|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Principles in bold, *Sub-principles in bold & italics*. | SCORE | Action |
| Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law |  |  |
| Local government organisations are accountable not only for how much they spend, but also for how they use the resources under their stewardship. This includes accountability for outputs, both positive and negative, and for the outcomes they have achieved. In addition, they have an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies. It is essential that, as a whole, they can demonstrate the appropriateness of all their actions and have mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and to respect the rule of law. |  |  |
| *A 1) Behaving with integrity* |  |  |
| *i) Ensuring Members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Codes of conduct.* * *Individual sign off with regard to compliance with codes etc.* * *Induction for new Members and staff on standard of behaviour expected.* * *Performance appraisals.* | Substantial |  |
| *A1i) What NHDC has or does:*   * Operates Codes of Conduct for Members and Employees, maintaining arrangements for sign off of those, awareness of key policies and reporting / investigating any allegations of breaching those Codes. * Complaints concerning employees are dealt with according to the Managing Misconduct Policy, and/ or Employment Procedure rules for officer (for relevant officers will also potentially involve the Independent Person/ Reserve Independent Person (IPs), Employment Committee and Full Council). |  |  |
| *Outcomes/ examples:* |  |  |
| * *Codes of conduct*   In respect of the Member Code this is in [Section 17](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Constitution%20Final%20post%2016.1.20.pdf) of the Constitution. This was reviewed October and November 2017 and the amended version approved for implementation on 4 May 2018.  A new NHDC Code of Conduct Guide was approved by the Standards Committee in October 2016, it was amended to reflect the new Code of Conduct in April 2018 and is available on the internet:  <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Section%2017%20Councillor%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20from%204.5.18_0.pdf>  Code of Conduct training was provided to District Members in February 2017, May 2017 and 22 May 2018. The training was refined following the first session with the Standards Committee Members and IPs indicating positive input and leadership. The Induction programme held in May 2019 also included refreshers in regard to the Member Code of Conduct.  **Code of conduct training usually takes place following an election however the election in 2020 was postponed due to COVID-19 as was the associated training. The next round of training is due to take place following the election in 2021. This was noted in the Standards Committee meeting in October 2020**.  Minor amendment Standards Committee Co-optee and appointment of Parish/Town Representatives to Standards committee  The increase in co-optee numbers will widen the engagement and further promote the ethical standards message in the District. This also ensures that there is Parish/Town or Community Council in-put into the Standards Committee and Sub-Committees (as may be required).  <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s7140/MINOR%20AMENDMENT%20STANDARDS%20COMMITTEE%20CO-OPTEE%20NUMBERS%20AND%20APPOINTMENT%20OF%20PARISH%20TOWN%20REPRESENTATIVES.pdf>  The Council also has a Planning Code of Good Practice. This is set out in [Appendix 3 to section 8 [Planning Code of Good Practice](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Section%208_0.pdf)] of the Constitution. This was reviewed and updated in 2015 and a new Code adopted. This was considered by Standards Committee in March and October 2016 and a minor amendment recommended. The full constitution was recently approved by Full council on 17th January 2019.  The Planning Code Of Good Practice was reviewed in 2020. This review was presented at January 2020 Council.  The amendment made was to ensure good governance within the Council and that the Council’s Planning Code of Good Practice remains fit for purpose and is consistent with best practice.  http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s9424/Review%20of%20Planning%20Code%20of%20Good%20Practice.pdf  During 2018/19 the committee considered the response to the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) consultation on ethical standards and the corresponding report; The recommendations included a review of the Council’s complaints handling and review of the process when consulting the IP regarding allegations received by the council.  Review of Planning Code of Good Practice Report: <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s9424/Review%20of%20Planning%20Code%20of%20Good%20Practice.pdf>  Section 8 of Constitution, Regulatory Committees (See Appendix 3): <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/S8_2.pdf>  As stated in the Standards Committee Report in October 2020, the NHDC Code of Conduct was last updated and adopted on 4 May 2018. Members therefore took the view in February 2019 (and subsequently in October 2019) that the Council would await the outcome of the Government’s response to the recommendations (one of which was a new model code). There has (as indicated above) been a consultation on a new model code and therefore advisable that the Standards Committee/ Council awaits the outcome of the consultation on the draft to consider whether that LGA version should be adopted. <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14170/Standards%20Matters.pdf> |  |  |
| * *Individual sign off with regard to compliance with codes*   When new Members are elected they sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office and in doing so agree to abide by the Authority’s Code of Conduct. They receive a copy of the Code and various other documents as part of an Induction pack (including the Council’s Constitution, officer and Committee structures and other Member information) from Committee and Member Services.  The Members should return their Register of interest form within 28 days of election. The Council maintains records of the interests of Members (and Parish Councillors). The Member’s interests are retained by the Monitoring Officer and are published on the individual Councillors pages as part of the Localism Act 2011 requirements. The Code of Conduct was recently amended to include a new obligation to attend compulsory training and the inclusion of gifts and hospitality and membership, general control or management of an outside body to the councillors’ register of interests forms. Training took place on the 22 May 2018 and 2019 for members. [[Councillors' Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interests](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/councillors-mps-and-meps/councillors-code-conduct-and-declaration)]  As mentioned above, a new code of conduct is due to be presented in the civic year 2021/22 and training will also be provided in the next civic year. | Substantial |  |
| * *Induction for new Members on standard of behaviour expected.*   Members receive specific training from Planning / Licensing, Legal and the Monitoring regarding roles and responsibilities as a Member. Members are required to agreed to abide by the Information Security Policy prior to gaining access to the Council’s IT facilities and should undertake certain e-learning training: such as Data Protection and Anti-Bribery.  All Members are offered training as and when this arises. Fraud awareness training was provided to NHDC Members prior to full Council in January 2017 by the Shared Anti-Fraud (SAFs) Manager. New Members of the Finance, Audit & Risk (FAR) Committee are provided with an Induction programme and identify their own skills and knowledge needs. Training is then tailored to this.  The Council has a Media relations protocol [[Media Relations Protocol](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Media%20relations%20protocol.pdf)] to provide direction and guidance to employees and Councillors on issues relating to the media as well as to provide the media with an indication of the service they should expect to receive from the Council.  Training was arranged for Members as part of an [Induction programme](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/NHDC%20Cllr%20Dev%20Protocol.docx) (two sessions in May 2019), covering an overview of the Constitution (Procedure & Rules), the Councillor Code of Conduct, the Members Planning Code of Good Practice and the Protocol for Member/ Officer Working arrangements. In addition to new members, a number of existing members attended this training. The Learning and Development Protocol is supported by two member champions. This was reasonably well attended by some existing as well as the newly elected Councillors. The planned session for May 2020 did not take place due to the suspension of elections.  See response to Anti-Bribery Module and need for increased uptake by Members and staff. |  |  |
| * *Member complaints handling*   Processes and examples are detailed under A1i) above.  During the 2020/2021 year, there were six formal complaints made to the Monitoring Officer, all of which were relating to district councillors with one of the complaints being against three district councillors. These complaints were reported to the Standards Committee in a report delivered by the Service Director for Legal and Community on the 20th October 2020. The report can be found here: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14170/Standards%20Matters.pdf>  Council are due to be informed of these complaints at Annual Council in the Annual Report of the Standards Committee.  Group Leaders and the Standards Committee Chair are kept informed of Monitoring Officer and standards matters on a monthly basis. The Monitoring Officer also holds quarterly meetings with the Independent Person, Reserve Independent Person (‘IPs’) and the Chair of Committee. They also attend annual training events for Independent Person to share good practice.  The Independent Person (IP)s appointed by Full Council under the Localism Act 2011, have a key role in promoting high standards of conduct by elected and co-opted Members. They assist by acting as advocate and ambassadors in promoting ethical behaviour, attend relevant training where Member conduct is discussed and are involved in dealing with complaints against Councillors. They are involved in reviewing Policy and procedure prior to any revisions being presented to Standards Committee, and had noticeable input into the new Code of Conduct Guidance and revisions to the Complaints Handling Procedure that were approved by Standards Committee on 12 October 2016: <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Standards%20Committee/201610121930/Agenda/$att11575.docx.pdf>  <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Standards%20Committee/201610121930/Agenda/$att11576.docx.pdf>  They also attend Member training sessions to present their independent view on issues, doing so at the first Member session presented at Standards Committee on 21 February 2017:  https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/CeListDocuments.aspx?CommitteeId=154&MeetingId=1438&DF=21%2f02%2f2017&Ver=2  Quarterly meetings are held with the Monitoring officer and Deputy Monitoring officer to discuss general Code issues/practice and any on-going matters.  Councillor Complaints Handling Procedure was reviewed and updated in 2019. Following the Committee meeting on the 19th February 2019, the Complaints Handling Procedure was reviewed by the Monitoring Officer, the then Chair and IPs in the light of the CSPL report in April and published in May 2019 following the end of the pre-election period.  The Procedure for handling Councillor Complaints was reviewed and amended in 2019 and is available on the internet:  <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s5201/APPENDIX%20A%20-%20ANNUAL%20STANDARDS%20REPORT.pdf> |  |  |
| Employees: |  |  |
| * SIAS reviewed the Ethics Policies of the Council as part of the 2016/17 Internal Audit plan (finalising the report in November 2016). This provided a Substantial assurance. The Staff Induction Programme was reviewed with a medium priority recommendation that employees read and confirm they understand the Code of Conduct and other key governance related policies before the end of their probationary period and undertake certain e-learning training module by that time (Data Protection Act, Bribery Act). The target date was ongoing.   Human Resources are in the process of conducting a project to review all corporate policies owned by the team. |  |  |
| * Codes of conduct   NHDC has an Employee Code and it was last reviewed in April 2017: Employee Code of Conduct  The Code covers governance related issues, such as Conflicts of Interests, Whistleblowing, Gifts & Hospitality, Political Restriction, Member and officer relations, fraud and corruption, bribery, constitution, outside interests, confidentiality and information security (although the Council also has separate and more detailed Policies and procedures linked to those).  The Council has an Employee Conflicts of Interest Policy which was last reviewed in reviewed February 2021 (administrative changes made only) and the process for declarations available to all on the intranet, together with a Managing Organisational Conflicts in Council Roles and Duties Guidance approved in September 2015 and reviewed in March 2021.  Employee Personal Conflicts of Interest Policy: <https://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Employee%20Conflicts%20of%20Interest%20Policy%202%202021%20final%20%28004%29.pdf>  Managing Organisational Conflicts in Council Roles & Duties: <https://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Managing%20Organisational%20conflicts%20in%20Council%20roles%20and%20duties%203.21%20final.pdf>  The Whistleblowing Policy and Fraud Prevention Policy were also reviewed and processes updated in 2019 – promoted and discussed through the Staff Forum and approved by Cabinet. This whistle blowing policy was most recently reviewed in January 2021. They are available to employees through the intranet, together with advice for Managers on handling whistleblowing situations: Whistleblowing Policy; Handling Whistleblowing - Advice for Managers  Whistle Blowing Policy: <https://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Whistleblowing%20Policy%201.21%20final.pdf>  There is a now an overarching fraud protection policy that covers Fraud, corruption, money laundering and bribery: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/fraud-prevention-policy> . |  |  |
| * Individual sign off with regard to compliance with codes   Following a review of the Anti-Bribery Policy in 2016, the Council introduced an Annual Declaration letter in May 2016, on the recommendation of SAFS. This was linked to the Regular Performance Review (RPR) and requires employees to confirm in writing that they understand the requirements of the key governance related policies – and to request training or further clarification if they do not. During the first year there was a 75% return rate. To improve this rate, these Declaration letters will now be logged in the same way as the RPRs for return by July each year. A report will be compiled at the beginning of August in each financial year. Outstanding letters will be chased. . During 2020/2021, 78% of staff returned this letter.  In addition, new employees were recommended by SIAS to complete an Annual Declaration letter before the end of their probationary period. |  |  |
| * Induction for new Staff on standard of behaviour expected   The Council has a Staff Induction Programme. The SIAS review of Ethical policies made a medium recommendation relating to the Annual Declaration (see above) and that new starters should complete the e-Learning modules covering the Bribery Act and the Data Protection Act, as early as possible and before the end of their probationary period in any event.  The First Day Welcome was reviewed to ensure that all new starters have the legislative information they need to be able to start working. New starters are required to complete certain e-learning modules within a set time period of their start date and managers will check that these are completed within the appropriate time frames (e.g. first day / first week / first month.) Employees are expected to complete the e-learning modules and will be sent an annual reminder, as is the case with Data Protection. These will be monitored by the managers prior to end of the probationary period. |  |  |
| * Conflicts of Interest   Training was provided to Senior Management Group on the Managing Organisational Conflicts in Council Roles and Duties Guidance in 2016. Service Directors/ Corporate Managers are obliged to include any details of organisational conflicts in their service plan assurance statement.. Employees interests are retained by HR. Senior Management are now also required to declare any related party transactions. |  |  |
| * Staff RPR (appraisals):   The appraisal system was reviewed in 2016 and changes implemented that year as a new Regular Performance Review (RPR) system. The RPR Scheme aims to improve the performance of individuals and of the organisation as a whole to achieve the Council’s priorities. All forms and guidance are available to employees and courses are run for employees on how to conduct the RPRs (in person and via e-learning on the intranet). |  |  |
| *A1 ii) Ensuring Members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles). This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Communicating shared values with Members, staff, the community and partners* | Substantial |  |
| *A1 ii) What NHDC has or does & outcomes:*   * A Standards Committee which oversees and promotes high standards of Member conduct. It is composed 12 Councillors and 2 non-voting co-opted Parish Councillors. The IPs are invited to attend the meetings of the Standards Committee. * The Committee oversees the Complaints Handling Procedure and Final Determination Hearings through a Sub-Committee. * The Chairman of Standards Committee provides an annual report to Full Council in May. This is designed to promote shared values with Members, employees, the community and partners.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The composition of the Committee was reviewed and a decision taken by Full Council on 19th May 2016 to increase the number of elected Councillors from 8 to 12 (therefore nearly a quarter of the Membership) including 4 Executive Members. This was to increase the flexibility of the Committee and will also increase understanding and promotion of its work.   • To appoint members of committees for 2020/21  • Council Constitution Annual Review 2020   • Council constitution (confirmation of Amendments) & further minor proposed changes - minor amendments associated with the Senior Management restructure.  Constitutional & Governance Review 2019/20: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s9463/CONSTITUTIONAL%20GOVERNANCE%20REVIEW%20201920.pdf>  Council Constitution: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/council-constitution>  Constitutional & Governance review 2019/20 – the review set out a number of amendments to update the Council’s constitution and proposal of new Cabinet Panels <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=2338&Ver=4>  The Standards Committee supported the recommended amendments to the Member’s Code of conduct at the October 2017 meeting. The Code had not been reviewed since 2013. The amended Code was adopted to come into force following the District Council elections in May 2018. The amended Code was adopted to come into force following the District Council elections in May 2018. This was most recently updated in July 2020.  Code of Conduct for Councillors: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/S17_3.pdf>   * All but the most minor amendments to governance related policies are approved by Members. Where these are through delegated Member or officer powers, they are published and notified to Members through the Member information Service (MIS) and on the Council’s website. Service areas are linked to specific Executive Portfolios with the Leader of Council having political oversight for governance related areas, such as the Constitution.   Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee, as the (critical friend) Member body reviews a number of areas,including the Resolutions Report, the 3Cs End of Year Report, the Council Plan and Objectives, the Annual Review for Safeguarding, the Commercial Update, Priorities for the District monitoring, Crimes and Disorder matters, Annual report on the Regulation of Investigation Powers Act (RIPA), District wide Survey for 2019 (including Key findings and actions), Performance Indicators and Management Measures.  During 2020/2021 the Committee considered and recommended action on a range of issues. Further information on this can be accessed here: <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15629/Appendix%20C%20-%20Corporate%20Peer%20Challenge%20Extracts%20from%20Action%20Plan.pdf>  Throughout 2020/2021, the O&S committee received reports and presentations on the following:  • Garden Waste Collection Service Impacts of COVID-19 and Commercial Waste Collection Service Impacts of COVID-19 – Presented by the Service Director of Place • Presentation by the leader of the council regarding progress in the last year, priorities going forward, responding to COVID-19 and latest data.  • The Council’s Plan for Recover Following the COVID-19 Pandemic – presented by the Deputy Chief Executive.  • Draft Design SPD by the Service Directory of Regulatory • Careline Future Provision presented by the Service Director of Customers •Update of the Commercial Directorate’s Progress and Future Work Programme – Presented by the Service Director of Commercial  [[Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme](http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s5353/Work%20Programme%20Report.pdf)]  These arrangements demonstrate Member leadership to the Membership, employees, and community and partner organisations.   * The new shared values and behaviours as noted translate to staff organisational behaviours as noted below:   **I am considerate** – This means - Working with colleagues, members, partners and customers in a thoughtful and respectful way.  **I am adaptable** – This means - Being flexible and willing to change to improve effectiveness and efficiency.  **I am innovative** – This means - Always looking for ways to improve through being creative and generating new ideas.  **I am constructive** – This means - Engaging with colleagues, members, partners and customers in a positive way  **I am open** – This means- A willingness to engage with colleagues, members, partners and customers in an accessible way.  **I am professional** – This means - Demonstrating all of the other Organisational behaviors in a way that seeks to achieve the best result or provide the right support and guidance.  These objectives are incorporated into staff Regular Performance Reviews (RPR’s) and forms part of the Council plan 2020-2025 as an integral part of the Council’s Values and Behaviours. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/council-plan> |  |  |
| *A1 iii) Leading by example and using these standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*  *• Decision making practices*  *• Declarations of interests made at meetings*  *• Conduct at meetings*  *• Shared values guide decision making*  *• Develop and maintain an effective Standards Committee* | Full/ |  |
| *A1 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Council’s Constitution includes a scheme of delegation and terms of reference for each of the Council’s Committees and decision making practices are outlined. The Council’s Constitution is reviewed annually. * A set report / delegated decision format and guidance on how to complete the report and use of the delegated decision form and process. * Member declarations of interest are a standing item on all agendas and the record of delegated decision template. Minutes show declarations of interest were sought and declarations made. Records of delegated decisions also record any interests applicable to the Member concerned. * A legal adviser attends all Council, Cabinet, Planning and Licensing Committee meetings to advise on Code and other issues where this is requested or otherwise considered appropriate. A legal advisor will review delegated decisions prior to these being published. * An effective and pro-active Standards Committee as outlined under A1 ii) above. * The O & S Committee sets an agreed work programme for a number of Task and Finish Groups and reviews. The O & S Committee, can make recommendations to Cabinet which reflect their findings in order to further inform the decision-making process. The Committee’s terms of reference/ remit are set out in section 6 of the Constitution. * Corporate plan/ service plan/ decision making process provides guiding principles.   *Outcomes/ examples:*  The Council’s Constitution was reviewed in July 2017 and changes to the Council’s delegations approved by Full Council A further review was undertaken and amendments approved by Full Council on 17 January 2019, on 16th January 2020 and different sections have undergone review throughout 2020 as mentioned in A1 ii.   * A further change to the Contract Procurement rules was approved by full Council in January 2020 to ensure the effectiveness of the organisation’s internal controls. The review and adoption of the Council’s Contract Procurement Rules is a key action in the Council’s Procurement Strategy - http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s9515/6b%20-%20Appendix%20A%20Draft%20amended%20Contract%20Procurement%20Rules.pdf * The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 introduced a requirement to record and make available for inspection/publish Non –Executive decisions under delegated authority (as soon as reasonably practicable) relating to : * Grant a permission or licence * Affecting the rights of an individual; or * Award a contract or incur expenditure which, in either case, materially affects the Council’s financial position. * In respect of the individual delegated (Non-Executive) regulatory decisions, a more flexible approach was adopted, given that there was arguably “an exemption” [[1]](#footnote-1) for such areas as licensing and planning – as there were existing legal requirements contained in other statutory provision relating to decision making (format, and make certain documents available through electronic means[[2]](#footnote-2)). * Following a High Court[[3]](#footnote-3) ruling, the provisions of the 2014 Regulations are said to apply to planning. Whilst clarification has been sought from the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), SMT have endorsed an update to the guidance to reflect the legal change and the Council’s approach to the matter. The guidance includes the following – ‘ Relevant planning officers have been advised that all delegated decisions are to be documented on an updated planning decision template, with hard copies of this and supporting documents supplied upon request….If this 2014 Regulations, exemption does not apply, then (with the exception of delegated Planning decisions which shall be uploaded on to the planning website page)’. The Guidance to Councillors and Officers has been updated and notified to staff as a result in April 2018. Training session have also taken place to further embed this information.   Planning Code of Good Practice   * That the Standards Committee recommended to Full Council that the Planning Code of Good Practice. This ensures good governance within the Council and that the Council’s Planning Code of Good Practice remains fit for purpose and is consistent with best practice. <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s8752/Planning%20Code%20of%20Good%20Practice.pdf>. As per A1i)   Delegated decision guidance reminder   * The guidance was updated and notified to staff and members in April 2018, following a resolution of the FAR committee. The guidance can be found on the Intranet,<http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northerts-intranet/files/Guidance%20to%20Members%20%20Officers%20Delegated%20Decisions%2108%204%2018_0.pdf> [Guidance to Members and Officers - Taking a Delegated Decision](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/Guidance%20to%20Members%20%20Officers%20Delegated%20Decisions%2018%204%2018_0.pdf)   As part of the member training on the 8th January 2018, the Planning Control and Conservation Manager lead a section to cover this applies to the delegated officer decisions for planning.  (Delegated decision guidance initially issued on the 27th April 2018 and then re-issued on 7th December 2018   * Further Planning training was provided to members via the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). An independent organisation who advise central and local government on planning issues. The course was delivered by a Member of PAS and a peer Councillor from another local authority in two sessions blocks. The first in September 2020 and October and then another is planned to take place in May 2021. |  |  |
| *A1 iv) Demonstrating, communicating and embedding the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Anti-fraud and corruption policies are working effectively* * *Up-to-date register of interests*   *(Members and staff)*   * *Up-to-date register of gifts and Hospitality* * *Whistleblowing policies are in place and protect individuals raising concerns* * *Whistleblowing policy has been made available to Members of the public, employees, partners and contractors* * *Complaints policy and examples of responding to complaints about behaviour* * *Changes/improvements as a result of complaints received and acted upon* * *Members and officers code of conduct refers to a requirement to declare interests* * *Minutes show declarations of interest were sought and appropriate declarations made* | Full |  |
| *A1 v) What NHDC has or does:*  The Fraud Prevention Policy is an overarching policy that covers Fraud, corruption, money laundering and bribery  <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/fraud-prevention-policy> .   * Participates in a Shared Anti Fraud Service (SAFS), which has been operational since April 2015. SAFS presents an Anti-Fraud action plan, progress reports and Annual Fraud report to FAR Committee. The Council has a Board and Partner role in the Service. * Fraud alerts are issued by SAFS to appropriate employees and managers as new threats arise and publish a Fraud &Corruption newsletter for employees. * A fraud reporting mechanisms is in place on the website (Hotline and email). * SAFS/ the Council work on National Fraud Initiatives. * Bribery prevention is part of the Fraud Prevention Policy as outlined above * Policies and procedures for Members and Employees to declare interests: * Members are obliged to declare interests under the Code of Conduct to the Monitoring Officer or at relevant meetings. Members are obliged to declare (statutory-defined interests- DPIs) in writing to the Council’s Monitoring Officer and for this to be made available on the (Councillors' Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interests) internet page: <http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/councillors-mps-and-meps/councillors-code-conduct-and-declaration> . * Members receive this declaration form as part of their Induction Pack and receive annual reminders from the Monitoring Officer. * The Council has a Councillor Code of Conduct which sets out Member interests, both statutory Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) and those locally agreed “Declarable Interests”. The Code set out when and how declarations should be made and is part of the Council’s Constitution in section 17 [[Constitution]](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Constitution%20Part%20A%2011.4.pdf). * The Council also adopted Guidance for Managing Organisational Conflicts ([Managing Organisational Conflicts guidance](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/MANAGING%20ORG%20CONFLICTS%20IN%20COUNCIL%20ROLES%20DUTIES%20GUIDANCE%2030.9.15.pdf)) The Organisational Conflicts Guidance also applies to Members and officers in the roles they undertake that may conflict. Employee organisational conflicts are recorded within the single manager’s assurance statement as agreed by SMT. Any relating to Members will be dealt with by the Monitoring Officer if they arise. * The Council has, as indicated, a standing item on the agenda for Council meetings for the declaration of interests. This is minuted and recorded, with both available on the Council’s website. Any such Member interest would be recorded on an individual delegated decision – or appropriate action taken for another Executive Member or Officer to take this if an interest is apparent. These decisions are published on the Council’s website and forwarded to Members. * The Council has an Employee Code of Conduct and that refers to the Conflicts of Interests Policy. Employees are obliged to declare personal conflicts under the Policy to their Appropriate Officer and retained by those Officers. * An [Employee Gifts and Hospitality Policy](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/FINAL%20Emp%20GIFTS%20%26%20HOSP%20POLICY%20Oct%202015.pdf). The Council maintains electronic Registers for Employee Gifts & Hospitality for each directorate and Members’ declarations are retained by the Monitoring Officer. * A [NHDC Members’ Protocol for Gifts and Hospitality](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/FINAL%20Member%20G%26H%20Protocol%20Oct%202015.pdf), and Councillors can update this information on their Register of Interests form as part of the new process * An [Annual Declaration Letter](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/Annual%20Declaration%20letter%20final%202017.pdf) for employees to ensure that they are aware of key governance policies. * A [Whistleblowing Policy](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/whistleblowing_policy_june_2014_version.pdf) which enables those working for the council (employees, agency staff and trainees) as well as Members to report wrongdoing or potential wrongdoing. It is available on the internet and intranet. The Council has guidance to Managers on how to handle whistleblowing concerns and leaflets around the Council building, reminding employees what they can do. * A [Comments, Compliments and Complaints](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/customer-services/comments-compliments-and-complaints) Policy (3 Cs). Details of the 3 C’s are reported to the O & S Committee. * Relevant Council officers attend the County wide customer services benchmarking group, which meets quarterly to discuss/ implement shared good practice.   *Outcomes/ examples:*  *Anti-fraud/ Anti-Bribery*   * The SAFS Anti-Fraud Action Plan for 2020/21 was approved by the FAR committee on 16th March 2020. The plan includes objectives and key performance indicators that support the Strategy and meet the best practice guidance/directives from central government department such as Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government and other bodies such as National Audit Office and the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy. The plan takes account of CIPFA guidance including the key principles of the CIPFA Code of Practice on Managing the risk of fraud and corruption 2014.   NHDC Anti-Fraud Plan 2020/21: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14476/NHDC%20Anti-Fraud%20Plan%20202021.pdf>  Minor amendments to the Employee’s Gifts and Hospitality Policy & notification of name changes to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) These are:   * An internal for Employees in respect of Gifts and Hospitality, and has minor amendments in respect of reporting arrangements: and Title changes in respect of authorising officers for RIPA,   Both followed Senior Management restructure; Employees in respect of Gifts and Hospitality.  Previously there were various ‘Appropriate Officers’ to accept or refuse a gift or hospitality that feel within the General consent of Special Consent criteria. These were Heads of Service, Corporate Managers, or Strategic Directors, or the Chief Executive or Monitoring Officers.  The changes provide that a General Consent gift or hospitality may be accepted with the approval of the employee’s line manager, and this needs to be followed with the completion of a General Consent form being sent to their Directorate contact for logging on a Directorate register. Anything that falls outside of the General Consent category can only be accepted if any application is made to the Monitoring Officer. This application will be retained by the Monitoring Officer, whether approved or refused. – <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/decisions/delegated-decisions-2018>    RIPA  Amendments have been made to reflect the changes in the Senior Management structure and those are now able to authorise an application. Previously these were Heads of Service and the Corporate Legal Manager was the Senior Responsible Officer. These roles are now taken by the Service Directors and the relevant amendments appear on page 4, 14-20 and 24. – <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/decisions/delegated-decisons-2018>   * In April 2020 the IPCO undertook an inspection in order to review the RIPA policy. The most recent update and annual review of RIPA was presented at the O&S committee on 16th June 2020. Two recommendations were put forward: Revision of the Policy in terms of communications data to reflect the legislative changes arising from the implementation of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 and that the Council’s Data Retention Policy be reviewed annually (note that this is something the Council already does). Alongside this, the RIPA social media policy was also updated.  <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10915/Regulation%20of%20Investigatory%20Powers%20Act%20RIPA%20Update%20and%20Annual%20Review.pdf> * In 2015/16, the Anti-Bribery Policy and procedures were reviewed and updated and a revised Policy adopted. * In 2019 a further review was undertaken and now the Whistleblowing Policy is a standalone policy. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/whistleblowing-policy> * There is a now (September 2019) an overarching fraud protection policy that covers Fraud, corruption, money laundering and bribery: [https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/fraud-prevention-policy .and](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/fraud-prevention-policy%20.and)   As part of the review the Council has introduced an e-learning anti-bribery module for employees and Members. This was rolled out to employees and Members in April 2016. Articles were included in MIS (April 2016) and Team Talk (May 2016). Two further global emails were sent, firstly to all employees and Members (August 2016) and then to all Members (September 2016). An update was provided to FAR in December 2016 and as part of the bi-annual review in March. The rate of uptake by employees had improved to 271/314 Staff are only required to complete the e-learning anti-bribery module once. At the end of 2020/2021, 307 staff (80%) had completed the module.   * . * The Anti-Bribery Policy and processes were reviewed by SIAS as part of an Ethical Policies Audit in 2016. This was given a Substantial assurance, a medium recommendation was given that all employees and Members undertake the Bribery Act module and this monitored and reported back to NHDC’s Senior Management team. This was reported to SMT on 28 February 2017 and to FAR Committee in March 2017. A recommendation was made to Full Council on 11 April 2017 that all Members and employees undertook the module and that was endorsed by the Membership. * Code of Conduct training was provided to the Members of the Standards Committee in February and to the full Membership in May 2017. This was provided by the Monitoring Officer/ Deputy and a number of legal officers attended the training. Also Code of Conduct training was provided at the New member training as per A1i). As per A1i) Code of conduct training usually takes place following an election however the election in 2020 was postponed due to COVID-19 as was the associated training. The next round of training is due to take place following the election in 2021. This was noted in the Standards Committee meeting in October 2020. * SAFS identified an anti-fraud training package for NHDC employees, with a planned rolled out in 2016. This is being implemented through Human Resources to align with the new Learning Management System (see above reference and link to update report). This training was most recently updated in 2018.   *Employee Conflicts of Interest:*   * The Employee Conflicts of Interest Policy was reviewed and updated in 2015 and additionally new Guidance was produced to cover organisational conflicts [[Managing Organisational Conflicts Guidance](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/MANAGING%20ORG%20CONFLICTS%20IN%20COUNCIL%20ROLES%20DUTIES%20GUIDANCE%2030.9.15.pdf)]. Training was provided to Senior Management Group on the Guidance in 2016 on the potential actions that can be taken in such organisational conflict situations. * Service Directors/ Corporate Managers are obliged to include any details of organisational conflicts in single managers’ assurance statement as agreed by SMT. * In addition to conflicts of interest forms, Senior Managers are required to declare any related party transactions.   *Whistleblowing Policy*   * The Council reviewed it Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures in January 2021, and these were updated and published to Members and employees. Employees also have to sign off an Annual Declaration letter (introduced in 2016) as part of their RPR to indicate that they are aware and have read this and other Policies. This has to be returned to Human Resources with their RPR form. * The Council has one pages on its internet referring to the Whistleblowing Policy. This highlights the concern and the application of the Policy to services provided by third parties; provided contact details to the Monitoring Officer, Chief Finance Officer and also the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) or SAFS and Public Concern at work – for those who do not wish to contact the internal Council officers or those connected with the Council: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/whistleblowing-policy>   *3 Cs:*   * The 3 C’s Policy was reviewed in 2015, and again reviewed by FAR committee in September 2019. An updated Comments, Compliments and Complaints (3c’s) policy was adopted by Cabinet September 2019 – http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s7296/Review%20of%20Comments%20Compliments%20and%20Complaints%20Policy.pdf * The Council summarises these and learning outcomes on Achieve and reports these back to the Senior Management Team (SMT). Overview and Scrutiny Committee also received an information note and 3C’s dashboard report. * The summary for the full period 2019/2020, was presented at the July 2020 Overview and Scrutiny meeting the summary indicated that the number of complaints received decreased from 1,947 in 2018/19 to 764 in 2019/20. 80% of complaints received in 2019/2020 were related to services delivered by key contractors. During the period of 2019/2020, the council received 543 compliments. * Processes and examples are detailed under A1i) above. During the 2019/20 year there have been eleven complaints made to the Monitoring officer (one relating to a Town Councillor, two relating to a Parish Councillor, three relating to Community Councillors, five relating to District Councillors, and one relating jointly to a Parish Councillor and a District Councillor). The Standards Committee informed Annual Council of these complaints in May 2020, as part of the Annual report of Standards Committee report: Annual report of Standards Committee 2019 and were reported at the October 2019 Standards Committee meeting <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s8736/Standards%20Matters.pdf>   *Member complaints:*  In July 2020, the Annual Report of the Standards Committee was presented to council. The report outlined standards matters, work of the Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer / Deputies during the civic year 2019-20 including councillor complaints from 2019/20.  Annual Report of the Standards Committee July 2020: <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s11254/Annual%20Report%20of%20the%20Standards%20Committee.pdf>  As per A1i) above. During the 2020/2021 year, there were six formal complaints made to the Monitoring Officer, all of which were relating to district councillors with one of the complaints being against three district councillors. These complaints were reported to the Standards Committee in a report delivered by the Service Director for Legal and Community on the 20th October 2020. The report can be found here: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14170/Standards%20Matters.pdf>  Council are due to be informed of these complaints at Annual Council in the Annual Report of the Standards Committee in 2021.  . |  | (see above action identified - declaration form to be considered with Code of Conduct)  As of April 2021 307 staff employees had undertaken or were undertaking the Anti-bribery e-learning module. |
| *2) Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values* |  |  |
| *A2 i) Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation’s ethical standards and performance. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Scrutiny of ethical decision making* * *Championing ethical compliance at governing body level* | Substantial |  |
| *A2 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Council has Standards, O & S Committee and Finance Audit & Risk Committees that all play a role in the scrutiny of ethical decision making. * The Standards Committee Chairman provides an annual report to Council on the Standards Committee work and complaints. * The Council’s O & S Committee sets an agreed work programme for a number of Task and Finish Groups and reviews. These supplement scheduled meetings and ensure further Member scrutiny and analysis of how the Council utilises its resources. The O & S Committee, having reviewed policy recommendations and completed task and finish reviews, can make recommendations to Cabinet which reflect their findings in order to further inform the decision making process. * The O & S Committee publishes an Annual report which is presented to Council by the Chairman of the Committee. * The FAR Committee is the main Audit Committee. It receives, considers, approves and makes recommendations on various ethical issues. It receives reports from SIAS, SAFS, external auditors and internal Council officers. It considers the audit findings and Plans. It receives the quarterly revenue, capital and treasury management reports, prior to Cabinet. It reviews annual governance arrangements, approves the AGS and monitors actions. * The Constitution, terms of reference of Committees, Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations and processes and guidance detailed under A 1) also underpin the commitment to decision making practices. * SMT has the responsibility to conduct the annual review of governance arrangements and “score” these against the Local Code of Corporate Governance (which includes the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework principles). This then forms the basis of the AGS presented to the FAR Committee for their consideration and approval. * Finance Audit & Risk Committee presents an annual report on its actions and recommendations and the contribution it has made to the Council’s overall governance.   *Outcomes/ examples:*  *Scrutiny of ethical decision making*   * The O & S Committee has 7 scheduled meetings and publishes an annual report: Annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee considers a range of topics including scrutinising key decisions of Cabinet. At the Council meeting for May 2019 the Committee presented its annual report outlining the topics it considered: [Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2019/20.](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s5203/ANNUAL%20REPORT%20OF%20THE%20OVERVIEW%20AND%20SCRUTINY%20COMMITTEE%20201819.pdf) * The Overview and Scrutiny Committee set a programme of work and Forward plan for the civic year 2020/2021 in June 2020:   Forward Plan of Key Decisions - 8 June 2020: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s11161/Appendix%20B%20-%20Forward%20Plan%20-%208%20June%202020.pdf>   * As per A1ii, during the civic year, the committee carries out the following actions as contained in the Resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Once actions are completed, they are removed from the document and therefore a full list of the Resolutions throughout the civic year have been included below.   March 20 Resolutions of the O&S Report: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s11019/Resolutions%20of%20the%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf>  June 2020: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s11019/Resolutions%20of%20the%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf>  July 2020: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s11362/Resolutions%20of%20the%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf>  September 2020: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s11712/Resolutions%20of%20the%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf>  December 2020: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14683/Resolutions%20of%20the%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf>  January 2020: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15055/Resolutions%20of%20the%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf>  March 21 Resolutions of the O&S Report: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15680/Resolutions%20of%20the%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf>  The actions included the consideration of: The Task and Finish group on waste, closure report regarding the Hitchin Town Hall and District Museum, the Council’s plan for recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic including views on the new normal regarding delivery of services, local plan hearings, draft design SPD, waste route optimisation, Careline future provision, devolution and recovery.  The Committee also received the RIPA update and review, as mentioned in A1 iv) and Annual reports. The Annual Review of Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Adults (2019-2020) was received in December 2020.  Annual Review of Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Adults (2019 – 2020) <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14640/Annual%20Safeguarding%20Report%20201920.pdf>   * Due to the pandemic this review has been postponed whilst the closure of the Hitchin Town Hall and District Museum is ongoing as a result of COVID-19. * As part of the Internal Audit Plan 2016/17 SIAS undertook an audit of Ethical Governance Policies, which will be reported back relevant officers in November 2016 for action and in summary form to FAR Committee. SIAS provided an overall substantial assurance on the Policies and controls in place. Recommendations were made in relation to the Staff Induction Programme, on Bribery Act e-learning and other e-learning. Recommendations on updating certain policies on Bully & harassment and employee complaints handling were actioned by December 2016. Outstanding actions on e-learning, employee and Member use of the new GROW zone e learning package are being reviewed. The new system has been developed to improve access and increase uptake.   *Championing ethical compliance at governing body level*   * The Finance Audit & Risk Committee’s Annual report for 2019/20 was presented at the FAR committee in June 2020. This helps to highlight the governance work undertaken and the effectiveness of the Committee   Finance & Audit Risk Committee Annual Report 2019 to 2020: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10936/FAR%20COMMITTEE%20ANNUAL%20REPORT%20201920.pdf>   * The Communities & Local Government Select Committee reported their findings on 16 January 2018. The report made a number of recommendations, some requiring guidance and legislation to be amended. The Council is in the process of considering a peer review, and in the light of this and the CLG recommendations, this is to be carried forward for the next AGS Action Plan 2019/20. <https://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/about-nhdc/lga-peer-review-2020>. * The Peer review took place in January 2020. The Corporate Peer Challenge is designed by the LGA to provide a robust and effective improvement tool managed and delivered by the sector, for the sector. Peers are at the heart of the peer challenge process and consist of Councillors and senior officers from other District/Borough Councils who provide a ‘practitioner perspective’ and ‘critical friend’ challenge. 15 recommendations were provided in the Initial Feedback. They were: * Executive Members should lead and be accountable for decisions. * Meetings should be focused with fewer agenda items. * Membership of the O&S committee is perceived to be too large. * All scrutiny members to complete formal scrutiny training. * Use the task and finish programme to support early involvement with policy making. * Review finish time and location of the meeting. * Clarify the governance arrangements between O&S and Cabinet Panels. * Ensure forward work plan includes scrutiny of external partners and contractors. * Broaden the Council’s focus to an ambitious place shaping agenda. * Align all your resources, policies, capacity to achieve your priorities. * Develop a narrative for place. * Use reserves to fund internal and external transformation capacity. * Take a corporate approach to transformation – top down and programme managed. * Use external partnerships to benefit North Hertfordshire. * Best practice needs to look beyond the Hertfordshire area.   A final report was produced in March 2020, to be presented at March Cabinet meeting 2020. Due to Covid-19 situation, the meeting was cancelled and where required decisions were made under delegated decisions. <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10365/Appendix%20A%20Corporate%20Peer%20Challenge%20Feedback%20Report.pdf>..  The report requested that an Action Plan be developed by the Leader, Deputy Leader, Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive to respond to the recommendations within the report The Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan was adopted by Cabinet on 23 June 2020.  Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10927/Appendix%20A%20Draft%20Corporate%20Peer%20Challenge%20Action%20Plan.pdf>  The Action Plan is reviewed and updated approximately every quarter. The most recent update on the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan was presented to the O&S committee on 9th March 2021. This update outlines the progress made so far and noted that progress had been made against many of the actions, with 17 of the 60 actions marked as completed but the pandemic had impacted the progress. Overall, it was felt that excellent progress had been made given the circumstances. <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15604/Update%20on%20Corporate%20Peer%20Challenge%20Action%20Plan.pdf> |  | (see previous action on the Corporate Plan A1 ii).  Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan development |
| *A2 ii) Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation’s culture and operation. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Provision of ethical awareness training* | Substantial |  |
| *A2 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * Training is provided to Members on the Code of Conduct post-election as part of their induction. * Specialist training is provided to those who sit on Planning, Licensing and FAR Committees. * Other training is offered to the Membership as and when available, either course-based or via the e-learning. * Training is provided to new employees as part of their induction. They are obliged to read through the IT Security Policy and undertake some ethically related compulsory training. * The employee RPR system enables relevant training to be identified. This is supplemented by the Annual Declaration letter which confirms awareness of key policies and request further training. * The Council has a Learning Management System, with e-learning modules which enables employees to manage aspects of their learning and development. This includes fold ers with Legislative and Policy training. * SMG receives updates and training on ethically related areas as may be relevant.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Council’s Member induction procedure includes training on the Councillor Code of Conduct and other relevant Codes, Protocols, Procedures and Regulations (available via the Constitution). * On the back of a new Guide to the Code of Conduct, approved by the Standards Committee, some updated training on the Code was developed and rolled out initially to the Committee in February 2017. Following feedback from the Committee it will be refined and rolled out to the Membership as a whole with other relevant Finance training on the 24th May 2017. * As part of the Fraud Awareness Plan, Member training was identified by the SAFS and Fraud Awareness training was provided to the Membership before Full Council on 19 January 2017. * SAFS identified and provided Money Laundering, Fraud awareness and ID fraud training for appropriate officers (Chief Finance Officer (Service Director for Resources), Deputy Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer (Service Director for Legal & Community ) and Service Director - Customers ) in October 2016. * As part of the Ethical Policies Audit, which reported in November 2017, SIAS reviewed those Human Resource or Member procedures, some relating to training. The report provided an overall substantial assurance on this issue. One Medium recommendation related to a way of ensuring that new employees understand the Employee Code of Conduct and other key governance related policies. The recommendations were: for new starters to complete the employee Annual Declaration form before the end of their probationary period and to complete the e-Learning modules covering the Bribery Act and the Data Protection Act as early as possible in their employment and before the end of their probationary period. Managers will be responsible for ensuring that new starters undertake these and the completion of the e-learning modules monitored with reminders sent. This recommendation was actioned. SIAS also made a medium recommendation for all employees and Members to undertake the module. * The e-learning modules sit on the Council’s Learning Management System. This has a number of ethical modules on legislative and Policy matters, such as Equality and Diversity; data protection; fraud awareness; safeguarding vulnerable adults and children (as well as the Bribery Act module).There will also be a module to cover the principles of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for both staff and members. As part of the review of employee training, the issue of a more Member-user friendly training system is being considered. This will be carried forward and monitored in 2019/20. |  | (See actions identified for Member/ employee e-learning above).  . |
| *A2 iii) Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Appraisal processes take account of values and ethical behaviour* * *Staff appointments policy* * *Procurement policy* | Full |  |
| *A2 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * The RPR system incorporates a compulsory Annual Declaration letter (see A1 I above), confirming understanding of relevant policies, and/ or for employees to identify any training requirements relating to those issues. Any identified gaps are then addressed through an individual's personal development plan. Personal development and delivery against agreed personal objectives are monitored through agreed six monthly RPR reviews. * Support professional officers in obtaining their continuous professional development & payment of professional bodies’ fees. * Support Member development through provision of training and a delegated training budget to each political group on an elected Member pro-rata basis.   A People Strategy that includes the Workforce Development Plan [[People Strategy 2015-2020](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/20150828%20Final%20People%20Strategy%202015%20-%202020%202%20version%20without%20work%20plan.pdf)]. The plan for a new People Strategy for 2020 – 2026 was postponed due to the impact of the pandemic and as an alternative a People Recovery plan has been developed. This describes how HR processes will adapt as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and how we will support staff through this period of change.  People Recovery Plan 2020 - 2022: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15652/Appendix%20A%20-%20People%20Recovery%20Plan%202020-2022.pdf>   * A vacancy management process which provides a corporate overview of vacancy management and ensures compliance with proper recruitment practices. * A Recruitment and Selection Policy that promotes a fair selection process, to ensure compliance with equality and employment legislation and that the best candidate is offered the job. [[Recruitment and Selection Policy](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/Recruitment%20and%20Selection_0.pdf)]. * Contract Procedure Rules (Section 20 of the Constitution) that underpin the Council’s approach to Procurement. Contracts shouldensure that suppliers are under a contractual obligation to adhere to the requirements of the Bribery Act 2010 and the Councils’ requirements as set out in the Councils’ Anti-Bribery Policy. * There are general procurement guides available on the Council’s intranet covering Public Procurement Rules and Legislation, Procurement Processes, Contract Management and the Social Values Act. * Standard Procurement Templates are available covering procurement risk logs, Requests for quotation and Invitations to Tender that include standard wording requiring potential suppliers to confirm that the supplier has adequate anti-bribery procedures in place/ will ensure compliance with the Bribery laws and adhere to the Council’s Policy (with a link to the Fraud Prevention Policy).   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Council’s RPR process identifies progress, performance and skills gaps to enable the individual and the Council to achieve NHDC objectives. This process is to ensure that the individual in post is equipped to carry out their functions with due regard to law, policy and regulation. A new RPR Policy was approved in 2016. This is conducted against a flexible competency framework (for Technical, Staff Behavioural and Manager Competencies). * The Council was last reassessed for the Investors in People (IIP) Standard in 2014 and applied for the new IIP Standard in 2017. NHDC was awarded accredited status in June 2017 for a three year period. At present, this has not been renewed for 2021 however the council continues to abide by these principles.   As part of the response to the legal requirement to publish Gender Pay Gap figures, an action plan has been developed. As part of the Council’s response, the recruitment process has been reviewed – from language used in the initial advertisements, to rolling out unconscious bias training for recruiting managers, and greater analysis of the council’s work profile. As referred to in the Action Tracker for the Gender Pay Gap Group, a programme called Gapsquare was used to produce the annual equalities data published on the Councils website, it will be used for an equal pay review in 2021/22 and further GPG analysis from Gapsquare is underway for presentation at the next meeting  ONGOING ACTION – Carrying out the actions as identified in the action plan  In 2020, the council introduced Shaping our Future. This group’s aim is to provide co-ordination between the development of activities related to Elected Members and those related to Officers and the Management of the organisation. This group strives to create a high quality, diverse, inclusive and resilient workforce, meeting the needs of our community and this is recognised as one of the stated outcomes of the group.  In 2021, the council introduced a new initiative in the form of an Inclusion Group. The main purpose of this group is to drive the equality and diversity agenda forward within the organisation. The group aims to gain an understanding of the perspective of all employees, including the experiences of minority, disadvantaged and vulnerable staff within the organisation. The group will meet quarterly with each meeting focussing on one of the protected characteristics and will be an opportunity for staff to discuss their experiences and issues. The first two meetings took place on 8th March 2021 and 15th June 2021, focussed on ‘Age’ and ‘Disability’ respectively. The next meeting is due to take place on 6th September 2021 with a focus on ‘Race / Ethnicity’.    **ACTION – Completion of identified action in Gender Pay Gap Action plan**   * The Council has a comprehensive approach to reviewing its Contract Procedures. It has a Procurement Team and Contracts & Procurement Group (CPG) with relevant service area representation on the CPG. The Procurement Team and a specialist Contracts & Procurement Lawyer lead on any review, with this being considered by the CPG prior to initial consideration by the FAR Committee, then Cabinet and finally Full Council. An updated version of the Contract Procedure Rules was approved on 24 November 2016. Amongst other things, this updated Social Value Act 2012 considerations and compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015. Notification of the changes was then circulated to all employees via email, with a dedicated page setting out the changes on the intranet [Contract Procurement Rules have been updated 2016](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/contract-procurement-rules-have-been-updated), were also updated for 2018/19. with a link to the relevant internet page where the updated Rules are available. * The Contract Procurement rules were also updated for 2018/19. <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s4038/Item%206a%20-Referral%20-%20Procurement%20Rules.pdf>. With further amendments presented at the December 2019 FAR meeting - http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s9120/FAR%20Report%20CPR%20Review%20December%202019.pdf * The Contract Procurement Rules were most recently updated and approved by full council in January 2020. The following amendments were made:   • The previous version of the Rules required non-compliance to be reported to the Monitoring Officer and the Senior Management Team and it was proposed that non-compliance be reported to the Monitoring Officer and the Monitoring Officer may consult with the Service Director - Resources if appropriate;  • The proposed new section 3.10 reflected the Council’s focus on community engagement and environmental protection;  • Additional guidance had been put into the rules in order to aid Officers;  • Service Directors were now in a position to extend contracts by up to 24 months and up to a value of £200,000.  Further details can be found in the report: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s9513/6b%20-%20Referral%20from%20Finance%20Audit%20and%20Risk%20Committee%20-%205%20December%202019%20-%20Contract%20Procurement%20Rules.pdf>  Contract Procurement Rules: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/S20_0.pdf>  That the Contract Procurement Rules are part of the Constitution (under Section 20) and are revised and updated periodically as part of the Council's governance and procurement review processes, contributing to effective organisational internal control. In addition, the review and adoption of the Council’s Contract Procurement Rules is a key action in the Council’s Procurement Strategy.   * The use of Consultants and Contract Management was incorporated in the SIAS 2016/17 Audit Plan. Contract Management was given a Substantial assurance and the former field work is ongoing as at the 2017 year end and will be reported through the 2017/18 AGS process. On its Audit Plan 2017/18, larger contracts/ contract management issues are identified, including one relating to HTH, held over from the 2015/16 Plan. This will also be reported through to FAR Committee. |  |  |
| *A2 iv) Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with high ethical standards expected by the organisation.* *This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Agreed values in partnership working:*   *–– Statement of business ethics communicates commitment to ethical values to external suppliers*  *–– Ethical values feature in contracts with external service providers*   * *Protocols for partnership working* | Substantial |  |
