



Annual Governance Statement 2022/2023

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement provides an overview of how the Council's governance arrangements operate, including how they are reviewed annually to ensure they remain effective. Governance comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the Council is directed and controlled, and through which it is accountable to, engages with and leads the community.
- 1.2 Governance is about how the Council ensures it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. Good governance leads to effective:
- leadership and management;
 - performance and risk management;
 - stewardship of public money; and
 - public engagement and outcomes for our citizens and service users.
- 1.3 The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is properly accounted for, and provides value for money. 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.
- 1.4 The Council operates in a complex and constantly evolving financial, policy and legislative environment. The role, responsibilities and funding models of local government continue to be in a period of rapid transition. The borough continues to progress the delivery of its ambitious Let's Do it Strategy, with staff, residents and stakeholders across the Borough engaged in working towards the realisation of the vision. The Council's Corporate Plan sets out its priority actions for delivering the strategy for the borough.

- 1.5 The national and international public health emergency caused by the COVID- 19 pandemic have led to substantial impacts for the borough and the Council. These have included implications for provision of services, our workforce and our financial position. Effective leadership and governance of the response and recovery have been critical. Plans are being delivered which now focus on the borough's longerterm recovery, including its economy, residents and communities, in line with the Government's Living with Covid plan and the Council's ambitious Let's Do it Strategy.
- 1.6 The introduction of the new Integrated Care System (ICS) arrangements at Greater Manchester level have been intended to drive the next phase of health and social care integration. The operating model for Bury's health and social care integration – described as the Bury Integrated Care Partnership, will be key to enabling further progress towards achievement of the priorities for the borough. These ambitions are for the borough to significantly improve health outcomes, tackle health inequalities and develop a financially and clinically sustainable system.
- 1.7 The changes taking place present both opportunities and challenges. Therefore, the Council must continue to engage in a broad programme of innovation and reform work so that it can maintain services for residents which are efficient, effective and deliver value for money using available resources. This document explains the governance mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate oversight of this work.

2. Scope of Responsibility

- 2.1 Bury Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. It is also responsible for ensuring 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 its functions are exercised.
- 2.2 In discharging these responsibilities, the Council must put in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk. The Council has adopted a Code of Corporate Governance which is consistent with the seven principles of the CIPFA /SOLACE framework "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government".
- 2.3 The Council Constitution document sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. Some of these processes are required by law, while others are a matter for the Council to choose.

The following link takes you to Bury Council Constitution.

<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=350&MIId=3362&Ver=4&Info=1>

The Council's Constitution is reviewed annually to ensure it remains consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (CIPFA/SOLACE) joint framework for delivering good governance in local government. CIPFA issued an update to the Framework in 2016, which has informed the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) from 2016/17 onwards. The Finance Regulations were not reviewed during 2022/23 however they will be reviewed in the first half of the 2023/24 financial year.

2.4 This Annual Governance Statement explains how the Council operates its governance framework. The AGS also meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 regulation 6(1) which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

2.5 The Council's financial management arrangements are consistent with a number of the governance requirements of the CIPFA statement on the role of the Chief Finance Officer in Local Government (2016). The Statement requires that the Chief Finance Officer should report directly to the Chief Executive and be a member of the leadership team, with a status at least equivalent to others. For the 2022/23 financial year The Executive Director of Finance (and designated Section 151 Officer) is a joint appointment across both the Council and Bury Integrated Care Partnership (previously the CCG). They are a member of, and attend, the meetings of the Council Executive Team and the Locality Board which includes Executives from the Council and organisations across the Integrated Care Partnership.

2.6 All statutory officers have access to the Chief Executive. The Council considers that its management arrangements are appropriate in the context of compliance with the CIPFA Statement.

3. The Purpose of the Governance Framework

3.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the Council is directed and controlled, and through which it is accountable to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of the borough's strategic objectives as set out in the Let's Do It strategy – to 2030, to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

3.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve the Council's aims and objectives and can therefore not provide absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control

identifies and prioritises risks; evaluates the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised; and aims to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

4. The Governance Framework

4.1 Corporate governance describes how organisations direct and control what they do. The Constitution is updated when appropriate, to ensure it reflects the Council's current governance arrangements. The information below includes key examples of how the Council has adhered to its governance commitments set out in the Code and includes hyperlinks to sources of further information, which include more detail about how the Council has implemented its commitments. The Council has a broad range of strategies and policies in place, and therefore this is not intended to be an exhaustive list. More detail about particular areas of interest can be found on the Council's website <https://www.bury.gov.uk>

4.2 There are seven core principles of good governance in the public sector, which are set out below (principles 'A' through to 'G'). Each core governance principle has a set of sub-principles beneath it with a description of how we meet those principles. Where applicable, hyperlinks are also provided where you can access more information about key examples of governance in action.

Principle A - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.

