THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 24TH SEPTEMBER 2026

REFERENCE FROM GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE: 20TH JULY 2026

“182 DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (AGS) 2025/26 (HOF/S151O) –

The Council, as part of its arrangements for corporate governance, was required to undertake an annual review of internal control and governance; the resulting Annual Governance Statement (AGS) had to be included within the Statement of Accounts.

The AGS explained how the Council had complied with the terms of the CIPFA and SOLACE Framework – Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016 for the year ended 31st March 2026. It outlined what had changed, improved or been developed in year and identified any areas for improvement to further strengthen the sound governance arrangements already in place.

The Committee requested for the report produced on partnership working between the Council and Town and Community Councils to be made available to members of the Governance and Audit Committee (to be disseminated by Democratic Services).

Members also discussed:

- Directorate self-assessments;
- Youth Council involvement;
- Corporate complaints arrangements;
- Budget development transparency;
- Future governance improvements.

There was significant discussion regarding the possible introduction of a cross-party budget working group.

RESOLVED –

(1) T H A T the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2025-26 be noted.

(2) T H AT the following comments and areas for improvement (for 2026/27) be for considered by Officers for inclusion into the Draft Annual Government Statement 2025/26:

- Greater involvement and engagement with the Youth Council, particularly in regard to Scrutiny;
- Focus and greater emphasis on Corporate Complaints following the shift in responsibility from C1V to Democratic Services to ensure that

that function remains effective and to ensure timescales around responding to complaints are reviewed;

- Greater emphasis on Member involvement around Directorate self-assessments and budget setting processes.

(3) T H A T Cabinet be requested to consider the introduction of a Budget Working Group to allow Elected Members to delve deeper into budgetary and saving proposals.

Reasons for decisions

(1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

(2) To allow Cabinet, the Chief Executive and the Section 151 Officer to consider the comments made by the Governance and Audit Committee.

(3) To ensure more robust scrutiny within the Council's budget setting process."

Attached as Appendix – Report to Governance and Audit Committee: 20th July 2026

Appendix

Meeting of:	**Governance and Audit Committee**
Date of Meeting:	**Monday, 20 July 2026**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Resources Scrutiny Committee
Urgent Decision Procedure Used (If yes, why)	No
Item Type	Part I
Report Title:	**Draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2025/26**
Portfolio Holder:	No Relevant Cabinet Member
Strategic Leadership Team:	**Head of Finance/Section 151 Officer**
Lead Officer:	**Head of the Regional Internal Audit Service**

1.0 What is this report about?

1.1 The Council, as part of its arrangements for corporate governance, is required to undertake an annual review of internal control and governance; the resulting Annual Governance Statement (AGS) must be included within the Statement of Accounts.

1.2 The AGS explains how the Council has complied with the terms of the CIPFA and SOLACE Framework - Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016 for the year ended 31st March 2026. It outlines what has changed, improved or been developed in year and identifies any areas for improvement to further strengthen the sound governance arrangements already in place.

1.3 This is the Draft AGS for 2025/26.

2.0 What are the Recommendations?

	Recommendations – What and How?	Reason for Recommendation – Why?
2.1	The Governance and Audit Committee is requested to consider and comment on the Draft Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 and recommend it be signed off by the Leader and the Chief Executive.	To provide for a review of the governance framework and the system of internal control, which has been in place within the Council for the year ended 31st March 2026. The AGS must be presented with the Statement of Accounts.

	Recommendations – What and How?	Reason for Recommendation – Why?

3.0 What is the background to this report?

3.1 Local authorities are accountable to the public and other stakeholders for ensuring they have a sound system of governance. The Council is required to demonstrate it has good and effective governance arrangements in place in line with the 7 principles of the CIPFA and SOLACE Framework - Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016.

3.2 The Accounts and Audit (Wales) Regulations 2014, as amended from time to time, requires each Local Authority to conduct a review, at least once a year, of the effectiveness of its system of internal control and the governance arrangements with its Annual Statement of Accounts.

3.3 This Draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) explains how the Council has complied with the terms of the Framework for the year ended 31st March 2025. It outlines what has changed, improved or developed in year and identifies any areas for improvement to further strengthen the sound governance arrangements already in place.

3.4 The Council's Code of Corporate Governance forms part of its Constitution and details the governance framework arrangements it has in place to support the AGS.

3.5 The AGS will be included within the annual Statement of Accounts.

3.6 As with all the work undertaken by the Council, the AGS reflects the Council's responsibilities under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Council has embedded the five ways of working across its activities and in delivering its priorities from Vale 2030 it will maximise its contribution to the seven national Well-being goals.

4.0 What issues are there to be considered?

4.1 Good corporate governance requires the active participation of Members and Officers across the Council. These arrangements are reviewed on an annual basis and the findings used to update the AGS. This helps to ensure the continuous improvement of the Council's corporate governance culture.

4.2 The inclusion of the AGS within the Statement of Accounts provides an overall assessment of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and an appraisal of the controls in place to manage the Council's key risks and identifies where improvements need to be made.

4.3 A draft AGS has already been shared with Audit Wales.

4.4 The Draft AGS for the 2025-26 financial year is attached at **Appendix A** and explains how the Council has complied with the 7 principles of the CIPFA and SOLACE Framework - Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016 for the year ended 31st March 2026.

4.5 The AGS reviews the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. The review of the effectiveness is informed by the work of Internal Audit and Chief Officers within the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the internal control environment, and by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

4.6 No significant governance issues were identified in the previous AGS (2024-25), although areas for improvement were included. Progress against these areas has been included as an appendix to the Draft AGS (2025-26). The Council recognises the importance of continuous improvement and has identified further areas for improvement which have been summarised as a separate appendix to the AGS. These will be developed and improved on moving into 2026-27.

