

Agenda Item	8
Report No	AS/16/23

The Highland Council

Committee: **Audit & Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **28 September 2023**

Report Title: **Code of Corporate Governance**

Report By: **Head of Legal and Governance**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides an update on progress with delivering the Local Code of Corporate Governance for 2022/23 and presents the proposed Code for 2023/24 for Members' approval

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Note the progress on delivering the 2022/23 Code of Corporate Governance and
- ii. Approve the 2023/24 Code of Corporate Governance

3. Implications

3.1 Resource: There are no resource implications arising directly from this report.

3.2 Legal: There are no legal implications arising directly from this report

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island): There are no such implications arising directly from this report.

3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever: There are no such implications arising directly from this report.

3.5 Risk: There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. Approving the local Code of Corporate Governance annually is a requirement of good governance which forms an important element of the Council's Annual Governance Statement to external auditors.

3.6 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people): There are no such implications arising directly from this report.

3.7 Gaelic: There are no Gaelic implications arising directly from this report.

4. Introduction

4.1 The Council is required to prepare a Code of Corporate Governance on an annual basis. This requirement is based on advice from Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (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.

4.3 CIPFA and SOLACE published a Guidance Note for Scottish Authorities- Delivering Good Governance in Local Government. 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:-

1. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
2. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
3. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
4. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
5. Developing the authority's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
6. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
7. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

4.5 This report advises on the status of the actions identified and agreed in the Local Code of Corporate Governance for 2022/23 and presents the proposed Code of Corporate Governance for 2023/24 for approval.

5. Local Code of Corporate Governance 2022/23

5.1 The Code of Corporate Governance 2022/23 was agreed by this Committee in September 2022 and a copy can be found at :-

https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/80557/item_12_-_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 Recording and Management System (PRMS). The

2022/23 Code contained a total of seventy-eight actions seventy-six of which are shown as complete or on target. The remaining two actions which had been identified as having some slippage related to the ongoing review of the Council's capital programme. Following Council's decision on 14 September to agree a revised capital programme those actions are also now complete.

5.3 The current format of the Code has been one used for a number of years. As part of a wider improvement activity it is intended that the format is revised and refreshed in advance of presenting the 2024/25 Code.

6. Code of Corporate Governance 2023/24

5.1 The proposed Code of Corporate Governance is set out in Appendix One.

Designation: Head of Legal and Governance

Date: 15 September 2023

Author: Stewart Fraser

Background Papers:

Appendix One – Proposed Code of Corporate Governance 2023/24

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 Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)	√	
		Member Induction and ongoing training programme with emphasis on the principle of Councillors behaving with integrity at all time	Executive Chief Officer- Performance and Governance	Ongoing	A Members survey was issued early in 2022, part of which focused on members' training and induction and the feedback from this helped to inform the development of the Members' induction programme which commenced the week following the local Government elections in May 2022. A further survey was undertaken in April 2023. A Short Life Members' Working Group was established in June 2023 and a refreshed Learning and Development Programme will be presented to Council approval in October 2023.

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		<p>Programme of Member Training and Development 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 and the Code of Conduct</p>	<p>Executive Chief Officer- Performance and Governance</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The Members' induction programme delivered sessions on key aspects including planning, information management, Code of Conduct and licensing.</p> <p>The Members' Intranet has been completely refreshed and updated and enables Members to access key documents and guidance from one place, including the Improvement Service Induction Notebooks. Training and development opportunities continue to be rolled out with dedicated sessions on subjects including health and safety; Member safety and security; Equality and Diversity; and Gaelic Awareness. A range of online training and development opportunities are also available on the Council's online learning platform Traineasy including corporate risk, Members' scrutiny role and performance management.</p>

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		Report to Council on an annual basis on the uptake of Member training and development		October 2023	The April 2023 Member survey included additional questions seeking feedback on the induction programme and the delivery of ongoing training and development opportunities as a rolling programme. Council has approved further development of the members' learning and Development programme with a further report being presented to Council in October 2023.
		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 People	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 Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)	Ongoing	

