

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2020/21

Executive Summary

Based on the work carried out, which has been reviewed by the Audit and Standards Committee, we are satisfied that the Governance Framework is generally effective. 2020/21 was an unprecedented year and over the coming year we will address the matters contained in the statement below to strengthen our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these actions will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review and will monitor their implementation and operation throughout the year.

Signed on behalf of Fylde Borough Council

Councillor K Buckley
Leader of the Council

Allan Oldfield
Chief Executive

Governance Issues

As a result of the assessment of the effectiveness of governance within the council, the Corporate Governance Group has identified that a sound system of governance and risk management exists within the Authority. Commentary on internal control is captured within the Statement.

Following the assessment of the effectiveness of governance, during 2021/22, the Corporate Governance Group recommends that governance work should focus on the following:

| Area Requiring Action | Senior Responsible Officer | Progress update | Status | Completion Date |
|--|--|--|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Consider revised Code of Conduct drafted by the Local Government Association and bring forward a report for consideration by the Audit and Standards Committee/council | Tracy Manning (Director of Resources) | Initial summary report of the position was made to the Audit and Standards Committee at its meeting on 26 th November 2020. A further report was considered by the Audit and Standards Committee in May 2021 and it was resolved this would be the subject of a joint workshop between Blackpool and Fylde elected members and Independent Persons during the summer of 2021 to be reported back to the Audit and Standards Committee in the autumn of 2021. As a result this action was incorporated within the 2021/22 Corporate Governance Action Plan | In-progress | 24 th September 2021 |
| Project Management Framework – Compliance Guidance for Managers | Alex Scrivens (Corporate Services) | An internal review was currently taking place, this would be looking at the council's existing project management methodology. This was being managed by the newly appointed Senior Projects Manager, Charlie Richards. The goals would identify best practice and modernise the approach to our existing project frameworks, to be applied and consistent in all service areas. This action was transferred across from the 2020/21 Corporate Governance Action Plan | In-progress | 31 st July 2021 |
| GDPR – updating of key policies & procedures, provision of support & awareness raising to assist managers in meeting their compliance obligations | Ian Curtis (DPO) and Ben McCabe (Deputy DPO) | Work on Data Retention Policy was now underway and this action was transferred from the 2020/21 Corporate Governance Action Plan | In-progress | |

| Area Requiring Action | Senior Responsible Officer | Progress update | Status | Completion Date |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|----------|-----------------|
| As a result of a recommended action by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Provide briefings on the Complaints Procedure and provide conflict resolution and customer care training for officers involved in complaint handling | Alex Scrivens (Corporate Team) | The Corporate Team had been unable to carry out this training in 2020/21 as a result of the demands the pandemic and the requirement to divert resources from the usual activities, and as a consequence this issue would be addressed during the course of 2021/22 (this action was carried forward from the 2020/21 Action Plan) | On-going | 31 March 2022 |
| As a result of a recommendation by PAS consider a targeted Planning Peer Review by the Planning Advisory Service | Mark Evans (Head of Planning) | Action carried forward from the 2020/21 Corporate Governance Action Plan. Action not completed in 2020/21 due to competing work pressures of both the Head of Planning and the wider Planning Team | | |
| Core Competencies Review 'Fylde 2024' initiative | Kirstine Riding (Housing Manager) | The Fylde 2024 steering group have maintained and stored all information in relation to this initiative on a Fylde 2024 SharePoint site . There is an ambition to revisit this project once service delivery resumes outside of the exiting pandemic. This will involve a review of where we are at with the Greengage in the light of the changes to the work environment and culture of the organisation because of the pandemic (this action was carried forward from the 2020/21 Action Plan) | On-going | 31 March 2022 |

| Area Requiring Action | Senior Responsible Officer | Progress update | Status | Completion Date |
|--|--------------------------------|--|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Actions as a result of Covid-19 to consider the longer-term implications of agile working with a view to re-setting the culture and behaviours of the council | Alex Scrivens (Corporate Team) | The Corporate Team was about to embark on a survey of employees to seek feedback on key considerations in furthering work, communication, hours, and physical locations to enable staff to be as productive as possible no matter where, when or who they work with. This would build on the successful remote working which had been accelerated due to the pandemic. Any suggested refinements and improvements would be considered by the Head of Paid Service together with the relevant managers (this action was carried forward from the 2020/21 Action Plan) | In-progress | 30 th September 2021 |
| Incorporate governance changes agreed by the council as a part of the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) submission within the Constitution for formal approval and complete three-yearly Constitution Review | Tracy Manning | The principles of a revised governance framework had been agreed by the council as a part of the submission to the LGBC. These proposals would require incorporation into a revised version of the Constitution in preparedness for implementation post 2023 elections. This work would require to be instigated early in 2022 in readiness. The Constitution three-yearly review would also be incorporated at the same time. Both pieces of work would be taken forward by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with a periodic Constitution Review Working Group to be established at the Audit and Standards Committee at its 17 March 2022 meeting. | In-progress | 17 th March 2022 |

| Area Requiring Action | Senior Responsible Officer | Progress update | Status | Completion Date |
|--|--|--|-------------|-------------------------------|
| Service planning | Tracy Manning Paul Walker | To complete service planning for the Resources and Development Services Directorates | In-progress | 31 July 2021 |
| Fraud awareness | Corporate Fraud Team | To undertake corporate fraud training for council staff to raise awareness for the potential for fraud and the systems in place for elevating and reporting any concerns | Outstanding | 31 st October 2021 |
| Health and safety | Corporate Health and Safety Team | To seek a review of compliance with the working time directive within operational teams and make any recommendations to managers thereon | Outstanding | 31 st October 2021 |
| Head of Internal Audit Opinion – Limitation of Scope | Tracy Manning (Director of Resources) | To take action to ensure sufficient internal audit work is undertaken to gain assurance during 2021/22 to issue a full Head of Internal Audit opinion. | In progress | 31 March 2022 |

