

Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Resources

Cabinet Member: Cllr Mandy Chilcott - Cabinet Member - Resources

Division and Local Member: All

Lead Officers: Sheila Collins, Interim Director of Finance

Chris Squire, Director of HR and OD

Simon Clifford, Corporate Affairs Director

Paula Hewitt, Director of Commissioning and Lead Commissioner for
Economic and Community Infrastructure

Author: Cllr Mandy Chilcott - Cabinet Member - Resources

Contact Details: 01823 359028

1. Summary/link to the County Plan

- 1.1** This report highlights the key activities and achievements of the past year within my areas of responsibility.
- 1.2** In the main, these services underpin much of the work of the Council, providing advice to and supporting our frontline services and in doing so we help make things happen to deliver the Council's priorities and services effectively.
- 1.3** The first section is devoted to financial sustainability. I'm delighted to report the dramatic improvement seen in our financial fortunes over the course of the past year but would also ask the we all remain mindful that this continues to be a volatile area that is susceptible increases in demand – whether that's through an ageing population needing social care support, or pressures within children's social care. This is very much a national picture that urgently needs a Government supported long term solution.

Two further significant areas are worthy of note. Firstly, the approach from our senior leaders and staff to achieve and deliver our savings targets. 99% of these targets have been delivered or are on track to be delivered. This is a huge step forward that helps the Council to live within its means. Secondly the way we have rebuilt our General Fund reserve from a very low level to a level that is appropriate. These two changes have contributed significantly to the new positive financial outlook.

- 1.4** Aside from our improved financial position, I would highlight our major projects team which is on course to complete 14 new or improved schools with more in the pipeline. And I would also highlight our democratic services team who work so hard to support all council members.
- 1.5** This report should be read alongside the more detailed comprehensive budget and finance documentation that has been provided to Council Members and the public over the past months – a move that has further improved our transparency and has enabled and encouraged new ideas to come forward.

Key Achievements and Activities

2. Finance Services

- 2.1** Despite huge financial challenges in 2018/19, and increasing demand for core social care services, the council delivered an underspend at the end of 2018/19 (£5.9m) and started to improve financial stability through improved General Fund position (from £12.188m to £17.689m during the year). A follow-up to the Corporate Peer Review, carried out in April 2019 confirmed this positive direction-of-travel for the Council and reiterated the need to sustain this progress and embed improved practices throughout 2019/20.
- 2.2** Alongside the above, we have made significant improvements in the frequency and quality of financial reporting during 2018/19: For example, moving from quarterly budget monitoring reporting to monthly reporting, alongside other initiatives during 2018/19, ended with the external auditor improving the Council's Value For Money (VFM) conclusion from 'Adverse' (for 2017/18) to 'Qualified except for' for 2018/19 – a huge step forward. The Auditor said in its report to the Audit Committee on 19 September 2019:
"Having considered all the evidence... we are now satisfied that sufficient progress has been made since our Adverse VFM conclusion in 2017/18 to conclude that the financial challenges facing the Council are no longer pervasive to the whole Council."
However, in explaining the rationale for the 'except for' VFM conclusion the Auditor said:
"This 'except for' rating recognises that there is still much to do within the Council to return it to a fully sustainable financial position and it is critical that continued effort is directed to ensuring the positive trajectory over the last 12 months continues".

The Council recognised the further work needed and chose to continue with Interim Director of Finance arrangements for 2019/20 to provide continuity and ensure an experienced S151 led the council through the further improvements in 2019/20.

