

Nottingham City Council

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2015/16

Scope of responsibility

- 1.1 Nottingham City Council (the Council) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, this includes arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3 The Council approved and adopted a code of corporate governance consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government* publication. A copy of the code is available on our website at <http://www.nottingham.gov.uk/governance>. This statement explains how the Council has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, which require all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

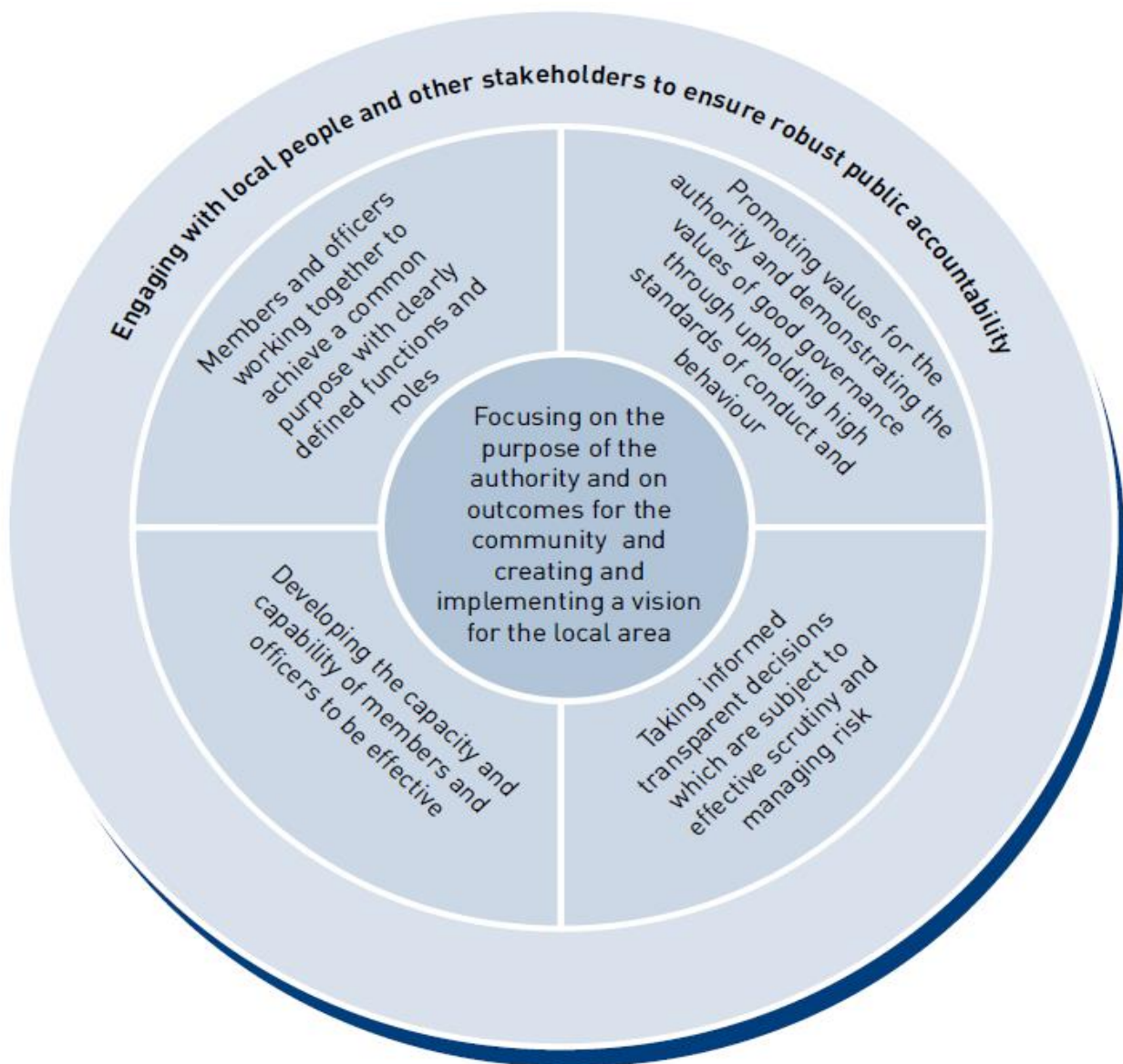
The purpose of the governance framework

- 2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and the activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money
- 2.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives, and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.
- 2.3 The governance framework was in place at the Council for the year ended 31 March 2016 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and Statement of Accounts.

The Governance Framework

- 3.1 The core principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework for delivering good governance adopted by the Council in its local framework are illustrated below. Each of these principles is underpinned by the core components described. The Council has taken reasonable measures to ensure that the systems and processes comprising the authority's governance arrangements are operating effectively.

CIPFA/SOLACE - Principles underpinning the delivery of good governance



Arrangements for identifying and communicating the Council's vision of its purpose and intended outcomes for citizens and service users

- 3.2 The function of governance is to ensure that the Council and its partners fulfil their purpose and achieve their intended outcomes for citizens and service users and operate in an effective, efficient, economic and ethical manner. This concept should guide all governance activity. The Council has to develop and promote a clear vision of its purpose and intended outcomes for citizens and service users that are clearly communicated both within the Council and to external stakeholders.
- 3.3 The Council has accepted that knowledge and understanding of local communities and neighbourhoods is critical to delivering fit for purpose services, and improving public involvement with the work of the Council has been identified as a priority.
- 3.4 The Council's vision is wholly aligned with that of the City as set out in the 2030 vision and Nottingham Plan to 2020. Accordingly this vision and the associated Nottingham Plan

Strategic Priorities are set and are not subject to annual review and change. The Nottingham Plan to 2020 sets the overall strategic direction and long term vision for the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the City of Nottingham and focuses on the following six themes (with three important cross-cutting aims of Aspiration, Green and Fairness):

- World Class Nottingham
- Neighbourhood Nottingham
- Family Nottingham
- Working Nottingham
- Safe Nottingham
- Healthy Nottingham

3.5 The latest Council Plan, approved by councillors, sets out the Council's ambitions for the city over the next four years up to 2019. This includes the following 5 key objectives for the Council to deliver:

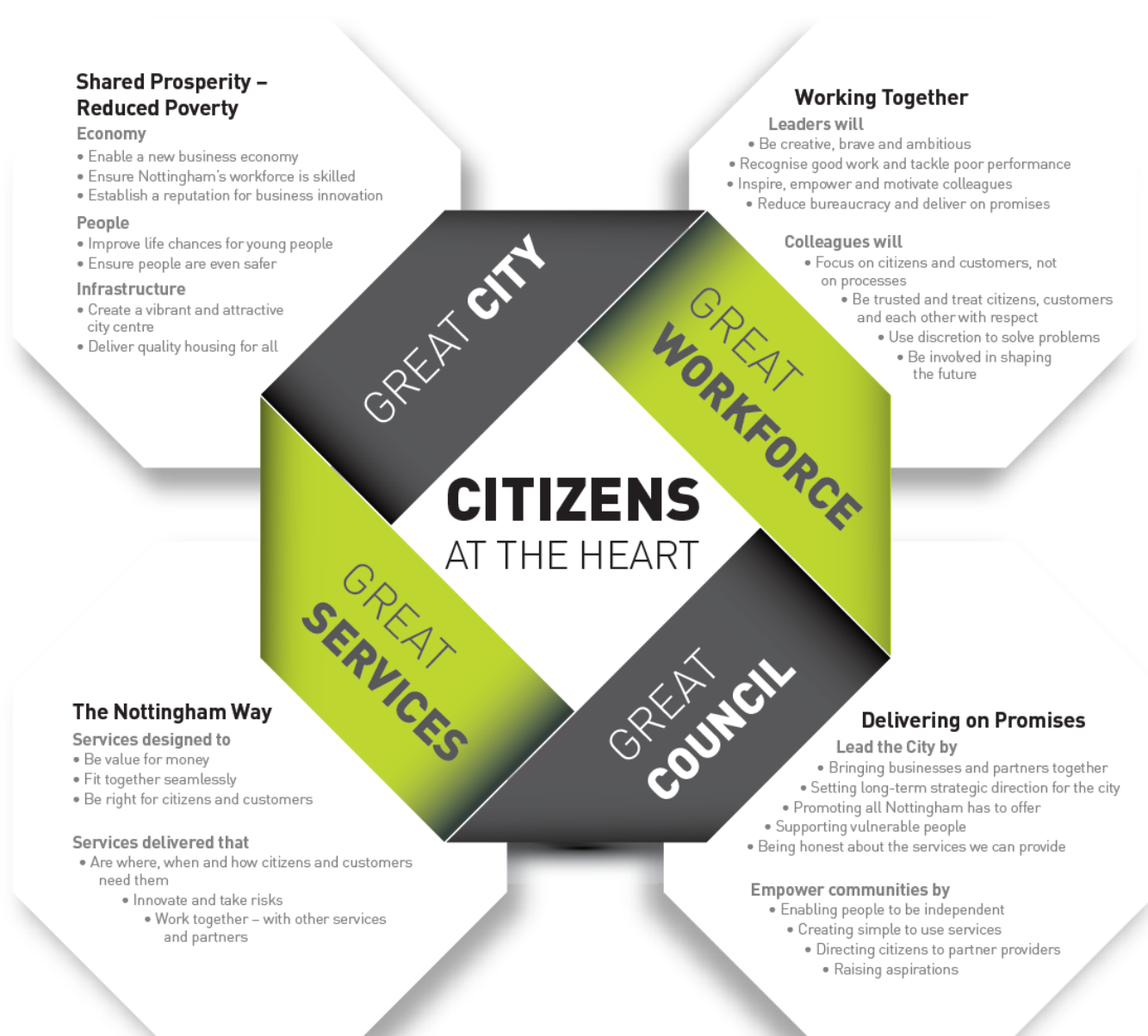
- Ensure that every child in Nottingham is taught in a school that is judged good or outstanding by Ofsted
- Build 2,500 new homes that Nottingham people can afford to rent or buy
- Cut the number of victims of crime by a fifth and continue to reduce anti-social behaviour
- Tackle fuel poverty by setting up a not for profit energy company, to sell energy at the lowest possible price to Nottingham people
- Guarantee a job, training place or further education plan for every 18-24 year old

