board and its members in helping to tackle vaccine hesitancy across the borough.

In 2020/21 the LCA Board continued to meet throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic response to support partner agencies in delivery of work across the health and social care system. The engagement of key stakeholders at this critical time was seen as pivotal to our effective response to the national emergency at a local level. The Board played a critical part in assuring the system response was effective; that all partners were kept informed of actions and decision-making through this period; tackled system problems by co-ordinating solutions to these challenges; then reviewed action and delivered a lessons learnt workshop to ensure we captured all the learning for us to incorporate this learning to build back better, this is now being fed into the refresh of the Trafford Together Locality Plan (our plan for health and social care sustainability and reform).

This engagement approach has helped to build a culture of openness and transparency across the health and social care system. Much of the feedback received through the listening exercise was that relationships with partners were enhanced over this period and this, in turn, has helped to establish a strong

foundation for us to move into recovery and reform of the system with a co-production and co-design approach.

The LCA refreshed its Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in August 2020. This document sets out a clear vision and purpose of the Board that covers: aims and objectives; governance and accountability; membership, principles and behaviours; plus new sections on equality / diversity and conflicts of interest.

In respect of Trafford Council's budget process for 2021/22 and in order to assist the evaluation of the budget proposals and to ensure the Council was sufficiently informed to enable it to meet its duties under the Equality Act, a number of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) were carried out. The EIAs ensured due consideration was given to those with protected characteristics and to identify the likely impact of the savings measures proposed in the budget on each of these groups.

A public consultation exercise was conducted on a range of budget proposals with targeted and specific consultation undertaken where relevant. As part of the process residents and businesses were informed of the level of savings to be achieved in the next financial year. Proposals under consideration were also shared and responses gathered from residents and stakeholders. The public consultation was conducted online and commenced in November 2020 and closed early in December 2020. Promotion of the budget consultation took place prior to and during the consultation period. Key messages were delivered through various communications channels to promote the budget proposals and encourage participation including; signposting from the home page of the Council's website for the duration of the consultation, press releases, Twitter and Facebook posts, specific communications to targeted groups, and updates to members, partners, businesses and stakeholders. The responses received through the consultation were considered as part of the budget process.

A number of the budget proposals related to the workforce and staff consultations were undertaken or scheduled for later in the year as appropriate. Other proposals including an early retirement/severance scheme, voluntary leave purchase, and work pattern changes were undertaken by staff on a voluntary basis.

The annual Budget Scrutiny process was undertaken across two sessions on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of December to look at the budget plans, key assumptions, risks and challenges. The sessions covered:-

- Session 1 - Review of the Place Directorate, Investment Strategy budget, impact of Covid-19 and a review of Council reserves
- Session 2 – Review of the budgets for Adult Services and Children's Social Care.

Both sessions were attended by relevant Executive Members and senior officers who provided background information relating to the budget proposals and answered

questions raised by Scrutiny Members. Following the sessions a report was submitted to the Executive in January 2021 and the Executive provided a formal response at their budget meeting in February 2021.

The government challenge to increase active transport routes across the country presented a huge undertaking for all local authorities and Trafford was no exception. Under the Safe Streets Save Lives campaign, the residents of Trafford were asked to comment on locations where cycling and walking could be improved. Trafford launched an online engagement tool to seek residents' views and concerns about active travel interventions. The data from the exercise led to the identification of a range of locations to be considered for some form of intervention. 14 locations were considered and consultation was undertaken with the community affected to gauge their views. 8 locations did not receive community support and were discounted and the remaining 6 sites were recommended for bids for Tranche 1 funding.

Following the bids, funding was received for all 6 sites and multiple consultation exercises were run. The results of those exercises helped to shape the temporary active transport measures employed. The learning from those exercises has greatly informed the Council's approach to the Tranche two schemes, which are currently underway, and the service's approach to consultations in general. A full overview of the Council's journey in implementing the active transport schemes during the pandemic, including the consultation process, was presented to the [Scrutiny Committee meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021](#).

A Trafford Partnership Recovery Strategy has been developed with a joint action plan around the four themes of Business Recovery, Employment and Skills, Children and Young People and Living Well in the Community. The Recovery and Renewal Leads meet monthly to monitor activity. These themes have one central focus - job creation and development – helping people to get on in life by improving their skills, obtaining employment, assisting business, and investment. Digital skills, greenspace, carbon neutrality and sustainability run throughout the action plan and are central to the strategy.

Trafford continues to work with GM Colleagues to ensure our recovery is aligned to the wider GM strategy. Officers are linked into cross council meetings such as GM Tactical Coordination Group, North West Leaders Group, at Response and Recovery level; sharing experience and learning, and working together to deliver solutions and consistent approaches where possible.

CIPFA SOLACE Principle C	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
<p><b>Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate Plan</li> <li>• Trafford Recovery Plan</li> <li>• Trafford Locality Plan</li> <li>• Medium Term Financial Strategy</li> <li>• Investment Management Strategy</li> </ul>

- Core Strategy
- Trafford Local Plan
- Carbon Neutral Framework and Action Plan
- Physical Activity Vision

**How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2020/21**

In response to the Covid 19 Pandemic STAR introduced a 10 Point Plan in 20/21 which supported their approach to work differently and to support local businesses. The 10 point plan was approved by STAR Board and STAR Joint Committee at their meeting [17<sup>th</sup> June 2020](#). The points included giving bidders more time to submit tenders and quotes, supporting local businesses with training and support on submitting a good tender and using the Social Value Portal, and allowing winning contractors to review and change their social value offer if delivery was affected by Covid or if they wished to offer something different to support the Covid agenda.

The Corporate Performance reporting cycle continues to monitor progress against the delivery of the Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan is reported on a quarterly basis to the Executive and the Corporate Leadership Team. Key performance indicators are monitored each quarter and RAG rated. The indicators cover a number of economic, social and environmental measures including, but not limited to, housing completions, affordable housing NHS health checks, Trafford Pledge, apprenticeships, waste/recycling, residential / nursing care, discharge from hospital, homelessness, planning applications and council tax collected. The Annual report on the Corporate Plan went to the [Executive meeting on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021](#).

Exception reports are prepared for any key performance indicator off target with a red status to outline why performance is below target and what action is in place to improve performance. Additionally, where there is a significant impact to residents, some exception reports are produced for an amber indicator. Three exception reports were provided, as appendices to the main report, to the Executive on the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021 on the number of affordable housing completions, The Trafford Pledge – number of new jobs created, and Increasing the number of apprenticeships in the Council.

Many other performance indicators are included in service plans and case studies on performance are also included in the quarterly corporate plan publication, which is published on the Council’s website at [Corporate Plan \(trafford.gov.uk\)](http://trafford.gov.uk).

The performance framework is inherent in everything done within the Council and supports improvement, delivery and effective decision making. The ‘golden thread’ of the performance framework ensures that work across all directorates is aligned. GM and National priorities are built into the Corporate Plan which then feed down to service, team and individual plans.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant social and economic impact in the Borough, as well as the critical health issues. The Council has published a **Recovery Plan** covering the range of Council services which is regularly reviewed and updated to address changes in the pandemic and respond to the impact of COVID-19 and an Inclusive Economy Recovery Plan, which focuses specifically on ensuring effective economic recovery and the delivery of a more inclusive economy. The Recovery Plan links with all components that support Trafford's recovery including the economic recovery plan, the Poverty Strategy, and the Living well in the Community design group to ensure alignment and an integrated approach.

Much of the work in the **Trafford Together Locality Plan** was either re-prioritised or escalated in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The plan is currently being refreshed in light of all the learning from the crisis response, the reform completed to date, and the understanding of our future priorities gained through the changes Covid-19 has brought. To help shape the future, the Local Care Alliance (LCA) has developed a Recovery Measurement Framework to ensure a robust system for capturing data and intelligence is in place. This framework contains a series of performance dashboards that support the local priorities and is able to evidence outputs and outcomes (including performance data linked to the 3 key outcomes as well as data on inequalities, recover and reform performance) this can be found on a 'Tableau Landing Page' accessible to all professionals across the system. Tableau is a visual analytics platform that has helped transform the way data is used in Trafford to solve problems, by making the most of the data sources available. This data-led approach has been embedded in the Health and Social Care Strategic Design Groups (SDGs, these are: Living Well at Home; Living Well in My Community and; A Short Stay in Hospital).

The refreshed Trafford Together Locality Plan will tell the story of Trafford's response to the pandemic – including the lessons learnt, the journey into recovery and how organisations across Trafford will aim to collectively continue to reform the system in light of the proposed changes through the Government White Paper on Integrated Care Systems (ICS). The plan will incorporate all the data, intelligence and insights gathered over the last 18 months and provide clarity on the systems priorities moving forward. The Locality Plan will continue to address the challenges set out in the NHS Long Term and align with the refresh of the Council's Corporate Plan and the NHS Planning Guidance. It is anticipated that the refreshed Locality Plan will be signed-off in September 2021 by both the Council Executive and CCG Governing Body.

