

Agenda Item	<b>9</b>
Report No	<b>AS/11/21</b>

## **HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

**Committee:** Audit & Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 17 June 2021

**Report Title:** Code of Corporate Governance

**Report By:** Head of Corporate Governance

### **1. Purpose/Executive Summary**

1.1 This report provides an update on progress with delivering the Local Code of Corporate Governance for 2020/21 and presents the proposed Code for 2021/22 for Members' approval.

### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Note the progress on delivering the 2020/21 Code of Corporate Governance
- ii. Approve the 2021/22 Code of Corporate Governance

### **3. Implications**

- 3.1 There are no financial, legal, Gaelic, Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) or Climate Change/Carbon Clever implications arising directly from this report and actions requiring to be delivered under the Code of Corporate Governance will continue to be built into Service and Operational plans where required.

### **4 Introduction**

- 4.1 The Council is required to prepare a Code of Corporate Governance on an annual basis and this requirement is based on advice from CIPFA and SOLACE on best practice on this matter.
- 4.2 The Council has also agreed that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee would receive an annual report on the local Code to ensure proper scrutiny. Internal Audit undertake an audit of the Council's compliance with the local Code, every three years, and this is reported separately to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee.
- 4.3 CIPFA and SOLACE published a revised Guidance Note for Scottish Authorities- Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016). This provides guidance on implementing the Framework and provides an important foundation to enable local authorities to review effectiveness and to identify continuing improvements in governance arrangements.
- 4.4 The Framework and Guidance are based on seven core principles each with a number of sub-principles. The core principles are:-
- 3.4.1 Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
  - 3.4.2 Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
  - 3.4.3 Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
  - 3.4.4 Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
  - 3.4.5 Developing the authority's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
  - 3.4.6 Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
  - 3.4.7 Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.
- 4.5 This report confirms the actions delivered under the Local Code of Corporate Governance for 2020/21 and presents the proposed Local Code of Corporate Governance for 2021/22 for approval.

### **5. Local Code of Corporate Governance**

5.1 Code of Corporate Governance 2020/21

The Code of Corporate Governance 2020/21 was agreed by this Committee in September 2020 and a copy can be found at:-

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/77085/item\\_10\\_code\\_of\\_corporate\\_governance](https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/77085/item_10_code_of_corporate_governance)

5.2 The progress in delivering the actions set out in the Code is monitored quarterly through the Council's Performance Management System. In spite of the challenges faced in responding to the pandemic the Council has made substantial progress in delivering the commitments set out within the 2020/21. The majority of actions are either complete or are on target with a small number showing slippage in completion. The small number of commitments which have been completed or are continuing to progress slightly behind schedule include:-

- i) Refreshed Member Development Programme
- ii) Review of Finance and Contract Standing Orders
- iii) Develop Participatory Budgeting
- iv) Corporate workforce Strategy and plan in place

6. **Code of Corporate Governance 2021/22**

The proposed Code is detailed at Appendix One.

Date: 2 June 2021

Author: Stewart Fraser, Head of Corporate Governance

## Code of Corporate Governance 2021/2022

Core Principle	Sub Principle	Commitment/Action	Responsible Officer*	Completed/Target Date	Further Comments
A) Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.	Behaving with integrity	All Councillors have agreed to abide by the Councillors Code of Conduct, Protocol for relations between Councillors and Employees and the Nolan Principles	Head of Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer)	√	
		Member Induction with emphasis on the principle of Councillors behaving with integrity at all time	Executive Chief Officer- Performance and Governance	Ongoing	
		Review and prepare a new induction programme for new Members in 2022	Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance	December 2021	
		Refreshed Member Training and Development Programme being developed which will continue to reinforce conduct and integrity as core principles. Programme will consider further training on regulatory issues such as planning, information management, the Code of Conduct and review value of introducing	Executive Chief Officer- Performance and Governance	Ongoing	Development of the refreshed Programme which will include elements of knowledge testing is progressing

		mandatory elements including knowledge tests.			
		Report to Council on an annual basis on the uptake of Member training and development		March 2022	
		All Officers are required to comply with the Code of Conduct for Officers and Protocol for relations between Councillors and Employees and compliance forms part of the Induction for new employees	Interim Head of HR	Ongoing	
	Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values	Councillors Code of Conduct in place and compliance monitored via annual report to Audit & Scrutiny Committee	Head of Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer)		
		Council Standing Orders sets out the Council's Governance arrangements and how decisions are made, and this is reviewed annually.	Head of Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer)	December 2021	Standing Orders were reviewed and amended in January 2021. The annual review will be reported to Council in December 2021.
		Employee Code of Conduct in place and compliance managed through HR policies and procedures including Grievance, Capability and Disciplinary policies	Interim Head of HR	√	HR policies and procedures are reviewed on regular basis to ensure legislative and organisational compliance.
		Financial Regulations and Contract Standing	Head of Corporate Finance and	September 2021	Financial Regulations are reviewed and

