

Annual Governance Statement

2019/20



Annual Governance Statement

1. **Scope of Responsibility**

- 1.1 Dudley Metropolitan 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, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 2000 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.
- 1.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, the council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance (including the system of internal control) of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is to explain how the council has endeavoured to deliver good governance through the arrangements in place during the period covered and how the council has reviewed the effectiveness of these arrangements. It also meets the requirements of Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to undertake a review of the effectiveness of internal control and publish an AGS. The proper practice is provided by the updated CIPFA/SOLACE guidance “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government”. The AGS covers the financial year 2019/20 and the subsequent period up to the sign off of the 2019/20 statement of accounts and therefore governance issues up to the date of approval of the audited accounts need to be considered.
- 1.4 The AGS should be read in conjunction with the council’s Code of Corporate Governance which was approved by Audit and Standards Committee in July 2019.
- 1.5 The Code of Corporate Governance provides details of the framework the council has put in place to meet the principles of effective governance as prescribed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) guidance “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government”. A copy of the Code of Corporate Governance is available on the council’s website.

2. **The Purpose of the Governance Framework**

- 2.1 The governance framework comprises the arrangements (including political, economic, social, environmental, administrative, legal, and other arrangements) put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved. It places the attainment of sustainable economic, societal and environmental outcomes as a key focus of governance structures and processes and stresses the importance of taking account of the impact of current decisions and actions on future generations.

2.2 Risk management and internal control are a significant part of the governance framework and are designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. They cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve objectives and priorities and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The systems of risk management and internal control are based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the council's objectives and priorities, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

3. The Governance Framework

3.1 Dudley MBC's governance framework comprises the strategies, plans, policies, procedures, systems and processes and values and behaviours that assist the council in delivering its strategic objectives/priorities and provide services in an appropriate and cost effective way.

3.2 The full Council is ultimately responsible for the development and maintenance of the governance environment. Responsibility is delegated down via the Constitution to Cabinet, other Member Committees and Officers (See **Appendix A** for a description of the council's structure).

The key statutory positions in relation to governance are:

- Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) who must ensure that the council is properly organised and staffed,
- Monitoring Officer (Lead for Law and Governance) who must ensure the lawfulness and fairness of decision making,
- Section 151 Officer/Chief Finance Officer (Director of Finance and Legal) who must ensure the lawfulness and financial prudence of decision making and the proper administration of the council's financial affairs.
- Head of Internal Audit who is responsible for delivering an annual opinion on the effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and internal control.
- Statutory Scrutiny Officer (Democratic Services Manager), who promotes and provides support to the council's overview and scrutiny functions and gives advice to Members and Officers on these functions.

3.3 The council's governance framework is detailed in a Code of Corporate Governance that is updated on an annual basis. The Code of Corporate Governance is based on the 7 principles detailed in the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance "Delivering good governance in Local Government":

- Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values,
- Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement,
- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits,
- Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes,

- Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it,
- Managing the risks and performance through robust internal controls and strong public financial management,
- Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

Code of Corporate Governance

4. Review of Effectiveness

4.1 General Overview

4.1.1 Many senior managers in the council have contributed in determining the effectiveness of the council's systems and processes and an initial draft was discussed and challenged by Strategic Executive Board. Assurance on the effectiveness of systems and processes comes from many sources such as Internal Audit, Strategic Executive Board, Members through full Council, Cabinet, Committees particularly Audit and Standards Committee and Scrutiny Committees, the work of council support services, risk and performance management systems, quality systems, corporate groups and individual Managers. The following sections detail some key elements of the council's governance framework, how effectiveness is determined for these areas and what outcomes have been delivered.

4.2 Internal Audit and Fraud

4.2.1 Audit Services is the only internal source of independent assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes within the council.

4.2.2 The Head of Audit Services reports to the Director Finance and Legal (Section 151 Officer) who is a permanent member of Strategic Executive Board. He oversees the performance of the service on a day to day basis.

4.2.3 The work of internal audit is monitored by the Audit and Standards Committee, who approve the annual audit plan and receive regular monitoring reports. Audit Services completed 96% of the 2019/20 audit plan.

4.2.4 Audit Services are required to comply with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and one of its requirements is for an external quality assessment against the standards to be undertaken every five years. Audit Services have recently (March 2020) had an external assessment and were found to meet the standards and also compared very favourably with other public and private sector providers.

4.2.5 The Head of Audit Services is required by Public Sector Internal Audit Standards to deliver an annual report which contains an internal audit opinion. The internal audit opinion must conclude on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and control. The annual report is to be presented to Audit and Standards Committee in July 2020.

4.2.6 This opinion is based upon the work carried out by Audit Services during 2019/2020 and any significant external assurance received by the council. It must be acknowledged, however, that it is not possible to review all aspects of governance, risk management and control within a single year. In giving the opinion it should be noted that assurance can never be absolute and the most that internal audit can provide is reasonable assurance that there are no major weaknesses in the council's governance, risk management and control processes. In assessing the level of assurance, the following have been taken into account:

- All internal audit reviews undertaken including consultancy for the year ending 31st March 2020,
- Follow up reviews undertaken on High priority actions and audits that have been given a "Minimal" assurance rating,
- Continuing work being undertaken by Management to respond to actions arising from internal audit work,
- Whether any High priority actions have not been accepted by Management,
- Any other assurance opinion given by other providers that Audit Services have relied upon.