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		Council Standing Orders sets out the Council's Governance arrangements and how decisions are made, and this is reviewed annually.	Head of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)	Ongoing	Standing Orders were reviewed and amended in June 2022. Further review of Standing Orders is being taken forward as part of the Governance Review process with further report to Council in October 2023 and annually thereafter.
		Employee Code of Conduct in place and compliance managed through HR policies and procedures including Grievance, Capability and Disciplinary policies	Interim Head of People	√	HR policies and procedures are reviewed on regular basis to ensure legislative and organisational compliance.
		Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders reinforce the ethical values of the Council including in the awarding of contracts to third party organisations	Strategic Lead Corporate Audit and Performance/ Head of Corporate Finance		Financial Regulations are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. The most recent review was approved by Council on 28 October 2021. These are maintained on a universal access Sharepoint site for all staff and also published on the Council's website for public access. A further review of the Regulations is planned for Autumn 2023.
	Respecting the rule of the law	Council's Scheme of Delegation sets out the authority delegated to	Head of Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer)	Ongoing	The Council's Scheme of Delegation was reviewed and amended

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		committees and officers and supports compliance with statutory and legislative obligations and is reviewed annually			in March 2022. Standing Orders were reviewed and amended in June 2022. Further review of the Scheme of Delegation is being taken forward as part of the Governance Review process with further report to Council in October 2023 and annually thereafter.
		Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders are reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with statutory and legislative obligations	Strategic Lead Corporate Audit and Performance/ Head of Corporate Finance	√	As detailed above Financial Regulations are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. The present version of Contract Standing Orders is dated 1 January 2023
		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	Strategic Lead Corporate Audit and Performance	Ongoing	The revised policy was approved by Council in October 2020. Annual Whistleblowing reports are provided to the June meetings of the

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					<p>Audit and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>The 2022/23 Annual Whistleblowing report and the current policy were considered by the HR Sub Group in June 2023. Any revisions required to the policy will then be actioned.</p>
		<p>HR policies and procedures are in place to deal with Grievance, Capability and Disciplinary matters relating to employees</p>	<p>Interim Head of People</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>HR policies and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure legislative and organisational compliance. The Grievance and Disciplinary procedures have been reviewed by the HR Sub-Group and changes to the Grievance Procedure were agreed at the Corporate Resources Committee in February 2023. Operation of the revised procedure will be reviewed after a period of 6-12 months.</p>
		<p>The Council's Internal Audit Team undertake investigations into complaints alleging any misconduct or lack of compliance with corporate procedures</p>	<p>Strategic Lead Corporate Audit and Performance</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Any complaints are considered and assessed to determine if there is need for investigation. This may result in an unplanned audit review, a fraud or whistleblowing</p>

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					investigation. These will be subject to the normal reporting arrangements including to the Audit & Scrutiny Committee.
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 Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)	Ongoing	Standing Orders were reviewed and amended in June 2022. Annual reviews will continue to be undertaken.
		All meetings of the Council, Strategic, Audit and Scrutiny and Regulatory Committees are webcast and archived for one year for public access	Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance/ Interim Head of ICT/Head of Revenues & Customer Service	√	The Council has made use of Microsoft Teams to hold Council and Committee meetings remotely and in a hybrid fashion. Recordings including of Area Committee meetings are 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,	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

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		Gaelic, Rural/Island and Poverty Impact Assessments			<p>disseminated to report writers.</p> <p>A consolidated impact assessment approach is being developed and will be submitted for Council approval. The guidance will be updated once this is concluded.</p>
		Continue to develop participatory budgeting across the Council area to ensure community participation in resource allocation.	Head of Community Support and Engagement	Ongoing programme	<p>The Council agreed a new approach to participatory resourcing as part of the budget setting process in 2022. Public engagement will identify priorities for targeting funds to inform area committee decisions on allocations, including Coastal Communities Funds, Place Based Investment Funds, and Area Play Funds. As this approach evolves, the aim will be to include other mainstream budgets delegated to local level. This is already in action through the Highland – Let’s Talk Funding engagement exercise. As Area Place Plans are developed, e.g. Skye and Raasay Futures, the priorities will support directing</p>

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					the allocation and direction of spend of local funds. The roll out of Area Place Plans across Highland will further support greater local participation and involvement in service design, priority setting and delivery.
	Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	The Council is one of five lead partners within the Highland Community Planning Partnership. Work with partners to improve evidencing outcomes and performance reporting in order to deliver improved outcomes for Highland communities	Chief Executive	√	<p>Performance Framework to support monitoring the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan and delivery of effective outcomes is in place</p> <p>Recruitment is now complete for a Partnership Development Manager and Partnership Officers to support the work of local and strategic community planning.</p>
		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.	Chief Executive	Ongoing	The agreed terms of reference and structure for the Community Planning Partnership (2019) are regularly reviewed by the Community Planning Board.
		The Highland Council is the lead organisation		Ongoing	Regular updates are presented to the