		Orders reinforce the ethical values of the Council including in the awarding of contracts to third party organisations	Commercialism/ Corporate Audit and Performance Manager		updated on a regular basis. The Regulations will be subject to full review including obtaining external advice from CIPFA on robustness.
	Respecting the rule of the law	Council's Scheme of Delegation sets out the authority delegated to committees etc and officers and supports compliance with statutory and legislative obligations and is reviewed annually	Head of Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer)	December 2021	The Council's Scheme of Delegation was reviewed and amended in January 2021. The annual review will be reported to Council in December 2021.
		Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders are reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with statutory and legislative obligations	Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism/ Corporate Audit and Performance Manager	September 2021	Financial Regulations are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. The Regulations will be subject to full review including obtaining external advice from CIPFA on robustness and establishment of mandatory training modules for budget holders and members.
		Statutory Officers are appointed and their responsibilities set out in the Scheme of Delegation. Where appropriate statutory officers are part of the Council's Executive Leadership Team	Chief Executive	√	
		A Whistle-Blowing Policy is in place and reviewed regularly	Corporate Audit and Performance Manager	Ongoing	The revised policy was approved by Council in October 2020 and has

					been implemented. The first annual report on policy use will be considered by Audit & Scrutiny Committee in June 2021 and annually thereafter.
		HR policies and procedures are in place to deal with Grievance, Capability and Disciplinary matters relating to employees	Interim Head of HR	Ongoing	HR policies and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure legislative and organisational compliance
		The Council's Internal Audit Team undertake investigations into complaints alleging any misconduct or lack of compliance with corporate procedures	Corporate Audit & Performance Manager	Ongoing	
B) Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	Openness	Standing Orders for conducting Council business promote openness and transparency with all decisions made in public (unless exemptions under the Act apply) and all agendas and papers published in advance on the Council Website	Head of Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer)	December 2021	Council Standing Orders were reviewed and amended in January 2021. The annual review will be reported to Council in December 2021
		All meetings of the Council, Strategic, Audit and Scrutiny and Regulatory Committees are webcast and	Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance/ Interim Head of ICT/Head of Revenues & Customer Service	√	Since May 2020 the Council has made use of Microsoft Teams to continue to hold Council and Committee meetings with

		archived for one year for public access			recordings including of Area Committee meetings being shared via the Council website or YouTube.
		Guidance for Report Writing reinforces that all reports to Council and Committees must include the risks and implications of any decisions being taken, including Equality, Gaelic, Rural and Poverty Impact Assessments	Executive Chief Officers & Heads of Service	Ongoing	The Guidance will be kept under review with a particular focus on appropriate identification of risks and implications. Any changes will be disseminated to report writers.
		Continue to develop participatory budgeting across the Council area to ensure community participation in resource allocation.	Head of Policy and Reform	Ongoing programme	Work is ongoing to develop areas of work to involve communities in identifying priorities for spend e.g. car parking charging. A cross-service review will consider how to mainstream approaches to participatory budgeting in the current financial context and developing a new approach to participation and involvement with communities as part of the recovery plan
	Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	The Council is one of five lead partners within the Highland Community Planning Partnership. Work with	Chief Executive	√	Work is almost complete to develop a Performance Framework to support monitoring the Highland



		partners to improve evidencing outcomes and performance reporting in order to deliver improved outcomes for Highland communities			Outcome Improvement Plan and delivery of effective outcomes.
		The Council will work with partners to put in place reviewed Terms of reference for the Community Planning Partnership to strengthen governance, accountability and delivery of outcomes.	Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place	Ongoing	Reviewed terms of reference and a structure for the Community Planning Partnership were agreed by the Community Planning Board in December 2019
		The Highland Council is the lead organisation for the Inverness and Highland City-Region deal which is being delivered by a local partnership including Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the University of Highlands and Islands and Albyn Housing Society Ltd. Funding is provided through the Scottish and UK governments and is managed by the Council. Regular monitoring reports are brought to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee.	Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment		Regular updates are presented to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee as part of refreshed scrutiny and governance arrangements.
		The Council has strong engagement with the Police Service of	Head of Policy and Reform	√	Police and Fire scrutiny continues through Area Committees and twice a