3.6 The Council Plan underpins the council's wider Good to Great journey, with a continued emphasis on placing citizens at heart of everything the Council does to shape its service delivery going forward. It has clear priorities with associated performance measures supported by delivery plans containing the key milestones and measures for each Plan priority. Major changes are managed by the Corporate Leadership Team on a monthly basis, including all internal transformational projects and programmes, which together ensure that the Council is well placed to lead Nottingham and optimise what it does for and on behalf of its citizens.

3.7 How the Council delivers the Council Plan objectives is captured within business plans, mirroring the lifespan of the Plan to 2019. These in turn feature in colleagues' own Performance Appraisals to detail how the work they do contributes to the delivery of the council's key priorities.

3.8 The Nottingham Plan, Council Plan and other key plans such as the Children & Young People's Plan are published as appropriate and are available to all members of the public. Regular performance reports on the progress in delivering Plan objectives are provided for councillors to review performance. Financial statements are published annually and equally the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is a publicly accessible document. Regular updates and reviews ensure consistency within plans and reflect national developments including the effects of reduced Government funding. Ultimately this means the Council's priorities and those of its key partners over both the short and long term, are in accord. The principles underpinning the Plan are summarised in the updated Council's 'Message Map' below, which illustrates the direction and focus for the Council.

Message Map



Arrangements for reviewing the authority's vision and its implications for the authority's governance arrangements

- 3.9 Good governance flows from a shared ethos or culture, as well as from systems and structures. Consequently it is important that clear values and objectives are set and processes implemented to assess their effectiveness. Where appropriate the review mechanism should enable problems to be identified and corrective action to be taken. Progress against the Council's strategic priorities is monitored and reported to the Executive Board and One Nottingham Board on an annual basis.
- 3.10 Portfolio Holders and the Executive Board make decisions based upon colleague recommendations and in response to changing legal or financial obligations. The reports containing recommendations to be considered clearly explain the technical issues and their implications and relate the recommended action to agreed policies and strategies.

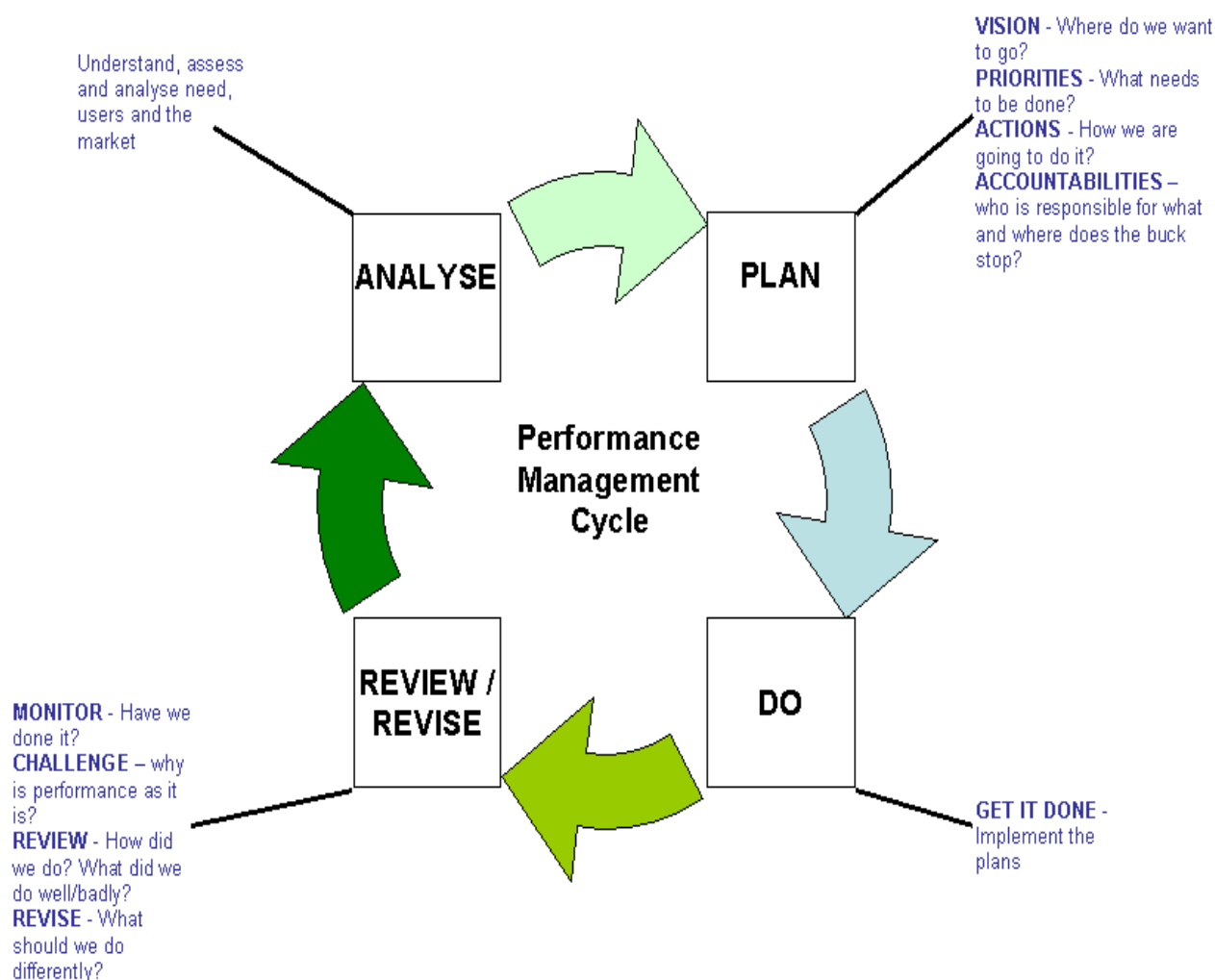
Where more than one course of action is possible the alternatives are analysed and justification given for the preferred choice.

- 3.11 Professional advice is taken when decisions have legal or financial implications, this is done in advance of decision making. Advice on legal and financial matters is taken from internal, and where necessary, external sources. Portfolio Holders also have a common responsibility to promote and be accountable for their services nationally and internationally as required. They also represent the Council's views on matters of corporate or strategic policy within their portfolio. The Leader of the Council also has responsibility to promote the City, the Council and its core values and objectives.
- 3.12 The advice given will usually be contained within the board papers and will be presented to the appropriate meeting to facilitate discussion. Reports are circulated with the agenda where possible, to allow consideration in advance of the meeting at which a decision is to be taken. Where applicable the recommendation will be supported by appropriate external evidence or advice. Minutes of Council, Board and Committee meetings are available to the public.
- 3.13 An overview and scrutiny function is undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, supported by standing panels. The Committee's functions contribute to policy development and help to shape major plans and strategies and publicly hold the Executive to account for the decisions it makes. As a consequence, the Committee plays an important role in supporting the programme of improvements to Council services. Councillors with an overview and scrutiny role work independently, openly and transparently, and the recommendations made are founded in the evidence received from experts in the fields being reviewed, service users and colleagues. The Committee and Panels seek to involve representatives of non-council organisations, interest groups and members of the public in their activities where it is considered that such involvement would bring new perspectives, expertise and/or specialist knowledge, to allow scrutiny to fulfil its role. An annual report on scrutiny activity is produced and reported to Full City Council, covering the vision for Overview and Scrutiny, its role and its method of working.