4.7 Overall, the Council continues to demonstrate good governance, supported by a well-established framework of policies, procedures and internal controls that underpin effective decision-making, accountability and transparency. Governance arrangements remained in place throughout 2025-26 and have continued to evolve in response to organisational priorities, external expectations and a challenging operating environment. The Council maintains a clear focus on managing risk, ensuring financial sustainability and delivering its corporate priorities through effective leadership and oversight.

4.8 The Council continues to operate within a challenging financial and demand-led environment, requiring sustained focus on transformation, prioritisation and the effective use of resources. An ongoing emerging issue is the replacement of the Social Care system, which remains a recognised corporate risk.

4.9 The Draft AGS will be reviewed as part of the external audit on the Statement of Accounts and should reflect any governance issues right up to the date that the Auditor General for Wales signs off the Statement of Accounts for 2025-26.

5.0 How has evidence been used to inform the report, including the views of others?

5.1 The previous year's AGS (2024-25) including the appendix on areas for improvement, was used as the basis for collating this year's AGS. It was reviewed to ensure the Council's governance arrangements still complied with its Code of Corporate Governance and the requirements of the *CIPFA / SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (2016)*. It was circulated to key officers across the directorates for them to incorporate any relevant updates, note any significant changes and identify further improvements. It was sense checked with Vale 2030, the Council's Corporate Risk Register, its Annual Self-Assessment and the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report.

5.2 The updated Draft AGS (2025-26) was re-circulated to key officers for further comment and taken through the Strategic Insight Board before being presented to Governance and Audit Committee.

6.0 What are the next steps if the recommendations are approved?

6.1 The Draft AGS will be formally reviewed by Audit Wales alongside the Statement of Accounts for 2025-26. Feedback will be considered and amendments made where appropriate before the final version is signed off by the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council and then submitted with the Statement of Accounts for sign off by Audit Wales.

7.0 How does this report support Vale 2030 and Reshaping?

7.1 Having good and effective governance arrangements in place is the backbone of providing effective, efficient and economic services across all directorates to the public within the Vale of Glamorgan and demonstrates sound financial management, robust internal control and proper use of public resources in an accountable and transparent way.

7.2 The Council recognises the importance of continuous improvement and has identified a number of areas for further development across each governance principle, which will be taken forward during 2026-27.

8.0 How does this demonstrate the Five Ways of Working?

8.1 Long term – strong governance arrangements in place enable services to be delivered more effectively, economically and efficiently in the future. Positive assurance on sound financial management now provides a firm foundation for future delivery of services.

8.2 Integrated – effective governance supports service areas to deliver their services in line with the well-being goals; identified areas for improvement lead making service delivery more efficient.

8.3 Involved – the AGS is collated by Internal Audit but supported by key officers across the directorates before being taken through the Strategic Insight Board and Governance and Audit Committee for further comment and contribution.

8.4 Collaborative – the relationships with, and governance arrangements of, the Council's key partner organisations have been considered when compiling the AGS.

8.5 Preventative – having solid governance arrangements in place contributes to ensuring that the Council's assets and interests are properly accounted for and safeguarded, and that potential issues arising relating to governance, internal control, risk, reputation are minimised.

Resources

9.0 Finance

9.1 There are no resource implications as a direct consequence of this report.

10.0 Workforce

10.1 There are no workforce issues as a direct consequence of this report

11.0 Legal and Equalities

11.1 **Does an Equalities Impact Assessment need to be completed? No**

11.2 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh Language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

12.0 Key Contacts

12.1 **Who are the primary officers to contact with any comments and/or queries on the report?**

Lead Officer: Andrew Wathan Head of Regional Internal Audit Service	Democratic Services Officer Gareth Davies

Appendix

Appendix A – Draft Annual Governance Statement 2025-26

Background Documents

None

Vale of Glamorgan Council

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2025/26

Draft Version 0.6
June 2026

Content	**Page**

Executive Summary

The Council is required to demonstrate that it has in place robust and effective governance arrangements in line with the CIPFA/SOLACE *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (2016)*. This Annual Governance Statement sets out how the Council has complied with the seven principles of the framework for the year ended 31 March 2026 and provides an overview of the effectiveness of these arrangements. It highlights key developments during the year, areas of strength, and those where further improvement is required.

Overall, the Council continues to demonstrate good governance, supported by a well-established framework of policies, procedures and internal controls that underpin effective decision-making, accountability and transparency. Governance arrangements remained in place throughout 2025/26 and have continued to evolve in response to organisational priorities, external expectations and a challenging operating environment. The Council maintains a clear focus on managing risk, ensuring financial sustainability and delivering its corporate priorities through effective leadership and oversight.

During the year, the Council made further progress in strengthening its governance arrangements. This includes responding to the findings of the Panel Performance Assessment (PPA) undertaken in November 2024, embedding the new Corporate Plan *Vale 2030*, and continuing to develop scrutiny, performance and risk management arrangements. The PPA concluded that the Council is operating effectively, using its resources efficiently, and has sound governance arrangements in place, with no significant areas of concern identified, while recognising opportunities for further development.

Progress has also been made in addressing areas for improvement identified in the 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement, although some actions remain ongoing due to continued financial pressures, increasing service demand and wider external factors affecting local government. No significant governance issues have been identified for 2025/26. However, the Council recognises the importance of continuous improvement and has identified a number of areas for further development across each governance principle, which will be taken forward during 2026/27.

The Council continues to operate within a challenging financial and demand-led environment, requiring sustained focus on transformation, prioritisation and the effective use of resources. An ongoing emerging issue is the replacement of the Social Care system, which remains a recognised corporate risk. The Council will continue to manage this risk alongside other key pressures through its established governance, performance and risk management frameworks.

What did we do well in terms of governance in 2025/26?