A1 - Behaving with Integrity

The Council's 'Lets Do It' strategy sets out the vision for Bury 2030. Let's is an acronym for a framework of core operating principles which is intended to drive a common mindset across all partners in Bury to:

- Operate Locally through a neighbourhood model which means truly understanding and engaging with local communities;
- Drive enterprise;
- Work Together with inclusion at our core; and
- Take a strengths-based approach.

Bury's goal is to achieve faster economic growth than the national average, with lower than national average levels of deprivation. Bury's goals include achieving: -

- A better future for the children of the Borough
- A chance to feel more part of the Borough
- More green spaces and environmentally friendly and □ A better quality of life.

- To achieve these ambitions the Council has this year undertaken a significant programme of co-design with over 1,000 staff, and informed by residents, to define the values and behaviours required of the workforce.
- Local: I'm proud to make a difference to people and communities in the neighbourhoods where they live.
- Enterprise: I strive to develop and improve; to play my part in delivering great solutions with the people of Bury.
- Together: My work is shaped in an inclusive way, with dignity, kindness and respect; developed together by those with lived experience.
- Strengths: I'm proud to build on the strengths of Bury people, my colleagues and myself to deliver.

These behaviours represent how we should do things, how we should treat others, what we should say, and how we should say it. Work is now underway to embed these values and behaviours across the workforce including through enhanced staff engagement and communications, the Council's staff awards and regular 'shout out' messages, a strengthened Employee Review (appraisal) framework, a new mandatory training programme for all managers and immersive staff development experience to be launched in Summer 2023.

Additionally, The Council expects all employees and Members to work within and abide by the Code of Conduct for Officers and The Code of Conduct for Members. This code of conduct has been reviewed and considered by standards and Council, an updated code was agreed by Council in May 2023.

These codes can be found in the Bury Constitution.

<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=350&MIId=3362&Ver=4&Info=1>

- (Councillor Code of Conduct – section 31
- Employee Code of Conduct – section 32)

A2 - Demonstrating Strong Commitment to Ethical Values

- The Standards Committee champion high standards of ethical governance from elected members and the Council as a whole. The Committee meets throughout the year.
- A report is submitted to Annual Council each year regarding the Council Constitution. The report is prepared by the Monitoring Officer and details the work of the Standards Committee and any other governance changes.
- <https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=148&MIId=3260&Ver=4>
- Expectations for managers are embedded within the new mandatory management development programme: Let's Manage Bury Well, which launched in January 2023.

A3 - Respecting the Rule of Law

- The Council's Director of Law and Governance undertakes the role of Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer ensures that Council decisions are taken in a lawful and fair way, correct procedures are followed, and that all applicable laws and regulations are complied with. The Director of Law is also responsible for reporting any actual or potential breaches of the law or maladministration to the Full Council and/or to the Cabinet, and for ensuring that procedures for recording and reporting key decisions are operating effectively.
- The Executive Director of Finance has statutory reporting duties in respect of unlawful and financially imprudent decision making.
- The Council ensures that it complies with CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Chief Finance Officer in Local Government (2016)

Details of the roles of each of these officers are set out in the Council Constitution.
- Section 11 – Article 8

<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=350&MIId=3362&Ver=4&Info=1>

Principle B - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

B1 - Ensuring Openness

- The Council's website has recently been updated and relaunched. The website is set out in a clear and easily accessible way, using infographics and plain language. The information which residents use most, such as about Council Tax, and Waste and Recycling can be accessed quickly and easily from the main page. Design of the site has considered and incorporated understanding of the needs of people with accessibility requirements. <https://www.bury.gov.uk/>. [Developing a more accessible website responds directly to resident feedback through our focus on race inclusion during 2021/22](#)
- All Council and Committee meetings are held in public (other than in limited circumstances where consideration of confidential or exempt information means that the public are excluded), with agenda and reports available on the Council's website. Live-streamed webcasts of Council, Cabinet, Scrutiny, Planning and Licensing committee meetings are available online, as well as in an archive which can be accessed on demand. <https://councilstream.com/burycouncil>
- The Council publishes a forward plan, notices of key decisions to notify the public of the most significant decisions it is due to take, this is available online.

The Council also publishes its:

- Pay Policy Statement to support the Annual Budget
- Constitution
- Council Cabinet and Committee Reports
- Information on payments over £500
- Information on the senior structure and senior roles.

B2 - Engaging Comprehensively with Institutional Stakeholders

The Council has led the development of a ten-year vision for the borough which engages partners across the Borough in delivery – Team Bury. The Strategy defines the vision; outcome measures and delivery plan to achieve a challenging vision for the borough – to achieve: faster economic growth than the national average, with lower than national average levels of deprivation. To direct the Council’s contribution to this strategy a Corporate Plan has been produced and quarterly monitoring reports are produced for the Council’s Cabinet.