The Authority has spent its resources within the overall agreed budget for the financial year 2020/21 with a small underspend of £2.8m.

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant financial impact during the year resulting in additional expenditure for the financial year 2020/21 of £51.9m. The additional expenditure has been financed through enhanced Central Government support, which compensated for loss of income and relieved hardship for residents and businesses throughout the year. Financial support was also received from the NHS via Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group in relation to discharges from hospital. The timing of when that support was received throughout the year made monitoring the budget position particularly difficult in 2020/21.

The small underspend on the budget in 2020/21 will be moved into earmarked reserves to support the sustainability of future year's budgets.

Consideration and approval by the Authority balanced budget proposals for 2021/22 took place at the full Council meeting on the [17<sup>th</sup> February 2021](#). Due to increasing cost pressures on Adult Social Care and across other Council services, it was recommended that a specific Council Tax increase of 3% be implemented to finance expenditure in Adult Social Care and an additional 1.99% Council Tax increase for general services.

The budget was set while taking account of the anticipated financial implications of COVID-19, the impact on future financial resilience, and the expected levels of extra Central Government support. There is a risk that the financial legacy of COVID will impact the longer-term resilience of the Council, which will become clearer as further information becomes available.

The reserves are managed with reference to the approved Reserves Policy, which is regularly reviewed by the Executive. The level of reserve balances is informed by the budget process and the levels of risk the Council is exposed to. The ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has led to the Council having a greater reliance on the application of reserves to cover ongoing pressures, with budget plans in place to replenish these reserves over the long term.

The Council adopted a revised **Investment Strategy** in September 2020. The revised strategy better aligns with the Council's strategic priorities, and is in line with recent changes to the guidance on local authority finances.

The Council adopted its **Core Strategy** in 2012, setting out the spatial plan for the Borough. In 2020/21 the Council made progress on the two documents that will ultimately replace the Core Strategy. In March 2020 the Executive agreed to the establishment of a joint committee of nine GM authorities (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan) to prepare a Joint Development Plan to cover housing and employment land requirements including, as appropriate, strategic site allocations and Green Belt boundary amendments and associated infrastructure across the nine Greater Manchester LAs. That plan, Places

for Everyone, replaces the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework, and will set out the sub-regional spatial strategy for GM.

In February 2020 the council commenced consultation on the [draft Trafford Local Plan](#) (Regulation 18) and supporting documents. The draft Local Plan sets out the next level of detail to Places for Everyone and is a key strategic document. The draft Local Plan strategic objectives are to: Deliver the homes that Trafford needs, Make Trafford accessible and equal for all, Ensure Trafford's resilience and carbon neutrality, Secure successful, sustainable and healthy communities, Maintain Trafford's economic potential, Revitalise Trafford's town centres, Protect, improve and connect green assets, Reduce the need to travel, and to Enhance cultural, heritage and leisure assets. It is expected that publication version of the Local Plan will be published in 2022.

The Council declared a Climate Emergency in November 2018, and established a Scrutiny Task and Finish group on Climate Change. Reports to the Executive in September 2020 and December 2020 set out the Council's response to climate change and its' ambition to becoming carbon neutral by 2038. The Executive approved a new Carbon Neutral Framework and action plan, following which a multi-agency Climate Change and Air Quality Commission has been established; the Commission has now appointed an independent Chair to lead this work. The importance of this work to the Council is demonstrated by the Leader of the Council taking the climate change portfolio. Delivery of the action plan has commenced, including securing over £4m of funding to decarbonise public sector building, with work on this commencing in 2021/22.

COVID 19 has had both a direct and in-direct impact on physical activity in the borough. Trafford's latest data from the Active Lives Survey identified an increase in inactivity levels in the borough from 20.60 % pre-Covid to 22.9%% as of November 2020. The data indicates that there are a number of population groups in Trafford who have been impacted more by COVID including; Older residents aged 65+, BAME residents, Women and Girls, Residents from low-socioeconomic groups, Children and Young People aged 5-18, Residents with disabilities and Long-Term Conditions.

While developing a refreshed vision for physical activity in the area the Trafford Moving Partnership recognised the disproportionate impact of COVID on physical activity levels in certain communities and population groups. The partnership is working collaboratively with the Trafford Community Collective to consult with residents from groups and communities where inactivity is more prevalent. The consultation will help build a clearer understanding of the impact of COVID 19 and

inform a place based approach to physical activity in communities where inactivity is highest.

In addition to the consultation and engagement an audit of the current provision is ongoing. The partnership will use the findings from these exercises to develop a needs led approach with the vision of enabling residents in Trafford to move more every day. The process will focus on access to green-space through; a green social prescribing pilot, more effective messaging, promotion of healthy lifestyles, and activity via the 'That Counts' branded campaign.

Trafford's Walking and Cycling strategy is also being developed and will inform:

- The Council's plans for developing better infrastructure for walking, cycling, wheeling, scooting and other forms of active travel;
- How the Council enables residents who need support to change their behaviour in relation to walking & cycling.
- Specific outcomes in terms of increased participation in walking and cycling.

In all the above work, the key focus is on reducing the inequalities that exist within Trafford by increasing the physical activity levels of groups who are less active than the general population.

CIPFA SOLACE Principle D	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
<b>Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modernisation Programme</li> <li>• Corporate Plan</li> <li>• Medium Term Financial Plan</li> <li>• Efficiency Plan</li> <li>• Capital Investment Programme</li> <li>• Social Value Framework</li> <li>• Equality Strategy</li> <li>• Ambitions Plan</li> </ul>
<b>How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2020/21</b>	
<p>Reports on the key performance indicators agreed in relation to the corporate plan continue to be delivered to both the Executive and CLT to monitor progress and outcomes achieved. The details on exception reporting and the link through the framework is outlined above under Principle C.</p>	
<p>During the year recovery activity has been delivered at pace to meet the needs of Trafford by working with the Council's partners, businesses and residents to make the best use of our collective skills and resources to support our communities, as well as remaining flexible and adaptable.</p>	

The Recovery Coordination Group (RCG) has led the recovery activity and is made up of the Corporate Leadership Team, Clinical Commissioning Group and Public Health colleagues. The RCG monitors the delivery of the Recovery plan and programme. Highlight reports and risk logs are prepared and presented by thematic subgroups which consist of; Education and Children, Health and Social Care, Health Protection, Infrastructure, Environment and Physical Activity, Sustainability and Economy, and Staffing, Digital and Modernisation.

Programme management support is provided to the Recovery/Response groups to ensure activity is coordinated, that actions are completed, and risks and issues are monitored. Governance arrangements are regularly reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose and that risks and issues are escalated as appropriate to the Recovery Coordination Group (Gold) and the senior leadership teams of the Council and the CCG. Progress is reported through a quarterly Recovery Update.

The Modernisation Programme continues to work with services to improve efficiency and reduce spending where possible. The programme also supports the Council's digital strategy and the investment in new technologies.

In 2020/21 Trafford developed a four year shared Equality strategy between the CCG and the Council. The strategy outlines the work required to improve equality of opportunity for Trafford residents, colleagues and partners. The Strategy was approved by the Council's Executive at their meeting held on the [25<sup>th</sup> January 2021](#) and it is expected to be signed off by the CCG Governing Body in July 2021. Since the strategy was approved in January, work has been ongoing to develop the implementation plan and Corporate Equality Steering and Working Groups have been created to facilitate the delivery of the strategy. The Strategy and its impact are being reviewed by an independent body. Trafford have consulted with key staff groups throughout the process and will continue to do so throughout the strategy's delivery to ensure it addresses their issues and concerns.

STAR procurement continued to use the Social Value Portal to capture the Social Value Offer from providers as part of the procurement process and ensure delivery of the offer is monitored throughout all contracts. This is reported quarterly to STAR Board and STAR Joint Committee. During 20/21 STAR delivered 28% of added value from Social Value, secured from procurement. This exceeded the annual target for STAR which was 25%.

In order to achieve the long-term financial targets, the Authority at its [February 2021 meeting](#) set a budget for the financial year 2021/22. The budget was supported by an appropriate assessment of risk by the Corporate Director of Finance and Systems,

an updated Capital Strategy and Programme, and the Treasury Management Strategy, which was developed in compliance with external regulations and the CIPFA Prudential Code.

The Council's financial resilience was supported by an agreed Reserves Policy, which pre-pandemic was subject to regular review, underpinning the long-term financial resilience of the Council and supporting the vision of the Borough.

The Council agreed a general capital investment programme (excluding investment funds) of £42.8m for 2020/21, and achieved an end of year spend of £33.95m. The major areas of investment included school improvements, children's social care, adult social services, maintaining public buildings, regeneration projects, highways schemes, greenspaces, and ICT improvements. During the year the Council agreed, in principle, a revised leisure strategy, which included a refurbishment programme for three leisure centres in Altrincham, Sale and Stretford, alongside development of a Strategic Outcomes Planning Model to stages 1 and 2 to provide the strategic context for leisure investment. The Council also agreed the community asset transfer of George H Carnall leisure centre, and this transfer was completed in early 2021/22.