		Scotland and Scottish Fire & Rescue Service with scrutiny at both a strategic and local level			year through the Communities and Place Committee
		The Council engages with the voluntary and community sector through the Community Planning Partnership and the Highland Third Sector Interface as well as directly with community bodies, including Community Councils.	Head of Policy and Reform	√	There has been a wider approach to engagement over the last 12 months focused on resilience with new and emerging groups and local groups who have changed roles during the pandemic
		The Council has a Health & Social Care Partnership with NHS Highland, based on a lead agency model, with NHS responsible for Adult Services and the Council responsible for Children's Services	Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care	√	The Council and NHS Highland have agreed a revised Partnership Agreement with improved scrutiny and governance arrangements. The Agreement will be submitted to the Scottish Government for approval in June 2021.
		The Council has a Staff Partnership Forum in place for engagement with Trade Unions. Trade Unions are also represented on the Council's Redesign and Recovery, Improvement and Transformation Boards.	Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance	√	The Partnership Framework Agreement was reviewed in June 2021 and will be considered at the Forum in June 2021.
	Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively	As part of the Redesign process, the Council agreed to be more community-minded by	Chief Executive	√	

		<p>listening locally, widening participation in decision-making, supporting community bodies to do more and to target support to particular people and places most in need. Community Reviews form part of the Redesign process allowing co-reviewing of services/functions with communities.</p> <p>The Recovery Plan agreed in June 2020 identified eleven key priorities. The Ambitious Highland Health and Prosperity Strategy was agreed in March 2021.</p>			
		<p>The Council engages with specific user groups on a range of issues including our tenants, through the tenant participation network, with parents through our Parent Councils and with young people through the youth work service and the Highland Youth Parliament.</p>	<p>Executive Chief Officers Education, Health and Social Care &amp; Property and Housing</p>	√	
		<p>The Council holds a contact database of groups with an interest in equality, diversity and human rights issues and liaises with these</p>	<p>Head of Policy and Reform</p>	√	

		groups to share information, engage and seek views on a range of issues.			
		Under the Community Empowerment Act the Highland Community Planning Partnership has established 9 local partnerships which are engaging with communities to identify local issues and how outcomes can be improved for the local community, with a specific focus on reducing inequalities.	Ward Managers and Executive Chief Officers	√	
		The Council has developed processes to support the aims, objectives and duties contained within the Community Empowerment Act. This supports communities to participate in the allocation of budgets, to be involved in improving service outcomes and to take on buildings or land in order to increase the benefits to the wider community.	Head of Policy and Reform	√	
		Community engagement is undertaken on a variety of service and policy	Executive Chief Officers/Head of Service/Ward Managers	√	Executive Chief Officers have responsibility for identified geographical areas.

		issues and led by Service and Ward Managers.			There have been increased levels of engagement with groups through the pandemic and work is underway to review how this is supported and what form this takes going forward. The new Community Support Co-ordinator role will assist in developing relationships and wider engagement with community and voluntary groups
		The Council supports a network of community councils and engages and consults with them on a regular basis and on a range of issues in order to determine community views and responses from local communities.	Head of Policy and Reform	√	
C) Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	Defining outcomes	The Highland Council Programme for 2017-2022 sets out a number of goals based on five themes: a place to live, a place to learn, a place to thrive, a welcoming place, and a redesigned Council. This will be supported by a performance framework including	Chief Executive	√	New Directorate Service Planning Guidance was issued in January 2020 to reflect the new Corporate Plan and to require a greater focus in data analysis in developing service priorities and performance. New Directorate Service Plans were submitted to