2.3 Other key achievements to further improving the Council's financial stability include:

- 2.3.1 A revised Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) approach for 2020-23 to strengthen stakeholder engagement; greater challenge and review of proposed needs to spend, to gain greater levels of confidence in budget forecasts; multi-year budgeting; integration between revenue and capital budgets; review of core funding assumptions; scenario planning; and improved best practice arrangements (e.g. for treatment of reserves);
- 2.3.2 Continued improvements to the quality and transparency of financial reporting (to Cabinet, Scrutiny and Council), alongside sustaining the monthly reporting started in 2019/20;
- 2.3.3 Review of the corporate process for managing reserves – to improve accountability and transparency;
- 2.3.4 Increased focus on budget monitoring and continued tighter financial control: noting that by month 8 for 2019/20 there remained over £6m of the corporate contingency unallocated – which, subject to variations later in the year, will enable the Council to boost its financial resilience towards the end of the year.
- 2.3.5 Continued focus on value for money actions tracked and reported to each Audit committee and monitoring through the Council's risk management system (JCAD).
- 2.3.6 Strengthened senior Finance Leadership Team during summer 2019– additional Deputy post created and existing Strategic Business Partner role filled with permanent appointments. However, the recent appointment of one Deputy (Jason Vaughan) to the permanent Director of Finance role (with effect from 1 March 2020) and departure of the other Deputy (Lizzie Watkin), has led the service to review the senior Finance Leadership Team. An experienced interim Chief Accountant has joined for 6 months from Jan 2020 and an advert for a permanent Deputy S151 Officer will be published shortly.
- 2.3.7 Following success in becoming a Business Rate Pilot for 2019/20, the county was able to allocate £4m to a county-wide reserve to allocate to initiatives to improve economic prosperity across Somerset. So far £1m

has been allocated. In addition, this Council is estimated to benefit by £1.2m in 2019/20 (although the final gain will be confirmed later in 2020).

2.4 Somerset Local Government Pension Fund

As the administering authority for the Somerset Local Government Pension Fund, the Finance Team has made good progress of moving to pooling, as at end of December 60% of the fund is now managed by the Brunel pool. The Fund's actuary has undertaken its regular triannual review of the Fund's financial position and the funding level has increased to 86% from 77% at the 2016 assessment.

2.5 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

The DSG allocation for 2020/21 was announced in late December, including the split between the various 'blocks' (total £400m) – an overall increase in funding compared to expectations a year ago. Officers are working closely with the Somerset Schools Forum (SSF) to determine the final allocations and implications for the DSG Deficit Recovery Plan that the Council submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) in June 2019. More details are included in the MTFP Budget Report elsewhere on this agenda.

2.6 Treasury Management

As usual the detailed full year Treasury Management outturn report will be produced and provided to Full Council at the July meeting. The Treasury Team continues to work within the prudential code which emphasises security and liquidity, and then when these are achieved, delivers yield. Gross investment income for the 9 months to end of December 2019 was £1.9m, which was an average return of 1.11% from an average balance of £222m.

Cabinet has endorsed an investment policy of increasing the amount invested in strategic pooled funds and this will be implemented as part of the Treasury Management Strategy.

2.7 Internal Audit

Throughout this financial year the Chief Internal Auditor (CIA) role has been held by the South West Audit Partnership (SWAP) on behalf of the Council, following the retirement of the former CIA towards the end of 2018/19. This change has worked well. The Interim Director of Finance and the Chief Internal Auditor have liaised frequently to review progress against audit plans, previous audit action plans and to consider any fraud or irregularity instances. In addition, the CIA has attended the Council's Governance Board regularly to

update them on internal audit progress and consider appropriate changes to the audit plan and most recently to develop the audit plan for next year. Attendance at the Governance Board has provided useful insight for the CIA to be aware of current and emerging challenges that might influence the audit work programme.

The CIA retains authority to act independently and has access to relevant officers and members to carry out audit duties as appropriate, including reporting independently to the Audit Committee and attending the Senior Leadership Team meetings.

2.8 Audit Committee

Throughout 2019/20 the Finance Team have ensured a robust work programme has been in place and supported to enable effective governance reporting. A focus on ensuring every meeting receives a progress report on the value for money action tracker and that audit reports with partial findings can be scrutinised by the Audit Committee as follow ups, has continued during 2019/20. Services and audit have reduced the number of partial audits recorded in our system from 18 in March 2019 to 17 as at 31 January 2020.