Arrangements for measuring the quality of services for users, for ensuring they are delivered in accordance with the authority's objectives and for ensuring that they represent the best use of resources

- 3.14 It is important that the Council uses available resources to provide the appropriate quality of services for its citizens in accordance with its objectives and priorities and to operate within its means. The Council Plan contains targets to be met in achieving these priorities. These are translated into actions through strategic business plans and operational plans, and the Performance Management Framework (PMF), illustrated below, is in place to monitor and review the effectiveness of the actions put in place.

Performance Management Framework



3.15 The PMF has a clear focus on outcomes. Comprehensive and effective performance management systems operate at all levels throughout the Council. Performance is managed at the City level through the Nottingham Plan management partnership board and at corporate level through the Corporate Leadership Team and Departmental Leadership Teams. The framework has been subject to positive review by both the Audit Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It establishes a clear relationship between corporate priorities and decisions taken from the top down to individual level via business planning. The framework was substantially updated in 2013/14 and further revisions have been undertaken each year to ensure it continues to reflect the prevailing economic and political climate. The PMF sets out the high level approach the Council will take to performance management, ensuring that all are:

- Clear about what to achieve, by when and by whom
- Focussing resources and action on the right outcomes
- Aware of how things are going
- Reporting on progress – to both internal and external audiences
- Able to quickly access effective support.

Accordingly the Framework:

- Sets out the principles of our performance culture and how this can be sustained
- Applies to all levels of council activity
- Defines the roles, responsibilities and reporting arrangements for all involved
- Has a broad scope, which includes strategic business planning, risk management, workforce planning, colleague performance appraisal and performance monitoring and management at team, service, departmental and organisational levels
- Has wider links to the Council's Transformation Portfolio.

3.16 Performance reports on the progress of delivering the Council Plan objectives are taken quarterly to the Executive Board with highlights reported in the Nottingham Arrow. Both the Nottingham Plan and Council Plan are tracked by a set of key performance indicators and some information is provided by external agencies such as the police. The Council's Corporate Leadership Team continues to drive the focus on continuous improvement. Although external assurance from bodies such as the Care and Quality Commission (CQC) and Ofsted currently remains in place, this is specific to certain service areas only.

3.17 The Council has a software system for performance and business management used throughout the Council. The system is used to monitor and manage performance at all levels and helps to develop and improve the way performance information is collected, presented and used to improve service delivery. The quality of services provided is also monitored by routinely seeking the views and experiences of citizens, service users and colleagues.

3.18 The Council's budget process establishes the resources required to deliver its services and objectives and includes reviews of the overall use of resources. Appropriate limits have been approved in line with the Prudential Code for Capital Accounting. Financial procedures are identified in approved Financial Regulations. Financial reserves are kept under review and the Council maintains an adequate Internal Audit function. The Council also publishes its Statement of Accounts in accordance with statutory and professional guidance. The Council's accounts have been successfully subjected to a rigorous external audit.

3.19 Financial performance is monitored regularly with senior management and councillors receiving monthly financial reports to help manage the Council's performance. Colleagues responsible for financial resources are required to sign Personal Accountability Statements in recognition of their responsibilities to use these resources effectively, and their success is monitored as part of the performance appraisal process.

Arrangements for defining and documenting the roles and responsibilities of the executive, non-executive, scrutiny and officer functions, with clear delegation arrangements and protocols for effective communication

3.20 In local government the governing body is the City Council, which has overall responsibility for directing and controlling all the work undertaken in its name. The Constitution, approved by City Council, sets out how it operates, how decisions are made and the procedures followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Nottingham City Council has adopted the 'Strong Leader' and Cabinet model of Executive Governance as set out in the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended), and this is reflected throughout the Constitution. Responsibility for decision making, the role of the City Council, Executive Board, Committees and the process for

determining Key Decisions are well documented and defined in the Constitution, and may be viewed at the following internet address:

<http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/about-the-council/nottingham-city-councils-constitution/>

- 3.21 The Constitution includes a scheme of delegations which is detailed so that the functions of City Council, Executive Board, Portfolio Holders, Committees and officers are specified.
- 3.22 The City Council comprises 55 councillors, with the Labour Party having overall control. The councillors meet as a Full Council around every six weeks. A limited number of items of business, such as approving the level of Council Tax and approving items within the Policy Framework, must be considered by the Full Council. For other decisions, the Leader and Executive Councillors hold decision-making powers through the Executive Board, each Executive Councillor including the Leader, holds a portfolio which supports the priorities of the Council.
- 3.23 The role of each Portfolio Holder is defined in terms of both general and specific responsibilities. Councillors who are not on the Executive may be members of one of the regulatory committees or undertake overview and scrutiny activities. Detailed terms of reference are in place for all committees.
- 3.24 There is a clear distinction between the Executive and Scrutiny functions within the Council and clearly defined roles for these functions which are understood by both bodies. The Council has protocols in place to ensure communication between councillors and colleagues in their respective roles and which govern their relationship. The role of Overview and Scrutiny is set out in the detailed terms of reference for the committee itself and for the panels which report to it.

Arrangements for developing, communicating and embedding codes of conduct, defining the standards of behaviour for councillors and staff

- 3.25 A hallmark of good governance is the development of shared values which become part of the organisation's culture, underpinning policy and behaviour throughout the organisation, from the governing body to all colleagues. These are in addition to compliance with legal requirements, for example on equal opportunities. The Council recognises that to be effective in fulfilling their role councillors will need to work closely with and talk to all colleagues and partners, and that the principles of good governance are followed in all Council business.
- 3.26 The Council has put arrangements in place to ensure that procedures and operations are designed in conformity with appropriate ethical standards and their continuing compliance in practice is monitored. Breaches of the code of conduct relating to councillors would be considered by the Standards Committee. Colleagues can report non conformity with appropriate ethical standards via the Confidential Reporting Code. Councillors can raise issues of non compliance directly with the Standards Committee. Citizens are encouraged to report concerns through any of the routes included in the Confidential Reporting Code or via the Council's "Have Your Say" procedure.. The Council's People Management Handbook includes sections relating to raising concerns, performance improvement and discipline.
- 3.27 At an individual level the Council has developed and adopted formal codes of conduct defining the standards of personal behaviour to which individual councillors and colleagues are required to adhere. All councillors have to sign a declaration to abide by and uphold

the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. Under the Code councillors are also required to register interests. All councillors have signed and agreed to adhere to the Members Code of Conduct and training on the Code is provided as part of an induction programme. Support staff also had briefings about the Code.

- 3.28 The Council's Monitoring Officer maintains the Register of Councillors' Interests that have been brought to his attention. Councillors are obliged by law to keep their registration up-to-date (and failure to do so constitutes an offence) and they must inform the Monitoring Officer of any changes within 28 days of the relevant event. Councillors are regularly reminded of this responsibility. A councillor's failure to register interests can be the subject of a complaint. All councillors have had the opportunity to receive training relating to the Code of Conduct.
- 3.29 In addition to their specific portfolio responsibilities all Portfolio Holders have a common responsibility to ensure that the executive functions within the portfolio are performed in accordance with approved Council policies and strategies and to the highest ethical standards. These values are also enshrined in the respective codes of conduct for colleagues, councillors and the councillor/colleague protocol. The need for disclosure of interests is a standard agenda item at all meetings, and a review of the minutes of the Executive Board indicates that potential conflicts of interest are regularly disclosed. The Council has put arrangements in place to ensure that the associated procedures and operations are designed in conformity with appropriate ethical standards.