		Corporate Plan and Service Plans which set out how performance and delivery will be monitored			and agreed at the Spring 2021 cycle of Strategic Committees.
		The redesign statement and statement of Council purpose, values and outcomes were initially agreed by the Council in June 2017. The Recovery Plan agreed in June 2020 identifies eleven key priorities.	Executive Chief Officer-Transformation	√	Progress on the Recovery Plan is reported to the Recovery, Improvement and Transformation Board and to Council.
		Annual Performance Report presented to Council to monitor delivery of outcomes and priorities	Chief Executive	√	
	Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	The Council is developing a Medium Term Financial Strategy to support the delivery of statutory responsibilities and delivery of the outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan and will need to be developed in context of COVID-19 and the Council's overall Recovery Plan and any revised Council priorities	Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance		In March 2021 the Council agreed a budget for 2021/22 with indicative budgets for 2022/23 and 2023/24. As part of the budget the Council approved 'Ambitious Highland-Health and Prosperity Strategy 2021/22' comprising investment in recovery and transformation  Ongoing development of the Medium Term Financial Plan will continue to be brought to Council meetings throughout 2021/22.

					<p>The Council worked with CIPFA to review its financial management arrangements; this work concluded in June 2020 and links to the recommendations of the Council's Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) which the Council received in March 2020. A BVAR improvement plan is in place with includes improvement in financial management and reporting.</p>
		<p>The Council Capital Programme 2018/19 to 2022/23 ( agreed March 2018 and reprofiled in January 2021) supports the delivery of statutory responsibilities and delivery of the outcomes set out in the Council Programme</p>	<p>Executive Chief Officer – Finance and Resources/Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Delivery of the Capital Programme is subject to regular update reporting to Council committees with overall financial impacts reported to the Corporate Resources Committee</p> <p>Overall programme amendments are brought to Council with work underway during 2021/22 to develop a Capital Strategy and then a firm 5 year (with indicative further 5 year) new programme to begin in 2022/23</p> <p>The affordability of the Capital Programme will</p>

					be incorporated into the Medium Term Financial Plan.
		The Council's Redesign Board is focused on the Council being more open-minded to new ways of delivering services, more community-minded and more commercially-minded to ensure service delivery is sustainable, affordable and aware of community impacts.	Executive Chief Officer -Transformation	Ongoing	
		Budget management is the responsibility of budget holders and monitoring reports are presented to Committee quarterly	Executive Chief Officer – Finance and Resources	√	Business partner model being enhanced alongside development of improved MI to support more informed decision making
		Corporate Risk Management is undertaken to ensure that the Council identifies and mitigates its key risks, in order to deliver its priorities and outcomes, and reported to every Audit & Scrutiny Committee	Executive Chief Officers/ Corporate Audit & Performance Manager	√	The Corporate Risk Strategy has been refreshed and was approved by Audit and Scrutiny Committee in March 2021. Quarterly reporting of Corporate Risk to Audit and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Leadership Team and Weekly Strategic Meeting has been established.
D) Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of	Determining interventions	Options appraisals are undertaken to support significant changes in service delivery and	Executive Chief Officers & Heads of Service	√	



the intended outcomes		used to inform decision making			
		The Redesign Board's approach includes a peer review process to appraise 10 options for service delivery. Peer reviews are overseen by the Redesign Board made up of Members and Trade Union representatives.	Executive Chief Officer-Transformation	Ongoing programme	
		Guidance for Report Writing reinforces that all reports to Council and Committees must include the risks and implications of any decisions being taken, including Equality Impact Assessments	Executive Chief Officers & Heads of Service	Ongoing	The Guidance will be kept under review with a particular focus on appropriate identification of risks and implications. Any changes will be disseminated to report writers
		Financial Approach, agreed by Council, which includes prioritisation of services to manage competing demands within limited financial resources	Executive Chief Officer – Finance and Resources	√	
	Planning interventions	Corporate and Service Plans are produced and reviewed annually including being reported to Committee for scrutiny	Executive Chief Officers & Heads of Service	√	The Corporate Plan was reviewed and approved by Council in October 2019. Directorate Service Planning Guidance was updated in December 2019 and issued January 2020.