4.2.7 The Head of Audit Services opinion is as follows:

"I am satisfied that sufficient assurance work has been carried out to allow me to form a reasonable conclusion as to the adequacy and effectiveness of Dudley MBC's overall internal control environment and there has been no limitations to the scope of our activity or resource constraints imposed on Audit Services which have impacted on our ability to meet the full internal audit needs of the council. Taking into account what is detailed in paragraph 4.2.6, for the 12 months ended 31st March 2020, I am able to provide 'Reasonable' assurance on Dudley MBC's framework of governance, risk management and internal control, which is required in order to achieve the council's priorities. The main concerns which I am required to bring to your attention are:

- The council has experienced significant and prolonged issues with the implementation of its replacement HR and Payroll System and previous audit reports have identified many serious concerns that the council was struggling to address. Audit Services were due to start a further audit on this area in April 2020, but unfortunately due to the Covid-19 pandemic this audit has had to be postponed. Confirmation of improvement will be only be achieved once a further audit is carried out.
- Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Dudley to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. The inspection identified some significant weaknesses and required a Written Statement of Action to be submitted to Ofsted. The cost of Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) services are met from the High Needs Block within the Dedicated Schools Grant. It is understood there will be an ongoing underlying shortfall and a cumulative deficit of around £13m by the 31st March 2021.

These areas are working to comprehensive Action Plans.”

- 4.2.8 The council has a dedicated Corporate Fraud Manager, who is a qualified fraud investigator with many years’ experience in this area. He is responsible for delivering against the Fraud Action Plan (which is made up of four elements: Prevent, Detect, Investigate and Resolve) and maintaining the fraud risk register. The council also maintains a Housing Fraud Team.
- 4.2.9 Regular reports on fraud activity are presented to Audit and Standards Committee.
- 4.2.10 The Annual Fraud Report details that during the period 1st January 2019 to 31st December 2019 the Corporate Fraud Manager was involved in 56 investigations of which 15 no fraud was established, 25 were in progress as at 31st December 2019 and 16 fraud/other inappropriate behaviour was established.
- 4.2.11 During the period 1st January 2019 to 31st December 2019 the Housing Fraud Team carried out investigations into 707 referrals of which 76 were found to involve fraud. The notional saving to the council was approximately £543,000.

4.3 **Risk Management**

- 4.3.1 The council’s risk management strategy is reviewed and approved by Audit and Standards Committee.
- 4.3.2 A report on corporate risks is presented to Strategic Executive Board and Audit and Standards Committee three times a year. For each of these meetings, Audit and Standards Committee select a corporate risk for discussion. This would involve the officer responsible for the risk delivering a presentation on how the risk is being managed, which is then open to challenge by Members. During 2019/20 risks relating to “Vulnerable People” and “Payroll” were subject to Member challenge.
- 4.3.3 The council’s corporate risks were subject to ongoing review during 2019/20; the following were rated “Major” or “Significant” (there are other risks rated “Moderate”):

Risk	Rating March 2020	Rating April 2020
Failure to address the actions in the internal audit report may result in staff not being paid or not being paid correctly	Major	Major
If the council is unable to stay Payment Card Industry Compliant (P.C.I), several risks may arise/be incurred: financial penalties, reputational damage and the council's approach to income collection impeded.	Major	Major
Failure to implement emergency planning and business continuity arrangements will increase the inability of the local authority to respond and recover from incidents.	Major	Major
Following the UK's exit from the European Union, risks remain in respect securing satisfactory international trading arrangements and agreements with the constituent states of the EU, the USA and other countries worldwide.	Significant	Significant

The council may be unable to set and/or manage its budget so as to meet its statutory obligations within the resources available.	Significant	Major
The council may fail to; assess the importance of information to the business and may be unaware of the potential impact on the organisation should the confidentiality, integrity or availability of information be compromised.	Significant	Significant
There is a risk that various changes to welfare and benefits systems could place people at risk and increase pressures on statutory services.	Significant	Major
There is a risk that the council's capacity to support delivery of its priorities or take advantage of emerging opportunities may become insufficient. This presents a risk that services supporting vulnerable people fail to meet statutory requirements, a loss of potential regeneration investment into the borough, increases in workforce stress, customer dissatisfaction and diminishing political support.	Significant	Significant
There is a risk that the transformation of the council rests on a number of significant ICT Projects. These projects carry a risk of failing to delivery their aims, cost overrun, being ineffective and/or disruption to the current business. E.g. Social Care Replacement, Digital Platform and PIMS.	Significant	Significant
There is a risk that the MCP will be delayed or not take place at all due to changes in national policy or current challenges in the local NHS system. This would result in reputational and financial issues and threaten the delivery of existing MTFS savings	Significant	Removed
Risk of failure to protect adults in positions of vulnerability due to increasing demand, changing patterns of abuse (e.g. exploitation) and reducing resources	Significant	Major
Risk of failure to protect children in positions of vulnerability, due to increasing demand, changing patterns of abuse (e.g. exploitation) and reducing resources.	Significant	Major
The council acknowledges that there is a risk of fraud across all areas of its operations and is working both internally and with external partners to prevent and reduce this risk.	Moderate	Significant
Failure to have in place effective arrangements for managing health and safety leading to risks to council staff, service users and visitors to council premises	Moderate	Major
There is a risk post COVID 19 that existing government funded initiatives may not be continue or may continue but with reduced allocations. Work on programmes that are mid bid continue at risk.	N/A	Major

NB/Corporate risks were discussed by Strategic Executive Board in March 2020 and reviewed again in April 2020 to reflect the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 4.3.4 As part of the council's risk management processes, Directors are required to complete a quarterly risk assurance protocol. The purpose of the protocol is for Directors to confirm that risks have been identified and managed in accordance with the Risk Strategy.
- 4.3.5 Responsibility for coordination of risk management has transferred from Financial Services to Audit Services. This transfer has been considered and endorsed by Strategic Executive Board in light of an audit that raised a number of issues of compliance and comparisons with practice in other authorities. Audit Services are considered better placed to capitalise on synergies with other assurance work and to develop a revised strategy and procedures

4.4 **Financial Management**

- 4.4.1 The Director of Finance and Legal is the officer designated under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 to make arrangements for the proper administration of the council's financial affairs. A review against CIPFA's statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer has been undertaken, which found all key requirements are being met.
- 4.4.2 The council's Scrutiny Committees and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board have a role in scrutinising the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Capital Monitoring Programme is reported to all Cabinet meetings and the revenue budget is reported to Cabinet three times per year (and may be reported more frequently on an exception basis).
- 4.4.3 Directors, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Executive have delegated authority to manage their budgets. They are each supported in this by a dedicated Finance Manager and a team of qualified staff who work closely to understand the business, but are professionally accountable to the Section 151 Officer. The council showed an adverse variance of £1.9m against budget for 2019/20 (including an adverse variance of £2.1m for Children's Services, £1.3m for Adult Social Care and offset by £1.6m from Corporate, Treasury and Levies). Internal Audit have conducted audits of Treasury Management, Council Tax, Business Rates, Debtors, Creditors, Budget Management, Benefits, BACS and General Ledger and all received either "Substantial" or "Reasonable" assurance.