2.9 Risk Management

During 2019/20, in my role as both Cabinet Member and the Council's Risk Champion, we continue to work to raise the understanding that risk management is a vital management discipline and is a key part of our governance framework. I continue to oversee, with the help of the Audit Committee through their constructive challenge and ideas, the assurance and compliance with the Council's risk management business procedures. The suite of risk documentation regarding policy and process was presented to, and approved by, the Cabinet following an in-depth briefing in November.

3. Corporate Property

3.1 Group Structure and Remit

2019 has been on the whole a year of consolidation and stability, although there have, and continue to be, significant challenges in recruiting staff to key positions. Closer working between the group and services such as Highways, Planning, Economic Development, Adults and Children's Services, Public Health and Libraries, has helped ensure a smooth transition to the Corporate Landlord model. Our Health and Safety colleagues have moved to be managed by the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Design as he chairs the Health, Safety and Wellbeing committee.

Claire Lovett (Head of Property for the previous 3 years) left the council to take up a fresh challenge in June. Oliver (Ollie) Woodhams took up the permanent position from 3rd January 2020; a position John Cooper filled on an interim basis following Claire's departure. Ollie moved from his position as Strategic Manager for Traded Services in ECI.

3.2 Policies, Plans and Procedures

The draft Corporate Property Asset Plan for 2019 -24 has been prepared. This document will set out how the Corporate Estate will be managed over the next few years. Somerset County Council (SCC) is committed to creating an effective and efficient estate which provides value for money for the taxpayer, reduces our environmental impact, maximises opportunities to generate income streams from its assets, and supports transformation in the way that the Council uses its estate to deliver its services. The main document is supported by updated plans, policies and strategies

The Plan will be reviewed by Scrutiny for Policies and Place Committee and presented to Full Council for adoption during 2020.

3.3 Property Database and Asset Management system

CPG is currently working with Corporate ICT colleagues on the replacement of the current asset management software system Atrium, which ceases being supported from December 2020, although the developer is willing to continue basic support into 2021. Key stakeholders have been engaged to develop a systems specification. It is envisaged the new solution could also supersede other software and non-software property systems employed by the Council, including recording Health and Safety, Asbestos, Legionella.

The aim is to have the preferred solution contract awarded by the end of the third quarter of 2020.

3.4 Facilities Management and Property Maintenance Group

October 2019 marked the first anniversary of the insourcing of the Property Maintenance Team following the end of the repairs and maintenance contract. This has proved highly successful, with excellent feedback from those using the service whilst also reducing costs.

Facilities Management (FM) took on responsibility for the Area Highway Offices in August and a significant amount of work has been done to improve compliance levels in these buildings as well as the Family Centres and former Children's Centre buildings which transferred to FM in November 2018. The

overall compliance level of the corporate property estate has risen from 83% in the summer to 93%. This is due to the implementation of the Corporate Landlord Model and having the buildings managed by a dedicated facilities management team.

The East FM Team has been successfully restructured and two additional Area Facilities Management Assistants have been recruited in preparation for the remaining thirty buildings comprising of libraries, registration offices, park and ride facilities and leaving care buildings to be transferred to the FM team on 1st April 2020. Transitional work has already commenced.

A new hybrid mail contract took effect from 1st December, and FM is in the process of setting up corporate contracts for pest control, fire extinguisher maintenance, first aid training and consumables, personal hygiene services and grounds maintenance. The team is also working with Somerset Waste Partnership and the District Councils to set up a new waste and recycling contract from April 2021.

3.5 Major Projects

2019 saw the Major Projects team and Estates colleagues successfully delivering a number of construction projects with many more currently in progress (see table below).