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		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, Environment and Economy		Economy and Infrastructure Committee as part of refreshed scrutiny and governance arrangements. A Members' Monitoring Group has also been established. The City-Region Deal is also subject to periodic internal audit reviews and the outcomes reported to the Audit & Scrutiny Committee.
		The Council has been successful in being awarded support from the Levelling Up Fund	Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Environment and Economy	April 2025	A Programme Board has been established with stakeholders to oversee the delivery of the improvements to Inverness Castle, Northern Meeting Park and the Bught. The Board is chaired by the Inverness City Leader.
		The Highland Council has agreed to act as 'Accountable Body' for the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport.	Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Environment and Economy	Ongoing	A Members' Monitoring Group was established in June 2023 and had its first meeting in August 2023.

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		The Council has strong engagement with the Police Service of Scotland and Scottish Fire & Rescue Service with scrutiny at both a strategic and local level	Head of Community Support and Engagement	√	Police and Fire scrutiny continues through Area Committees and twice a 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 Community Support and Engagement	√	There has been a broader approach taken to engagement across the Council with a focus on greater participation and involvement of communities in service, design, delivery and priority setting. This is supported by the agreement of the Place Based Framework and wider commitments to community planning and will be strengthened through the development of an Engagement and Involvement Strategy which will reflect how the organisation will engage and involve our communities in how we operate, and help support developing and improving our involvement and relationship with communities across Highland.
		The Council has a Health & Social Care	Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care/	√	The Council and NHS Highland have agreed a

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		Partnership with NHS Highland, based on a lead agency model, with NHS responsible for Adult Services and the Council responsible for Children's Services	Chief Social Work Officer/ Head of Integration Adult Social Care		revised Partnership Agreement with improved scrutiny and governance arrangements which include a Joint Monitoring Committee. The Agreement was approved by the Scottish Government in November 2021. The Council and NHS Highland are consulting on the Adult Social Care Strategic Plan which is due for adoption at the end of 2023. The Children's Strategic Plan has been adopted.
		The Council has a Staff Partnership Forum in place for engagement with Trade Unions. Trade Unions are also represented on the Council's Redesign Board.	Interim Head of People	√	The Partnership Framework Agreement was reviewed and agreed at the Staff Partnership 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 listening locally, widening participation in decision-making, supporting community bodies to do more and to target support to	Chief Executive	√	The My Council project considers how to both improve customer experience of contacting the Council and also how individuals wish to engage with the Council

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		particular people and places most in need.			
		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.	Executive Chief Officers Education, Health and Social Care & Property and Housing	√	
		The Council holds a contact database of groups with an interest in equality, diversity and human rights issues and liaises with these groups to share information, engage and seek views on a range of issues.	Head of Community Support and Engagement	√	
		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	Ward Managers and Executive Chief Officers	√	

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		community, with a specific focus on reducing inequalities.			
		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 Community Support and Engagement	√	
		Community engagement is undertaken on a variety of service and policy issues and led by Service and Ward Managers.	Executive Chief Officers/Head of Service/Ward Managers	√	The My Council project considers how to both improve customer experience of contacting the Council and also how individuals wish to engage with the Council.
		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	Head of Community Support and Engagement	Ongoing	

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		responses from local communities.			
C) Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	Defining outcomes	The Highland Council Programme for 2022-27 set out a number of goals based on five priorities: A Fair and Caring Highland; Resilient and Sustainable Communities; Accessible and Sustainable Highland Homes; A Sustainable Highland Environment and Global Centre for Renewable Energy; A Resilient and Sustainable Council. The new Council Programme will be supported by a performance framework including Corporate Plan and Service Plans which set out how performance and delivery will be monitored	Chief Executive	√	The Service Planning guidance was reviewed in order to ensure that Service Plans focus on improvement. Service Plans were prepared and submitted for approval by the relevant Strategic Committees in the August/ September reporting cycle. Progress will be reported on a quarterly basis.
		The redesign statement and statement of Council purpose, values and outcomes were initially agreed by the Council in June 2017 The Board met in September 2022 to	Acting Depute Chief Executive	√	A Senior Officer Board, chaired by the Acting Depute Chief Executive, meets regularly to oversee delivery of the Redesign Programme.