4.5 **Performance Management**

- 4.5.1 The Council Plan for 2019-2022 was approved by full Council in May 2019 and will be delivered via a One Council ethos to build an effective and dynamic organisation aligned to the three core priorities:
- Growing the economy and creating jobs,
 - A cleaner greener place,
 - Stronger and safer communities.

- 4.5.2 These core priorities shape the services that are provided and ensure that directorates and partnerships are linked via a common purpose. Each directorate has identified their three key priorities.
- 4.5.3 The Council Plan also sets out Dudley Council's alignment with the shared vision for the borough, which is built around seven aspirations and developed with key partners and stakeholders. The aspirations for Dudley Borough by 2030 are:
- An affordable and attractive place to live with a green network of high quality parks, waterways and nature reserves that are valued by local people and visitors,
 - A place where everybody has the education and skills they need, and where outstanding local schools, colleges and universities secure excellent results for their learners,
 - A place of healthy, resilient, safe communities with high aspirations and the ability to shape their own future,
 - Better connected with high quality and affordable transport, combining road, tram, rail, and new cycling and walking infrastructure,
 - Renowned as home to a host of innovative and prosperous businesses, operating in high quality locations with space to grow, sustainable energy supplies and investing in their workforce,
 - A place to visit and enjoy that drives opportunity, contributing to its ambitious future while celebrating its pioneering past,
 - Full of vibrant towns and neighbourhoods offering a new mix of leisure, faith, cultural, residential and shopping uses.
- 4.5.4 A Council Vision – Future Dudley 2030 is currently being produced which will link to the Borough Vision – Forging a Future for All and the Council Plan 2019-22.
- 4.5.5 The Council Plan is supported by Director Plans that provide more detailed information on the service actions the council are taking to deliver its priorities and outcomes. The plans have a three year focus and are reviewed annually in support of the Council Plan.
- 4.5.6 A quarterly performance report is presented to Strategic Executive Board and Corporate Scrutiny Committee. Prior to Corporate Scrutiny Committee, Members select an area of performance for detailed scrutiny during the meeting. During 2019/20 Members have reviewed performance relating to Childrens Services/Schools, Waste Management and Attendance Management. Progress against Director Plans is monitored at monthly directorate management team meetings.
- 4.5.7 The performance report for the quarter ending 31st March 2020 showed that of the 34 Key Performance Indicators identified, 18 were "On or Exceeding Target", 5 "Met Target" and 11 were "Below Target". The quarterly performance report has been enhanced with the inclusion of benchmarking information, where available.

4.6 **Asset Management**

- 4.6.1 The council's Estate Strategy 2017 – 2022 sets out key objectives for its land and property estate. Proposed actions that materialise in the implementation of the Strategy are reflected in an action plan which is monitored by Corporate Landlord

Services at regular estates meetings. For those proposed actions to progress into capital projects their business cases must obtain approval at the council's Commercial Opportunities Group, Strategic Executive Board and Cabinet.

- 4.6.2 In addition to the actions in the current Strategy, the main task in the next 12-18 months will be to review and update the Strategy itself to reflect possible actions required over the next five year period. Directors are being asked what they need from their land and property over the next five years, which may be influenced both short and long term by the recent Covid-19 pandemic.
- 4.6.3 A recent internal audit of Corporate Asset Management has provided "Reasonable" assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of processes. An action that is being considered in response is providing a "state of the estate" report to Strategic Executive Board.

4.7 **People Management**

- 4.7.1 A Corporate Workforce Analytics Report is presented on a quarterly basis to Strategic Executive Board. This provides information on the type of staff employed, sickness absence rates, completion of My Annual Review meetings and other key Human Resource indicators. Directors receive their own directorate report which is discussed at their management team meetings.
- 4.7.2 A key aspect of the attendance management procedures is the completion of return to work interviews. The latest data available indicates that 88% of return to work interviews are being completed, which is a significant improvement on the previous year. Heads of Service are now provided with a monthly report identifying where return to work interviews are not being undertaken.
- 4.7.3 There has also been a significant improvement in the completion of My Annual Reviews, with 77% of reviews now being completed. Heads of Services are provided with a monthly report on the completion of My Annual Reviews.

4.8 **Information Management**

- 4.8.1 The Information Governance Board supported by the Corporate Information Governance Team oversees the operation of information governance processes and compliance with General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act.
- 4.8.2 During the year the Corporate Information Governance Team have assisted in the drafting and development of 32 Data Sharing Agreements with partners, undertaken and assisted with 12 Data Protection Impact Assessments, processed 1,319 Freedom of Information requests, 673 Subject Access Requests and 179 Environmental Information Regulation requests. Furthermore, as a consequence of an increased awareness of the need to report suspected data breaches, assessed the severity of 136 suspected incidents of which only 2 have been required to be reported to the Information Commissioner's Office, both of which have required no further action to be taken.
- 4.8.3 The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has contacted the council with regards to four Data Protection concerns and one Freedom of Information complaint during the period. The council has worked with both the ICO and the

complainants in all circumstances and reached satisfactory outcomes and has not been imposed with any formal regulatory action.

