

## TRAFFORD COUNCIL

**Report to:** Accounts and Audit Committee  
**Date:** 26 November 2020  
**Report for:** Approval  
**Report of:** Corporate Director of Governance and Community Strategy

### Report Title

Annual Governance Statement – 2019/20

### Summary

The preparation and publication of an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is necessary to meet the statutory requirement set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. This report provides the final version of the 2019/20 AGS.

The Committee previously received a report in July setting out the Draft AGS. Draft versions of the AGS had also previously been shared and reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team.

Since the draft version was presented to the Accounts and Audit Committee on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020 a number of the significant issues for 2020/21 have been updated. Those which have been updated are highlighted within the document. Any further issues arising in 2020/21 impacting on governance and developments in relation to governance issues reported to date will be considered as part of the process for compiling the 2021/22 AGS.

### Recommendation

The Accounts and Audit Committee is asked to approve the 2019/20 Annual Governance Statement.

### Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

Name: Alexander Murray – Democratic and Scrutiny Officer

Extension: 4250

**Background Papers:** None



# TRAFFORD COUNCIL

## **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2019/20**

## Executive Summary

The 2019/20 municipal year has seen the Council building upon the foundations put in place in the previous municipal year, when it adopted a new Corporate Plan for Trafford. The Corporate Plan is now in its second of four years and describes Trafford Council's vision and priorities for the borough. Based on seven strategic priorities, the Plan is a plan for the whole community and provides the detail of what the Council will do and how it will work with our communities and its partners to deliver change to Trafford in line with these commitments. The Council monitors its performance against the Corporate Plan, and reports performance quarterly to the Corporate Leadership Team and the Executive.

The Council's Change Strategy "Building a Winning Culture #EPIC" continued to evolve throughout 2019/20. The new organisational values, empower, people centred, inclusive and collaborative from which the acronym of EPIC was created, are now embedded in all of our people and engagement activities.

The Council has developed a system wide Health and Social Care Locality Plan with a focus on integrating a Strategic Commissioning Function (SCF) between the Council and the CCG. Working with partners across the sector, the plan builds on the great work previously undertaken and takes a place based approach in working with the VCFSE and local community groups. It focuses on two key methodologies:

- the delivery of support as close to home as possible and,
- on further developing person and community centred approaches.

Trafford has a Local Care Alliance (LCA) in place to contribute to, shape, monitor and assure the system of progress against the plan and to ensure all partners across health and social care are engaged.

The Council has continued to strengthen and develop its Investment Strategy. In February 2020 the Council approved an increase to the 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.

The end of the municipal year saw the introduction of lockdown measures as a result of the COVID pandemic outbreak. The pandemic emergency has had a huge impact on the Council and its communities which is likely to be felt for many years. The response saw the creation of a number of community outlets for support; these will be developed

further with the communities to embed the commissioning response and approaches for the future and support the “ build back better “ approach to recovery and reform.

## **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 2020 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 (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 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 August 2020 (previously 31 May)
- Public Inspection Period to start on or before first working day of September 2020 (previously included first 10 working days of June)
- Publish Final Audited Accounts 30 November 2020 (previously 31 July)

The Authority meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 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 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 (Corporate 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 Corporate 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 2019/20 in line with the seven governance principles

CIPFA SOLACE Principle A.	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
<b>Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constitution</li> <li>• Employee Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Members Code of Conduct</li> <li>• Register of Interests</li> <li>• Disciplinary Policy</li> <li>• ICT Acceptable Use Policy</li> <li>• Anti-Fraud &amp; Corruption Strategy</li> <li>• Confidential Reporting Code</li> <li>• Standards Committee</li> <li>• Corporate Governance Code</li> </ul>
<b>How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2019/20</b>	
<p>A Constitutional review of the Council’s Recruitment and Employment Procedures was conducted during the year. The review was done by an external legal practice with the resulting changes being submitted to the Council’s Employment Committee and Standards Committee before being approved by <a href="#">Council 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019</a>.</p> <p>A working group of the Council’s Standards Committee carried out a review of the Member Officer Protocol which was reported to the <a href="#">Standards Committee 25<sup>th</sup> September 2019</a> before being approved by Council. The Standards Committee oversaw the Council’s response to the report on Local Government Ethical Standards by the Committee on Public Standards in Public Life, which was published in January 2019. The response involved reviewing the Members Code of Conduct, complaint’s procedure, and register of interests to bring them in line with the 14 areas of best practice listed within the report. A report was delivered at the <a href="#">Standards Committee 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020</a> which covered all the proposed changes. The implementation of the actions by Council has been delayed due to the impact of COVID 19.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The 2018/19 Annual Report for the Counter Fraud and Enforcement team was presented to the <a href="#">Accounts and Audit Committee on 29 July 2019</a> outlining fraud prevention and detection activities and planned work for 2019/20. The team has primarily focused on revenues related fraud relating to Council tax, Business rates and Adult social care funding misuse. An annual report for 2019/20 will be reported to the Accounts and Audit Committee later in 2020.</p> <p>The Council continues to participate in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) data matching exercise. An update was provided by the Audit and Assurance Service to the <a href="#">Accounts and Audit Committee on 5 February 2020</a> setting out work undertaken</p>	

