

## Appendix C – Principles of Good Governance Annual Review

Principle	Evidence of Compliance
<p><b>A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law</b></p> <p>Local government organisations are accountable not only for how much they spend, but also for how they use the resources under their stewardship. This includes accountability for outputs, both positive and negative, and for the outcomes they have achieved.</p>	<p>Integrity is one of the overarching values of the Council as set out in the Council Strategy. The behaviours that demonstrate this are set down in the Councillors' Code of Conduct (which was updated in 2024-25), and in the Officers Code of Conduct and Behaviour Framework.</p> <p>The values and behaviours detailed within the Behaviour Framework are being incorporated into all relevant HR Policies and Procedures. This will assist to ensure that this is part of the conversation all staff are having in regular performance and supervision meetings.</p> <p>Officers joining the Council are now provided with in person inductions organised by HR. This is intended to ensure that all new staff understand how decisions are made and so that they know the culture in which we operate.</p> <p>Training is provided for Members on an annual basis, including Training on the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>At the Annual Council in May 2025, Members unanimously adopted a Councillor Charter further highlighting the commitment to ethical behaviours.</p>
<p><b>B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement</b></p> <p>Local government is run for the public good, organisations therefore should ensure openness in their activities. Clear, trusted channels of communication and consultation should be used to engage effectively with all groups of stakeholders, such as individual citizens and service users, as well as institutional stakeholders.</p>	<p>The Council is committed to openness and undertakes extensive stakeholder engagement with the communities that we serve.</p> <p>Formal decisions of the Council, Executive and other Council bodies are publicised in advance on the respective forward plans, and all public meetings are live streamed and recorded. The Council permits public participation in ordinary meetings of Council, Executive and Planning Committees and third parties regularly appear at Scrutiny Committees. Decisions of the Council are available on the Councils website.</p> <p>The Council has undertaken a number of significant consultations, including the Draft Budget 2025/26, the Proposed Extension to Newbury Town centre</p>

	<p>Pedestrianisation, a Draft Carers Strategy, the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Thematic Review (2025), and the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment 2025.</p> <p>The Council began a programme of holding Community Forums in 2023. These are held in various locations across the district and are also accessible online. The two most recent events have considered Planning and then Highways.</p> <p>The Council has been working with the Voluntary and Charitable Sector to develop a Memorandum of Understanding to facilitate more effective joint working and to improve support and outcomes for vulnerable groups.</p>
<p><b>C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits</b></p> <p>The long-term nature and impact of many of local government's responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable.</p> <p>Input from all groups of stakeholders, including citizens, service users, and institutional stakeholders, is vital to the success of this process and in balancing competing demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available.</p>	<p>The Council Strategy 2023-2027 sets out the Council's strategic ambition and provides direction to everyone in the Council to ensure that all services are working together to support the priorities set out in the strategy and corresponding Department Plans.</p> <p>The Council Strategy also provides focus for the Executive and Senior Leadership Team and provides a framework by which the Council's performance can be evaluated. Reports presented to decision makers highlight where decisions are intended to support strategic priorities. Reports also provide a clear summary highlighting the impacts (positive or negative) of the proposed decision.</p> <p>In the past year, the Council has consulted on and approved a number of significant strategic documents, including the West Berkshire Local Plan Review 2022-2039, and the Waste Management Strategy 2025-32. The Council has undertaken consultation on the Draft Local Transport Plan which is due for approval in 2025. These plans and strategies will support effective decision making.</p>
<p><b>D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes</b></p>	<p>The Council undertake regular reviews of performance.</p> <p>Quarterly Finance and Performance reports are considered by the Scrutiny Commission (now</p>