The Council's [Ambitions Plan](#) was launched in October 2020 and the full plan can be viewed on the Council's website. The Ambitions plan lays out 8 Ambitions that the Council is seeking to achieve within Children's Services. Each Ambition has a responsible strategic lead, actions to be completed, key performance indicators to measure success, an overview of the approach to be taken, and the progress that has been made so far. Following the initial launch a review of the plan was carried out by the strategic leads and through partnership workshops. The update of the Ambitions Plan following the review was presented to the Service Improvement Board on the 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021 and to the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on the [4<sup>th</sup> February 2021](#).

CIPFA SOLACE Principle E	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
<p><b>Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People Strategy</li> <li>• Change Strategy</li> <li>• Member Development Strategy</li> <li>• Members' Training Plan</li> <li>• Members' Induction Process</li> <li>• Employee Training &amp; Development Plan</li> <li>• Corporate Induction Procedure</li> <li>• Employees Personal Development Review (PDR)</li> <li>• Staff Health &amp; Wellbeing Strategy</li> <li>• Absence Management Strategy</li> </ul>
<p><b>How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2020/21</b></p>	

The Council's People Strategy, Building a winning culture was launched in 2020. The two year strategy, outlined the Council's key people priorities, aligned to four pillars (Recruit, Retain, Grow and Sustain) that will support the delivery of the corporate priorities and further embed the EPIC values (Empower, People Centred, Inclusive, Collaborate).

The Council have continued to work towards the priorities and objectives outlined in the strategy throughout 2020/21, whilst providing a responsive and agile service to the organisation as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The wider employee groups, EPIC Pioneers, Mental Health First Aiders, and staff group and forums, have been instrumental in the support, ideas, and initiatives that they have delivered during 2020/21 and throughout the pandemic.

The council's EPIC Manager programme evolved to a virtual delivery model, and encompasses a modular suite of learning and development modules to support all managers. The programme starts with a suite of four core modules, "being your best, vital conversations, teams- being your best, and health and wellbeing". There are further optional modules that have been developed in 2021 to support managers' personal development, these included values based recruitment, psychology of change, leading personal change and MiTrent for managers. These new additional modules are themed around our strategic and operational priorities.

The Council continued to deliver EPIC Check in sessions virtually to managers and colleagues throughout 2020/21 to support performance and wellbeing conversations with colleagues during the pandemic. The Council also developed a suite of tools, guidance, and, where requested, virtual training to support managers to have coaching wellbeing conversations with their colleagues.

In addition to the EPIC manager programme Trafford's wider learning offer is supported through the e-learning platform Me-learn and opportunities to gain a relevant and professional qualification through our upskill/apprenticeship programme. These qualifications are inclusive of leadership development and we continue to offer career paths in roles that require professional qualifications.

Coaching is available to all colleagues and managers. Colleagues can access one to one coaching with a professional internal coach to support their professional development and/or to support their wellbeing.

A succession planning strategy is in place which ensures key skills are not lost and staff are upskilled to enable them to take on higher graded roles. Successors have been identified at senior manager level and targeted development initiatives provided to ensure that the Council's workforce is equipped to meet new and emerging demands.

In July 2020 the Council launched an internal covid-19 employee pulse survey across the workforce and achieved a 51% response rate (1,242 people). The survey

focussed on the key areas of Leadership, Management, Wellbeing, Adaptations, Communications, Business Continuity and My Company. The outputs of the survey when combined with the feedback received from the 2019 b-Heard engagement survey enabled the Council to formulate and share the corporate commitments and actions to support engagement with colleagues. The action plan focussed on the key areas highlighted in both surveys.

The Council has continued to deliver bi-monthly leaders and all colleague Let's Talk engagement sessions. These events now run virtually and offer colleagues and leaders the opportunity to hear the latest updates from across the council from the Chief Executive, leader of the Council and Corporate Leadership Team. In 2020 the Council delivered wellbeing development sessions at all of the let's talk events in response to Covid-19 and the presented challenges.

There is a standard corporate induction for all new colleagues. In 2020 to expedite the appointment and job readiness of people into Covid support or related roles Human Resources worked with a number of services to design a more agile and streamlined induction package, alongside the creation of a bespoke e-learning course for the volunteer hubs.

The Council continues to deliver the Health & Wellbeing Strategy 'EPIC You', which comprises of initiatives and activities aimed at improving organisational effectiveness and organised around four key themes.

- Healthy Lifestyle
- Mental wellbeing
- Focus on Musculoskeletal (MSK) Health
- Health and Safety

Alongside the priorities outlined in the strategy and the services delivered by the Mental Health First Aiders, the Council has championed a number of initiatives to further support the workforce in 2020/21. These are inclusive of the development of the Council's intranet pages to share and promote wellbeing resources, tools and support guides; Mental Health first aid support and tea and talk sessions, alongside championing and providing a programme of activity through a number of national health and wellbeing campaigns including Mental Health Awareness week, Health and Wellbeing Week, National Self Care Week and world sleep day.

The Council has a robust approach to managing employee absences in place, including sickness absence, and the Corporate Leadership Team monitors levels on a monthly basis. The HR Operations team support services in dealing with more complex cases in line with the Council's policy and guidance.

During the last year it was vital to understand resource levels across the organisation as staff's availability was sometimes reduced for a variety of reasons including: isolating due to being clinically extremely vulnerable, isolating due to being in close

contact of someone with a Covid-19 diagnosis, isolating due to having Covid-19 symptoms or diagnosis, or balancing child-care commitments with work. HR created a dedicated code for sickness related to a Covid-19 symptoms and diagnosis to monitor staffing levels and provide support. Regular reports were provided to the Council's Recovery Co-ordination Group (RCG) throughout the year.

Stringent Covid Secure arrangements have been in place in all of the Council's work settings to reduce the risk of infection. Regular communications have gone out to ensure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities. Staff who have been unwell as a result of the coronavirus have been supported through regular contact with their manager and the HR team. Where staff who were absent due to Covid 19 approached the point where their pay would be impacted, they were able to request an extension to sick pay without detriment.

A Member Continuing Professional Development record has been created, which outlines the training that members are required to undertake to support their development as Councillors. The Member Continuing Professional Development record was presented to and agreed by the Standards Committee at their meeting on the [25<sup>th</sup> March 2021](#).

A refreshed induction programme was introduced for all new members in 2020/21 and an annual training programme is being designed around the continuing professional development record. The Member Development Steering Group continues to meet on a regular basis to agree priorities for development and review, and to evaluate development programmes.

CIPFA SOLACE Principle F	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
<b>Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Procedure Rules</li> <li>• Contract Procedure Rules</li> <li>• Treasury Management Strategy</li> <li>• Scrutiny Committees and Protocols</li> <li>• Risk Management Strategy &amp; Policy Statement</li> <li>• Strategic Risk Register</li> <li>• Internal Audit Strategy</li> <li>• Accounts &amp; Audit Committee</li> </ul>
How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2020/21	
<p>Trafford's Contract Procedure Rules are currently under review with elements being prioritised, such as exemptions and modifications. This is being undertaken in conjunction with the Trafford Legal team who support STAR and their partners through an SLA.</p>	
<p>The Council continues to regularly review and monitor its Strategic Risk Register with update reports presented to the CLT and the <a href="#">Accounts and Audit Committee</a>. By the end of the year, as reported to the <a href="#">Accounts and Audit Committee on 23 March 2021</a></p>	

,the highest risks in the register included managing the impact of disruption caused by COVID-19, uncertainty regarding the Council's financial position; risks in relation to the economic impact of Brexit and COVID-19; the impact of the pandemic on Leisure Services; the performance of the One Trafford Partnership; risks in relation to information governance; and management of health and safety risks. During the year, the Climate Emergency was also added as one of the higher risks on the strategic risk register. The strategic risk reports highlighted responsibilities and ongoing actions to manage the risks identified.

The Internal Audit 2020/21 work plan incorporated coverage of a number of key financial systems and other business risks. Updates of work undertaken were provided to the Corporate Leadership Team and the [Accounts and Audit Committee](#) during the year. Internal audit reports issued included reviews of the Asset Investment Strategy, cyber security and a number of financial systems including Treasury Management and Social Care payment systems. Where applicable, audit reviews also took into account changes in procedures introduced as a result of the pandemic. For a significant part of the year, as part of the COVID-19 response, the Service played a role in supporting other services in administering grants payments to eligible businesses.

The Annual Report of the Head of Internal Audit for 2020/21 stated that planned internal audit work has been subject to some disruption during 2020/21 as the Council has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. In supporting the Council's response to the pandemic and also as a result of disruption faced by other services, this has resulted in some changes in priorities from work originally planned. There has, however, continued to be a range of internal audit work undertaken during the year across each of the main areas of the Internal Audit Plan, which enables an audit opinion to be given. Where reviews have not been undertaken, this has been subject to review and where appropriate, take into account in revised plans going forward.