and outcomes from work completed in 2019/20.	
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>• Budget Consultation</li> <li>• Trafford Partnership Board &amp; Strategic Boards</li> <li>• Public Service Reform Board &amp; Operational Group</li> <li>• Building Strong Communities Strategy</li> <li>• Locality Working Programme</li> <li>• Joint Strategic Needs Assessment</li> </ul>
<b>How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2019/20</b>	
<p>The Council continued to webcast all Executive, Council, and Committee meetings via the Trafford Council website and YouTube Channel. During the move to virtual meetings in response to the COVID 19 pandemic the Council used a combination of Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and YouTube to ensure openness of the Council's decision making process and engagement with stakeholders, including Trafford residents, was maintained.</p> <p>Trafford Council has is committed to listen to the views of residents and business and have carried out several consultations on a number of schemes across the borough during the last 12 months. The three main consultations events were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The future of Stretford Centre which was held in November. A further consultation session was held on 25 January 2020 to outline feedback from the first event, and provide further opportunities for local people and groups to share ideas that can shape the future of Stretford.</li> <li>• The Civic Quarter Masterplan. Large-scale proposals for the development of the former Kellogg's site in Stretford. Bruntwood Works and Trafford Council announced plans for a residential-led mixed use development to include housing, primary school, offices and public realm.</li> <li>• Phase II of the Altrincham Leisure Centre consultation was conducted to gather a wider range of input and engagement. This helped the Council to achieve the best possible solution and maximised the potential of the site for the local area.</li> </ul> <p>The Council has developed a system wide health and social care locality plan, that builds on the great work previously undertaken, including the One Trafford Response pilot, and working with partners across the sector including a place based approach in work with the VCFSE and local community groups, focusing on two key methodologies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the delivery of support as close to home as possible and,</li> </ul>	



- on further developing person and community centred approaches, which together maintain connections and reconnect people to their local communities, reduces social isolation, empowers residents and develops citizen support to neighbours. The COVID pandemic outbreak has seen the creation of a number of community outlets for support; these will be developed further with the communities to embed the commissioning response and approaches for the future and support the “ build back better “ approach to recovery and reform.

Trafford has a Local Care Alliance (LCA) in place to contribute to, shape, monitor and assure the system of progress against the plan and to ensure all partners across health and social care are engaged. The LCA has an independent chair to ensure an objective and external view is supporting the development. The Joint Commissioning board (JCB) for Trafford, meets regularly and brings together members across Trafford council and Trafford CCG governing body. Their refocused objectives are to challenge delivery against the plan and support the system changes, unblock barriers and assure progress.

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

**How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2019/20**

The [Corporate Plan](#) is now in its second of four years and describes Trafford Council’s vision and priorities for the borough. It provides the detail of what the Council will do and how we will work with our communities and our partners to deliver change to Trafford in line with these commitments. The Council has identified seven strategic priorities that we believe are key to enabling Trafford residents, businesses and staff to thrive. Our priorities set out our aspirations for our people, place and communities, and how they can affect and improve their daily lives. These are:

- Building Quality, Affordable and Social Housing
- Health and Wellbeing
- Successful and Thriving Places
- Children and Young People
- Pride in Our Area
- Green and Connected
- Targeted Support

These priorities are not just for the Council but for the whole community and have been shared with members of the Trafford Partnerships. To achieve our aims we will work closely and effectively with partners, residents, businesses and communities to make this a success. While the corporate plan spans just four years it is aimed at

building foundations which will guarantee that Trafford is sustainable in the long term financially (by creating a thriving local economy), socially (by building strong communities who are proud of their area), and environmentally (by implementing local solutions to aid the global effort to combat climate change).

Trafford has progressed the second year of delivery against its 5 Year Health and Social Care Locality Plan with a focus on integrating a Strategic Commissioning Function (SCF) between the Council and the CCG. There has been significant development of work to build a SCF programme of work that includes the integration of 4 commissioning teams. The programme will include work to align to the statutory commissioning functions of the Director of Adult Social Care (DASS) and the Director of Children's Services (DCS). The governance to support this programmes sits with the newly created Health and Social Care Commissioning Advisory Board (HSCCAB) which in turn reports to the Trafford Joint Commissioning Board (TJCB).

Consideration and approval by the Authority of its future budget for 2019/20 took place at its [20 February 2019 full Council meeting](#). Due to increasing cost pressures on Adult Social Care, the Council Tax recommendation resulted in a specific 1% increase to be implemented to finance expenditure in this area and a 2.99% Council Tax increase for other services.

The Authority has spent its resources within the overall agreed budget for the financial year 2019/20, delivering a net saving of £298k. There was £1.4m of budget pressures linked into COVID-19 which were financed from government grant. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Central Government has provided several grants including COVID-19 un-ring-fenced grants totalling £12.658m (£6.119m of which was received on 27 March 2020 and the net balance of £4.722m has been carried forward into 2020/21 via an earmarked reserve) to meet urgent and unforeseen costs and financial pressures impacting on the Council and the Trafford economy. The Council also received a grant of £10.832m at the end of March to support cash flow. This was a cash advance of Government funding anticipated in 2020/21.

Further additional funding of £48m was made available to the Council (in 2020/21) via the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, funding to provide grant support to local businesses. The Council will act as an Agent in administering the grants scheme to those in receipt of Small Rates Business Relief or the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant funding.

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy continued to be reviewed and updated throughout the year, culminating with the setting of a balanced budget for 2020/21 on the [19<sup>th</sup> February 2020](#).