Arrangements for reviewing and updating standing orders, standing financial instructions, a scheme of delegation and supporting procedure notes/manuals, which clearly define how decisions are taken and the processes and controls required to manage risks

- 3.30 Decision making within a good governance framework is complex and challenging. It must further the organisation's purpose and strategic direction and be robust in the medium and longer terms. To make such decisions councillors must be well informed.
- 3.31 The Constitution and its appendices clearly define those matters specifically reserved for collective decision of the Authority and those matters that may be delegated. The responsibility for updating the Constitution is set with the Monitoring Officer. Reports making changes to the Constitution including those to Financial Regulations are regularly made to the Full Council for approval or noting as the case may be. Most reports are available for public inspection as are the results of deliberations recorded in meeting minutes.
- 3.32 Councillors and colleagues making decisions require the support of appropriate systems to help ensure that good decisions are made / implemented and that resources are most effectively deployed. Risk management with the identification and mitigation of risk plays an important role in supporting service planning, project planning and delivery, decision making and achievement of the Council's objectives.
- 3.33 The Risk Management Framework (RMF) sets out the way in which the Council identifies monitors and mitigates its strategic, operational and project/partnership risks. The RMF is regularly updated and is endorsed by the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and approved by Audit Committee annually. The RMF comprises a Risk Policy, Strategy, and a Process Guide covers risk management in terms of:

- Purpose, principles and benefits
- Decision making, projects and partnerships
- Appetite, escalation and delegation
- Roles and responsibilities
- Detailed practical guide

3.34 During 2016/2017 the RMF is being updated with a programme of re-engagement and training for all responsible risk owners, including Audit Committee and CLT. Part of this will include a review of the council's risk appetite and tolerance. The result will be a risk management process that provides a structured approach, with built in flexibility to meet the needs of the increasing diverse activities undertaken by the council.

. The Risk Management Framework (under review)



3.35 Risk Management (RM) arrangements are integrated to other key documents including the MTFS, Financial Regulations and Corporate Financial Procedures. The Director of Resilience is responsible for risk management, championing its development and implementation. The CLT takes an active role in reviewing strategic risks along with the Audit Committee through updates of the Strategic Risk Register (SRR). Work takes place to review the composition of the SRR and test alignment of risks to the Council's strategic priorities. Similarly, a significant commitment is made to supporting effective risk management of the Transformation/Big Ticket programmes through the work of the Portfolio Programme Management Office.

3.36 RM training has been provided to the Audit Committee as part of the councillor induction process and is to be refreshed in 2016/2017. Wider training for colleagues is also now available supported by e-learning, workshops and revised guidance, consistent with the updated RMF. Risk workshops have been run by a Corporate Risk Specialist and have included basic risk management awareness.

3.37 The Strategic Risk Strategy details the work being undertaken in 2016/2017 to refresh the RMF and provides practical guidance on the management of the SRR and the risks within it, including escalation/delegation of risks, reporting arrangements and responsibilities. Risk action plans are developed for all risk registers, maintaining a rigorous risk and opportunity management approach while enabling flexibility in how risks are managed at different levels of the organisation. This reflects for example, departmental priorities, ways of working and activities, while complying with requirements of higher level risk strategies. The RMF is available to colleagues through the Council's intranet site.

Arrangements for ensuring that the Authority's financial management arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA statement on the role of the Chief Finance Officer

3.38 An essential element of good governance is the existence of sound arrangements for the management of financial resources.

3.39 The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) is a professionally qualified accountant. The CFO sits on the CLT and is able to contribute positively to decision making affecting the delivery of the Council's objectives. The CFO is able to promote good financial management and in so doing makes sure effective use is made of City Council resources and ensures that the finance function continually develops and remains fit for purpose. The following illustrates the Financial Framework put in operation to support the delivery of the Council's objectives.

The Financial Framework

CATEGORY	OVERALL	REVENUE	CAPITAL	TREASURY MANAGEMENT	PROCUREMENT	RISK MANAGEMENT
Strategies	MTFS					
		Income Generation Strategy	Capital Strategy & AMP	Treasury Management Strategy	Procurement Strategy	Risk Management Framework
Guidance	CIPFA technical guidance &	Budget Guidelines	Capital Guidelines	CIPFA Code of Practice for TM	CIPS Procurement Toolkit &	Risk Management Policy and Guidance
Plans	MTFP	Annual Budget	Capital Programme & AMP	Treasury Policy Statement	Procurement Checklist	Risk Responses
Governance	Constitution	Budget Management & Control statements & Annual Governance Statement		Prudential Indicators & Annual Report	Contract & Finance Procedure Rules	Risk Register reporting and regular review
	Financial Regulations and Standing Orders					Audit Committee Reports & annual report
	Internal & External Audit Plans and our response to inspection and audit reports					

Arrangements for undertaking the core functions of an Audit Committee, as identified in CIPFA's Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities

- 3.40 The operation of an effective Audit Committee is an essential part of good governance. The Audit Committee was established in 2008/09 and annual reports of its achievements are sent to Full Council. The role of the Committee is developing and regular interaction with similar Committees in other Core Cities is undertaken to share best practice.

Arrangements for ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures, and that expenditure is lawful

- 3.41 In order to demonstrate the highest level of stewardship of public resources it is important that all work undertaken on behalf of the Council is transparent, falls within legal powers and is in accordance with professionally recognised best practice. However, governance cannot be reduced to a set of rules, or achieved fully by compliance with a set of requirements.
- 3.42 This ethos of good governance can be expressed as values and demonstrated in behaviour. In England, the Local Government Act 2000 outlined ten principles of conduct for use in local government bodies built on the seven principles for the conduct of people in public life established by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan principles). These principles are enshrined in the Council's Codes of Conduct and are summarised in the following table:

Local Government Act 2000 Ten Principles of Conduct

Principle	Holders of public office:-
Selflessness	Should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends
Integrity	Should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.
Objectivity	Should make choices on merit in carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits.
Accountability	Are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
Openness	Should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and actions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
Honesty	Have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
Leadership	Should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.
Respect for others	Should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person and by treating people with respect, regardless of their age, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. They should respect the impartiality and integrity of the authority's statutory officers and its other employees.
Duty to uphold the law	Should uphold the law, and on all occasions, act in accordance with the trust that the public is entitled to place in them.
Stewardship	Should do whatever they are able to do to ensure that their authorities use their resources

Principle	Holders of public office:-
	prudently and in accordance with the law.

- 3.43 The Council's establishment incorporates all posts required by statute. These key roles are performed by the Council's Head of Paid Services, Monitoring Officer and Section 151/114 Officer. The roles of these officers are laid down in the Council's Constitution and are defined clearly in the associated job descriptions. As Head of Paid Service, the Chief Executive is ultimately responsible and accountable to the Council for all aspects of operational management.
- 3.44 The CFO undertakes the responsibilities of the Section 151 Officer including responsibility to the Council for ensuring that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, for keeping proper financial records and accounts and for maintaining an effective system of internal financial control.
- 3.45 The role of the Monitoring Officer includes responsibility to the Council for ensuring that agreed procedures are followed and that all applicable statutes, regulations and other relevant statements of good practice are complied with. The Monitoring Officer is responsible for arrangements for whistle blowing to which staff and those contracting with the Council have access; arrangements have been put in place allowing them access and the right of complaint is well publicised.
- 3.46 Service areas use professional networks to keep abreast of developments. The central policy function has been enhanced and works well in applying a Nottingham perspective to emerging policy trends and prospective legislation. Increasing use is made of web-based resources from specialist legal firms for legislative updates. Professional advice is offered and taken in advance of decision making when decisions have legal or financial implications. Advice on legal and financial matters is taken from internal and, where necessary, external sources. The advice given will usually be contained within the board papers.
- 3.47 The Council has Budget and Policy Framework Procedure rules in place, which set out how budget and policy decisions are made. Key roles are performed by the Council's Head of Paid Services, Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer. A regular programme of work is carried out by Internal Audit reviewing compliance with established procedures. In addition, scrutiny committees, external audit and external inspection agencies contribute to the review of the Council's compliance with its policies, procedures, laws and regulations.

Arrangements for identifying the development needs of councillors and senior colleagues in relation to their strategic roles, supported by appropriate training

- 3.48 Effective local government relies on public confidence in councillors and colleagues. Good governance strengthens credibility and confidence in public services. The Council needs the right skills to direct and control resources effectively. Governance roles and responsibilities are challenging and demanding, and councillors need the right skills for their roles. In addition, governance is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of knowledge and experience.