Scope of responsibility

Fylde Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. The council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to decide to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

In 2007, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) published best practice guidance, 'Delivering Corporate Governance in Local Government Framework' to assist authorities in reviewing their governance arrangements. This council subsequently approved and adopted a code of corporate governance, which was consistent with these principles. This guidance was subsequently updated in 2016 to define seven new core principles which should underpin the governance arrangements for all public bodies.

The seven core principles are:

| | |
|---|--|
|  Principle A: Integrity and values <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staying true to our strong ethical values and standards of conduct• Respecting the rule of law• Creating a culture where statutory officers and other key post holders are able to fulfil their responsibilities• Ensuring fraud, corruption and abuse of position are dealt with effectively• Ensuring a safe environment to raise concerns and learning from our mistakes |  Principle D: Making a difference <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having a clear vision and strategy setting out our intended outcome for citizens and service users |
|  Principle B: Openness and engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keeping relevant information open to the public and continuing their involvement• Consultation feedback from the public is used to support service and budget decision• Providing clear rationale for decision making - being explicit about risk, impact and benefits• Constructively challenging what we do and the decisions made |  Principle E: Capability <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear roles and responsibilities for council leadership• Maintaining a development programme that allows councillors and officers to gain the skills and knowledge they need to perform well in their roles• Evaluating councillor and officers' performance• Regular oversight of performance, compliments and complaints to enable results (outcomes) to be measured and enable learning |
|  Principle C: Working together <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having a clear vision and strategy to achieve intended outcomes - making the best use of resources and providing value for money• Being clear about expectations - working effectively together within the resources available• Developing constructive relationships with stakeholders• Having strong priority planning and performance management processes in place• Taking an active and planned approach to consult with the public• Regularly consult with employees and their representatives |  Principle F: Managing risk and performance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring that effective risk management and performance systems are in place, and that these are integrated in our business systems / service units• Having well developed assurance arrangements in place - including any commercial activities• Having an effective Audit & Standards Committee• Effective counter fraud commitments in place |
| |  Principle G: Transparency & accountability <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Having rigorous and transparent decision making processes in place• Maintaining an effective scrutiny process• Publishing up to date and good quality information on our activities and decisions• Maintaining an effective internal and external audit function |

Each local authority is required to conduct a review at least once a year on the effectiveness of the system of internal control and include a statement on such a review within its published Statement of Accounts. This annual governance statement is the culmination of this work and provides commentary on the 2020/21 financial year.

The purpose of the governance framework

This statement is an acknowledgment on the part of the council that is incumbent on all the stakeholders who play a part regarding the organisation of the council to ensure that there is a sound governance framework underpinning the work of the organisation.

The governance framework comprises systems and processes for the direction and control of the Authority and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with, and leads the community.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The governance framework as outlined has been in place at the Fylde Borough Council for the municipal year ended 31 March 2021.

The governance environment

Principles

In 2017, the council adopted a code of corporate governance ("the Code") and recognises that effective governance is achieved through the core principles enshrined in it as outlined above. This framework establishes that the authority should ensure to keep under review the effectiveness of their governance arrangements and whether standards are being attained. A review of the core principles of the Code took place in the summer of 2020 with the Audit and Standards Committee subsequently endorsing the outcome of this review.

The council's corporate governance environment comprises a multitude of systems and processes designed to regulate, monitor, and control the various activities of the Authority in its pursuit of its vision and objectives. The following describes the key elements:

Constitution

The council's constitution sets out how the council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent, and accountable to local people. The constitution also identifies the principal obligations and functions of the council.

The constitution and its appendices clearly explain how the different elements of the council interact and work together. It sets out procedure rules to which members and officers must adhere, codes of conduct and protocols.

The constitution builds on model constitutions and guidance produced by the government.

The Monitoring Officer has a standing obligation to keep the operation of the constitution under review and recommend any changes to help better achieve its objectives. During the year a review of the Terms of Reference of the council's Committees was undertaken. This resulted in some modifications to the remit of some of the council's Programme Committees. These changes were considered and endorsed by the Audit and Standards Committee and were subsequently agreed by the council.