The Council leads wider stakeholder and community involvement in the Borough strategy through:-

- The network of Community Hubs in each neighborhood which are designed to co-ordinate engagement across Ward Councillors, local residents and the wider voluntary and community sector.
- The Team Bury Leadership Group, chaired by the Leader of the Council, which engages Chairs / Non-Executives leaders of key Bury Partnerships organisations in long term strategy, ideas and innovations
- The Team Bury network of the Bury system at Chief Executive level, which aims to represent the wider partners in delivery of the strategy and the work of the Council.
- Engagement of health and care system leaders through the Health and Wellbeing Board which has a clear remit around tackling health inequalities, as well as playing a key leadership role in the health network, including the Locality Board, GP networks and the System Strategic Finance Group.

In addition to the above the Council is a constituent District of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) which exercises a number of new powers devolved from the Central Government. The GMCA meetings are also held in the public domain and streamed live. The Leader of Bury Council is a constituent member of the GMCA.

There is regular contact with the other nine constituent districts through the meetings of the GMCA. Lead Members and Officers feedback issues to the constituent districts on pertinent matters. Separately the Statutory Regulatory Officers for Finance and Monitoring Officer of each of the Districts meet regularly to consider matters of common interest and agree a common approach on shared issues including companies where the Authorities are key shareholders.

The Council has enhanced its approach to engagement with staff this year through a programme of quarterly all-staff ‘pulse surveys’ which have provided an opportunity for all employees to provide feedback which has, in turn, supported the development and progression of the Council’s Organisational Development priorities. The organisation’s

internal communications approach has also been reviewed and refreshed with a clear monthly rhythm of communications in place including emails, staff briefings, poster distribution to major staff sites and standard computer desktop backgrounds and email signatures.

B3 - Engaging with Individual Citizens and Service Users Effectively

In order to ensure its message is effectively communicated to its citizens the Council's Communications function proactively prepare appropriate press releases to support activities undertaken by the Council and keep residents informed. The Council's website has been updated throughout the year, The Council use their social media platform to share key messages with residents.

- <https://twitter.com/BuryCouncil/status/1402245388317433863>
- <https://www.facebook.com/BuryCouncil/>
- <https://www.instagram.com/burycouncil/?hl=en>

Principle C - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits

C1 - Defining Outcomes

The Let's do it! Strategy and associated Corporate Plan sets out the immediate and long-term vision for Bury and the work of the Council and its partners. This planning framework seeks to drive and continually measure progress against seven overarching outcomes for the Borough, which are

1. Improved quality of life.
2. Improved early years development.
3. Improved educational attainment.
4. Increased adult skill levels and employability.
5. Inclusive economic growth.
6. Carbon neutrality by 2038.
7. Improved digital connectivity.

The 2022/23 budget supported this strategy.

We will continue to help to deliver these priorities through new ways of working.

C2 - Sustainable Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits

- Bury Council declared a Climate emergency in 2019 and set a target to be carbon neutral by 2038. The Council have developed a Climate Action Strategy and Action Plan which was approved in 2021. Quarterly progress updates are reported to the Climate Action Board. <https://www.bury.gov.uk/pests-pollution-and-food-hygiene/pollution/lets-go-green-carbon-neutral-bury/burys-climate-action-strategy-and-actionplan>

- The Council is currently preparing a new Local Plan that will guide future development in the Borough. Together with the Places for Everyone (PfE) joint development plan, the Local Plan will form a key part of Bury's overall development plan, and once adopted, these documents will be used as the basis for determining future proposals for the next 20 years. The PfE will deal with strategic planning matters that are of significance across the Joint Plan area (such as identifying future levels of housing and employment growth), Bury's Local Plan will contain a range of locally-specific planning policies and identify local sites where development should be built as well as areas where development should be restricted or controlled.

Work on the PfE is currently on-going and it is expected that a revised draft of this document will be subject to consultation shortly.

- A procurement strategy has been established which sets out our approach to procurement activity. Procurement will support economic development, supply chain resilience, and help deliver real outcomes to the people of Bury through social value. Bury Council will embrace Social Value to ensure that all of the businesses we contract with are supporting our local communities and adding value beyond their contractual requirement. Bury Council will also ensure that we champion Social Value in all that we do. Bury Council is committed to Social Value and support the Greater Manchester Social Value Framework and Driving Social Value in GM Public Procurement paper.

Principle D - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

D1 - Determining Interventions

- The Constitution defines and documents the roles and responsibilities of Officers and Members and delegation arrangements, protocols for decision making and codes of conduct for Members and staff. Delegation of decision making to officers is detailed in the constitution, so that they can deal with the day to day running of the service. Details of what decisions are taken in this way is set out in the Council's constitution. The underpinning Scheme of Delegation is subject to appropriate updates. Further specific delegations may be granted, through recommendations in public reports to Committees.
- All decisions are formally recorded. In addition, decisions taken under delegated powers are also recorded electronically and are reported via the Council's Electronic Decision Recording System. The Council has a number of meetings which are streamed live, this includes Council, Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny and Regulatory meetings (Planning and Licensing).

D2 - Planning Interventions

- The Council plans its activity at a strategic level through its budget and business planning cycle and does so in consultation with internal and external stakeholders

to ensure services delivered across different parts of the organisation and partners complement each other and avoid duplication.