| *A2 iv) What NHDC has or does:*   * Procurement Guidelines for Suppliers/ Tendering guidance is available on the Council’s website, making it clear that contractors must comply with the Contract Procurement Rules and Financial Regulations, and what is expected from them during the process [<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/business/procurement/procurement-guidelines-suppliers>; <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/business/procurement/tendering-contracts>] * A “Go Local” policy for procurement under £50,000. * The Council references anti-bribery and corruption provisions within standard requests for quotations and Invitations to Tender documents.   Contract Procurement Rules place requirements on employees to incorporate Anti-Bribery and Social Value provisions (the latter where relevant) as part of the contracts with suppliers. Version 1 of the Contract Management guide has been finalised and placed on the intranet for use by Managers. This is now subject to an annual review in line with the review of the Contract Procurement Rules. The Contract Management guide was last reviewed in February 2021. <https://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/doing-business/procurement/contract-management>   * Standard purchase order terms on the internet, which include audit, anti-bribery and compliance with equality legislation [<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/business/procurement/standard-terms-and-conditions>].   A Procurement Strategy which sets out key business aims, promoting a sustainable, equitable approach to procurement, that seeks to minimise adverse impacts on the environment, promotes high professional standards and best practice partnering/ collaboration with suppliers <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/business/procurement/procurement-strategy>. The most recent version of this was approved by Cabinet in January 2021 and implemented in April 2021. Due to the ongoing uncertainty caused by current circumstances, the Strategy has been put in place for a short period of time in order to ensure that it continues to be up-to-date. The key focus during this Strategy period will be Leadership, Commercialism, Community and Social Benefit and Reacting to Change.  Procurement Strategy April 2021-2022: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/business/procurement/procurement-strategy>   * Council’s Procurement Strategy Report: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15162/The%20Councils%20Procurement%20Strategy.pdf> * A Corporate Equality Strategy, and to work with partners to deliver the Council’s corporate objectives in an equitable manner [<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/policies/equality-and-diversity>]. The revised Strategy was uploaded to the Website in the summer of 2017. * A newly adopted Cabinet Sub-Committee, with oversight of Local Authority Trading Company participation, promoting consistency shareholder approach. * A CCTV Joint Committee with remit to agree, for example, strategic, Policy, Code of Practice issues relating to the jointly owned and operated CCTV Control and Monitoring Service [Section 11 of the Constitution]. * One of the 13 member organisations of the North Hertfordshire Partnership (NHP). Meetings take place on a bi-annual basis to progress the area vision ‘to make North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper’, with Health and Wellbeing Partnership as a sub-committee of NHP. * A Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2021. This included the ongoing commitment to, for example, promote equality of opportunity and improve health and wellbeing. The Strategy aspirations have been renewed through the North Herts Local Strategic Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Partnership. Progress of the strategy is reported regularly to NHP meetings and via annual reports presented at community conferences. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/policy/strategic-partnership-involvement> * Part of the North Herts Community Safety Partnership (CSP) that works together to deliver a number of projects which support community safety and crime and disorder issues, such as domestic abuse awareness and anti-bullying. The action plan for the next year is in the process of being updated following on from the findings in the strategic assessment, public consultation (including feedback from the police priority setting forums as well as the survey) and current community safety data. This will be added to the website once updated<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/community/community-safety/community-safety-partnership-projects>   *Outcomes/ examples:*  Herts Careline has achieved a Gold Standard of 100% satisfaction in its latest survey. Hert Careline community alarm and telecare service has achieved a 100% recommendation from its customers. The standard was generated from the service annual customer satisfaction survey which gathers the opinions of those using the service. (<https://www.care-line.co.uk/about/news/herts-careline-achieves-a-gold-standard-of-100-customer-satisfaction-in-its-latest-survey.aspx>)  Herts Careline Survey 2019- (At present, there has not been a more recent Careline survey. This is likely due to the ongoing impact of the Pandemic on services.)  Congratulations to Herts Careline! The community alarm and telecare service received impressive results from their recent Customer Satisfaction Survey, which is based on the opinions of those using the service.  The results from this year’s survey are highly positive, highlights include:  99.8% of customers would recommend Herts Careline to a friend or relative  99.5% of customers say the help they receive from Herts Careline Control Room Operators is ‘excellent’ or ‘good’  99.3% of customers feel more reassured having their Herts Careline service  98.9% of customers say the help they receive from Herts Careline Customer Service Team is ‘excellent’ or ‘good’  98.8% of customers believe their friends and relatives enjoy peace of mind knowing they have the Herts Careline service  96.9% of customers feel more independent and in control having the Herts Careline service  To find out more about Herts Careline please go to: <https://www.care-line.co.uk/home.aspx>   * This is followed through, for example, with the Council’s expectations in procurement, with regards to support the local community, anti-bribery and corruption, health & safety, equality, adherence to the Living Wage within documentation, for example with seeking quotations for the Supply and support of a new Herts Careline website in March 2017. * During 2016 the Council also set up a wholly owned Local-Authority Building Control Company, as a key collaborative working initiative: Broste Rivers LA7 Limited with 6 other Hertfordshire local authorities. Arrangements and contracts were reviewed in 2017/18 with a new Commissioning Panel being established to review client side service provision bi-annually. * The North Hertfordshire Partnership is the District's local strategic partnership (LSP) Membership includes representatives from a wide range of local organisations, including North Hertfordshire District Council, Hertfordshire County Council, North Hertfordshire College, North Hertfordshire Centre for Voluntary Services, Hertfordshire Constabulary, Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, North Hertfordshire Minority Ethnic Forum, Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, North Herts Homes, Citizens Advice Bureau, North Herts Association of Parish, Town and Community Councils and the East and North Hertfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.   Since 2014, NHDC has followed through Strategic aims by providing community grants to fund local community projects. See section B3 Vi) for more information on this.   * As part of a long-term Office accommodation project (DCO Refurbishment Project), the Council decided to procure the services of Willmott Dixon Construction Limited during 2016/17 to undertake design and refurbishment contract works (through a SCAPE framework), to the Council’s main offices in Gernon Road, Letchworth. As one of the Council’s largest works/ services contract, it was important that the procurement/ contract management was and is handled effectively, whilst balancing this with pragmatic collaboration towards issues and contract management.   This was also a Public Service Contract, and whilst Willmott Dixon Construction Limited is part of a larger national company group, the appointment had specific benefits in terms of economic, social and environmental factors – in that the company would support youth employment( work experience for a deaf carpenter and assistance with employment), social exclusion (raising funds for the Chairman’s charity and sponsoring the Inaugural Volunteer’s Award Evening), a community transformation projects( painting classrooms and re-lining a school pond; decorating and carrying out repairs at Mrs Howard hall) within the District (and be monitored through its annual Foundation review).  The DCO Refurbishment Project was assessed by SIAS during 2016/17 (as part of the 15/16 Projects requiring completion) and received a Substantial level of assurance with 2 Medium and 2 Merits attention recommendations. The contract arrangements were also to be reviewed by External Auditors during the follow on 2017/18 period.   * This has now been completed and was the biggest project undertaken within the council with a final cost of £5.3m overall. The medium priority recommendations included the clarification of project tolerances and that the Project Board meets at the specified frequency. The merits attention priority recommendations included that the Project Initiation Document (PID) be updated to reflect changes in responsibilities (proceeding staff changes) and that the benefits realisation profile be reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect changes made since 2014. More information on this can be found in the Final Internal Audit Report for North Herts District Council – Office Accommodation Project 2017/18 which was published in September 2017 as well as the SIAS Committee Progress Report – December 2018: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s1538/Item%206%20-%20SIAS%20Update%20Report%202017-18.pdf> * A Cumulative Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken for 2020/21. This can be found on the council’s website https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/equality-and-diversity This report sets out the approach taken to consider the cumulative equality impact based on a number of source documents: those Council and Committee reports that required an equality impact analysis and those council and committee reports that did not require an equality impact analysis but demonstrated mitigating action to avoid treating one aspect of the community more favourably than another. This covered issues such as the Fair Debt collection , Statement of Community Involvement,, Garden Waster Service Council tax reduction scheme, Local Plan, implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Green Space Management Strategy and Pay Policy Any potential for compounded impacts were identified in individual impact assessments appended to relevant reports.   Cumulative Equality Impact Assessment 2020/21: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Cumulative%20Equality%20assessment%202020-2021.pdf> |  |  |
| *A3) Respecting the rule of law* |  |  |
| *A3 i) Ensuring members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations*. *This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Statutory provisions* * *Statutory guidance is followed* * *Constitution* | Substantial |  |
| *A3 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Constitution is reviewed annually and approved by Full Council. Necessary amendments may be made year-in (in response to legislative changes), by the Monitoring Officer and must be notified to Members. * The Monitoring Officer’s role is to ensure decisions are taken lawfully, in a fair manner and procedures followed. After consulting the Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer section the Monitoring Officer has a statutory duty/ powers to report any proposal, decision or omission that he/she considers would give rise to unlawfulness or any decision or omission that has given rise to maladministration (“Section 5 report”). * The Monitoring Officer is responsible for providing advice on ethics and governance to the Standards Committee and to the members of this Council and Parish Council’s within the District. * Has a Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures in place that encourage reporting of potential wrong doing or illegal activity by employees, agency staff, Members and contractors. * All Committee reports and delegated decision templates have required areas for legal advice (as well as Finance, Social Value Act 2012 and Equality Act 2010); part 1 reports are published and available for inspection as per the statutory requirements. * Legal services maintain records of advice provided (according to relevant destruction policy).   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * Whistleblowing example in section A 1iv) above demonstrates that whilst no illegal activity took place, processes changed as a result. * The Council has reviewed and updated Fraud Prevention Policies as outlined in A1iv). * No Section 5 report has been issued during 2020/21. The approach of the Monitoring Officer is to seek to resolve any potential issue in advance, including by ensuring relevant legal and governance advice is included within Committee reports (and delegated decision records), as outlined (which have recently been reviewed and updated), so that use of the report would be as a last resort. * One issue in relation to Members allowances and approval of a percentage increase by Full Council on 18 January 2018 due to take effect in April 2018), was not implemented, as the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) had not been consulted as required under legislation. This was however, reviewed in February and March prior to implementation. An attempt was made to resolve the matter with a short consultation with the IRP; however, when the IRP failed to agree the principle of percentage increases the increase was not implemented. In the April 2018 Council meeting a motion was put forward in regard to the Member’s Allowance Scheme decision, approved in January 2018. The motion put forward was that:   *-That this Council recognises that the Allowance Scheme for 2018/19, approved by the Council on 18th January 2018, was improperly made.*  *-The adopted scheme for 2017/18 remained in place without amendment for the 2018/19 year.*  *- The Council further requests that the Chief Executive does not convene the IRP until any scheduled review of the allowances for 2019/20.*  *- Council requests that the sum of approx. £6,800 saved by retaining the 2017/18 allowance scheme be allocated to the 5 Area Committees pro-rata to their existing allocation.*  Members’ Allowances continue to be reviewed annually. Below are the reports from the most recent reviews in 2020 and 2021.  Council Meeting, 26th January 2020 – Review of Members’ Allowance Scheme: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=2338&Ver=4>  Council Meeting, 21st January 2021 – Review of Members’ Allowance Scheme Report: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MID=2390#AI10026> |  |  |
| *A3 ii) Creating the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders and members are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Job description/specifications* * *Compliance with CIPFA’s Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (CIPFA, 2015)* * *Terms of reference* * *Committee support* | Substantial |  |
| *A3 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Constitution identifies the key District statutory officers (Head of Paid Service – Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer (CFO)– Service Director for Resources and Monitoring Officer – Service Director for Legal and Community), and other senior officers and Members and sets out their roles. All are part of the Senior Management Team to oversee matters. (Section 12 & 14 of the Constitution). * The CFO has a duty to the Council's taxpayers to ensure that public money is being appropriately spent and managed, and reports directly to the Chief Executive. The CFO ensures that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, is responsible for keeping proper financial records and accounts and for maintaining an effective system of internal control. * The CFO is a Member of a specified accountancy body (section 113 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988) and has a duty under section 114 of the 1988 Act to consult with the Head of Paid Service and Monitoring Officer on any unlawful expenditure and/ or an unbalanced Budget, and to report this to all Members. * The Council’s financial management arrangements conform to the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016). * Full Council, Cabinet and Committees terms of reference are set out in the Constitution (Sections 4-11): <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/council-constitution>. The Constitution reflects the legislative arrangements for defining executive and non-executive functions. * A Legal advisor attends Full Council, Cabinet and regulatory Committees – such as Planning, Licensing and Standards to be on hand to provide advice. * The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) attends Full Council, Cabinet and the Finance Audit and Risk Committee. * Committee and Member Services provide support to the Council, Councillors and the democratic processes of the Council. The team organise the civic calendar of Committee meetings dates, the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions, prepare and despatch agendas and reports in advance of the meetings and take and despatch minutes and decision sheets minutes after the meetings. Delegated decisions are retained by them and they provide support for Councillor Surgeries.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Council's financial management arrangements are underpinned by a regulatory framework comprising of the Financial Regulations, Contract Procurement Rules, annual audits of key financial systems, audits of other systems undertaken on a risk-based basis and the role of the statutory Section 151 (Chief Finance) officer. * The Financial Regulations were reviewed and approved by Full Council on 9th July 2020 and came into effect on 18th July 2020.  Financial Regulations: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/S19_0.pdf> * The Contract Procurement Rules were reviewed, amended and approved by Full Council on 24 November 2016and more recently at Full Council 16th January 2020 http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s9515/6b%20-%20Appendix%20A%20Draft%20amended%20Contract%20Procurement%20Rules.pdf * The FAR Committee meets 6 times per year and provides on-going monitoring and review of financial management. The Committee’s terms of reference/ remit are set out in section 10 of the Constitution. * As per the 2020/21 Internal Audit Plan Report which was presented at the FAR committee on 16th March 2020; During 2020/21, SIAS planned to review the key financial systems including: Integra, Treasury Management, Payroll, Revenues and Benefits. Operational audits included Waste Contract Follow-up, Corporate Debt Management Follow-up, Trade Waste, Customer Services – Digitalisation, Commercial Strategy, Anti-Social Behaviour, Parking Strategy and Enforcement, Medium Term Financial Strategy, Housing Allocations, Health and Safety of Out of Hours Workers, Review of FAR, King George V Playing Fields and Workman’s Hall.   North Hertfordshire District Council Finance, Audit and Risk Committee 2020/21 Internal Audit Plan Report: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10279/NHDC%20SIAS%202020-21%20Internal%20Audit%20Plan%20Report%20-%20March%202020%20issued%2004%2003%2020.pdf>   * No section 114 1988 Act reports have been issued by the CFO during 2020/21. * As per A2 iv) A Cumulative impact assessment was undertaken for 2020/21A Cumulative impact assessment was undertaken for 2019/20 https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/equality-and-diversity This report sets out the approach taken to consider the cumulative equality impact based on a number of source documents: those Council and Committee reports that required an equality impact analysis and those council and committee reports that did not require an equality impact analysis but demonstrated mitigating action to avoid treating one aspect of the community more favourably than another. This covered issues such as the Fair Debt collection , Statement of Community Involvement,, Garden Waste Service Council tax reduction scheme, Local Plan, implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, Green Space Management Strategy and Pay Policy Any potential for compounded impacts were identified in individual impact assessments appended to relevant reports.   Cumulative Equality Impact Assessment 2020/21: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Cumulative%20Equality%20assessment%202020-2021.pdf> |  | The Senior Management Organisational chart has been place on the website. |
| *A3 iii) Striving to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Record of legal advice provided by officers* | Full |  |
| *A3 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * All Committee reports and delegated decision templates have required areas for legal advice and part 1 reports are published and available for inspection as per the statutory requirements. * Legal services maintains records of advice (according to relevant destruction policy), as part of an electronic/ hard copy management systems.   Outcomes/ examples:   * See: A3i) and A3iii) above examples. |  |  |
| *A3 iv) Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Monitoring officer provisions* * *Record of legal advice provided by officers* * *Statutory provisions* | Substantial |  |
| *What NHDC has or does:*   * Has a Monitoring Officer appointed by Full Council, with role and remit set out in statute and the Constitution. These are explained under A3i)-ii) above. * The Monitoring Officer has a key reporting role in terms of the Whistleblowing arrangements. * Records of legal advice are retained as A3iii) above. Any potential illegality would be reported to the Monitoring Officer by relevant legal officers reviewing a report or delegated decision. Any issues would, as indicated be resolved in this manner.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * No section 5 Local Government & Housing Act 1998 reports have been issued by the Monitoring Officer. See, however, example under A3i). |  |  |
| *A3 v) Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Effective anti-fraud and corruption policies and procedures* * *Local test of assurance (where appropriate)* | Substantial/ |  |
| *A3 v) What NHDC has or does:*   * Has the anti-fraud and corruption arrangements set out under A1iv).   Assurances are provided by the Council’s internal audit function that is delivered by SIAS and are a significant source of assurance. The PSIAS also requires that the SIAS be subject to an external quality assessment at least once every five years. This should be conducted by a qualified, independent assessor or assessment team from outside the organisation. The next external assessment was due in November 2020. However, as stated in the 2019/20 Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Annual Report presented at the FAR committee in June 2020, this was deferred from November 2020 and will now take place in May 2021 as a result of the impact of COVID-19.  The Head of Assurance has concluded, therefore, that SIAS ‘generally conforms’ to the PSIAS, including the Definitions of Internal Auditing, the Code of Ethics and the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing. ‘Generally conforms’ is the highest rating and means that SIAS has a charter, policies and processes assessed as conformant to the Standards and is consequently effective. 2019/20 Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Annual Report: [https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10970/201920%20ANNUAL%20ASSURANCE%20STATEMENT%20AND%20INTERNAL%20AUDIT%20ANNUAL%20REPORT.pdf](https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10970/201920%20ANNUAL%20ASSURANCE%20STATEMENT%20AND%20INTERNAL%20AUDIT%20ANNUAL%20REPORT.pdf%20%20)   * The Head of SIAS is required to deliver an annual internal audit’s opinion and report, covering overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation’s framework of governance, risk management and control that can be used by the organisation to inform its AGS. * Service Directors/Corporate Managers are required to prepare and contribute to the single managers’ assurance statement as part of their Service Planning, which is used as part of the AGS preparation and review of arrangements. * A Shared Anti Fraud Service (SAFS) has been operational from April 2015, reviews arrangements and presents reports to FAR Committee on types of fraud, outcomes of closed cases and ongoing investigations. SAFS provides benchmarking/ effectiveness assurance. * Has an effective FAR Committee to review arrangements. * Has an active O & S Committee that oversees and makes recommendations on arrangements. * Obtains assurance from the Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee arrangements, with effective Chairman/ IPs practices in place. * Has project governance and follow up provisions in place for lessons to be learnt/ follow up.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * SIAS undertake and present an Annual Assurance Statement, Internal Audit Annual Report, Annual 2019/2020 report on the work undertaken on assurance and other projects at the FAR committee September 2020 meeting.   SIAS Annual Report 2019/2020: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s11650/SIAS%20-%20ANNUAL%20REPORT%20201920.pdf>   * Updates on progress against the Audit Plan are presented to FAR Committee. This process allows review of the assurance levels provided by SIAS by Members/ public, actions to be monitored and appropriate amendments to the Plan to be approved. FAR was updated on the 2020/21 plan in June 2020, September 2020, December 2020 and March 2021. * As reported in March 2021 FAR Committee report, by February 2021, 85% of the Audit Plan days had been delivered against a profiled target of 91% and that 67% of audits had been delivered to draft or final report stage against a target of 83%. Whilst this was below the KPI, the SIAS Client Audit Manager was confident that the targets would be reached. Internal Audit Progress Report – March 2021: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15641/SIAS%20Progress%20Report.pdf> * SAFS present reports an action plan to FAR Committee. They report the types of fraud, outcomes of closed cases/ ongoing investigations. [See A1 v). At the December 2020 FAR meeting, it was reported that the COVID-19 outbreak had created opportunities for fraudsters to exploit and that there were 49 live cases, which was a manageable amount and that there had been 66 allegations of fraud between April and October 2020. This number was higher than previous years and was a result of a campaign that had been launched in August to raise awareness of Fraud against the Local Authority.  SAFS Progress with delivery of the 2020/21 Anti-Fraud Plan: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14475/PROGRESS%20WITH%20DELIVERY%20OF%20THE%20202021%20ANTI-FRAUD%20PLAN.pdf> * Service Directors have agreed a single assurance statement for service delivery for the council. The Service Delivery Plan has individual Service Area Action plans appended to it for 2019/20. These action plans indicate that effective systems are in place within their area, with relevant actions/ mitigation measures identified (The six directorates - Resources Regulatory, Place, Customers Legal & Community and Commercial were all deemed effective). All assurance statements are collated into one document to ensure effective/monitoring systems are in place across the Council. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/service-delivery-plan> |  | A single corporate Service plan with a combined assurance statement has been developed by both SMT and SMG (Service Directors and senior managers.) |
| Principle B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement. |  |  |
| Local government is run for the public good; organisations therefore should ensure openness in their activities. Clear, trusted channels of communication and consultation should be used to engage effectively with all groups of stakeholders, such as individual citizens and service users, as well as institutional stakeholders. |  |  |
| *B 1) Openness* | Score | Actions |
| *B1 i) Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation’s commitment to openness. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Annual report* * *Freedom of Information Act publication scheme* * *Online council tax information* * *Authority’s goals and values* * *Authority website* | Full |  |
| *B1 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * Annual reports are presented to various Committees as indicated above, regarding the 3Cs, RIPA, O & S, Standards Committee [see A1ii), A2 i) reports and their relevant links]. * SIAS Annual report through to FAR Committee September 2020. <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s11650/SIAS%20-%20ANNUAL%20REPORT%20201920.pdf> * A SAFS Annual report. * A FAR Committee Annual Report. * The revised Council Plan and revised Council Objectives 2021-2026 document and communicates the Council’s vision and ambitions, are reviewed by Overview &Scrutiny Committee, then Cabinet and finally approved annually by Full Council * [ <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/council-plan>The Council’s vision is one developed by the new administration alongside new Objectives. These were considered by Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny committee. Executive Members assessed the proposed priorities with the Senior Leadership team. A Member workshop took place on 10th August 2020 to consult and agree on the proposed actions for each of the objective priority areas. The final draft of the Council Plan was recommended to Full Council in September 2020. * The relevant documents are made available on the Council’s website with Service plans that show how the Objectives will be delivered in practical terms [[Council Plan and Objectives page](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/council-plan)] * The Council Plan is supported by the corporate business planning programme – and the five year Medium Term financial strategy (MTFS) sets out the financial elements of the process and looks to secure the financial elements of the Plan.   An Investment Strategy has replaced the Capital Programme and Treasury Management Strategy which is considered by Cabinet and approved by Full Council sets the treasury management and capital programme operations that are associated with the MTFS, is reviewed each year and monitored quarterly. [The](file:///\\Client\G$\Service%20Plans\Corporate%20Plan\Corporate%20Plan%202018\Workshop\The) [Investment Strategy (integrated strategy Capital and Treasury)](http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s4185/INTEGRATED%20CAPITAL%20AND%20TREASURY%20STRATEGY.pdf) was presented to FAR on the 28th January 2019 The Investment Strategy (integrated strategy Capital and Treasury) was presented to FAR on the 20th January 2020   * The Corporate business planning programme would be used to assess identified projects against criteria including the Council’s agreed policy, its priorities, the outcomes of public consultation, demonstration of continuous improvement and changing legislative need. * Performance figures are reviewed by O & S Committee and relevant recommendations made.   An Investment Strategy review (previously the Annual Treasury Management Review) is undertaken and reported to FAR Committee. and Cabinet. The review for 2019/20 was reported to Cabinet in June 2020 <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MId=2401&Ver=4>  The review for 2019/20 went to Cabinet/FAR committee in June 2020 -- <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10933/INVESTMENT%20STRATEGY%20CAPITAL%20AND%20TREASURY%20END%20OF%20YEAR%20REVIEW%20201920.pdf>  A mid year review was presented at the December 2020 meeting <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14564/INVESTMENT%20STRATEGY%20CAPITAL%20AND%20TREASURY%20MID-YEAR%20REVIEW%20202021.pdf>   * An annual Report on Risk Management is reported to FAR Committee and Cabinet * <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14511/RISK%20MANAGEMENT%20UPDATE.pdf> * A Risk and Opportunities Management Update report is also reported to FAR on a quarterly basis, The latest was at the March 2020 meeting http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10170/Risk%20and%20Opportunities%20Management%20Update.pdf * A [report](http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s5921/Statement%20of%20Accounts%20201819.pdf) that accompanies the Statement of Accounts, explains any amendments that have been required by the external auditors, and the Letter of Representation [Statement of Accounts 2019-20 audited], including Signed Audit Opinion of the CFO & Chairman of FAR Committee enables the external auditors to form an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the Council financial position and of its income and expenditure for the year ended, in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2015/16. * An Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Report sets out the annual audit position and provides an overall assurance level for the Council. * The revised Service Delivery plan clearly outlines the councils’ high level work programme and priorities for the next four years, The revised delivery plan has the following key aspects:   + A single, streamlined, SMT led service plan https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Service%20Delivery%20Plan%202020-21.pdf   + The service plan would be for a four year period, updated annually and reviewed every six months   + A single managers’ assurance statement, agreed by SMT   + Individual action plans for service areas to be appended to main plan   + Retain the use of SWOT/PESTLE analysis, * An External Auditors Audit Results report for year end, reported through to September FAR Committee (as above). * Projects are reviewed by O & S Committee/ Task & Finish Groups and recommendations made. * A Freedom of Information (FOI) publication scheme that details information that is routinely made available by the Council and whether there is a charge for this information [, information on how to make requests (with an on-line facility), FOI annual request figures, information about FOI/ Environmental Information and Data Protection, Review and complaints procedures [[Freedom of Information overview page](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/data-protection-and-freedom-information/freedom-information-2)]. * Open Data is published on this website, and is open to use and re-use, through the terms of the Open Government Licence. This covers: Budgets for the year; contracts register; Constitution; Council meeting dates; agendas and minutes; Councillor allowances; election results; fraud; grants and awards; land and property assets; Organisation structure chart; Parking revenue (on-street and off-street); Pay Policy Statement; Payments to Suppliers; Performance management; Senior employee salaries and job descriptions; Statement of Accounts; Trade Union Facility Time; Waste contracts [[Open Data page](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/open-data)] * The ‘Council Tax Information’ leaflet provides information on the Council’s performance, expenditure and efficiencies and is posted on the Council’s website. [NHDC financial Information leaflet 2018/19 and 2020/21](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherthttps:/www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-tax/your-council-tax-bills-cms/files/Council%20Tax%20Leaflet%202018-19.pdf) * Business Rates Annual Notification, explanatory notes and background information [Business Rates – Annual Notification](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/business/business-rates/your-business-rates) * Publish Data Sets on NNDR Full list and monthly credit balances [[Published Data Sets](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/freedom-information/published-data-sets)].   Annual Monitoring Report, containing indicators and targets across the district to aid with future planning decisions and identification of local priorities [Annual Monitoring Report 2019-20]   * A Civil Parking Enforcement Annual Report that details actions and surpluses]. [Civil Parking Enforcement Annual report 2018-19. A 2019-20 report has been delayed due to impact of Covid and will be reported on in future statements.](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Civil%20Parking%20Enforcement%20Annual%20Report%202018-19.pdf) * An Annual Strategic Action Plan developed by the North Herts Community Safety Partnership (NHCSP).[North Hertfordshire Community Safety Action Plan (NHCSAP)](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/North%20Hertfordshire%20Community%20Safety%20Action%20Plan%20April%2019%20to%20March%2020.pdf) * Air Quality Annual Status Report (Air Quality Annual Status report 2019) * The Council’s website complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) AA rating for Local Authorities   *Outcomes/ examples:*  The Corporate Plan and Corporate Objectives are reviewed annually, firstly by O & S Committee, then Cabinet and then by Council (the 2017-22 Plan being approved in September 2016). The Council has a clear vision to make North Hertfordshire which is making North Hertfordshire a district in which everyone who lives, works or visits is able to flourish. It is clear that the Council must work with its partners, businesses, and urban and rural communities to achieve this vision <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/council-plan>   * The Council has 5 Objectives which are:   **Be a more welcoming, inclusive, and efficient council**  We will engage with and welcome the contributions of residents, community groups and businesses; working collaboratively with local people.  **Build thriving and resilient communities**  We will work on frequent and regular opportunities to improve the partnership and relationship that the Council has with local citizens. Some of this will be achieved by change in culture, tone and communications but more will be done through direct measurable activity, intervention and consultation.  We will develop a range of innovative ways in which local communities, from small groups to whole towns and communities of interest can be encouraged to become more involved in supporting, planning, improving and maintaining local environments.  This work stream will focus particularly on engaging with young residents and those who are disadvantaged or in any way socially excluded, to ensure such innovations are fit for the future and imaginative in concept and delivery.  **Respond to challenges to the environment**  We will seek to provide a clean and safe environment, in consultation and partnership with local people. We will engage local people and organisations as we progress towards our target of net zero carbon emissions by 2030, whilst taking action to enable and encourage residents to minimise their own carbon impact. We will protect the natural and built environment through our planning policies and an effective green spaces strategy. We will take action against environmental crime and ensure that our approach to waste and recycling promotes the hierarchy of reduce, re-use, recycle. We will complete the elimination of single use plastics from the council and support reductions in their use across the district. We will work to improve the monitoring and management of air quality across the district, prioritising those areas where air quality is most in need of improvement.  **Enable an enterprising and co-operative economy**  We will aim to become an increasingly innovative and inclusive Council, committed to generating community wealth, by seeking commercial and investment opportunities and through proactive engagement with a wider range of small and medium sized businesses to build a sustainable local economy. We will continue to engage with residents, staff and Councillors to continue to embrace modern working practices through the use of IT and a commitment to working towards a paperless Council whilst increasing the efficiency of services and access to them by residents.  **Support the delivery of good quality and affordable homes**  We will enable and support the delivery of good quality and affordable housing in the district, ensuring both new and existing housing is fit for purpose, including a commitment to consultation and ensuring communities have the infrastructure they need. We will build more effective relationships with local housing associations and recognise our role in the fight against homelessness. We will continue to support Parishes with Neighbourhood plans.   * The Council Objectives reflect the short and long term requests of residents and are based on the District Wide Survey <http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/customer-services/publications-and-consultations/district-wide-survey>. The District Wide survey shows that 95% of residents are satisfied with North Herts as a place to live compared with 82% nationally. 