During the year, the Local government Boundary Commission (LGBC) also commenced its review of both councillor numbers and warding arrangements. A cross-party Working Group of elected members was established in September 2020, with the responsibility of developing a proposal in relation to the number of council members going forward. A proposal for 37 members from 2023, together with a revision of the council's governance arrangements, was agreed by the Boundary Commission. It is anticipated that post 2023 local government elections to council's governance system will move to a structure of one over-arching policy committee, together with scrutiny and regulatory committees. In February of 2021, the Working Group re-convened to develop warding proposals based on 37 elected members, and these proposals have been submitted to the Boundary Commission. The outcome of the work to the LGBC will be known in autumn 2021. As a result, a piece of work will have to be commenced in 2022, to review the Constitution to formally put in place the changes to the governance system in readiness for 2023. This will also provide the opportunity for a three-yearly periodic review of the Constitution to take place.

Political structure

The council operates a committee system, following a referendum held in May 2014, which resulted in a vote in favour of the council moving from an executive form of governance to a committee system.

The council, meeting as a body, is responsible under the constitution and the Local Government Act 2000 for setting the policy framework and the budget for the authority. It also exercises certain other functions that are reserved to it.

As a result of the change in governance system, the council now operates a committee system with decision-making delegated to the council's committees. There is a mechanism in place for decisions to be referred to the council. The council's committees comprise Finance and Democracy, Tourism and Leisure, Environment Health and Housing, Operational Management, Planning, Licensing, Public Protection and a combined Audit and Standards Committees. There is also a cross-party Member Development Steering Group which considers and recommends personal development and general training opportunities for elected members together with the well-being of elected members in the wider context. These various member groups have met several times each throughout the course of the year, via remote means, to discharge the business of the council. A joint committee is also established with Blackpool and Wyre Councils to discharge economic development functions, within the context of the council's overall policy framework.

The council is engaged in other partnerships and these arrangements are subject to review on an on-going basis, for example, the Community Safety Partnership. Its Terms of Reference has subject to review in 2020/21 with an annual report on its activities also prepared for scrutiny.

Although no longer a constituent member of the Lancashire Combined Authority or the Shadow Combined Authority, the council remains committed to working with all the Lancashire authorities to establish alternative options for working together on strategic regional initiatives. One such initiative

was developing an evidence base to support the vision and ambition established for Lancashire through the Greater Lancashire Plan (GLP). The emergency response to Covid-19 initially disrupted this work however commissions are now underway once more. The GLP focuses on health, skills and vibrant economy, infrastructure and sustainability of the environment and an inclusive and vibrant economy. The government's expected levelling up white paper may well bring about a future reorganisation of local government in Lancashire affecting Fylde Council.

Meetings of the committees are open to the public, except where personal or confidential matters may be disclosed. Public platform allows members of the public to make a point or raise a question during Programme Committee meetings, council together with the Planning Committee. Members of the council who are not members of the respective committees can ask questions at committee meetings. This helps ensure robust accountability of decisions. Members of the public also have the facility to ask a question at council meetings by pre-registering to do so. These arrangements have continued to prove effective throughout the year with members of the public taking the opportunity to use these various means of communication through remote means.

The council has no scrutiny committee/committees in place at present; however, the committee system provides opportunity for scrutiny of its processes and policies and there is the ability to refer items to the council for reconsideration.

All the council's work is aligned to its corporate priorities through its committee system. All reports identify how they align to one of the four priorities: economy; environment; efficiency and tourism.

The council's Audit and Standards Committee deals with conduct, ethics, propriety, and declarations of interest. It also oversees and determines complaints made against members under the Code of Conduct. During the year it has overseen the development of a complaints handling procedure for standards complaints. The council has access to a number of 'independent persons' who assist in upholding high standards. A recruitment for a new IP was undertaken during the year because of a vacant position, with the appointment being endorsed by the council. These individuals have worked closely with the Monitoring Officer throughout the year to ensure that high standards of behaviour are maintained.

The Audit and Standards Committee is a point of reference for the Monitoring Officer who investigates or arranges for the investigation of any allegations of misconduct in accordance with agreed procedures and statutory regulations.

The monitoring and performance of the council's assurance and governance framework is also led by the council's Audit and Standards Committee. The committee has the responsibility to ensure that the monitoring and probity of the council's governance framework is undertaken to the highest standard and in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) guidelines.

Decisions on planning, licensing and other regulatory or quasi-judicial matters are taken by committees of the council in accordance with the principles of fairness and natural justice and, where applicable, article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Such committees always have access to legal and other professional advice.

Officer structure

The authority implements its priorities, objectives and decisions through officers, partnerships, and other bodies. Officers can also make some decisions on behalf of the authority under the Scheme of Delegation.

The Chief Executive

The Chief Executive is designated as the Head of the Authority's Paid Service. As such, legislation and the constitution make him responsible for the corporate and overall strategic management of the Authority. He is responsible for establishing a framework for management direction, style, and standards and for monitoring the performance of the organisation.

Monitoring Officer

The council has designated its Director of Resources as Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer must ensure compliance with established policies, procedures, laws, and regulations. She must report to the full council or one of the council's Committees as appropriate if she considers that any proposal, decision, or omission would give rise to unlawfulness or maladministration. Such a report will have the effect of stopping the proposal or decision being implemented until the report has been considered. No such reports have arisen during the 2020/21 financial year. Blackpool Council's Monitoring Officer acts as Deputy Monitoring Officer for the council, supporting the Monitoring Officer in her role. There are reciprocal arrangements for investigating standards matters across both these council's Monitoring Officers. The Head of Governance also supports ethical framework arrangements.