A Panel Performance Assessment (PPA) was undertaken in November 2024. This was a constructive exercise timed to fit with the development of the new Corporate Plan (Vale 2030). The PPA report and response were approved by Council in March 2025 and considered alongside the budget for 2025/26 and the new Corporate Plan for 2025-30, Vale 2030. Work has progressed in 2025/26 in response to the recommendations of the PPA report which are referenced in relevant sections within the AGS.

The Panel concluded that overall, the Council exercises its functions effectively… and there were no identified areas of concern, and that from the evidence they heard and within the current high levels of service demand and financial pressures faced by all local authorities across Wales the Council is using its resources effectively and efficiently. The Panel also concluded that the Council has effective governance arrangements in place but there were some areas which could be further developed.

During 2025/26, the Council has undertaken the first municipal year of the revised Scrutiny arrangements, which included changes to ways of working for all stakeholders involved, alongside the undertaking of integrated Scrutiny meetings reviewing the Council's performance and budget and delivering four Task and Finish reports considering a range of topics.

What do we need to improve?

From a review of the Council's governance arrangements and their effectiveness for 2025/26, no significant governance issues were identified. However, for each Principle we have identified further areas we would like to develop and improve on moving into 2026/27; for ease of reference and to monitor their progress, they have been collated and shown at Appendix C.

The Council continues to operate in a challenging environment financially and in terms of service demands and expectations.

Introduction

The Council is required to demonstrate that it has effective governance arrangements in place in line with the seven principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance Framework (2016). This Annual Governance Statement forms part of the Statement of Accounts and sets out how the Council has complied with this framework for the year ended 31 March 2026.

The Introduction provides context on the Council's governance framework and the arrangements that support effective decision-making, accountability and oversight.
The Council promotes a culture rooted in shared values, ethical principles and good conduct, which underpin the behaviour and decision-making of Members and officers.

The behaviour of elected Members and officers is governed by Codes of Conduct and supporting procedural rules, including requirements to declare and manage conflicts of interest. Roles and responsibilities are defined through standing orders, schemes of delegation and financial regulations, ensuring clarity and accountability.

The Council's Code of Conduct for elected Members is based on the Seven Principles of Public Life and supports high standards of integrity, openness and accountability in the conduct of public business.

The Council's governance framework includes a system of internal control designed to manage risks associated with delivering its objectives. While these arrangements provide reasonable assurance of effectiveness, they cannot eliminate all risk. The framework has been in place throughout the year ended 31 March 2026 and continues to be reviewed and strengthened.

Key internal controls operating during 2025/26 are summarised in Appendix A.

The Council's Code of Corporate Governance provides the overarching framework for achieving sustainable economic, social and environmental outcomes, supported by effective financial management and long-term planning.

The Council's governance arrangements also support its responsibilities under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, including the application of the sustainable development principle and contribution to the national well-being goals (see Principle C).

Scope of Responsibility

The Vale of Glamorgan Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money allocated to it is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. This is reflective of the duties under the Local Government & Elections (Wales) Act (2021), Part Six, also. The Council sees Corporate Governance as doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. Strong, transparent and responsive governance enables the Council to put citizens first by pursuing its aims and priorities effectively, and by underpinning them with appropriate mechanisms for managing performance and risk. In order to maintain citizens confidence, these mechanisms must be sound and be seen to be sound.

The 7 principles of the CIPFA and SOLACE Framework - Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016 are set below:

Governance Principles:

A Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.

B Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

C Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.

D Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

E Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

F Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.

G Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability.

The Council's detailed framework of its governance arrangements is set out in the Code of Corporate Governance, which forms part of our Constitution and is available on our website at Code of Corporate Governance; in accordance with Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016. A further CIPFA Guidance Bulletin 06 (Application of the Good Governance Framework 2020/21) was issued in February 2021.

The overarching governance framework in place for the Council is shown at Fig.1.

The important relationship between the Governance Principles and Internal Controls are shown at Fig.2.