75% of North Herts’ residents are satisfied with the way the Council runs things, against 65% nationally. * The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is the Council’s key financial planning document. It considers and encompasses the financial implications of the priorities and actions in the Priorities document and is thus an integral part of the Corporate Business Planning process and is updated at least annually. * An Annual report is produced by Planning Policy and Projects Group which core indicators for areas such as business development, housing, transport, local services, performance of policies in the adopted Local Plan, employment monitoring. It also looks at any deficiencies in the scope of current monitoring and how it can be improved in future. This report and previous ones are available to residents via the Council’s website: [<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-policy/monitoring> ] * The Council is part of the Herts & Beds Air Pollution Monitoring Network, and took the lead in re-procuring the air quality monitoring, network and website arrangements for 14 authorities in 2016. The Network maintains a website with comprehensive information on the quality of air in the region, and residents can access current pollution levels. Older air quality reports that are specific to NHDC can also be found on the Ricardo (contractor) website. [[Air Quality page](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/environmental-health/pollution/air-quality); [Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire air quality current & historic](http://www.airqualityengland.co.uk/local-authority/?la_id=408); [Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) Reports](http://www.airqualityengland.co.uk/local-authority/hnb-reports) ] * North Herts Community Safety Partnership’ (NH CSP)  is a high performing Community Safety Partnership and North Hertfordshire remains a low crime area with one of the lowest crime figures in Hertfordshire. The NH CSP annual Strategic Assessment identifies crime and disorder issues within the district, describes emerging trends and informs the annual revision of the Community Safety Action Plan. The most recent annual countywide strategic assessment indicates that there had been a 18.3% decrease in crime and disorder compared to the previous year with no areas experiencing severe or longstanding crime and disorder problems. The recent Community Safety consultation also indicated that 91% of residents were either ‘fairly’ or ‘very satisfied’ with their local area as place to live.  Eighty-two percent of respondents felt either ‘quite’ or ‘very safe’ in their local area and just under 70% were not worried about being a victim of crime.  .   As a result of the findings in the strategic assessment, public consultation (including feedback from the police priority setting forums as well as the survey) and current community safety data, the CSP priorities for 2021/22 are:   * **Anti-Social Behaviour (inc. criminal damage, deliberate fires and environmental crime)**: The NH CSP will continue to work together to reduce all elements of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage across the district * **Burglary Business and Community, Residential:** The NH CSP will work together to combat all burglary offences * **Protecting Vulnerable People:** The NH CSP will work together to increase awareness of issues such as; domestic abuse, child sexual exploitation, modern slavery and human trafficking, rogue trading, hate crime and those at risk of being drawn into extremism or terrorism and promote the need and importance of reporting these crimes.  The partnership will also work together to reduce the risk of repeat victimisation * **Rural Crime (inc. fly-tipping, coursing, theft and arson):** The NH CSP will work together to protect and support rural communities from countryside crimes * **Violence (inc. night-time economy crime, domestic abuse, gangs and county lines and substance misuse):**  The NH CSP will work together to tackle violent crime trends within the district * In October 2016 the Councils Access to Information Review process was considered and this updated to include a proposed time limit for Review consideration and DPA Complaints Procedure, which are in addition to the rights a requestee has to complain to the ICO [.[Access to Information - Review and DPA Complaints Procedure](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Complaints%20Procedure%20Oct%202016.pdf)]. * The Review time limit supplements the statutory one for handling requests (20 working days) and during 2020/21 the Council only failed to handle 1.03% of the 677 FOIs/EIRs requests within that period. There were 7 reviews, 1 of which was successful and the information released, 3 which were partially successful, and 3 which were unsuccessful. * There were 0 ICO cases. In respect to requests for information under the Data Protection Act - 165 Data Protection cases (including 22 Subject Access Requests) were received in the period 2020/21, of which 98.8% were successfully answered within the 40 calendar day deadline. There was 1 complaint lodged at the ICO. It was found in our favour. * A Communications Strategy 2019-2023 was published, with the two core themes to the strategy approach being: Positive and Proactive; and Digital First. In line with this, there is a focus on building our subscriber base for our new communication channel @NorthHerts and building awareness of NH Now through targeted social media activity. We have also enhanced our website offer by introducing a Find My Nearest Facility function. The Intranet has seen the addition of a Chatbot to assist with public enquires. * Council’s Outlook Magazine is produced and delivered to all households in the area and available on the Council’s website [[Outlook Magazine](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/customer-services/publications-and-consultations/outlook-magazine)]. It contains information about Council's services and events. * The Council’s In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, North Hertfordshire District actively supported the most impacted/vulnerable by the outbreak of the virus. When the country went into full scale lockdown on the 24th March, the council quickly set out its support by signposting residents and businesses to the Council’s (Community Support Fund) and central Government’s package of guidance and support measures including grant funding awards. The Council’s website established multiple pages with information and links and these have also been heavily publicised on various social media platforms and provide |  |  |
| *B1 ii) Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided.* *This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Record of decision making and supporting materials* | Full |  |
| *B1 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * There is an effective Committee administration process in places so that all Council meeting agendas, reports, minutes available for inspection, and these, together with public meeting recordings available on line (<https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>). * Pre-meetings and report deadlines dates are circulated in advance to Members and employees by Committee services. Outlook magazine also publishes the Meeting dates for the relevant quarter. * There is a presumption of openness and transparency, with reports (or confidential parts of reports) only being exempt for the public so long as statutory exemption requirements[[4]](#footnote-4) apply. Report authors consider such matters with the designed Constitutional “Proper officer”. * Meetings are open to the public, unless an exemption applies (and the press and public only required to leave for so long as such items are considered). * There is a Council and Democracy page on the NHDC website, that links to information about the Council, Councillors, MPs, Council meetings, Council departments, Forward Plan of Key Decisions, Petitions, Notices of Part 2 (exempt) decisions that the Council intends to take in the near future, delegated decisions, recordings/ the right to record Council meetings, Notices of Urgent Decisions. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy> * Public Registers and Delegated Decisions are available on the NHDC website for [Environmental Health and](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Environmental%20Health%20related%20Delegated%20Decisions%20Report%201st%20Jan-14%20Jan%2016.csv) Licensing [[Public Registers and Delegated Decisions](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/environmental-health/public-registers-and-delegated-decisions)]. * Planning applications, and review decisions made in the last 3 years [[View Planning Applications](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-applications/view-planning-applications)] * Review Delegated Executive and Non-Executive decisions[[5]](#footnote-5) <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/decisions/delegated-decisions-2017> * The Constitution also sets out what information is available to the public and how to engage with the Council in Section 3. * Has a system to record public meetings, and welcomes the ability of the press and public to record meetings under and adopted Protocol [[Protocol for Recording of Council Meetings](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Protocol%20for%20Recording%20of%20Council%20Meetings.pdf)]. Since the first Covid-19 lockdown, meetings have been held virtually via Zoom, streamed live to YouTube, and remain on the Council’s YouTube channel afterwards, thereby increasing accessibility to members of the public. <https://www.youtube.com/c/North-hertsGovUk>   It was reported at the March Overview and Scrutiny meeting the increase of wider engagement on virtual platforms - [Virtual and Physical Committee Meeting attendance by members of the public 2019 - 2021](https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15625/Virtual%20and%20Physical%20Meeting%20Attendance%20by%20members%20of%20the%20public%202019%20to%202021.pdf)  From the minutes:       A document showing attendance by members of the public at virtual and physical meetings between 2019 and 2021 had been produced, as requested at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 19 January 2021.  ·    For 2019/20 the numbers of attendees physically present at meetings was shown and for 2020/21 the number of live and recorded YouTube views were shown. These would be provided as part of the quarterly monitoring reports for information.   * Although the figures could not be directly compared, they did show that a wider audience was being reached albeit via recordings of Council meetings   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * See record of decision making action in A1iii) re *Shasha* decision and post Whistleblowing amendments to template following that investigation A1iv). * Throughout the pandemic, Councillor Surgeries, Town Talks, Area Committees and Environment Panel meetings have also been held virtually via Zoom to ensure continued openness and engagement with residents. |  |  |
| *B1 iii) Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear.* *This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Decision making protocols* * *Report pro-formas* * *Record of professional advice in reaching decisions* * *Meeting reports show details of advice given* * *Discussion between members and officers on the information needs of members to support decision making* * *Agreement on the information that will be provided and timescales* * *Calendar of dates for submitting, publishing and distributing timely reports is adhered to* | Full |  |
| *B1 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Constitution set the basis of decision making delegations/ remit for Council, Cabinet, Committee meetings, Member and officer delegations [[Council Constitution](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/council-constitution)]. * A calendar of meetings is approved each year at Annual Council in May [[Schedule of council meetings 2018/19](http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s2302/Council%20Meetings%202018-19.pdf)] * The Forward Plan, with key decisions is updated and placed on the Council’s website [[Council and Democracy](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy)] * An Annual Report on Key Decisions and cases of special urgency is provided to Full Council and placed on the Council’s website. * Adopted a standard report, Information note and delegated decision format, with guidance, with the report and delegated decision templates covering: an Executive summary, reasons for the recommendation(s), options considered, consultation, forward plan, background, relevant considerations, legal/ financial/ risk/ equalities/ social value and human resource implications [[Report template](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/Report%20template%20FOR%20USE%202017-18%20ONWARDS.docx) [Report guidance notes](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/Report%20guidance%20FOR%20USE%202017-18%20ONWARDS.docx) [Information Note Template](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/information_note_template.docx) [Information Note Guidance](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/information_note_template_and_guide.docx) [Template for Records of Decisions Made Under Delegated Authority](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/record_of_decision_template__3_2015_0.doc) [Guidance for Decisions Made Under Delegated Authority](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/guidance_final_9_3_15.pdf) ]   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * See the O & S Task and Finish Group review of Council report/ amendments proposed in the A1iii) example. The templates and guidance are now operative from the 2017/18 civic year. All reports have and continue to record professional advice from officers in respect of legal/ financial/ risk/ equalities/ social value and human resource implications. From 2020, report templates were amended to include a mandatory Environmental Implications section to reflect the Council’s objective to Respond to Challenges to the Environment. The process of review by O & S Committee, all the way through to approval of the new templates clearly demonstrates that Members have been part of the process for deciding what information should be included in reports, and or as appended to such reports/ records. Such information is provided in compliance with statutory requirements for provision of the report, publishing and inspection. * The Key Decisions-Annual Report of cases of special urgency informing the Council of any occasions over the past year where the provisions relating to “Special Urgency” had been used in connection with the publication of an intention to make a Key Decision. The report in June 2020 confirmed that in 2019/20 the Special Urgency powers had been used in regard to the Business Rate pooling in September 2019. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic a number of Key decisions were made by way of urgent delegated decisions   <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10899/Key%20Decisions%20-%20Annual%20Report%20on%20Cases%20of%20Special%20Urgency.pdf> |  |  |
| *B iv) Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions/ courses of action. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Community strategy* * *Use of consultation feedback* * *Citizen survey* | Substantial |  |
| *B1 iv) What NHDC has or does:*   * A Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2021 <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/strategic-partnership-involvement> * A 5 year Consultation Strategy for 2016-2020 [[Consultation Strategy 2016-2020](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Consultation%20Strategy%202016-2020.pdf)] that sets out the methods that will be used to consult and practical considerations for doing so. This entails various approaches to consultation and availability through the Council’s website. * Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the Council will involve the community in preparing the Local Plan and in considering planning applications [[Statement of Community Involvement - Adopted September 2015](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/15.09.14%20-%20SCI%20-%20adopted.pdf).A review of the statement is undertaken every 5 years. A consultation period ran form 12th February to the 25th March 2020. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/statement-community-involvement-sci> * A District Wide Survey every two years. [2017 District wide Survey - key findings report](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/DWS%202017%20Research%20Report%20FINAL.pdf) * The Communications Manager has published a [Communication strategy](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s3656/Appendix%20A%20Communications%20Strategy%202019%202023.pdf) adopted – 2019-23, [Strategy action plan 2018-19,](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s3657/Appendix%20B%20-%20NHDC%20Communications%20Strategy%20Action%20Plan%2018-19%20-%2019-20.doc.pdf) 19-20 and [Social media strategy and Policy 2018](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s3658/Appendix%20C%20-%20Social%20Media%20Strategy%20and%20Policy%202018.docx.pdf)-21 * There will be an increased focus on effective consultation between Council and the service users of North Hertfordshire. Methods of engagement will include Citizens Panels, focus groups, e- letter communication, and on line surveys.The report and decision record template prompts authors and documents consultation that has taken place and is part of the retained record for examination. * A communications team assists services in undertaking and understanding the value of carrying out consultation in their services. * Staff Consultation Forum. * A Joint Staff Consultative Committee (JSCC) is an informal committee which is attended by representatives of the Staff Consultation Forum and Trade Union(s). * Staff Consultation Policy [[Staff Consultation Policy](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/Staff%20Consultation%20Forum%20-%20August%202015.pdf)]. * The Council has a paid for subscription to Survey Monkey online survey tool. * Many services areas carry out their own statutory consultation (eg for Planning; Parking strategy). * Member and officer involvement in outside bodies, with Members nominated to over 60 such bodies in June 2020 Nominations of Representatives to Outside Bodies 2020/21 such as North Herts Homes, Citizen’s advice North Herts, Letchworth Sustainability forum, North Herts Ethnic forum, Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, Walsworth Community Centre and Royston Advisory Council. This assists with community engagement and reviewing use of the resources to see that outcomes are achieved. <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10894/Appointment%20of%20Members%20of%20Committees%20for%20202021.pdf>   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * As outlined in A2iv), the Sustainable Community Strategy included the ongoing commitment to, for example, promote equality of opportunity and improve health and wellbeing. The Strategy aspirations have been renewed through the North Herts Local Strategic Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Partnership. Progress of the strategy is reported regularly to NHP meetings and via annual reports presented at community conferences. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/policy/strategic-partnership-involvement> * The Local Plan Proposed Submission consultation process is a statutory one. As a Local Planning authority, NHDC has to prepare a Local Plan and keep it under review. The Local Plan has to set out the Council’s plans for the area, including allocating sites for development, identifying areas to be protected from development and setting the policies to be used when determining planning applications. Full Council endorsed key elements of the draft plan in July 2016. The final version of the Proposed Submission Local Plan was then approved for public consultation by Cabinet in September 2016 and a 6 week further public consultation took place between October and December 2016 [[Final consultation on proposed Local Plan for North Hertfordshire](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/final-consultation-proposed-local-plan-north-hertfordshire)] and received (5675 individual) representation. The Proposed Submission was then considered by Cabinet and finally approved by Full Council for Submission (with Schedule of Proposed Additional Modifications) on 11 April 2017 for examination by the Secretary of State. The Local Plan was submitted to Government on the 9th June 2017. The Consultation Statement [Regulation 22 Consultation Statement](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/file/6243) demonstrates how the Council’s Statement of Community Involvement has been followed when undertaking the four stages of consultation during 2013-2016 as part of the prepare of the Submission draft. The latest updates regarding the examinations can be found here –   <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-examination/examination-latest-news-and-updates>   * Previous consultation on the new Local Plan are also provided on the Council’s website [[Proposed Submission Local Plan 2011-2031](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-policy/local-plan/proposed-submission-local-plan-2011-2031)] * A report to update on Local Plan Implementation was taken to Cabinet on 16th March 2021. As well as updating on progress, it had the aim of seeking approval to conduct a consultation upon the Inspector’s proposed Further Main Modifications to the Plan and documentation produced under delegated authority. It was resolved that officers be authorised to conduct a consultation on the proposed Further Main Modifications and relevant supporting documents. <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15805/Local%20Plan%20Further%20Modifications.pdf> * Joint Staff Consultative Committee (JSCC) is an informal committee which is attended by representatives of the Staff Consultation Forum and Trade Union(s). It does not make decisions, but provides an opportunity for Members to discuss employee relations and Human Resource management issues. It meets 4 times per year as part of the consultation with employees [see Section 10 of the Constitution]. The Staff Consultation Forum meets monthly and during the last year has in-putted I to issues relating to the office accommodation refurbishment and move; Local Plan; Equality & Diversity Policy Review. Draft and finalised minutes are made available on the Council’s intranet. * In addition to this the Council now has a Shaping Our Future Group, which is designed to bring together staff and Councillors to input into the future direction of the organisation with regards to succession planning, automation, commercialisation, and diversity. The Inclusion Group feeds into the Shaping our Future group on matters of equality, diversity, and inclusion. Its purpose is to understand the experiences of staff mainly in relation to protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010, and to drive forward the diversity/inclusion agenda. |  |  |
| *B 2) Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders* |  |  |
| *B2 i) Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Communication strategy* | Substantial |  |
| *B2 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * A Customer Service Strategy that aims to put people first [[Customer Service Strategy page](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/customer-services/customer-service-strategy)]. * A Communications Strategy and action plan [[Communications Strategy page](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/customer-services/publications-and-consultations/communications-strategy)] that sets out the approach to communicating with residents, partners and the media. * Communicates the district vision and achievements against its Corporate Objectives in a quarterly publication, ‘Outlook’ that is delivered to residents. * A Consultation Strategy [see above]. The 5 year [Strategy](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Consultation%20Strategy%202016-2020.pdf) has recently been updated to reflect the advances in technology and the manner in which consultations are conducted * A Media relations protocol [[Media Relations Protocol](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Media%20relations%20protocol.pdf)] to provide direction and guidance to employees and Councillors on issues relating to the media as well as to provide the media with an indication of the service they should expect to receive from the Council. * A Social Media policy [[Social media policy](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/communications-and-print/social-media-guidance)] * Guidance to Members for Social Media [[Guidance for Social Media](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/MIS%20note%20on%20social%20media%20June%202016.pdf)]. * Use social media sites and text alerts service to widen the range of communication methods with local residents. * A Corporate business planning process that includes an annual timetable of formal consultation events, ensuring our statutory, voluntary, community parish and town council, and business partners have the opportunity to comment on budget proposals (both investments and efficiencies) under consideration. * An effective partnering arrangement for strategic engagement with institutional stakeholders through the North Herts Partnership. * Member and officer involvement in outside bodies, with Members nominated to over 60 such bodies in May 2018 [Nominations of Representatives to Outside Bodies 2018/19](http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s2306/Item%2017%20-%20Outside%20Bodies%202018-19.pdf) such as North Herts Homes, Citizen’s advice North Herts, Letchworth Sustainability forum, North Herts Ethnic forum, Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, Walsworth Community Centre and Royston Advisory Council. This assists with community engagement and reviewing use of the resources to see that outcomes are achieved.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Council participated in the National Customer Service Week between 2-6 October 2017. It was an opportunity raise awareness of customer service and the vital role it plays. To mark the week, there was a busy programme of activities for residents/ stakeholders. Residents attending the CSC were invited to participate in a short survey to give us their feedback, and given help to use the Council’s online services and feed back on the experience of using the online services   <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/customer-services-week-%E2%80%93-nhdc-promotes-its-self-serve-channels>  Annual reports are provided to the North Herts Partnership from the Citizens Advice, Herts Minority Ethnic forum and NHCVS Impact report, to demonstrate support of the shared our vision (‘to make North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper’) (see also A2 iv)/ B1i). The North Hertfordshire Partnership also engages comprehensively through distribution of the Performance Reward Grant (PRG) allocation. [North Herts CVS Impact report](https://app.box.com/s/x7dvvluhjmu9h4igsu5o1h1fqbsmr637); ; North Herts CAB annual report for the financial year 2020; North Herts Ethnic forum annual report for the financial year 2020 (see the Charity Commission Website). |  |  |
| *B2 ii) Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Database of stakeholders with whom the authority should engage and for what purpose and a record of an assessment of the effectiveness of any changes* | Substantial |  |
| *B2 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * A Citizens Panel [see above]. * A Consultation Strategy that sets out the basic approach to consultation and assesses effectiveness from the last strategic period [see above]. * North Herts Strategic Partnership [see above]. * North Hertfordshire forms part of the [Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership](http://www.hertfordshirelep.com/) to ensure a prosperous economy for the district’s residents and businesses.Officers also attend various cross District equivalents meetings across service areas, for example for Legal, Planning, Corporate Policy and Environmental Services, which aids shared good practice Shared services / partnerships arrangements are explored as and when appropriate to do so. * A report and record of decision format that clearly documents consultation and outcomes as part of the decision making process/ any changes suggested and actioned. * North Hertfordshire is also part of the Herts Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), which looks to work collaboratively to tackle climate change and environmental degradation across Hertfordshire. The group currently works across 4 key themes: Water, Biodiversity, Carbon Reduction, and Transport. North Herts leads on Biodiversity.   Database for business rate payers for consultation.   * Local Plan consultation list. * Local interest group forum. * Part of Hertfordshire Property Partnership (HPP). * Legal Services are part of “Herts First” Legal Service provision and the Public Law Partnership (PLP). * Legal Services (with other authorities in Hertfordshire) have a protocol in place with Hertfordshire Constabulary for the reporting of alleged offences by Councillors.   Outcomes/ examples:   * Hertfordshire’s building control services were combined to form a single company called Hertfordshire Building Control (HBC), made up of seven different Hertfordshire Councils. The company was formed in August 2016 and is now operating from offices in Welwyn Garden City. HBC has divided the seven council areas into three new work areas along major routes in the county. Each team has a name: the A1 team, the M25 team and the A10 team. This initiative means that HBC is now has the largest team of qualified surveyors in the county and work in collaboration with local builders, agents and architects. Any work that falls outside of the boundaries of these councils will now be undertaken by a second *company called The Building Control (Hertfordshire) Company.* Information on the services provided can be found on these links [Building Control](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/building-control) & [HBC](https://www.hertfordshirebc.co.uk/). The arrangements were reviewed in 2017 and 2018 with a new Commissioning Panel being established, for the contract officers from the authorities, with a view to reviewing the Services Agreement.<https://www.hertfordshirebc.co.uk/> * The Hertfordshire LEP has the vision that by 2030,’ Hertfordshire will be among the UK’s leading economies, helping realising the full economic potential od the assets an opportunities within the ‘ Golden Triangle’. This is underpinned by 4 priorities – 1. Maintaining global excellence in science and technology, 2. Harnessing our relationships with London (& elsewhere) 3. Re-invigorating our places for the 21st Century and 4. Foundations for growth. Programmes, events and achievements are documented on the LEP site. * Legal continue to be part of “Herts First” Legal Service provision, providing assistance to other authorities such as East Herts, St Albans and Central Bedfordshire during 2020/21. PLP (Public Law Partnership) PLP is an Eastern region legal partnership and membership also provides and internal local authority market place and opportunities for benchmarking, shared learning and good practice. * The Council is a Member of the HPP which secured over £400,000 grant funding through the one public estate programme. |  |  |
| *B2 iii) Ensuring that partnerships are based on:*  *–– trust*  *–– a shared commitment to change*  *–– a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners and that the added value of partnership working is explicit.* *This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Partnership framework* * *Partnership protocols* | Substantial |  |
| *B2 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * See LEPs and North Herts Strategic Partnership approach to partnership [A2 v); B2ii)]. * Working with Town Centres in Partnership to co-ordinate and progress the work in the town and tackle growth and development challenges. * Shared Service Partnerships for Internal Audit, Anti-Fraud and Insurance, which recognise the benefits of partnership working. * A Grants Policy, which sets out the basis of supporting local groups/ partner organisations.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * Within North Hertfordshire there are four town centre partnerships for Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston and the Council is a member of each one. The partnerships include members from various organisations; retailers, businesses, public sector organisations, voluntary and community groups, all of whom have an interest in their town centre. The Council supports these partnerships through funding and Member nominations/ participation within the Partnerships [<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/business/economic-development/town-centre-management>]. * The Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS) is a partnership of councils and housing providers across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire with the aim of deterring, preventing, investigating and pursuing fraud for each of its partners providing a robust and resilient service. NHDC was a founder member of the SAFS Partnership In December 2016 the SAFS Board agreed to continue with the existing service from April 2017 and the Partnership has now been joined by Luton Borough Council from January 2017[[Shared anti-fraud service (SAFS) - progress report 22.3.17](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Finance,%20Audit%20and%20Risk%20Committee/201703221930/Agenda/$att12174.docx.pdf)].Update!   **ACTION COMPLETED - The revised Area Committee Grants was revised and agreed in January 2020. All five Area Committees were consulted in regard to the proposed alterations. The scope of the award criteria was widened to allow other volunteer or not-for-profit organisations to apply for funding.**  **In addition, the Terms of Reference of the District wide community facilities Capital and Revenue Grant Panel were also agreed to ensure consistency of approach. The policy criteria was shared with each of the Area Committees before being submitted to cabinet and Full Council for approval in January 2020.** |  |  |
| *B 3) Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users* |  |  |
| *B3 i) Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes.* *This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Record of public consultations* * *Partnership framework* | Substantial |  |
| *B3 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Council hold records on public consultation for the last 4 years on its website. * It has Strategic Policies in place with stakeholders and partner organisations [see A2 v); B2ii), B2 iii)].   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * In 2016 the Council undertook a review of its Grants Policy. As part of the committed approach to partner organisations, such as Citizens advice and North Herts Centre for Voluntary Services and half yearly reviews undertaken in October / November 2016 it was determined that the Citizens Advice North Herts, North Herts Centre for Voluntary Service and the North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum annual awards move to formal contractual arrangements with Authority for three consecutive years as from 2017/18 [*https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/201703281930/Agenda/$att12260.doc.pdf*](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/201703281930/Agenda/$att12260.doc.pdf) . Following the end of this 3-year contractual arrangement, the Council entered into a further contractual arrangement for three consecutive years (20/21, 21/22, 22/23) with these organisations via delegated decision in 2020. * SIAS reviewed the Council’s Grant procedures and confirmed a Substantial level of assurance. |  |  |
| *B3 ii) Ensuring that communication methods are effective and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement.* *This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Communications strategy* | Substantial |  |
| *B3 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Council has a Communications Strategy and Media Relations Protocol [see B2i) above]. * Media training for Executive Members/ Chairmen of Committee.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * A review of the Consultation strategy has been undertaken, being reported back to SMT in May 2018. The Council will be considering better use of its Citizen’s Panel and best practice. While the strategy’s initial timespan was 2016-2020, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic mean that the strategy will be reviewed in 2021/22.   A revised [Communication strategy](http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s3655/Communications%20Strategy%202019%20-%202023.pdf) 2019-2023 has been adopted, while the [Social Media strategy adopted in 2018 runs to 2021.](http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s3658/Appendix%20C%20-%20Social%20Media%20Strategy%20and%20Policy%202018.docx.pdf)  The Council's Communications Strategy for 2019 - 2023 outlines how we will plan and manage our communications activities over the next five years.  It sets out our approach to communicating with residents, partners, businesses, with staff and councillors. The Strategy covers the range of communications activities including media relations, external communications, internal communications, website and social media. In addition, ‘Consultation’ session were organised with the Senior Management Group to refresh managers of the principle of the Consultation strategy.   * A media training session was provided to Cabinet Members in November 2019. |  |  |
| *B3 iii) Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Communications strategy* * *Joint strategic needs assessment* | Substantial |  |