Chief Financial Officer

The council has designated the Chief Financial Officer as the officer responsible for the proper administration of its financial affairs in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. The principal responsibilities of this officer include financial management, reporting and monitoring financial information, ensuring compliance with financial codes of practice including the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Regular reports have been made to the council's Finance and Democracy, and other Committees as appropriate, throughout the course of the year.

Both statutory officers referred to above have unfettered access to information, to the Chief Executive and to councillors so they can discharge their responsibilities effectively. The functions of these officers and their roles are clearly set out in the council's Constitution. In particular, the role of the Chief Financial Officer accords with the principles set out in the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government. A protocol establishes the nature and role of the Monitoring Officer.

Governance framework

Internal Audit

The council maintains an independent Internal Audit Service, which operates within the principles set out within the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). These standards were set by several internal audit standard setters who established a series of standards known as PSIAS and adopted with effect from 1 April 2013.

Corporate Governance Group

A Corporate Governance Group has been established to co-ordinate the receipt and actioning of reports from the various sources of audit and inspection. The group also is responsible to the Management Team for maintaining and monitoring the Annual Governance Statement. Officers in turn, are responsible and answerable to, the council's Audit and Standards Committee.

Strategic Risk Management Group

The councils has adopted a Strategic Risk Management Strategy, which incorporates the identification and management of existing risks to the achievement of corporate objectives in accordance with recognised standards of control assurance. A Strategic Risk Register is in place and is monitored and reviewed, combined with action planning for risks identified. A Strategic Risk Management Group (SRMG) has been established to assist with the management of strategic risks.

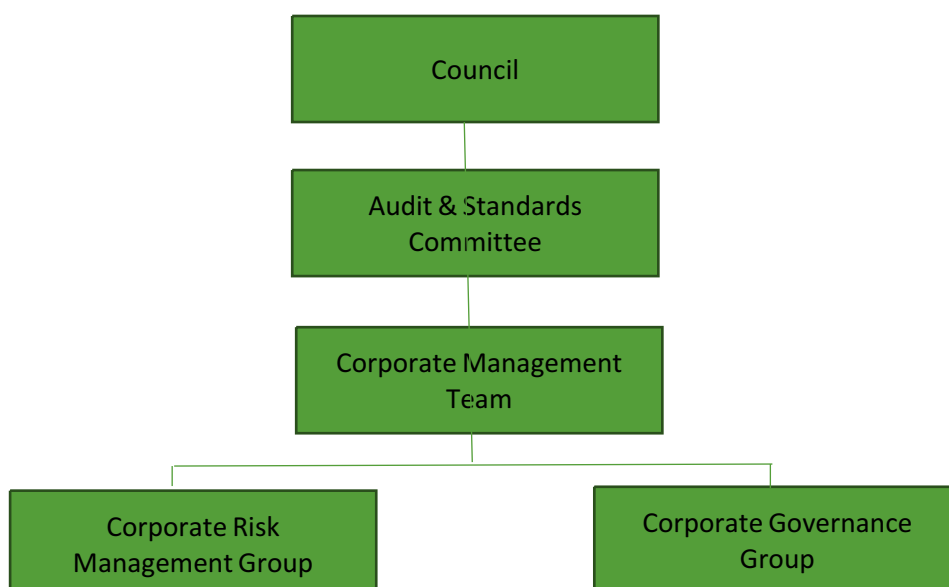
The Authority's Risk Management Policy requires that officers understand and accept their responsibility for risk and for implementing appropriate controls to mitigate those risks. To this end, service managers have identified their respective operational risks and have recorded these on GRACE.

Management Team

Two directors report to the Chief Executive and form the authority's management team together with six Heads of Service for the authority, one of whom is the Section 151 Officer. The Management Team assists the Chief Executive with the strategic and overall management of the organisation. The Constitution makes it responsible for overseeing and co-ordinating the management, performance, and strategic priorities of the authority within the agreed policy framework and budget. Each member of the management team takes lead responsibility for major elements of the authority's business.

The Management Team collectively and individually are responsible for securing the economic, effective, and efficient use of resources as required by the duty of best value. Powers delegated to each member of Management Team, together with other officers, are documented in the constitution.

Governance structure for risk and corporate governance



The Corporate Plan establishes Fylde Council's corporate priorities and reflects the council's principal statutory obligations. Performance against the plan is supported by a performance management system and performance information is reviewed by the various committees of the council during the year.

The financial management of the Authority is conducted in accordance with the Financial Regulations set out in Appendix 4 of the Constitution. The council has in place a Medium-Term Financial Strategy, updated at least twice per annum, to support the aims of the Corporate Plan.

Annual budgets are set by the council in the context of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, and each budget is allocated to a named budget holder. The responsibilities of budget holders in financial management are clearly set out within Financial Regulations.

A robust process of financial monitoring is in place. Budgets are regularly reviewed; the regularity and depth of attention is linked to the risks associated with each budget area. The financial position of the council is reported on a regular basis to the Management Team, to the council's Committees, and to full council. Closer monitoring and appropriate action are taken where there is an indication of a likely variance against budget.

