

Watford Borough Council

Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

1. Watford Borough Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
2. In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.
3. Watford Borough Council has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/Solace Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'. It is also in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England & Wales) Regulations 2015.
4. This Governance Statement explains how the Council has maintained sound governance during the financial year 2020/21 and also how the Council meets the requirements of regulation 6(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

5. The governance framework has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31 March 2021 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and statement of accounts. It comprises the systems and processes as well as the culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and through which accounts to, engages with and leads the community.
6. The governance framework enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate and cost-effective services.
7. The system of internal control is a significant part of this framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. However, it cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and, therefore, can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness.
8. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

9. The key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the Council's governance arrangements, as per the CIPFA 'Delivering good governance in local government: Framework – Addendum' include the following:

General

10. Watford Borough Council operates an elected Mayor and Cabinet model of governance under the Local Government Act 2000 and this places total responsibility for those functions designated as Executive Functions into the hands of the directly elected Mayor. However full Council is responsible for setting the Council's budget and agreeing the key policy framework. The Council also has established an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Financial Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the actions of the Mayor and Cabinet and assist with policy development, this is done either directly by those committees or by Overview and Scrutiny Committee establishing task and finish task groups to look at particular areas of interest. In addition, the Council has six further committees that cover non-executive functions, these are; Licensing, Development Management, Audit, Functions, Standards and Appointments. It also has a number of advisory member groups such as Major Projects Board, Planning Advisory Group, Housing Advisory Group, the Health and Wellbeing Forum, the Sustainability Forum, the Constitution Working Party and the Member Development Group.
11. Watford Borough Council has a directly elected Mayor, which means that the community elect that person to lead the council at four yearly intervals. The Mayor is supported by a Cabinet made up of elected councillors that plays a key role in determining the overall budget and policy framework of the Council. Each member of the Cabinet has a portfolio for which they are responsible and can make delegated decisions within their area of responsibility as set out in the Executive Scheme of Delegation, individual officers can also make decisions as set out in both the Executive Scheme of Delegation and the Council's Functions Scheme of Delegation in the Constitution.
12. The Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to the local community. Some of these procedures are required by law, whilst others are adopted by the Council. The Constitution is reviewed annually and is available on the Council's website and intranet.
13. The Council has an approved Code of Conduct for Councillors and a separate code for officers, which sets out and describes its commitment to good governance and identifies the arrangements that have been and will continue to be made to ensure its ongoing effective implementation and application in all aspects of the Council's work. The Local Code of Governance is available on the Council's website and intranet.
14. The Council acknowledges its responsibility for internal control, and for ensuring that its systems maintain the integrity of accounting records and safeguard its assets. These systems provide reasonable assurance as to the reliability of financial information and to maintain proper control over the income, expenditure, assets and liabilities of the Council. However, no system of internal control can provide absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss.
15. Leadership Board and Management Board are aware of the financial and other procedures and controls outlined in the Constitution, and senior officers are required to sign a declaration of compliance, in the form of a Management Assurance Statement at the end of each year. This evidences amongst other things, that their staff are aware of and consistently apply the requirements of the Constitution.
16. Elected Members as decision-makers have to fill in a register of pecuniary interest when they are elected and also declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests as and when they occur.

Strategic Framework

17. The Council has mapped its strategic governance framework to identify the linkages from its Council Plan 2020-24 to its key strategies, which ensure the Council retains an effective focus on delivery and clarity of purpose. The Council Plan 2020-24 is the Council's key strategic document, setting the direction for the authority and providing a basis for its planning and delivery of outcomes for the community.

Vision, themes and commitments:

The Council Plan 2020-24 sets out the council's vision, themes and commitments.

Our Vision: Watford Together: Our Town Our Future

Our Themes:

- A council that serves our residents;
- A thriving, diverse and creative town;
- A healthy and happy town.