<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=148&MID=2936>

- All Directors prepare a service plan which demonstrates how they will deliver their responsibilities within the Corporate Plan, as well as business as usual activity. Plans were included in the Corporate Plan which was presented to Full Council with the budget for the year. The plans were agreed by Council in February 2022. This, in turn, informs Departmental plans and, ultimately individual objectives through the Employee Review process.

D3 - Optimising Achievement of Intended Outcomes

- The Council integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints, supporting it to take into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term, including both revenue and capital spend budgets. This includes a medium-term financial plan.
<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s28734/Medium%20Term%20Financial%20Strategy%20Refresh%20202223%20-%20202526.pdf>
- The Council has a clear set of Equality Objectives and an Inclusion Strategy which it is continuing to drive. 2022/23 has seen a specific focus on disability inclusion as well as a continued emphasis on race quality, both within the workforce and our communities.

Principle E - Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

E1 - Developing the Organisation's Capacity

- As the Council continues to face financial pressures, a series of Departmental reviews and restructures have taken / are taking place. Additionally, transformation projects are taking place to review and streamline processes in place to drive improvement in the services provided, by using new technologies, ways of working and new delivery models. Training is provided to develop and support staff whose roles may change as restructures take place.
- The Council has active engagement with the Trade Unions and there are regularly convened Corporate and departmental Joint Consultative Committees to discuss restructures and specific service matters. The Trade Unions also play an active role in consultations with staff and feedback comments to the Council.
- Staff capacity development is supported through development planning, which is at the core of the Employee Review process. A range of development opportunities are available to all staff, including accredited qualifications supported through the Council's Apprenticeship Strategy which was refreshed this year.

- A Members Development Group is in place which oversees Member training and development activity. This includes clear expectations in relation to core training as well as specific development for portfolio holders and Committee Chairs.

E2 - Developing the Capability of the Organisation's Leadership and Other Individuals

- The Council is committed to a program of leadership development as part of an organisation development strategy and early financial provision was made within the transformation strategy. Work has been undertaken to support the establishment and effective delivery of the Executive Team.
The Council's approach to leadership engagement has also been strengthened through the further embedding of the Strategic Leadership Group (the Executive Team and their direct reports) and the Senior Managers' Forum (the next tier of management). These two groups are now meeting regularly and working to a structured plan, including a clear programme of management cascade. A program of leadership masterclasses has been developed and a core program of management basic training for circa 300 people managers is now being delivered, and this will continue throughout 2023/24. This programme has received overwhelmingly positive feedback.
- The Council has many policies and procedures relating to HR and these are available on the Council's intranet site and are easily accessible. In 2022/23 a staff handbook was developed, to ensure consistent and highquality people management across the Council. Underpinning this a comprehensive programme of review is underway across all workforce policies, with 10 policies formally reviewed and agreed this year.
Additionally, the policies relating to Adult Care Services were reviewed.
- Services are required to have regular team meetings, and one to ones with line managers and these are in addition to the annual performance setting discussions that inform key priorities and outcomes for the year (the Employee Review).
There is a fortnightly Executive team briefing, regular weekly staff e-mail communications providing staff broadcasts and wellbeing support. Locally, engagement activity is delivered within Departments and Services aligned to their specific ways of working
- Immediately following local elections, new Council Members receive an induction into the work of the Council and their role as local members. The format and content are reviewed annually with members. The induction training is also open for existing members to attend. All Members are provided with training before sitting on any regulatory committee. In addition the Council provides a mock Council training session for new members and existing Members to attend, the Leader of the Groups support this training.
- The Council is committed to promoting the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the workforce through both specific interventions and opportunities and as a central part of the role of all managers. There is a dedicated intranet page

with a wide range of support and guidance for staff and their managers as part of the Council's 'Live Better, Feel Better programme' covering a wide range of health and wellbeing topics across including mental, physical and financial wellbeing underpinned by a 24/7 Employee Assistance Program (phone line and online support) providing a range of support. During the past year the Council has developed a bespoke financial wellbeing offer in the context of the cost of living crisis and undertaken a review of its Occupational Health provision, with a transition to a new model in-place as part of a Greater Manchester contract for this service. A range of service-specific wellbeing interventions have been delivered and wellbeing forms a core component of a new management development programme which all managers will complete over the coming three years. Wellbeing will be a key component of a new People Strategy for the Council which will be developed during 2023/24.

