

CIPFA Financial Management Standards – Self Assessment

Appendix B

Ref.	CIPFA Financial Management Standard	Current Status	2025/26 Planned Developments	Status
1	Responsibilities of the CFO and Leadership Team			
A	The leadership team is able to demonstrate that the services provided by the authority provide value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The Council Plan sets out how we will use our resources to deliver on our core outcomes and priorities, supported by a Council Delivery Plan. · Through our performance management framework, we monitor delivery of the Council Plan and the Council Delivery Plan. · A suite of dashboards for monitoring and decision making provide a golden thread from Council to Service business plans, covering performance, finance, risk, and assurance. · Benchmarking information is used to compare our service/financial performance to other authorities as part of the annual refresh of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). · Where performance (either service or financial) is identified as an issue of concern reviews are instigated with a clear value for money focus. · All Council strategies use a 'why, what, how' approach to ensure effectiveness is at their core. · Investment decisions specifically consider the cost-benefit of projects, with an independent evaluation forming part of the decision-making process. · These strands of activity are brought together and considered as part of an integrated approach to service and financial planning, driven by the Council Delivery Plan to cover policy, finance and performance. · All reports to Member bodies, Corporate Board, and service management teams include a financial implications section that comments on the value for money of the decision. · Where savings are required, Services are required to prioritise 'right-sizing' budgets and identifying efficiency improvements before considering service reductions. · All tenders consider VFM by considering the quality of service and not just price and, in many cases, quality is given a higher weighting. · We provide open access to our current contract information to demonstrate transparency to the public. 	Implement interface between Unit4 and InTend contract management software to allow greater visibility of contract spend, and compliance with the Procurement Act	GREEN
B	The Authority complies with the CIPFA "Statement of the Role of the CFO in Local Government"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The Executive Director for Resources is the Authority's s151 officer. He is a member of the Council's Corporate Board, helping it to develop and implement strategy and to resource and deliver the organisation's strategic objectives sustainably and in the public interest. · The Director of Finance (Deputy s151 Officer) also attends Corporate Board. · The Executive Director for Resources is actively involved in, and able to bring influence to bear on, all material business decisions to ensure immediate and longer-term implications, opportunities and risks are fully considered, and alignment with the organisation's financial strategy. · The Executive Director for Resources leads the promotion and delivery by the whole organisation of good financial management so that public money is safeguarded at all times and used appropriately, economically, efficiently, and effectively. · The Director of Finance, reporting to the Executive Director for Resources, leads and directs a finance function that is resourced to be fit for purpose. Both are professionally qualified and suitably experienced. · The five principles laid out in CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government are met. 		GREEN
2	Governance and Financial Management Style			
C	The Leadership Team demonstrates in its actions and behaviours responsibility for governance and internal control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The organisation has a set of core behaviours, which are demonstrated on a day-to-day basis by senior managers, to support the cultural change and transformation of the organisation. · The behaviours are supported by our values; to be high performing, collaborative, customer focused, accountable, and trustworthy. · The behaviours and values are integral to 1:1s and appraisal conversations and are key to the way we recruit and develop colleagues. · We have arrangements to provide assurance that our behaviours are being upheld and that members and officers demonstrate high standards of conduct. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o codes of conduct for officers and members (including gifts and hospitality, registering interests, anti-fraud, and whistleblowing); and o inclusion of ethical values in policies and procedures for all areas including procurement and partnership working. · http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/conduct · Our Constitution sets out the framework to ensure that all officers, key post holders and Members can fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative requirements so that we are efficient, transparent, accountable to our citizens and compliant with the law. · We have documented governance arrangements for our wholly owned companies and the Warwickshire Investment Fund. · The Director of Finance and Monitoring Officer both attend Corporate Board to ensure strong governance and oversight of decision-making. · Directors complete an Assurance Statement at the end of each financial year which confirms the management of risk and internal controls in place during the year. · Equality Impact Assessments are completed as part of implementing changes to policies, activities and services. 	Refreshing, improving and delivering the finance induction training programme for new members post 2025 local election	GREEN