18. Underpinning these overarching themes are a series of measurable (SMART) commitments and actions that are set out in the Council's Delivery Plan 2020-22. The Delivery Plan ensures that every member of staff understands their role in delivering the Council's ambitions and our community is well-informed about our plans and promises. The Council also plays a major role in the Local Strategic Partnership, One Watford, which is made up of key stakeholders such as Hertfordshire County Council, Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group, Watford BID, Watford and Three Rivers Trust, Watford Community Housing, and Hertfordshire Constabulary.

Decision Making Structures

19. At an Officer level, the Council has a Leadership Board made up of the Managing Director and Group/Executive Heads of Service. The Council also has Management Board which meets monthly and in addition to members of Leadership Board also comprises Heads of Service. Financial control is primarily the responsibility of a shared Director of Finance with neighbouring Three Rivers District Council. Leadership Board meets fortnightly to review and progress the key objectives of the Council. The Council also has a Strategic Group, chaired by the Managing Director, to consider and drive forward the overall strategic direction of the Council. In addition, there are a variety of officer boards that look at the council's commercial and property investments and oversee the Council's response to COVID-19.

20. Overall financial control is monitored on a monthly basis by Leadership Board and the Financial Scrutiny Committee, and quarterly by Cabinet. Budget preparation is influenced by the Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which forecasts budget pressures and available resources over a four-year period. This MTFS is reported quarterly to Cabinet and Financial Scrutiny Committee where variations to the strategy are approved. The Council has the ultimate responsibility for approving the annual budget. The final accounts at the end of a financial year are subject to formal approval by the Audit Committee (but is also reported to Cabinet and Financial Scrutiny Committee).

Constitution

21. The Council has a written constitution which identifies community focus, service delivery arrangements, structures and processes, risk management, internal control arrangements and standards of conduct. This sets out how the council takes decisions, roles and responsibilities

of members and officers, codes of conduct and procedure rules and also sets out the rights of citizens.

22. The Council's Constitution is available to all on the Council's website.
23. There are regular meetings of the Council, Cabinet and other committees. Council, Cabinet and committee / scrutiny meetings are open to the public and written reports are available to the public through the council's website. Information is only treated as confidential when it is necessary to do so for legal / commercial reasons in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972.
24. The Council published a new Council Plan in July 2020, which has taken a four-year perspective. This is reviewed annually and is underpinned by a more detailed Delivery Plan, which sets out key service improvement commitments and actions for the medium term, with targets for performance and deadlines for achievement. This has been informed by public consultation on a range of topics, particularly around priority setting, and a detailed analysis of the Watford context based on information derived from sources such as Census 2011 and the Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Progress on the Plan is reported to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee (both public meetings) and more directly to the public through the Council's magazine, About Watford, which is distributed to every household in the Borough and is also available online.
25. Councillors are assisted in their policy and decision-making roles by the advice of staff with suitable qualifications and experience, under the leadership of the Managing Director. All reports requiring a decision from members include comments on financial, legal, equalities, sustainability, community safety (as relevant), risk and other appropriate issues such as potential risks to non-achievement, all of which ensures that comprehensive advice is provided prior to decisions being taken.
26. The Constitution sets out an Officers' Code of Conduct, which includes: Disclosure of Information, Political Neutrality, Potential Conflict of Interest Situation, Bribery, Corruption and Fraud, Appointments and Other Employment Matters, Outside Commitments, Personal Interests, Equality Issues, Information Security, Criminal Offences, Whistle blowing and Breaches of the Code of Conduct.
27. The scrutiny function within a local authority provides a necessary check upon the role of Cabinet and is a key component of corporate governance. At Watford it is co-ordinated through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which can review Cabinet decisions and service performance, including those of the Council's outsourced services, it can also set up task groups to look in depth at issues it wishes to scrutinise and it also scrutinises the Community Safety Partnership. In addition, the Standards Committee considers member conduct and the Financial Scrutiny Committee considers financial issues. Finally, the Audit Committee reviews the overall governance arrangements, including the service related control and risk management environment. The Audit Committee also considers the response to Freedom of Information requests, the Ombudsman's annual report, risk management, Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act as well as annual accounts and treasury management (investment) policies.
28. The Council's protocols and procedures are reviewed and updated on a regular basis for standing orders, financial regulations, a scheme of delegation and supporting procedure notes/ manuals clearly defining how decisions are taken and the process and controls required to manage risks. Compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations is achieved through a combination of training events, written policy and procedural documentation, authorisation procedures, managerial supervision, review by internal and external audit and use of the disciplinary procedure where appropriate.