Fig. 1. Governance Framework

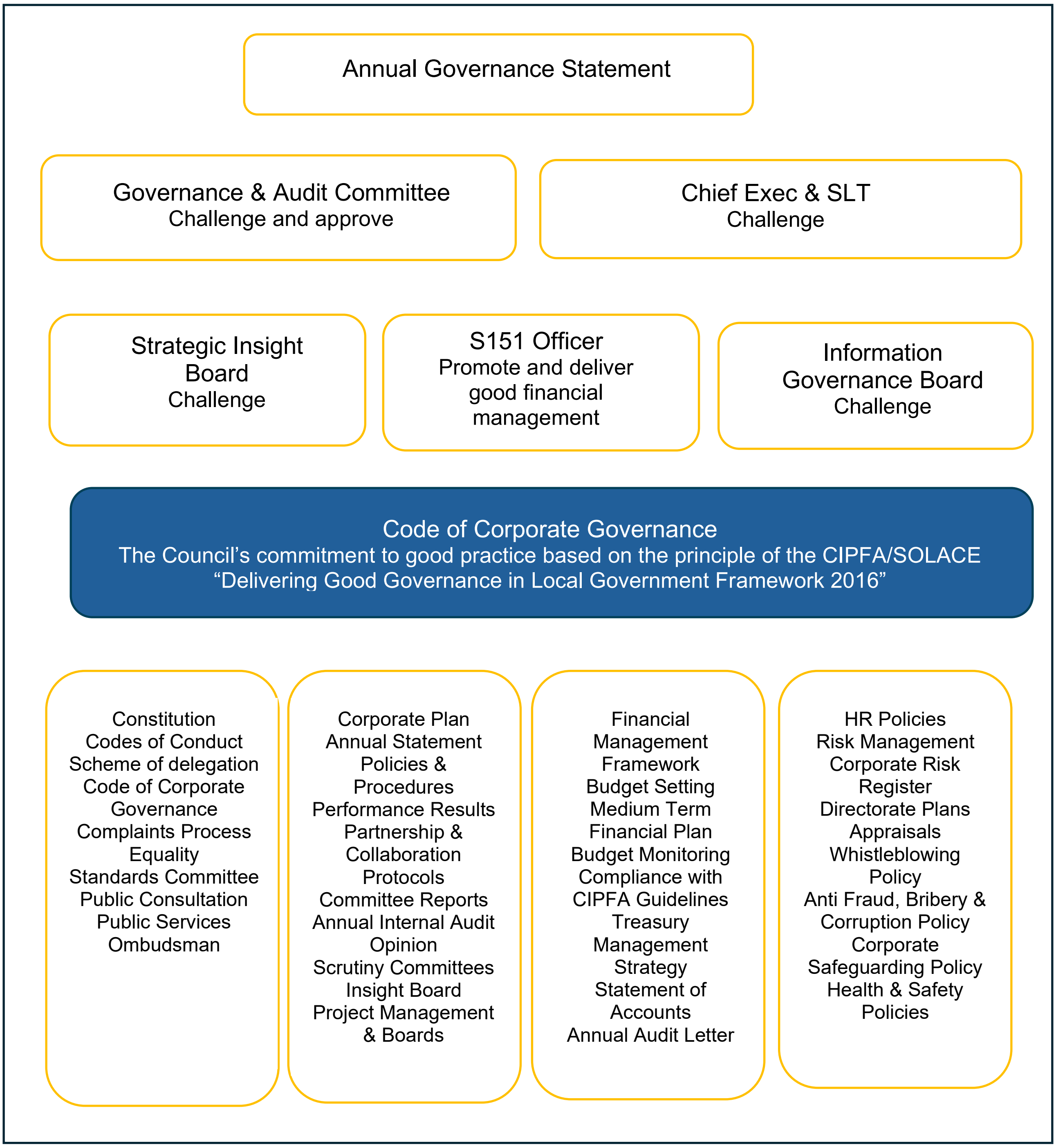
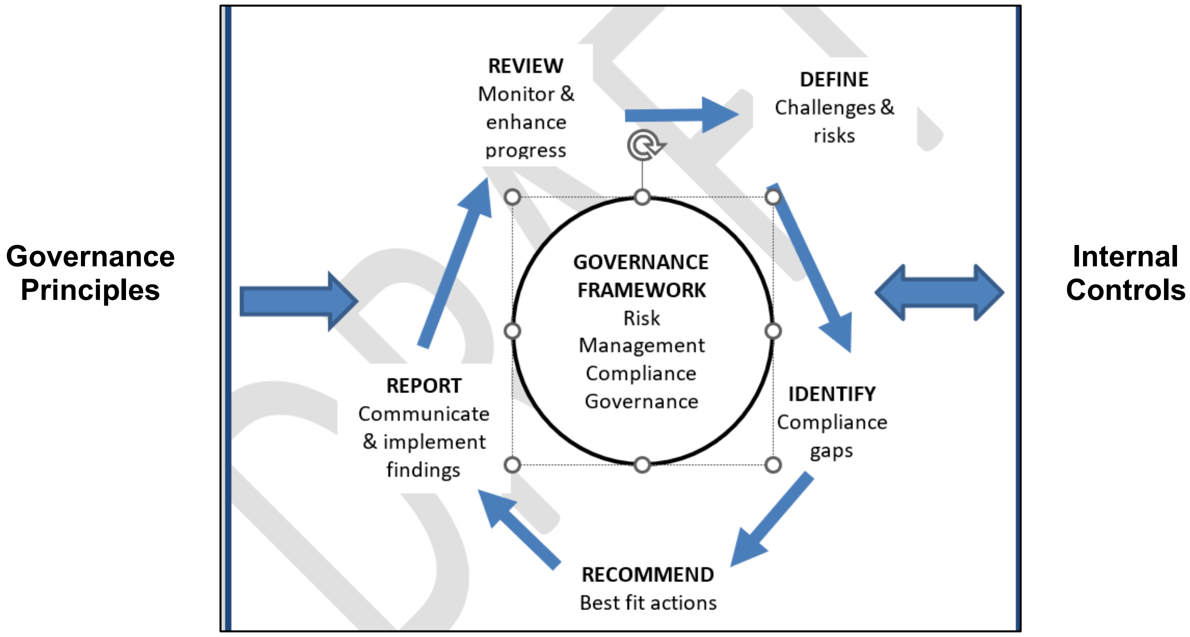


Fig.2 **Relationship Between Governance Principles and Internal Controls**



The following sets out for each of the principles, the changes, improvements and developments in year and areas for improvement in 2026/27.

Principle A: ***Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law***	

Changes, improvements or developments in year	• The Council continues to promote a culture based on shared values. The roles and responsibilities of Elected Members and Officers, including adherence to Codes of Conduct and the requirement to declare an appropriately manage personal interests and conflicts of interest are set out in the Council's Constitution.
	
	• The Standards Committee, chaired by an independent co-opted member oversees ethical standards, member training (including co-opted members and church and parent governor representatives) and complaints. It advises the Council on the adoption and revision of the Members Code of Conduct, considers reports from the Monitoring Officer, and case tribunals, determines matters referred by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) and grants dispensations to members. The Committee also exercises these functions in relation to Town and Community Councils, oversees complaints handling and Ombudsman investigations, monitors compliance by political group leader with their statutory duties, provides advice and training to group leaders and reports annually to Full Council.
	