Trafford has a strong commitment to working with the Armed Forces Community and the requirements set out in the Armed Forces Covenant were recognised by the

<p>Ministry of Defence in November 2019, the Council being awarded the Covenant Gold Award. The Council's Armed Forces work goes beyond the Council's statutory obligations and included implementing changes to policy, employment assistance and support of reservists and veterans at times of need.</p>	
CIPFA SOLACE Principle D	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
<p><b>Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transformation Programme</li> <li>• Annual Delivery Plan</li> <li>• Medium Term Financial Plan</li> <li>• Efficiency Plan</li> <li>• Capital Investment Programme</li> <li>• Social Value Framework</li> </ul>
<p><b>How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2019/20</b></p>	
<p>The Council monitors its performance against the corporate plan, and reports performance quarterly to the Corporate Leadership Team and the Executive. The performance reports went to the Executive on the <a href="#">6<sup>th</sup> January 2020</a>, and the <a href="#">16<sup>th</sup> March 2020</a>. The report delivered in March showed that of the 15 performance indicators 8 were over performing, 3 were underperforming but still predicted to meet annual targets, and the remaining 4 were underperforming and rated as amber, with exception reports written as appropriate. The transformation outcomes continue to be monitored through Finance and the Corporate Leadership.</p> <p>In determining a balanced budget for 2019/20, an overall budget gap of £13.44m needed to be addressed by a combination of additional resources of £6.58m and £6.86m of service savings and additional income. The Authority has spent its resources within the overall agreed budget for the financial year 2019/20, delivering a net saving of £298k</p> <p>In order to achieve the long-term financial targets, the Authority at its February 2020 meeting set a budget for the financial year 2020/21 supported by an appropriate assessment of risk by the Corporate Director of Finance and Systems. All the expected risks pre the pandemic to the Authority as at <a href="#">Council Meeting 19 February 2020</a> were considered in the budget report. The future savings required by the Council along with the planned achievement from future transformation were also presented.</p> <p>The 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.</p> <p>The 2020/21 budget was set pre-pandemic. The resources available to the Council reflected the pre-COVID operating environment and were deployed to continue to</p>	

improve performance and reflect the agreed objectives of the Council.

Trafford Council has been working in collaboration with Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and key partners to continue to enhance the joint working seen in the previous year. The next phase of work will focus on wider partnership engagement and alignment to work on community infrastructure that is sustainable and able to deliver the humanitarian aid required for the future spikes in infection outbreaks of COVID 19. The Joint Commissioning Board is committed to forming a Joint Committee to explore pooled and aligned budget opportunities.

The One Trafford Estate programme is in place and in December 2017, Trafford Council were awarded an £85,000 grant to undertake a 'Locality Asset Review' (LAR). The review assesses the size of the public estate required for the future delivery of improved services and establishes a strategic plan for redesign of the estate. The LAR Was approved by the Executive at their meeting on the [24<sup>th</sup> June 2019](#), and will be delivered through a Strategic Estates Group.

In March 2020 work completed on the refurbishment of Urmston Leisure Centre, which is the first stage in a larger programme of work. All Trafford Leisure centres were required to close as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown on the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2020, which has had a severe impact on the financial position of Trafford Leisure CIC, and as a result the remainder of the investment programme will be reviewed during the 2020/21 financial year.

The Executive at their meeting on the [15<sup>th</sup> July 2019](#) approved the Playing Pitch Strategy Review, Long Term Security of Tenure and Local Football Facilities Plan which sets out the overall strategy for managing playing pitches in the Borough.

STAR has four key strategic partners and two additional partners: Trafford, Rochdale, Stockport and Tameside and also Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group and Tameside Clinical Commissioning group. STAR continues to exceed savings targets and its wider performance indicators set annually. During 2019/20 STAR commenced using a Social Value tool and new approach (Social Value Portal) and for the STAR partners this has been immensely successful, with a year on securing 25% of the contract value in added value to be delivered during the life of the contracts equating to £31m. This also captures and reports on local/Greater Manchester spend, Small and Medium size Enterprises/Voluntary Community Social Enterprise sector bidding and winning contracts. It has established a more robust contract management function.

Trafford created the Community Response to COVID-19 project to establish a coordinated response to the overwhelming offer of help from community groups and people in Trafford. The Community Response to COVID-19 is a fully collaborative, co-produced project spearheaded by Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council, we are committed to working together in partnership with local organisations, businesses and

partners to ensure that a full community response is taken.	
CIPFA SOLACE Principle E	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
<b>Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>
<b>How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2019/20</b>	
<p>The Council's Change Strategy "Building a Winning Culture #EPIC" continued to evolve throughout 2019/20. The new organisational values, empower, people centred, inclusive and collaborative from which the acronym of EPIC was created, started to be embedded in all of our people and engagement activities.</p> <p>Our EPIC Pioneers have been integral to supporting and championing new ways of working and all of our people initiatives throughout 2019/20.</p> <p>We held a number of leadership and colleague engagement events throughout the year and delivered a Leadership conference in January 2020 to coincide with the launch of our new People Strategy for 2020-2022.</p> <p>In October 2019, we launched the Best Companies B-heard engagement survey across the workforce and achieved a 51% response rate and a Best Companies Index (BCI) score of 631.9. This put us in the 'one to watch' category with a good level of engagement. Throughout 2019/20 we will put the foundations in place to continue to embed our values and engage with our colleagues so that they feel informed and empowered to achieve better outcomes for our residents.</p> <p>The Council has continued to refresh HR policies and plans, (all refreshed policies were submitted to the Council's Employment Committee which support Trafford's commitment to attract the best talent, grow and develop our existing staff, promote a healthy work-life balance, and embed our aspiration to become an employer of choice.</p> <p>A suite of learning and development interventions are available to equip staff with the tools, techniques, and skills they need to work successfully. Learning and Development Plans and a refreshed 'Check in' process are in place at directorate level across the council and all development actions are discussed frequently and updated annually. Trafford's Learning offer is delivered both face to face and via the e-learning platform with access to coaching opportunities and relevant qualifications</p>	

available via the professional development route and/or apprenticeship levy.

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.