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		agree a number of major strategic projects for consideration and to re-establish a programme of Lean/Rapid Reviews			
		Annual Performance Report presented to Council to monitor delivery of outcomes and priorities	Chief Executive	√	The Annual Corporate Performance Report was presented to September 2023 Council meeting. Review of performance reporting arrangements will be undertaken of to assess if this can be undertaken more frequently.
	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 the current financial crisis	Head of Corporate Finance (Section 95 Officer)	√	<p>In March 2023 the Council agreed a one year budget for 2023/24 As part of the budget the Council approved 'Our Future Highland Budget Strategy 2023-2024'</p> <p>Ongoing development of the Medium Term Financial Plan will continue to be brought to Council meetings throughout 2023/24.</p> <p>The recommendations of the Council's Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) were received in March 2020.</p>

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					<p>A BVAR Improvement Plan is in place which includes improvement in financial management and reporting. Progress in delivering BVAR improvement was reported to Council in September 2021 and will continue annually until the BVAR Improvement Plan is complete.</p>
		<p>The Council Capital Strategy and Programme supports the delivery of statutory responsibilities and delivery of the outcomes set out in the Council Programme</p>	<p>Head of Corporate Finance (Section 95 Officer)/ Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Environment and Economy</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>An updated Five-year Capital Programme was agreed at September 2023 Council.</p>
		<p>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</p>	<p>Acting Depute Chief Executive</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	

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		sustainable, affordable and aware of community impacts.			
		Budget management is the responsibility of budget holders and monitoring reports are presented to Committee quarterly	Head of Corporate Finance (Section 95 Officer)	√	
		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/ Strategic Lead Corporate Audit and Performance	√	The latest revision of the Corporate Risk Strategy was approved by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in March 2021. A further review was undertaken during 2023. Quarterly reporting of the management of corporate risks is provided to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee
		Service risks are identified and managed. Regular updates are provided for scrutiny by the Strategic Committee	Executive Chief Officers/ Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit and Performance)		Further work has been undertaken to improve the identification and management of Service risks. These will be recorded within Service Plans and progress on managing risks will be reported quarterly to the relevant Strategic Committee
D) Determining the interventions	Determining interventions	Options appraisals are undertaken to support significant changes in	Executive Chief Officers & Heads of Service	√	

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necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes		service delivery and used to inform decision making			
		The Redesign Board's approach includes a core programme of work and targeted lean reviews. These are overseen by the Redesign Board made up of Members and Trade Union representatives.	Acting Depute Chief Executive	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. A consolidated impact assessment approach is being developed and will be submitted for Council approval. The guidance will be updated once this is concluded.
		Financial Approach, agreed by Council, which includes prioritisation of services to manage competing	Head of Corporate Finance (Section 95 Officer)	√	

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		demands within limited financial 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	√	. New Service Planning Guidance was issued in January 2022 and interim service plans in place in June 2022 in order to support the new political leadership (post May 2022 local government elections) develop the new Council programme. The new Council programme, Corporate Plan and updated service plans reflecting the Council's new strategic direction are in place and will be kept under review.
		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/ Strategic Lead Corporate Audit and Performance	√	Service Management Teams continue to monitor performance throughout the year against Corporate and Service priorities and report quarterly to strategic Committees. Performance is continuously monitored within the Council's Performance & Risk Management System (PRMS). Quarterly Performance reviews

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					are held by the Chief Executive and Acting Depute Chief Executive with each Directorate to oversee and scrutinise performance and service delivery.
		<p>The Council is subject to continuous external review on the delivery of Best Value (BV). BV work is now fully integrated into the annual external audit work from 2023/24. This means that each year a BV thematic is identified and the outcome is reported in their Annual Audit Report (AAR). The Council's AARs will be reviewed by the Accounts Commission once over the five-year period. This means that the Council will receive a report summarising the BV period between October 2023 and August 2027.</p>	Strategic Lead Corporate Audit and Performance	√	<p>External Audit reports including any BV findings will be reported to the Audit & Scrutiny Committee. Progress on addressing any BV recommendations will also be reported to Council on an annual basis.</p>
		<p>The Council is developing a Medium Term Financial Strategy to support the delivery of statutory responsibilities and</p>	Head of Corporate Finance (Section 95 Officer)	√	<p>In March 2023 the Council agreed a one year budget for 2023/24 As part of the budget the Council approved 'Our Future Highland</p>