	• The Monitoring Officer/Head of Legal and Democratic Servies has statutory responsibilities to ensure the Council complies with its legal obligations and Codes of Conduct and to report any unlawful activity or maladministration. During 2025/26, the Committee met six times and strengthened governance through:
	  • ongoing monitoring of standards, including observation of Council and Town and Community Council meetings,
	  • delivery of refresher training to Members,
	  • recruitment of an additional Independent Member,
	  • review and update of the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure, and consideration of complaints referred by the PSOW,
	  • consideration of applications for dispensation,
	  • engagement with and monitoring of compliance by political Group Leaders,
	  • approval of Annual Report,
	  • review of reports and PSOW investigations from PSOW and APW,
	  • participation in national and regional forums, including the National Standards Committee Chairs Forum and the All-Wales Monitoring Officer Group.
	
	• The Committee also received updates on the Civility in Public Life work programme.

	• The Monitoring Officer continues to fulfil their statutory responsibilities, providing advice and reporting mechanisms in relation to potential breaches of conduct and supporting both the Council and Town and Community Councils and meets with the Clerks of TCC's on a quarterly basis. • During 2025/26, six complaints relating to Member conduct were received. Of these, four related to Town and Community Councils and two to Vale of Glamorgan Council Members. The PSOW determined that no evidence of a breach was found in two cases, one case remains under investigation, one is under consideration, and two have been referred to the Standards Committee for hearings. • The Council's wider ethical governance framework continued to operate during 2025/26 through the application of the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy, Whistleblowing Policy, Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Procedure Rules. Together these arrangements support high standards of conduct, promote accountability and transparency, and provide clear mechanisms for identifying, reporting and addressing concerns or irregularities. • A mid-year review of the Whistleblowing Policy (July 2025) reported on incidents and Member feedback, leading to enhanced monitoring, improved trend analysis by Directorate, and clearer tabular and graphical reporting. Outcome-focused reporting has been strengthened, with actions reported to Committee, alongside new work to track case outcomes and review support for whistleblowers.
Areas for Improvement 2026/27	• Finalise the review of the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure, procedures for hearing complaints, and refresher training, as well as section 19 of the Council's Constitution. • Prepare for Member development and induction ahead of the May 2027 elections, alongside a review of the Council's Constitution and the Whistleblowing Policy, with more outcome-focused reports continuing to be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee. • Explore improved ways of working with Town and Community Clerks to enhance their knowledge of Constitutional processes • Undertake further observations of Town and Community Council meetings across the Vale of Glamorgan to promote high standards of conduct by Town and Community Councillors.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement</th></tr>
<tr><td>Changes, improvements or developments in year</td><td>
The Council remains committed to openness and meaningful stakeholder engagement, ensuring that residents, service users and partners are able to influence decision-making and service delivery. Its planning and governance processes are designed to incorporate consultation, feedback and participation from local communities.
During 2025/26, the Council engaged residents through consultations, surveys, feedback, complaints, place-based and digital activity, with strong participation highlighting the importance of early involvement, clear communication, and transparency in how views shape decisions.
The Let’s Talk about Life in the Vale Survey (2025), aligned to the National Resident Survey, generated 2,507 responses, providing valuable insight into residents’ priorities and informing service planning and improvement. Evidence from the Participate network shows increasing use of engagement feedback in shaping services, priorities and decision-making.
The Council has continued to strengthen inclusive engagement through its Public Participation Strategy (2022–2025), structured around the principles of Reach, Involve and Represent. This is supported by a combination of digital, face-to-face and community-based engagement approaches, including well-attended activity linked to regeneration, neighbourhood services and local initiatives.
Formal governance arrangements further support transparency and participation, including:

opportunities for the public to ask questions at Full Council and contribute to Scrutiny and Planning Committees;
participation in Scrutiny through representations, topic suggestions and task and finish work;
implementation of a revised e-Petition scheme; and
regular reporting of strategic partnership activity to Cabinet for oversight

Youth engagement has also been strengthened, with Vale Youth Council representatives participating in Scrutiny Committees and contributing to discussions on key topics.
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	• Internal engagement arrangements complement this approach, with staff surveys, wellbeing initiatives, staff networks and policy consultations ensuring that employee voice informs organisational development and decision-making. • The Council continued to support openness in formal decision-making during 2025/26 through the publication of Cabinet and Committee reports, clear reporting of legal, financial, equalities and other implications, and public access to meetings except where exempt information applied in accordance with legislation. • Scrutiny arrangements continued to provide transparent challenge and review of decision-making and performance, while regular publication of key information, including expenditure and decision notices, supported public accountability.
Areas for Improvement 2026/27	• Explore alternative mediums to enhance public participation in the Council's decision-making processes • Improvement in the completion rates of our performance appraisal process, a wider review on the reason for the decline in completion in 2024/25 will take place. • The Council is currently working to produce new Communications and Public Participation strategies in response to the Let's Talk about Life in the Vale survey, the results of which will be published early in 2026/27. • Despite extensive engagement activity, participation and insight are not consistently representative. Some groups remain too seldom heard and response levels vary between services, limiting the depth and consistency of insight. • In 2026/27, the Council will strengthen use of engagement and complaints insight to support prevention, service redesign and demand management, improving data integration, consistency of analysis, and targeting of underrepresented groups, while maintaining clear feedback loops to build trust and sustain participation.

Principle C : *Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits*	

Changes, improvements or developments in year	• The Council has established a clear strategic framework for defining and delivering outcomes through Vale 2030 published in March 2025. This sets out the Council's vision, well-being objectives and intended outcomes, aligned to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and informed by local need, available resources and stakeholder engagement.
	
	• During 2025/26, significant progress was made in embedding Vale 2030, with stronger alignment between planning, performance and governance through Directorate Plans, an Annual Statement, enhanced outcome-focused reporting, and improvements to the Annual Self-Assessment process.
	
	• The Council continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to sustainable outcomes through:
	  • integration of enabling strategies, including the Medium Term Financial Plan, People Strategy, Digital Strategy, Asset Management Plan and Risk Management Framework;
	  • embedded application of the Well-being of Future Generations principles in planning and decision-making; and
	  • strengthened partnership working, with activity mapped against Vale 2030 priorities and reflected within Directorate Plans, performance reporting and the Strategic Partnership Group framework.
	