Coaching offers are available and a leadership offer - #EPIC Manager is being rolled out that includes modular suite of learning aimed at new leaders, middle leaders and senior leaders. Managers have also accessed the Apprenticeship levy for leadership qualifications and we continue to offer qualification career paths in roles that require professional qualifications.

A refreshed Health & Wellbeing Strategy 'EPIC You' is in place 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 & Safety

Absence Management continues to be monitored at Member and Corporate Leadership level. Sickness performance is reported on quarterly to the Employment Committee as part of the workforce update with the latest update going to the Committee on the [2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020](#). A refreshed policy is being developed for implementation that supports positive attendance and support for improvements for Directorate and overall council level targets.

A Member Training Plan has been developed with a refreshed induction programme for all new Members for 2019-20 and an annual training programme based on learning needs analysis undertaken in November 2018. The Member Development Steering Group continues to meet on a regular basis to agree priorities for development and review and evaluate learning and development programmes.

A bespoke set of scrutiny training sessions were delivered by North West Employers to members of the Council's three Scrutiny Committees. The first two sessions were focused upon the key aspects of scrutiny and were held in June 2019 prior to the first meetings of the year. The third session was focused upon budget scrutiny and was held in November prior to the Council's Budget Scrutiny Sessions in December. A scrutiny element was added to the Members induction training to ensure that new Councillors were made aware of the function, the powers of scrutiny, and the role that it plays within the Council's decision making process.

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 2019/20	
<p>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.</p> <p>The budget position of the Council is also supported by a robustness statement from the Corporate Director of Finance and Systems, including an assessment on the overall adequacy of reserves.</p> <p>At the <a href="#">Council Meeting 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020</a> the Council approved an increase to the 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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).</p> <p>The budget for 2020/21 was approved by the Executive <a href="#">19<sup>th</sup> February 2020</a> and set out the Council’s Medium Term Financial strategy 2020/21 to 2022/23 including income and savings proposals to address the funding gap of £42.13m over next 3 years. The plan is a rolling document which is updated as changes in assumptions and conditions are known. (See Section 5.3 Significant Governance Issues 2019/20 - Medium Term Financial Position / Savings).</p> <p>The Annual Budget Scrutiny exercise took place during December 2019 with the</p>	

report being submitted to the [Executive 27th January 2020](#). The Executive's response to the process was delivered to the [Scrutiny Committee 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020](#).

The Council continues to regularly review and monitor its Strategic Risk Register with update reports presented to CLT and the Accounts and Audit Committee. By March 2020, there were 14 strategic risks identified with each risk managed by nominated staff / groups within the Council. In addition to the impact of COVID-19, the other high risks in the strategic risk register by the year-end included risks in relation to safeguarding vulnerable children (reflecting the Ofsted review reported in May 2019); uncertainty regarding the Council's financial position; risks in relation to the impact of Brexit; and the performance of the One Trafford Partnership. These also are reflected as significant governance issues in section 5.

Trafford's Information Governance (IG) activities have focused heavily on GDPR Implementation and completion of the new Data Security and Protection (DSP) Toolkit. GDPR activities included; training and awareness activities (e-learning and workshops), internal communication and awareness campaigns, further work refreshing privacy notices to meet transparency requirements, privacy by design and default through the development and implementation of a Data Protection Impact Assessment template and procedure, and further work developing the Records of Processing Activities. There is further work to be done and the Council's priority moving into 2020-21 will be embedding GDPR as business as usual.

The Authority continues to monitor risks in relation to Cyber security. The authority completed the Public Services Network (PSN) assessment including an independent penetration test on both the internal and external network. A number of remedial actions were addressed prior to Trafford achieving compliance in October 2019. The Council was assessed in April 2019 as 'standards not fully met (plan agreed)' against the new Data Security and Protection Toolkit used to assess compliance with expected data security standards. Progress is being made in the four areas identified in the plan as requiring action and the Council will need to get to a position to submit a standards met Toolkit by the end of September 2020, the revised deadline for the 2019/20 Toolkit. The Toolkit delivery group meets quarterly and engages four areas where the Authority's processes were to be strengthened.

During 2019/20 the Council reformed the Information Security Governance Board into a more focused Information Assurance Board (IAB) with new terms of reference. The Board meets quarterly and brings together Senior leadership with responsibilities around information risk, information security and confidentiality – the Senior Information Risk Owners' and Caldecott Guardians' of the Council and CCG and the Chief Digital Officer – along with the Council and CCG's Information Governance Managers who are also the respective organisations' Data Protection Officers'.

The Council conducted a policy review which has involved key IG policies being updated and the drafting of new policies. A substantive review of service level privacy notices has been undertaken and a number of additional privacy notices have been



drafted and published. These are elements of a larger piece of work the Council is doing to ensure it meets its transparency obligations under GDPR. The work already undertaken, in progress and planned is intended to strengthen the overall Information Assurance position and ensure robust oversight.

A third party service provider continues to provide additional ICT security capacity and expertise, manage the firewall parameters, and provide accredited security advice. A detailed assessment of the Authority's cyber security processes against a recognised best practice framework was undertaken during Quarter Four 2019/20 as part of the Authority's internal audit plan. The recommendations will be formulated into an improvement plan for 2020/21.

The Council has identified where further work is required to ensure it maintains effective business continuity management and to ensure robust data recovery processes in place. A more detailed description of the progress made this year is provided in section 5. This work will be progressed and is listed in section 5.3 as a significant issue for 2020/21.