- 4.8.4 The council has met to a “satisfactory” standard the requirements of the NHS Digital Data Security and Protection Toolkit which is needed to be completed by public bodies that operate an Adult Social Care or Health function on an annual basis. During 2019/2020 the council maintained its Public Sector Network compliance status and is continuing to work with a Qualified Security Assessor (QSA) to ensure that it will achieve the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI-DSS).
- 4.8.5 An ISO27001 Gap Analysis concluded that the council was in an excellent position to progress with projects to look at achieving both Cyber Essentials Plus and ISO27001 accreditations. This position is also supported by recent Local Government Association Cyber Security self-assessments that demonstrated the council’s current position was “Amber/Green” in terms of maturity. A scoping exercise is currently underway to obtain assessor quotations for Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation activities and an Information Security Management System. A supporting manual has been drafted and independently assessed to take forward for ISO27001 accreditation consideration.
- 4.8.6 An internal audit of Cyber Security was undertaken during 2019/20 which provided “Reasonable” assurance.

4.9 **Values and Behaviours/Codes of Conduct**

- 4.9.1 To support the council’s vision, the following values have been determined to guide the standard of behaviour expected from Members and Officers:
- Accountability,
 - Determination,
 - Empowerment and Respect,
 - Excellence,
 - Simplicity,
 - Working Together.
- 4.9.2 These values have been promoted widely within the council, embedded in a number of key policies and strategies, subject of discussions at Leadership Forum and dedicated training sessions have been held. The council has determined that “Our values underpin everything that we do and everything we strive to do should be driven by them”. This has led to an increased impetus in embedding the values and behaviours in major programmes such as the Successor Programme (social care replacement system) to modernise how we work with social care service users.
- 4.9.3 Leadership competencies which set out the standards of behaviour expected of employees in leadership roles and to strengthen accountability have been identified and promoted at Leadership Forum.
- 4.9.4 Officers are required on an annual basis to electronically accept the Employees’ Code of Conduct and acceptance is monitored by Directors.

4.10 **Community Engagement**

- 4.10.1 The Future Council Future Community work stream aims to transform the way that the council engages with its communities, testing out new ways to enable the public to participate in decision making.
- 4.10.2 These approaches can support the achievement of the Forging a Future Vision, particularly the Healthy, Safe, Resilient Communities aspiration, as there is good evidence that participation in local decision making contributes to resilient communities.
- 4.10.3 Dudley MBC already has some good examples of working in this way and by building on this practice, particularly through trying these new and innovative methods of engaging, it aims to make this the usual way of working.
- 4.10.4 During 2019/20, the council was selected as one of only three councils nationally to take part in the Government's Innovation in Democracy programme to trial citizens' assemblies. Dudley's assembly, the Dudley People's Panel, met over two weekends in November and December 2019 and looked at the future of Dudley and Brierley Hill town centres. Members of the Panel have presented their recommendations to Cabinet and these are being used to shape the regeneration plans for the two town centres. An evaluation of the national programme is being prepared for the Government and lessons learnt will inform Dudley's future approach to engagement and involvement.
- 4.10.5 During the year, deliberative enquiry approaches have also been used to explore community health action and digital engagement with the council. Storytelling is another approach that is being used to obtain feedback from people who often do not get involved in traditional approaches, with a recent example hearing from local people who are experiencing poverty as part of the work on one of Dudley Health and Wellbeing Board's three priorities to mitigate the impact of poverty.
- 4.10.6 These new and innovative methods are supplemented by more traditional approaches with a range of engagement forums and networks continuing to meet or operate online. The council's ten community forums consisting of local councillors and the police meet quarterly with local residents and have seen increased attendances and increased applications for community funding following implementation of recommendations from a review, which was reported to Cabinet during 2017.
- 4.10.7 Social media is one of the channels the council used to help inform its decision making and is used to promote campaigns, latest news and helpful advice. All full Council meetings are now broadcast live via the council's YouTube page.
- 4.10.8 Thousands of people have also engaged with the council through the live Facebook forums. The council has also teamed up with Black Country Radio to run two "Question Time" sessions a year with the Leader of the council and partners such as police, health and education – reaching audiences of thousands of people.

4.11 **Customer Feedback**

- 4.11.1 All formal customer feedback is recorded on the council's complaints management system. Data about complaints is collated each quarter and again at the end of the financial year. The data is used to monitor performance, review how the council responds to customer feedback and how services can be improved. Complaints information is included in the quarterly performance report that is presented to Strategic Executive Board and is discussed at the Corporate Customer Feedback Group.
- 4.11.2 During 2019/20 the council received 202 statutory complaints of which 26% were upheld. The council received 1224 corporate complaints of which 34% were upheld or partially upheld. The council also received 942 compliments during 2019/20, which was far more than expected.
- 4.11.3 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's annual review letter for 2019 indicated 80 complaints/enquiries were received by the Ombudsman, of which 17 were subject to detailed investigation. The outcome of these detailed investigations was that 13 were upheld and 4 were not upheld. For upheld complaints, when compared to all English metropolitan boroughs, the council is in the third performing quartile.
- 4.11.4 Internal Audit reviewed Customer Feedback during 2019/20 and provided "Reasonable" assurance.

4.12 **Equalities Framework**

- 4.12.1 The council has an approved Equality Strategy for 2016-19 which is being reviewed and updated during 2020. The Equality Strategy provides the overall equality framework for the council and aims to ensure that the council goes beyond meeting its legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and its public sector equality duties.
- 4.12.2 An action plan was developed through the council's Corporate Equality and Diversity Leadership Group (CEDLG) which sets out in detail what actions have been identified to implement the strategy. The strategy and action plan are supported by a range of policies and guidance documents.
- 4.12.3 An annual review of equality is presented to Cabinet and reports on progress in implementing the strategy and includes employment monitoring data for protected characteristics including race, disability and sex. Employment data is also benchmarked against other local authorities e.g. the gender pay data - which has resulted in some actions being identified to help close the council's gender pay gap.
- 4.12.4 During 2019/20, the CEDLG has been amalgamated into a Workplace Wellbeing and Equality Steering Group chaired by the Director of Public Health and Wellbeing to improve capacity and coordinate better work on equality and employee mental health and wellbeing.
- 4.12.5 An internal audit of the council's arrangements for managing equality and diversity carried out during 2019/20 provided "Reasonable" assurance.

