

Crawley Borough Council
Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

The Principles of Good Governance

The CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance publication (2016) defines the various principles of good governance in the public sector. The document sets out seven core principles that underpin the governance framework.

These principles apply to the AGS prepared for the 1 April 2022 to the 31 March 2023 and up to the date of the approval of the Annual Report and

The Governance Committee is responsible for regularly reviewing the Constitution and ensuring that it is both up to date and fit for purpose. Significant changes to the Constitution are considered by the Governance Committee before being put before the Full Council for adoption.

Statutory roles within the Governance Framework

The Council has a legal duty to appoint to three statutory roles to fulfil the duties within the governance framework. These are outlined below:

Head of paid service

Responsible for the overall corporate and operational management of the council (including overarching management responsibility for all employees).

Required to report to and provide information for the Cabinet, the Full Council, the Overview and Scrutiny Commission and other Committees.

Freedom of Information/Environmental Information Requests

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) 2004 give anyone the right to ask for any information held by a public authority, which includes this Council. This is subject only to the need to preserve confidentiality and in the application of certain exemptions and exceptions which may be engaged where it is proper and appropriate to do so. The Council responds to such requests in a timely and impartial manner and in line with the legislation. The Council also proactively publish information on its website as part of the [Publication Scheme](#).

Subject Access Requests

Section 7 of the Data Protection Act provides for individuals to obtain a copy of information that an organisation holds about them upon making a written request.

Engagement and Communication

Crawley Borough Council recognises that stakeholders require information about decisions that are being taken locally, and how public money is being spent in order to hold the Council to account for the services it provides.

The Council held its annual [Crawley Question Time on the 15 March 2023](#) which was open to the public, business leaders and partner organisations to ask questions about topics important to them. The views and comments expressed will help the Council and others to plan work on improving services and the town in general. The panel included representatives from Crawley Borough Council, West Sussex County Council, Sussex Police and the Crawley Clinical Commissioning Group. This meeting was held at the new Town Hall.

The Council held its first [Estates Day](#) in August 2022, which welcomed Crawley Homes tenants and leaseholders from ion

panel

If the matter is still not resolved to their satisfaction, the complainant is entitled to take the matter up with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman or the Housing Ombudsman who deal with any complaints that relate to the housing managed service.

Complaints data is reported to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) on a quarterly basis and includes data on volumes received and reasons for those that are late. Lessons learned for upheld and part upheld complaints is also reported to CMT to ensure continuous improvement in service delivery. In addition, data is reported at a service level monthly to ensure action is taken to address any areas of concern.

Significant changes and improvements were made to the Complaints process in 2022/23. The [Complaints Policy](#) was reviewed and updated in October 2022 and brought in line with

and the Corporate Plan priorities. This ensures that a timely response can be applied to service improvement and against service plans and strategies. This is encapsulated within the Performance Management Framework. The Corporate Performance Dashboard is reported to CMT on a quarterly basis. Heads of Service are encouraged to discuss the performance report as part of DMT discussions, to consider areas of success and improvement.

The Council recognises that to drive improvement it needs to closely monitor and review its performance. The Council routinely monitors its spend against budgets, and each department has an agreed purpose and collect data to measure their performance.

Going forward the Council will need to respond to key emerging drivers:

- Focus on our Community Needs
- Continuing to deliver efficiencies
- A workforce with the right people, skills and attitudes
- Capacity to respond to wider change agendas both within the sector and more broadly
- Operational resilience reflecting the reduction in funding and need to generate income

Housing Strategy

Housing need and the policies to address this are contained within the Local Plan Housing policies.

[Homelessness Review and Homelessness Strategy \(2019 - 2024\)](#) was approved by the Full Council on 16 December 2019.

The Council has identified five priorities for addressing homelessness within Crawley:

- Preventing and relieving homelessness
- Tackling rough sleeping
- Meeting the needs of vulnerable people
- Accessing suitable and affordable accommodation
- Preventing repeat homelessness.