The Internal Audit 2019/20 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. The Annual Report of the Head of Internal Audit for 2019/20 states that based on internal audit review work undertaken in 2019/20, the Internal Audit Opinion is that, overall, the control environment encompassing internal control, risk management and governance, is operating to a satisfactory standard. Follow-up internal audit work in areas previously reviewed demonstrates that progress is being 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 2019/20, actions have been agreed with management to be followed up in 2020/21.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not had a significant impact on levels of assurance provided to support the Internal Audit Opinion for 2019/20 given that the disruption to planned work commenced towards the year-end in March 2020. In terms of 2020/21, considerable time was spent in the first quarter of the year in providing support to the Council's response to the pandemic and audit plans will be subject to review through the year taking into account risks and priorities.

It was also noted in the Internal Audit Opinion that in terms of external inspection, in May 2019, Ofsted published a report on findings following its review of Children's social care services which provided ratings of "inadequate" or "requires improvement to be good" across areas reviewed. Subsequently, this issue was also reflected in the 2018/19 External Audit Value for Money Conclusion reported to the Accounts and Audit Committee in October 2019. It was noted that during 2019/20, an improvement plan was produced in response to this which has been progressed through the year and is subject to monitoring by Ofsted.

The Council's assurance arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit. Internal Audit operates in general conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

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.

In 2019-20, STAR Procurement continued to provide the shared procurement service for Stockport, Trafford, Rochdale and Tameside Councils as well as GMCA and other public sector organisations through commissioned activity bringing additional income into the organization from procurement support and shared service expertise. During the period it delivered savings in excess of £7m. Local spend improvement is continuing and has established a more sustainable position.

CIPFA SOLACE Principle G	Key Elements of Trafford Framework
<b>Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability</b>	<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>

**How we demonstrated effectiveness in 2019/20**

The External Auditor's Annual Letter 2018/19 was presented to the [Accounts and Audit Committee on 30 October 2019](#). 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 2019 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 2018/19.

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 2019, except for the overall effectiveness of the Council's services for children. In terms of the latter point, the Annual Audit Letter acknowledged, as referred to earlier, that the Council was taking action with a full improvement plan to address the issues raised in the Ofsted report. Findings from the 2019/20 audit will be reported to the Accounts and Audit Committee later in 2020.

During 2019/20 a total of 1413 Freedom of Information requests were received, of which 82% were responded to within the statutory timescale of 20 working days. FOI

reports are produced and circulated to senior managers weekly. The Council will continue to monitor compliance closely. Performance reports are shared with CLT on a regular basis with the target to increase the Council's compliance rate above 90%.

The Annual Scrutiny Report 2018/19 went to the [Council meeting 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019](#). During the year the [Scrutiny Committee](#) met four times, the [Health Scrutiny Committee](#) met six times, including an extraordinary meeting to look at issues around the Altrincham Hub, and the [Children and Young Peoples Committee](#) met four times. On top of meetings each Committee carried out a number of task and finish groups focused upon areas selected by Committee Members. A review of the Council's Scrutiny function was planned for the end of the municipal year to feed into the 2019/20 report but this was postponed due to the impact of COVID-19.

Information on the Council's decision making is open and transparent and published on the website. The Council continues to publish a range of open data through its website, data.gov.uk and the Trafford Data Lab's website (trafforddatalab.io). It also publishes data on grants to voluntary and community organisations on 360Giving.

#### 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 2018/19 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 2018/19 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 2019/20 to address them.

2018/19 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2019/20
<p><b>Delivery of Corporate Plan</b> - The Corporate Plan was agreed at <a href="#">Council 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019</a> and since this time the Directorate Plans have been developed. The Corporate and Directorate Plans are at the core of the Council's performance management framework and are designed to deliver the Council's Corporate Vision. The Directorate Plans and performance measures are being developed and will be reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team monthly and presented to Executive twice a year. The Transformation, Performance and Resources Group and the Assistant Director Corporate Strategy and Policy will be involved in the annual budget and consultation process which will link in with the delivery of the plan and strategic priorities.</p> <p>The strategic priorities will be delivered on a partnership level through the Trafford Together priorities which have been adopted by the Trafford Partnership as a borough-wide community plan. The Partnership organisations will be focusing on what each of the 7 Priorities mean for them, what success looks like and how they are and will contribute to achieving them. A Trafford Partnership performance dashboard will be developed.</p>	<p>Directorate plans and performance measures have been developed. These are reviewed monthly at DMT and CLT level.</p> <p>A quarterly report detailing progress to targets is produced; with all services contributing with data and celebration of successful achievements.</p> <p>New terms of reference and a revised membership of The Transformation, Performance and Resources Group has ensured increased involvement in the annual budget and consultation process.</p>