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

F1 – Managing Risk

- The Council operates a risk management framework that aids decision making in pursuit of the organisation's strategic objectives, protects the Council's reputation and other assets and is compliant with statutory and regulatory obligations. The Corporate Risk Register is part of this framework and is an articulation of the key risks impacting the Council. It is used to inform decision making, provide assurance over actions being taken to manage key risks and to inform directorate level risk management planning and mitigation activities. Named risk managers are identified in the Register for its key strategic risks.
https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s35231/Corporate%20Risk%20Register%20Report_Q4%20Final.pdf
- The corporate risk register is presented to, and discussed by, the Executive Team throughout the year.
- In addition to this, internal audit report findings on audits are presented to the Audit Committee throughout the year. Other senior officers throughout the organisation report to both the Council's Cabinet and the Locality Board as well as various Overview and Scrutiny Boards.
- Reports to Committees also include a section that sets out the risks to any proposals and recommendations. Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken, where required and documented as part of all formal Committee Reports to ensure the Council is acting in accordance with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- All reports presented to Cabinet are signed off by both the Monitoring Officer and the S151 officer (or nominated individual) to ensure appropriate financial and legal oversight is provided on all recommendations. Legal and financial implications are set out in all reports to ensure that the implications of recommendations are fully understood prior to a decision being made.

F2 – Managing Performance

- The Council puts in place Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor service delivery whether services are internal or through external providers. An Integrated Monitoring and Corporate Plan report is provided to the Executive team on a monthly basis. This brings together analysis of performance against the Corporate Plan to highlight any challenges so that they can be addressed. The Cabinet receives quarterly reports on our performance against the Corporate plan.

F3 – Effective Overview and Scrutiny

- The Council has three scrutiny Committees which hold decision makers to account and play a key role in ensuring that public services are delivered in a way residents want, the agenda, reports and minutes are publicly available on the Council website. All scrutiny committees have a forward plan outlining the matters the Committee will scrutinise. Scrutiny Chairs meet regularly as a group to review their plans.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a finance and performance sub group that carries out deep dives in to performance and finance matters..

F4 – Robust Internal Control

- The Council has robust internal control processes in place, which support the achievement of its objectives while managing risks. The Council's approach is set out in detail in both the latest Annual Corporate Risk Management report, and its Internal Audit Plan.
<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s32398/Internal%20Audit%20Plan%202022.23.pdf>
- The Council has an Audit Committee, in line with CIPFA's 'Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police (2018)', which provides an independent and high-level resource to support good governance and strong public financial management.
- The Council maintains clear policies and arrangements in respect of counter fraud and anti-corruption. These are the Anti- Fraud and AntiCorruption Policy; Whistleblowing Policy; Anti Money Laundering Policy and the Anti Bribery Policy. <https://www.bury.gov.uk/asset-library/antifraud-and-corruption-policy-including-whistleblowing-anti-moneylaundersing-anti-bribery-etc.pdf>. These policies were last refreshed in 2019

F5 – Managing Data

- The processing of personal data is essential to many of the services and functions carried out by local authorities. The Council complies with data protection legislation, which includes GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018). This will ensure that such processing is carried out fairly, lawfully, and transparently.
<https://www.bury.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/dataprotection/data-protection-legislation>
- The Council reviews and supplement its policies, and also keep its processing activities under review, to ensure they remain consistent with the law, and any compliance advice and codes of practice issued from time to time by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- The Council ensures that officers handling personal data are trained to an appropriate level in the use and control of personal data. It is made clear that all staff and Members are personally accountable for using the Council's information responsibly and appropriately. All staff must undertake protecting information e-learning training on an annual basis, and this forms part of the induction process for new staff. Data protection also forms part of the induction program for new Members and is included in the Council's new starters induction pack.
- Information Governance is overseen by the Director of Law and Governance who is the Senior Information Risk Officer for the Council (SIRO). This was previously the Deputy Chief Executive. The Council's performance on managing data is reported to the Audit Committee on a bi-annual basis.
- The Council makes information available to the public via the information access regimes provided for by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Data protection legislation, including the Data Protection Act 2018, provides individuals with various rights. The Council ensures that all valid requests from individuals to exercise those rights are dealt with as quickly as possible, and by no later than the timescales allowed in the legislation.
- Information regarding Freedom of Information requests and Environmental Information Regulations can be found online by accessing the following link:-
<https://www.bury.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/requesting-information>

F6 – Strong Public Financial Management

- The Council's approach to Financial Management ensures that public money is safeguarded at all times, ensuring value for money. Its approach supports both long-term achievement of objectives, and shorter term financial and operational performance.

- The Executive Director of Finance (S151 Officer) ensures that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, proper financial records and accounts are kept, and oversees an effective system of internal financial control. The Executive Director of Finance ensures well developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control including management of financial risks, systems and processes. The Constitution (Part 4 Section 6) details the financial regulations which underpin the financial arrangements.
- The Financial Management Code (FM Code) sets out the standards of financial management expected for local authorities and is designed to support good practice and to assist local authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability. The FM Code was launched in 2019, with the first full year of compliance being 2021/22. Information about the financial resilience assessment which the Council has carried out is set out in Section 5 of this AGS document – ‘Annual review of effectiveness of the governance framework’.
<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s28734/Medium%20Term%20Financial%20Strategy%20Refresh%20202223%20-%2020202526.pdf>
- Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 requires that when a local authority is making its budget calculations, the Chief Finance Officer (‘CFO’) of the authority must report to the Council on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s28734/Medium%20Term%20Financial%20Strategy%20Refresh%20202223%20-%2020202526.pdf>
- The Council delivers a range of partnerships which involves working with others, these include: -
- Joint venture arrangement for the development of the Millgate Estate; A board is in place which is attended by Bury Council Chief Executive, The Council Leader and the Director of Place. Strategic financial advice and legal support is provided by the S151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.
- Joint venture arrangement in place for the development of Prestwich Town Centre. A board is in place which is attended by Bury Council Chief Executive, The Council Leader and the Director of Place. Strategic financial advice and legal support is provided by the S151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.
- The Council also has relationships with:-
- Bury MBC Townside Fields, a wholly owned subsidiary set up to develop Townside Fields, including Q park, 3KP, Townside Fields, Premier Inn.
- Townside Fields Management Company, a company in which Bury MBC owns a third of the shareholding.