29. Codes of Conduct defining the standards of behaviour for members, staff, partners and the community have been developed and communicated and are available on the Council's website. These include:

- Members Code of Conduct;
- Code of Conduct for staff;
- Anti-fraud and corruption policy (including whistle blowing and anti-bribery);
- Money Laundering detection guidance;
- Members and officer protocols;
- Regular performance appraisals, linked to service and corporate objectives;
- Service standards that define the behaviour of officers;
- A Standards Committee which has a key role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct for members;
- Officers are subject to the standards of any professional bodies to which they belong.

30. The Group Head of Democracy and Governance is the Council's Monitoring Officer and duties include: maintaining the Council's Constitution; reporting on any potential or actual illegality or maladministration; and giving advice to the Mayor and councillors on the Constitution or issues of maladministration, financial impropriety or probity.

31. The Shared Director of Finance is the statutory Chief Finance Officer. Duties include: overall responsibility for financial administration, reporting on any actual or potential instances of illegality in expenditure, including unlawful loss or deficiency or illegal items of account, and giving advice to the council on financial planning.

Data Quality and Risk Management

32. The need to develop policies and guidance on data quality and assurance is essential in order to promote consistency and awareness across the organisation. To that end, the Council has a senior member of staff who acts as the Senior Information Risk Officer. Guidance documents include a Data Quality Policy, an Information Security Policy, a Data Asset Register and management training modules, all of which are on the intranet.

33. The governance framework is dependent upon the underlying system of internal control which is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. The Council's approach to risk management is governed by its Risk Management Strategy which is updated annually and approved by Leadership Board and the Audit Committee. This Strategy underpins the Corporate Risk Register which was updated and reviewed by the Audit Committee in March 2021 and covers major issues that will affect the achievement of the council's key objectives. The Corporate Risk Register is at a strategic / high level and is complemented by detailed project and service risk registers. The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed quarterly by Leadership Board and is reviewed annually by Audit Committee. It was last reviewed by Audit Committee in March 2021.

Business continuity and emergency planning are other key aspects within the corporate governance framework. This is the responsibility of the Group Head of Transformation.

34. All committee reports contain a 'risk implications' section as an aid to decision taking. There is however, a continued need to ensure an effective risk identification process occurs where the Council has outsourced the provision of services to a private sector partner.

Shared Services with Three Rivers District Council

35. Watford Borough Council has been a leading authority in developing a shared service for revenues, benefits, ICT, financial services, human resources, pest control and procurement

with Three Rivers District Council. Both councils also share the statutory post of Chief Financial Officer (S151) - the Shared Director of Finance.

36. From April 2014, the Governance arrangements for shared services changed to a lead authority model. Watford Borough Council are responsible for providing the services of ICT, human resources, pest control and procurement whilst Three Rivers District Council are responsible for providing financial services and revenues & benefits. An executive board of senior management from both councils are responsible for these services. The role of the Board covers:

- Monitoring performance and dealing with complaints from either authority;
- Resolving conflicts between competing interests amongst the authorities;
- Reviewing the governance arrangements;
- Dealing with matters referred up to it by the Operations Board;
- Having overall supervision of the Shared Service;
- Receiving annual reports on each service within the shared service.