| *B3 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Council has a Communications Strategy and Media Relations Protocol [see B2i) above]. * Hertfordshire County Council host a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which includes a district breakdown of health, social care needs and areas of inequality [joint strategic needs assessment](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/jsna/what-is-the-joint-strategic-needs-assessment.aspx) * Streamlined Service Delivery plan as B1 i). * Housing, education and employment needs assessments (sports etc LP).   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * When feedback from the District Wide Survey shows residents do not always feel well informed about how the Council spends its money or about how to get involved in local decision making, the results are used by senior managers to examine any issues and identify where service improvements can be made to address them. |  |  |
| *B3 iv) Implementing effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how their views have been taken into account.* *This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Communications strategy* | Moderate |  |
| *B3 iv) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Council has a Communications Strategy, a revised consultation strategy and Media Relations Protocol [see B2i) above]. * A Report and record of decision template, which includes a specific section on consultation undertaken/ changes effected as a result.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * District wide survey 2019 .District wide survey key findings 2019 <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10366/District%20Wide%20Survey%202019%20-%20Key%20Findings.pdf> |  | (see action B1 iv) action identified to consider feed- back mechanism linked to consultation exercises). |
| *B3 v) Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity.* *This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Processes for dealing with competing demands within the community, for example a consultation* | Substantial |  |
| *B3 v) What NHDC has or does:*   * A Citizen panel which is open to all residents that is made up of a cross section of the community in terms of demographic mix of age, gender education, status and location.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Green Space Management Strategy was an example of how we used the feedback from the Citizen Panel to make amendments to the proposals [see B1 iv)]. * Waste collection and Street Cleansing Consultation – in summer of 2017 NHDC and East Herts carried out an online consultation, seeking residents’ views on a range of potential contract options for the joint waste and recycling contract ([Summary of key findings](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/NHDC%20Waste%20and%20Recycling%20contract%20options%20survey%20outcomes%20November%202017.pdf)) * Local Plan consultation process balances competition views of those wanting housing and those not wanting housing. Consider and take a balanced view of competition demands. |  |  |
| *B3 vi) Taking account of the interests of future generations of tax payers and service users.* *This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Reports* * *Joint strategic needs assessment* | Full |  |
| *B3 vi) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Council has a multi-media approach to contact – on line, in person, by phone, by post, with self service and social media sites (on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, dedicated e-mail bulletins and digital magazine). The use social media sites and text alerts is geared towards engagement with younger residents. * Assesses needs through evidence-based Strategic needs assessments (used to support the preparation of the Local Plan 2011-2031<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-examination/examination-library>      * Produces a monitoring report for key indicators business development, housing, transport, local services, performance of policies in the adopted Local Plan, employment monitoring. It also looks at any deficiencies in the scope of current monitoring and how it can be improved in future. This report and previous ones are available to residents via the Council’s website: [<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-policy/monitoring> ] [See also B1 i) B1 iv)] * The Council engages with different groups through the North Hertfordshire Partnership and its nominated Members on bodies such as Baldock Youth and Community Association, Royston & District Sports Council and Sport North Herts.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * During 2020/21 the Council has helped fund a number of initiatives aimed at younger residents, including through its Area Committee grant system the following : - .   North Herts Emotional Support in Schools Service - Funding for online counselling service and support for families  Young Peoples Puppet Theatre - Puppet Theatre project in Breachwood Green JMI  North Herts African Caribbean Community - events to celebrate Black History Month  North Herts. Minority Ethnic Forum - 3 YEAR funding agreement 2020 – 2023  Tilehouse Counselling - 40 additional counselling sessions to deal with Coronavirus  Home-Start Hertfordshire - running costs through Covid impact to maintain service  7th Letchworth Scout Group Covid support  2 Samaritans (North Herts. and Stevenage) - Purchase of Headsets and monitors  PHASE (Providing Help and Support in Education) - virtual mentoring sessions to young people in Hitchin  Lea Sports Football Club - cost of new goalposts  Strathmore Fun Club - funding for new and outdoor sports equipment  Hitchin Fun Club - funding to help cover the cost of our annual Holiday Clubs  Imajica Theatre Company - Virtual Panto  In addition to this, grants have been given to a number of organisations providing food for individuals and families in need, particularly in light of the increased demand resulting from the pandemic.  Some of the projects that received funding from the Area Committees and were due to go ahead in 2020/21 were unable to due to the pandemic. This includes:  6 week outdoor play sessions at Norton Common: Letchworth Area Committee awarded Groundwork Hertfordshire a grant of almost £3,000 to help deliver a 6 week outdoor play sessions at Norton common. The sessions were due to take place in the summer of 2020 and to cater for children of 8 years and older. The aim of the sessions was to encourage children to use the common as a natural playground, expel the wilderness and learn about conservation.  Free football sessions for girls: Southern rural Committee awarded Knebworth Football club a grant of £500 to provide free football sessions to girls at a local school. When the sessions go ahead they will give girls the opportunity to be physically active, learn new skills and provide pathways to play football both inside and outside. |  |  |

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| Principle C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits |  |  |
| The long-term nature and impact of many of local government’s responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable. Decisions should further the authority’s purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes, and remain within the limits of authority and resources. Input from all groups of stakeholders, including citizens, service users, and institutional stakeholders, is vital to the success of this process and in balancing competing demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available. |  |  |
| *C1) Defining outcomes* |  |  |
| *C1 i) Having a clear vision which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation’s purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provides the basis for the organisation’s overall strategy, planning and other decisions. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Vision used as a basis for corporate and service planning* | Full |  |
| *C1 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * Council Objectives and Plan approval process [see A2 i) B1 i)] * Council vision based on joint member and Senior management engagement and workshop [see A2 iv) B1 i) B2 i)]. * Service planning process. * NHDC Resilience Plan. * Employee Regular Performance Review (RPR) process and workforce planning to support the Council to achieve its objectives, improve/ manage performance and individual’s development   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Council has recently revised the Corporate Service Planning process, which supports delivery of the Corporate Plan and in context of the Medium Term Financial strategy. A four year plan Service Delivery plan outlines the high level work programme and priorities for the council with Service Action Plans providing details of the projects and actions that deliver the specified objectives. * The Council believes that good service planning is a cornerstone of effective performance management. An effective Service Plan provides a solid foundation for services, keeping priorities and principles firm even in times of change. They are a vital part of the ‘golden thread’, which links corporate and community objectives through to individual performance plans, ensuring each person in the Council knows how what they do contributes to achieving the Council’s objectives. Priorities/ targets are set from the Council Plan and linked to overall Service Delivery Plan and individual Service Action Plans.   The overall Service Delivery Plan identifies high level project to the Objectives and the individual Service Action Plan identifies how each individual action meets the Council Objectives.  Service Delivery Plan is a four year plan with the view to update it annually and reviewed every six months and placed on the Council’s Objectives/ Plan page on the website [[Corporate Objectives page](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/corporate-objectives)].   * RPR system which was audited by SIAS in 2017. The system secured full assurance which demonstrated its organisational purpose in the Corporate priorities process [see A1 i) A2 iii)]. The RPR process includes alignment to the adopted Values and Behaviours as set ou in the Council plan . * The Council’s People Strategy incorporates the Workforce Development Plan [[People Strategy 2015-2020](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/20150828%20Final%20People%20Strategy%202015%20-%202020%202%20version%20without%20work%20plan.pdf)]. The People Strategy progress is monitored at quarterly Joint Staff Consultative Committee (‘JSCC’) meetings. Mitigations measures to address this include, for example: monitoring turnover rates; job evaluation; employee benefits; secondment opportunities; mentoring; management development; leadership development; apprentice scheme; career development; and home working. The Council reports on a number of performance indicators to the JSCC on the workforce profile. The Council recognises the importance that effective workforce planning plays in achieving the Council’s Objectives and has identified this as a Medium Corporate Risk. * NHDC has recently revised its Resilience plan. The Emergency plan, continuity plan and supporting documents have been combined into one plan with supporting Response and support plans and documents. GO Cards have been developed as a procedural guide to managing an incident. * A awareness raising Business continuity week took place in May 2018 to encourage staff to be aware of the relevant procedures/individual responsibilities and key service infrastructure plans in case of an emergency/disruption. * North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) faces significant challenges and therefore a need to continually develop and adapt. To focus the way the organisation addresses this a programme called ‘Shaping our Future’ was introduced in 2020 to co-ordinate the many elements.  To steer and support Shaping our Future’ activities and provide co-ordination between the development of activities related to Elected Members and those related to Officers and the Management of the organisation. These elements should be complimentary and result in achieving the stated outcomes of:     A high quality, diverse, inclusive and resilient workforce, meeting the needs of our community;  A healthy, creative and productive organisation;  A vibrant culture that embodies our values and behaviours.  The Council have also undergone a Corporate Peer Challenge (January 2020)  The Corporate Peer Challenge is designed by the LGA to provide a robust and effective improvement tool managed and delivered by the sector, for the sector. Peers are at the heart of the peer challenge process and consist of Councillors and senior officers from other District/Borough Councils who provide a ‘practitioner perspective’ and ‘critical friend’ challenge. |  |  |
| *C1 ii) Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Community engagement and involvement* * *Corporate and service plans* * *Community strategy* | Full |  |
| *C1 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * Consultation processes, Strategies and arrangements as detailed in B above. * Council Objectives, Plan and Service Planning detailed in C1 i) above. * Corporate Equalities Strategy. * Joint Staff Consultative Committee (JSCC) and Staff Consultation Forum. * Equalities analysis which records the impact assessment a part of the report and record of decision template, which will assess any impact. * Sustainable Community Strategy which is delivered strategically through the North Hertfordshire Partnership [see A2 iv) B1 iv) & links].   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * Consultation / Communications / Corporate Plan / Local Plan submission examples linked to above. * The Council is subject to a Public Sector Equality Duty, which places a responsibility on the Council to consider all individuals when carrying out its day to day work (in formulating policy, delivering services and in relation to its own employees). It is a duty of public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people carrying out their activities. This duty is supplemented by a Corporate Equality Strategy to ensure that the Council treats everyone equally. The Council is committed to equality of opportunity in employment and aims to have a workforce that is representative of the community that it serves. The Equality objectives are based around the Corporate Objectives, with all priorities embracing the work that the Council does with our local communities, parishes, town councils and charities. * The Equality Strategy was reviewed in 2016/17 (including via the Staff Consultation Forum) and is supplemented by the yearly Cumulative Equality Impact Assessment. The strategy is due for review in 2022. [Equality and diversity documents](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/equality-and-diversity) Completed equalities analysis are part of the former report / record of decision template and new report template and are available for inspection/ published together with Council meeting agendas and reports at the Council’s offices and on its website <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/council-and-committee-meetings>   Equality and diversity documents Completed equalities analysis are part of the former report / record of decision template and new report template and are available for inspection/ published together with Council meeting agendas and reports at the Council’s offices and on its website <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/council-and-committee-meetings>  A cumulative equalities assessment is annually prepared to review decision making throughout the civic year. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Cumulative%20Equality%20assessment%202020-2021.pdf> |  |  |
| *C1 iii) Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Regular reports on progress* | Full |  |
| *C1 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * A Leadership Team that reviews priorities, key projects and Performance Indicator reports and Top Risks. * A Performance Management system that includes a corporate Data Quality Policy and uses the Pentana (Risk reporting) System to improve its performance management. * A [NHDC Project Management Framework](file:///C:\node\2373). This includes a [Risk & Opportunities Management Strategy 2017-20](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/Risk%20%26%20Opportunities%20Management%20Strategy%202017-20%20%282018%20Amendments%20to%20Final%20Version%20Approved%20by%20Cabinet%20on%2019.12.17%29.pdf) and Project Evaluation steps, benefit review plan, project risk logs, lessons learned, end project reports and lessons logs that assist with regular reports, evaluation and delivering the desired outcome. * A Performance and Risk Management Team which oversees the Project Management Framework, and offers support / guidance relating to its application and use. * Pentana: an integrated suite of corporate performance and risk management software. It is a web-based system, which has positively affected the way NHDC records, monitors and uses performance indicators, improvement actions and risks. All NHDC Councillors and officers have view only access to the system via a guest login. * Reporting performance figures to O & S; Finance, Audit &Risk and Cabinet. * Reporting quarterly budget, capital and treasury management information to FAR Committee and Cabinet. * Reporting Risk Management Information to FAR Committee and Cabinet. * SIAS and SAFS provide updates on progress as against their Audit/ Service Plans to FAR Committee.   *Outcomes/ examples:*  SMT receives quarterly performance and risk information prior to these being reported through to the relevant Committees and Cabinet. Any recommendations are then made to Cabinet, in March, prior to the new financial year/ their adoption. |  |  |
| *C1 iv) Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Performance trends are established and reported upon* * *Risk management protocols* | Substantial |  |
| *C1 iv) What NHDC has or does:*   * Processes for performance management/ reporting as set out above in C1 iii) above. * A Performance and Risk Management Team. * A Risk Management Group that meets quarterly. * A Risk Management Member ‘champion’ (currently the Executive Member for Finance and IT), who is part of the Performance and Risk Management Team. * A [Risk & Opportunities Management Strategy 2017-20](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/Risk%20%26%20Opportunities%20Management%20Strategy%202017-20%20%28Final%20Version%20Approved%20by%20Cabinet%20on%2019.12.17%29.docx) * A [Risk & Opportunities Management Policy Statement 2017.](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/Policy%20Statement%202017%20%28Final%20Version%20Approved%20by%20Cabinet%20on%2019.12.17%29%20%E2%80%93%20Signed%2022.01.18.pdf) * The Pentana software for performance/ risk management monitoring. * The FAR Committee has the responsibility to monitor risk and Cabinet for awareness and overall management of risk. * Financial Management Code (CIPFA) * Risk Management Framework documents (replacing the current Policy and Strategy)   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * At the July 2019 meeting of the FAR Committee, it recommended amendments to the Annual Report on Risk Management and referred on to Cabinet for consideration and approval.   <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s5812/Appendix%20B%20-%20Annual%20Report%20on%20Risk%20Management%202018-19.docx.pdf>.  This continuous updating demonstrates effective development and operation of the risk management system.   * At the September 2019 and March 2020 meeting, recommendations were made by FAR Committee through to Cabinet changing categories of risk. These changes to the Corporate risks for the Quarter, were namely:      * Brexit risk to retain its current risk score of 9; * Managing the Councils Finances to retain its current risk score of 9, be noted * A further amendment as approved at the December meeting regarding the Corporate risk for the quarter, namely impact of Anti Social Behaviour on Council Facilities to retain its current risk score of 7 be noted <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=146&MId=2215&Ver=4> * A Financial Management Code was presented to FAR to the December 2019 meeting to provide an assessment of how well the Council performs against the Financial Management Code launched by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and actions that it plans to take. * At the March meeting the Waste and Covid-19 risks were considered. The Committee also reviewed the Risk Management Framework to replace the current Policy and Strategy <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=146&MId=2217&Ver=4> * March 2020 update - <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s4610/Risk%20and%20Opportunities%20Management%20Update.pdf>   A Risk Management update was presented at the July 2020 meeting and it was resolved:  (1)       That the Corporate Risks for the quarter, namely the review of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) risk with an unchanged scored of 9 and the review of the Cyber Risks and Data Protection Risk with an unchanged score of 8, be noted;    (2)     That the Annual Report on Risk Management be noted.    (3)       That the Executive Member for Recycling and Waste Management be requested to provide a written response to the following questions to the next meeting of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee on 7 September 2020:       * <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s11351/Risk%20Management%20Update.pdf>   A further update was provided at the September 2020 meeting and it was recommended to Cabinet:  (1)       That the Corporate Risk for the impact of Anti-Social Behaviour on Council Facilities be retained at a risk score of 7 instead of reduced to 5;    (2)       That the Novel Coronavirus (covid19) Corporate risk be retained at a risk score of 9 instead of reduced to 8;    (3)       That the New Corporate Risk, Covid19 – Leisure Management Contract, be proposed as a risk score of 8.    (4)       That the Route Optimisation of Collection Rounds Risk be archived.  <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s11610/Risk%20Management%20Update.pdf>  and December 2020 meeting it was resolved and recommended to cabinet;  ***RESOLVED:***    (1)       That the reviews of the Corporate Risks for the quarter be noted;    (2)       That the amendments to the Risk Management Framework as part of the Management response to the SIAS Audit, be noted.    ***RECOMMENDED TO CABINET***:    (1)       That the risk score for the Covid 19 Leisure Management Contract risk be increased from 8 to 9;    (2)       That the amendments to the Risk Management Framework as part of the Management response to the SIAS Audit be noted and approved  <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14511/RISK%20MANAGEMENT%20UPDATE.pdf>  and March 2021  It was recommended to Cabinet that:  (1)       That there be no change to the risk score for Corporate Planning risks, subject to the note ‘representation prepared with regard the speculative expansion of London Luton Airport to four runways’ being archived as deemed no longer relevant.    (2)       That there be an increase in the risk score from 5 to 7 and a target risk score of 6 for the Increased Homelessness Corporate risk;    (3)       That there be no change to the risk score for the review of the Waste Corporate risks subject to the risk score being agreed and signed off by the Executive Member for Waste and Recycling.    (4)       That that the Workforce Planning Corporate Risk be archived. Original Risk score 5, final risk score 5. |  |  |
| *C1 v) Managing service users expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *An agreed set of quality standard measures for each service element and included in service plans* * *Processes for dealing with competing demands within the community* | Substantial |  |
| *C1 v) What NHDC has or does:*   * Performance indicators and targets are set through the Corporate Plan/ Objectives and Service Planning process [see C1 i) above]. These are approved by Cabinet in the March and incorporated in relevant service plan areas and monitored/ reported as detailed above [see C1 iii)]. The Plans and targets are made available on the Council’s Corporate Objectives website page [<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/corporate-objectives>]. * Customer care standards that aims to deliver high responsive, high quality, value for money, customer focussed services [[Customer Care Standards page](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/customer-services/customer-care-standards)]. * A [3 Cs Policy](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/NHDC%20Complaints%20Policy.pdf) and procedure for dealing with comments, compliments and complaints that allow the Council to balance those needs against effective targets and improve service where necessary and/ or possible. * Outlook magazine information on service provision and budgets quarterly.   *Outcomes/ examples:*  The Performance indicators approved for 2020/21 included new, revised and unaltered ones were presented at Cabinet March 2019 -  https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10180/New%20Year%20Performance%20indicators%20to%20be%20monitored%202021.pdf |  |  |
| *C 2) Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits* |  |  |
| *C 2 i) Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision.* *This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Capital investment is structured to achieve appropriate life spans and adaptability for future use or that resources (eg land) are spent on optimising social, economic and environmental wellbeing:*   *–– Capital programme*  *–– Capital investment strategy* | Substantial |  |
| *C2 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) looks five years ahead to ensure the Council’s commitment to the delivery of its Objectives ( <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/budgets-and-spending/medium-term-financial-strategy> ), A Treasury Management Strategy, [[Treasury Management Policy Statement](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Finance,%20Audit%20and%20Risk%20Committee/201701231930/Agenda/$att11909.docx.pdf), [Treasury Management Practices.](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Finance,%20Audit%20and%20Risk%20Committee/201701231930/Agenda/$att11910.docx.pdf) [Treasury Management Strategy 2018/19](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Finance,%20Audit%20and%20Risk%20Committee/201701231930/Agenda/$att11911.docx.pdf) to balance cash flow and fund the Council’s capital plans, which is reviewed each year and monitored quarterly. (January FAR committee), An annual Treasury Management review also takes place http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s5308/ANNUAL%20TREASURY%20MANAGEMENT%20REVIEW%20201819.pdfThe Finance Audit & Risk Committee and Cabinet reviews the Council’s revenue, capital and treasury management activity on a quarterly basis. * All reports and records of decisions record the financial, social value and equality impacts [see above]. The Social Value policy and approach is covered in terms of the impact on procurement and the “Go Local” Policy, detailed in the Contract Procurement Rules [[Section 20 Contract Procurement Rules](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Contract%20Procedure%20Rules%2024%2011%2016%20%28final%29_0.pdf)]. * Social Value and Go Local guidance is provided for procurement [[Social Values Guide](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/social_value_guide.pdf); [PPN - Supporting Apprenticeships and Skills](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/PPN%20-%20Supporting%20Apprenticeships%20and%20Skills.pdf); [Social Values Act 2012 - Social Values flowchart](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/SVA%20Flow%20chart.pdf); [Social Values Act 2012 - Go Local flowchart](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/Go%20Local%20Flow%20Chart.pdf), [The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012: Introductory guide](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/690780/Commissioner_Guidance_V3.8.pdf)   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Quarterly reviews processes outlined ensure the Council has sound processes and controls over the Treasury function that minimise risks to the Council. * The Council’s key financial systems are subject to an annual review by internal audit. In terms of capital issues (eg land) the SIAS Asset Management / IT Asset Management assessments provided a Moderate/ Substantial assurance respectively. Recommendations for the former will be reported back through the Committee process. * The [Investment Strategy](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s4190/Integrated%20Capital%20and%20Treasury%20Strategy%202019-20.pdf.pdf) (Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy which replaces the Capital Programme, and Treasury Strategy) for 2019/20 was considered by Cabinet on 29th January 2019 and approved by Full Council on 7th February 2019. The Strategy looks to manage investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions and the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks. It ensures the Council’s compliance with CIPFA’s code of practice on Treasury Management, the Local Government Act 2003, statutory guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the CIPFA Prudential Code. As well as determining and managing the Councils risk appetite in respect of investments. * The Social Value provisions within the Contract Procurement Rules were recently updated as part of the review/ approval by Full Council on 24 November 2016.   Capital investment in land and buildings, for example for improvement purposes to NH Leisure aim to increase income yield. The Property Acquisition Development Strategy was approved by Cabinet 28th January 2020 |  |  |
| *C2 ii) Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the organisation’s intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Discussion between members and officers on the information needs of members to support decision making* * *Record of decision making and supporting materials* | Substantial |  |
| *C2 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * A Committee – Cabinet and / or Full Council decision making process that takes account of risk, makes decision making transparent and allows for issues to be teased out and further information requested prior to a final decision being made. * Where relevant, decision call in by O & S before implementation of Executive Decisions. * 3-5 year Strategies/ Policies (such as the MTFS) that balance risk and opportunity within the political cycle and financial constraints. * Member involvement in reviewing and recommending (and then approving) Report/ Record of Decision templates [see A1 iii) Overview &Scrutiny Task and finish group].   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * One of the key examples of balancing competing demands and long term aspirations is demonstrated in the Local Plan process and potential new settlement/ Town idea that has been mooted. The draft Local Plan process was commenced on or around 2010 with a 2011-2030 Plan, that following consultation with Members and the public [see B1 iv) & link] has been approved for submissions to the Government by the end of May 2017. The Report of 11 April 2017 demonstrated that this issue was a Top risk and the potential risk consequences of not approving the Submission draft and the consultation results [[NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2011-2031 report 11.4.17]](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Council/201704111930/Agenda/$att12310.docx.pdf). Full Council presentations and the Council debate (including the alternative of scrapping the plan/ new Town/ settlement being the focus) demonstrated the ongoing discussions on need and long term requirements [see recording and minutes [[Full Council 11.4.17 page].](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/CeListDocuments.aspx?CommitteeId=136&MeetingId=519&DF=11%2f04%2f2017&Ver=2) * The Green Space Management Strategy 2017-2021 [see also B1 iv)] Call-in, considered by O & S Committee on 15 February [[O & S Committee 15.2.17](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee/201702151930/Agenda/att12026.pdf)] concentrated on the adequacy of consultation process adopted. The rationale of the use of a Citizen Panel focus group was explored, with recommendations that this should not be referred back to Cabinet for reconsideration; however, more report information was to be provided by the Head of Leisure and Environmental Services to the Committee on steps taken and the progress made in identifying interested groups and organisations (as part of recommendations 2 &3). * O & S Task & Finish Group considered the quality of Council reports and made recommendations to Cabinet in its [Task and Finish Group on the Quality of Council Reports 2016](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/201606141930/Agenda/$att11122.docx.pdf) on 14 June 2016. It made 7 recommendations to: review its report template and consider adopting the features of the alternative report template. This was accepted and adopted for 2017/18 civic year onwards. * The Record of Decision template has also been updated following a whistleblowing report, to include further information/ documents and sign off by a Member when consulted [see A1 iii)]. |  |  |
| *C2 iii) Determining the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs.* *This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Record of decision making and supporting materials* * *Protocols for consultation* | Substantial |  |
| *C2 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * See C2 ii) above. * A 5 year Consultation Strategy for 2016-2020 [[Consultation Strategy 2016-2020](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Consultation%20Strategy%202016-2020.pdf)] that sets out the methods that will be used to consult and practical considerations for doing so. This entails various approaches to consultation and availability through the Council’s website. This embodies the Council’s Objectives (notably “.. promote sustainable growth within our district to ensure economic and social opportunities exist for our communities..”).   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * See C2 ii) and B1 iv) outcome/ examples. |  |  |
| *C2 iv) Ensuring fair access to services. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Protocols ensure fair access and statutory guidance is followed* | Full |  |
| *What NHDC has or does:*   * A Corporate Equality Strategy, and to ensure fair access to services [[Corporate Equality page](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/policies/equality-and-diversity)]. * Annual Cumulative impact assessment. * Monitor through the 3C’s policy and review and update practice.     *Outcomes/ examples:*  In October 2020 the results of a public consultation took place regarding the Taxi and Private hire Licensing Policy. These were presented to the Licensing and Appeals Committee  <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14195/Adoption%20of%20a%20Taxi%20and%20Private%20Hire%20Licensing%20Policy.pdf>  It was resolved:    (1)       That the responses to the public consultation on the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy be noted;    (2)       That the following amendments be made to the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy:  ·                That the following be added into the driver code of conduct: If a driver witnesses a crime they are required to report it to the Police;  ·                That Section 7 of the Policy refer to Taxi instead of Hackney Carriage.    (3)       That, subject to the amendments in (2) above, the revised Policy attached as Appendix D be adopted.  In October 2020 the results of a public consultation took place regarding the Statement of Licensing Policy required by virtue of Section 5 of the Licensing Act 2003. These were presented to the Licensing and Appeals Committee  <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14200/Adoption%20of%20a%20Statement%20of%20Licensing%20Policy%20Required%20by%20Virtue%20of%20Section%205%20of%20the%20Licensing%20Act%20200.pdf>  The committee resolved    (1)       That the responses to the public consultation be noted;    (2)       That the proposed Statement of Licensing Policy attached as Appendix D be supported; |  |  |
| Principle D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes |  |  |
| Local government achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory, and practical interventions. Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that local government has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved They need robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure that their defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best trade-off between the various types of resource inputs while still enabling effective and efficient operations. Decisions made need to be reviewed continually to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised. |  |  |
| *D 1) Determining interventions* |  |  |
| *D1 i) Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and including the risks associated with those options. Therefore ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Discussion between members and officers on the information needs of members to support decision making* * *Decision making protocols* * *Option appraisals* * *Agreement of information that will be provided and timescales* | Substantial |  |