2018/19 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2019/20
<p><b>Medium Term Financial Position / savings</b> - The size of the budget challenge for 2020/21 and later years remains significant, especially when put in the context of the level of savings delivered since 2010. This is compounded with the lack of transparency surrounding future local government funding levels and the impact of the expected full reset of the business rate baselines. Since 2013 the Council has benefitted from a growth in business rate revenues, above pre-determined baselines, to such an extent that the budget for 2019/20 is reliant on approximately £12m of additional funding from growth in retained business rates which are likely to be lost under a full reset. Financial planning will be extremely difficult during 2019 caused by the uncertainty of the reset of the business rate system and the review of the needs and resources distribution methodology, both anticipated to be effective from 2020/21 but with a prospect these could be deferred pending the outcome of Brexit negotiations.</p>	<p>During the course of 2019/20 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. This exercise identified an overall budget gap for the three year period from 2020/21 of £42.13m, including £18.50m for 2020/21.</p> <p>The budget gap in 2019/20 was met by a combination of new funding and income of £9.86m, including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A 3.99% increase in the council tax (1.99% general increase and 2% for adult social care) £3.98m;</li> <li>○ Net income from investment properties and other income £6.12m;</li> <li>○ Use of Budget Support Reserve £4.47m;</li> <li>○ savings programmes of £3.93m.</li> </ul> <p>The remaining budget gap after the current round of budget proposals is £15.01m and £5.66m in 2021/22 and 2022/23 respectively.</p> <p>Note these figures are “pre-pandemic”</p>
<p><b>EU Exit</b> - The Council commissioned an independent review of the potential economic impact of Brexit on the Borough. The review considered the potential impact both in relation to an exit in accordance with the Prime Minister’s Withdrawal Agreement or on a No Deal basis. In both scenarios there would be an adverse effect on the Trafford economy, with No Deal having a greater negative impact. Trafford was also identified as being one of the</p>	<p>Whilst the UK has agreed the terms of its EU departure, both sides still need to decide what their future relationship will look like, which means that there still remains a degree of uncertainty. This will be worked out during the ‘Transition Period’, which begins immediately after Brexit day and is due to end on 31 December 2020. During this 11-month period,</p>

2018/19 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2019/20
<p>worst affected local authorities due to the structure of the local economy which is export driven.</p> <p>In response the Council has appointed a senior officer to lead on assessing the impact of Brexit, and established a cross-directorate working group. This group has developed an action plan, taking into account the potential impact on the local economy and on Council services, both directly provided and commissioned, and potential mitigating actions.</p>	<p>the UK will continue to follow all of the EU's rules and its trading relationship will remain the same. So at the moment, there is no change.</p> <p>An internal project group, the Trafford Brexit Impact Group, has been established to provide the cross-Council mechanism to plan, coordinate, monitor and mitigate against the impacts of Brexit on the Council. The Group has produced a Brexit Preparedness Plan which is a 'live' document to identify key issues and activities to mitigate risk. It will also work with key stakeholders to help deal with the impacts of Brexit on the economy of the borough as a whole, such as the GM Combined Authority. The Trafford Resilience Forum leads on emergency planning and works closely with GM in the Resilience Forum that is coordinating with all 10 Local Authorities on civil contingency planning for a No Deal Brexit.</p> <p>The potential impact of Brexit, along with the economic challenges associated with Covid-19 will be addressed through the Recovery Plan.</p>
<p><b>Trafford Amey Contract</b> - The Contract governance arrangements have been made far more robust over the last six months following the re-establishment of the Contract Management Group (CMG) and associated service delivery performance monitoring groups including Health and Safety.</p> <p>They all meet monthly and serve to inform the quarterly Governance Board which the Leader of the Council chairs. CMG and the service review groups examine in detail performance and service levels, based around an agreed key performance indicator</p>	<p>Reports were presented to the Executive in July and October 2019 setting out the actions taken following the report from the scrutiny task and finish group, and the options appraisal against the alternatives proposed by the group.</p> <p>Amey implemented a route optimisation programme for the domestic waste service in autumn 2019 which led to a sustained period of poor performance. The Council took informal and then formal action, including invoking the Immediate Action Procedure in order to return the service to</p>

2018/19 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2019/20
<p>framework that can be tangibly measured using agreed method statements and validation of prime documents or data systems.</p> <p>There is an emphasis on continuous improvement and performance deductions are applicable, either through self-deducting or through negotiation when shortfalls are identified by the Council or external means.</p> <p>Amey continues to suffer from unreliable service on occasions, often as a result of staff turnover and lack of available resource.</p> <p>As a result of this continued uncertainty over the long term reliability prospects for the partnership, the Council's Executive, following a Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish report which went to the <a href="#">Executive 18<sup>th</sup> March 2019</a> , have determined that the Council should conduct an assessment of the feasibility of the following 3 options;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider alternative models of service delivery, including the development of an In-House Service model, with a view to ending the contract with Amey.</li> <li>2. Review the contract with Amey with a clear intent that there should be a wholesale reshaping of the contract and partnership between Amey and the Council.</li> <li>3. Continue the Amey Contract and seek significant improvements to the delivery of existing services.</li> </ol> <p>This feasibility study will be presented to Executive in July 2019 and a way forward determined around future service modelling.</p>	<p>an acceptable level of performance. Service was returning to a stable position at the point at which the impact of Covid-19 reduced staff availability requiring service changes.</p>



2018/19 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2019/20
<p><b>The Trafford Together Way (place based working model)</b> - In order to translate the new Greater Manchester model for unified public service delivery, which was launched and adopted in March 2018, into a meaningful model for Trafford, a new reform statement for the Trafford Partnership has been developed. The aim of this statement is to coalesce all partners around a simple narrative for Trafford's approach (as a borough and a Partnership) to the way we deliver services across our 4 neighbourhoods, based on our Butterfly model, in order to help us collectively deliver the Trafford Together priorities.</p> <p>Work will be done to communicate, share and embed the model across the Council and partners over the next year, overseen by the Partnership Public Service Reform Board whose role is as an enabler of change. This includes for example the roll out of the place based work for early help, commonly known as One Trafford Response.</p>	<p>Work in Trafford is already underway to reimagine both existing early help and locality-based working; aiming to offer the right support, at the right time and in the right way to a diverse range of communities in Trafford.</p> <p>Consultations with partner agencies has continued, including School clusters, GMP, health, commissioned services, VCSE, GP's and Trafford Housing Trust. To explore a place based offer in four neighborhoods, multi-agency cluster meetings/panels, assessments/understanding local needs and services to be arranged within a local offer.</p> <p>Then a wider multi-agency workshop was planned for April to co-design a new blended, integrated offer. This was to build on the work of the draft models and consider a full range of options ensuring a holistic whole-Trafford approach to Early Help and Locality working. The plans for the workshop had to be reviewed in light of covid-19 pandemic.</p> <p>However it has accentuated the appropriateness and urgency to move towards a new model. The current disruption to the status quo has meant we are now prototyping new solutions in real time. We will be taking this learning from these circumstances and act quickly to reshape what the future will look like, aiming to offer the right support, at the right time and in the right way to a diverse range of communities in Trafford.</p> <p>It will be aligned to the wider ambitions within Trafford to</p>