Community Engagement

37. Corporate governance includes informing our community of the plans and aspirations of the council and is primarily communicated through its published Council Plan and Delivery Plan as well as regular update reports to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee and through its resident magazine, 'About Watford'. The directly elected Mayor, Peter Taylor, takes the lead in ensuring there is open and effective community leadership and provides a focal point for individuals, communities, business and voluntary organisations to engage with the Council. The Mayor is also the Chair of the Borough's Local Strategic Partnership, One Watford, which continues to lead on the successful delivery of the overall vision and objectives for the town and on effectively integrating partnership working and delivery.

38. The Council has established twelve neighbourhood forums, which mirror the Borough's ward boundaries and each has a devolved budget of £3,000. These are organised and managed by the relevant local councillors as part of their commitment to community leadership and engagement.

39. The Council has established clear channels of communication with all sections of the community and other stakeholders. It provides citizens and business' with information about the Council and its spending through a leaflet. For 2020/21 this was distributed with Council Tax bills and online for Business Rate customers. A summary of key financial information is contained in the Council magazine 'About Watford'. It also has very high engagement figures through social media, which is important for its profile as a town with a younger than average population.

40. A range of consultation and engagement projects are undertaken annually. This includes a regular 'Community Survey', which covers a range of areas relating to the Council's services and activities, including how it spends its money and prioritises areas for focus and improvement. Local residents are also invited to attend a range of Council-led Forums across a range of local issues, which help build understanding across a range of areas including future plans and service delivery. The Watford Compact provides an agreement between the statutory and voluntary sectors in Watford to clarify and strengthen their relationship and to achieve better outcomes for individuals and for the Watford community.

REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

41. In accordance with recent external audit guidance, the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework will focus upon significant weaknesses and the 'big picture'. If issues

have not been highlighted, it is because current governance arrangements have proved fit for purpose.

42. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the executive managers within the Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Annual Report of the Head of Assurance for the Shared Internal Audit Service and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates. The Mayor and Portfolio Holders maintain a continuous review of the Council's policies, activities and performance of Officers both through regular reviews and on a day to day basis.

The Council

43. Council comprises 36 Members and an Elected Mayor. The main roles are:

- To set Watford Borough Council's Budget and Policy Framework;
- To receive a report from the Mayor, which Councillors can then ask the questions related to the report;
- To receive questions from the public, which are then debated by the Councillors;
- To receive petitions from the public, which are debated by the Councillors;
- To receive questions from Councillors with their response, these are not debated;
- To receive motions from Councillors, which are then debated;
- To consider any recommendations from Committees or Working Parties.

44. Council met six times during 2020/21 and agendas, reports and minutes are available on the Council's website.

Cabinet

45. Cabinet comprises the Mayor and five members and makes decisions which are in line with the Council's overall policies and Budget. It is chaired by the Mayor and includes the Portfolio Holders.

46. Each Member of Cabinet has responsibility for a range of Council functions, known as a portfolio and each portfolio-holder is required to work closely with Group/Executive Heads of Service and develop an in-depth knowledge of their portfolio area.

47. The dates of all cabinet meetings are pre-published and all decisions have been taken in public apart from a small number of reports which were considered and determined after the press and public has been lawfully excluded. Agendas, reports and minutes of the meetings are available on the Council's website.

48. Cabinet met nine times during 2020/21.

The Review Committees

49. The Council has two review committees, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Financial Scrutiny Committee. Their role is to scrutinise the decisions and performance of Cabinet and the Council as a whole.

50. Overview and Scrutiny Committee comprising nine members, is the over-arching scrutiny committee for Watford Borough Council. Its work includes:

- Reviewing called in Executive decisions made by Cabinet, Portfolio Holders and Officers;
- Reviewing the Council's performance measures;

- Monitoring the Executive decisions taken and the key decisions to be taken by Cabinet, Portfolio Holders and Officers;
- Monitoring the progress of recommendations from previous scrutiny reviews;
- Setting up Task Groups to review suggested topics for scrutiny;
- Monitoring the progress of Task Groups and agreeing the final reports;
- Setting a rolling scrutiny work programme.