| *D1 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * Explored in previous sections:   A1 iii): The Council’s Constitution includes a scheme of delegation and terms of reference for each of the Council’s committees and decision making practices are outlined. The Council’s Constitution which is reviewed annually. Guidance on making a delegated decision with template record of decision forms, which includes standard report areas including an ‘options’ appraisal called “Alternative options considered” and risk analysis. A set report template and guidance on how to complete the report which includes standard report areas including an ‘options’ appraisal called “Alternative options considered” and risk analysis [see B1 iii) also]. A legal adviser attends all Council, Cabinet, Planning and Licensing Committee meetings to advise on Code and other issues where this is requested or otherwise considered appropriate.  A3 ii) The Committee and Member Services team organise the civic calendar of Committee meetings dates, the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions, notify officers and Members of the deadlines for agenda/ report, prepare and despatch agendas and reports in advance of the meetings.  B1 iii) A calendar of meetings is approved each year at Annual Council [[Schedule of Council Meetings 20/21](https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10886/Appendix%20A%20-%20Calendar%20of%20Meetings%202020-21.pdf); The Forward Plan, with key decisions is updated and placed on the Council’s website [[Council and Democracy](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy)];   * The Procurement Team monitors the Council’s contract register and renewal timescales to ensure the commissioning cycle is applied and relevant officers renew in time / meet the needs of the Council and try to achieve improved outcomes.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Report on the Building Control Collaborative arrangement sought to make material changes to the Building Control Business Case with a view to delegations/a proposed Inter Authority agreement being entered into to continue with the project in accordance with the principles of the Business Case to continue to the next phase   <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s1253/Item%2011%20-%20Building%20Control%20Part%201.pdf> |  |  |
| *D1 ii) Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts.* *This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*  *Financial strategy* | Substantial |  |
| *D1 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * Processes already described in other sections, for example:   B1 i) The Corporate business planning programme is used to assess identified projects against criteria including the Council’s agreed policy, its priorities, the outcomes of public consultation, demonstration of continuous improvement and changing legislative need.  B1 iv), B2 ii), C2 iii) A 5 year Consultation Strategy for 2016-2020 [[Consultation Strategy 2016-2020](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Consultation%20Strategy%202016-2020.pdf)] To be reviewed in 2020/21)  C1 iii) Project / performance and risk review process through from Project Boards, SMT, Committees, Cabinet and/or Council. A NHDC Project Management Framework.  C2 i) MTFS;  Financial Rules [Section 19 Constitution].   * Statement of Account statutory publishing and inspection process that allows the local government electors to inspect object to the local auditor.[[6]](#footnote-6)   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * Those already described associated with B1-C2 above.   SIAS audits on Key financial systems: provided a Good ( Payroll Processing) and Satisfactory )Treasury Management) level of assurance at 2112th February 2021 FAR meeting. The SIAS Internal Audit progress report of March 2021 stated that ‘ The title of the Parking Strategy and Enforcement audit has changed titles to reflect the scope of the work. This project is now titled Parking Income. This change was agreed with management as a result of the impact of COVID-19 on progress of the Parking Strategy which deemed the planned audit to be too early to adequately assess the governance, control framework and risks relating to the Parking Services.’   * No local government elector objection was received for the periods 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18,2018/19 or 2019/20. Elections were postponed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and there are therefore no local government elector objections for 2020/21 |  |  |
| *D 2) Planning interventions* |  |  |
| *D2 i) Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Calendar of dates for developing and submitting plans and reports that are adhered to* | Substantial |  |
| *D2 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * Processes already described in other sections, for example: * B1 i) The Corporate business planning programme is used to assess identified projects against criteria including the Council’s agreed policy, its priorities, the outcomes of public consultation, demonstration of continuous improvement and changing legislative need. * B1 iv), B2 ii), C2 iii) A 5 year Consultation Strategy for 2016-2020 [[Consultation Strategy 2016-2020](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Consultation%20Strategy%202016-2020.pdf)] that set out the Council’s commitment to involve local people it its most important decisions. (The Strategy will be reviewed in 2021/22) * C1 iii) Project / performance and risk review process through from Project Boards, SMT, Committees, Cabinet and/or Council. A NHDC Project Management Framework, provides a robust process for planning and controlling strategic and operational matters. * A Statement of Community Involvement – Adopted July 2020 sets out how the Council will involve the community in preparing the Local Plan and in considering planning applications. * Calendar of meetings/ Forward Plan process which indicates when strategic and operations matters will be considered.     *Outcomes/ examples:*   * Examples linked to B1-C1 iii) linked to the above.   Audit on Corporate Governance and Risk Management was assessed as Substantial.<https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10970/201920%20ANNUAL%20ASSURANCE%20STATEMENT%20AND%20INTERNAL%20AUDIT%20ANNUAL%20REPORT.pdf>   * *,* |  |  |
| *D2 ii) Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Communication strategy* | Substantial |  |
| *D2 ii What NHDC has or does:*   * A Communications Strategy and action plan [[Communications Strategy page](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/customer-services/publications-and-consultations/communications-strategy)] that sets out the approach to communicating internal and external stakeholders. * Is part of the North Hertfordshire Partnership, which together develop the shared vision for the District, reflected in the Corporate Plan and threads through service delivery.   Working within partner organisations, such as: East of England Leaders Group, East and North Herts NHS Trust – Involvement Committee, Groundwork Hertfordshire East, Herts Leaders’ Group, Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, London Luton Airport Consultative Committee, The Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP)   * <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s122/Appendix%20A%20-0Representatives%20on%20Outside%20Bodies%20201718.pdf> * Funding groups such as Citizens Advice North Herts through more formal contractual arrangements for service delivery [[Cabinet 28 March 2017Review of NHDC Memorandum of understandings (annual grant awards)]](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/201703281930/Agenda/$att12260.doc.pdf)   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * See previous examples of internal and external stakeholder participation above. * B3 i) Grants Policy review/ memorandum of understanding. |  |  |
| D2 iii) Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:   * Partnership framework * Risk management protocol | Full |  |
| *D2 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * Service Directors have to identify threats to service delivery/performance in their own work areas, when undertaking projects, letting contracts, formulating or introducing new policies *and engaging in partnership working.* Risk Management Framework (Part 3 – Strategy), approved by Cabinet in December 2020. These are recorded on the Risk Register, and monitored through Pentana. * See C1 iii): The Council has [a Project Management Framework](file:///\\srvfp01\node\2373). Contract Procurement Rules include an initial requirement to carry out a new procurement risk assessment with the Risk Manager and post procurement lessons learnt log [see Section 20 Contract Procurement Rules]. * Risk Management and control of resources are crucial elements of the Financial Regulations [[Constitution PART B Section 19 Financial Regulations](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Constitution%20PART%20B%20Financial%20Regulations%2014%2007%2016.pdf)], to develop, maintain robust management, which are key to delivering services (whether delivered internally externally or in partnership).   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Office accommodation project / and subsequent Development Agreement included a risk assessment/ risk log that was reviewed by the Project Board, updated to reflect the changing requirements and specifications and demonstrated a collaborate approach to shared risk. * The wholly owned Local-Authority Building Control Company, Broste Rivers LA7 Limited, is collaborative working with 6 other Hertfordshire local authorities. Risk was considered as part of the project management under the Council’s established Project Management Framework, and risk considered as part of the service agreement finalised for operational arrangements that were signed off in August 2016. It continues to be part and parcel of the considerations for the shareholder representative and by the Board of Directors [see also A2 iv)]. |  |  |
| *D2 iv) Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering outputs can be adapted to changing circumstances. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Planning protocols* | Substantial |  |
| *D2 iv) What NHDC has or does:*   * See D2 i) processes described, which demonstrate the systems in place. * Project management and use of PRINCE2 and PRINCE2 light.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Local Plan submissions process was a top risk for the Council, and involved adapting to changing legislative requirements, neighbouring authority co-operation issues and considering effects, for example, such as Brexit on housing supply numbers [[North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 report 11.4.17].](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Council/201704111930/Agenda/$att12310.docx.pdf) |  |  |
| *D2 v) Establishing appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *KPIs have been established and approved for each service element and included in the service plan and are reported upon regularly* | Substantial |  |
| *D2 v) What NHDC has or does:*   * Appropriate Performance Indicators are agreed and implemented through the processes described in C1 iii) – iv) and included in service plans. * Shared service indicators, such as for SIAS and SAFS are agreed and included in the service plan approved by FAR Committee.   *Outcomes/ examples:*  Overview &Scrutiny example A2 i), C1 iii) Overview &Scrutiny example A2 i), C1 iii) Performance Management measures for 2018/19 [Performance Measures for 2018/ 19](http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s1945/Report.pdf). [New Performance measures (20/21)](http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10180/New%20Year%20Performance%20indicators%20to%20be%20monitored%202021.pdf) were to be considered at the March 2020 meeting. Due to the Covid-19 situation this meeting was cancelled and the item not considered. |  |  |
| *D2 vi) Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Reports include detailed performance results and highlight areas where corrective action is necessary* | Full |  |
| *D2 vi) What NHDC has or does:*   * Performance Indicator Monitoring Reports include results, reasons and any corrective action. As above, regular reports to SMT / KPIs.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * Performance reports to O & S Committee during 2019/20:-   Quarter 3 2018/19 Performance Indicators, End of Year Performance Indicator 2018/19, Quarter 1 Performance Indicators 2019/20, Quarter 2 Performance Indicators 2019/20,(January 2020) Quarter 3 Performance Indicators 2019/20 (March 2020), Quarter 4 Performance Indicators 2019/20 (June 2020), Quarter 1 Performance Indicators 2020/21 (September 2020), Quarter 2 Performance Indicators 2020/21 (December 2020), Quarter 3 Performance Indicators 2020/21 (March 2021) |  |  |
| *D2 vii) Preparing budgets in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Evidence that budgets, plans and objectives are aligned* | Full |  |
| *D2 vii) What NHDC has or does:*   * See B1 i) The Corporate Plan is supported by the corporate business planning programme – and the five year Medium Term financial strategy (MTFS) sets out the financial elements of the process and looks to secure the financial elements of the Plan. It is reviewed annually / updated and approved by Full Council. * Value for money/ service reviews. * Quarterly Revenue Budget & Capital Programme monitoring, & Treasury Management reports to Finance, Audit &Risk Committee and Cabinet. * SIAS and SAFS progress against Plans reports to Finance, Audit &Risk Committee.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * Quarterly monitoring reports indicate if there are any significant variances and whether financial health indicators for 2020/21 and forecasts indicated that they would all match the budgeted levels. |  |  |
| *D 2 viii) Informing medium and long term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy.* *This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Budget guidance and protocols* * *Medium term financial plan* * *Corporate plans* | Substantial |  |
| *D2 viii) What NHDC has or does:*   * The MTFS, as indicated, is reviewed annually to set an indicative 5 year financial plan for the longer term strategic vision as well as a detailed one year budget [see B1 i)]. The MTFS and annual budget are prepared in line with the agreed Objectives and Corporate Plan/ business planning process. * Budget workshops are provided to Political groups on or around November prior to budget setting. * Employee Procedure Guides and Training Manuals on Budgetary matters. * Learning Management System e-learning modules on: Accounting – An introduction; Financial Regulations Workshop; Procurement For Budget Holders; Contract Management Training; and Closure of Accounts 16-17; which are accessible to employees and Members. * Capital programme ([Capital programme report](http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s1709/Capital%20Programme%202018-19%20Onwards.pdf))   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The 2016/17 Strategy was approved in February 2016 [[Treasury Strategy Statement 2016/17],](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Council/201602111930/Agenda/$att10551.docx.pdf) with the subsequent years approved in February 2017, and February 2018 [[Treasury Strategy Statement 2017/18](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Council/201702091930/Agenda/$att11975.docx.pdf) and [Treasury Strategy 2018/19]. For 2019/20, the](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s1790/Appendix%20C%20-%20Treasury%20Strategy%20Statement.pdf)[Investment Strategy](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s4190/Integrated%20Capital%20and%20Treasury%20Strategy%202019-20.pdf.pdf) replaces the Capital Programme, and Treasury Strategy and was considered by Cabinet inJanuary 2019 and approved by Full Council in February 2019.In 2020, the Strategy was reviewed on 20th January 2020 and approved by Full Council on 28th January 2020. |  |  |
| *D3) Optimising achievement of intended outcomes* |  |  |
| *D3 i) Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints.* *This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Feedback surveys and exit/ decommissioning strategies* * *Changes as a result* | Substantial |  |
| *D3 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * Project management lessons log and details of the relevant lessons in Corporate Lessons Learnt Log. * 3 C’s Policy. * Background information for the budget that informs the budget workshop and monitors these as part of the efficiencies.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The consultation in regard to the revised Green Space Management Strategy was an example of how the Council balanced service priorities and responded to feedback [see B1 iv) & B3 v)]. * The review of capital project funding to Community facilities, was part of a review of the Community Halls Strategy 2011 and that since its adoption, Council had identified a need for capital improvements to the District’s community halls. This led in 2016/17 to the establishment of a new capital funding scheme, the rationale for the establishment of a new capital projects funding scheme was addressed and included in the approved budget for 2016/17 at the Full Council meeting held on 11th February 2016 [[proposed Community Facilities Capital Projects Funding Scheme (Cabinet 14 June 2016)](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/201606141930/Agenda/$att11129.doc.pdf)]. The Grant panel awarded grants totalling £200k to four Sports and Community Centres across the District in July 2017 and over £150K to four community village halls in 2018, the Grant panel awarded over £350k in 2020. * In 2020, the council awarded grants to food banks and food provision services, and to groups providing support for residents suffering from loneliness or mental health issues, as part of the COVID-19 Community Support Fund * Supporting the Food provision network and signposting families who need emergency help with food to local organisations in their area * Distributing of food vouchers * Providing Activity packs to families during the school holidays * Supplying local charities and support groups with sanitary products to tackle period poverty * Working with Survivors Against Domestic Abuse (SADA) to provide welfare packs to individuals and families who flee domestic abuse * Supporting the Letchworth Best Before Café to purchase a basic kitchen for their new premises * Working with the Hitchin Food Rescue Hub to stock up their non-perishable larder essentials   In addition to these projects, we have also provided £42,150 from the Coronavirus support grants between June 2020 and now to help alleviate child poverty.  The facilities, operated by Stevenage Leisure Ltd (SLL) under a contract with NHDC, have been heavily impacted by coronavirus (COVID-19) since the start of the pandemic. This has been a national trend affecting fitness and leisure facilities throughout the UK.  In order to reduce the potential spread of COVID-19, the government instructed all gyms and leisure centres to close in March, in the period of national restrictions during November, and again in the current period of national restrictions. This has left SLL facing significant ongoing costs but no income, causing a serious threat to the viability of sport and leisure provision at the centres, prompting NHDC’s Cabinet to propose additional funding to cover the closures and recovery, so that the facilities can remain viable and available for residents.  When the leisure centres have been closed, SLL have done all that they can to reduce their costs, including furloughing staff. But they have still had to maintain the buildings, deal with customer queries and plan for when they can reopen. Due to social distancing they have also had a lot less income than usual when they have been able to open.  The financial support will reimburse any losses, which will help to secure health and wellbeing provision for residents in the future. The support to SLL in 2020/21 is forecast to be £2.45m with further financial support of £2m forecast in 2021/22. Some of this cost will be covered by grants and compensation received, or expected to be received,  from government, but the majority will come from NHDC funds.  Councillors agreed a revised package of financial support to ensure the continued delivery of Council owned leisure facilities in the district to support the health and wellbeing of our residents.   * When efficiencies are identified by Service Directors they set out delivery plan including timescales for implementation and any contractual obligations which may impact on the efficiencies and investments. |  |  |
| *D3 ii) Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term* *This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Budgeting guidance and protocols* | Full |  |
| *D3 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * See D2 viii) above.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * See D2 viii) above. |  |  |
| *D3 iii) Ensuring the medium term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Financial strategy* | Full |  |
| *D3 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * A MTFS – see B1 i), C2 i), D1ii), D2 vii) above.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * See MTFS examples B1 i), C2 i), D1ii), D2 vii) above. * Principle D - That Council have been alerted to a forecast impact of Covid-19 in comparison to available reserves and confirms that these reserves will be used to fund the impact. .<http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s11410/Covid-19%20Financial%20Impacts.pdf> * The Community support fund was supported by the reserves fund to support voluntary organisations tackling the impact of Covid on the community <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/community/grants/coronavirus-community-support-fund>   Decision was made under delegated authority in January 2021 to approve the Council’s Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG), and to approve the Council’s Closed Business Lockdown Package (CBLP), with the aim of ensuring that financial support provided by the government during periods of pandemic restrictions reaches qualifying businesses as quickly as possible.  Regarding the Restart Grant scheme which supports businesses to reopen safely following COVID restrictions, a decision was made under delegated authority in March 2021 to ensure that the financial support provided by the government reaches qualifying businesses as quickly as possible.  The council was allocated £118k under the Reopening High Streets Safely (RHSS) funding that was awarded last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The total RHSS funding that the Council received can be broken down as below:   * £76,000 spent to date on communication campaign encouraging people to shop safely and locally and changes to the public realm including hand sanitiser units, barriers systems and management fees, * £38,000 committed future spend on changes to the public realm including planters in Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston Town centres to facilitate social distancing for pavement café  licences, a communication campaign management fee including temps for footfall counts * £4,000 towards administration supporting the grant return process.   <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/councils-join-forces-help-region-shop-safe-shop-local>  In line with the government’s ‘Everyone In’ instruction, the Council has been accommodating a large number of additional households who are sleeping rough or who are at risk of street homelessness. This has been supported through additional funding through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme Grant and the Homeless Prevention Grant.  The Council was successful in securing £183,000 of Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) funding. This has been used to provide ongoing accommodation support for rough sleepers housed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has funded three strands of activity, all of which have been key components of the resettlement pathway:   1. £90,000 for increased capacity of Haven First’s accommodation-based support service. This is a key element of the pathway enabling Haven First to secure a lease on a local hotel in Royston for six months. 2. £71,000 for assistance with the Council’s (net) cost of hotels, emergency accommodation often being an initial first step on the pathway 3. £22,000 for two ‘Housing First’ placements - this provides more intensive support solutions for those with particularly high and/or complex needs. This has funded Haven First’s support costs.   During the last year, the council has also received just over £257,000 from Flexible Homelessness Support and Homelessness Reduction Grants combined to fund extensions to existing specialist services in the district which support rough sleepers, those facing domestic abuse and young people. These Grants have been used in part to fund two specialist homelessness services up until the end of 2020/21.  The Council also received Homelessness Prevention Grant funding. The funding is ringfenced for use in managing homelessness pressures and supporting those who are at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping |  |  |
| *D3 iv) Ensuring the achievement of ‘social value’ through service planning and commissioning. The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 states that this is “the additional benefit to the community...over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes”.* *This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Service plans demonstrate consideration of ‘social value’* * *Achievement of ‘social value’ is monitored and reported upon* | Moderate |  |
| *D3 iv) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Service Plans reflect the need to consider the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, implications of the authority’s investment into local projects (and where relevant in procurement). * Procurement Strategy 2021-22 As with many Councils during the last year, the Council has had to be reactive to the unprecedented situation (following the pandemic and preparing for post European Union transition). This shorter term Strategy for 2021-22 therefore will attempt to put into place some of the Council’s aspirations for the District, as they relate to the Council’s Plan as well as remain reactive to the changing environment. The Council’s Procurement Strategy 2021-22 puts in place the aspirations for the district as they relate to the Council Plan, including taking a focus on achieving community benefits though emphasis of the Go Local policy and a widening of the scope of this to incorporate Community Wealth Building. * All reports and records of decisions record Social Value Act 2012 implications of a decision. The Social Value is also covered in the “Go Local” Policy, detailed in the Contract Procurement Rules [[Section 20 Contract Procurement Rules](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Contract%20Procedure%20Rules%2024%2011%2016%20%28final%29_0.pdf)]. * Social Value and Go Local guidance is provided for procurement [[Social Values Guide](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/social_value_guide.pdf); [PPN - Supporting Apprenticeships and Skills](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/PPN%20-%20Supporting%20Apprenticeships%20and%20Skills.pdf); [Social Values Act 2012 - Social Values flowchart](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/SVA%20Flow%20chart.pdf); [Social Values Act 2012 - Go Local flowchart](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/Go%20Local%20Flow%20Chart.pdf)]. * A Corporate Equality Strategy, and to work with partners to deliver the Council’s corporate objectives in an equitable manner <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/policies/equality-and-diversity>   Outcomes/ examples:   * The Council has a Council Objective to  ****Enable an enterprising and co-operative economy. The**** will aim to become an increasingly innovative and inclusive Council, committed to generating community wealth, by seeking commercial and investment opportunities and through proactive engagement with a wider range of small and medium sized businesses to build a sustainable local economy. We will continue to engage with residents, staff and Councillors to continue to embrace modern working practices through the use of IT and a commitment to working towards a paperless Council whilst increasing the efficiency of services and access to them by residents. * This Objective forms part of the Council Plan and the Service Plan indicates how the service areas link to Objectives. Heads/ Corporate Managers assess their future service needs “Where do we need to be” on SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) and PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technical, Legislative and Environmental) analysis. The Service Plan template states the following as guidance to Heads/ Corporate Managers: “*From January 2013, under Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, local authorities were required to capture the ‘social value’ of their investment into local projects. Two comparative projects may have the same financial value, but it is the value to the local community, community groups or individuals which needs to be captured and reflected more accurately in order to better inform decision making; this should therefore be built into individual service plans, and the individual projects reflected within them. ”* (see Council Objectives page – with Service Plans: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/corporate-objectives>). * The Corporate Procurement Group will seek to collect information regarding contracts and any inherent social value benefits. They will also seek to identify scope to include social value benefits in future contracts where possible.   The council was allocated £118k under the Reopening High Streets Safely (RHSS) funding that was awarded last year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 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This has been supported through additional funding through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme Grant and the Homeless Prevention Grant.  The Council was successful in securing £183,000 of Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) funding. This has been used to provide ongoing accommodation support for rough sleepers housed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has funded three strands of activity, all of which have been key components of the resettlement pathway:   1. £90,000 for increased capacity of Haven First’s accommodation-based support service. This is a key element of the pathway enabling Haven First to secure a lease on a local hotel in Royston for six months. 2. £71,000 for assistance with the Council’s (net) cost of hotels, emergency accommodation often being an initial first step on the pathway 3. £22,000 for two ‘Housing First’ placements - this provides more intensive support solutions for those with particularly high and/or complex needs. 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| Principle E. Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it |  |  |
| Local government needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications and mind-set, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve their intended outcomes within the specified periods. A local government organisation must ensure that it has both the capacity to fulfil its own mandate and to make certain that there are policies in place to guarantee that its management has the operational capacity for the organisation as a whole. Because both individuals and the environment in which an authority operates will change over time, there will be a continuous need to develop its capacity as well as the skills and experience of the leadership of individual staff members. Leadership in local government entities is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of backgrounds, reflecting the structure and diversity of communities. |  |  |
| *E1 Developing the entity’s capacity* |  |  |
| *E1 i) Reviewing operations, performance use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Regular reviews of activities, outputs and planned outcomes* | Substantial |  |
| *E1 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * Part of shared Services (SIAS, SAFS, Insurance) with ongoing review programmes. * IT technical systems analysis, for reconciliations and ratification of, for example, data for revenues & benefits. * HPP/ report through Leaders Group and then / Chief Exec -Group. * Asset Management Group and Asset Management Plan.   *Outcomes/ examples:*  SIAS review of Asset Management, IT Asset Management provided a Moderate / Substantial level of assurance.<https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15641/SIAS%20Progress%20Report.pdf>  <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=146&MId=2457&Ver=4> |  |  |
| *E1 ii) Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as*  *benchmarking and other options in order to determine how the authority’s resources are allocated so that outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Utilisation of research and benchmarking exercise* | Substantial |  |
| *E 1 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * Part of the County Benchmarking LG Futures, Membership of LG Inform for comparable data input and analysis; and HR Salary benchmarking and other relevant local government strategies(corporate equality, workplace practices) * Relevant Council officers attend the County wide customer services benchmarking group, which meets quarterly to discuss/ implement shared good practice. * A Member of the Legal PLP and Herts First. * Part of Sport England’s National Benchmarking service. * Part of East Anglian benchmarking for grounds maintenance.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Council takes part in the Sport England’s Nation Benchmarking Scheme (NBS) which all leisure centres take part in every other year: <https://www.sportengland.org/our-work/partnering-local-government/tools-directory/national-benchmarking-service-nbs/>   Right Directions (in partnership with Leisure-net Solutions) undertake these surveys nationally and the results are sent to the Sport Industry Research Centre (SIRC) at Sheffield Hallam University to analysis and then to NBS. The aim of the NBS is to provide local authorities with rigorous and robust information on the performance of their sports and leisure centres compared with that of equivalent family facilities elsewhere in the country. For each centre, clients of the NBS select an appropriate level of support for their data collection, deliver the required data and receive a facility-specific report on performance relative to national benchmarks.  The management of Leisure facilities in the District is contracted to Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL), who are contractually obliged to participate in the survey on the Councils behalf. SLL receive the report and then present this to the Partnership Board (which has Council representation in the form of the Executive Member/ Head of Service and relevant managers). This enables SLL/ the Council to identify ways of improving the service in a joint work programme for the following year.  SLL also procure non user / user survey on behalf of the Council on the use of and reasons why people are not using the District facilities: Leisure Net carry out the survey every other year and it gives the Council an indication from local people what their current activity levels are, who they use for their leisure pursuits (the Council or our competitors or no-one), what they would like to see introduced, reasons for using the Council / not using.  A Full Report is provided that assesses: access, utilisation, finance and customer satisfaction, and is used to improve services.   * PLP benchmarking exercise provides useful information on staffing and an overview on service provision. |  |  |
| *E 1 iii) Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Effective operation of partnerships which deliver agreed outcomes* | Full |  |