- 4.12.6 Also during the year an external review was undertaken of the market position statements for the All Age Disability, Children and Young People and Older People services and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Joint Commissioning Strategy to ensure that good equality practice is being followed.
- 4.12.7 An external review of the council's overall approach to promoting equality is under way as part of the arrangements for reviewing and updating its strategy.
- 4.12.8 The West Midlands Local Authority Equality Network provides an opportunity for informal checking of progress and good practice on equality against other regional local authorities.

4.13 **Modern Slavery**

- 4.13.1 A Modern Slavery Statement and Policy approved by Cabinet are available to view on the council's website. This document is in the process of being updated, however, there will be some delay due to Covid-19.
- 4.13.2 Work continues to take place within Adult and Children's services with regards to internal victim pathways (there is a pathway in place for referrals into the Adult and Children's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs).
- 4.13.3 Work on Modern Slavery and delivering the Action Plan is overseen by Safe and Sound (Dudley's Community Safety Partnership) Community Cohesion Strategic Group.
- 4.13.4 Communications to raise awareness of the Modern Slavery / Human Trafficking agenda are undertaken throughout the year. A leaflet has been created and distributed widely.
- 4.13.5 Well over 1,000 staff have received awareness raising sessions and training on modern slavery / human trafficking in accordance with their role. In addition, awareness sessions and training for voluntary, community, faith and the business sector have taken place. E-learning is also currently being developed.
- 4.13.6 National Referral Mechanism training is required to be undertaken as the council is a first responder. A train the trainer session took place on 24th April 2020, which is now being rolled out to other council staff.
- 4.13.7 The number of people referred into the National Referral Mechanism was 26 for the year to the 31st December 2019. This compares to 13 for the previous year.

4.14 **Scrutiny Committees**

- 4.14.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board approves and monitors the Annual Scrutiny Programme and co-ordinates the work of the various Scrutiny Committees. Scrutiny Committees have considerable flexibility to amend the Annual Scrutiny Programme to reflect developments during the year.
- 4.14.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board report annually to the full Council with details of Scrutiny Committee activities and annual work programme. Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Scrutiny Committees are submitted to full Council to increase transparency. The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2019/20 will be reported to full Council in July 2020 and made

available on the council's website. This will set out the key issues considered and the outcomes of scrutiny work during the municipal year. A review of Scrutiny arrangements will be considered during 2020/21.

4.15 **Audit and Standards Committee**

4.15.1 Audit and Standards Committee are responsible for approving the annual review of the Code of Corporate Governance and approve the Annual Governance Statement prior to its signing by the Chief Executive and Leader of the council.

4.15.2 The Committee's terms of reference has been updated to reflect good practice issued by CIPFA and there are regular assessments undertaken to ensure that it is working effectively. The Committee reviews assessments completed by the Head of Audit Services on compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and fraud best practice

4.15.3 New committee members are requested to complete a skills assessment to identify any training needs.

4.16 **External Assurance**

4.16.1 During the year a number of external reviews have been undertaken which have contributed to the assessment of the effectiveness of governance processes. The most important being:

Effectiveness of the area in implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014
Provider: Ofsted/Care Quality Commission
Outcome: <u>Ofsted/CQC Report re SEND</u> See paragraph 6.1
Focused Visit - Children's Services
Provider: Ofsted
Outcome: <u>Ofsted Report- Focused Visit</u> See paragraph 5.1
External Quality Assessment of Internal Audit
Provider: Business Risk Solutions
Outcome: Confirmed compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

Further Education and Skills inspection report
Provider: Ofsted
Outcome: Good https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/42/50218
Inspection of Youth Offending Services
Provider: HM Inspectorate of Probation
Outcome: Requires Improvement HMI Probation Report
Audit of Statement of Accounts, Value for Money arrangements and Statutory Duties
Provider: Grant Thornton (External Auditors)
Outcome: Draft opinion that is subject to peer review. Financial Statements - Unqualified Opinion. Value for Money - Qualified adverse conclusion on the arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources.
Schools
Provider: Ofsted
Outcomes: Ofsted Reports-Schools
Tiled House Care Home
Provider: Care Quality Commission
Outcomes: Good CQC Report - Tiled House
Home Care Services
Provider: Care Quality Commission
Outcomes: Good CQC Report - Home Care

Adult Social Care Peer Review
Provider: Local Government Peers
Outcome: ASC Peer Review Report
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Report
Provider: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Outcomes: See 4.11.3 Ombudsman's Annual Letter

NB/ There were also peer reviews undertaken on Children’s Services (Fostering and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub), an external review of the Lettings and Voids process, an external review of Public Sector Partnership, a Strategic Review of ICT and a Strategic Review of Human Resources/Organisational Development. The council also had an LGA Corporate Peer Review in January, but the final report has not yet been received due to Covid-19.

5. Update on previous issues raised

5.1 Children’s Services

- 5.1.1 In April 2016 Ofsted issued a report on the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and a review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Their overall opinion was Children’s services in Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council are inadequate.
- 5.1.2 After a series of monitoring visits, Ofsted carried out a further inspection in October 2018 and the outcome was positive. The inspection report stated “Significant progress has been made in many areas of Children’s Services in Dudley since the last inspection in 2016. Effective work by senior management and staff, together with commitment and investment by political leaders, has led to improved responses to the needs of children and families. As a result, outcomes for many children and their families are better.” Judgements in two of the three areas: “leadership” and “children in and leaving care” were rated “Good”, and “help and protection” were rated “Requires Improvement”. Moving from a position of being judged inadequate in all areas other than care leavers to one where two of the three judgements were good was a significant achievement by the council and its partners.
- 5.1.3 Ofsted undertook a focused visit in December 2019 and gave the following conclusion: “Senior leaders acknowledge that the quality of social work practice has deteriorated since the last inspection. The new chief executive brought in an interim director of children services, who subsequently established and strengthened the senior leadership team within the service. The new leadership team is very new, and actions taken and associated plans have not yet had an

impact on services. As a result, there are significant vulnerabilities within the service, which mean that too many children do not have their needs assessed in a timely and effective way. Consequently, some children do not receive the right service to meet their needs when they need it, and they remain vulnerable for too long.”