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D	The authority applies the CIPFA/SOLACE "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016)"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organization has approved and adopted a refreshed Code of Corporate Governance, consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016). The Annual Governance Statement explains how the Council has complied with its Code of Corporate Governance. Induction training is available to all Members and includes a focus on governance, the code of conduct and officer/member relations. The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level based on continuing processes designed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify and prioritise the risks that could prevent us from achieving our policies, aims and objectives; assess how likely it is that the identified risks will happen, and what will be the result if they did; and manage the risks efficiently, effectively, and economically. 		GREEN
E	The financial management style of the authority supports financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council's financial management style and approach to risk is a balance of stewardship and enabling, aligned to the hierarchy of financial management styles (delivering accountability, supporting performance & enabling transformation) set out in the Code. The Council has a defined 'risk appetite' that is refreshed annually. The characteristics of the Council's financial management style are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a consistent structure and approach to the delegation of financial responsibilities and authority; budget holder responsibility; financial management support aligned to service structure and documented through an agreed Service Offer; enabling ethos, supporting improvement of performance, development, and transformation, including a dedicated Projects Team within Finance; Finance representation on the Project Boards for all major projects; and Finance attendance at all Service Management Teams. A comprehensive Finance Workforce and Training Strategy that includes a suite of finance training for managers to ensure all employees understand their joined up and collective responsibility for the sound and effective management of the Council's financial resources. Sustainability, strategic risk management and stewardship is directed through the s151 role and Resources Directorate. All reports to Member bodies and Corporate Board are required to include a financial implications section that is signed-off by a senior member of the Finance Service and a representative of the Finance Service attends all such meetings. This will highlight any financial sustainability concerns in relation to the decision being recommended. The respective Finance Manager attends Directorate Leadership Team meetings to ensure financial risks and implications are considered across the portfolio of agenda items. Processes ensure there is alignment of performance/service information with financial forecasting deadlines. 		GREEN
3	Long to Medium-Term Financial Management			
F	The authority has carried out a credible and transparent financial resilience assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The budget resolutions include the s151 Assurance Statement on the robustness of reserves and estimates. A reserves strategy is approved as part of the suite of budget papers on an annual basis. The Executive Director for Resources undertakes and issues a detailed reserves risk assessment each year and sets out clearly the minimum level of reserves it is prudent for the Authority to hold. The MTFS includes an assessment of future resilience issues and level of reserves. The financial resilience of the Authority, including use of the CIPFA Financial Resilience Index is reviewed annually by the Executive Director for Resources and reported to Corporate Board and Members as part of their budget deliberations. Quarterly balance sheet modelling is undertaken including the impact of WIF and WPDG. A standalone annual assessment of the organisation's debt capacity is prepared and included as part of the Council's capital strategy. 	Pilot the development of a suite of Finance specific metrics within PowerBI	GREEN
G	The authority understands its prospects for financial sustainability in the longer term and has reported this clearly to members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is Council policy and practice to set a budget and MTFS that is balanced not only for the next financial year, but also over the medium term (5 years). The positioning of the budget report within the wider suite of consistent annual financial cycle reporting ensures that the understanding of sustainability is central to reporting throughout the financial year. An interactive financial planning model is used as part of the MTFS process allowing Councillors and senior officers to adjust the drivers of spend and resourcing to understand the impact on the annual budget and the 5-year MTFS. The model includes the flexibility to use reserves to support activity on a temporary basis but ensures the MTFS is balanced and sustainable. Budget reporting to Members includes a sensitivity analysis of the impact of changes in estimated inflation, taxbases, government grant, spending need, council tax levels and business rates. The Council's Strategic Risk Management Framework and Strategic Risk Appetite levels and statements in place with a full annual update and quarterly refresh. 		GREEN

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H	The authority complies with the CIPFA "Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital, Treasury and Investment activities are managed line with the Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities, as well as associated statutory guidance (e.g. Investment Guidance; Minimum Revenue Provision Guidance; Treasury Management Guidance). Fundamental to this is the setting of prudential and commercial investment indicators in the Treasury Management and Investment Strategies agreed as part of the suite of budget reports. Mid-Year Review and Outturn reports of performance against both strategies are considered by Corporate Board, Cabinet and the Resources and Fire Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A quarterly review is undertaken to ensure internal consistency between the capital programme, the Treasury Management and Investment strategies and the balance sheet forecasts. Business case appraisal process for both WPDG and WIF includes the provision of evidence that demonstrates compliance with the Prudential Code as part of the financial implications of any proposed decision. 	Reviewing the need for and potential shape of an Investment Fund to replace the current Warwickshire Investment Fund from 2027/28 onwards	GREEN