The committee met nine times in 2020/21.

51. Financial Scrutiny Committee comprises eight members and its work includes:

- To examine the Medium Term Financial Plan;
- To examine the budget strategy for the relevant financial year;
- To review the service spending priorities for the relevant financial year;
- To challenge, question and test those strategies and plans;
- To examine the draft proposals for the budget for the following financial year;
- To challenge if the proposals match the strategy and priorities;
- To forward comments on the budget proposals to Cabinet in time for the January budget meeting.

The Financial Scrutiny Committee met five times in 2020/21.

Member Panels

52. There have been a number of cross-party Member Panels and Task Groups to review and monitor various areas of Council activity, e.g. Mental Health Task Group – to look at current mental health provision in the borough and consider what more Watford Borough Council could do to support those living with mental health difficulties; Watford Colosseum Task Group – to review responses from private sector theatre operators about the future use of the venue following refurbishment works (March to November 2021); Health Services for the Deaf Task Group – to consider and facilitate a response to issues relating to the accessibility of health services for those who are profoundly deaf or with severe hearing loss.

Standards Committee

53. The Standards Committee is set up as and when required to consider matters of Member conduct. There was one meeting of this committee in 2020/21.

Members Remuneration

54. Members remuneration was reviewed in 2018 by an Independent Remuneration Panel, which was made up of four independent members. The report and recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel was approved by the Full Council as part of the Budget Council meeting, details of which are available on the Council's website. The Panel recommended that with effect from April 2019 the Basic Allowance should be linked to local government pay settlements and increased accordingly.

55. The Independent Remuneration Panel now sits on a quadrennial basis and is therefore next due to meet in 2021.

Senior Management

There are three Council Officers who have statutory appointments - the Managing Director's role as the Head of Paid Service, the Shared Director of Finance's role as the Section 151 Officer and the Group Head of Democracy & Governance as the Monitoring Officer.

56. Leadership Board comprises the three statutory appointments above, plus the following officers: Group Head of Community and Environmental Services, Executive Head of Strategy and Communications, Group Head of Transformation, Executive Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, Group Head of Place and Executive Head of Commercial and Innovation. Leadership Board meets every two weeks.

Performance Management

57. Performance management follows a 'cascade' principle. The Council approves its Council Plan and Delivery Plan and highlights key aspirations and targets including a series of commitments and actions to be achieved in the year ahead. This Council Plan then cascades down to individual service plans, which in turn translates into team and individual work plans. Performance is monitored regularly by Leadership Board and through Group / Executive Heads of Service, Cabinet Members and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Panel. Performance reviews also include consideration of complaints and progress against the Council's equalities agenda. In 2020/21, the Council implemented a new performance and project management software (Qlik), which is allowing for greater real time assessment and scrutiny of performance, including across its major projects.

58. The Council keeps residents and stakeholders informed of its progress through a publication called 'About Watford' which is delivered to every household and covers key achievements, events and opportunities. It also has a large social media following across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram platforms which are a significant channel for communicating and engaging with residents.

Procurement

59. The Council aims to use its resources efficiently, effectively and economically.

60. The Council has a robust set of documentation to provide guidance and advice to Members and officers to ensure that Procurement is carried out in an effective and ethical manner. This documentation includes Contract Procedure Rules and a Contract Management Toolkit. These documents are regularly reviewed to reflect changes in local requirements and EU policy and legislation.

The Audit Committee

61. The Audit Committee comprises five members and met four times during 2020/21.

62. The Audit Committee's terms of reference are consistent with best practice. The Committee approves the annual plan of internal audit and receives the quarterly and annual reports of the Head of Assurance for the Shared Internal Audit Service. It approves the Statement of Accounts, the annual governance statement and the review of the effectiveness of the internal audit system. It receives reports on risk management and reviews the operation of treasury management. It also received the annual letter from the Ombudsman and considers regular reports upon Freedom of Information requests, risk management and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act.