	• The Annual Self-Assessment (ASA) is a key governance mechanism, evaluating performance, resource use and governance, incorporating internal and external challenge, and informing future planning and improvement. The 2025/26 ASA (year one of Vale 2030) is scheduled for Cabinet in July 2026, with publication in Autumn 2026.
	
	• The November 2024 Panel Performance Assessment found the Council operating effectively with no significant concerns, while identifying improvements in performance reporting, partnership working and governance, which have been progressed in 2025/26 through enhancements to Vale 2030, reporting and scrutiny arrangements.
	
	• Supporting governance structures have also been strengthened. The Strategic Insight Board has been refreshed during 2025/26 to enhance cross-directorate oversight of performance, risk and regulatory activity, while a range of programme and project boards and a central Reshaping Transformation Team support delivery of corporate priorities.

	• The Council's financial planning supports sustainable outcomes, with updates to the Financial Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan, inclusive budget consultation and Equality Impact Assessments, and regular monitoring of performance, with in-year pressures (e.g. schools, social care, savings delivery) actively managed.
Areas for Improvement 2026/27	• Ongoing communications about Vale 2030 to raise awareness with residents, staff and partners about the priorities detailed in the new Corporate Plan. • Strengthening outcome-focused reporting. • Embedding Vale 2030 and associated planning arrangements. • Review of the approach to the Annual Self Assessment to reflect feedback. It is anticipated that changes to Scrutiny ways of working will see an increase in the amount of task and finish activity during 2025/26. • Early budget decision making to ensure full delivery of savings programmes. • Work to better track Value for Money outcomes as a result of schemes delivered in the Capital Programme.

Principle D: ***Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes***	
Changes, improvements or developments in year	• The Council has established robust arrangements to ensure that interventions are informed, evidence-based and aligned to the delivery of Vale 2030 outcomes, with clear governance, performance and partnership frameworks in place to support effective decision-making. • In 2025/26, partnership working was strengthened by mapping activity to Vale 2030 priorities, embedding this in Directorate Plans and Self-Assessments, and introducing six-monthly Cabinet reporting to improve oversight and visibility. • The Council's performance framework supports informed decisions, with the Annual Performance Calendar ensuring statutory compliance and structured monitoring of well-being objectives, alongside ongoing improvements in 2025/26 including:

	- the introduction of Directorate Plans and the Annual Statement, strengthening alignment between planning, performance and decision-making; - enhanced performance reporting through Power BI, providing more consistent, accessible and outcome-focused information; - the development of a more detailed Quarter 2 performance report; and - the adoption of a single, integrated performance report structured around well-being objectives, supporting a more holistic view of progress. - Governance and scrutiny arrangements support effective interventions, with the Joint Performance Scrutiny Committee and revised structures strengthening Member oversight. In 2025/26, it reviewed the Quarter 2 report and will consider the Annual Self-Assessment in July 2026, supported by regular Member briefings and improved reporting tools. - Engagement with Members, partners and stakeholders continues to shape priorities and interventions within the performance framework, ensuring that decisions reflect a broad range of insight and evidence. - The Council's decision-making framework continued to require Cabinet and Committee reports to present a clear rationale for proposed actions, including consideration of alternative options where appropriate, together with legal, financial, risk, equalities and other implications. This supports informed and evidence-based decision-making aligned to the delivery of Vale 2030.
Areas for Improvement 2026/27	- Review of the Directorate Self Assessment process and how judgements are reached for the Annual Self Assessment. - Further strengthen decision-making through enhanced use of performance and insight - Continue to develop outcome-focused reporting including Power BI performance reports and more outcome focused commentary.

Principle E: ***Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within***	

Changes, improvements or developments in year	• The Council has established robust arrangements to ensure that it has the leadership capacity, skills and organisational capability required to deliver its objectives and support effective governance.
	
	• The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) provides overall organisational leadership. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined within the Constitution. Job profiles, and performance is managed through an enhanced Chief Officer Appraisal process, which has been further strengthened through the introduction of peer review, 360° feedback.
	
	• The Chief Executive plays a key role in promoting sound governance, supporting statutory officers and ensuring that high-quality information is available to inform decision-making and scrutiny, while maintaining effective relationships with Members.
	
	• The Council prioritises Member and officer development through induction (including mandatory Code of Conduct training), a refreshed Member Development Strategy (Feb 2025), ongoing briefings and training, and structured personal development reviews.
	
	• During 2025/26, changes arising from the Reshaping Scrutiny programme were implemented following extensive Member engagement and external feedback, strengthening the effectiveness of scrutiny and Member oversight. Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs continue to collaborate internally and regionally to share best practice, supported by improved governance arrangements.
	
	• The Council also ensures Members are fully supported in undertaking their roles, including the continued provision of training and support for hybrid and virtual meetings, supported by Democratic Services. Work commenced during 2025/26 to develop the Member Induction and Development Programme for the 2027 elections.
	
	• The Council maintains a strong focus on workforce development and organisational capacity. Key developments include:
	
	  • enhancement of the iDev online learning system;
	  • continued delivery of the Learning Café, providing targeted development opportunities across nine key themes;

	• delivery of management development programmes aligned to Vale • Additional learning initiatives have been delivered during 2025/26 including training in data protection, cyber security and safeguarding. • The Council also continues to work collaboratively with partners to develop capacity and explore innovative approaches to service delivery, supported through regular reporting to Cabinet on strategic collaboration activity.
Areas for Improvement 2026/27	• A Council wide Skills Mapping exercise as part of the new People Strategy and Target Operating Model, looking at the requirement for skills of the future, gaps identified and pathway to achieve and close the gaps. • Delivery of the Signalling Change Plan.