| *E1 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * Part of the North Herts Local Strategic Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Partnership. Progress of the strategy is reported regularly to NHP meetings and via annual reports presented at community conferences. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/policy/strategic-partnership-involvement> * Part of the North Herts Community Safety Partnership (CSP) that works together to deliver a number of projects which support community safety and crime and disorder issues, such as domestic abuse awareness and anti-bullying. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/community/community-safety/community-safety-partnership-projects>. An Annual Strategic Assessment is undertaken by the North Herts Community Safety Partnership (NHCSP). * North Hertfordshire forms part of the [Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership](http://www.hertfordshirelep.com/) to provide a collaborative approach to a prosperous economy within the District. * Shared services / partnerships arrangements are explored as and when appropriate to do so (and include those already cited of SIAS, SAFS & Insurance). * Part of Herts Infrastructure and Planning Partnership. * CCTV Partnership * Part of the Local-Authority Building Control Company, Broste Rivers LA7 Limited. * Lead authority developing Herts Health Improvement Agency. * PLP.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * A2 iv) example of the benefits of the award winning Herts Careline partnership working. * B2 i) example Annual reports are provided to the North Herts Partnership from the Citizens Advice, Herts Minority Ethnic forum and NHCVS Impact report, to demonstrate support of the shared our vision (‘to make North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper’) (see also A2 iv)/ B1i). * SIAS Annual report. * SAFS Annual report. * PLP training/ internal market. * Food Provision services – We work in collaboration with (and have awarded grant funding to) Feed Up Warm Up, Best Before Café, and Hitchin Food Rescue Hub to ensure food provision to the most disadvantaged residents. We entered into long-term funding agreements with local food provision services during the pandemic in order to help them support increased community need. * Intergenerational project - In 2019 the Council joined forces with Howard Cottage Housing Association and Hillshott Infant School to pilot our first intergenerational project: "Generations Together". For five weeks, children aged 4-5 years old came together with older adults and enjoyed a range of activities including a farm visit, party games, baking, sports day, craft activities and more. In the UK, 3.6 million older people live alone, of whom over 2 million are aged 75+. Being socially isolated and feeling alone can have a huge detrimental effect on a persons health (Age UK, 2019). Whilst loneliness can affect anybody of any age, we recognise that the significantly large population of older people living in North Herts are more at risk. We also wanted to provide an opportunity for our oldest and youngest communities to form friendships and have positive interactions with each other, recognising that both groups have something they can teach the other. The project was very successful and therefore ran for a second time from November 2019 – March 2020 * In response to Covid-19, the council established a Recovery Board to oversee and monitor the delivery of the Recovery Plan; provide the necessary strategic guidance and direction; ensure effective project and risk management systems are in place; ensure collaboration and integration, where appropriate, with other public and private sector recovery plans. They meet regularly to respond to changing and current circumstances. |  |  |
| *E1 iv) Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Workforce plan* * *Organisational development plan?* | Full |  |
| *E1 iv) What NHDC has or does:*   * The People Strategy incorporates the Workforce Development Plan [[People Strategy 2015-2020](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/20150828%20Final%20People%20Strategy%202015%20-%202020%202%20version%20without%20work%20plan.pdf); [Workforce profile](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/policy/workforce-profile)]. The Strategy was develop with the Corporate Objectives (Priorities as was), Corporate Projects and workforce demands anticipated. * A vacancy management process which provides a corporate overview of vacancy management and to ensure compliance with proper recruitment practices. * Streamlined Service Delivery Planning. * Revised Values and Behaviours   *Outcomes/ examples:*  Workforce Planning is a medium Corporate Risk and identifies the risks from the Council’s ability to recruit and retain employees that have the skills and experience needed. The People Strategy was updated to cover 2015 to 2020. Mitigations measures to address issues include, for example: monitoring turnover rates; job evaluation; employee benefits; secondment opportunities; mentoring; management development; leadership development; apprentice scheme; career development; and home working. The People Strategy progress is monitored at quarterly Joint Staff Consultative Committee (‘JSCC’) meetings. A review of vacancy control was last undertaken during 2015/16. A review of vacancy control was last undertaken in 2019.   * The Council has a Transformation Project which seeks to improve our services to residents through the use of Artificial intelligence and development of self-serve systems. It also seeks to improve Council working and efficiency by automating processes that are currently manually handled. * The Shaping Our Future Programme also contributes towards the development of the organisation. It considers how the Council can change and adapt in order to continue to achieve the Council’s priorities. It includes (but is not limited to) staff and leadership development; work on equality, diversity and inclusion; moving towards a more commercial culture; digital transformation. * Actions arising from the corporate business planning process will feed into personal objectives for individual employees via the RPR and 1:1 meetings system. The clear lines of responsibility, outcomes and target dates will be monitored as part of the Council’s project governance and performance management reporting. * The Values and Behaviours of the organisations were revised in 2018. These organisational values replace the staff competences. It establishes the organisation’s values and and how staff demonstrate the relevant behaviours to in their daily activities to support them. |  |  |
| *E2 Developing the capability of the entity’s leadership and other individuals* |  |  |
| *E2 i) Developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Job descriptions* * *Chief executive and leader pairings have considered how best to establish and maintain effective communication* | Substantial |  |
| *E2 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * Description of the Leader and Executive Members in the Council’s Constitution. * Joint Leader’s briefing on human resource issues. * The Leader is part of Herts Leaders Group and East of England Leaders Group. * Weekly Managing Director/ Leader Briefings. * Opposition Member/ shadow briefings by the Chief Executive/ other senior officers. * Political Liaison Board (PLB) meetings. * Bi-monthly SMT meetings and close working relations between Senior Officers and Executive Members. * Robust Recruitment process with an appointment at an appropriate level (Member / Officer). * Corporate Learning and Development   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Council has a number of essential employee Corporate Learning and Development activities, such as: time management, managing conflict, first aid and fire marshal training, succession planning, skills audit, equalities and diversity e-learning, open learning resources and the essential learning programmes for all new employees and managers. These include Customer Service Excellence, corporate induction, dignity at work briefings, preparing for RPR briefings, managing people through difficult situations. Staff Learning and Development sessions have also been instituted on the morning of every first Friday of each month. There are a mixture of themed and non-themed sessions to enable them to be used by teams or individuals to focus on an area of development most helpful for them Following the RPR, employees can input any learning and development needs (other than essential or service specific learning needs) directly onto the GROW zone Learning Management System (LMS). Essential learning activities are agreed by SMT as essential for all or a particular group of officers. Other types of Professional, Technical, Personal and Managerial Development are organised through the service areas. The Council recognises that Career Development is a lifelong process of managing progression in learning and work. The Council recognises the need for employee development and succession planning and this is monitored through the RPR and 1:1 process. * The [Recruitment & Selection Policy](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/Recruitment%20%26%20Selection%20policy%20-%20Sept%202015_1_0.pdf) was last reviewed and updated in September 2019. The person specification is a key document/ part of the process to provide objective criteria that reflects the values required to successfully undertake a particular role. |  |  |
| *E2 ii) Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Scheme of delegation reviewed at least annually in the light of legal and organisational changes* * *Standing orders and financial regulations which are reviewed on a regular basis* | Substantial |  |
| *E2 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Council’s Constitution includes a scheme of delegation. * The Directors/ Heads/ Corporate and other relevant officers which are retained and reviewed of sub-delegations. * The Constitution (which includes Standing orders in the form of Rules) is reviewed annually.   *Outcomes/ examples:*  The Constitution was reviewed and approved on 14 July 2017, April 2018 and January 2019 and July 2020 (with section 11 further updated in November 2020).  The Financial Regulations were reviewed in January 2018 and were further amended following the Section 12/ 14 review (on 31 May 2018). They were amended under Delegated Decision in January 2019. A further review was undertaken January 2020 Council meeting. The amendments included -  That, subject to the following, the proposed amendments below, the amendments set out in Appendix A be approved:    Paragraph 4.8.9  That the restriction on the number of points of clarification that could be raised at the Planning Control Committee (currently 3) be removed;    Paragraph 9.8.2  That the wording of Paragraph (g) of the Terms of Reference be amended so that it read:    “In line with the Council’s adopted Statement of Community Involvement to receive any presentations from developers on major planning applications for 100 dwelling and above (including Construction Management Routes) and provide comments accordingly.”    (2)       That the Terms of Reference for the Cabinet Panels at Appendices B,C and D be approved.    This reports sets out the review undertaken and recommends amendments to update the Council’s Constitution and propose new Panels. <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s9463/CONSTITUTIONAL%20GOVERNANCE%20REVIEW%20201920.pdf>   * The regulations were amended again in July 2020 on the instruction of Council, in order to reflect the new senior management structure whereby the roles of Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive were deleted from the establishment and replaced with a Managing Director role, effective from 18th July 2020. The regulations were also updated with respect to the role of Deputy Managing Director, with the Service Director: Regulatory appointed to act in the absence of the Managing Director to ensure resilience.   <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s11255/CONSTITUTIONAL%20INCLUDING%20FINANCIAL%20REGULATION%20CHANGES%20TO%20FOLLOWING%20TIER%201.pdf> |  |  |
| *E2 iii) Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads the authority in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other’s authority. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Clear statement of respective roles and responsibilities and how they will be put into practice* | Substantial |  |
| *E2 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Constitution includes a general description of the role of the Leader in Section 5 of the Constitution. The scheme of delegation outlines areas of responsibility and decision making practice under Sections 12 and 14. All employees have a written Job Description.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * As part of the review of section 14 of the Constitution in April 2018, the Executive Member functions were aligned to the Officers’ delegations, making it clearer which Executive Member was responsible for which area [see Section 14 <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/council-constitution>] |  |  |
| *E2 iv) Developing the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective shared leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by:*   * *ensuring members and staff have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and that ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:* * *Access to update courses/ information briefings on new legislation* * *Induction programme* * *Personal development plans for members and officers* * *ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis* *ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:* * *for members this may include the ability to:*   *–– scrutinise and challenge*  *–– recognise when outside expert advice is required*  *–– promote trust*  *–– work in partnership*  *–– lead the organisation*  *–– act as a community leader*   * *Efficient systems and technology used for effective support* * *ensuring personal, organisational and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external* * *Arrangements for succession planning* | Substantial |  |
| *E2 iv) What NHDC has or does:*   * Induction arrangements for Members and employees (and actions) identified in A1 i). * Training & development identified in A1i); A1v); A2ii); A2 iii) (and actions). * Training & development identified in E above. * Promotes ILM Leadership & Management qualifications. * Investors in People status. * Business planning away days. * Member attendance at conferences, such as Town and Country Planning Association. * Apprenticeships training programme. * Gender Pay Gap report and Action plan   *Outcomes/ examples:*  A Councillors’ Learning and Development Protocol is in place and is supported by Member Champions.  Councillors are strongly encouraged to undertake training. An Induction Programme is provided for all new Councillors and other training is available through out their term of office. The 2019/20 Induction Programme is attached below.  There are also other learning resources and guidance available to Councillors including through the Local Government Association. The 2019/20 LGA Councillors Guide is an online resource, designed as a quick reference guide to provide Councillors with the essential information. <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/11.166%20Councillors%20Guide%202019_08_0.pdf>   * NHDC was awarded accredited status in June 2017 for a three year period. Other alternative accreditation standards may be considered in the future, to better reflect the requirements of the organisation. * Gender Pay Gap report and Action plan - Human Resources progress the Action plan to reduce the GPG within NHDC. An annual report is produced and the 2020 report can be accessed here <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/NHDC%202020%20%20Gender%20Pay%20Gap%20Report.pdf> |  |  |
| *E 2 v) Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Residents’ panels* * *Stakeholder forum terms of reference* * *Strategic partnership Frameworks* | Substantial |  |
| *E2 v) What NHDC has or does:*   * A Citizen Panel used for consultation. * Area Committees [[Section 9 Constitution](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Section%209_0.pdf)] for Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth, Royston and Southern and Rural meet ordinarily 4 times each per year. Town Talks are held before the Area Committee meetings. * Members hold surgeries. * Statement of Community Involvement. * Consultation Strategy. * The Communications Strategy. * Cabinet Panel on the Environment; Cabinet Panel on Housing, Strategic Planning, and Transport; Cabinet Panel on Community Engagement and Cooperative Development.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Area Committees play a community leadership role in bringing together different interest groups from the public, private and voluntary sectors to work in partnership to meet the Council's Corporate strategic and local objectives. They receive petitions on local matters, act as a forum for discussion on matters of local interest and in particular list to the views of local bodies and organisations; establish and maintain relationships with outside bodies/voluntary organisations. * The Communication strategy has recently been recently revised. This reflects the differing methods of communication, notably the growth of digital communication. . A review of actions arising from the Communications Service action plan is undertaken every year and incorporates any actions from the Communication strategy.   A review of the Consultation strategy has been undertaken, being reported back to SMT in May 2018 The Strategy will be reviewed again in 2021/22. A revised Communication strategy was adopted with a Strategy action plan 2018-19, 19-20, and a Communications Service Action Plan 2020/21. |  |  |
| *E2 vi) Taking steps to consider the leadership’s own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Reviewing individual member performance on a regular basis taking account of their attendance and considering any training or development needs* * *Peer reviews* | Moderate |  |
| *E2 vi) What NHDC has or does:*   * Member attendance records are maintained by Committee & Member Services. This information is available on our external website <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/mgUserAttendanceSummary.aspx>   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * Member training falls under the remit of the Democratic Services Manager. Training budgets for Members, for external training, are allotted to group on a pro-rata percentage basis. Member training will be reviewed by SIAS |  | ( |
| *E2 vii) Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Training and development plan* * *Staff development plans linked to appraisals* * *Implementing appropriate human resource policies and ensuring that they are working effectively* | Substantial |  |
| *E2 vii) What NHDC has or does:*   * Training and development / induction identified in A1 i); A1v), A2ii); A2 iii); and E2 iv) (and actions). * RPR process. * The People Strategy incorporates the Workforce Development Plan [[People Strategy 2015-2020](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/20150828%20Final%20People%20Strategy%202015%20-%202020%202%20version%20without%20work%20plan.pdf)].   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Appraisal system was reviewed in 2016/17 and became the Regular Performance Review (RPR) process. The SIAS assessment took place in August 2017 and SIAS provided full assurance that there are effective controls in operation for those elements of the risk management processes. In its revision of its appraisal process, the Council sought to evidence that it is a modern, forward thinking employer that invests in cost-effective manner to the learning and development of its staff to the benefit of both the Council and the individual. The revised RPR was considered and approved at appropriate levels within the Council with positive engagement from staff during the development phase. This provides assurance that the workforce in general had the opportunity to consider whether management’s proposals were workable and relevant. |  |  |
| *E2 viii) Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Human resource policies* | Substantial |  |
| *E2 viii) What NHDC has or does:*   * A number of Human Resource – owned / related policies that are aimed to maintain health and wellbeing [ such as [Homeworking Health and Safety](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/property-and-support/health-and-safety/homeworking-health-and-safety); [Health and Safety Training](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/property-and-support/health-and-safety/health-and-safety-training); [Home working](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/human-resources/hr-policies/home-working) [Handling Difficult Customers](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/customer-service/handling-difficult-customers); [Bullying and Harassment](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/human-resources/hr-policies/bullying-and-harassment); [Lone working](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/lone-working); [Managing pressure](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/human-resources/hr-policies/managing-pressure); [Mentoring & Coaching](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/human-resources/learning-and-development/mentoring-and-coaching); [Occupational Road Risk (Driving at Work)](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/property-and-support/health-and-safety/occupational-road-risk-driving-work);[PPE-personal-protective-equipment](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/ppe-personal-protective-equipment); [Personal safety](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/personal-safety); [Racial-incident-reporting](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/strategy-and-performance/equalities-and-diversity/racial-incident-reporting); [RIDDOR-reporting-accidents-injuries-diseases-and-dangerous-occurrences](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/riddor-reporting-accidents-injuries-diseases-and-dangerous-occurrences); [Smoking and the workplace;](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/about-me/hr-policies/smoking-and-workplace) [Whistleblowing Policy](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/Whistleblowing%20Policy.pdf); [Working at heights](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/working-height); [Working time](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/human-resources/hr-policies/working-time)]. * An Occupational Health service that can advise on issues such as fitness for work, sickness absence, disability, rehabilitation, ill-health retirement, travel health, health promotion, or indeed any health and work issue. Managers are also invited to refresher courses to raise awareness of the Occupational Health service.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * Healthy eating / exercise (Workplace challenges)/ mental health and wellbeing sessions are promoted to the staff during the year. October has been designated Workplace Wellbeing Month for NHDC staff. * Spot the Sign suicide awareness course, Safeguarding victims of domestic abuse and modern day slavery training have also been promoted to staff. * Flu vaccination – regular vaccination programmes are organised for staff to benefit from, in partnership with local Pharmacies. * Following the Staff survey the following have taken place – an interactive staff briefing to stimulate ideas from staff he issues raised in the survey , an SMT sub group to progress a Corporate action plan and a social committee to take forward the agreed actions. * Gender Pay Gap and introduction of Social and Wellbeing Group. The group are tasked with organising activities and events for staff to enhance the employee experience and encourage interaction across the council. * The Inclusion Group – This group has the aim of driving forward diversity and inclusion within the council and of understanding the experiences of staff in relation to the protected characteristics outlined under the Equality Act. * Staff Recognition scheme – Celebrating our Values To recognise and celebrate the excellent work of staff from across the organisation, we have introduced a recognition scheme called ‘Celebrating our Values.' The aim is to recognise those staff who are embodying the corporate values and behaviours and setting a really positive example.Every six months nominations of staff of those who exemplify one or more of the corporate values and behaviours, (going above and beyond what we would normally expect of staff). * Coronavirus-19 – NHDC response - Business Continuity Plans in place to deal with the evolving situation, to ensure we can continue to deliver critical services. * Staff survey to enable us to gain a better picture of homeworking capabilities and also those staff who have caring / childcare responsibilities. The survey was repeated in February 2021 to capture the changing picture over the course of lockdown. * Introduction of universal home-working across the organisation wherever possible. Our plans will of course take into account those people who cannot work from home for operational or practical reasons. * Adoption of a pragmatic approach to staff who may need to work from home while their children are also at home * Following the last Staff survey the following have taken place – an interactive staff briefing to stimulate ideas from staff he issues raised in the survey , an SMT sub group to progress a Corporate action plan and a social committee to take forward the agreed actions |  |  |
| Principle F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management |  |  |
| Local government needs to ensure that the organisations and governance structures that it oversees have implemented, and can sustain, an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. Risk management and internal control are important and integral parts of a performance management system and crucial to the achievement of outcomes. Risk should be considered and addressed as part of all decision making activities.  A strong system of financial management is essential for the implementation of policies and the achievement of intended outcomes, as it will enforce financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery, and accountability.  It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny is in place as a key part of accountable decision making, policy making and review. A positive working culture that accepts, promotes and encourages constructive challenge is critical to successful scrutiny and successful delivery.  Importantly, this culture does not happen automatically, it requires repeated public commitment from those in authority. |  |  |
| *F1 Managing risk* |  |  |
| *F1 i) Recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making.* *This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Risk management protocol* | Full |  |
| *F1 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * See Processes for Risk management reporting as set out above in C1 iii). * See C1 iv) Risk Management Team/ Group/ champion/ [Risk Management Framework – Strategy](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/RMF%20Strategy%20%28Approved%20by%20Cabinet%2015.12.20%29.pdf), 2020; [Risk Management Policy Statement, 2020](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/RMF%20Policy%20Statement%20%28Approved%20by%20Cabinet%2015.12.20%29.pdf); The Pentana software for performance/ risk management monitoring. * The responsibility for individual risk is identified on Service Plans/ Corporate through Covalent and monitored through the FAR Committee and Cabinet for awareness/ overall management of risk. * This Risk Management framework indicates that risk management is embedded across all service areas and helps to inform decision making.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * See C1 iv) review of Risk Management Policy and Strategy examples. * SIAS review of Risk Management provided a Substantial level of assurance. * Business Continuity/ Disaster Management review by SIAS during 2016/17 provided a Substantial level of assurance. * As per C1 i) the Resilience plan. The Emergency plan, continuity plan and supporting documents have been combined into one plan with supporting Response and support plans and documents. GO Cards have been developed as a procedural guide to managing an incident. * COVID-19 remains one of the Council’s top risks and currently has the highest risk score of 9 (assessed as high for both impact and likelihood). * This virus creates the following risks for NHDC:  Significant numbers of Members, officers and contractor staff could become unavailable due to illness or quarantine guidelines; Subsequent inability to deliver services and make decisions; There could be a local outbreak requiring significant response (e.g. track and trace); Pressure on the Council's financial position, both in terms of income and impact upon reserves (including risks associated with external service provider income, such as Stevenage Leisure Limited, Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency and Hertfordshire Building Control); A detrimental effect on the Council's ability to deliver ‘normal’ services; Long-term homeworking could affect NHDC culture and cohesion, although this is currently too early to assess; Contractors' inability to stay active or to continue service delivery; Increasing work levels (e.g. Environmental Health inspections/contact tracing, ASB, Domestic Violence, Homelessness etc.) and significant pressure on staff (e.g. specialist officers in Environmental Health). * Actions taken to manage the risk presented by COVID-19 have included: Closure of services in line with national restrictions, local outbreak and response plans, creation of a Project Board to manage the recovery process, including opportunities to build back better, ongoing support to staff, the majority of whom (an average of 270 per day) are continuing to work from home, ensuring services continue to be successfully delivered, which has minimised the direct impact of Covid-19 on our workforce, offering sites for vaccination programme and continuing wave monitoring and response.   This has most recently been reviewed in the Risk Management Update in March 2021: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15578/Risk%20Management%20Update.pdf> |  |  |
| *F1 ii) Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Risk management strategy/ policy formally approved and adopted and reviewed and updated on a regular basis* | Full |  |
| *F1 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * A [Risk and Opportunities Management Strategy 2017-20](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Risk%20%26%20Opportunities%20Management%20Strategy%202017-20%20%28Final%20Version%20Approved%20by%20Cabinet%20on%2019.12.17%29.pdf); [A Risk and Opportunities Policy Statement 2017](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Policy%20Statement%202017%20%28Final%20Version%20Approved%20by%20Cabinet%20on%2019.12.17%29%20%E2%80%93%20Signed%2022.01.18.pdf) (Signed 22nd January 2018)   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * Risk Management Strategy is reviewed regularly and most recently in June 2018 Finance Audit and Risk Committee as per C1 iv). Risk management update are also provide to the Finance Audit and Risk committees <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s4610/Risk%20and%20Opportunities%20Management%20Update.pdf> * [*http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s5810/Risk%20and%20Opportunities%20Management%20Update.pdf*](http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s5810/Risk%20and%20Opportunities%20Management%20Update.pdf) * *<http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s9079/Risk%20and%20Opportunities%20Management%20Update%20December%202019.pdf>*   This was revised on 15th December 2020 and includes the Risk Management Framework - Policy Statement, Risk Management Framework – Policy and the Risk Management Framework - Strategy : <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/performance-and-risk-management>  Outcomes/ examples:  Risk Management Strategy is reviewed regularly and most recently was revised and approved by cabinet in December 2020.  Risk management updates are also provided to the Finance Audit and Risk committees:  Risk and Opportunities Management Update, FAR, 16th March 2020: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10170/Risk%20and%20Opportunities%20Management%20Update.pdf>  Risk Management Update, FAR, 20th July 2020: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s11351/Risk%20Management%20Update.pdf>  Risk Management Update, FAR, 7th September 2020: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s11610/Risk%20Management%20Update.pdf>   * Risk Management Update, FAR, 3rd December 2020: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14511/RISK%20MANAGEMENT%20UPDATE.pdf> |  |  |
| *F1 iii) Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Risk management protocol* | Full |  |
| *F1 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * See F1 i)-ii) above.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * See F1 i)-ii) above. |  |  |
| *F 2 Managing performance* |  |  |
| *F2 i) Monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Performance map showing all key activities have performance measures* * *Benchmarking information* * *Cost performance (using inputs and outputs)* * *Calendar of dates for submitting, publishing and distributing timely reports that are adhered to* | Substantial/ Full |  |
| *F2 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * See Performance management measures already described above, notably: C1 i) Corporate Objectives and Plan approval process [see A2 i) B1 i)] Service planning process. Employee Regular Performance Review (RPR) process and workforce planning. This ties together the golden thread of delivery/ measurement process. The Pentana (Risk reporting) System to improve its performance management. * A2i (& examples): Committee / Cabinet involvement Annual Safeguarding Performance and 3 Cs monitoring. * Use of LG Inform & LG Inform Plus for benchmarking information. B3 vi) monitoring report for key indicators business development, housing, transport, local services, performance of policies in the adopted Local Plan, employment monitoring. It also looks at any deficiencies in the scope of current monitoring and how it can be improved in future. This report and previous ones are available to residents via the Council’s website: [<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-policy/monitoring> ] [See also B1 i) B1 iv)]. C1 i) Employee Regular Performance Review (RPR) process and workforce planning. * Hertfordshire County-wide customer services benchmarking group for informal benchmarking and mystery shopper information. * Informal benchmarking with other local authorities via the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) * Cost performance is measured using LG futures. * Calendar of dates for submitting, publishing and distributing timely reports previously detailed under A3 ii), B1 iii), C1 i), D2 i).   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * See examples linked to the above. |  |  |
| *F2 ii) Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation’s financial, social and environmental position and outlook. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Discussion between members and officers on the information needs of members to support decision making* * *Publication of agendas and minutes of meetings* * *Agreement on the information that will be needed and timescales* | Full |  |
| *F2 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * Numerous processes have been explained above regarding Reports / Record of decisions, areas covered in the reports as standard for professional advice on financial, social and risk implications of a decision. Involvement of O & S in report review and information required and the implementation of a new format from 2017/18 and further revisions in the 2020 civic year. Publication of agendas/ minutes and timescales also covered above.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * See above. |  |  |
| *F2 iii) Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which encourages constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the organisation’s performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *The role and responsibility for scrutiny has been established and is clear* * *Agenda and minutes of scrutiny meetings* * *Evidence of improvements as a result of scrutiny* * *Terms of reference* * *Training for members* * *Membership* | Substantial |  |