- 5.1.4 Children’s Services are working to a long term Improvement Plan, covering 18 months, which is being monitored by the independently chaired Children’s Services Improvement Board.

5.2 **Financial Sustainability**

- 5.2.1 The Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by council on 12th February 2020 forecasts a breakeven position for 2020/21, a surplus of £1m in 2021/22 and £4.3m in 2022/23. The Director Finance and Legal, in making his report to the Council Tax setting meeting under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 concluded as follows:

“In my professional opinion:

(a) The estimates made for the purposes of the calculation of the council’s budget requirement under Section 32 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, contained in this report, are robust,

(b) The financial reserves that will remain available to the council as a result of agreeing the proposals contained in this report are adequate to enable the setting of a lawful budget for 2020/21,

(c) Although adequate to set a lawful budget for 2020/21, reserves are low by comparison with other councils. There are significant risks in future years and Members should note that, if these risks materialise, there will be a need to identify further savings and/or additional income in order to avoid imprudent reductions to the level of reserves.”

- 5.2.2 It should be noted that the forecasts made in 5.2.1 were before the Covid-19 lockdown. Covid-19 could potentially have a material effect on these figures. Based on current forecasts, although it appears that the General Fund reserve will not be called upon this year, there could be ongoing effects of Covid-19 and other pressures such that use of reserves could become unsustainable in future years and as early as next year. This is highly dependent on the outcome of the Government’s Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and any announcements about additional resources or changes to accounting regulations. Dependent on the outcome, it may be necessary to identify additional savings to ensure the sustainability of the Medium Term Financial Strategy in future years. Further information is set out in 6.2.11.
- 5.2.3 The council was in a position during 2019/20 where no one party could command a majority of the Councillors. Informal budget discussions were held between the parties as in previous years.

5.3 **Payroll Transactions**

5.3.1 Internal Audit towards the end of 2017/18 highlighted a number of significant issues with payroll transactional activity. As a result, a “Minimal” assurance rating was given. The audit identified issues relating to the management of overpayments, exception reporting, quality control, separation of duty, reporting to the West Midlands Pension Fund, data quality and retention of documentation. A follow up audit review was undertaken in April 2019 which found that insufficient progress had been made for the assurance rating to change. Another internal audit was scheduled for April 2020 but has been delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This audit will be undertaken as soon as possible once the audit plan for 2020/21 commences. Payroll Management have provided the following comment: “We are confident that ongoing directed project work throughout 18/19 and 19/20 has resulted in significant improvements to processes resulting in increased resilience and conclusion to large outstanding backlogs of work.”

5.4 **Senior Management Changes**

5.4.1 A new Chief Executive started in Dudley on the 17th June 2019. The Chief Executive has reviewed the senior management structure of the council and brought in the first phase of the restructure from the 1st November 2019. Currently the council has an Acting Deputy Chief Executive, an Acting Director Public Realm, an Acting Director of Children’s Services, an Acting Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, an Acting Assistant Director (Family Solutions, Education and SEND) and an Assistant Director (Children’s Social Care) (Fixed Term). The position of Director of Commercial and Customer Services has recently become vacant. The council appointed a new statutory Director of Adult Social Care on 1st October 2019 and a Director of Housing and Community Services was appointed on 13th August 2020.

5.5 **Dudley Integrated Health and Care NHS (Integrated Care Partnership- ICP)**

5.5.1 The Dudley Integrated Health and Care NHS (previously called the Multi-Specialty Community Provider or MCP) was authorised on 1st April 2020. It brings together a range of health and care services in one organisation with primary care, delivered by General Practice, at its heart. It has been created from a partnership of local GPs, NHS Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group, Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust and Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

5.5.2 The contract to Dudley Integrated Health and Care NHS (DIHC) will be awarded by Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group once the full business case has been submitted and approved but following discussion with NHSE/I this has been put on hold so that efforts can be concentrated on the current situation with Covid-19. DIHC will be run as a separate legal entity, initially on a ten year contract with the option to extend to fifteen years

5.5.3 Currently a number of Public Health contracts, which equates to approximately £11.9m are in scope of the DIHC. At this stage, no Adult or Children’s services have been agreed by the council as in scope, however, they will be aligned to the care model where this can improve outcomes. The council has established the

following requirements to be considered to determine whether to transfer any additional services into the DIHC:

- Each line of investment must demonstrate a decreased cost to the council,
- Any transfer of service must meet both regulatory and statutory requirements,
- Each transfer must demonstrate improved outcomes for the people of Dudley,
- Those outcomes will be clearly stipulated and performance data will be tabled at both the Health and Wellbeing Board and Scrutiny processes to account for change,
- The model must be able to adapt to the overall level of funding available to the council in order to ensure sustainability,
- Will not decrease income to the council e.g. VAT and client contributions.

5.5.4 A rigorous assurance process led by NHS regulators is underway called the Integrated Support and Assurance Process (ISAP). This assesses whether the procurement has been conducted properly and whether the contract is ready to commence. The process has been reviewed on two occasions by the Clinical Commissioning Group's internal auditors and the Good Governance Institute. A further internal audit review will take place to coincide with the next stage of the Integrated Support and Assurance Process.