Principle F: ***Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management***	
Changes, improvements or developments in year	• Risk management is embedded across the Council's governance framework, supported by a corporate approach and the Risk Management Strategy, with quarterly Corporate Risk Summary reports providing oversight of key and emerging risks, which continued to operate effectively in 2025/26, including: • systematic escalation processes aligned to the Council's risk appetite; • regular horizon scanning to identify emerging risks; and • oversight by the Strategic Insight Board, Strategic Leadership Team, Cabinet and Governance and Audit Committee. • Independent assurance is provided through Internal Audit, with a Substantial Assurance opinion issued in 2025/26 (March 2026), confirming the effectiveness of the Council's risk management arrangements and identifying several strengths and good practices. • The performance framework, aligned to Vale 2030 and Directorate Plans, provides a structured approach to monitoring delivery and improvement.

	• Directorate self-assessments and quarterly reporting offer a clear evidence base, highlighting exceptions to support scrutiny and informing the Annual Self-Assessment and continuous improvement. • Strong internal controls are maintained through the Executive and Scrutiny model, with decisions made within a clear policy and budget framework and subject to oversight. • Internal Audit provides independent assurance across governance, risk management and control systems. During 2025/26, the Internal Audit Plan provided broad coverage across all Directorates, with an overall Reasonable Assurance opinion and no major issues identified. • Effective data management supports decision-making and performance monitoring, with the Data Strategy (June 2024) promoting a data-driven culture, complemented by the Digital Strategy and Reshaping Programme to enhance digital capability and service outcomes. • The Council maintains strong public financial management arrangements with the Section 151 Officer ensuring proper administration of financial affairs. During 2025/26, the Council continued to strengthen the integration of financial and corporate planning, aligning the Medium Term Financial Plan, budget setting and the Reshaping Programme with Vale 2030 priorities. • The Council's self-assessment against the CIPFA Financial Management Code (reported July and September 2025) confirmed full compliance, with further improvement actions identified. A rolling programme of review by Internal Audit provides additional independent assurance. • The Council also maintains a proactive approach to counter-fraud, supported by an updated Fraud Strategy and Framework (2024/25) and participation in the National Fraud Initiative.
Areas for Improvement 2026/27	• Further integration of risk and performance arrangements • Improved use of data and insight to inform decision-making • Continued development of Member support and capability. • Development of ongoing Member briefings to address short term training needs to compliment wider, more strategic Member Development Programme.

Principle G: ***Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability***	
Changes, improvements or developments in year	• The Council seeks feedback from the public through its complaints procedure for both Corporate and Social Services areas, responding to the outcomes as appropriate and reporting the results at least annually to the Governance and Audit Committee. • In November 2025, Audit Wales published its review of the Council's Complaints process – Corporate Complaints: Supporting Service Improvement and made a number of recommendations which are now being taken forward by the Council. • The volume of complaints for the year is as below; figures for 2025/26 are provisional:

Corporate Complaints	**2023/24**	**2024/25**	**2025/26**
Complaints received	835	944	1013
Resolved at Stage 1	91%	95.3%	92.4%
Complaints received by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales	77	63	80
Investigated by PSOW	0	0	2
Resolved through the early resolution process	19	16	9

- The Council remains committed to implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability. This is demonstrated by:
  - Mechanisms which are in place for reporting progress against key regulatory recommendations / improvement proposals via the Strategic Insight Board, Governance & Audit Committee, all Scrutiny Committees, and Cabinet.
  - All Committees have clear Terms of Reference and work programmes.
  - Procedures are in place for sign-off of Cabinet Reports ensuring legal and financial implications have been appropriately assessed and are consistent with corporate policy

	- The Council reports at least annually on performance, value for money and stewardship of resources to stakeholders in a timely and understandable way. - The Council has been worked collaboratively to develop a revised approach to agendas, Committee reports, minutes and decision notices, with the aim of improving the accessibility and transparency of its decision-making processes. These were approved by Democratic Services Committee and will be implemented in the 2026/27 municipal year. - The Internal Audit Service is a key means of assurance. Since 1st April 2019 the Council has hosted a Regional Internal Audit Service (RIAS). This has operated effectively throughout the year and the service operated in compliance with the Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS). The Governance & Audit Committee reviewed the RIAS Internal Audit Charter and approved the 2025/26 Internal Audit Annual Plan in June 2025. Progress against the 2025/26 plan was reported quarterly. - The 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan outlined the assignments to be carried out to enable the Head of Internal Audit to form an annual opinion of the Council's overall control environment including, governance, risk management and internal control. - The work completed by the RIAS for the financial year was sufficient for the Head of Audit to be able to give an annual opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control for 2025/26: **Head of Internal Audit Opinion Statement 2025/26** From the work undertaken during the financial year 2025/26 and taking into account other sources of assurance, such as Head Teacher and Chair of Governor Assurance Statements, the Head of Internal Audit's annual opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control for 2025/26 is: **"Reasonable Assurance"** The opinion states that, based on the work completed by the Regional Internal Audit Shared Service for the financial year, no significant cross-cutting control issues have been identified that would

	impact on the Council's overall control environment. The weaknesses that have been identified are service specific.
	
	Many Council staff are continuing to work remotely, and systems & processes have had to be adjusted to cater for these ways of working. Similarly, Internal Audit has worked remotely, conducting audits and obtaining evidence digitally. Each audit has considered the potential impact of remote working to ensure adequate controls and governance arrangements remained in place.
	
	The recommendations made to improve governance, risk management and control have been accepted and are at various stages of implementation.
	