In December 2019, CIPFA introduced a Financial Management Code (the Code). A key objective of the Code is to improve the financial resilience of organisations by embedding enhanced standards of financial management. The Code is due to be implemented in local government bodies in 2021/22 with 2020/21, being a shadow year. The Council will review compliance with the Code and address any areas of concern in order to enhance standards of financial management across the council.

In 2016, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) updated its best practice guidance on delivering good governance. As a result, during the year, the council adopted of Code of Corporate Governance which outlined several behaviours and actions which underpinned the supporting principles. This document was reviewed during 2020 and subsequently approved by the Audit and Standards Committee.

Internal Audit had a far from normal year in 2020/21. The team was redeployed for a large part of the year to deal with the administration of Covid related business support grants. At the latter end of 2020, the Head of Internal Audit, recognising the continued impact of COVID-19, reported to the Audit and Standards Committee that in light of the team being redeployed to business grants administration, and other resources across the council being re-directed to support activity in response to the pandemic, that it had not been possible to deliver a significant portion of the planned internal audit work as set out in the internal audit plan for the year and in light of this how she intended to evaluate the internal control framework, and a risk based revised approach was agreed at the committee meeting in November 2020. However, shortly after this, the Head of Internal Audit handed in her notice subsequently leaving the council in early 2021, followed shortly by remaining members of the team. As a result it has not been possible to deliver the revised plan and achieve sufficient assurance across a significant subset of areas of operation that are material and this has resulted in a limitation of scope opinion.

The Merseyside Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) were appointed in early 2021 to provide the audit service for a 12-month period. The contract commenced in 15th March 2021.

The Head of Internal Audit Opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control is moderate, that there is an adequate system of internal control, however, in some areas weaknesses in design and/or inconsistent application of

controls puts the achievement of some of the organisation's objectives at risk.

The Head of Internal Audit has obtained insufficient assurance across a significant subset of risk or areas of operation that are material.

Limitations to the scope

The Head of Internal Audit opinion however excludes, main accounting, housing benefits, council tax and business rates, third party assurance from external providers and key financial systems as there is insufficient assurance available for the Head of Internal Audit opinion to offer reasonable assurance.

The limitations of scope have arisen because Council internal audit staff have been redeployed to meet critical business needs. In addition, management made the decision to use available staff to address the priorities arising from the pandemic and avoid placing additional demands on staff to complete internal audits.

To avoid similar limitations in future, the council has increased internal audit capacity and strengthened its resilience by procuring MIAA to provide the internal audit service and deliver a risk-based plan during 2021/22 to fulfil the requirements of the PSIAS. Gaps in audit coverage in 2020/21 have been considered as part of the 2021/22 risk assessment and planning process.

In addition, the council's senior leadership team has committed to ensure staff are available to support internal audit to complete sufficient work to provide an opinion. There will be regular reporting and monitoring to senior management and the Audit and Standards Committee to ensure the achievement of the plan is on track. This action is recorded in the Corporate Governance Action Plan. MIAA has supported Fylde Council to provide this opinion on behalf of the organisation in full compliance with the PSIAS.

Other governance issues

During the year, the council's interaction with government agencies has been significant, as the government has delegated several initiatives aimed at responding to the pandemic to local government. The council's relationship with government has continued to be objective and professional.

Council services are delivered by trained and experienced people. Posts have a detailed job description and person specification and training needs are identified through the Personal Development Appraisal Scheme. In addition, the council has comprehensive policies and procedures in place, which provide the framework for the operation of its services and ensure that its actions and decisions are undertaken within the framework of effective internal control. The authority also has a set of core competencies which outline the expected behaviours of employees. Clearly the year has been an unprecedented one in terms of business interruption and new responsibilities balanced against delivering core services. This has been challenging for the council as a small district, and in turn, for its employees.

The Authority has a zero-tolerance policy towards fraud and corruption. The council's Whistleblowing Policy provides the opportunity for anyone to report their concerns confidentially and enable these to be investigated impartially. The council has a shared Corporate Fraud Team with Preston City Council and regular reporting was instigated during the year on the service reporting on the outcomes of its work to elected members. The Corporate Fraud Team also joined meetings of the Corporate Governance Group during the year.

The council is committed to openness and transparency. It published a suite of transparency resources on its website, including collections of material required to be published by government

regulation and guidance. Additionally, the council maintains a comprehensive and fully searchable index of agendas and decision records from for committee meetings from 2005 onwards. During the year 2020-21, the council received 316 information requests (made under either the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004) and responded to more than 97% of them within the statutory deadline. All but twelve of the requests resulted in information being disclosed to the requestor or the council informing the requestor that it did not hold the information.

The council takes its data protection responsibilities seriously. Its data protection officer has complete operational independence in data protection matters and is one of the council's most senior officers. During 2020-21, the council has consolidated its compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR by completing its record of processing activity ('RoPA'). The RoPA in turn provides the foundation for an updated retention policy and schedule which is presently being rolled out. The data protection officer reports to the council's management team every six months on data protection at the council.