- 3.49 Generic, individual and group based training and development activities are in place with a mix of internal and external training provision. A councillor induction programme has been delivered by the cross party Councillor Development Steering Group (CDSG). The development programme has continued to meet councillor's needs over the last year and CDSG have continued to plan for and support both new and returned councillors' general and individual development needs and aspirations.
- 3.50 Human, financial and other resources are managed efficiently and effectively by the Council. Induction programmes for both councillors and colleagues are in place. The Constitution contains clear details of the roles and responsibilities for councillors, including the Leader and Portfolio Holders. All colleagues have detailed job descriptions and person specifications, and individual development requirements for colleagues are identified using a Performance Appraisal process. This process has recently been refreshed. Consultation with key customers is also used to understand the development needs for the Council.
- 3.51 Corporate Directors are experienced in their respective fields and are assessed by the Chief Executive as part of their performance appraisals. Most hold relevant professional qualifications which impose the requirement for continuing professional development. Corporate Directors organise their own training within the context of performance appraisals and any development obligations imposed by professional bodies of which they are members. Similarly, the skills of other staff are developed on an ongoing basis as part of the performance appraisal and service planning process

Arrangements for establishing clear channels of communication with all sections of the community and other stakeholders, ensuring accountability and encouraging open consultation

- 3.52 In order to understand the needs and demands of the community it is essential that appropriate procedures and processes are in place to ensure the relationships between the council, its partners and its citizens are clear, so that each knows what is expected of the other.
- 3.53 The Council is accountable in a number of ways. Councillors are democratically accountable to their local area and this gives a clear leadership role in building sustainable communities. All councillors must account to their communities for the decisions they have taken and the rationale behind those decisions. The Council is subject to external review through the external audit of its financial statements and some inspection regimes. Similarly, the Council budget is subject to significant influence and overview by government, which has powers to intervene. The Council is required to publish its financial statements and to prepare an annual report.
- 3.54 The Council is committed to the creation of sustainable and democratic communities, encouraging active citizenship and democratic engagement by developing the role of area committees; wide consultation on matters of local concern; events such as those that take place in Local Democracy Week and the promotion of councillors and their key roles within their communities. A range of media is used to let local people and employees know about progress on the Council's plans. For example, the "Contact Us" and "Have your Say" sections of the internet site allows citizens to find out about initiatives, register interest in future consultations and make observations. The Council welcomes and positively encourages public involvement in the way in which business is conducted.

- 3.55 Councillors and colleagues are both subject to codes of conduct. Additionally, where maladministration may have occurred, an aggrieved person may appeal either through their local councillor or directly to the Ombudsman. Councillors have been briefed in detail at induction by the Council's Monitoring Officer about the Code of Conduct and what its provisions mean in practice. Additionally there is a Member/Officer protocol which defines how councillors and officers should work together appropriately and the standards of personal behaviour and conduct expected.
- 3.56 The Council is accountable to the community it serves and publishes on an annual basis, information on its vision, strategy, plans, financial performance and outcomes, achievements and the satisfaction of service users in the previous period. The Council is dedicated to providing the easiest possible access to information while protecting individuals' privacy. Some information will not be available to the public as there are several grounds for exemption under the Freedom of Information Act. Most of these exemptions are subject to the application of a Public Interest Test. This is a test of whether the reasons for disclosing the information are outweighed by the exemption. Most Council meetings are open to the public and all minutes of meetings are available for examination, and reports clearly explain technical issues and their implications. A few simple rules have been introduced to help the public question session run smoothly and to be of maximum benefit to the public. The Executive Board meets in public (except for exempt items).
- 3.57 The Council has committed itself to wide consultation on matters of local concern. It expects that any consultation carried out is used to engage and gain the views of relevant communities, plan what needs to be achieved, establish how far the services meet their objectives from the customer's perspective, enable changes to services in line with customer feedback, determine how visible changes can be tracked as a result of consultation and provide feedback on the results and actions arising from consultation.

Arrangements for incorporating good governance arrangements in respect of partnerships and other group working and reflecting these in the authority's overall governance arrangements.

- 3.58 In order that shared goals are achieved it is important that the principles of good governance are put in place across the full range of Council work. When working in group or partnership arrangements the existence of sound governance helps ensure that shared goals are achieved and resources controlled and used effectively.
- 3.59 The Council engages with all sections of the community whilst working with partnerships. A variety of mechanisms are used to ensure the engagement is appropriate to the diverse communities. The Nottingham Plan to 2020 (One Nottingham Sustainable Community Strategy) provides the overarching vision, objectives and priorities for the Council and the One Nottingham family of partnerships. The Nottingham Plan to 2020 has full commitment across the Council, partners and community. Given the significant political and economic changes since the plan's launch, the One Nottingham Board and the leadership of Nottingham City Council requested a refresh of the Nottingham Plan targets in 2013/14, to ensure that the right areas of work are prioritised, partnership resources are targeted in the most efficient way and the best target measures are used to ensure the plan is effectively delivering for the citizens of Nottingham. The refresh of the Nottingham Plan to 2020 is not a full revision. Targets were revisited to make sure they are appropriate, credible, robust and measurable going forward, whilst maintaining the ambition that was established when the plan was launched in 2009 as a contract with citizens. It also considered possible areas within the plan which would most benefit from dedicated partnership focus.

Recommendations were developed by Nottingham Plan lead officers and have been through a challenge process with peers and performance colleagues, taking account of performance to date. The targets in the plan are reviewed on an annual basis and an updated plan is agreed by the One Nottingham Board including amended and or/revised targets for the coming year. The plan is published on One Nottingham's web page.

- 3.60 The Council's Partnership Governance Framework (PGF) sets out the approach to managing work with significant partnerships and provides a mechanism for ensuring that Councillors and lead officers are clear about their roles and responsibilities in relation to significant partnerships. The mechanism is the annual health checks which includes a section to assess that the governance of the partnership is clear and appropriate. The health checks enable the partnership to assess that it has a clear set of values and guiding principles against which decision making and actions can be judged. These are often set out in the partnerships' constitutions including codes of conduct. The health check also includes an assessment of the aims and objectives of the partnerships, including alignment between the partnership and the Nottingham Plan, and also a section to enable the partnerships to assess the robustness and clarity of their decision making, delegated powers and accountability. The Partnership Governance Framework, via the health checks, provides the mechanism for significant partnerships to assess the extent to which their aims and objectives align to The Nottingham Plan to 2020 and the vision for 2030.
- 3.61 In 2013/14 two additions were included in the health checks for partnerships to confirm that the Council lead officer is actively engaged and that, where applicable, for the most recent financial year, the partnership had an 'unqualified audit opinion' and that recommendations are actioned. The annual health checks have previously been updated to ensure that the partnerships were able to assess whether those making decisions are provided with information that is fit for the purpose, relevant, timely and give clear explanations of technical issues and their implications. This contributes to the assessment for the 'decision making and accountability' capability. The checks also enable each partnership to assess that it has a clear set of values and guiding principles against which decision making and actions can be judged. These are set out in the partnerships' constitution, policies and procedures. The register of significant partnerships includes the status of the partnerships, its membership, and a summary of how its aims and roles are aligned with the Council's strategic plans. Each year a on a rolling programme three of the partnerships are scrutinised to verify the quality and accuracy of response, and their documentation checked with advice given where needed. Each partnership is verified at least once every four years. The register, and an overview of the health check results, including proposed actions where remedial work is needed, are reported to the Audit Committee. The checks include a section for lead officers and chairs to self-assess the governance of partnership risk management (called "partnership risk management") and a section for "overall headline risks". The register of significant partnerships is reviewed and revised on an annual basis with emerging partnerships added as appropriate, and those who no longer qualify being removed and their effectiveness assessed in different ways, often by contract or service level agreement.
- 3.62 The Council and partners in One Nottingham and other significant partnerships have an excellent understanding of its diverse communities and their needs (see Nottingham Insight, Citizens Survey 2015, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, State of Nottingham Report, Crime & Disorder Needs Assessment, Ward Report and wealth of ward and mosaic data) which is used to shape our engagement.

- 3.63 The Research, Engagement and Consultation (REC) function within the Strategy and Commissioning Directorate supports all services across the Council to effectively consult and engage with citizens and make the best use of the findings. This includes providing advice and support on planning, designing and undertaking consultations (including surveys, event evaluations and focus groups) and engagement activity. As part of this, the team advises colleagues as to the most appropriate ways of consulting and engaging depending upon the intended audience, and ensures that colleagues think about using alternative formats and interpretation services when necessary. REC also manages the Citizens' Panel, which consists of 300 citizens from across the city. The demographic profile of the Panel is broadly representative of the city. Panel members receive regular surveys and are regularly called upon to take part in focus groups and also get involved in testing the customer experience of services. REC also ensures that young people participate and engage in decision-making about services and their communities. As part of this, the Engagement and Participation Lead Officer within REC manages a variety of groups for young people of different ages and backgrounds. REC also ensures that citizens' views are taken into account in the various commissioning reviews. This may involve managing focus groups and reference groups, helping to plan and deliver stakeholder conferences, planning survey activity and supporting citizen involvement in tendering specification, tender assessment and quality assurance.
- 3.64 Other organisations where the Council holds a substantial interest include its group companies, charities and trusts. In every such interest the Council endeavours to ensure they are set up with appropriate governance arrangements and are expected to comply with all relevant laws and regulations, and their financial statements and other published information are expected to be accurate and reliable.

