

**Stroud District Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2020-21 Improvement Plan – Progress Report**

<b>Governance matter identified</b>	<b>Position as at January 2021</b>	<b>Target Date and Lead Officer</b>
<p><b>Future Financial Sustainability / COVID-19</b> The 2020-21 Medium Term Financial Plan identified core deficit of £3m by 2024-25.</p> <p>The Medium-Term Financial Plan now includes a savings target related to the fit for the future programme. Savings will be created by investing in modern service delivery methods and improved community engagement.</p> <p>As part of the Medium-Term Financial Planning process, funding is now clearly identified and linked to priority Council projects. This ensures successful integration of the financial plan and the Corporate Delivery Plan. This will be continued when the CDP is revised in 2021.</p> <p>Strategy and Resources Committee receives regular financial monitoring updates. The budget strategy in Autumn 2021 will consider all known factors relating to changes in funding streams, including government reforms, which will be further updated as part of the Medium-Term financial planning process.</p>	<p>Work on this continues and the Council is still on target to achieve its savings objective.</p> <p>The new Council Plan was agreed in October 2021 by Council. The Budget to be considered for the upcoming year will continue to be linked to priority projects.</p> <p>The Budget Monitoring process continues to keep members informed of the latest financial position.</p>	<p>Chief Financial Officer (S151)</p> <p>31st March 2022</p>
<p><b>Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC)</b></p> <p>A Peer Review was undertaken by the Local Government Association (LGA) and a team of elected members, senior officers from other local authorities together with LGA advisors with the Peer Challenge team's feedback reported to Council on 16 May 2019.</p>	<p>The Local Government Association Peer Review Team will be undertaking a Corporate Peer Challenge review with SDC on the 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022.</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

<p>The majority of the recommendations are now completed with 2021-22 expected to see the finalising of the remaining actions. Early discussions have already been held with the LGA about a follow up review in 2022.</p> <p>The senior management team's response to the Peer Review report's recommendations to Quarter four 2020-21 included:</p> <p><b>Actions taken in response to the above:</b></p> <p>There remains a need to close the medium-term financial gap although the position there remains uncertain until the Local Government Financial Environment is clarified.</p> <p>The Council continues to review, monitor, and develop its governance arrangements to ensure better decision making in order to deliver its revised priorities and plans. The Constitution Working group has now re-convened and is considering its work plan. Any further progress will be considered as business as usual within the role of the Monitoring Officer.</p>	<p>The position has been updated as part of budget setting for 2022/23. The Council will be closely monitoring the developments of the local government funding review.</p> <p>The CWG continues to look at items within the Constitution.</p> <p>The appointment of a permanent Monitoring Officer is expected in 2022.</p>	
<p><b>COVID-19 – Impact on Governance</b> There were a number of key changes that impacted upon the day-to-day workings of the Council.</p> <p><b>The Council has responded by:</b></p> <p>Ensuring there was regular and consistent engagement between the Strategic Leadership Team, officers, and Members. This included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A recovery Strategy was produced in consultation between Senior Officers and members of the Strategy and Resources Committee.</li> </ul>	<p>This Recovery Strategy has now been rolled into the objectives in the new Council Plan.</p>	

<p>There are planned audits in 2021-22 that will further enhance the Council's governance arrangements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding – to review the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements for meeting its statutory responsibility and duty of care to cooperate, communicate and report issues relating to safeguarding to the appropriate internal person(s), authorities and partner agencies.</li> <li>• Procurement &amp; Contract Management Framework – to provide assurance that the agreed actions to address the relevant recommendations emanating from the 2019/20 audit reviews have been fully implemented.</li> <li>• Fit for the Future – Internal Audit will provide professional advice on the future internal control environment with a view to designing out risk as the modernisation programme progresses.</li> <li>• One audit (Planning Enforcement) arising from a direct Councillor request to the Committee.</li> </ul>	<p>Safeguarding and Fit for the Future activities have been deferred.</p> <p>Procurement and Contract Management Framework (CMF)-shift from assurance to a consultancy activity for CMF only-Procurement follow-up of progress via recommendation monitoring.</p> <p>See above.</p> <p>This piece of work has been completed and an action plan for service improvement has been developed.</p>	
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