<p>'Local government achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory, and practical interventions (courses of action). Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that local government has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved. They need robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure that their defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best trade-off between the various types of resource inputs while still enabling effective and efficient operations.'</p>	<p>Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee), prior to being presented to Executive. This ensures that the Council can demonstrate progress against its stated priorities, and highlights areas of risk.</p> <p>The Council sets its budgets following extensive internal governance, and after meaningful external consultation and engagement has taken place. The Council has a clear Medium Term Financial Strategy, approved by Council prior to setting the annual budget, which supports delivery of the Council Strategy.</p> <p>A mid-term review of the Council Strategy was considered by Council in May 2025, and this highlighted a number of proposed changes to the manner of reporting against performance indicators agreed as part of the Council Strategy Delivery Plan.</p> <p>The Council has received a number of Peer Reviews in the past year, which have assisted to identify both areas of strength and areas for improvement. Action plans have been developed in response to each of those.</p> <p>The Council has a Social Value Policy in place, and this will be reviewed in the coming year to ensure that the Council continues to secure appropriate social value when undertaking commissioning activities.</p>
<p><b>E. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</b></p> <p>'Local government needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications and mindset, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve intended outcomes within the specified periods. A local government organisation must ensure that it has both the capacity to fulfil its own</p>	<p>The Council has developed an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) to support recruitment and retention, with a new EVP and Careers site launched in October 2024. Whilst there remain some areas where recruitment is still challenging, the reduction in agency spend by £5 million over the past 2 years is evidence of the improved offer.</p> <p>All staff complete an annual appraisal and a personal development plan to identify areas of training and development that will support the employee to progress in their career. Objectives and the personal development plan will be reviewed at regular one to ones.</p> <p>The Council has a fairly new senior leadership team, and a number of workshops have taken place with this group to develop and maximise on its cohesion and effectiveness.</p>

<p>mandate and to make certain that there are policies in place to guarantee that its management has the operational capacity for the organisation as a whole.'</p>	<p>Although the Council has seen some reductions on the budget available for training, the Council is currently <b>utilising 100%</b> of its Apprenticeship Levy to support employees to complete apprenticeships.</p> <p>The Council also fully launched its new Learning Platform in 2025, and this too has expanded the number of courses that are available to staff.</p> <p>There is an annual programme of Member Development that is approved by Council each year to support Members to discharge their roles effectively.</p>
<p><b>F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</b></p> <p>'A strong system of financial management is essential for the implementation of policies and the achievement of intended outcomes, as it will enforce financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery and accountability.'</p> <p>'It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny are in place as a key part of accountable decision making, policy making and review. A positive working culture that accepts, promotes and encourages constructive challenge is critical to successful scrutiny and successful service delivery.'</p>	<p>The Council has operated with well-established systems of internal control for its financial resources. However, as a result of the low levels of reserves that the Council was operating with, additional internal controls were established, which included the creating of a 'Financial Review Panel' to consider recruitment activities and significant spend.</p> <p>As a result of the Council seeking Exceptional Financial Support in 2025, additional controls are being introduced to ensure that budget setting and management of budgets is robust and effective.</p> <p>As noted above, Financial and Performance reports are considered on a quarterly basis by the Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee and Executive.</p> <p>The Council updated its Risk Management Strategy in December 2024, and training has been delivered to support staff in understanding the need for robust risk management, and to support them in fulfilling their duties when considering risks.</p> <p>The Governance Committee receives a Risk management Report twice a year to provide assurance that the Council is appropriately reviewing and assessing risks. This Committee also approves the Internal Audit Plan 2025-28, which includes an Anti-Fraud Work Plan. Internal Audit is a key element of the assurance process in respect of governance arrangements and fraud prevention.</p>

	<p>Risks are reviewed on a quarterly basis by the internal Risk management Group and at Corporate Board. These bodies also receive updates on Information Security, including a review of incidents that have occurred resulting in data breaches.</p> <p>Officers are required to complete Data Protection Training on an annual basis, and levels of training are checked as part of the quarterly reviews.</p>
<p><b>G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability</b></p> <p>Accountability is about ensuring that those making decisions and delivering services are answerable for them. Effective accountability is concerned not only with reporting on actions completed but also ensuring that stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the organisation plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner. Both external and internal audit contribute to effective accountability.</p>	<p>As noted above, Financial and Performance reports are considered in public on a quarterly basis by the Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee and at Executive.</p> <p>The Governance Committee will receive reports from Internal Audit regarding the Internal Audit Plan and progress against that. These reports will highlight cases where there is limited assurance following an inspection or follow-up inspection. An update is provided to the Governance Committee in respect of progress made against outstanding recommendations in previous reports <b>where there was limited assurance</b>.</p> <p>The Governance Committee will also consider the External Auditor Plan and did so at the meeting of the Governance Committee which took place on the 29 April 2025. This identified a number of significant risks, including valuation of property and fraud risk.</p>