The report also concluded that follow-up audit work of areas previously reviewed demonstrates that progress is continuing to be made to improve controls and address risks previously identified, although further action is required in respect of some areas reviewed. Where areas for improvement have been identified during 2020/21, actions have been agreed with management to be followed up in 2021/22. In response to external inspection, improvement actions have continued to be progressed.

Given the above, based on assurance gathered during 2020/21, the Internal Audit Opinion is that, overall, the control environment encompassing internal control, risk management and governance, is operating to a satisfactory standard.

As the Council's External Auditors (appointed to audit the accounts of Trafford Council for five years, for the accounts from 2018/19 to 2022/23) Mazars LLP

provided regular updates to the [Accounts and Audit Committee](#) through the year including details of its planned work and findings.

The Council has robust arrangements in place for managing corporate risks, through the regular reporting of the strategic risk register; non-financial performance through regular reporting of its corporate plan priorities and through bi-monthly reporting of the revenue budget monitoring projections, capital programme performance and reserves position.

The budget position of the Council is also supported by a robustness statement from the Director of Finance and Systems, including an assessment on the overall adequacy of reserves.

With local authorities across the UK facing the challenges of reduced funding and increased demand for services, the need for robust financial management has never been more important. CIPFA has developed the Financial Management Code (FM Code), which sets out the principles by which authorities should be guided in managing their finances and the specific standards that they should seek to achieve. Using a proportionate approach, it is up to each authority to consider how it complies with the FM Code and to identify what action it should take to better meet the standards that the FM Code sets out.

2021/22 will be the first full compliance year for the FM Code and an internal assessment of the Council's performance against the FM Code is in progress. (CIPFA identified 2020/21 as a 'shadow year' to work towards full implementation). Initial assessment indicates that the Council does demonstrate considerable compliance with the FM code standards. Any actions that are agreed will ensure the Council maintains effective financial management arrangements moving forward.

At the [Council Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020](#) the Council approved an increase to the amount which could be made available for investment through the Council's Investment Strategy from £400m to £500m, supported by prudential borrowing, to support the Strategy. The strategy is to support economic regeneration and provide an investment return, supporting the Council's financial resilience and offering an additional solution to address future budget gaps.

To mitigate the risks of the approach nationally recognised investment advisors are being used as part of the due diligence process with emphasis placed on securing investments in low risk assets, with a balanced portfolio. All investment decisions are subject to approval by the cross party Investment Management Board.

Further risk mitigation is being undertaken through the creation of a "Risk Reserve" through the ring-fencing of an element of the returns and an allowance for debt repayment (in accordance with national regulations).

The budget for 2021/22 was approved by the Executive [17<sup>th</sup> February 2021](#) and set out the Council's Medium Term Financial strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24 including income and savings proposals to address the funding gap of £43.27m over next 3 years. The plan is a rolling document which is updated as changes in assumptions and conditions are known.

The Annual Budget Scrutiny exercise took place during December 2020 with the report being submitted to the [Executive on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021](#) and a response provided at the [Budget Executive Meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021](#).

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic the Council suspended the standard Scrutiny function and established a Pandemic Scrutiny Committee at the Extraordinary Meeting of Council on the [15<sup>th</sup> May 2020](#). Following its creation the Pandemic Scrutiny Committee met on a monthly basis up until December 2020. The work of the Committee culminated in a summary report to the Executive on the [14<sup>th</sup> December 2020](#). The Council's standard Scrutiny Function was re-established from January 2021 with each of the three Committees holding two meetings in the remainder of the municipal year.

A full review of the Council's Scrutiny function is planned for the 2021/22 municipal year.

CIPFA SOLACE Principle G	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
<p><b>Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council Website</li> <li>• Freedom of Information Publication scheme</li> <li>• Trafford Partnership Data Lab</li> <li>• Marketing and Communications Team</li> <li>• Annual Financial Statements</li> <li>• Annual Governance Statement</li> <li>• Annual Scrutiny Report</li> <li>• Corporate Plan</li> </ul>
<p><b>How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2020/21</b></p>	
<p>The Council has continued to work towards the seven strategic priorities identified within the Corporate Plan to enable Trafford residents, businesses and staff to thrive. The corporate plan continues to describe the Council's overall approach and outlines the Trafford vision. Quarterly reports on the Council's Performance against the Corporate Plan are provided to Executive, which include a written report plus a brochure that utilises qualitative data and case studies to outline achievements during the quarter.</p>	
<p>The corporate plan and delivery is based on key priorities and objectives and helps to measure the right things at the right time. It is used to continually improve how we work together and the way services are delivered are performance managed. The</p>	

plan is based on the quality and accuracy of current and forecasted information which produces meaningful measures of how partners and services are performing. This ensures the Council provides value for money and prioritises resources sufficiently.

Each service is responsible for delivery of its service plan which contributes to the wider corporate plan and is reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team, Directors and senior managers with input from all teams. This ensures accountability, transparency and good practices are in place.

The External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter 2019/20 was shared with Accounts and Audit Committee Members in May 2021 and is also included on the agenda for the 22 July 2021 Accounts and Audit Committee. The audit opinion reported was that the financial statements give a true and fair view of the Council's financial position as at 31 March 2020 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended and have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2019/20. There was one control deficiency highlighted to address with high priority and related to the difficulties encountered in obtaining sufficient evidence from the Council's external valuer to support the valuations from a sample of land & building and investment property assets, with the need for improved supporting documentation. The Council agreed an action plan which is being progressed.

The report also concluded that in all significant respects, the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2020, except in relation to Children's Social Care Services that have been assessed as "inadequate" by Ofsted. In terms of the latter point, the Auditors concluded that they were satisfied that the Council is taking urgent action to address the issues identified.

Findings from the 2020/21 external audit will be reported to the Accounts and Audit Committee later in 2021.

Information on the Council's decision making is open and transparent and continues to be published on the website. This includes publishing open data through its website, data.gov.uk and the Trafford Data Lab's website (trafforddatalab.io). A fundamental review of the Council's digital content will begin in October 2021 and improvements will be made to the scope and quality of information published via digital channels.

Open data is about increased transparency, about sharing the information we hold with the wider community to build useful applications. The data needs to be in open, machine readable formats that can be easily reused.

The Council has an open data webpage [Open data \(trafford.gov.uk\)](https://trafford.gov.uk/open-data) and reports on 9 key data sets outlined in the Local Government Transparency Code 2015.

- [Constitution](#)

- [Workforce information](#)
- [Payments to suppliers, Contract Register & Invitations To Tender \(ITT\)](#)
- [Waste contracts](#)
- [Fraud Prevention](#)
- [Voluntary Sector Grants](#)
- [Land and Building Assets](#)
- [Parking](#)
- [Public funeral information](#)

Additional open data regarding Trafford and surrounding areas, including visualisations and applications, is available on [Trafford Data Lab website](#).

Trafford Council's Communications and Marketing Team has been at the forefront of sending key messages to residents, businesses and other key stakeholders about how the Council has responded to the pandemic.

The communications strategy has centred around the following:

- The successful implementation and delivery of test and trace in Trafford
- The prevention and management of further coronavirus outbreaks in the borough
- The safe opening of Trafford's schools, economy and social life
- The successful implementation of the vaccine programme

During this period the guiding principle of the communications team has been to ensure transparency around the Council's activities. This has meant using plain English to ensure messages to key stakeholders were easily understood, with no hiding behind council jargon. The communications team have had to focus on speed over perfection as the pace of change has required the Council to deliver communications quickly to ensure relevance, but this has not been at the expense of accuracy.

There has been close partnership working with our key stakeholders throughout the pandemic to deliver consistent and meaningful messages to the public.

The team has reported to senior management and the Executive on a monthly basis to ensure their work remains in line with the Council's key corporate objectives. This has included analytics of media coverage, whether positive or negative, and levels of public engagement with social media output.

The team have produced a new Communication Strategy, which outlines their key objectives for the next 12 months. The team will continue to work hard to ensure the Council continues to interact with key stakeholders in an open and transparent manner.

During 2020/21 a total of 1183 Freedom of Information requests were received, of which 67% were responded to within the statutory timescale of 20 working days. Performance was impacted by the Covid Pandemic as many officers in service areas

who assist in collating information for FOI responses have necessarily prioritised other activities. FOI processes have recently been reviewed and improvements are being made around case management and oversight, with revised reporting strategies. The council will continue to monitor compliance closely on a regular basis with the target to increase the Council's compliance rate above 90%.

#### 4. Review of effectiveness

4.1 Trafford Council's Corporate Governance Code sets out the Authority's responsibility to undertake a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework on an annual basis. The review is informed by the work of the Council's executive managers, the Head of Internal Audit's annual report, by the external auditor's comments, and the results of reviews and inspections.