During the year, seven personal data breaches were reported to the data protection officer. Of these, six were judged to not involve a risk to the rights and freedoms of data subjects. The remaining breach was considered to involve a high risk and was accordingly reported to the Office of the Information Commissioner.

The Authority is committed to working in partnership with public private and voluntary sector organisations where this will enhance its ability to achieve its identified aims and this has never been more so than in 2020/21

Covid-19

In March 2020 the first meeting was held of the Lancashire Resilience Forum (LRF) to agree a Lancashire-wide response to the emerging health crisis. This resulted in the LRF establishing a command structure for Lancashire for the crisis which had several themes including intelligence and advice, warning and informing, test and trace, adult social care, logistics, death management, business continuity, human aspects, education and early years and faith. The council's senior managers played a lead role within each respective area ensuring that a local response was put in place. This work continued throughout 2020/21.

The council's workforce was mobilised to move from 'business as usual activity' to emerging new priorities such as the humanitarian response through the establishment of a Community Hub through to a system of administering grants to the business community.

The council provided sound leadership during the crisis with the ability to move resources around to ensure that it had the capacity to respond. Teams whose usual work had ceased were moved into new areas of activity, with much achieved through agile working.

The Fylde Community Hub, which was established to support those on the NHS shielding list and the vulnerable. The Hub was resourced by council employees and it worked with several volunteer groups and other partners. A dedicated call centre for the Hub was operated remotely by staff working from home with the necessary IT solutions put into place to enable this. This was operated not only in usual business hours, but also during the evenings and weekends, during the first wave of the pandemic.

By the Spring of 2020, there were over 100 volunteers who also supported the work of the Hub offering support for others such as shopping and prescription collection/deliveries.



Fylde currently have 5883 Extremely Vulnerable Persons (EVPs - Shielded) that have been supported up until the period when shielding paused (31st March). All the EVPs on the list up to that point have been contacted directly either by telephone or in writing by the Fylde Community Hub to offer support and to signpost them to other partner organisations for assistance.

The Government, through the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), introduced grants to support businesses affected by the pandemic and a team of staff administered these grants throughout the year. To date £29.8m has been paid to Fylde businesses in 2020/21 through a range of schemes outlined below. Local authorities are responsible for delivering the funding to eligible businesses, fully reimbursed by government, with top-up funding if original allocations were insufficient. Other than for the discretionary schemes detailed below, the eligibility criteria and amount of the award were determined by BEIS.

Small Business Grants Fund (SBGF) and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF) – introduced at the start of the pandemic the amount of the award was predetermined based on a combination of business rate relief eligibility and the rateable value of the qualifying premises within the council's rating list.

Local Authority Discretionary Grant Fund (LADGF) - On 1 May 2020 the Government announced that it was providing local authorities with additional funding to target small businesses with high fixed property-related costs but that were not eligible for the Small Business Grant (SBGF) or Retail, Hospitality and Leisure (RHLGF) Grant schemes. An additional 5% of the SBGGF & RHLGF grant scheme funding was awarded for each local authority. Whilst the Government stated that they wanted local authorities to exercise their local knowledge and discretion they asked that the following types of businesses be prioritised from this funding pot:

- *Small businesses in shared offices or other flexible workspaces e.g. industrial parks, science parks, incubators etc, which do not have their own business rates assessment*
- *Regular market traders who do not have their own business rates assessment*
- *B&B's which pay council Tax instead of business rates; and*
- *Charity properties in receipt of charitable business rates relief which would otherwise have been eligible for Small Business Rates Relief or Rural Rate Relief*

On 17 October 2020 Fylde (along with the rest of Lancashire) entered into Local Covid Alert Level 'Very High' restrictions. It was announced there would be further support grants for businesses which were required to close or were affected as a result of the new restrictions. Subsequently, the following grant schemes were announced by BEIS in respect of 2020/21:

- Local Restrictions Grant (Open)
- Local Restrictions Grant (Closed) pre 5 November 2020
- Local Restrictions Grant (Closed) Addendum 5 November - 2 December 2020
- Local Restrictions Grant (Closed) 2 December - 30 December 2020
- Local Restrictions Grant (Closed) Tier 4 31 December - 4 January 2021
- Christmas Support Payment for wet-led pubs
- Local Restrictions Grant (Closed) Addendum 5 January - 31 March 2021
- Closed Business Lockdown Payment (CBLP)
- Local Restrictions Grant - Sectors
- Additional Restrictions Support Grant (ARG)

Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSg) (closed) and Christmas Support Payment (CSP) for wet led pubs - Local authorities were responsible for delivering the funding to eligible businesses, fully reimbursed by government, with top-up funding if original allocations were insufficient. The eligibility criteria and the amount of the award were determined by BEIS.

The Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) Addendum: 5 January onwards and the Closed Businesses Lockdown Payment (CBLP) - These schemes under the 'business support package for January lockdown' provided for grants payable to all eligible business affected by national restrictions and required to close. Eligibility criteria and the amount of the award were again determined by BEIS. Authorities were funded with reconciliation between grant allocation and actual eligible costs.

Local Restrictions Support Grant (Open) – This provided support for businesses that were not legally required to close but were severely impacted by restrictions. Authorities had a funding allocation and then had discretion over the eligibility criteria, to determine which businesses to support and the amount of the award.

Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) - Local authorities received a lump sum payment when regional tier 3 or widespread national restrictions were imposed. Local authorities could use this funding for direct business support grants or for wider business support activities, determining how much funding to provide to businesses, and exactly which businesses to target.

The council was required to follow the guidance for each of schemes and to conduct activity to provide assurance that the grants have been paid out in line with the eligibility and subsidy allowance conditions for these schemes.

Pre and post-payment assurance plans were developed for each grant scheme and eligibility checks were performed on all payments, whether pre or post-payment. Continuous monitoring, reporting and assurance checking was carried out throughout the process in line with the detailed guidance provided and regularly updated by BEIS for each scheme.

The council's Environmental Protection Team also provided a high-level of support to businesses affected by the various closed periods either because of national lockdowns or tiering arrangements. Pro-active visits have taken place to businesses, focusing on the hospitality and close-contact services, to provide support and guidance, and to enforce on those occasions where regulations were being disregarded.

Coronavirus: Are you ready to re-open safely?

Check your business is allowed to re-open (see Government list) and review your current risk assessment (see COVID-19 checklist) Visit www.fylde.gov.uk/reopening

Ensure adequate procedures are implemented for the following:

- Cleaning, hand washing and hygiene
- Help people to work from home (where possible)
- Maintain a 2 metre distance throughout. Where this is not possible, you must introduce additional controls
- Manage all queues according to the 2 metre rule (ensure regard for public access on pavements and passing traffic near roads)
- Take all practical and reasonable steps to reduce transmission risks (see practical tips)
- Ensure all controls are visible to the public (consider use of the Fylde Poster Pack and other downloadable resources)

For specific advice please email commercial@fylde.gov.uk



Businesses Permitted to Re-Open 4th July

FAQs

Can I stand up and drink at the bar, or anywhere else on the premises, at licensed venues?
No. Seating will facilitate appropriate distancing that will prevent overcrowding and congestion.

Who am I allowed to share a table with at a licensed premise?
Tables should be restricted to 6 persons from two households (maximum).
Outdoor seating is restricted to six people from any number of households.

Is there a limit to the number of people that can share a table at a licensed premise?
Please refer to Question 2.

Do I have to provide my name and contact details when I book a table?
Venues are advised to assist (NHS Test and Trace) by keeping a temporary record of customers and visitors for 21 days. Customers should do this in order to help fight the virus and stay safe.

Do I have to book a table in advance at a licensed premise or can I just 'walk in'?
It is advised to book to secure your seating. Booking assists the business in planning and working safely within their capacity.

Is a table booking restricted to the number that booked, not permitting others to join?
Refer to Question 2. You are advised to speak to the business to amend your booking in advance.

Can the venue set a time limit for using a table?
Yes. This is to the discretion of the business since the new controls are likely to require planning to maintain customer safety.

Can the venue operate a cashless service only (refuse cash)?

Contactless payments are encouraged where possible.

Can a restaurant or café require that food is purchased and refuse drinks only customers?
The service of drinks only is discretionary to the business. Some licensing conditions require the sale of alcohol to be in addition to the supply of food.

Does the 2m guidance apply at the table or between the tables?
The 2m guidance relates to the distance between tables.

If a venue is operating a '1m plus' approach, what mitigation measures should be in place?

- This may depend on each business circumstances. Such mitigation measures may include:
- Further increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning
 - Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible
 - Using screens/barriers to separate persons from each other & workers from customers at service points
 - Back-to-back or side-to-side (rather than face-to-face) positioning whenever possible
 - Maintaining one-way systems
 - The provision and maintenance of face coverings and visors
 - Designated pick up points for food and separate stations for clearing tables and dirty crockery

For further information visit www.fylde.gov.uk/reopening



Example leaflets, produced by the Environmental Protection team to support businesses reopening in 2020/21

As the government encouraged those who could to work from home this affected many office-based staff working at the Town Hall. The IT Team was able to support home working through the provision of equipment and guidance to staff. Both the Customer Services and Fylde Community Hub Call Centres were operated through remote, home-working, solutions. This ensured that customers saw no demonstrable difference when contacting the council. It also enabled an out-of-hours services for Community Hub telephone enquiries from those seeking assistance. The resilience of the ICT infrastructure is commendable.

Front line service delivery did not falter during the pandemic. As other councils struggled to keep their refuse collection services fully operational there was no diminishment in the service provision of the council's black, brown and green bin refuse collection service. The crematorium was able to respond to demand as well as sensitively deal with the social-distancing requirement of funeral services with on-line access for those unable to attend funerals in person provided.

There has also been close partnership working with colleagues within the health sector and the council has provided a local response with respect to both track and trace and lateral flow testing within business and community settings. Fylde partnered with Blackpool Council to deliver track and trace which has been a successful operation with self-isolation grants administered by the shared revenues and benefits service.


A team of Covid-19 marshals were employed from October onwards providing a visible presence within communities to provide reassurance and to provide intelligence on an on-going basis.