5.5.5 The council intends that additional assurance will be provided through the Adult and Health Scrutiny Committee.

5.6 **Infrastructure Developments**

5.6.1 There is very significant confirmed and planned regeneration activity proposed for Dudley that includes:

- Midland Metro Extension from West Bromwich, through Dudley to Brierley Hill; which is due for completion by winter 2023;
- Portersfield development – a mixed use scheme by a private developer to include residential, retail and office accommodation. This scheme includes the demolition of Cavendish House;
- Development the existing Dudley Bus Station to create a multi-modal transport Interchange. Expected to start on site 2021 for completion in 2022;
- Development of Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre and Test Track; the test track will be available for use in Spring 2021 and the Innovation Centre building will be completed by December 2021;
- Construction of a new Leisure Centre in Dudley town centre has started on site;
- Investment into Churchill Shopping Centre by owners LCP;
- New ownership of the Trident Shopping Centre seeking to invest in the Centre;
- Collaborative working with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to develop Dudley Town Centre proposals as one of 5 WMCA Town Centre Pilot Projects;

- £23m investment into the Black Country Living Museum 'Forging Ahead' Project;
- Ongoing investment in the centre of Dudley via Townscape Heritage Funding;
- The council have been notified that it will be awarded UNESCO Geopark status but are awaiting formal ratification from the UNESCO board, at this time we have no indication of when this announcement will be made;
- Construction of Institute of Technologies (IoTT) by Dudley College has started on site and will be open for students in September 2021;
- Dudley DMBC was successful in securing £1.8m funding for a Heritage Action Zone at Brierley Hill in April 2020;
- Dudley DMBC has been shortlisted as one of the 100 high streets nationally for Future High Street Funding in Brierley Hill. The final bid is to be submitted later in 2020.

5.6.2 During September 2019, Dudley Town Centre was one of 100 towns invited by Government to bid for the £3.6billion Towns Fund. Government requires the establishment of a Town Board to prioritise and drive investment and to seek long term economic and productivity growth through investment in connectivity, land use, skills and enterprise infrastructure.

5.6.3 The existing Dudley Town Centre Area Programme Board has now become the Town Board with membership being expanded and appropriate terms of reference and governance / consultation arrangements put in place. It is the Government's expectation that a Town Investment Plan is produced and submitted to Government during 2020. It is proposed that ongoing work as part of the Innovation in Democracy pilot be utilised to inform effective consultation with local communities as part of the development of the Town Investment Plan.

6. **New and Emerging Significant Issues**

6.1 **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

6.1.1 During May 2019, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Dudley to judge the effectiveness of the area in implementing the disability and special educational needs reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

6.1.2 As a result of the findings of this inspection and in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) has determined that a Written Statement of Action is required because of significant areas of weakness in the local area's practice. HMCI has also determined that the local authority and the area's clinical commissioning group are jointly responsible for submitting the written statement to Ofsted.

6.1.3 A comprehensive Written Statement of Action was completed and approved by Ofsted on the 20th December 2019. As a result of this a tight SEND Improvement project plan is now in place ensuring significant action is taken.

6.1.4 The costs of Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) services are met from the High Needs Block within the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). As previously reported, the council (in common with many other councils) have been experiencing significant financial pressures from increasing demand for children that require additional educational support. On current trends and even allowing for an increase in government funding of £5.0m, there will be an ongoing underlying shortfall and a cumulative deficit on the High Needs Block within the DSG of around £13m by the 31st March 2021. This deficit may exceed the positive schools balances at that time. This position may be improved if the urgent review of services starts to deliver savings before this date.

6.2 **Covid-19**

6.2.1 The Director of Public Health and Wellbeing first brought the issue of Covid-19 to Strategic Executive Board (SEB) in January 2020. The first cases of Covid-19 were identified in England on Friday 31st January 2020. On Tuesday 4th February 2020, the first weekly system wide meeting chaired by the Director of Public Health was held to identify how the council and its partners would manage community cases and their contacts using the Dudley Health Protection Co-operation Agreement as the framework.

6.2.2 On 11th February 2020 a report from the Director of Public Health and Adult Social Care on Covid-19 was presented to the Senior Executive Board (SEB). This set out the immediate priorities for the council, how it should respond and the potential impacts. SEB approved the following:

- That a clear, co-ordinated command and control structure would be put in place;
- That the system-wide response be delivered within the framework of the Dudley Co-operation Agreement;
- All outstanding Business Continuity Plans were in place, up to date and reviewed in light of the current situation and possible scenarios;
- The agreement to support planning and mobilisation of additional resources as required.

6.2.3 On the 10th March 2020 a council Covid-19 incident co-ordination group met to oversee and implement the priorities identified above. A strategic eight point Action Plan was developed with the purpose of meeting the following principles:

- Delaying the spread of Covid-19;
- Protecting vulnerable people from the impacts of Covid-19;
- Mitigating the impact of the Covid-19 on the health and social care system, communities and local economy;
- Developing resilience and supporting recovery.

6.2.4 The monitoring of the Covid-19 eight point plan and associated risks are undertaken by the Covid-19 incident group with reporting into SEB every fortnight.

6.2.5 In early April SEB reviewed its corporate risk register in light of Covid-19, increasing the rating of a number of risks. It was also agreed that additional

mitigating actions should be identified and these would be reflected in the Covid-19 strategic eight point Action Plan. Co-ordinating the borough wide response is undertaken by the Covid-19 Strategic Partnership Group whose membership includes the council, Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group, The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust and Dudley Council for Voluntary Services.