- Six Town Housing – An Arm’s Length Management Organisation (ALMO) to provide housing provision across the Borough.
- Persona – a Local Authority Trading Company established to provide a range of adult social care services.
- It is a requirement of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting that ‘Where an authority is in a group relationship with other entities and undertakes significant activities through the group, the review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control should include its group activities’.
- Arrangements are in place for the Council and the group companies to work together in setting priorities and overseeing and reporting on performance. The internal audit service also carry out audits of these organisations as part of the requirement to fulfil statutory S151 duties.
- There is an opportunity to raise any concerns during the year through Partnership meetings between the Chief Executives of the Council and the ALMO (Six town Housing). This has been taken into account and incorporated in the Statement of Accounts and the ‘issues for consideration’ in the Annual Governance Statement.
- CIPFA’s Prudential Code of Practice and Treasury Management Code of Practice sets out the risk framework through which the Council manages its balance sheet and makes capital investment decisions. Alongside the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) guidance on minimum revenue provision, and the guidance on borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) which seeks to limit borrowing solely for yield, the Council has a strong regulatory framework that it adheres to. The Capital Strategy and capital approval process detail the approach to decision making on capital investments, and the Treasury Management Strategy details the approach for debt management and cash investing, both of which contribute to strong, ongoing financial management of the Council’s balance sheet.
<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s30204/Treasury%20Management%20Strategy%20and%20Prudential%20Indicators%20202223.pdf>

Principle G - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

G1 – Implementing Good Practice in Transparency

- The Council follows the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, which includes requirements and recommendations for local authorities to publish certain types of data. [Local Government Transparency Code](#)
- The Council’s website is set out in a clear and easily accessible way, using infographics and plain language. Information on expenditure, performance and

decision making is sited together in one place and can be accessed quickly and easily from the homepage.

<https://www.bury.gov.uk/>

G2 – Implementing Good Practices in Reporting

- The Council produces a detailed, annual Corporate Plan Performance Delivery Report, which charts the Borough's progress towards its vision and priorities.. The Executive have oversight of performance, finance and workforce matters, regular finance reports are brought to this meeting.

<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s35746/Bury%20Corporate%20Plan%20Performance%20and%20Delivery%20Report%20Quarter%20Four%20End%20of%20Year%202022-23.pdf>

G3 Assurance and Accountability

- The Council welcomes peer challenge, internal and external review and audit, and inspections from regulatory bodies and gives thorough consideration to arising recommendations.
- An ICO inspection took place in July 2021, with a desk- top revisit to Bury Council, taking place 11-14 April 2022. Overall, they were positive about the progress made, with 57 recommendations completed and 22 in progress and have not stated any further plans to return to Bury.
- A LGA peer review of Highways was undertaken in June 2022
- To support the work on Children and young people there was a finance peer review and finance benchmarking analysis of 2020/21 published data against peer authorities
- Three Ofsted Monitoring visits have been made during 2022/23, focusing on front door arrangements, children in need of help and protection and early permanence for children. Published reports show steady progress has been made since the inadequate judgement which was received form the inspection in 2021.
- Two reviews have been undertaken by the Department for Education focusing on leadership and partnerships. Positive progress has been noted with emerging strengths including a restructured leadership team and commitment to invest, such as the implementation of the Family Safeguarding Model.
- We continue to work with other local authorities as part of the DfE funded Sector Led Improvement Programme (SLIP). In the last 12 months, this has included an LGA review of our children in care and care leaver services; a diagnostic by Hertfordshire ahead of the Family Safeguarding implementation (which is being supported by Hertfordshire under the same SLIP arrangements); a review of Public

Law Outline by Salford (as part of the North-West regional programme) and a review of our edge of care support by Essex Council. Feedback is always shared with the senior leadership to ensure that our improvement and transformation plans are shaped by the learning that has been identified.