Project No:	Project Name	Projects Completed Date	Planned Completion Date
P17059	Hazelbrook SEN School – New Build	05/09/19	
P17058	Sky College Render Works	30/08/19	
P17082	Nerolls Primary School – New Build	30/08/19	
P17088	Milborne Port School – Classroom Extension	02/09/19	
P18018	Yeovil Preston - ASD Extension	11/11/19	
P18019	Oaklands ASD Expansion & Nursery	02/09/19	
P18049	Wellington St John's – Classroom Extension	16/08/19	
P15070	Wells Enterprise Centre – New Build		20/01/20
P15071	Wiveliscombe Enterprise Centre – New Build		30/01/20
P16004	iAero Yeovil – New Build		15/06/20
P16032	County Hall A Block – Refurbishment		29/05/20
P17071	Bishop Fox's School – Expansion Block		10/09/20
P17098	Bruton Enterprise Centre		20/12/20
P18007	Polden Bower SEN School – New Build		18/12/20
P18017	Little Marsh - Nursery		31/07/20
P19005	Willowdown School – Expansion		28/08/20

This ongoing programme of new school and Economic Development builds are being successfully delivered by the Major Projects team which continues to work closely with colleagues in Commissioning, Highways, Planning and Procurement to improve our processes and keep pressure on costs.

Also, during 2019 the Major Projects team has been monitoring the developments within the offsite construction market, with frameworks now available for us to potentially source more cost-effective primary schools. Further detailed analysis of these options is planned for early 2020.

3.6 Corporate Landlord

SCC has operated a Corporate Landlord model since April 2019 (recognising that property is a corporate resource). 95% of the estate including budgets has transferred to CPG with the remaining library estate due to transfer by April 2020.

Property holdings range from administrative office buildings, operational buildings situated in the community (such as schools and libraries), more complex operational sites (such as waste transfer sites and depots) to income producing assets (such as business parks and buildings let to tenants). They are held on a mixture of tenures: freehold, leasehold and licences.

This approach is enabling CPG to take a holistic view of the estate and increase optimisation and value. CPG has also taken on the centralisation of service contracts and utility billing which has reduced the overall resource requirement to the Council.

3.7 Asset Rationalisation, One Public Estate

The self-sustaining estate ambition is for SCC to have an estate where the income it generates covers the cost of running and maintaining it.

Through collaborative working between the various teams, CPG has completed the initial phase of Place Based Reviews (which involved an assessment, from a property perspective, of all Council owned and occupied property assets across the County). This has highlighted premises (and sites) which warrant continued investment and those which are poorly placed to deliver value for money for the Council.

The next stage will involve discussions on future accommodation requirements with directors and strategic leads and developing service plans. This reflects a move on the part of the CPG to become more pro-active in property management and to take advantage of the Corporate Landlord Model.

Last year, the One Public Estate Somerset Partnership Board successfully secured further funding from the One Public Estate programme, championed by the Local Government Association and the Cabinet Office in conjunction with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This scheme provides revenue funding for investigative work to enable joint Local and Central Government property projects to get off the ground. The Somerset Partnership Board (consisting of all District Councils, Police, Fire and Ambulance services and the NHS), has been successful in securing funding for feasibility studies for 8 projects so far.

The latest round (Wave 7), awarded in January 2019, has provided sponsorship for investigations in Burnham-on-Sea and Wells as well as support for a wider programme of work including Frome. Firm project proposals for both locations are expected by the end of March 2020. Discussions with Board members around potential co-locations in Frome are continuing.

Collectively, the Partnership Board is reporting revenue savings of £513,500 and capital receipts of £1,587,500 in 2019/20, as a result of its collaborations and estate rationalisation.

3.8 County Hall Campus

The contractor has been working within A Block since May 2019 to deliver replacement of essential building fabric elements alongside refurbishment, aligned to designs agreed with various conservation stakeholders. This will include the ability to combine the ground floor Luttrell and Wyndham committee rooms so that they can be a large 100-person meeting space as well as separate rooms for greater flexibility. During 2019, the project team has secured £180,000 of savings by moving out of leased properties in the Taunton area. That has been made possible (ahead of moving into A block) by using C block and the upper floor at Taunton Library (where SSE staff are currently based). Work to introduce Smart Office to teams currently working in C Block is underway along with preparation to clear some floors of C Block.