					New Directorate Service Plans were submitted to and agreed at the Spring 2021 cycle of Strategic Committees.
		Performance management arrangements includes quarterly performance reports to Committees for scrutiny. Ongoing performance management/ monitoring is managed through the Council's Performance & Risk Management System	Executive Chief Officers & Heads of Service	√	Performance Management arrangements are under review as part of the overall redesign of the Council. Service Management Teams continue to monitor performance throughout the year against Corporate and Service priorities and these are monitoring in the Council's Performance & Risk Management System (PRMS)
		The Council is subject to continuous external review on the delivery of Best Value with a detailed report every 5 years and annual commentary on progress in the Council's Annual External Audit Report	Corporate Audit & Performance Manager	√	The Council was subject to a detailed BVAR during 2019 and this was reported along with an Improvement Plan to Council in March 2020. A report on progress against the improvement Plan will be considered at Council in September 2021-The BVAR Improvement Plan will be a focus of the 2021 external audit.

		Internal Audit Plan agreed annually and all audits are reported to Audit & Scrutiny Committee	Corporate Audit & Performance Manager	√	The approval of the Internal Audit Plan was delayed due to COVID-19 and was revised to take account of the impact of the pandemic on the Council. An updated Plan will be submitted to Audit and Scrutiny Committee in June 2021.
		The Council is developing a Medium Term Financial Strategy to support the delivery of statutory responsibilities and delivery of the outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan and will need to be developed in context of COVID-19 and the Council's overall Recovery Plan and any revised Council	Executive Chief Officer – Finance and Resources		In March 2021 the Council agreed a budget for 2021/22 with indicative budgets for 2022/23 and 2023/24. As part of the budget the Council approved 'Ambitious Highland-Health and Prosperity Strategy 2021/22' comprising investment in recovery and transformation  Ongoing development of the Medium Term Financial Plan will continue to be brought to Council meetings throughout 2021/22.
		The Council has a Capital Programme which supports delivery of statutory responsibilities and delivery of outcomes set out in the Council programme.	Executive Chief Officer Finance and resources/ Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property	Ongoing	Delivery of the Capital Programme is subject to regular update reporting to Council committees with overall financial impacts reported to the Corporate Resources Committee

					<p>Overall programme amendments are brought to Council with work underway during 2021/22 to develop a Capital Strategy and then a firm 5 year (with indicative further 5 year) new programme to begin in 2022/23</p> <p>The affordability of the Capital Programme will be incorporated into the Medium Term Financial Plan.</p>
E) Developing the entity's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	Developing the entity's capacity	Performance management arrangements include quarterly performance reports to Committees for scrutiny and an Annual Performance Report to Council Ongoing performance management/ monitoring is managed through the Council's Performance & Risk Management System	Chief Executive	√	New arrangements have been outlined in the Directorate Service Plans with reporting to Strategic Committees.
		Budget monitoring is reported to Committee quarterly and the Annual Accounts are reported to Audit & Scrutiny Committee and Council	Executive Chief Officer – Finance and Resources	√	
		Performance against Statutory Performance Indicators and	Chief Executive	√	Council in October 2020 considered the first annual report on

		comparison with performance against other Scottish Councils is reported to Council annually			delivery of the revised Corporate Plan. In March 2021 Council considered a report on Statutory Performance Indicators and the Local Government Benchmarking Framework.
		Corporate Workforce Strategy in place and development of Service & Corporate Workforce Plans in progress	Executive Chief Officers, Heads of Service & Interim Head of HR	Ongoing	The Workforce Planning and Development Project reported to the Redesign Board in February and an Action Plan agreed at the March 2021 meeting.
		The remit and work plan for the Council's Redesign Board was initially agreed by the Council in June 2018.	Executive Chief Officer -Transformation	√	
		The work of the Council's Redesign Board places staff at the centre of identifying the change that is needed and implementing that change. This includes staff involvement in peer reviews of services, in Lean reviews of functions, peer spending reviews and in communicating improvement ideas.	Executive Chief Officer -Transformation	Ongoing	
		A number of significant Partnerships in place	Executive Chief Officers	√	Update reports on Project Dòchas are

		which deliver benefits in terms of efficiency and service improvement - for example Health & Social Care Partnership, High Life Highland, ICT Partnerships (Wipro) and Highland City Region Deal			reported to every meeting of Corporate Resources Committee.
	Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals	Job and Role Descriptions in place for Officers and Elected Members and effective arrangements in place for joint working	Chief Executive	√	Joint Leadership training incorporated in the Leadership, Culture and Performance priority in the Recovery Plan
		Scheme of Delegation to Committees and Officers is in place and is reviewed and updated annually	Head of Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer)	December 2021	The Council's Scheme of Delegation was reviewed and amended in January 2021. The annual review will be reported to Council in December 2021
		Member Induction Programme delivered for new Council and on-going Member Development Programme is being developed to support individual and collective capacity and capability	Executive Chief Officer- Performance and Governance	√	Development of the refreshed Programme which will include elements of knowledge testing is progressing
		The Employee Review & Development process ensures that all employees have an annual review of their	Executive Chief Officers, Heads of Service & Interim Head of HR	√	A new Learning Management System is being developed.