The council was also particularly fleet of foot, by in mid-March, having agreed an approach to how decision-making would take place during the crisis. At the Special council meeting delegated powers were given to the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service to take decisions, in consultation with leading members, during the crisis. This meant that the council was able to respond to issues far in

advance of the eventual enabling legislation introduced by Central Government with followed several weeks later. When the enabling legislation came into force the council switched its decision-making model to that of remote meetings. These respective responses ensured that there was no business interruption to the council's decision-making abilities.

The council has chronicled how it will support community recovery going forward together with economic growth through its Recovery Plan, below.

| | What we will achieve | What we will do |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Supporting Community Recovery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerable residents staying safe and healthy, including the homeless • Great outcomes by volunteer and community groups, delivered with support and facilitation from the council • A reduction in anti-social behaviour through a community partnership approach • Support those with financial hardship as a result of the pandemic • A healthier and more active community across all age groups and demographics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and further develop the community-based arrangements that have been created during the pandemic, ensuring that new and returning groups are sustainable • Implement an active citizenship scheme to support young people through post-pandemic recovery, providing opportunities and activities to develop their life skills • Work in close partnership with the In Bloom groups to return award-winning status the towns and villages • Target those most impacted by the pandemic (i.e. homeless, unemployed, vulnerable etc.) to ensure they can access the support they need from the council and our partners • Offer all residents targeted support and advice regarding healthy and active lifestyle choices including change empowerment programmes |
| Supporting Economic Recovery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic recovery through facilitating and supporting investment and development • Economic benefit for the borough secured through regional partnerships • Progressive employment opportunities and an enhanced skills base • Revived town centres and high streets through support and investment • An extensive and quality tourism offer with a wide range of all-year-round events | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver major infrastructure improvements including the M55 link road, south Fylde railway improvements, the Enterprise Zones, the M55 junction, and the Clean Energy Technology Park • Develop and deliver regeneration strategies for the borough's three town centres; St Annes, Lytham, and Kirkham • Facilitate major town centre projects including; the Kirkham Future High Street/Heritage Action Zone, redevelopment of the former public offices and JR Taylors in St Annes, and expansion of the unique independent traders and café culture in Lytham • Review significant empty or derelict commercial premises/land and engage with owners to encourage reuse/redevelopment • Deliver public realm schemes across the borough that enhance the local environment and stimulate private sector investment • Apply for grant funding and provide capital investment for projects to revive the high street, boost the rural economy, and enhance tourism • Support the return of events to the Borough, actively promoting and facilitating additional events and all-year-round tourism attractions and facilities • Create all year-round leisure destinations at Fairhaven, The Island and other locations in partnership with local stakeholders • Establish sustainable and meaningful forums to engage with the business community, that are constructive and deliver benefit to the local economy |
| Re-aligning the Council | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish sustainable and meaningful forums to engage with the business community, that are constructive and deliver benefit to the local economy • Effective and productive partnerships and engagement with every stakeholder • Service policy and plans that support and drive sustainable recovery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise the Corporate Plan and Commercial Strategy so that they are drivers behind the post-pandemic recovery over the long-term and shape the approach required to deliver sustainable recovery • Review council operational and governance structures to ensure the appropriate resources and decision-making arrangements are in place to deliver the recovery plan • Review policy and procedures to reflect both the changes brought about by the pandemic and the approach required to deliver community and economic recovery • Implement stakeholder engagement that is accessible, supportive and productive, resulting in sustained effective communication and shared objectives for recovery, embracing the digital developments introduced during the pandemic • Communicate through all media the recovery initiatives and successes in partnership with all stakeholders |

Fylde Council Coronavirus Recovery Plan
www.fylde.gov.uk e: listening@fylde.gov.uk


Review of effectiveness

Fylde Borough Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The Corporate Governance Group, which comprises the Monitoring Officer and Director of Resources, Section 151 Officer, Head of Governance and the Head of Internal Audit, has been given the responsibility to annually review the corporate governance framework and to report to Audit and Standards Committee on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Code and the extent of compliance with it and its work is referenced within this statement.

Inherent within the review of internal control arrangements is the need to assess the extent of compliance with statutory requirements and the Authority's rules and regulations, which includes not only its Financial and Contract Procedure Rules but also its Scheme of Delegation, and Codes of Conduct. This is evaluated each year by each Head of Service completing a self-assessment against these procedures. The Corporate Governance Group reviews these statements made by the respective Service Heads taken together with external assurance sources such as the external auditor's Annual Audit Letter and its ISA 260 report to those charged with governance...

During 2020/21, the Audit and Standards Committee kept under review how issues identified in the previous annual governance statement had been resolved. Any outstanding actions have translated into this year's action plan although delivery has been good on governance improvements despite resources being diverted elsewhere to respond to the pandemic.

The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Directors and the respective Heads of Service within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Internal Audit's annual report, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

The Strategic Risk Management Group has continued to meet during the year to review achievement of control measures in relation to strategic risks identified. The Audit and Standards Committee has also been kept abreast of strategic risk issues and their management.

We have considered the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework and system of internal control, and a plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system is set out in the priorities on page 3 of this statement.



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This document/publication is also available on our website at www.fylde.gov.uk.

Any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent to us at the Town Hall, St Annes Road West, St Annes FY8 1LW, or to listening@fylde.gov.uk.