4.2 The processes applied, the sources of assurance obtained in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of governance arrangements, and, as part of that, the systems of internal control include the following:

Management Controls	Independent Assurance	External Assurance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Management</li> <li>• Programme Management</li> <li>• Performance Management</li> <li>• Risk Management</li> <li>• Legal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal Audit</li> <li>• Scrutiny</li> <li>• Health &amp; Safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External Audit</li> <li>• Other inspectorate e.g. OSTED, CQC</li> <li>• Sector led improvement e.g. LGA</li> </ul>

4.3 These governance functions are described in more detail within the Council's Corporate Governance Code and specific assurances or improvements delivered during 2020/21 are detailed in Sections 3 and 5 of this Statement.

4.4 The review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by the Accounts and Audit Committee concluded that the arrangements continue to be fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework. The areas which have been addressed and those which are to be addressed with new actions are set out in Section 5.

## 5. Significant Governance issues

- 5.1 The Council takes its responsibilities and duties seriously with regard to ensuring continuous improvement in the way that its functions are exercised and in the consideration of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 5.2 In the 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement a number of significant governance issues were identified. Below are the details of those significant governance issues followed by the action that the Council has taken in 2020/21 to address them.

2019/20 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2020/21
<p><b>Ofsted Report</b> - As a guiding template of good practice we will continue to use the Local Government Association’s paper on ‘Improvement in Children’s Services’ to inform not only the rewrite of the Improvement Plan and reporting methodology but also to help us take stock of the wider arrangements which underpin the Improvement Journey, such as governance, risk, innovation, engaging partners, supporting the workforce, effective use of resources, and leadership.</p> <p>The continued engagement and commitment of our Children’s workforce (internal and external) will be critical to our success. Having clear and effective communication, as well as clear leadership and vision, will be critical in this regard. Adopting a co-design approach to the refresh of our improvement plan will support this.</p> <p>Plans are in place to utilise the expertise from Future Gov, an independent advisory organisation, whose mission it is to ‘build on the best of places, supporting them to create a</p>	<p>In December 2020 Trafford completed a self-assessment that was subject to scrutiny and challenge via the NWADCS peer challenge and through the annual conversation process with Ofsted.</p> <p>During the year Trafford have appointed a Director of Early Help &amp; Children’s Social Care and a Strategic Lead for Practice Improvement and Learning. Both appointments are on a permanent basis and are critical to the progress of improvement.</p> <p>The improvement board has continued to meet on a 6 weekly basis and is chaired by the Council’s DfE Advisor. In December 2020 a full review of the improvement plan took place with a focus on the actions, timescales and progress. The review of the plan was presented to the Improvement Board on 19 January 2021 and the full report was provided to the Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee on the <a href="#">4<sup>th</sup> February 2021</a>. The review of the plan identified that there were no areas considered to be a risk to the plan of improvement (RAG rated red).</p> <p>The Quality Assurance framework was updated to ensure the Council considered the Ofsted finding, “managers at all levels need oversight and grip”. There has been an incremental approach to</p>

2019/20 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2020/21
<p>vision and organise for change in the internet and climate era. They will work alongside internal and external colleagues within the Children’s service to realign service delivery and governance arrangements so that the best possible outcomes are being achieved for Trafford’s Children’s whilst making sure value for money is at the heart of everything we do. This will be dovetailed with the creation of a dedicated and expanded project team whose role it will be to drive the improvement journey forward, manage risk and maintain effective communication channels.</p> <p>Looking forward to 2020/21, and in order to embed an outcome focused approach to our future improvement activity, the following measures were agreed by the Children’s services Improvement Board in September 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A revised and updated improvement plan that sets out clearly the strategy and Ambitions for our Children’s Services and how we will build on our partnerships for the next year.</li> <li>• The assignment of lead responsibility and membership of each work stream to further embed a collaborative approach</li> <li>• Agreed qualitative and quantitative measures of success aligned to each work stream</li> </ul>	<p>increasing the expectations of audit activity and the Council has supported managers undertaking audits with coaching sessions. The framework introduced the moderation function to provide oversight of audit which provides a consistent understanding of what good looks like across the service. These changes have led to a significant improvement in audit compliance and moderation. Quality assurance reporting has been developed to breakdown compliance and findings from audits by individual service areas, teams and practitioners, which enables the service to identify barriers to improvement.</p> <p>Monthly performance clinics have been introduced within service areas, which are chaired by the responsible Strategic Lead. The Director for EH &amp; CSC chairs a monthly Quality and Performance meeting where strategic leads present reports and an overview of performance in their areas. The DCS chairs a quarterly DMT performance clinic. This ensures that all levels of managers own quality assurance across the service. This strengthening of the services performance management approach has enabled reporting on patterns and trends within services. The findings from audit over the last year identified that most of cases are judged to be “requires improvement” or “good”.</p> <p>The Trafford Strategic Safeguarding Partnership (TSSP) has been developing a multi - agency framework to increase understanding of the quality of practice across the partnership, on the basis that no single agency can safeguard children in isolation.</p> <p>The service practice standards have been refreshed to help set clear expectations of what is safe and promotes relational practice with children and families. The practice standards were launched in</p>

2019/20 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2020/21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The reporting schema for the work streams to the Board on an agreed cycle, including feedback from partners and stakeholders;</li> </ul> <p>We are also working to further develop the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our quality assurance and performance activity so that every practitioner understands their own performance and how they are contributing to improving outcomes for the children they work with;</li> <li>• Multi-agency auditing and feedback systems and processes;</li> </ul> <p>Our Voice of the Child approach to provide a range of feedback mechanisms for children and families.</p>	<p>February 2021, following approval by SLT and DMT. In January 2021 the service started to roll out the use of Child Impact Chronologies, which are an integral tool in understanding each child's story and inform how the service plan for children.</p> <p>The Council have strengthened links from the improvement board to manager and practitioner forums to ensure there are clear lines of communication on practice matters and to provide a mechanism to feed information to the board. Learning from audits is a standard agenda item for these forums. Other learning spaces are in development which will be accessible to practitioners and linked to the findings from audits. A 'what good looks like' briefing has been developed to be shared across the service. Work has been completed to strengthen the practitioner forum and ensure that it is purposeful and impacts on practice. The Terms of reference and action plan for the forum has been updated to reflect the strengthened approach.</p> <p>A relational practice model is being progressed to build on the current restorative values. An engagement session was held with practitioners and a potential relational practice partner to understand what practitioners needed from a commissioned programme, and the procurement process has since commenced.</p> <p>The service worked on a reset of Partnership Governance to ensure clear alignment across all boards, with the aim to enable a clear line of sight on issues and actions being taken in respect of children from a wider partnership perspective. This was developed in collaboration with partners and stake holders as well as children, young people, parents and carers through the FutureGov work. There has been a lot of activity in progressing the governance including the</p>

2019/20 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2020/21
	<p>reconfiguration and launch of the Start Well Board to raise the status to become strategic and accountable for the different plans.</p> <p>A dedicated Children’s Commissioning Board has been set up with a focus on strategic commissioning so we are ensuring the right services are commissioned for children in Trafford based on need.</p> <p>There has been a desktop review of TSSP structure. The priorities of the safeguarding partnership are being aligned to the Ambitions plan to ensure a shared vision and avoid duplication. There has also been a review of strategic links to the TSSP to ensure the partnership is strengthened and relationships are established. A multi-agency quality assurance framework has been developed and was presented to the TSSP on 5 February 2021 for approval. The multi-agency framework will focus on quality of practice and impact. An update of this work was presented at the Improvement Board on 8 Dec 2020. Work is planned to strengthen relationships within the partnership at an operational level and the Strategic Lead for Practice Improvement &amp; Learning and the Strategic lead for Safeguarding are leading on this.</p>
<p><b>Medium Term Financial Position</b> - There are significant future challenges to the Council’s financial resilience due to uncertainty on matters outside of the Council’s control such as Brexit, the costs of the COVID 19 pandemic, which it will be required to fund directly and indirectly, or the impacts of commitments made under devolution. An added pressure is that the Council’s previous plans to deliver savings by Transformation may be constrained by the recent emergency.</p>	<p>During the course of 2020/21 the MTFP was continually reviewed to reflect changes in budget assumptions around pay and price inflation, changes in Government funding and growing demand pressure on social care services. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was closely monitored both for the effects this had on Council finances during the year and for future years. This exercise identified an overall budget gap for the three year period from 2021/22 of £43.27m, including £25.52m for 2021/22.</p>