It is expected that A Block will be fully occupied by the end of Summer 2020 at which time the remaining business case benefits will be delivered. These remaining benefits include having the Council's contact centre relocated to the County Hall site which means all front of house customer services will be on campus, benefiting from the synergies of the front-line service groupings.

CPG would like to thank members for being accommodating during the A block refurbishment, which has impacted on their parking and meeting arrangements.

In relation to C Block, CPG is working on an options appraisal which will be finalised in early 2020.

3.9 Finance – Capital and Revenue

CPG was responsible for the delivery Capital receipts of £10,717,164 for 18/19. For the financial year 19/20

- **Capital receipts actuals so far** - £1,963,900
- **Potential pipeline** - £7,229,501

Made up of: -

<i>Contracts exchanged</i>	£2,670,000
<i>Under offer</i>	£1,437,501
<i>Potential further sales</i>	£3,122,000
• Potential Total 19/10	£9,193,401

At this stage CPG is unable to confirm if all these sales will actually be completed before April 2020 but if not, they should be achieved in 2020/21.

Estates prioritised Section 106 monies collection for 19/20 with a potential £4.8m identified. To date £3.2m has been realised, with a further £1.5m invoiced.

On the revenue side, CPG has delivered £559,000 of MTFP savings in 2019/2020 and anticipate finishing the financial year with an underspend of £250,000. Please note some of this underspend has arisen from unfilled positions.

3.10 Sustainability and Environment

With regards to the approach to all new build projects with sustainability and environmental impact in mind, CPG considers the finished structure and the application of processes that are environmentally responsible and resource efficient. This will include the use of sustainable building materials or green products such as timber, stone, metal and paper which can be recycled and re-used, through to the life-cycle costs. Reducing energy consumption and waste are also key indicators considered, from ensuring all lighting is LED and minimising the amount of waste being sent to landfill.

CPG is contributing to the development of Somerset's Climate Emergency Strategy.

4. Procurement

The Commercial and Procurement team leads on the purchase of goods and services with an annual value of over £250m. To ensure this expenditure continues to be managed effectively, it has produced a new Procurement Strategy (2020-2022). The Strategy [LINK](#) focuses on three key themes; showing leadership; behaving commercially; and achieving benefits that fulfil the vision of "Improving Lives" programme. The Strategy is a live document with an action plan setting out a clear path to improve our approach to procurement in Somerset.

One of the priorities supporting the Strategy is embedding social value, and the team has been developing a social value framework to guide activities in maximising the social value obtained through the procurement process. Whilst our current award criteria are weighted 70:30 for price versus quality, we will pilot in early 2020 amending this in a small number of procurements to assess the impact allocating specific weighting to social value. This will then be used to help inform a more formal review in May as to whether or not we change our future procurement approach to the weighting criteria to place greater emphasis on social value. This will also include consideration of achieving the associated priority of responding the Climate Emergency Declaration for Somerset through our procurement approach.

The Commercial and Procurement team has had the support of the whole Council in pulling together a centralised contract register, something that was previously devolved across Services. Having this in place, together with a focus on clarifying our longer-term commissioning intentions, will enable us to take a more strategic approach to our procurement decision making, further increasing value for money through our buying activities. Key will be balancing these two aspects, delivering social value whilst ensuring continued value for money.

The team has overseen over 60 procurement activities in the past year. These are as diverse as securing contractors to build a new school, to the provision of community health services by some of our third sector partners.

In the coming year we will be looking closely at the Contract Procedure Rules and Standing Orders to ensure these are up to date and considering how we can work closer with local Small and Medium Enterprise businesses to help them engage more effectively with Somerset County Council through the procurement process.

5. HR and Organisational Development

The HR and Organisational Development (HR-OD) team has delivered and, in many cases, led change programmes that are not only linked to our financial programme but are also improving organisational performance and service outcomes through the Improving Lives Programme. In May 2019, the team won the Team of the Year award from the Public Sector People Management Association.