- We continue to work with Department for Education, implementing Project Safety Valve. Significant progress has been made with improving the EHCP process and working with parents and Bury2gether to continue to deliver an improved SEND service.
- An internal scrutiny review was undertaken of the Bury Safeguarding Children Partnership. The review concluded by acknowledging the positives which could be built on and will feed the transformation process during 2023/24.
- An external review was undertaken by CIPFA which provided a top-level financial review of the Council's financial position. A number of recommendations were included within the report which will be considered and addressed in the 2023/24 financial year, a number of these recommendations in respect of reserves have already been commenced.
- Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) set out the standards for internal audit and have been adopted by the Council. This process includes the development of an Emergent Audit Plan designed to invite comment from management and the Audit Committee.
- The Council monitors the implementation of internal and external audit recommendations. Assurance reports are presented to Audit Committee and Mazars (the Council's external auditors), summarising the Council's performance in implementing recommendations effectively and within agreed timescales. Information regarding Audit Committee meetings can be found at: <https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CIId=133&Year=0>
- The Legal Services team hold the Lexcel Quality Mark. The team are subject to an annual audit undertaken by the Law Society
- Following three RIDDOR reportable incidents in 2022/23 within the Operations Department the Council commissioned an external review of health and safety arrangements, with a particular focus on the Operations Department which is the area of greatest risk in the Council. This review was commissioned in the context of an ongoing improvement journey in relation to Health and Safety in the Authority which began in 2021/22 in the context of an internal audit which provided 'limited assurance'. This improvement activity is progressing well and an update was provided to the Audit Committee in March. The external review is specifically focused on:
 1. A review of the Council's corporate health and safety policy, training approach and materials, audit schedule and action plans, annual report and advisory capacity in the context of the above and provide any recommendations for development or improvement.

2. A deep-dive analysis of the application of health and safety arrangements and safety culture in the Operations Department, with reference to training plans and records, risk assessments, H&S procedures, H&S spot checks, equipment maintenance logs and recent incidents. – It is essential that this aspect of the review focuses on the reality of working arrangements and culture within the Department and is informed by appropriate interviews with managers and operational staff as well as observations of work where appropriate. (It may be appropriate to focus this part of the review on some specific areas of the Department informed by the risk profile of activity and the recent incidents).

The review is ongoing and will report by the end of Q1 2023/24. The findings will be shared with the Council's Health and Safety Joint Consultative Committee.

- The Council is in regular liaison with key Government bodies and is also fully engaged with the Local Government Association (LGA), Greater Manchester Combined Authority and specialist region wide initiatives such as the Greater Manchester Growth Hub, along with peer groups such as S151 officers and monitoring officers.
- A Regeneration Board, including the formation of the Housing Growth Subgroup, has been established to oversee and provide clear focus on process and governance of regeneration projects within the Borough, and coordinating the Affordable Housing Programme, the Brownfield Land Programme and the Accelerated Land Delivery Programme, to maximise land use, inward investment and delivery of housing and regeneration ambitions.
- An external review was commissioned to undertake a strategic review of the management and maintenance of council housing in the Borough.
- The Council monitors the implementation of internal and external audit recommendations. Assurance reports are presented to Audit Committee and Mazars (the Council's external auditors), summarising the Council's performance in implementing recommendations effectively and within agreed timescales. Information regarding Audit Committee meetings can be found at:
<https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CIId=133&Year=0>
- Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) set out the standards for internal audit and have been adopted by the Council. This process includes the development of an Emergent Audit Plan designed to invite comment from management and the Audit Committee.

5. Annual review of effectiveness of the governance framework

- 5.1 The Council has a legal responsibility to conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the systems of internal control. After conducting this review, the Council has assurance that its governance arrangements and systems of control are robust.

5.2 The effectiveness of governance arrangements is monitored and evaluated throughout the year, with activity undertaken including:

- Executive Team - Responsibility for governance and internal control lies with the Chief Executive and the Executive Team, which meets on a weekly basis to steer the organisation's activity.
- Scrutiny and challenge by Council and its Committees - The Council has four bodies responsible for monitoring and reviewing the Council's governance:
 - 1) The Cabinet - Proposes the budget and policy framework to Council and makes decisions on resources and priorities relating to the budget and policy framework
 - 2) Audit Committee - Approves the Council's Annual Accounts, oversees External Audit activity and oversees the effectiveness of the Council's Governance, risk management and internal control arrangements
 - 3) Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Considers the implications of financial decisions and changes to corporate, partnership and city region governance arrangements
 - 4) Health Scrutiny committee To review the policies and performance of the Council and external organisations in relation to the following areas:
 - Adult social care (including adult safeguarding Health and wellbeing board
 - Housing
 - Public health
 - Adults and Communities budget and policy framework
 - Statutory health scrutiny powers including the review and scrutiny of any matter relating to the planning provision and operation of health services for children and young people, including transitional health care services, affecting the area and to make reports and recommendations on these matters
- 5) Childrens scrutiny committee - To review the policies and performance of the Council and external organisations in relation to the following areas:
 - Education and Schools
 - Children and Young People Support and Safeguarding Services
 - Children and Young People Specialist Services
 - To scrutinise individual Cabinet decisions relating to the above areas.
 - To monitor the Council's performance in the above areas.
 - To scrutinise statutory inspection reports and oversee the implementation of any recommendations arising from such reports:
 - Transitional arrangements between children and adult services
 - Statutory education scrutiny powers

