Principles of Good Governance Annual Review
Completed May 2026

Principle	Evidence of Compliance
A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law 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.	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), the Councillor Charter, and in the Officers Code of Conduct and Behaviour Framework. 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. 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. Training is provided for Members on an annual basis in accordance with a programme approved by Council, including Training on the Code of Conduct.
B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement 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	The Council is committed to openness and undertakes extensive stakeholder engagement with the communities that we serve. 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. Council meetings during the 2025-26 financial year received over 16,000 views on You Tube. 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.

service users, as well as institutional stakeholders.	The Council has undertaken a number of significant consultations, including the proposals for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire, the draft budget for 2026/27, the Draft Playing Pitch Strategy, the proposed Extension of pedestrianisation for Newbury Town Centre, and a Health Visiting Service survey. 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. The Council formally approved the adoption of a Voluntary and Charitable Sector Memorandum of Understanding, which had been developed in consultation with key VCS stakeholders, to facilitate more effective joint working and to improve support and outcomes for vulnerable groups.
C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits 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. 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.	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. 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. The Council acknowledged the launch of the Local Government Outcomes Framework, and this has been incorporated into the Council's performance reporting since September 2025. In the past year, the Council has consulted on a number of significant proposals, including proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire, proposals for Pedestrianisation for Newbury Town Centre, the budget for 2026-27, and a Residents Survey.

	This engagement helps to ensure that decision making is informed and undertaken in a transparent manner.
D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes '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. '	The Council undertakes regular reviews of performance. Quarterly Finance and Performance reports are considered by the Scrutiny Commission (now 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. 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. The Council has received a number of External 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. The Council will be updating its Procurement Strategy to reflect the Procurement Act 2023, and alongside this, will adopt a Think Local Social Value Policy. This has been informed by key stakeholders and will ensure that the Council secures the right balance between best value and social value.
E. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it 'Local government needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications and mindset, to operate efficiently and effectively	The Council developed an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) to support recruitment and retention and whilst there remain some areas where recruitment is still challenging, the cumulative savings in agency spend of £13 million over the past 3 years is evidence of the improved offer. 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.

and achieve intended outcomes within the specified periods. A local government organisation must ensure that it has both the capacity to fulfil its own 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.'	The Council has a fairly new senior leadership team, and a number of workshops have taken place with this group over the past year to develop and maximise on its cohesion and effectiveness. The new SLT was highlighted as a risk in the previous Internal Audit Annual Assurance Report, although this is now recognised as an improving situation. Internal Audit raised a concern during the year that Audit Recommendations were not always being followed through, which may have been linked to changes in senior managers. In order to ensure that all audit recommendations are implemented, Service Directors will be required to provide updates during the Quarterly Assurance meeting of SLT. 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. There is an annual programme of Member Development that is approved by Council each year to support Members to discharge their roles effectively.
F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management '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.' 'It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny are in place as a key part of accountable decision	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' ('FRP') to consider recruitment activities and significant spend. Following the Council seeking Exceptional Financial Support in 2025, additional controls were introduced to ensure that budget setting and management of budgets is robust and effective. This included an assurance review by CIPFA, which informed the actions detailed in the Financial Improvement Plan('FIP'), adopted in December 2025. There is enhanced financial governance arrangements, including a review of FRP, and the introduction of a Spend Panel and a Finance Improvement Group that is supported by external Peers. The FIP also introduced the four GPAW Boards linked to the themes of Growth, Prevention, Assets, and We Can Culture. These Boards will be critical for the

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.'	delivery of improved financial resilience and for the Council to become financially sustainable. As noted above, Financial and Performance reports are considered on a quarterly basis by the Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee and/ or Executive. The Council updated its Risk Management Strategy in December 2024, and training has been delivered to support staff and the Governance Committee understanding the need for robust risk management, and to support them in fulfilling their duties when considering risks. A review was also undertaken to ensure that risks are assessed having regard to risk appetite, and demonstrating to what extent the risk score deviates from the acceptable risk exposure. 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 2026-29, 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 providing independent, risk-based, and objective assurance, advice, insight, and foresight. The Internal Audit Team achieved the 'Fully Conforms' rating from the most recent external review in 2023, which checked compliance by Internal Audit with professional standards Risks are reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Senior Leadership Team, along with Health and Safety, Complaints, FOI and Information Security. This includes a review of any significant incidents that have occurred. Officers are required to complete Data Protection Training on an annual basis, and levels of training are checked as part of the quarterly reviews.
G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability	As noted above, Financial and Performance reports are considered in public on a quarterly basis by the Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee and/or at Executive.

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.	The Governance Committee will receive reports from Internal Audit regarding the Internal Audit Plan and progress against that. The Committee are also presented with an update on the delivery of the Anti-Fraud Work Plan. 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 where there was limited assurance. The Governance Committee will also consider the External Auditor Annual report and Plan. The Annual report for (2024-25), presented at the meeting of the Governance Committee in January 2026 identified a number of significant Value for Money risks, including financial resilience and the Dedicated Schools Grant. It is also of note that the External Auditors also confirmed that they did not identify a risk of significant weakness in the areas of the Council's governance or arrangements for improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness due to "the procedures performed during our risk assessment identifying the Council to have appropriate and effective processes in place."