Internal Audit

63. Internal Audit is an assurance function that provides an independent and objective opinion to the Council on its control environment - this comprises the systems of governance, internal control and risk management - by evaluating its effectiveness in achieving the organisation's objectives.

64. The internal audit function is carried out, by the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS), a local internal audit partnership hosted by Hertfordshire County Council. This provides greater independence and resilience and a positive step in improving governance. Internal Audit carry out a programme of reviews during the year which are based upon a risk assessment including fraud risk. The audit plan is approved by Audit Committee in March of the preceding year. As part of these audits, any failures to comply with legislation, council policy and practice or best practice guidance issued by a relevant body is identified and reported. Circulation of reports to senior officers, reports to the Audit Committee and follow-up procedures ensure action is taken on priority improvements. Progress on implementing internal audit recommendations is reported quarterly to Audit Committee.
65. In line with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, an Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Report is compiled and presented to the first Audit Committee of each year, which:
- includes an opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's internal control environment;
 - discloses any qualifications to that opinion, together with any reasons for the qualification;
 - draws attention to any issues which are judged particularly relevant to the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement.
66. The SIAS Head of Assurance Annual Report is a key source document for the Council's Annual Governance Statement. For 2020/21 this Report includes the following statements:
- In our opinion the corporate governance and risk management framework substantially complies with the best practice guidance on corporate governance issued by CIPFA/SOLACE. This conclusion is based on the work undertaken by the Council and reported in its Annual Governance Statement for 2020/21;
 - A satisfactory assurance opinion is given on the adequacy and effectiveness of both financial systems and non-financial systems in the internal control environment, based on the internal audits completed in the year. The internal control framework is largely working well in managing the key risks in scope, with some audit findings related to the current arrangements. There are no qualifications to this assurance.

The Council's External Auditors

67. External auditors, Ernst & Young LLP, provide an external review function through the audit of the annual accounts, assessment of value for money, certification of grant claims and the periodic inspection of services such as revenues and benefits. The Annual Audit and Inspection Letter is circulated to all Members and formally reported to Cabinet and the Audit Committee.
68. The Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2019/20 was presented to the Audit Committee in July 2020 and the main conclusions for the year were:
- The 2019/20 accounts give a true and fair view of the Council's financial affairs and of the income and expenditure recorded by the Council; and
 - The Council made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ending 31 March 2020.
69. The Local Government contract for the Council was awarded to EY (Ernst & Young LLP) following re-tendering by the Audit Commission ahead of its abolition in March 2015. In December 2017 EY were appointed by PSAA as auditor for Watford Borough Council for 2018/19 onwards.

SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

70. The 'normal' running of Council business has and can be controlled through the governance framework detailed in this report. No significant governance issues have been identified for 2020/21 and no outstanding matters were brought forward from 2019/20.
71. During 2020/21 COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the Council. Staff having been working largely from home relying on IT systems for remote working that were in place before the start of the pandemic. In addition, the Council has been responsible for administering significant grant systems and Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rate reliefs. The range of responses to the pandemic has placed considerable strain on the Council's resources. Incident management arrangements were put in place to oversee the Council's response, with regular incident management meetings and briefings for Cabinet. Existing delegated authorities to officers, the Mayor and Portfolio Holders were used when urgent decisions were required.
72. The Council recognised early the importance of steering both the town and the council through the COVID-19 crisis and into recovery and renewal. It developed a 'Road to Renewal' Plan in spring 2020 specifically to concentrate activities and resources on achieving a successful recovery. Progress against the Plan is reviewed by Leadership Board, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Certification Statement from the Elected Mayor and the Managing Director

73. We propose to take steps over the coming financial year to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We will also monitor the implementation of any audit recommendations that arise during the course of the year.

Signed _____

Date _____

Peter Taylor - Mayor

Signed _____

Date _____

Donna Nolan - Managing Director