Review of Effectiveness

- 4.1 The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Corporate Directors within the Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, Statutory Officers, key colleagues, the Head of Internal Audit's annual report, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates. The review also looks at governance arrangements undertaken within its significant partnerships and within its group members.

Process that has been applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance framework

- 4.2 The purpose of the Constitution is to set out how the Council conducts its business, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that these decisions are effective, efficient and transparent so that the Council remains accountable to citizens.
- 4.3 Some of these procedures are required by law while others are a matter for the Council to determine. The Council exercises all its powers and duties in accordance with the law and its approved Constitution.
- 4.4 Nottingham City Council has adopted the 'Strong Leader' and Cabinet model of Executive Governance as set out in the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended), and this is reflected throughout the Constitution. Portfolio Holders share responsibility with

the Leader, Deputy Leader and other members of the Executive for the Executive business of the Council.

- 4.5 The principle bodies with responsibility for governance and their terms of reference are included in the Constitution and are summarised below, together with some of the topics considered during the year. All the associated reports and agendas are publicly available and may be found at the following website:

<http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/article/23479/Council-Meetings-and-Decisions>

Principal Constitutional Bodies Dealing With Governance

Body	Summary of Governance role
City Council	<p>City Council, comprising all 55 councillors, is the foremost public decision making forum of the Council that sets the policy framework and budget. The policy framework consists of the most important plans and strategies adopted by the Council. The Council meeting is chaired by the Lord Mayor.</p> <p>Topics Considered by the Council</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions from Councillors and Citizens • The Adoption of the Labour Party Manifesto as Council Policy • General Amendments to the Constitution • Decisions Taken under the Urgency Procedures • The Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2014-15 • The Appointment of Corporate Directors • The Nottingham City Council Plan 2015-19 • City of Nottingham Council Tax Support Scheme • Pay Policy Statement 2016/17 • Treasury Management 2016/17 • The Budget 2016/17
Executive Board	<p>The role of the Executive Board is to take key decisions as delegated by the City Council. The work also encompasses receiving performance and financial information which determines the strategic direction of the Council.</p> <p>Topics Considered by the Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Decisions • Pre-Audit Financial Revenue and Capital Outturn Report 2014/15 • Nottingham Plan Annual Report 14/15 (Year 5); Council Plan 2015-19 • Treasury Management; 2015/16 Half Yearly Update; 2014/15 Annual Report; 2016/17 Strategy • Budget Consultation 2016/17 • Review of 2015/16 Revenue and Capital Budgets • Council Tax - Determination of The 2016/17 Tax Base

Body	Summary of Governance role
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	<p>The scrutiny of Executive decisions is an essential element in the effective governance of the Council, and the scrutiny function has wide-ranging powers under the Local Government Act 2000 to examine policy development, executive decisions and matters of wider local concern.</p> <p>The Committee consists of Councillors who are not on the Executive, who are charged with keeping an overview of Council business and City concerns and scrutinising areas of particular interest or concern. Their role is to hold the Executive to account when deemed necessary in the business they undertake, and also to assist in the development and review of Council policy. Tasks involve looking in detail at areas of service delivery or issues of general concern in the Council, external partnerships and organisations. The Committee makes recommendations to the Executive or to the whole Council and on occasion, to outside organisations, on issues which might include suggestions for improvements or different ways of doing things. The Council also has a statutory responsibility to scrutinise substantial developments or variations in NHS services and this is undertaken by the Health Scrutiny Panel or by the Joint City / County Health Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>Topics Considered by the Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of Overview and Scrutiny Committee Sub-Committees 2015/16; Programme For Scrutiny 2016/17; Work Programme 2015/16 • Nottingham City Council's Summer of Engagement • Citizen Survey • Management and Organisation of The Local And Parliamentary Elections Held In May 2015 • Nottingham City Council Plan 2015-19 • Nottingham Growth Plan • Nottingham City Council's Good To Great Operating Model • Nottingham Plan 14/15 Annual Report (Year 5)
Standards Committee	<p>The Council has a Standards Committee that oversees the Code of Conduct and other governance matters. The Committee meets as and when required and there was no meeting called in the year.</p>
Audit Committee	<p>The Audit Committee has responsibility for the development of risk within the Council and is the designated body for the overview of the Council's Internal Audit function. An annual report is produced by the Chair of the Committee, reflecting the work undertaken and the associated linkages it has to improving governance.</p> <p>Topics Considered</p>

Body	Summary of Governance role
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit Committee: - Terms Of Reference And Annual Work Programme; Annual Report 2014/15 • Treasury Management: - Annual Report 2014/15, 2015/16 Half Yearly Update; 2016/17 Strategy • East Midlands Shared Services Annual Report 2015 • Annual Governance Statement 2014/15; Progress Made To Date on Issues Reported 2014/15 And Process For Producing 2015/16 Statement • Review of Accounting Policies • Statement of Accounts • External Auditors; Progress Report And Technical Updates; Annual Audit Letter; External Audit Plan 2015/16 • Ombudsman Annual Letter • Capital Programme 2015/16 to 2019/20 • Council Tax Discounts • Counter Fraud Strategy • Internal Audit: - Annual Report; Charter 2015; Quarterly Reports; Reports Selected For Examination • Partnership Governance Health Checks And Update To Register Of Significant Partners • Performance Management Framework • Risk:- Review And Improvement Of The Delivery Of Strategic Risk Management; Update On The Review And Improvement Of The Delivery Of Strategic Risk; • Information Technology; Progress Against Recommendations Re: Review Of Nottingham City Council It Services; Resilience Of City Council It Systems

Head of Internal Audit (HoIA)

- 5.1 Internal Audit is an independent, objective assurance and consulting activity aiding the Council in accomplishing its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach directed to evaluate and improve the Council's control and governance processes. Using information and evidence collected during the year the HoIA produces an annual audit report and opinion summarising the effectiveness of the governance arrangements in place.
- 5.2 In 2015/16 The HoIA maintained processes complying with the governance requirements set down in the CIPFA Statement on the role of the Head of Internal Audit. The service met the requirements of the Account and Audit Regulations 2015 and associated regulations and an independent review confirmed the service substantially complied with the principles contained in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).
- 5.3 The HoIA reports to Corporate Directors and stakeholders who are responsible for ensuring that proper standards of internal control operate within their areas of

responsibility. Internal Audit has reviewed the controls and given an opinion in respect of the systems and processes found in place. The 2015/16 Audit Plan, as agreed by the Audit Committee and Corporate Directors and key stakeholders, was completed in accordance with the professional standards. The HoIA has also overseen those policies and procedures in place addressing the risk of fraud and irregularity, and is of the opinion that they align with best practice as described in the CIPFA Code for managing the risk of fraud and corruption. Additionally during 2015 the HoIA has developed the use of a corporate team to strengthen the counter fraud function.

HoIA Overall Opinion

- 5.4 The HoIA has undertaken reviews of the internal control procedures in respect of the key systems and processes of the Council and where appropriate, its partners. The work was planned using a risk based model of the Council's activities. It has been supplemented by ad hoc reviews in respect of irregularities and other work commissioned by Corporate Directors or the partners of the Council and the work undertaken by external review agencies. Reports in respect of all reviews were issued to those with responsibility, together with recommendations and agreed action plans. Each report issued included a level of assurance that could be assessed from its findings. Each quarter, a list of reports was sent to the Audit Committee for scrutiny and a number of audits were selected for in depth review at the Committee.
- 5.5 Throughout 2015/16 the HoIA has continuously reviewed the significant challenges and risks associated with the Council's operations and allocated the necessary resources, via the audit plan, to help him form an opinion on the Council's governance arrangements. In forming his opinion the HoIA has reviewed all the IA reports issued in 2015/16 and drawn upon available external sources of assurance from independent review bodies and internal assurance mechanisms to identify and assess the key control risks to the Council's objectives. Accordingly, the HoIA has concluded that although no systems of control can provide absolute assurance, nor can IA give that assurance, he is satisfied that, on the basis of the audit work undertaken during the 2015/16 financial year, there have been no significant issues (as defined in the CIPFA Code of Practice) reported by IA. Furthermore, on the basis of the audit work undertaken during the 2015/16 financial year, covering financial systems, risk and governance, the HoIA is able to conclude that a significant level of assurance can be given that internal control systems are operating effectively within the Council, its significant partners and associated groups.