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		<p>delivery of the outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan and will need to be developed in the context of the current financial crisis.</p>			<p>Budget Strategy 2023-2024'</p> <p>Ongoing development of the Medium Term Financial Plan will continue to be brought to Council meetings throughout 2023/24.</p>
<p>E) Developing the entity's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</p>	<p>Developing the entity's capacity</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p>	<p>√</p>	<p>New arrangements have been outlined in the Directorate Service Plans with reporting to Strategic Committees on a quarterly basis. Annual performance reports are submitted to Council in September each year. Performance is continually monitored through PRMS. Quarterly Performance reviews are held by the Chief Executive and Acting Depute Chief Executive with each Directorate to oversee and scrutinise performance and service delivery. A new leadership development programme has been established for the Council's senior team. A new management development programme 'Management</p>

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					Connections' has been launched for the Council's managers.
		Budget monitoring is reported to Committee quarterly and the Annual Accounts are reported to Audit & Scrutiny Committee and Council	Head of Corporate Finance (Section 95 Officer)	√	
		Performance against Statutory Performance Indicators and comparison with performance against other Scottish Councils is reported to Council annually	Chief Executive	√	This information reporting on Statutory Performance Indicators and the Local Government Benchmarking Framework has traditionally been reported to Council in March each year. This is being reviewed to establish if more regular reports can be provided to Council.
		Corporate Workforce Strategy in place and development of Service and Corporate Workforce Plans in progress	Executive Chief Officers, Heads of Service & Interim Head of People	Ongoing	Recommendations from the Workforce Planning and Development review confirmed the 2017-22 Strategy is fit for purpose. A revised Corporate Workforce Strategy has been developed. Service Workforce Plans were developed and submitted to Service Committees in Autumn 2023.

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		<p>The remit and work plan for the Council's Redesign Board was initially agreed by the Council in June 2017. The Board met in September 2022 to agree a number of major strategic projects for consideration and to re-establish a programme of Lean/Rapid Reviews.</p>	<p>Acting Depute Chief Executive</p>	<p>√</p>	<p>The Redesign Board reports directly to the Council. The Board itself meets quarterly with additional ad hoc workshops arranged as required. A Senior Officer Board has been established, chaired by the Acting Depute Chief Executive, to ensure delivery of the Redesign Programme.</p>
		<p>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.</p>	<p>Acting Depute Chief Executive</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	
		<p>A number of significant Partnerships in place which deliver benefits in terms of efficiency and service improvement - for example Health & Social Care Partnership, High Life</p>	<p>Executive Chief Officers</p>	<p>√</p>	

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		Highland, Highland City Region Deal and the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport.			
	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	√	
		Scheme of Delegation to Committees and Officers is in place and is reviewed and updated annually	Head of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer)	Ongoing	
		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 and attendance reporting is progressing
		The Employee Review & Development process ensures that all employees have an annual review of their objectives, performance and support for their training and development needs	Executive Chief Officers, Heads of Service & Interim Head of People	√	The new Learning Management System 'Traineasy' will be used to support the recording of ERDs. ERDs have been revised and were relaunched in summer 2023.

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		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/ Strategic Lead Corporate Audit and Performance	√	See information at C) above.
		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. A consolidated impact assessment approach is being developed and will be submitted for

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					Council approval. The guidance will be updated once this is concluded.
		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 (PRMS)	Chief Executive	√	Quarterly performance reports are provided to Strategic Committees Service Plans have been produced as detailed at E) above
		Budget monitoring is reported to Strategic Committees quarterly and the Annual Accounts are reported to Audit & Scrutiny Committee and Council	Head of Corporate Finance (Section 95 Officer)	√	
		Performance against Statutory Performance Indicators and comparison with	Chief Executive	√	In March annually the Council considers a report on Statutory Performance Indicators

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		performance against other Scottish Councils is reported to Council annually			and the Local Government Benchmarking Framework
		Performance report for the Corporate Plan to include analysis against targets, benchmarks, family group and national averages	Strategic Lead Corporate Audit and Performance	March and September annually	In March annually the Council considers a report on Statutory Performance Indicators and the Local Government Benchmarking Framework. This annual approach is being reviewed. In September annually the Council receives an annual performance report centred on delivery of the Corporate Plan
		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	<p>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.</p> <p>A consolidated impact assessment approach is being developed and will be submitted for Council approval. The guidance will be updated once this is concluded</p>

