

## CIPFA Financial Management Standards – Self Assessment - Progress on 2024/25 Planned Developments

CIPFA Financial Management Standard	2024/25 Planned Developments	Commentary on Progress
The leadership team is able to demonstrate that the services provided by the authority provide value for money	Develop and provide training on the new Procurement and Contract Management Strategy, to all staff involved in procurement and contract management.	<p>Over the past year, staff members from Procurement, Contract Management and Legal Services (considered the 'Superusers') have attended a 3-day LGA deep dive procurement training course. Additionally, all staff have access to ten 1 hour e-learning modules on the Procurement Act.</p> <p>Council staff have also attended various training sessions led by CIPFA. The first was aimed at Senior Leadership through a New Procurement Act Briefing Session which explained impact of changes on Local Government Procurement. Followed by four training sessions of 'Implementing the Procurement Act' which supported procurement, finance, solicitors, project managers, auditors, and contract managers with day-to-day responsibilities for seeking tenders and managing suppliers. Finally sessions on Contract Management – Checking &amp; Improving Performance - supported practitioners to achieve best value from contracts and help drive future efficiency savings through better contract management. The event focused on helping secure the best commercial outcomes from existing contracts and future procurements.</p> <p>Additional sessions for legal, procurement and contract management were also provided on procurement act by external legal specialists to provide a further focus on the legislative requirements</p>
The leadership team is able to demonstrate that the services provided by the authority provide value for money	Soft market testing to identify options for efficiencies and removal of manual processes in replacement of the Access projects (Mosaic, Synergy, Abacus etc)	Work on identifying options has included soft market testing undertaken for the new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, a detailed conversation is underway with provider to generate quotes, with value for money at the heart of these discussions. Also, a project due to start imminently to implement new social care systems, including looking at how we can maximise value of our investment in the care charging system by embracing process re-design and technological improvements
The Leadership Team demonstrates in its actions and behaviours responsibility for governance and internal control	Further automation and process re-engineering/digital redesign and systems thinking (removing failure demand).	The Finance service remains committed to automation, and is currently exploring developing a Technology in Finance strategy. Finance staff are involved in the 'Co-Pilot' pilot to identify opportunities to implement and generate efficiencies. Separately workstreams are in place to improve workflows and generate smoother processes.
The Leadership Team demonstrates in its actions and behaviours responsibility for governance and internal control	Implementation of Workforce Planning and Workforce Strategy	<p>The approach to Strategic Workforce Planning has been implemented across the Council, working in partnership with the CIPD and WME (West Midlands Employers). Workforce Services have developed support and guidance to enable leaders to be accountable for developing their own strategic workforce plan for the next 3-5 years. The Head of Workforce Planning and Development is a member of the CIPFA workforce advisory panel to support the CIFA Local Government Finance Workforce Action Plan for England.</p> <p>Our People Strategy pulls together our priority areas for our workforce, which are centred around strategic workforce planning, reward and recognition, recruitment and retention, leadership and EDI and wellbeing. Following a redesign of workforce services, this key strategy will be refreshed in 2025.</p>

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<p>The financial management style of the authority supports financial sustainability</p>	<p>Embedding the new Risk Management framework</p>	<p>The Strategic Risk Management Framework was updated in 2023 and agreed by Cabinet in January 2024.</p> <p>In September 2024 responsibility for the risk management framework and associated reporting transferred to the Corporate Policy Unit. The move reflects an opportunity to strengthen the alignment between strategic foresight, risk management and strategy development.</p> <p>During September 2024 a revised approach has been developed which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creates a clearer 'aggregate view of risk at organisational and directorate level.</li> <li>- Places greater emphasis on ownership, analysis and oversight by each DLT and risk owners.</li> <li>- Creates an opportunity to address 'remedial action' ahead of reporting to Members.</li> <li>- Extends the current infrastructure in place for strategy to work for strategy and risk – standing DLT items, strategy &amp; risk network.</li> </ul> <p>During Q3 of 2024/25 a "Deep Dive" review of all risks was undertaken at both a strategic and directorate level. This resulted in a number of risks being closed as well as new risks being identified in line with Council Plan priorities.</p> <p>Strategic and Directorate Risk registers continue to be reviewed and updated at least quarterly by risk owners, control owners, leadership teams and Corporate Board, ahead of reporting to Members as part of the integrated performance reports to Cabinet (plus O&amp;S Committees). This ensures risks are controlled and mitigated.</p>
<p>The authority has carried out a credible and transparent financial resilience assessment</p>	<p>Implement monitoring of the WCC position against new OFLOG/MHCLG financial metrics as they evolve.</p>	<p>Monitoring of WCC's position against selected OFLOG metrics is included in the quarterly performance monitoring process and reporting. Comparison of WCC's position against OFLOG and MHCLG metrics compared to statistical neighbours is also undertaken ad-hoc throughout year and as part of annual budget setting within the benchmarking process.</p>