Other assurance mechanisms

- 6.1 Corporate Directors and statutory officers have provided an assurance statement supporting the AGS for 2015/16. These statements have been supplemented by assurance gathered from key colleagues responsible for Internal Audit, Risk, Human Resources, significant partnerships and group members, and have also been informed by independent external reviews, including the external auditor. The assurance is based around questionnaires developed from the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework for Corporate Governance.
- 6.2 In summary, the Council has reviewed its systems of internal control and taken a comprehensive approach to considering and obtaining assurance from many different sources. The Council has been informed on the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework, and the arrangements continue to be

regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework. The areas already addressed, and those to be specifically addressed with new actions planned, are outlined below.

Issues reported

- 7.1 Part of the AGS report reflects the position on significant control issues affecting the Council and the action plans put in place to address them. In ascertaining the significance of the control issues reported, the Council has used CIPFA guidance on the factors involved. These factors are summarised as follows:
- The issue has seriously prejudiced or prevented achievement of a principal objective.
 - The issue has resulted in a need to seek additional funding to allow it to be resolved, or has resulted in significant diversion of resources from another aspect of the business.
 - The issue has led to a material impact on the accounts.
 - The Audit Committee, or equivalent, has advised that it should be considered significant for this purpose.
 - The Head of Internal Audit has reported on it as significant, for this purpose, in the annual opinion on the internal control environment.
 - The issue, or its impact, has attracted significant public interest or has seriously damaged the reputation of the organisation.
 - The issue has resulted in formal action being taken by the Chief Financial Officer and/or the Monitoring Officer.
- 7.2 Issues worthy of note are issues that are not categorised as significant but which require attention to ensure continuous improvement of the system of internal control. New or outstanding issues are as follows:

ISSUES WORTHY OF NOTING

Central Government Review of Local Government Funding & Balancing the Council's Budget

- 7.3 The Council, like all other local authorities across the country, has seen a substantial reduction in government funding as a consequence of the Government's policies to tackle the national fiscal deficit.
- 7.4 Between 2010/11 and 2016/17 the overall settlement funding for the Council, after taking account of transfers in funding and new burdens, has been reduced by the equivalent of £118.6m or 44.7%.
- 7.5 In particular Nottingham's Revenue Support Grant has more than halved since 2013/14, with a reduction of £68.4m by 2016/17 with a further cut of at least £33.0m by 2019/20 already announced by Government as part of a 4-year settlement.

The Medium Term Financial Planning Process

- 7.6 The City Council's annual budget is constructed in order to deliver the Council Plan. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is the overarching framework within which the Council's financial planning and management activity takes place. The annual budget is an integral part of the rolling multi-year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This approach

enables it to support delivery of the Council's priorities, services and improvements. It provides the means by which planned spending may be controlled within available resources. Therefore, this assessment of the robustness of the budget focuses on the likelihood that actual spending will vary from the budget and the consequent impact on the financial health of the organisation.

- 7.7 The Council is a going concern and the budget process is part of a continuous service planning and financial cycle. Therefore, a wealth of knowledge and understanding of the previous and current local and national financial and economic environments is used to make informed assumptions and judgements about the future. This activity seeks to establish a robust budget which is appropriate, realistic and constructed having taken a practical and appropriate assessment of risk.
- 7.8 The Council's approach to setting recent budgets has, where possible, also been guided by the following principles:
- to pursue commercialisation opportunities to generate income for the Council; and help offset a proportion of the impact of grant reductions;
 - reducing demand and reviewing the way we commission our services;
 - redesigning and modernising our service provision / identifying efficiencies;
 - to protect frontline services and minimise the impact of service reductions and changes on vulnerable citizens
- 7.9 Over the last 6 years Nottingham has found cumulative savings of £175.1m with a further £28.6m planned for 2016/17.
- 7.10 Between 2010/11 and 2012/13 Nottingham adopted a "strategic choice" approach to clearly identifying all departmental savings, fees & charges and invest to save proposals. To meet increasing budget gaps several transformational "big ticket" programmes were also introduced in 2012/13 to deliver significant savings and were further expanded over 2013/14 and 2014/15.
- 7.11 The budget approach since 2015/16 has been to focus on managing demand and cost pressures; increasing income; implementing service redesign and efficiencies before proposing the stopping of specific service delivery.
- 7.12 The Council will have to make difficult decisions about the services it continues to provide in order to begin closing the £23.3m budget gap currently projected for 2017/18, rising to £42.1m in 2019/20.

Brexit

- 7.13 On the 23 June 2016 the UK held a referendum and voted to leave the European Union. Whilst this result has caused much uncertainty in the financial markets and prompted significant changes in the national political situation, the UK remains part of the EU until further notice. In order to leave the EU, the UK government must provide formal notification under Article 50 of the EU Treaty. When this happens, a two year negotiation period is triggered. During this process, the UK remains a member of the EU, but if talks are not concluded after two years, and not extended, Britain reverts to World Trade Organisation (WTO) terms, requiring trade tariffs to be imposed.
- 7.14 Nottingham City Council notes the result of the referendum on the UK's membership of the EU. Our current expectation is that the UK will not leave the EU until around January 2019

at the earliest. The Council will use the intervening period to work with the wider local government family such as the Local Government Association and the Core Cities network, as well as key strategic partners within Nottingham, to consider its response to any threats and opportunities that emerge from this decision for both Nottingham and its citizens.

- 7.15 Many commentators are forecasting that with current economic uncertainty a slowdown or recession is likely in the near future with dampened business confidence and investment, increases in inflationary pressure and slower trend economic growth. The Treasury's fiscal rules allow the Government to run a deficit in "exceptional times" and it has indicated that its policy for the remainder of the parliament might be to allow a larger deficit to develop if there is an economic slowdown. The possible implications for local government funding and wider public spending are likely to be announced once the Government revisits its plans for fiscal consolidation at the Autumn Statement.
- 7.16 The City Council's treasury management practices have protected the authority from any adverse short term market shocks and the medium term financial strategy (MTFS) will be revised in light of economic conditions and their impact on business rates or announcements of any further public sector spending cuts.

Children in Care

- 7.17 The Children in Care service exists primarily to work with children who are at risk of significant harm and have been brought into the care of the Council. Our priorities for children in our care are to ensure that they are safe, healthy, and achieving their full potential in education. Wherever possible we will work to return children to live with their birth or extended families when it is safe to do so. If returning to family is not achievable then adoption and fostering are the next preferred options. For some children and young people residential care is the appropriate placement.
- 7.18 The cost of funding children in care arrangements and associated budget pressures are key issues facing the service. There is a need to recruit and retain more of our own foster carers and Social Workers to maintain stable children in care arrangements and reduce agency spend.

Latest Position

- 7.19 In a recent announcement the Department for Education have stated that nationally Children in Care numbers are at a 30 year high. Because of our early help preventative and support work with families the Council is performing well against similar Councils. Our Children in Care numbers have remained stable against the previous year; in April 2016 we had 588 children in our care this is 90.5 per 10,000 child population, similar Councils had 96.3 per 10,000 child population in April 2016.
- 7.20 We have plans in place to manage the numbers of children who remain in care over the forthcoming year. Part of this work involves systematic use of various tools to help return young people to their birth families when possible, and having detailed exit plans for each child into adoption or other permanence arrangements, benchmarking all data against our statistical neighbours and ensuring a full complement of staff to deliver the business.
- 7.21 There is a renewed focus on recruiting local foster carers, and providing support to children on the edge of care driven through Big Ticket Projects.

- 7.22 A new payment scheme for our foster carers has been implemented, with improved financial rewards for those who care for teenagers, a new marketing strategy is in place, post graduate students from the Nottingham Business School have recently worked with the fostering service and produced a report that we will use to inform our marketing as we move forward.
- 7.23 Our web site and social media communication such as twitter and Facebook will be a new focus; a specific campaign to recruit 25 carers for 25 teenagers has taken place in December 2015, initial responses have been positive.
- 7.24 Performance in relation to placement stability for children in care for more than two years is better than the target. We continue to ensure the recording of the wishes and feelings of children and young people and ensure that these have influence within the care planning process.
- 7.25 Performance against children in care key performance indicators is strongly monitored and in some areas out performs against statistical neighbours. One area for renewed focus against key performance indicators is in ensuring the health of children in care is robustly monitored and action taken where appropriate to avoid delays in dental checks and health assessments.
- 7.26 Work is underway to match children and young people to adopters at an earlier point in the adoption process to ensure a stable and permanent family home for all of our children in care. Improving adoption timeliness and permanence and tackling delay is a key local and national priority area, we have reduced the time of entering care to adoption for children with an adoption plan from 101 to 83 weeks in the last year.
- 7.27 In the 2015/16 financial year 47 children were adopted, 21 children were discharged as a result of a Special Guardianship Order. 21 children were discharged as the result of a Child Arrangement Order.
- 7.28 The reconfiguration of Nottingham City Council's Residential Services into Small Group Homes has served to support children and young people to have better placements and improved outcomes in a cost effective manner and ensured young people receive a quality service that keeps them safe. All of our registered children's homes were inspected under a new tougher OFSTED framework in the 2015/16 financial year; all were rated good or outstanding.
- 7.29 The leaving care team support 235 of our former children in care aged 18 - 21 into independence; we have a range of semi-independent settings that we use to assist young people during their transition, to their own accommodation.
- 7.30 Several of our Children in Care have obtained apprenticeships in the Council We currently have 10 care leavers at university; some young people are able to stay with their foster carer after their 18th birthday if they wish to do so we currently have 17 young people in so called staying put arrangements with foster carers that we fund.
- 7.31 There is strong collaboration between partners in Nottingham most notably between Health, Schools, Council, Police, Foster Carers and providers of residential accommodation. Levels of involvement in the criminal justice process of children in care

aged 10-17 have fallen significantly in recent years and are now in line with similar Councils.