		objectives, performance and support for their training and development needs			
		Lessons learnt are shared through formal management meetings (e.g. ELT, SLT) and, where appropriate, through reports to committee (e.g. internal Audit Reports to Audit & Scrutiny Committee)	Executive Chief Officers/Heads of Service/Corporate Audit & Performance Manager	√	
		Corporate Health & Well-being Strategy in place supported by an Occupation Health provider and strong trade union engagement through Health & Safety Committees and a network of trade union Health & Safety Representatives	Executive Chief Officers and Heads of Service	√	In March 2020 the Council launched an Employee Assistance Programme including free confidential service for all staff, their partners and dependants over the age of 16
F) Managing the risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	Managing risk	Corporate Risk Management is undertaken to ensure that the Council identifies and mitigates its key risks, in order to deliver its priorities and outcomes, and reported to every Audit & Scrutiny Committee	Executive Chief Officers/Corporate Audit & Performance Manager	√	The Corporate Risk Strategy has been refreshed and was approved by Audit and Scrutiny Committee in March 2021. Quarterly reporting of Corporate Risk to Audit and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Leadership Team and Weekly Strategic Meeting has been established
		Guidance for Report Writing reinforces that all reports to Council	Executive Chief Officers & Heads of Service	Ongoing	The Guidance will be kept under review with

		and Committees must include the risks and implications of any decisions being taken, including Equality Impact Assessments			a particular focus on appropriate identification of risks and implications. Any changes will be disseminated to report writers
		Project Management Policy in place which identifies the process for effective risk management and the reporting and governance arrangements required	Executive Chief Officers & Heads of Service	√	
	Managing performance	Performance management arrangements, include quarterly performance reports to Committees for scrutiny and an Annual Performance Report to Council. Ongoing performance management/ monitoring is managed through the Council's Performance & Risk Management System	Chief Executive	√	New arrangements have been outlined in the Directorate Service Plans with reporting to Strategic Committees
		Budget monitoring is reported to Strategic Committees quarterly and the Annual Accounts are reported to Audit & Scrutiny Committee and Council	Executive Chief Officer – Finance and Resources	√	
		Performance against Statutory Performance Indicators and	Chief Executive	√	Council in October 2020 considered the first annual report on



		comparison with performance against other Scottish Councils is reported to Council annually			delivery of the revised Corporate Plan. In March 2021 Council considered a report on Statutory Performance Indicators and the Local Government Benchmarking Framework
		Performance report for the Corporate Plan to include analysis against targets, benchmarks, family group and national averages	Corporate Audit and Performance Manager	October 2021 and annually	Council in October 2020 considered the first annual report on delivery of the revised Corporate Plan. The report offered analysis against national and family benchmarks. In March 2021 Council considered a report on Statutory Performance Indicators and the Local Government Benchmarking Framework
		Guidance for Report Writing reinforces that all reports to Council and Committees must include the risks and implications of any decisions being taken, including Equality Impact Assessments	Executive Chief Officers & Heads of Service	Ongoing	The Guidance will be kept under review with a particular focus on appropriate identification of risks and implications. Any changes will be disseminated to report writers
		Strategic Committee structure in place which supports policy development, effective decision making and	Chief Executive	√	

		scrutiny of delivery and performance. These are now supported by sub-committees, Boards and member seminars/briefings where appropriate which will increase Councillor capacity to engage in policy development			
		Audit & Scrutiny Committee in place which is chaired by an opposition Councillor provides effective oversight and assurance	Chief Executive	√	
	Robust internal control	Audit & Scrutiny Committee receives an Annual Internal Audit Report which provides an audit opinion upon the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control	Corporate Audit & Performance Manager	√	
	Managing data	Information Management Strategy and supporting procedures in place, including handling of personal data, and management of records under the governance of the	Interim Head of ICT/Data Protection Officer	√	