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<p>The authority understands its prospects for financial sustainability in the longer term and has reported this clearly to members</p>	<p>Improvement of data to support forecasting around high-risk services (particularly Mainstream Home to School Transport and SEND).</p>	<p>Progress has been made to improve the quality of data used in the Home to School Transport forecasting model. This now takes account of forecast Education, Health and Care plans supplied by the Education service. The Transport Operations service is also implementing new route management software, which will provide more accurate data about contracts and routes, and will also support the accuracy of the forecasting process.</p> <p>With regard to SEND, there have been system improvements within Finance, which have in turn improved data quality and forecasting. There remains a need for the service to be able to provide better data, e.g. for post-16 places.</p> <p>As part of the 2025/26 budget setting process, the large demand driven services undertook a rephasing of their demand and cost pressures based on expected growth as informed by national and local data.</p>
<p>The authority complies with the CIPFA “Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities”</p>	<p>Increased internal reporting of WCC exposure to non-treasury lending (such as WPDG and WIF)</p>	<p>Exposure to non-treasury lending is reported as part of the mid-year and outturn Treasury Management reports to Cabinet. Non-treasury lending within the capital programme is also reported as part of quarterly financial monitoring reports to Cabinet. Exposure of WPDG specific lending is reported regularly to the WPDG Governance Group and WIF specific lending reported regularly to the WIF Investment Panel.</p>
<p>The authority has a rolling multi-year medium-term financial plan consistent with sustainable service plans</p>	<p>Improved links/consistency between strategic activity of the Commercial Delivery Group and its alignment with the MTFS process (such as WPDG, Traded Services, Fees &amp; Charges Income)</p>	<p>The Commercial Delivery Group (CDG) consistently considers the impact of its decisions and processes on the MTFS as well as reviewing and monitoring the contribution that commercial services make to the budget. When any commercial decisions are taken (e.g about starting new services or ceasing trading), the impact on the MTFS is an element that services have to consider when presenting proposals</p> <p>There is a significant representation from within Finance on CDG, including the s.151 officer, the Director of Finance and two other members of the Finance Management Team, to ensure the impact on the MTFS is reflected. CDG receives quarterly performance reports and the impact on the MTFS discussed and clarified if there are any negative variances.</p> <p>Closer links and processes have been developed to align the timescale for the setting of gross surplus targets for commercial services (for 2025/26) with the corporate budget setting/MTFS process. Timescales were aligned and information cross referenced throughout.</p>

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The Leadership Team takes action using reports enabling it to identify and correct emerging risks to its budget strategy and financial sustainability	Continuation of development of the suite of Power BI dashboards.	<p>The organisation continues to benefit from an increasing breadth of both strategic and operational reporting via our suite of PowerBI dashboards. These take data from our core information systems, along with other sources, to provide near-live, automated reporting across many parts of the business.</p> <p>In the past year, there has been a particular focus on improved workforce dashboards (tracking headcount, absence, retention and other metrics), responding to new requirements in children's services as we progress with the DfE Pathfinder programme, and a new integrated reporting hub for the Fire &amp; Rescue Service, bringing a wide range of different reporting products into a single place. During the year 2024/25, dashboards delivered by the council's Business Intelligence service have been viewed an average of 11,000 times per month, up from 8,000 views per month in 2023/24.</p>
The Leadership Team takes action using reports enabling it to identify and correct emerging risks to its budget strategy and financial sustainability	Increased scrutiny of savings delivery and introduction of Budget Delivery Oversight Group	The Budget Delivery Oversight Group was established in early 2024/25 with agreed operating principles at its opening meeting in May 2024. The Group consists of Cabinet members plus several other members, and is supported by the s.151 officer, deputy s.151 officer and Strategic Finance team. Service Directors have been invited to present their services' financial position and performance on savings delivery, as well as presenting deep dives into the factors and drivers of budget pressures. Specific sessions have focused on Adult Social Care, Childrens Social Care, Education (including SEND) and Home to School Transport.