2019/20 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2020/21
<p>The Corporate Director of Finance and Systems will consider the risks as part of the closure of accounts and during the monitoring arrangements for 2020/21.</p>	<p>The budget gap in 2021/22 was met by a combination of new funding, additional income and savings programme, including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A 4.99% increase in the council tax (1.99% general increase and 3% for adult social care) £5.20m;</li> <li>○ Income generation and service delivery savings £9.18m;</li> <li>○ Use of reserves £11.14m</li> </ul> <p>The remaining budget gap after the current round of budget proposals is £11.12m and £10.30m in 2022/23 and 2023/24 respectively.</p>
<p><b>Information Governance - Outstanding Subject Access Request volumes</b> - In October 2019 CLT agreed that additional resources were required to tackle the significant number of outstanding subject access requests covering Children’s Services. A business case was approved to recruit two additional Information Governance Officers (one permanent, one fixed term for one year) and up to two agency members of staff to cover the period while recruitment took place. The Agency members of staff were recruited in February/March and one remains with the council at the time of publication (November 2020). The recruitment of the permanent and fixed term positions was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the process was completed in July and two new officers took up post in September</p> <p>Electronic redaction software was purchased in May 2020 for members of the Information Governance team and the</p>	<p>Significant attention has been paid to Information Governance activities through a wide ranging IG Project which is principally focused on service improvement.</p> <p><b>Subject Access Requests</b></p> <p>In terms of outstanding Subject Access Request volumes, a number of actions have been taken, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Digitisation of a significant portion of records enabling the IG team to process SAR’s electronically.</li> <li>- Outstanding SARs reviewed and RAG rated</li> <li>- Review of processes and procedures</li> <li>- Improvement Plan developed</li> <li>- Prioritisation Strategy developed and implemented</li> <li>- Improved reporting mechanisms</li> <li>- Increased capacity within IG team with increase in IG Officers and establishment of a temporary Senior Information Governance Officer role and two temporary Information Governance Assistant roles</li> </ul>

2019/20 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2020/21
<p>Agency members of staff to enable SAR work to be tackled effectively remotely.</p> <p>A review of the Information Governance service is underway and part of this has involved a detailed review of SAR processes. A number of changes and improvements have been identified and, once their impact can be measured in combination with the additional staffing resources, a detailed recovery plan will be produced.</p> <p><b>Records Management</b> - The council is due to embark on an implementation programme for Microsoft 365. This will bring significant changes and improvements to the management of electronic records, in particular email. Proposals for a comprehensive review of email storage which will involve a review and deletion exercise has been presented and agreed by CLT and will be carried out ahead of implementation. New email management and retention policies/ protocols will also be developed and put in place. Implementation of Microsoft 365 has been delayed as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic but a specialist external partner has now been appointed to work alongside the council on this key digital project over the next 12 months. The challenges in relation to physical records remain to be tackled. However, it is an issue which remains on the Council's risk register and will be a key piece of work which will be documented in an updated IG work programme and work plan as part of the ongoing IG Service review.</p> <p><b>Data breach management</b> - The council experienced a small number of significant data breaches in the final quarter</p>	<p><b>Records Management</b> The IG Team have been heavily involved in M365 programme meetings particularly in Q3 and Q4 of 2020/21:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ advising on the compliance and security features within M365</li> <li>▪ advising on the records management elements of M365</li> <li>▪ advising on legacy arrangements in relation to email particularly in regard to compliance features and functionality</li> </ul> <p>The team has provided advice on the initial technical design document and compliance features and, in conjunction with the CDO, will be presenting the case for the adoption of the Local Government Functional Classification Scheme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This is a highly structured way of managing electronic records by function area. By organising existing records in line with the scheme, data would be migrated to the M365 SharePoint environment in a consistent, structured format bringing significant improvements to records management across the organisation, in particular in relation to accessibility of data, reduced duplication and standardisation.</li> <li>▪ Significant compliance benefits – ensures we only retain what we need in accordance with retention obligations</li> </ul> <p>The compliance challenges remain in relation to physical records but a work stream in relation to this is shortly to be progressed as part of the IG project. Options to be explored and considered include a large scale digitisation of physical records to both bring about improved management of records/compliance and on an invest to save basis to reduce physical storage costs.</p>

2019/20 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2020/21
<p>of 2019/20. These have resulted in extensive investigations. A key action arising from these is that a thorough review of the breach management process is to take place to ensure clearer distinctions of roles for Information Governance, managers within the organisation (who will have a key role in investigations where a breach has occurred within their service) and for Human Resources in serious cases. Alongside this there will be a training and awareness raising exercise and communication campaign. These actions and activities are all due to take place in 2020/21.</p>	<p><b>Data Breach Management</b></p> <p>A review of data breach handling is currently in progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is notable early success with an interim process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Weekly DPO summary incident reports prepared for Head of Governance and SIRO</li> <li>- Significantly speeds up incident reviews and decision making by designated information risk leads.</li> <li>- This is reducing risk from delayed oversight of data incidents.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Significant improvements to triaging of data incidents when reported to team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information Governance Manager (DPO) has twice weekly meetings with IG Officers to triage new data incidents.</li> <li>- Enables more serious incidents to be progressed on an urgent basis.</li> <li>- Ensures Incidents are allocated promptly for investigation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Data incident management procedures are to be more fundamentally reviewed and improvements made to ensure incidents are investigated promptly and effectively on a consistent basis. Tracking/follow up processes are also to be established to ensure necessary remedial actions are taken/preventative measures are implemented to safeguard data.</p>
<p><b>Amey Contract</b> - The Council will continue to actively manage the Amey contract within the performance management framework and contractual mechanisms available. The Council will conclude the options appraisal review and the future delivery in line with the options</p>	<p>The Council continues to actively manage the Amey contract, in accordance with the contract management framework. In November 2020 the Executive approved the commencement of the seven year review, setting the following key objectives from the review:</p>

2019/20 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2020/21
<p>identified by the Scrutiny committee task and finish group. The contract includes the provision for a seven year review, with the work on this to commence after five and a half years, which will be during the 2020/21 financial year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no net increase in service costs to the Council and deliver better value for money to tax-payers;</li> <li>• future service performance is focused on delivering key customer priorities and outcomes;</li> <li>• that service standards are protected as far as possible;</li> <li>• any financial or other risk transfer to the Council is limited; and</li> <li>• jobs and conditions of employment are protected.</li> </ul> <p>Covid-19 had a significant impact on the delivery of services through the contract, in particular for the domestic waste services. Business continuity plan had to be implemented in response to staff reductions due to covid or self-isolation, and the green bin service (compostable waste) was reduced to a fortnightly collection for much of the year. The Council agreed to provide a moratorium on financial penalties for much of the year as a result of the challenges due to Covid.</p>
<p><b>Business Continuity</b> - A corporate Coronavirus task and finish group has been established to identify business continuity plans to ensure services can be maintained in the event of a local outbreak. The group will monitor the national and local picture and respond to the changing position.</p> <p>Services are updating their Business Continuity Plans (BCP). This is in the event of managing staffing shortages in particular.</p> <p>A previous internal audit review reported a number of areas for development in business continuity in relation to the</p>	<p>During 2020/21 business continuity activity was focussed on the immediate task of ensuring that services were able to run through the pandemic, noting that the onset of Covid 19 is precisely the sort of unpredicted incident that services need to plan and prepare for.</p> <p>There are two principal strands to this work – one relating to the resilience of ICT Infrastructure and a second covering service business continuity. Work on both was halted in March 2020. Efforts were made to revive the programme in the autumn of 2020 but were once again stymied by the need to tackle the resurgence of covid. Both ICT and Emergency planning have resumed work on the</p>

2019/20 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2020/21
<p>following - roles and responsibilities; identification of priorities including completion of Business Impact Analyses (BIA) to identify the impact of disruptions; co-ordinated planning including incident management, recovery and resumption plans; monitoring to ensure compliance with the agreed process and testing of plans; and to ensure adequate, accessible records are maintained.</p> <p>As reported previously, a Business Case had been approved by CLT and work has started to review the Business Continuity Management process. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, priority was given to mobilise business critical services to ensure effective business continuity. This, therefore, reflects the risk level increasing. Procedures will continue to be reviewed across the Council during 2020 onwards.</p> <p>A full update briefing has been prepared and work continues however, plans are updated in response to the current challenges of Covid and winter preparedness, resources are impacting on the pace of the project and is regularly reviewed.</p>	<p>programme in the spring of 2021. In particular the commission to Greater Manchester CCRU to progress Business Continuity is being revived – and new work schedules and resources identified.</p>
<p><b>Impact of Brexit</b> - The nature of the UKs future trading relationship with the EU will be agreed by the end of the 2020 calendar year. As details of this emerge during the second half of the year the Brexit Preparedness Plan will be revised and updated, and aligned with the Covid-19 recovery plan and the work of the Trafford Partnership.</p>	<p>The UKs future trading relationship with the EU was agreed at the end of 2020, with a short transition period. The Council's Brexit preparedness plan has been kept updated, and was reported to the Executive along with the Economic Recovery Plan. The Council has commissioned a review of its Brexit plan and this will be reported to the Executive in July 2021.</p>