2018/19 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2019/20
	<p>embrace whole family approaches grounded in restorative and relational practices, asset-based in nature.</p> <p>The roll out of the Children’s Multi-Agency Early Help panels is being scoped out for the four neighbourhoods in response to addressing the needs of children and their families at the earliest opportunity.</p>
<p><b>Information Governance</b> - The Council has records management challenges to address both in relation to physical and electronic records. In terms of physical records, a substantial number of boxes were not catalogued or indexed prior to being placed in external storage and need to be reviewed in order to identify what records they contain and whether the information still needs to be retained. With regard to electronic records, in particular emails, a corporate approach to email archiving and retention is required as a substantial volume continue to be stored going back several years. These issues require addressing in order to ensure compliance with Data Protection requirements and will be addressed in reports to CLT with a range of measures and actions to be considered.</p> <p>The Council also has a significant volume of subject access requests outstanding, in particular in Children’s Services. This is under review and a report is being produced setting out the position and how the council may be able to address the issue within existing resources or through the recruitment of additional resource. This issue requires addressing in order to ensure compliance with Data Protection obligations.</p>	<p>In terms of records management challenges, 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 have been presented and agreed by CLT and will be carried out ahead of implementation. New email management and retention policies and protocols will also be developed and put in place. Implementation of Microsoft 365 has been delayed as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic.</p> <p>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 for 2020/21.</p> <p>Moving to the compliance issue relating to the significant volume of subject access requests outstanding covering Children’s Services, CLT agreed that additional resources were required and a business case was approved to recruit two additional Information Governance Officers (one permanent, one fixed term for one year) and up to two</p>

2018/19 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2019/20
	<p>agency members of staff to cover the period while recruitment took place. Agency members of staff have been recruited with one starting in late February and the other in early March 2020. The recruitment of the permanent and fixed term positions has been delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic but virtual interviews have now taken place and the positions are expected to be filled in the near future.</p> <p>Electronic redaction software has also recently been purchased for members of the Information Governance team and the Agency members of staff to enable Subject Access Request work to be tackled effectively remotely. Once initial progress is gauged of the impact of additional resource working on the outstanding cases, a detailed improvement/recovery plan will be produced.</p>
<p><b>OFSTED Report</b> - Trafford Children's Services were inspected in March 2019 and the report was published in May 2019. The report judges Trafford to be Inadequate overall with sub-judgements of Requires Improvement for Help and Protection, Requires Improvement for Care &amp; Care Leavers and Inadequate for Leadership.</p> <p>An Improvement Board will be established and a detailed Action Plan will be developed to address the issues raised and implement improvement rapidly. Immediate actions include the appointment of additional agency social workers, the creation of an agency team to conduct case file audits and approval for additional agency early help workers. The full action plan will outline the longer term measures to be taken to address the issues and there will be formal reporting on progress to the Department for Education. There will now be quarterly Monitoring Visits by OFSTED to</p>	<p>Following the ILACS of March 2019, a detailed improvement plan has been implemented to drive forward changes in practice at every level and to critically improve our services so children in Trafford have better outcomes.</p> <p>The approach that has been taken to this work has been to use a 3 phase approach of responding, strengthening and embedding practice improvement.</p> <p>The plan has incorporated 7 distinct and inter-related areas of focus, each of which has been progressed through dedicated workstreams and associated action plans.</p> <p>In summary most of the key achievements up to the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, contained within the Improvement Plan, have been characterised by Trafford putting the scaffolding and key</p>

2018/19 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2019/20
<p>measure the impact of the actions taken.</p>	<p>mechanisms in place to succeed, e.g. a whole Council approach to supporting Children’s Services; aligning and investing resources to areas of greatest need; refreshing and development of policies, practice guidance and standards; a programme of workforce development and training; and the introduction of agreed quality assurance and performance frameworks.</p> <p>Completed sections from the Improvement Plan to date include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The creation of an Improvement Board</li> <li>• Recruitment of a permanent Director of Children's Services (DCS).</li> <li>• Enhanced status of the Principal Social Worker role to ensure practice leadership across the system.</li> <li>• Fully implemented QA Framework by improved auditing process, closing the loop and using the knowledge to measure and improve practice, so we effectively evidence the impact of our work has on children and families.</li> <li>• Reconfiguration of the First Response team.</li> <li>• Launch of Kindle service and increase in capacity and expertise to support children and families on the edge of care.</li> <li>• Improved Pathway Plans – making it more Young Person friendly.</li> <li>• Formal reporting to Children’s Scrutiny Committee.</li> </ul>