| *F2 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Council has one O & S Committee. Its Terms of Reference and Procedure Rules, call-in and Councillor Call for action [[Section 6 Constitution](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Section%206_0.pdf)] Task and Finish Groups provide challenge and debate before and during the decision making process. * The Committee has a broad membership of up to 16 Councillors and has 6 scheduled meetings per year. As well as its scheduled meetings, the Committee establishes a number of task and finish groups each year to look at topics in more depth. Once a review is complete, a report is prepared which is approved by the Committee and is then sent to the Cabinet or other public sector partners for consideration. * Agenda, reports and minutes with recommendation (and the recording of public meetings) are available either to inspect / or on the Council’s website]. <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=134> * A running list of recommendations are reported to Committee [[Resolutions of the O&S Committee 6th June 2017;](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s539/Resolutions%20Report.pdf) [Resolutions of O&S Committee 18th July 2017](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s583/Resolutions%20Report.pdf); [Resolutions of O&S Committee 19th September 2017](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s758/Resolutions%20Report.pdf); [Resolutions of the O&S Committee 12th December 2017](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s1465/Resolutions%20Report.pdf) and [Resolutions of the O&S Committee March 2018](https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s1954/Resolutions%20Report.pdf), Resolutions of O&S Committee 18th Sept 2018, Resolutions of O&S Committee 11th December 2018, Resolutions of O&S Committee 19th March 2019, Resolutions of O&S Committee 16th July 2019, Resolutions of O&S Committee 17th September 2019, Resolutions of O&S Committee 8th January 2020, Resolutions of O&S Committee 5th June 2020, Resolutions of O&S Committee 14th July 2020, Resolutions of O&S Committee 8th September 2020, Resolutions of O&S Committee 8th December 2020, Resolutions of O&S Committee 19th January 2021 * The Committee keeps performance under review, with updates provided to the Chairman at briefing sessions and quarterly monitoring reports to Committee. * A Committee Work Programme linked to the Forward Plan. * The Committee monitors key projects. * The Committee has a presentation on each Executive Member’s service portfolio (at each meeting), which includes performance indicators – targets and outcomes for those services. * The Chairman of Committee presents an annual report to Full Council. The 2019/2020 report was presented to council on 24th September 2020: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s12828/Appendix%20A%20Annual%20Report%20of%20the%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee%20for%20201920.pdf> * The amended Code of Conduct institutes a new obligation for all members to attend compulsory training (as decided by Council , Cabinet or Committee or the Monitoring officer , Statutory officer, Group Leader or standards sub-committee), in addition to voluntary training opportunities   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * Examples linked to above areas.   **ACTION – In response to the Peer challenge, an Action plan has been developed.**  **As per A2i). Examples of new initiatives that have been implemented as a result include the Shaping our Future and Inclusion groups**. |  |  |
| *F2 iv) Providing members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Calendar of dates for submitting, publishing and distributing timely reports that are adhered to* | Substantial |  |
| *F2 iv) What NHDC has or does:*   * The SMT/ Member Performance management measures already described above, notably: C1 i) Corporate Objectives and Plan approval process [see A2 i) B1 i)] Service planning process. Employee Regular Performance Review (RPR) process and workforce planning. This ties together the golden thread of delivery/ measurement process. The Pentana (Risk reporting) System to improve its performance management. * See also F2 i), ii) & ii) above,   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * Examples linked to above areas. |  |  |
| *F2 v) Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (eg financial statements). This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Financial standards, guidance* * *Financial regulations and standing orders* | Substantial |  |
| *F2 v) What NHDC has or does:*   * As per A3 ii) The Council's financial management arrangements are underpinned by a regulatory framework comprising of the Financial Regulations, Contract Procurement Rules (and other measures). * The Finance, Performance and Asset Management team provide guidance to Councillors and employees where necessary. Over the last year, this training has been provided through the intranet via workshops including video workshops or via the e-learning Learning Management System covering a variety of subjects surrounding accounting, financial regulations, procurement and closure of accounts. .   *Outcomes/ examples:*  . The Financial Regulations were last reviewed in January 2018 and were further amended following the Section 12/ 14 review (on 31 May 2018),and outlined below:   * The council constitution was reviewed in July 2020 and relevant referenced below. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/council-constitution> * Section 13: Finance Contract and Legal Matters were last reviewed in July 2020 <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/S13_4.pdf> * Section 16: Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules  <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/S16_3.pdf> * Section 19: Financial Regulations <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/S19_0.pdf> * Section 20: Contract Procurement Rules <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/S20_0.pdf> |  |  |
| *F3 Robust internal control* |  |  |
| *F3 i) Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving the objectives). This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Risk management strategy* * *Audit plan* * *Audit reports* | Full |  |
| *F3 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Risk Management Strategy, Policy and arrangements are described in various sections, notably: C1 iv). * The SIAS Internal Audit Plan forms part of the Council’s assurance framework. It supports the requirement to produce an audit opinion on the overall internal control environment of the Council, as well as a judgement on the robustness of risk management and governance arrangements, which will be contained in the Head of Internal Audit’s (SIAS) annual report. * As per A3 v) and above, the Head of SIAS (Internal Audit) is required to deliver an annual internal audit’s opinion and report, covering overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation’s framework of governance, risk management and control. This forms one of the key assurances for the AGS. It is presented to the FAR Committee. * SIAS Audit Plan complies with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) which came into effect on 1 April 2013. * Audit Plan and update review reports against the Plan are provided to FAR for approval. * External Auditors provide key timetabling/ stage of audit reports to FAR Committee (Audit Fee Letter, Audit Plan, testing routine procedures, Audit on financial statement and value for money conclusions/ Audit completion certificate and Annual Audit Letter).   *Outcomes/ examples:*  The Audit Plan for 2020/2021 was presented by SIAS to the meeting of the FAR Committee on 16th March 2020. The Plan, complies with PSIAS amongst other things, planning to assess the Council’s risk maturity. SIAS then determines the extent to which the Council’s risk register informs the identification of potential audit areas, with regular updates provided. [https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10279/NHDC%20SIAS%202020-21%20Internal%20Audit%20Plan%20Report%20-%20March%202020%20issued%2004%2003%2020.pdf](https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10279/NHDC%20SIAS%202020-21%20Internal%20Audit%20Plan%20Report%20-%20March%202020%20issued%2004%2003%2020.pdf%20%20%20)  Recommendations are detailed in the June 2021 SIAS report to FAR committee [[SIAS Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Report 2020/21](https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s16496/SIAS%20Annual%20Assurance%20Statement%20and%20Annual%20Report%202020-21.pdf)]. SIAS has concluded that the corporate governance and risk management  frameworks substantially comply with the CIPFA/SOLACE best practice guidance on corporate governance. This conclusion is based on the work undertaken by the Council and reported in its Annual Governance Statement for 2020/21 and the specific review of Risk Management carried out by SIAS during the year.  The top risks for the Council, as reported to FAR Committee in March 2021 (Risk Management Update Report, March 2021, are:   High Impact and High Likelihood:  • Brexit - EU Transition • Covid-19 - Leisure Management Contracts • Local Plan • Managing the Council’s Finances • Novel Coronavirus - Covid-19  High Impact and Medium Likelihood:  • Cyber Risks • Delivery of the Waste Collection and Street Cleansing Services Contract • Sustainable Development - Neighbouring Authorities  Medium Impact and High Likelihood:  • Impact of Anti-Social Behaviour on Council Facilities • Income Generation • Increased Homelessness • Sustainable Development - National and Regional Planning Issues  It is worth noting that the Brexit - EU Transition risk score has subsequently been reduced to 5 (medium in terms of impact and likelihood). |  |  |
| *F3 ii) Evaluating and monitoring the authority’s risk management and internal control on a regular basis). This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Risk management strategy/ policy has been formally approved and adopted and is reviewed and updated on a regular basis* | Full |  |
| *F3 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Risk Management Strategy, Policy and arrangements are described in various sections, notably: C1 iv).   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * See previous examples/ outcome related to the above. |  |  |
| *F3 iii) Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place). This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Compliance with the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (CIPFA, 2014)* | Full |  |
| *F3 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * As per A1 v) The Council has an overarching Fraud Prevention Policy and this includes the Anti-Money Laundering Policy, Anti-Bribery, Employee Personal Conflicts of Interest, Benefits Anti-Fraud. The Whistleblowing Policies and Fraud Plans all available on the internet: <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/fraud-prevention-policy> and <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/whistleblowing-policy> * The Council participates in a Shared Anti Fraud Service (SAFS) and they present an Anti-Fraud plan and progress reports to FAR Committee. The Council has a Board and Partner role in the Service. * The Anti-Fraud action plan sets out to comply with the five key principles of the Code of practice on managing the risk of fraud and corruption.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Fraud Prevention Policy was last reviewed in September 2019 - <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/fraud-prevention-policy>   The SAFS / NHDC [Anti-Fraud Plan 2020/2021](https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10282/App%20B%20NHDC%20Local%20Anti-Fraud%20Plan%202020%202021%20SAFS.pdf) was approved by FAR in March 2020. This plan set out the 6 goals ‘The 6 C’s’ for 2020/2021:   • **Culture**: Fraud is acknowledged as a Risk for the Council • **Communication**: The Council has a robust communication policy demonstrating its commitment to prevent fraud. • **Collaboration**: Co-ordination of effort, sharing of best practice, data, fraud alerts and new threats. • **Competence**: Have the highest levels of professional standards. • **Capability**: Ensuring the Counter-Fraud Measures are appropriate to the range of fraud risk. • **Capacity**: Develop the right level of resources to deal with the level of fraud risk.. |  |  |
| *F3 iv) Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor). This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Annual governance statement* * *Effective internal audit service is resourced and maintained* | Full |  |
| *F3 iv) What NHDC has or does:*   * SMT responsible for overseeing the preparation and content of the AGS. * The Council has a local Code of Corporate Governance that it reviews annually. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/corporate-governance> * As per A3 v) Internal Audit arrangements are provided through SIAS. They provide an Audit Plan for approval, prior to the new financial year; progress reports against the Plan and an Annual Assurance * The Head of SIAS is required to deliver an annual internal audit’s opinion and report, covering overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation’s framework of governance, risk management and control that can be used by the organisation to inform its AGS.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * There is a legal requirement on the Council to review/ prepare and adopt an AGS, prior to approval of the Statement of Accounts. SMT is responsible for leading/ overseeing the preparation of this AGS review and document prior to presentation to FAR Committee (for its consideration and approval). FAR reviews the draft plan at one meeting and then the final one prior to approving the AGS.   It is recommended practice for the Council to develop and maintained an up to date Local Code of Governance based on the up to date CIPFA/ SOLACE framework principles.FAR Committee considered and approved at its March 2018 meeting and the assessment of this principles will be as against that, as it is based on the “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016 Edition)” https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/corporate-governance   * The Client Audit Manager updated the performance figures set out in the table at Paragraph 2.13 of the report. 86% of planned days had been delivered (292 days out of 338 days) and 63% of planned projects had been completed (17 out of 27), both of which were significant improvements upon the March figures reported in the previous year (2016/17). He confirmed that enough work would be completed by the end of the year in order to enable SIAS to provide an annual assurance opinion, and work not completed by 4 March 2020 would be prioritised for completion in April/May 2018, in time for the closure of accounts. The Client Audit Manager explained that Appendix A to the report outlined progress against the 2019/20 Audit Plan; Appendix B provided the Committee with the detail of the Corporate Debt Management, Museum Services and Time recording System High Priority recommendations; and Appendix C was the timetable of Audit Plan items for 2019/20. <http://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10280/NHDC%20SIAS%20Progress%20Report%20issued%2004%2003%2020.pdf> * **Internal Audit Progress Report March 2021**:  <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15641/SIAS%20Progress%20Report.pdf>   The Client Audit Manager updated the performance figures set out in the table at Paragraph 2.0 of the report.  • 86% of planned days had been delivered (250 out of 292 days) •67% of planned projects had been completed (16 out of 24)  Appendix A to the report outlined progress against the 2020/21 Audit Plan; Appendix B provided the implementation status of high priority recommendations; and Appendix C included 2020/21 Audit Plan Start Dates Agreed with Management. |  |  |
| *F3 v) Ensuring an audit committee or equivalent group or function which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body:*  *–– provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment*  *–– that its recommendations are listened to and acted upon.*  *This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Audit committee complies with best practice. See Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (CIPFA, 2013)* * *Terms of reference* * *Membership* * *Training* | Substantial |  |
| *F3 v) What NHDC has or does:*   * FAR is the main governance Committee. The terms of reference of the Committee are set out in [Section 10](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Section%2010_0.pdf) of the Constitution. The Committee will, when relevant, make recommendations to the Executive, on Executive functions. No Executive Member is a Member of the Committee. * The Committee provides an Annual report to Full Council. * SIAS undertake a review of the effectiveness of the FAR Committee. * The Membership is offered relevant training.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * SIAS review the effectiveness of the FAR Committee and most recently concluded that is compliant with CIPFA best practice for 2019/2020. * SIAS issued a Final Internal Audit report - North Herts District Council – Review of the Effectiveness of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee 2019/20 in September 2020. The report concluded that overall, the Committee is compliant with the guidance issued by CIPFA and was therefore an effective scrutiny body for financial, audit, risk and internal control functions throughout the 2019/2020 financial year.  <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14519/FAR%20Review%20Final%20Report.pdf> |  |  |
| *F4 Managing data* |  |  |
| *F4 i) Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data*. *This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Data management framework and procedures* * *Designated data protection officer* * *Data protection policies and procedures* | Moderate |  |
| *F4 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * The Council has an Email Encryption system "Clearswift", which became operative at the end of the 2016/17 AGS review period. * Certain Service areas have their external emails encrypted by default (Housing, Revenues and Benefits, Systems Technical (Revenues and Benefits), Cashiers and Careline). All others are prompted for encryption of outgoing mail. Employees/ Members are instructed to encrypt an email if sending private, sensitive or confidential information to an external email address. * The Council has a designated data protection (DPA) officer – the Revenues Manager and Data Controller is the Service Director - Customers [DPA - website Contacts information](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/data-protection/information-management-gdpr)]. * The Council has DPA policies & procedures [[DPA Statement page](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/data-protection-and-freedom-information/data-protection/data); [Subject Access Request Form](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/NHDC%20Subject%20Access%20Request%20Form_0.pdf); [CCTV Footage Requests](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/data-protection-and-freedom-information/cctv-footage-requests); [Data Protection Act 1998 - Fair Processing Notice](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/data-protection-and-freedom-information/data-protection/data-0)]. * The Council has a Data Sharing Protocol which provides a framework for the Partner Organisations for the regulation working practices between Partner Organisations and is in accordance with the ICO’s data sharing code of practice (which includes a pro-forma [Data Sharing Agreement/ deletion certificate](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/system/files/docs/Data%20Sharing%20Agreement%202015%20v1%200_1.doc)). * The Council has a Privacy Impact assessment (PIA scope and full screening) documents process. These assess impacts on privacy in accordance with the ICO PIA Code of recommended practice.   *Outcomes/ examples:*  The Council reviewed the DPA complaints procedure during 2016/17 [[Access to Information - Review & DPA Complaints Procedure](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/Complaints%20Procedure%20Oct%202016_0.pdf)], and sets out the process of making a complaint in the way that a subject access request has been handled. The Council’s retention schedule was last updated in January 2016 [[Retention schedule](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/Retention%20Schedule%20January%202016_1.pdf)]. The Council’s retention schedule was last updated in 2020. <https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/data-protection/retention-schedule>   * **FOIs/EIRs - 2020/21**   FOI total received for the year: 677 Percentage responded to within the legislative timescale: 98.97%, with 1.03% of the total missing the deadline.  Reviews: 7  ICO Cases: 0  The ICO have removed the requirement for Members to register as Data controllers (1st April 2019. Members were made aware of this change through Member Information Services (MIS) on the 31st May 2019.   * Councils are not currently legally obliged to undertake a PIA for a new project, although it is recommended by the ICO under their Employers Code and the PIA Code of practice (and will come into force as part of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements in 2018). These were used in 2016/17 as part of the Environmental Dash Cam and body cam projects, and demonstrates that the Council was going beyond what is legally required as part of the overall assessment on the impact on the public and employees. * **DPs - 2020/21**   DPs total for the year: 165 Percentage responded to within the legislative timescale: 98.8%, with 1.2% of the total missing the deadline.  Number of Subject Access Requests (SARs) received: 22  A complaint was also lodged at the ICO which was found in the council’s favour.   * Shared Internal Audit Services - Update on Progress against the 2019/20 Audit Plan |  |  |
| *F4 ii) Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Data sharing agreement* * *Data sharing register*   *Data processing agreements* | Substantial |  |
| *F4 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * See F4 i) The Council has a Data Sharing Protocol (which includes a pro-forma Data Sharing Agreement). * A data sharing register is retained by the Freedom of Information (DPA) team.   *Outcomes/ examples:* |  |  |
| *F4 iii) Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Data quality procedures and reports* * *Data validation procedures* | Substantial |  |
| *F4 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * Pentana provides a significant checking procedure for data, with this entered and checked by one officer and checked by another from the Performance team. These are used for projects and KPIs.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * Pentana KPIs. |  |  |
| * *F 5) Strong public financial management* |  |  |
| *F5 i) Ensuring financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Financial management supports the delivery of services and transformational change as well as securing good stewardship* | Full |  |
| *F5 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * See A3 ii) & F2 The Council’s financial management arrangements conform to the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016). * Key financial Systems are audited by SIAS annually.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * A 3 ii) SIAS audits. |  |  |
| *F5 ii) Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Budget monitoring reports* | Full |  |
| *F5 ii**) What NHDC has or does:*   * See C1 iii), D2 vii) Quarterly budget monitoring of budget, capital and treasury management information to FAR Committee and Cabinet. * The most recent of these was presented at the FAR committee in March 2021 * Third Quarter Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) Review 2020/21: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15662/THIRD%20QUARTER%20INVESTMENT%20STRATEGY%20CAPITAL%20AND%20TREASURY%20REVIEW%20202021.pdf>   Treasury Management Update, Quarter Ended 31st December 2020: <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15664/Appendix%20B%20-%20Treasury%20Management%20Update.pdf>  *Outcomes/ examples:*   * See linked outcomes/ examples. |  |  |
| Principle G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability |  |  |
| Accountability is about ensuring that those making decisions and delivering services are answerable for them. Effective accountability is concerned not only with reporting on actions completed, but also ensuring that stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the organisation plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner. Both external and internal audit contribute to effective accountability. |  |  |
| *G1) Implementing good practice in transparency* |  |  |
| *G1 i) Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in an understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Website* * *Annual report* | Substantial |  |
| *G1 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * Corporate Identity Guidelines which highlights the use ‘plain English’ [[Corporate Identity Guidelines](http://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-intranet/files/files/nhdc_coporate_id_guide_final-3.pdf)]. * Website Strategy with clear, consistent plain English. * ‘Outlook’ – Annual Residents Report each autumn.   • Communication Strategy – Communications will be honest, accurate, transparent and accessible.  [https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/NHDC%20Communications%20strategy%202019-2023.pdf](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/NHDC%20Communications%20strategy%202019-2023.pdf%20)  • Media Relations Protocol  [https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/news-and-publications/media-relations-protocol](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/news-and-publications/media-relations-protocol%20%20)  *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The Website Strategy is in the process of being updated, although reference is made to B1 Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) AA rating for Local Authorities. |  |  |
| *G1 ii) Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand.* | Substantial |  |
| *G1 ii)What NHDC has or does:*   * Reference is made to Principle B and Council’s approach to openness and transparency arrangements.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * See linked outcomes/ examples. |  |  |
| *G2 Implementing good practices in reporting* |  |  |
| *G2 i) Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and the stewardship of its resources. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Formal annual report which includes key points raised by external scrutineers and service users’ feedback on service delivery* * *Annual financial statements* | Substantial |  |
| *What NHDC has or does:*   * External Auditors Ernst &Young that provide key timetabling/ stage of audit reports to FAR Committee (Audit Fee Letter, Audit Plan, testing routine procedures, Audit on financial statement and value for money conclusions/ Audit completion certificate and Annual Audit Letter). * SIAS undertake and present an Annual Assurance Statement, (Head of) Internal Audit Annual Report on the work undertaken on assurance and other projects.   *Outcomes/ examples:*  Ernst & Young presented an [Audit Plan Report](https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s9698/EXTERNAL%20AUDIT%20PLAN%20FOR%20YEAR%20ENDING%2031320.pdf) to FAR Committee in January 2020.The Plan set out how they intended to carry out their responsibilities as auditor. They then presented the [Final Audit Results Report](https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14580/FINAL%20AUDIT%20RESULTS%20REPORT.pdf) for the year ending 31st March 2020 at the FAR committee meeting in December 2020. The report noted that in the January Audit Plan, there were no new identified significant risks. However, new risks were identified as a result of Covid-19.  New risks identified include:  • The uncertain impact of Covid-19 on markets - the valuation of investment properties and other land and buildings valued using market data was identified as a significant risk  • It was identified that the unpredictability of the current environment gave rise to a risk that the Authority would not appropriately disclose the key factors relating to going concern, underpinned by management’s assessment with particular reference to Covid-19 and the Authority’s actual year-end financial position and performance.  • An increased risk that further events after the balance sheet date concerning the Covid-19 pandemic would need to be disclosed.  • The Authority holds material third party receivable balances as at 31 March 2020. IT was identified there is a risk of increasing amounts written off as irrecoverable and impairment of year-end balances due to the potentially increasing number of businesses and residents unable to meet their financial obligations. |  |  |
| *G2 ii) Ensuring members and senior management own the results. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Appropriate approvals* | Substantial |  |
| *G2 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * Actions and officers are identified in the AGS to ensure ownership and accountability.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * Update reports area are usually provided to FAR Committee in September and March each year. Due to the impact of COVID-19, these were presented at the December 2020 and March 2021 Far committee meetings. * **Annual Governance statement 2019-20:** <https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s11576/Appendix%20A%20Annual%20Governance%20Statement%20for%20201920%20and%20Action%20Plan%20for%20202021.pdf>   **December 2020 - AGS Action Plan Update:** <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14530/Appendix%20A%20Annual%20Governance%20Statement%20Action%20Plan%20202021.pdf>  **March 2021 – AGS Action Plan Update**: [https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15610/Appendix%20B%20-%20Action%20plan%20for%20202021%20and%20corresponding%20actions.pdf](https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15610/Appendix%20B%20-%20Action%20plan%20for%20202021%20and%20corresponding%20actions.pdf%20) |  |  |
| *G2 iii) Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in the Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (annual governance statement). This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Annual governance statement* | Full |  |
| *G2 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * As per F3 v) SMT is responsible for leading/ overseeing the preparation of this AGS review and document prior to presentation to FAR Committee (for its consideration and approval). FAR reviews the draft plan at one meeting and then the final one prior to approving the AGS. * The Council also has an updated Local Code of Corporate Governance which includes the updated CIPFA/ SOLACE Framework principles 2016.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The AGS is available on the Council’s website The 2020/21 one will be reviewed in draft in July 2021 and approved in September 2021 |  |  |
| *G2 iv) Ensuring that the Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Annual governance statement* | Substantial |  |
| *G2 iv) What NHDC has or does:*   * The draft AGS will be shared with SIAS/ SAFS and the external auditors for comment, prior to finalising.   *Outcomes/ examples:* |  |  |
| *G2 v) Ensuring the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other similar organisations. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Format follows best practice* | Full |  |
| *G2 v) What NHDC has or does:*   * The CFO follows: the CIPFA Code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17; and the CIPFA Statement on the role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government 2016 by ensuring that the financial statements are prepared on a timely basis, meet legislative requirements, financial reporting standards and professional standards as reflected in CIPFA’s Code of Practice. * External auditors, who review the financial statements are currently appointed through Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd, and on terms ‘Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies 2015-16’ (available via <http://www.psaa.co.uk/>) and ‘Terms of Appointment from 1 April 2015’. The latter set out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and statute.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * The NHDC Annual Audit Letter was presented at the FAR committee in January 2021 by Ernst & Young. The document set out the output of the Council’s most recent financial statement:   ‘On 30 November 2020 we issued an unqualified opinion giving a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2020 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended. We did include a paragraph emphasising the material uncertainty in relation to the valuation of the Council’s property assets (including investment property) as a result of Covid-19. This was not a qualification or modification to the audit opinion.’ <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15147/Annual%20Audit%20Letter%2020192020.pdf>  Ernst & Young presented a Final Audit Results Report to FAR Committee for the year ended 31st March 2020[Audit results for NHDC for the year ended 31st March 2019]. <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s14580/FINAL%20AUDIT%20RESULTS%20REPORT.pdf> |  |  |
| *G 3) Assurance and effective accountability* |  |  |
| *G3 i) Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Recommendations have informed positive improvement* * *Compliance with CIPFA’s Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit (2010)* | Substantial |  |
| *G3 i) What NHDC has or does:*   * As per G2 i) External Auditors present an Audit Update Report to FAR Committee. * SIAS and SAFS provide Plans and updates to Committee as against those plans. AGS Actions are reported to Committee. Recommendations are reported on and corrective action which results in positive improvements.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * See outcomes /examples previously outlined for SIAS/ SAFS. |  |  |
| *G3 ii) Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place which provides assurance with regard to governance arrangements and recommendations are acted upon. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards* | Substantial |  |
| *G3 ii) What NHDC has or does:*   * SIAS have direct access to Members for the purposes of their reviews. * SIAS report compliance with PSIAS.   SIAS Audit Charter since 2013. An update to the Charter was brought to the Committee in June 2015 with an assessment of SIAS’s conformance against the PSIAS standards presented to FAR Committee in September 2016. The Audit Charter forms part of the Head of Assurance Opinion report (brought to the first committee of each civic year) and is updated annually as appropriate.  *Outcomes/ examples:*  The version for 20/21 was presented at FAR committee on the 15th June 2020 for approval (Appendix D of Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Report). The Charter review did not result in any fundamental changes from the 2019/20 version.   * Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Report 2020/2021: In the Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit report 2019/20 presented at the June 2020 FAR committee, SIAS had provided an overall opinion of ‘Satisfactory Assurance’ in respect of the Council’s financial and non-financial systems. This is compared to an opinion of ‘Substantial Assurance’.  <https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10970/201920%20ANNUAL%20ASSURANCE%20STATEMENT%20AND%20INTERNAL%20AUDIT%20ANNUAL%20REPORT.pdf>SIAS has developed its Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme which ensures that the service has the processes to deliver robust assurance work. |  |  |
| *G 3 iii) Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Recommendations have informed positive improvement* | Substantial |  |
| *G3 iii) What NHDC has or does:*   * Participates in benchmarking exercises. * Is part of Shared service arrangements, which effectively benchmark the Council against participating authorities for Internal Audit, Anti-Fraud and Insurance. * Public Service Network accreditation.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * Various examples of the Council participating in external formal and informal comparative reviews, being willing and embracing the process to improve services [A1 v) County wide communications group; A2 iv) Herts Careline,’s high performance in its annual customer survey A2 iii) IIP accreditation; E 1 ii) Sport England’s Nation for leisure services. * The DWP also provide ongoing monitoring in respect of the Council’s benefits service. |  |  |
| *G3 iv) Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*   * *Annual governance statement* | Full |  |
| *G3 iv) What NHDC has or does:*   * Risk management arrangements apply to partnership projects and to procurement (see, for example C1 iii), D2 iii, for project management/ risk and procurement). * Risk Management is reviewed by SIAS, and is one of the key parts of the assurance provided for the AGS.   *Outcomes/ examples:*   * See previous outcomes/ examples linked to the above. |  |  |
| *G3 v) Ensuring that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and that the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:*  *Community strategy* | Substantial |  |
| *G3 v) What NHDC has or does:*   * See A2 iv) Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2021/ implementation through the North Herts Local Strategic Partnerships and Health and Wellbeing Partnership.   *Outcomes/ examples:*  See outcomes/ examples linked to the above. |  |  |

1. Under Regulation 7(4) of the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. E.g. for planning TCPO 2015 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. R(Shasha)v. Westminster City Council [2016] EWHC 3283 (Admin) applied most recently in R. (on application of Rogers) v Wycombe DC in December 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Under the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A, and/ or Local Government Act 2000/ The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012/2089 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Made under The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014/2095 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 process. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)