HR programmes have led directly to costs being removed from the Council through effective use of technology, policy and innovation, whilst also leading to year-on-year improvements in staff surveys. The HR-OD team continues to demonstrate exceptionally high levels of skill and engagement, compassion and innovation, championing the employee and focusing on improving lives.

There are five areas within the team: HR Advisory, HR Policy & Projects, Organisational Development, Resourcing and HR Administration & Payroll. HR-OD has been set its own ambitious savings targets since 2015 and has not only reduced its budget by over £2m (40% of its 2015 budget), but overdelivered in each year.

Aside from its 'Business as Usual' activities, the focus of the team has been organisational change, implementation of the People Strategy and the Improving Lives Programme. Achievements and highlights include:

- The transfer in of 200 public health nursing staff from Somerset Partnership Trust;
- The development, implementation, use and popularity of our Somerset People Attributes, enabling colleagues and teams to plan their development based on defined leadership competencies;
- Successful HMRC audit of our Payroll function;
- Improved focus on employee wellbeing, including Menopause Cafes, Time to Talk day, Domestic Abuse Charter, 'Shout-Out' days to praise the work of colleagues, benefits roadshows;
- Our first cohort of social worker degree apprentices (12, which we believe is one of the largest cohorts in the country);
- The start of our Social Work Degree Programme at Yeovil College, in partnership with the University of Gloucestershire;
- Continued innovation in our use of technology, to improve our delivery of services, reduce costs, openness and access to information;
- Development of a network of colleagues, interested in Innovation and how we share, learn from and celebrate great practice;

- The number of colleagues working for apprenticeship qualifications reached 273 in December 2019. Four of our apprentices have just been shortlisted for a national award and one apprentice won the Local Government Association's South West Apprentice of the Year award;
- The development of new graduate programmes;
- Improved workforce reporting;
- Continued development of our social media work and promotion of Somerset County Council as a great place to work.

Corporate Health & Safety Unit

Following recommendations from the South West Audit Partnership, the Corporate Health & Safety Unit ('CHSU') transferred from Corporate Property back to HR & Organisational Development to enable it to report to a corporate director.

The team continues to play a vital role in ensuring the safety of our staff and members of the public. It maintains strong links with service areas and managers, building awareness and ensuring that relevant audits and training are complete.

Highlights of the year include:

- CHSU is leading a group that's looking at lone working across the Council Working in partnership with service areas and ICT, we are currently trialling devices that will help ensure the safety of our lone workers;
- The team took on the statutory audits of schools from our Support Services for Education, managing these through hard work and additional hours. These vital statutory audits have now been cleared;
- The CHSU has now managed to recruit two new professional H&S Officer and has a full complement of officers;
- We are now able to generate a small income mainly through undertaking H&S training, advanced workstation assessments and carrying out Fire Risk Assessments of third parties e.g. Academies and by working with district councils. Maintained schools also have started to buy-back the CHSU services.

The team is planning a full Corporate Audit Programme for 2020/21 across all corporate service areas.

6. Legal Services

- 6.1** The Legal Services childcare team is rising to the challenge of developing technology; examples include a new Court Service system for applying for proceedings and the subsequent conduct of cases, and the complex interrogation of devices and transfer of high-volume data between statutory services.

Senior managers from Children's Service and Legal Services are meeting with local Judiciary to discuss the creation of a Drugs and Alcohol Court to run alongside the Family Proceedings Court.

- 6.2** The work of our Adult Social Care team continues to develop. Case law is constantly affecting workloads, specifically relating to deprivation of liberty. The team is very proud of the fact that it undertakes most of its own advocacy.

- 6.3** Recruitment and retention remains a challenge for Legal Services, two members of staff are currently studying to achieve qualifications to enable them to become Solicitors and another member of staff is currently undertaking the relevant work experience to enable him to qualify as a Solicitor.