2019/20 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2020/21
<p><b>COVID-19</b> - The Council is continuing to work to the GM Pandemic Strategic Response Plan in preparing a coordinated response to the COVID 19 outbreaks in Trafford. The governance arrangements have been set up with the Recovery Coordinating Group Chaired by the Chief Executive of the Council. This acts at the gold command level.</p> <p>We published our Outbreak Management Plan as required on 30th June 2020 and have established two new Boards: a Health Protection Board, chaired by Eleanor Roaf (DPH) and a Public Engagement Board, to be chaired by the Leader of the Council. Three further Silver level thematic groups are meeting weekly chaired by Corporate Directors. They are Adults Health and Social Care, Chaired by Diane Eaton, Children’s Health and Social Care and Education Chaired by Jill McGregor and Operations and Resilience Group chaired by Sara Saleh and Richard Roe. Terms of reference have been established for all the groups with the key areas that each group will oversee and provide assurance that these critical areas are being addressed. A number of sub groups / and time limited task groups have been established.</p> <p>There has been an ongoing communication programme for residents, staff and partners. New HR arrangements have been issued to staff to facilitate home working. ICT capacity has been enhanced through an increase in VPN licences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid continues to provide a major risk to the borough. Trafford have continued with the governance arrangements established in 2019/20, and updated our Outbreak Management plan to address any issues relating to new variants.</li> <li>• A Health Protection board and Public Engagement Board were established and continue to meet fortnightly. The two Boards provide effective forums for sharing plans and for public engagement and dissemination.</li> <li>• The <a href="#">Director of Public Health’s Annual Report for 2020</a> was on the impact and learning from Covid; this has been discussed at the CCG Governing Body and at the Council/CCG Joint Leadership team and shadow One System Board. The report included discussion on the risk of the impact of COVID both on health and risks to health and care service delivery, and on the wider determinants of health such as possible increases in unemployment and homelessness and their potential impact the Council’s ability to meet its statutory duties.</li> <li>• Trafford have established a programme team to reduce and manage Covid risks</li> <li>• Trafford have established a new community engagement team to ensure that local people’s views and attitudes are understood, in order to effectively provide necessary support and advice</li> <li>• Trafford Council has been working with schools, care homes, businesses and workplaces throughout the pandemic to promote Covid secure arrangements and to support the management of any outbreaks</li> </ul>

2019/20 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2020/21
<p>Directorates have updated their business continuity plans to focus on critical services. Major changes have been implemented to working practices to ensure that all staff whose job role allows them to work from home are able to do so. A range of programmes to support residents and businesses to mitigate economic impact have been introduced.</p> <p>The Health and Social Care Group has progressed both strategic and operational work providing support to Care Homes, Direct Payments services, Home Care, Drug and Alcohol services and Domestic Abuse and, training for care providers. Commissioners have sought assurance of business continuity from all service providers. The group works closely with CCG , primary care and the Trafford Local Care Organisation</p> <p>The Children’s Social Care and Health is working towards trying to secure placement stability for Looked After Children, staffing resilience for maintaining front line critical services, children’s health and wellbeing, youth justice and cohesion and advising supporting school and educational settings.</p> <p>With the current high rates of infection in Trafford and the national lockdown in place, the plans for staff returning to work have been put on hold and staff are being encouraged to work from home wherever possible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trafford have robust arrangements in place for testing and contact tracing</li> <li>• The vaccination programme is progressing well and Trafford are now working to increase uptake to reach the 90% target in every LSOA</li> <li>• Trafford have recruited a dedicated communications officer for Covid messaging</li> <li>• Staff are continuing to be supported to work from home where possible and Trafford Council are ensuring the return to the office is being managed safely</li> <li>• Plans are in place to reduce the risks from any future increases in Covid rates</li> <li>• Trafford Council have been working with the CCG on the management of long Covid</li> <li>• Trafford have been providing support to businesses and individuals throughout the Pandemic</li> </ul>

2019/20 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2020/21
We have also identified resources for a neighbourhood based community engagement team to work in localities on community engagement and behaviour change in relation to Covid.	

**Significant Governance Issues 2021/22**

5.3 The Council is committed to achieving its objectives through good governance and continuous improvement. Going forward, the Council will continue to ensure the effective delivery of its objectives and manages its resources to meet the ongoing financial challenges being faced. Detailed below are significant governance issues and actions planned to address these in 2021/22.

<p><b>Continued impact of COVID 19</b></p>	<p>The Council is continuing to work to the GM Pandemic Strategic Response Plan in preparing a coordinated response to the COVID-19 outbreaks in Trafford. The governance arrangements have been set up with the Recovery Coordinating Group Chaired by the Chief Executive of the Council. This acts at the gold command level.</p> <p>Two boards are in place. A Health Protection Board, chaired by the Director of Public Health and a Public Engagement Board, now chaired by the Executive Member for Covid-19 Recovery and Reform</p> <p>Six Silver level thematic groups are meeting bi-weekly chaired by Corporate Directors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults Health and Social Care, Chaired by the Corporate Director of Adult Services</li> <li>• Children’s Health and Social Care and Education Chaired by the Corporate Director of Children’s Services</li> <li>• Infrastructure &amp; Economy – Chaired by the Corporate Director of Place</li> <li>• Infrastructure, Environment and Physical Activity – Chaired by The Corporate Director of Place</li> <li>• Staffing Digital and Modernisation - Chaired by the Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources</li> <li>• Resourcing – Chaired by the Corporate Director of Strategy and Resources</li> </ul>
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	<p>Terms of reference have been established for all the groups with the key areas that each group will oversee and provide assurance that these critical areas are being addressed. A number of sub groups / and time limited task groups have been established.</p> <p>The silver groups report monthly on progress and risk management. The frequency of meetings and reporting is monitored regularly.</p> <p>Additional resources have also been recruited to support the delivery of the recovery activity; reporting through The Health Protection Board</p> <p>There has been an ongoing communication programme for residents, staff and partners. New HR arrangements have been issued to staff to facilitate home working. ICT capacity has been enhanced through an increase in VPN licences. Directorates have updated their business continuity plans to focus on critical services. Major changes have been implemented to working practices to ensure that all staff whose job role allows them to work from home are able to do so. A range of programmes to support residents and businesses to mitigate economic impact have been introduced.</p> <p>The Health and Social Care Group has progressed both strategic and operational work providing support to Care Homes, Direct Payments services, Home Care, Drug and Alcohol services and Domestic Abuse and, training for care providers. Commissioners have sought assurance of business continuity from all service providers. The group works closely with CCG , primary care and the Trafford Local Care Organisation</p> <p>The Children's Social Care and Health is working towards trying to secure placement stability for Looked After Children, staffing resilience for maintaining front line critical services, children's health and wellbeing, youth justice and cohesion and advising supporting school and educational settings.</p> <p>With the current high rates of infection in Trafford and the national lockdown in place, the plans for staff returning to work have been put on hold and staff are being encouraged to work from home wherever possible.</p>
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	<p>The vaccination programme is underway, led by the CCG, and while uptake is excellent overall, there are inequalities emerging within this, which we are working to address.</p> <p>We have also recruited a neighbourhood based community engagement team to work in localities on community engagement and behaviour change, and vaccination uptake in relation to COVID.</p>
<p><b>Climate Change Emergency</b></p>	<p>The Council has an adopted climate change framework and action plan, and an agreed governance arrangement to oversee the Borough wide response to becoming carbon neutral. Central to this is the climate change and air quality commission which was established in 2021. An independent chair of the commission has recently been appointed and the work plan will be developed during the year. A business engagement group is to be established to co-ordinate activity and drive change across our business sector, and a citizen's panel will be established later in the year.</p>
<p><b>Financial Management and the Medium Term Financial Position</b></p>	<p>There remain future challenges to the Council's financial resilience caused by 11 years of funding reductions, the uncertainty around structural changes to local government finance, namely the Fair Funding Review, Business Rate Retention and social care financing. The ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic are still not fully known and the impact of Brexit will be something that will impact on our financial planning going forward. Future levels of Government support are unclear and whilst they will be informed by the Comprehensive Spending Review this will not be until later in the financial year, so planning future year's budget scenarios will be a challenge. An added pressure in year will be the capacity of the Council to deliver against its ambitious savings and income target required to balance the budget during 2021/22 given the pressures on the workforce as it recovers from the impact of the response and recovery from Covid-19.</p> <p>In terms of financial management standards, the Council is in the process of reviewing conformance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code, including confirming any actions for further development. At this stage, whilst it is considered that there is considerable conformance with the Code, actions identified include further embedding regular performance updates on the Council's joint venture vehicles and further development of asset management planning to inform the Capital Strategy.</p>

## Information Governance

### Records Management:

There are ongoing compliance issues being addressed around records management (retention of both physical and electronic records).

- A review of the council's physical storage position from both a compliance and cost perspective is underway and a paper setting out the position and recommended strategies will be produced by the middle of July.
- Significant improvements to the storage and retention of electronic records will be realised through the implementation of Microsoft 365. It will be recommended that, as part of this, the Local Government Functional Classification Scheme should be adopted. This will mean that poorly maintained shared network area folders will be replaced by a highly structured storage area utilising Sharepoint.