2018/19 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2019/20
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young Person Friendly Improvement Plan in Place.</li> <li>• 1:6:20 rule has been achieved with an average caseload of 17.</li> <li>• Implementation of new standard on updating assessments regularly.</li> <li>• Revisit and relaunch of Levels of Need documents.</li> <li>• More proactive approach to supporting children who go missing.</li> <li>• Focused work with IRO's to ensure consistent approach to challenge.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Business Continuity</b> - This is a continuing issue within the Council and a business case is being established to bring in external support from the GM Civil Contingencies and Resilience Unit (CCRU) to support Trafford in this area. With their support Trafford will conduct a full audit of our current Business Impact Assessments and Business Continuity Plans and upskill senior staff across the organisation. It is hoped that once this has been undertaken processes and staff capability will be more robust.</p> <p>Once the work with the GM Civil Contingencies Unit is complete the Council will be able to deliver a Disaster Recovery solution that meets the recovery time requirements. In the meantime the Council is moving forward with establishing a suitable Disaster Recovery (DR) site as the current provision is not fit for purpose. Previous attempts at collaborations with other GM authorities have not materialised and the Council had been looking at a third party options for a DR Site. However, recent developments have offered</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work started in Dec 2019 with CCRU, members identified internally, including IT and performance as part of the project implementation group.</li> <li>• Weekly meetings held and progress mapped out against a number of key milestones over 82 days of work.</li> <li>• Key area is disaster recovery (DR), a permanent solution must be found as this is a critical area of failure. IT colleagues are committed to finding a solution in advance of 365 roll out.</li> </ul> <p>Areas in development and nearing completion are an electronic template, training deck for service heads created to attend workshop.</p> <p>Early conversation held to understand scope of data collection for software applications held across the council and partners.</p>

2018/19 Significant Issues	Action Taken 2019/20
<p>a new possible low cost solution which the Council is exploring and hope to implement within 2019/20.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next phase planned and centered on determining the business requirements in terms of priority restoration for systems and network to determine the specification of the ICT Disaster Recovery solution.</li> <li>• The current work underway to review the organisational support arrangements following the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) integration in April 2018 provides an opportunity to ensure that Business Continuity Management requirements are adequately resourced and coordinated across both organisations.</li> </ul>

**Significant Governance Issues 2020/21**

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 2020/21.

<p><b>Ofsted Report</b></p>	<p>As a guiding template in relation to 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 to also 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 in relation to the rejuvenation of our improvement plan will support this.</p> <p>Plans are in place to utilise the expertise from Future Gov, an independent advisory</p>
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organisation, whose mission it is to 'build on the best of places', supporting them to create a 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 will be to drive the improvement journey forward, manage risk and maintain effective communication channels.

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:

- A revised and updated improvement plan that clearly sets out the strategy and ambitions for our Children's Services and how we will build on our partnerships for the next year.
- The assignment of lead responsibility and membership of each work stream to further embed a collaborative approach
- Agreed qualitative and quantitative measures of success aligned to each work stream
- The reporting schema for the work streams to the Board on an agreed cycle, including feedback from partners and stakeholders;

We are also working to further develop the following:

- 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;
- Multi-agency auditing and feedback systems and processes;
- Our Voice of the Child approach to provide a range of feedback mechanisms for children

	and families.
<b>Medium Term Financial Position</b>	<p>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>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>
<b>Information Governance</b>	<p><b>IG Project: Review of IG Services</b>  The IG Project commenced in July 2020. The Objectives of the IG Project are to undertake a review of: work streams and priorities; client demand; processes and practices; systems and software; resources and skills basis; service level agreements; and budgets. The review is undertaken with a view to: improving service quality; removing inefficiencies from processes and practices; improving processes and practices; and re-focusing future activity around proactivity rather than reactivity within IG Services.</p> <p>The IG Project team have identified a number of key areas for focus, including: Subject Access Requests; Data Security and Protection (DSP) Toolkit; Information Security; Freedom of Information Requests/Environmental Information Regulation; Records Management; Data Protection by Design and Default; IG Service Quality; Systems, Process and Practice. A number of changes and improvements have been identified and actioned to date.</p> <p><b>Outstanding Subject Access Request volumes:</b> Outstanding subject access requests has been ranked as a high priority for the IG Project. The IG Project team have reviewed: Historical Backlog of SARs and completed a mapping exercise; resourcing requirements; practice, process and procedures; existing and future barriers; and audit trails.</p> <p>Dedicated Resource is now in place with two new officers took up post in September 2020 and the IG team are currently being assisted by an agency resource. All outstanding SARs have now been reviewed and all SARs are now RAG rated. The SAR process has been reviewed</p>



and an improvement plan is being developed. A prioritisation strategy developed and implemented across the team. Data/reporting mechanisms have been established.

Hard copy information has now been converted into a digitalised format which the IG team can process more efficiently and electronic redaction software was implemented in May 2020 to enable the IG Team to process SAR work effectively remotely.

Work is continuing on SARs against detailed workplans.

**FOIs/EIR:** Similar activities to those detailed above are underway in respect of FOIs/EIRs with the objective of finalising detailed workplans for implementation of improved practices across the IG Service in 2021.

**Records Management** - 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 Trafford 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 Project.

**Data breach management** - The council experienced a small number of significant data breaches in the final quarter 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 underway and a revised process to ensure clearer accountability and involvement of roles

	<p>across 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 some cases is established. Alongside the improved process there will be a training and awareness raising exercise and communication campaign. The IG Project Team is intending to implement the revised process and implement an awareness raising training programme in 2021.</p>
<p><b>Amey Contract</b></p>	<p>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 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>
<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>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 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-19 and winter preparedness, and it is acknowledged that limited resources are impacting on the pace of the project. This continues to be regularly reviewed.</p>
<b>Impact of Brexit.</b>	<p>The nature of the UK's 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>
<b>COVID-19</b>	<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>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 working from home. 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> <p>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 the Covid-19 pandemic.</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.

**Councillor Andrew Western**  
**Leader of the Council**

**Sara Todd**  
**Chief Executive**