- 6) Standards Committee - Promotes high standards of ethical conduct, advising on the revision of the Codes of Corporate Governance and Conduct for Members.
- Consideration of evidence sources to identify the Council's key governance challenges looking ahead to 2023/24 (see Action Plan at Section 7) - These sources include:
 - Executive Directors online annual governance questionnaires, which provide a self-assessment of compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance.
 - Regular meetings of statutory officers take place, which include Chief Executive, S151 officer and the Monitoring Officer
 - Consideration of risks identified in the Corporate Risk Register
 - Emergent challenges identified by the work of Internal Audit
 - Head of Audit and Risk Management Annual Opinion 2022/23 - In terms of the year to March 2023, the Head of Audit and Risk Management can provide 'moderate' assurance that the Council's governance, risk and control framework was generally sound and operated reasonably consistently in the year. The full opinion detail is set out in the Annual Audit Opinion 2022/23 report to Audit Committee.
 - External Auditor's Review of the Effectiveness of Governance Arrangements - The Council's external auditor is Mazars. They submit progress reports and their Annual Audit Letter to Audit Committee.
 - CIPFA Financial Management Code 2019 (FM Code) - The authority has carried out an assessment to note the level of compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management code. The code is not a set of rules to be followed but a set of principles in a format that matches the financial management cycle and supports governance in local authorities. A series of financial management standards set out the professional standards needed if a local authority is to meet the minimum standards of financial management acceptable to meet fiduciary duties to taxpayers, customers and lenders. The Financial Management Code (FM Code) is designed to support good practice in financial management and to assist local authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability. A number of areas were identified where improvements were required, and these are currently being addressed. The actions to address recommendations will be continued throughout 2023/24. .
 - A Separate review was commissioned during the year to provide a top level review of the Council's financial position.
 - The Chief Finance Officer has examined the major assumptions used within the budget calculations and associated risks. The Medium-Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy have been updated to reflect the 2023/24 budget position. The 2023/24 budget was approved by Council on 22 February 2023.
 - Annual Report to Annual Council - this report is submitted regarding the Council Constitution. The report also covers the work of the Standards Committee and any other Governance changes.
 - Commercial Governance – The Council has a Regeneration Board that has oversight and assurance for governance relating to its regeneration and

commercial projects (Levelling up projects) and housing development projects

6. Strategic oversight of actions to address the Council's governance challenges in 2022/23

This section provides a concise high-level summary of strategic actions taken to address the Council's governance challenges for the 2022/23 financial year, and the arrangements for oversight of delivery.

There were no challenges set out in the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement.

The Corporate Plan for 2022/23 did set out a number of objectives which were to be achieved throughout 2022/23. Progress against these objectives is reported quarterly, with an annual summary provided in the Corporate Plan Performance Delivery Report. Where applicable, reports and information are also presented to the appropriate Committee.

7. Action Plan: Governance Challenges for 2023/24 Onwards

The review of governance arrangements has identified fourteen main areas where the Council will need to focus its efforts during 2023/24, to address changing circumstances and challenges identified. These are set out in the section below. Completion or substantial progress against these objectives is due by the end of the financial year, in March 2024.

- Establishment of a Corporate Governance Board which will be responsible for the budget setting process, production of the AGS and information governance matters
- Review of governance structures
- Review and update Financial Regulations
- Review Performance Indicators utilised throughout the Council, and ensure they are still relevant.
- Embed the revised policies of Adult Care Services
- Consider findings of LGA Peer review of Highways and implement any required actions
- Consider findings of Children and Young People Finance Peer review and implement any required actions
- Consider findings of CIPFA review of Financial Resilience and implement any required actions.
- Implement Internal audit recommendations, particularly those reports which provided limited / moderate assurance.
- Consider the findings of the Strategic Housing Review and the future management and maintenance of council housing in the Borough and implement any required actions.

- Develop transformation plan to respond to legislative and regulatory changes effecting Social Housing and deliver step change improvements to customer services and satisfaction.
- Prepare for the inspection of social housing by the regulator and the introduction of the Social Housing Regulation Bill.
- Review and refresh anti-fraud and corruption policy.
- Develop the risk management strategy and operational risk registers.

8. Conclusion

The governance arrangements as described above have been applied throughout the year, and up to the date of the approval of the Annual Accounts, providing an effective framework for identifying governance issues and taking mitigating action. Over the coming year the Council will continue the operation of its governance framework and take steps to carry out the actions for the improvement identified in the review of effectiveness to further strengthen its governance arrangements.

In light of comments from the External Auditor, including recommendations made within the value for money report and audit opinion, we are developing an action plan to address issues raised in relation to financial sustainability, management of risks in the Council's estate, improving internal controls, improving the quality of financial statements and related working papers and the actions required to improve services to children.

Signed on behalf of Bury Council:

Leader of the Council

Chief Executive

12 December 2024

12 December 2024