### Subject Access Requests (SAR):

Progress continues to be made in addressing SAR Backlogs. The IG Project team (Created July 2020) has completed its main review of the SAR's backlog and a new operating process has been implemented and an improvement plan is in place.

- The IG Team has recently completed recruitment activity and, with additional capacity, a significant reduction in the outstanding caseload will be achieved by the end of the year.

### Freedom of Information (FOI) / Environmental Information Regulations (EIR):

- A twin problem of a growing number of overdue outstanding FOI requests and falling compliance rate was identified at the beginning of the year and is being tackled. An FOI review project has been carried out. This had two primary objectives – to clear the outstanding backlog of requests and to implement process changes to enable sustained performance improvement. New processes and procedures have been developed and are in the process of being implemented. A key change involves the rollout of Iken software across the IG team and this will bring significant improvements to case recording and case management.
- Significant progress is being made completing and closing outstanding overdue requests which have approximately halved since February. The average compliance rate for

	<p>2020/21 to date is 63% (responded to within 20 working days). The target compliance rate (and ICO expectation) is 95%. Actions being taken through the FOI project seek to address this performance shortfall both in the near term and longer term.</p> <p><b><u>Data Breaches:</u></b></p> <p>Two significant data breaches had been referred to the ICO and both cases were closed with no actions required by the ICO. However, one has recently been reopened due to a complaint.</p> <p>Continued data incidents have reinforced that the most common problem involves correspondence (email or by post) being sent to the wrong address/recipient. This is still happening with greater regularity than it should and will be addressed by a renewed focus on training and awareness raising.</p> <p>Legal have worked on revised Process and procedures for data breaches and further work will be done on these during July as a discrete workstream as part of the IG Improvement Project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effective interim processes are in place in the meantime in the form of weekly DPO Data Incident summary reports for the Head of Governance and SIRO. Significantly speeds up incident reviews and decision making by designated information risk leads.</li> <li>- This is reducing risk from delayed oversight of data incidents.</li> <li>• Significant improvements to triaging of data incidents when reported to team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Information Governance Manager (DPO) has twice weekly meetings with IG Officers to triage new data incidents.</li> <li>- Enables more serious incidents to be progressed on an urgent basis.</li> <li>- Ensures Incidents are allocated promptly for investigation.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Together, the above issues raise the following risks – legal/regulatory (non-compliance with legal requirements), reputational, financial, adverse publicity.</p>
<b>Amey Contract</b>	The Council will continue to actively manage the Amey contract within the performance management framework and contractual mechanisms available. The Council will conclude the

	seven year review, setting out a new contractual relationship and performance framework for the second half of the contract
<b>Leisure Services</b>	<p>Trafford Council have appointed to the new position of Head of Leisure. This role will give additional resource and strategic focus to ensure the Investment Programme is aligned to the updated Physical Activity Strategy. They will be responsible for the Contract Management of Trafford Leisure CiC</p> <p>A new contract and Operating Agreement between Trafford Council and Trafford Leisure CiC will be developed and implemented to ensure the services are aligned to delivery of the outcomes identified through Trafford's Strategic Outcomes Planning Model which was commissioned via Sport England.</p> <p>The Terms of Reference for Trafford Council Leisure Board will be reviewed to ensure improved governance of the Leisure Investment Programme and other leisure related projects.</p> <p>The Council and Trafford Leisure are working on a financial plan to the end of this fiscal year but there are so many unknowns at present. Trafford Council made an application to the National Leisure Recovery Fund for the £570,000 which was successful and was transferred to support Trafford Leisure. 30% allocated to cover cost incurred from December 20 to March 21 and the other 70% to assist with reopening from May 21. Customers have started to return and direct debit have continued for some services but the cost base has been kept artificially low due to furlough. Now that furlough is starting to end and employees are being requested to return there is now a significant increase in resignations and whilst that enables some cost savings it means there is now a new risk re lack of staff to service the potential increase in activity as the final restrictions are lifted for the Leisure sector on 19.07.21. Ongoing financial monitoring between Trafford Council and Trafford Leisure finance teams continues on a monthly basis.</p> <p>There are plans to align Trafford Leisure's financial year with that of the Council starting with the workshops in July but at this point in time we only have 3 months trading.</p> <p>In addition, the implementation of the Investment Programme of refurbishing Altrincham, Stretford and Sale Leisure Centres had begun which will further impact income due to the on-site disruption.</p>

<p><b>Impact of Brexit</b></p>	<p>A report setting out the potential impact of Brexit on the Trafford economy will be presented to the Council Executive in July 2021, along with an update of the economic recovery plan. The Council will implement the recommendations of the plan during the year to maintain the health of the local economy, alongside a skills programme to ensure an inclusive economic recovery.</p>
<p><b>Ofsted Report</b></p>	<p>Trafford Children’s Services was inspected under the Inspection Local Authority Children’s Service Framework in March 2019 and received an overall rating of inadequate. The sub-judgements were Requires Improvement for children in need of protection, Requires Improvement for children in care and care-leavers and Inadequate for Leadership. Following this judgement a number of actions are in place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Improvement Board has continued to be in place with an Independent Chair (DfE) and attended by senior politicians and senior officers from the Council and key partners.</li> <li>• A full and comprehensive Improvement Plan is being implemented, this is continually reviewed and updated in line with our internal findings from quality assurance</li> <li>• Progress towards improvement continues to be monitored by the Department for Education regularly through the Involvement of our Improvement Advisor and DfE link officer.</li> <li>• Most recent DfE review in May 2021 concluded that:  <b><i>“The service has continued to improve throughout the last six months and the council remains driven and committed to improving outcomes for the children, young people and families of Trafford”</i></b></li> <li>• A monthly REACT meeting continues to take place with DfE regarding LA response to vulnerable children during the Covid pandemic. Our performance relating to visits to children open to CSC, vulnerable children attending school has been consistently strong during the past several months. The DfE report that they are assured that we know our children</li> <li>• Ofsted have conducted a recent Assurance Visit (23 Feb – 10 March 2021) and have confirmed that they have seen progress since the 2019 inspection but that there are further improvements to ensure consistency in the quality of practice that we need to progress. Ofsted feedback was that all of the areas they found as needing to improve had already been identified by the Senior Leadership team, plans are in place to address and that there are the right plans.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant changes have been made to the Early Help and Children’s Social Care Front Door processes to improve timeliness and quality of decision making. Discussions are now well developed with partners about an agreed approach to Early Help.</li> <li>• There has been significant focus on improving Quality Assurance processes across the service and better reporting to Senior Managers. These changes are starting to inform a better self-view of our quality of practice. There will be a focus on embedding improvements and measuring impact going forward. Ofsted noted the improvements that have been made in this area and there were assured that the information we can collate from QA processes is giving us the key information that we need to improve practice.</li> <li>• Whole Service redesign is commencing with formal consultation starting on 17 March 2021. This will be significant in how we organise ourselves to deliver the right service to children at the right time in a much clearer way. The workforce have been a part of the process with engagement sessions and follow up ‘show &amp; share’ sessions with staff.</li> <li>• During Covid-19 we have established processes to focus on keeping children safe and maintaining placement stability for our cared for children. Our ‘Sit-Reps’ have shown an average of 75% resilience in all services. There have been regular Incident meetings and sub-groups to ensure safe delivery of practice. We have issued new guidance to staff, initiated an extensive Work from Home programme, used a monitoring process to measure our performance and continued with key aspects of our Improvement Journey.</li> <li>• A strategic development partner has been appointed through a competitive tender process to further support strengthening our social care practice.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Business Continuity</b></p>	<p>A corporate Coronavirus task and finish group has been established to identify business continuity plans to ensure services can be maintained in the event of a local outbreak. The group will monitor the national and local picture and respond to the changing position.</p> <p>As instructed by the Corporate Leadership Team, services are updating their business continuity plans. This is in the event of managing staffing shortages in particular.</p> <p>A previous internal audit review reported a number of areas for development in business continuity in relation to the following - roles and responsibilities; identification of priorities including completion of business impact analyses (BIA) to identify the impact of disruptions; co-ordinated planning including incident management, recovery and resumption plans; monitoring</p>

	<p>to ensure compliance with the agreed process and testing of plans; and to ensure adequate, accessible records are maintained.</p> <p>As reported previously, a Business Case had been approved by CLT and work has started to review the Business Continuity Management process. In response to the COVID-19 crisis, priority was given to mobilise business critical services to ensure effective business continuity. Procedures will continue to be reviewed across the Council.</p> <p>The onset of the pandemic further impeded progress on the completion of a comprehensive set of plans whilst also improving greater internal resilience.</p> <p>Regulatory and ICT Services have now met to review work undertaken so far, update this and pull together a revised plan for completing the Programme. Internal Audit will also provide input and will join the next meeting in July.</p>
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The Council is committed to achieving its objectives through good governance and continuous improvement. Going forward, the Council will continue to ensure it delivers its objectives and manages its resources to meet the ongoing financial challenges being faced.

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters 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.