- 7.32 The Council has a strategy to support families and endeavours to ensure that children remain within immediate or extended family rather than entering Council care when it is safe to do so. The Edge of Care Intervention Hub, Targeted Family Support, Multi Systemic Therapy Team, and Priority Family Programme all work in a variety of ways to support children and families across the city.

East Midlands Shared Service (EMSS)

- 7.33 Leicestershire County Council (LCC) and Nottingham City Council (NCC) have been working in partnership to develop and implement an East Midlands Shared Service to support both transactional finance and HR administration/payroll processes. The shared service is supported by an implementation of the Oracle E-Business Suite. As is usual with this type of extensive system implementation, a great deal of focus has been applied to the financial control processes requiring review and redesign. Much of the risk for NCC has been mitigated by the fact that the Council was migrating to an existing LCC platform.

Latest Position

- 7.34 The Council's Accountancy and Audit services continue to closely monitor the activity and performance of the Oracle system closely. No major concerns have yet arisen in this regard. Issues have been faced in terms of financial management since the implementation on 2 April 2013, and delays have been experienced in making payments to certain suppliers. The causes of this issue have been addressed and the resulting payment backlog is being cleared. To provide clarity of responsibilities, a service level agreement has been set up between NCC and EMSS.

Nottingham Express Transit (NET)

- 7.35 Nottingham City Council entered into a 22 year Private Finance Initiative concession contract with Tramlink Nottingham Limited ("Tramlink") in December 2011 to extend and operate Nottingham's tram network. The concession contract passes the key design, build and construction risks, to Tramlink, the private sector concession company.

Latest Position

- 7.36 Construction of NET Phase Two is complete. The NET concession contract, including project risks remaining with the City Council, is being managed by an experienced in-house project team and overseen by a dedicated Project Board.

Workplace Parking Levy (WPL)

- 7.37 The WPL is a levy which applies to all employers within the Nottingham City Council administrative boundary. Employers that provide any workplace parking places are required to get a WPL licence and those with 11 or more chargeable places, to pay a charge, from 1 April 2012. An important issue focuses on the ability of WPL to raise revenue to meet the Council's contribution to the NET Phase 2, the HUB and Link Bus network. The scheme was introduced on 1st October 2011 and charging commenced in April 2012.

Latest Position

- 7.38 There has been concern regarding the ability of WPL to meet funding requirements. The WPL income projections will be continually updated to reflect the latest information available from the WPL team as the income collection is still in its infancy. In the event that over the 23 year life of the NET Phase 2 contract, insufficient WPL income is generated, decisions may be made in respect of the ongoing contributions to the Link Bus network and/or extending the WPL scheme beyond the life of the NET Phase 2 contract.

Information Governance

- 7.39 Responsibility for information management risk and compliance rests with the Director of Resilience who acts as the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO), and is supported by Information Management Services.

Latest Position

- 7.40 Previous performance challenges associated with managing and processing personal and non-personal information requests have now been addressed and are in line with statutory expectations. Establishing a sustainable operating model to ensure performance is maintained is an area of focus and priority.
- 7.41 The Authority undertook its annual self-assessment against the Department of Health's (DoH) Information Governance Toolkit which assesses performance against DoH information governance policies and standards. The Authority achieved level 2 score in each of the 28 requirements, attaining an overall compliance score of 69%, and a satisfactory overall grade again this year.
- 7.42 The management of data incidents is carried out and managed by Information Management Services as per the Authority's data incident procedure. All data breach incidents are reported to the central service, consulting with the SIRO and Caldicott Guardian where appropriate. The number of data incidents reported increased during 2015-2016. Only one data breach incident was subject to reporting to the Information Commissioner, and after investigation no further action was taken by the regulatory body.
- 7.43 The Authority recognises the operational and strategic benefits to improving information management practices. As such the Authority has reviewed and restructured its corporate information management service to strengthen its ability to support the organisation to take forward and coordinate activities. The priority for the coming year is to establish an Information Management Assurance Framework ensuring that the Authority's legal obligations are maintained, risks are minimised and appropriate levels of availability, integrity and confidentiality of information are maintained. This will enable the Council to maximise the value of its information assets to drive improvements and gain efficiencies. Key development areas will include Information Management Strategy; Governance; Training; Monitoring and Performance.

Nottingham Revenues and Benefits

- 7.44 On 1st November 2014, Nottingham City Council entered into a 7-year partnership with Northgate Information Solutions for the provision of Revenues & Benefits Services. A unique element of the partnership was that Northgate are contractually-bound to sub-

contract the work to Nottingham Revenues & Benefits Limited (NRB), a wholly-owned Nottingham City Council company.

Latest Position

- 7.45 Governance arrangements are now fully established and embedded, including meetings of the monthly Operations Board, monthly Transformation Board and quarterly Partnership Board. Furthermore three councillors have been appointed to the NRB Ltd Board, whose inaugural meeting took place on 25th February 2016.

Information Technology

- 7.46 The Council commissioned a report considering several key areas where the Council's IT Service has run installed infrastructure to the end of its useful life with the view of identifying where investment is required to enable the Council to operate a technical environment that is fit for purpose.

Latest Position

- 7.47 A service improvement programme was developed to ensure that a continuing high level of IT service was delivered to support the work of the City Council, and help to ensure that services of sufficient quality are provided to citizens. The changes included in the programme have been successfully implemented and are now part of normal business activities

Robin Hood Energy

- 7.48 Robin Hood Energy is a private limited company wholly owned by Nottingham City Council and licensed to supply gas and electricity to domestic and non-domestic customers in England, Scotland and Wales. It is a not-for-profit company and began offering credit tariffs in May 2015 followed by prepayment tariffs and commercial tariffs.

Latest Position

- 7.49 Governance arrangements are now established including weekly management meetings and bi-monthly Board meetings. The Board comprises three Directors (all Councillors) and two more Councillors are shortly to join the Board of Directors.

EnviroEnergy

- 7.50 Enviroenergy is a private limited company wholly owned by Nottingham City Council, it both generates heat and power and sells heat and power to commercial and domestic customers in Nottingham. The company has recently launched additional commercial services, billing provision for a number of housing associations outside Nottingham and the development and sale of a heat monitor.

Latest Position

- 7.51 There has been a positive improvement in governance arrangements since the last audit report, all board papers are now posted on gov.com and constitutional services provide support for board meetings and support to the board of Directors. Improvement plans are still required for customer service, including investment in a new CRM system and replacement heat monitor to 4,000 domestic properties in Nottingham, timescale for this transition December-March 2017.
- 7.52 A new appointment of Head of Plant Operations will bring new focus on infrastructure and the investment that's required to sustain a heat network for the next 30 years.

Blueprint Partnership Limited / Blueprint (General Partner) Limited

- 7.53 Blueprint is a limited liability partnership owned 50% by Nottingham City Council and 50% by the Igloo Regeneration Fund (backed by Aviva). The primary objective of Blueprint is to provide regenerative property development within the East Midlands and the wider area (West Midlands and South Yorkshire).

Latest Position

- 7.54 The Council and its partner Igloo Regeneration Fund each have two Directors on the Blueprint Board with equal voting rights. Any decisions relating to the business, including investment of funds into the vehicle, have to be jointly agreed. Failure to reach agreement would lead to a deadlock situation being invoked. Any decision affecting or requiring resources from the Council are reported to the Council's executive board/portfolio holder for a decision to be made where there is an impact on the MTFP.

8.1 We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and we will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed:
Leader of the Council

Signed:
Chief Executive