Procurement Strategy

The Council operates a shared Procurement Service with Horsham, Mid Sussex and Mole Valley Councils, with Crawley acting as the lead Authority. Procurement processes are undertaken

These govern the way officers acquire goods, works and services, and ensure that Council processes are consistent, transparent, legally compliant and value for money. Council officers are trained to ensure that all procurement processes are consistent, transparent, legally compliant and value for money. Council officers are trained to ensure that all procurement processes are consistent, transparent, legally compliant and value for money.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The Council updated its

Principle D: Determining the intervention necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Effectiveness of Governance Framework

The Council has responsibility for reviewing the effectiveness of its governance framework and this is undertaken by the work of CMT in its development and maintenance of the governance environment. Internal Audit produces an annual report and specifically comments on the governance framework as does the External Auditor. Areas identified for improvement are acted upon by CMT.

Financial Measures

Crawley Borough Council publishes its Annual Statement of Accounts in accordance with CIPFA guidelines and the annual Budget is approved by the Full Council and is monitored and reported upon regularly. The Narrative Report which forms part of the Statement has a series of financial measures. Quarterly monitoring of finance is reported to Cabinet, other financial measures are reported to CMT on a quarterly basis together with other non-financial performance measures.

Consultations

To be effective this policy aims to inspire and support a genuine two-way dialogue with all sections of the community and other stakeholders. There are a number of ways people can get involved and connect with the Council.

Principle E : Developing the Council's capability, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

Recruitment, Training and Development

Human Resource policies and

Financial Compliance

The Head of Corporate Finance has overall financial responsibility within the Council, as outlined in the Constitution. Within the Constitution are the [Financial and Budget Procedure Rules](#) which ensure that compliance takes place. The Accounts comply with financial regulations and the CIPFA Financial Management (FM) Code.

The Financial Management Code of Practice Compliance Assessment 2022/23 was undertaken by the Head of Corporate Finance (s151 officer) and the Chief Accountant (deputy s151 officer). The outcome of this assessment was reviewed by Corporate Management Team on the 25 April 2023.

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

Effective Scrutiny (Overview & Scrutiny Commission)

The format and presentation of the strategic (significant) risks was reviewed and revised from a narrative to a tabular format. Showing the risk score without controls in place and the residual score with mitigation in place.

These strategic risks include the New Town Hall, District Heat Network, Delivering Affordable Housing, Homelessness, Migration / Asylum pressures, Three Bridges Station, Disaster Recovery & Business Continuity (data & health and safety breaches), maintaining a balanced budget, Recruitment, Retention and Succession Planning, Climate Emergency, National Waste Strategy (including food waste), Local Plan, Water Neutrality, Cost of living, Towns Fund programme and Damp and Mould.

The strategic risks are discussed regularly by CMT and are reported to the Audit Committee on a quarterly basis. The last update for 2022/23 went to the [20 March 2023 Audit Committee](#). Operational risks are managed at departmental level.

Risk management awareness training was given to managers and Councillors during the financial year by insurers Zurich. Dedicated training on Accident and Investigation and Claims Defensibility was also provided for relevant officers, with a particular focus on tree maintenance, trips and falls on Council land and housing repairs.

Corporate Projects Assurance Group (CPAG)

CPAG is chaired by the Chief Executive and includes the Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Corporate Finance (s151), Head of Governance, People & Performance (Monitoring Officer), Procurement Manager and Corporate Performance Manager. Its purpose is to monitor and manage strategic and significant risks and ensure improvement plans are adequate and managed effectively. It supports the framework of corporate controls to manage risks across the Council. The Group meets monthly.

Corporate Health & Safety

The Council ensures all its employees' time at work is safe and free from injury and ill health. In addition, the Council aims to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of all other persons who may be affected by undertakings. The Corporate Health & Safety Advisor primarily focuses on monitoring and advising on legal and legislative requirements where Health and Safety is concerned.

Significant progress has been made on reviewing and updating Health and Safety policies. The following policies have either been updated or are still to be completed. The documents are available for staff on the C intranet and were approved by CMT:

- Cycling while at work completed in March 2023
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) completed in February 2023
- Manual Handling completed in December 2022
- Control of Asbestos completed in December 2022
- Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment completed in October 2022
- Management of the Register of Aggressive & Potentially Violent Persons (Caution Register) this is currently in draft and awaiting sign off
- Smoke free Policy is currently awaiting sign off
- Other policies will be updated as and when required.

The Corporate Health & Safety Adviser has been working with Service Managers across the organisation to ensure that Corporate Risk assessments are in place and up to date. However, progress has been slow due to time pressures and capacity.

Governance Committee