I	The authority has a rolling multi-year medium-term financial plan consistent with sustainable service plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is Council policy and practice to set a budget and MTFS that is balanced not only for the next financial year, but also over the medium term (5 years). The approved 2025/26 budget also met this criterion. The rolling 5-year MTFS demonstrates that the finances of the authority are allocated in accordance with the priorities of the organisation and that the underpinning finances remain robust and our service delivery sustainable. In setting the MTFS framework it is acknowledged by Council that if future spending needs exceed the indicative levels, further budget reductions will need to be identified and delivered to ensure the budget remains sustainable. An Integrated Planning approach to service and financial planning designed to further enhance the golden thread between the Council Plan, Council Delivery Plan, MTFS and service business plans. Medium-term financial planning is based on the concept of revenue and capital investment pipelines and a prioritisation process focused on the Council Delivery Plan. 	Utilise data and engagement to identify and deliver savings required for MTFS with sufficient lead time and appropriate methodology for capturing and agreeing savings with services	GREEN
4 The Annual Budget				
J	The authority complies with its statutory obligations in respect of the budget setting process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council approves an annual balanced budget that enables the s151 officer to positively comment on the robustness of the estimates and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves (s25 assurance statement). The supporting documentation meets the requirements to approve a capital strategy, the annual pay policy statement and the treasury management and investment strategies. Meeting dates are set to ensure compliance with statutory deadlines. 		GREEN
K	The budget report includes a statement by the CFO on the robustness of the estimates and a statement on the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A s25 assurance statement forms part of the budget resolution for each of the political groups. The commentary is specific to the content of the resolution. The s151 officer's s25 assurance statement includes commentary on the key risks to the deliverability of the budget. For the 2025/26 budget these include the Dedicated Schools Grants Deficits, Demand Growth Risk, Funding Risk, Workforce Risk, Delivery of the Planned Budget Reductions, Inflationary Risk, Affordability of the Capital Programme, Impact of National Policy Changes, and Impact on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 		GREEN
5 Stakeholder Engagement and Business Plans				
L	The authority has engaged where appropriate with key stakeholders in developing its long-term financial strategy, medium-term financial plan, and annual budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation with stakeholders is undertaken as part of setting the annual budget and capital programme, including the statutory consultation with business ratepayers and consultation with the trade unions. Wider consultation with residents is embedded as part of the engagement around the organisation's priorities and objectives. Extensive stakeholder involvement is undertaken as part of the development and implementation of service changes and major projects, with the extent of consultation required approved by Legal Services. A corporate consultation and engagement framework and guidance provides overarching standards and best practice for all staff who undertake consultation and engagement activities and reflect current legislation around the "duty to inform, consult and involve" local communities and residents, and recognised best practice. 		GREEN
M	The authority uses an appropriate documented options appraisal methodology to demonstrate the value for money of its decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For all revenue and capital projects requiring funding a proof-of-concept document is produced to assess alignment to the Councils strategic objectives and priorities and whether the investment is value for money and affordable. Approval adds a scheme to the 'live' revenue or capital investment pipeline. A standard business case is then prepared for all new capital and revenue investment proposals. This includes Director sign off confirming the scheme is a priority in contributing to the delivery the corporate priorities and objectives, satisfaction with both the content of the bid and the rigour with which the business case has been compiled, and willingness to accept accountability for the delivery of the scheme benefits within the timeframe and cost envelope. Finance representatives review draft business cases to ensure financial implications are considered within the plans. All business cases are reviewed by an independent Panel including legal and finance representatives. The business case along with the evaluation then goes through a final approval process of Corporate Board and, where required, Elected Members at which point funding is approved. Investment business cases are required to identify measurable project benefits linked to solving the business problem. Post-project assurance of benefits realisation is required before projects can be closed. As part of our commissioning and procurement all tenders consider VFM by considering the quality of service and not just price. 		GREEN

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6 Monitoring Financial Performance				