- 6.2.6 The council has followed government/Public Health England advice from the onset of the pandemic. Staff who could work from home were asked to work from home, social distancing and health and safety requirements were enforced and key decision making meetings were held virtually, where possible. Following the change in legislation from April 2020, council Member Committees have started to run on a virtual basis.
- 6.2.7 The council has seen increased demand for some of its critical services, set up a food and distribution hub in liaison with Dudley Council for Voluntary Services, provided business grants on behalf of the government, re-engineered some of its services to make them safe and has given support to some of its key providers, particularly in adult social care. The council has also procured personal protective equipment (PPE), been responsible for population messaging and communication, enforced lockdown measures, supported and protected people who are shielding and made arrangements to cope with possible excess deaths.
- 6.2.8 Staff from non-essential services have been deployed to the front line, such as assisting with calls to people who are shielding to offer support, maintaining a food hub and distributing food to the vulnerable and helping with the provision of business grants.
- 6.2.9 As lockdown measures have relaxed, the council has commenced the process of returning staff to the workplace, where appropriate. A sub-group for the council d-19 incident group was set up to put in place a robust plan of action utilising health and safety, public health and HR expertise. The following actions have taken place: Covid Job roles have been RAG rated in order to prioritise those with the greatest need to return to a physical workplace, Corporate Landlord Services have commenced the process of making buildings Covid-secure and PPE needs have been addressed where relevant. These measures have been informed by an employee survey to assess the emotional impact on the workforce as well as individual risk assessments (e.g. for BAME employees and those assessed as vulnerable for health reasons).
- 6.2.10 The Council has set out a framework for local restrictions in response to public health risks and has considered the appropriate governance in the event that these powers may need to be used. The report will be ratified by Cabinet early September.
- 6.2.11 The council has received £21.9m of unringfenced government grant relating to the general impact of Covid-19 on its operations. The Government has also announced a scheme to claim compensation for reduced income from fees and charges but, at the time of writing, there is insufficient detail to reliably assess the value of this scheme. In addition, the council has received or expects to receive a number of grants for specific purposes related to the pandemic - £66.6m to

support business grants, £44.9m of additional Section 31 grant to compensate for additional Business Rates relief to retail, leisure, hospitality and nurseries, £3.0m of Hardship Fund to support additional Council Tax reductions, £2.9m for infection control in care homes, £0.3m of Reopening High Streets Fund, £1.9m to support Test, Track and Trace and £0.4m of Emergency Assistance Grant for food and essential supplies. The ultimate impact of additional costs and loss of income is uncertain and is dependent on the nature and duration of public health measures as well as the severity and duration of the economic downturn.

- 6.2.12 The risk of an influenza pandemic has been known for a number of years and there was an appropriate emergency plan in place and all council Heads of Service had a business continuity plan. A multi-agency table top exercise, developed jointly between Dudley Council, The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust and Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group took place on the 13th November 2019 to test the system response to a pandemic. A number of learning points were identified from the exercise that have influenced decisions in the current Covid-19 pandemic in relation to personal protective equipment, siting of screening facilities and excess deaths.
- 6.2.13 It is proposed that in due course, the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee will conduct a detailed scrutiny review concerning the Dudley MBC and partner's response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Recommendations arising from the scrutiny review will aim to guide the council and its partners in future planning and responding to any future pandemics.

7 Action Plan

- 7.1 The issues identified in Sections 5 and 6 will be the subject to separate Action Plans that will be monitored by Strategic Executive Board, Cabinet, Children's Services Improvement Board and other council Groups and Committees e.g. Council Plan, Director Plans, Children's Services Medium-Term Improvement Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Regeneration Actions Plans, Covid-19 Strategic Eight Point Action Plan.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The council is very aware of the issues raised in Sections 5 and 6 and will ensure progress is made during 2020/21. With the exception of these issues, the council's governance framework remains "fit for purpose".

P Harley
Leader of the council

K O'Keefe
Chief Executive

Appendix A

Dudley Council Governance Structure

Full Council

The full Council comprises all 72 elected members. It has responsibility for approving the overall policy framework including the budget. It retains responsibility for certain functions, however, most of its powers and duties are delegated to the Cabinet or committees operating within the decision-making structure set out in the Constitution. The full Council also has a key role in holding the Cabinet to account.

Cabinet

The Cabinet comprises of the Leader of the council plus 9 other Cabinet Members each with a defined portfolio (or areas of responsibility). The Cabinet meets approximately every 8 weeks, chaired by the Leader of the council. Shadow Cabinet Members attend meetings to speak but not vote. Collectively, the Cabinet makes decisions affecting local services and makes recommendations to the full Council on the overall policy direction. The Cabinet has to make decisions which are in line with the council's overall policies and budget. If it wishes to make a decision which is outside the budget or policy framework, this must be referred to the council as a whole to decide.

Scrutiny

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and four other Scrutiny Committees undertake in depth scrutiny investigations/ enquiries and contribute to policy development in respect of issues/items falling within their terms of reference. They submit reports and recommendations to the Cabinet and/or full Council on the outcome of scrutiny investigations, enquiries or reviews.

Statutory and Regulatory Committees

The council will appoint the following committees to discharge the functions indicated:-

- Appeals Committee - The determination of all matters where a right of appeal to elected Members exists under any of the council's policies or procedures.
- Appointments Committee - Recommending to the full Council the appointment of a Chief Executive and deciding upon the appointment of Strategic Directors and Chief Officers.
- Audit and Standards Committee and Standards Sub-Committee - The overview of internal and external audit, risk management, fraud and functions relating to local government standards.
- Children's Parenting Board - Its role is to secure cross departmental involvement and commitment throughout the council to deliver better outcomes for children in care. The Board is responsible for the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and subsequent Delivery Plan, which will ensure the most effective means of achieving sustained service improvements.

- Development Control Committee - Functions relating to town and country planning and development control, including tree preservation functions.
- Dudley Health and Wellbeing Board - This Board has been formed to recognise that the council has a key role to encourage coherent commissioning strategies across the NHS, social care, public health and other partners. The Board deals with the responsibilities of the Local Authority and the GP Consortia for the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment. It is also involved in developing a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- Ernest Stevens Trusts Management Committee - To undertake the council's functions as a Trustee in relation to matters concerning the Ernest Stevens Trusts and all Trust land in the Borough.
- Licensing and Safety Committee and Licensing Sub-Committees (x4) - Licensing functions (apart from hackney carriage and private hire licensing), health and safety functions, other than those exercised by the council as employer.
- Taxis Committee - Functions relating to hackney carriage and private hire licensing.