		Information Management Strategy Group chaired by the Interim Head of ICT. Records Management Plan agreed.			
		PSN Accreditation achieved which provides assurance about network and infrastructure security in relation to personal and other sensitive data	Head of ICT	√	
		Council uses the Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN), which is a secure public sector network, to provide its Wide Area Network to its c.380 sites including all schools and corporate buildings	Head of ICT	√	
		Data Sharing Agreements in place with key partners to enable safe and secure sharing of data across other bodies	Head of ICT/Data Protection Officer	√	
	Strong public financial management	Budget monitoring is reported to Committee quarterly and the Annual Accounts are reported to Audit & Scrutiny Committee and Council	Executive Chief Officer – Finance and Resources	√	

		<p>The Council is developing a Medium Term Financial Strategy to support the delivery of statutory responsibilities and delivery of the outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan and will need to be developed in context of COVID-19 and the Council's overall Recovery Plan and any revised Council</p>	<p>Executive Chief Officer – Finance and Resources</p>		<p>In March 2021 the Council agreed a budget for 2021/22 with indicative budgets for 2022/23 and 2023/24. As part of the budget the Council approved 'Ambitious Highland-Health and Prosperity Strategy 2021/22' comprising investment in recovery and transformation</p> <p>Ongoing development of the Medium Term Financial Plan will continue to be brought to Council meetings throughout 2021/22.</p> <p>The Council worked with CIPFA to review its financial management arrangements; this work concluded in June 2020 and links to the recommendations of the Council's Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) which the Council received in March 2020. A BVAR improvement plan is in place with includes improvement in financial management and reporting</p>
G) implementing good practice in	Implementing good practice in transparency	Guidance for Report Writing reinforces that all reports to Council	Executive Chief Officers & Heads of Service	√	The Guidance will be kept under review with a particular focus on

transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability		and Committees must include the risks and implications of any decisions being taken, including Equality Impact Assessments			appropriate identification of risks and implications. Any changes will be disseminated to report writers
		All Agendas and accompanying reports are published on the Council's Website and all Council, Strategic and Regulatory Meetings are webcast and archived for public access	Head of Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer) Head of Revenue & Customer Service and Interim Head of ICT.	√	Since May 2020 the Council has made use of Microsoft Teams to continue to hold Council and Committee meetings with recordings including of Area Committee meetings being shared via the Council website or YouTube.
	Implementing good practice in reporting	Annual and Quarterly reporting on Performance and Budget Monitoring, to Council and Strategic Committees	Executive Chief Officer – Finance and Resources	√	
		Annual Governance Statement published as part of Annual Accounts and reported to Council and Audit & Scrutiny Committee	Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance	√	The Council's CIPFA 5 Star Financial Management Model assessment and related improvement plan will be used to support a review of compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code
		Code of Corporate Governance reviewed annually and reported to Audit & Scrutiny Committee	Head of Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer)	√	

		Performance against Statutory Performance Indicators and comparison with performance against other Scottish Councils is reported to Council annually	Chief Executive	√	Council in October 2020 considered the first annual report on delivery of the revised Corporate Plan. The report offered analysis against national and family benchmarks. In March 2021 Council considered a report on Statutory Performance Indicators and the Local Government Benchmarking Framework
	Assurance and effective accountability	Internal Audit Plan agreed annually and all audits are reported to Audit & Scrutiny Committee, also tracking of actions arising from reports is monitored by the Committee	Corporate Audit & Performance Manager	√	
		Internal Audit Service in place which reports directly to the Audit & Scrutiny Committee	Chief Executive	√	
		Annual Scrutiny Plan and Annual Report from Audit Scotland is reported to Audit & Scrutiny Committee	Chief Executive	√	
		National Audits reported to Council and/or Audit & Scrutiny Committee to ensure that the Council takes	Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance/Corporate Audit & Performance Manager	√	Progress on the Best Value Audit Improvement Plan will be reported to Council in September 2021.

		any learning points and actions necessary			National reports submitted to Council, Audit & Scrutiny or Strategic Committee as appropriate.
		Corporate Risk Register includes any risks arising from service delivery by third parties	Executive Chief Officers	√	
		Scrutiny of key partnerships undertaken at Council and Strategic Committees and annual reports of ALEO's made to appropriate Committee	Executive Chief Officers	√	

- The identity/designation of the Officer may change as a result of the Restructure of responsibilities within Directorates

Updated June 2021