N	The Leadership Team takes action using reports enabling it to identify and correct emerging risks to its budget strategy and financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial reporting is consolidated covering revenue, capital, savings and balance sheet impacts. This enables the impact on reserves, the MTFS and future financial sustainability to be considered on a quarterly basis. Monthly financial reporting to Corporate Board enables a prompt and proactive response to emerging risks and for mitigating actions to be identified. Corporate Board receives quarterly reports on performance and risk that highlight areas of concern and any changes to our strategic risks. Where areas of concern are identified 'deep dives' covering financial and performance information are considered and action plans developed. This covers both the revenue budget and major capital projects. Directorate Leadership Teams receive monthly reports on their financial position and performance, which escalate areas of concern for Directorates to consider mitigating actions. A Commercial Delivery Group monitors the performance of traded services and other aspects of the Council's commercial strategy. A Capital Strategy Board oversees the capital investment pipeline with a specific remit to monitor the delivery of the capital programme. Directors provide an annual assurance that risks are managed, and controls are maintained through the year. Internal Audit provide a level of assurance that the significant risks facing the Council are addressed, based on audit outcomes. 	Implementing any changes required with regards to the Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector, and the Code of Practice for the governance of internal audits in Local Government	GREEN
O	The Leadership Team monitors the elements of its balance sheet that pose a significant risk to financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have a structured approach to the monitoring of the key elements of our balance sheet that pose a significant risk to financial sustainability. A reserves strategy is approved as part of the budget/MTFS each year and our level of reserves is monitored on an on-going basis. Compliance with the reserves strategy and the impact of in-year financial performance on the Authority's reserves and balances is reported as a standard part of all monitoring reports to Corporate Board and Cabinet. Cash balances, debt and investments are monitored as part of the treasury management and investment in-year performance reports to Corporate Board and Cabinet. Our performance management framework includes key financial health indicators at corporate and service level. This includes reporting on the level of outstanding debt. Our balance sheet model is used to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> forecast the Council's loan and cash position; determine long term capital financing and external borrowing requirements; assess the impact of major investments through WPDG and WIF as part of the assessment of the risks and benefits of the investment to the Council and subsequent impact on revenue and capital budgets; and support the setting of the authorised and operational boundaries within the Treasury Management and Investment Strategies. Robust governance arrangements for both WIF and WPDG have been implemented, as approved. 		GREEN
7 External Financial Reporting				
P	The CFO has personal and statutory responsibility for ensuring that the statement of accounts produced by the local authority complies with the reporting requirements of the "Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Executive Director for Resources is responsible for ensuring that the statement of accounts produced by the local authority complies with the reporting requirements of the "Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom". The operational responsibility for production of the Statement of Accounts, in line with proper accounting practices, rests within the Strategic Finance team. The Executive Director for Resources has management responsibility, through the Director of Finance, for the Strategic Finance team. The Strategic Finance team attend relevant briefings and training annually on Code of Practice changes and audit requirements to ensure knowledge is current and the quality of the draft, pre-audit documents remains high. 	Introduction of annual review and approval of accounting policies by the Audit & Standards Committee ahead of producing the draft Statement of Accounts	GREEN
Q	The presentation of the final outturn figures and variations from budget allows the leadership team to make strategic financial decisions	<p>The financial outturn report to Corporate Board and Cabinet provides an analysis of the financial position of the organisation at the end of the financial year including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> capital and revenue performance during the financial year; explanations and mitigating actions put forward by Services for variations to budgets, and the implications on the MTFS; savings achievement; and the resulting reserves position. <p>The information enables informed decisions to be made about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> approving the carry forward of specific resources to support the delivery of the Council Plan in the following financial year; and areas to be targeted as providing potential opportunities for budget right-sizing. <p>The report is consistent with preceding budget monitoring reports presented to Corporate Board and Cabinet throughout the year, from the budget setting report through the three quarterly stages of in-year monitoring, allowing outturn to be viewed in the context of the regular strategic financial reporting.</p>	Targeted reviews in high risk areas, combining financial and service intelligence to enable improved understanding of trends, risks and next steps. Priority areas of focus are those services with increasing overspends: SEND, Children's social care, Social Care and Support and Home to School Transport.	GREEN