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		Strategic Committee structure in place which supports policy development, effective decision making and 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	Chief Executive	√	Governance Review is currently underway and will report to Council in October 2023.
		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	Strategic Lead Corporate Audit and Performance	√	This is reported annually to the June meeting of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee
	Managing data	Information and Data Strategy and supporting policies in place,	Executive Chief Officer- Performance and Governance/ Corporate	√	

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		<p>including handling of personal data, and management of records under the governance of the Information Governance Board chaired by the Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance. Records Management Plan approved by National Records of Scotland</p>	<p>Performance & Information Governance Manager</p>		
		<p>PSN Accreditation is assessed annually through an external IT security health check to provide assurance about network and infrastructure security in relation to personal and other sensitive data</p>	<p>Head of ICT & Digital</p>	<p>√</p>	
		<p>Access to IT systems and data is controlled using a layered approach. Network access is either via Scottish Wide area Network (SWAN) – a secure public sector network linking all Council sites- or via VPN for remote and home working. Users are authenticated via a cloud authentication service.</p>	<p>Head of ICT & Digital</p>	<p>√</p>	

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		Information is handled appropriately and securely. Staff receive appropriate training to handle information. Risks associated with information assets are regularly reviewed	Information Asset Owners/Information Asset Managers	√	
		Data Sharing Agreements in place with key partners to enable safe and secure sharing of data across other bodies	Information Asset Owners/Corporate Performance & Information Governance Manager	√	
	Strong public financial management	Budget monitoring is reported to Committee quarterly and the Annual Accounts are reported to Audit & Scrutiny Committee and Council	Head of Corporate Finance (Section 95 Officer)	√	
		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 the current financial crisis.	Head of Corporate Finance (Section 95 Officer)	√	In March 2023 the Council agreed a one year budget for 2023/24 As part of the budget the Council approved 'Our Future Highland Budget Strategy 2023-2024' Ongoing development of the Medium Term Financial Plan will continue to be brought to Council meetings throughout 2023/24.

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<p>G) implementing good practice in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability</p>	<p>Implementing good practice in transparency</p>	<p>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</p>	<p>Executive Chief Officers & Heads of Service</p>	<p>√</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>A consolidated impact assessment approach is being developed and will be submitted for Council approval. The guidance will be updated once this is concluded</p>
		<p>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</p>	<p>Head of Legal and Governance (Monitoring Officer) Head of Revenue & Customer Service and Head of ICT & Digital.</p>	<p>√</p>	<p>The Council has made use of Microsoft Teams to hold Council and Committee meetings remotely and in a hybrid fashion. Recordings including of Area Committee meetings are shared via the Council website or YouTube. . All reports are managed internally via Microsoft SharePoint and published externally, except for restricted reports, on the Council website.</p>

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	Implementing good practice in reporting	Annual and Quarterly reporting on Performance and Budget Monitoring, to Council and Strategic Committees	Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance/ Head of Corporate Finance (Section 95 Officer)	√	
		Annual Governance Statement published as part of Annual Accounts and reported to Council and Audit & Scrutiny Committee	Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance	√	
		Code of Corporate Governance reviewed annually and reported to Audit & Scrutiny Committee	Head of Corporate Governance (Monitoring Officer)	√	
	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	Strategic Lead Corporate Audit and Performance	√	
		Internal Audit Service in place which reports directly to the Audit & Scrutiny Committee. Internal Audit Service must comply with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).	Chief Executive	√	Conformance on compliance with the PSIAS is confirmed within the Internal Audit Annual report which is provided to the June Audit & Scrutiny Committee

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		Annual Scrutiny Plan and Annual Report from Audit Scotland is reported to Audit & Scrutiny Committee	Chief Executive	√	
		National and Performance Audits issued by Audit Scotland are reported to Council and/or Audit & Scrutiny Committee to ensure that the Council takes any learning points and actions necessary	Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance/ Strategic Lead Corporate Audit and Performance	√	Reports submitted to Council, Audit & Scrutiny or Strategic Committee as appropriate.
		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 September 2023