- 6.4** The Commercial and Litigation team supports the full range of Council services, providing ad-hoc advice and supporting significant strategic projects. The team has been working with the Commercial and Procurement team to obtain good value from some of the Council's major contracts and to change the Council's approach to managing these contracts.

- 6.5** The Conveyancing and Property team together with the Commercial team have supported the development of the new schools at Nerrols and Hazelbrook. Additionally, the two teams have assisted in the implementation of the Library redesign project. The Conveyancing team has also handled the sale of several Council properties realising capital funds.

- 6.6** I would like to thank all members of staff for their hard work over the past year.

7. Democratic Services

7.1 Supporting the Council's democratic arrangements

The Democratic Services team continues to deliver a range of good quality services direct to the public together with internal governance, member training and support to the Council, Members and officers. The team also supports strategic partnership activity and provides direct support to lead Members such as the Leader of the Council, the Chair of the Council, the Cabinet, Opposition Group Leader, Chairs of committees, the Council's committees, the Chief Executive, the Senior Leadership Team and key partnership arrangements.

The team administers and undertakes the annual review of the Members' Scheme of Allowances which includes providing host authority services for the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (which advises the Council, Mendip District Council and Somerset West and Taunton Council).

The team is managed by the Council's Monitoring Officer who is also responsible for the Council's governance framework and for promoting and ensuring compliance with the Council's standards of conduct for Members and Officers.

7.2 Civic Office

The team provides direct support for organising and hosting a number of high profile civic and ceremonial functions and events (including royal household visits) on behalf of the Lord Lieutenant of Somerset (covering the historic county of Somerset), the High Sheriff and the Chair of Council (including the Chair's Awards and Somerset Day celebrations).

7.3 School Admissions, Exclusion and Transport Appeal Hearings

The team manages the Council's legal requirements for convening and administering over 400 appeal hearings per annum involving parents, guardians and school / academy representatives.

7.4 Governance

We continue to ensure that the Council's governance framework, Constitution and Schemes of Delegation remain fit for purpose and meet legal requirements. The Monitoring Officer and the Democratic Services team directly support the Governance Board and the Constitution & Standards Committee to ensure key governance policies and processes meet business needs and legislative requirements. The Monitoring Officer in conjunction with the Section 151 Officer complete the Annual Governance Statement and

supports the assurance work of the Audit Committee.

To assist with governance awareness and compliance, a Members' Portal is in place whereby members can access all relevant information to their role online. There is also governance guidance on the Council's intranet and training available for officers relating to decision making, risk management, impact assessments and member development.

7.5 Strategic Partnerships

The Democratic Services Team provides a wide range of Administering Authority governance support to a number of key strategic partnerships.

Heart of the South West (HotSW) Joint Committee - the partnership of the 19 Devon and Somerset Councils, working alongside the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to take forward the work of the Heart of the South West Joint Committee. This work aims to maximise the ability of the partnership to lever in further investment and responsibilities from Government to improve productivity and growth across the HotSW area.

Peninsula sub-national transport body – a partnership of the five transport authorities covering the south west peninsula, working to develop a regional transport strategy for the area to access funding and improvements for strategic transport priorities e.g. road and rail.

Somerset Waste Board – the partnership of the County Council and all Somerset district councils to manage the contracts for the delivery of an integrated waste management and recycling service and support strategic waste policy development. Governance support also includes providing governance and administrative support to the joint waste scrutiny panel.

Somerset Rivers Authority – the partnership of the County Council, district councils and Internal Drainage Boards. Governance support also includes providing governance and administrative support to the SRA scrutiny panel.

Somerset Health & Well-Being Board – this partnership board brings together partners who plan and commission services for health and social care and develops the Health and Well-Being Strategy. Work during 2019 has included a review of the Board's Constitution and membership to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Panel – this is part of the national arrangements for police governance. It scrutinises and keeps a regular check and balance on the performance and activities of the Police & Crime Commissioner.