	Andrew Wathan CPFA
	Head of Regional Internal Audit Service
	May 2026
	
	• Of the 49 opinions issued by Internal Audit during 2025/26:
	  • 47 (96%) were finalised with either *Substantial* or R*easonable Assurance* opinion levels.
	  • 2(4%) of the assignments were given an opinion of *Limited Assurance*.
	    i. Vehicle Fuel Management
	    ii. Corporate Building Compliance
	  • Zero *No Assurance* opinions
	• 86% of the Internal Audit Plan had been achieved against a target of 80%.
	• Every year schools not subject to an audit are sent a control risk self-assessment and a governance assurance statement by Internal Audit. For 2025/26 the return rate was 98%; the Headteacher and Chair of Governors of each school confirmed they were managing risks effectively, satisfied that statutory obligations have been met and that the overall governance arrangements of the school are satisfactory.

	• Total of 53 schools; 5 schools were visited; 47/48 completed and returned a CRSA; 1 thematic review of school governance and budgets was undertaken which included 7 schools in the sample testing; budget deficits were raised as significant issues. • *Limited Assurance* audit opinions will be followed up in 2026/27. • The Council responds to the findings and recommendations of Internal Audit, External Audit and other inspection bodies. The Governance & Audit Committee is integral to overseeing independent and objective assurance and monitoring improvements in internal control and governance.
Areas for Improvement 2026/27	• Improve upon how the Council responds to and learns from complaints, including consideration of Audit Wales recommendations following their review of the function.

Review of Effectiveness

The Council is responsible for conducting an annual review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. This review is informed by the work of Internal Audit, the Council's Chief officers and external audit and inspection bodies.

Key sources of assurance include:

- The Annual Internal Audit opinion
- Oversight provided by the Governance and Audit Committee
- Regular monitoring of financial and performance information by Cabinet
- Scrutiny by Members
- Statutory oversight by the Monitoring Officer

The Annual Self-Assessment provides an additional key source of assurance and supports the identification of improvement priorities.

The findings of the 2024 Panel Performance Assessment (see Principle C) confirmed that the Council is operating effectively, with no significant governance concerns identified.

Overall, the Council's governance, risk management and internal control arrangements continue to operate effectively. Performance monitoring, financial oversight and integrated planning arrangements support delivery of corporate priorities.

The Council continues to operate in a challenging financial and demand environment and recognises the need to maintain a strong focus on sustainability, performance and continuous improvement.

Significant Governance Issues 2025/26

From a review of the Council's governance arrangements and their effectiveness for 2025/26, no significant governance issues were identified. However, for each Principle area further developments have been identified and will be addressed and improved on moving into 2026/27; for ease of reference and to monitor their progress, they have been collated and shown at Appendix B.

The Council continues to operate in a tough, challenging financial environment and in terms of service demands and expectations. Of major concern are the persistent inflation in the UK economy, social Care demand and the pressures on school budgets.

Emerging issues 2025/26

An emerging issue identified in the 2024/25 AGS continues through 2025/26:

Social Care system – the platform for the Council's social care system is shortly to move out of support and there were delays at Welsh Government level to agree the successor systems and funding. The Council is working at a regional level on a solution, through the WLGA, but this continues to be a financial risk to the Council. This is recognised on the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

Conclusion

The 2025/26 Annual Governance Statement has comprehensively been updated to clearly demonstrate the Council continues to have good and effective governance arrangements in place and complies with its own Code of Corporate Governance across all 7 Principles. Examples have been given confirming it is in line with the "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework" (CIPFA/SOLACE, 2016), the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2014, Local Government and Election (Wales) Act 2021 and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

Approval of the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

Good governance is about running things properly. It is the means by which the Council shows it is taking decisions for the good of the people of the area, in a fair, equitable and open way. It also requires standards of behaviour that support good decision making – collective and individual integrity, openness and honesty. It is the foundation for the delivery of good quality services that meet local people's needs. It is fundamental to showing public money is well spent. Without good governance councils will struggle to improve services.

From the review, assessment and on-going monitoring work undertaken we have reached the opinion that Reasonable Assurance can be given that the governance arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.

We can confirm to the best of our knowledge and belief; this statement provides an accurate and fair view.

D.R. Thomas	L. Burnett
Chief Executive	*Leader of the Council*
Date:	Date:

Internal Controls

Below are the key internal controls that were in place in 2025/26 some of these have subsequently been amended as part of work associated with Vale 2030 our new Corporate Plan and in response to the Panel Performance Assessment.

Leadership, Culture and Planning

Organisational priorities and outcomes
Corporate Plan & Annual Delivery Plan
Directorate and Service/Team plans
Performance Management Framework
Medium term financial plan

Policies and Procedures

Constitution, Codes of Conduct
Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy, Whistleblowing Policy
HR and OD Policies/Procedures, Corporate Safeguarding Policy, Health and Safety Policies and Procedures, Risk Management Strategy

People, Knowledge, Finance, Assets

Robust HR, Payroll and H&S practices
Information governance
Performance monitoring and improvement
Member Development Programme
Financial management and reporting
Ethical & legal practices

Scrutiny and Transparency

Information management requests including Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information (EIR) requests
Complaints procedure
Reports considered by Legal and Finance experts
Equality impact assessments

Partnership Working

Partnership Statement

Appendix B

Progress Against Areas Identified for Improvement in 2025/26 (as per the 2024/25 AGS)

Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		
	• Review the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure, procedures for hearing complaints, and refresher training, as well as section 19 of the Council's Constitution.	• The review of the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure working group has met and reviewed the policy, which is aiming to be approved in Summer 2026.
	• The Standards Committee will: • aim to broaden its representation • enhance Independent Members' observations of TCC meetings • improve access to e-learning and member briefings • continue to report updates on the Civility in Public Life Programme	• During the year, Standards Committee undertook a successful recruitment campaign, and a new Independent Member was appointed. • Throughout the year, members of the Committee undertook observations of TCC briefings and reported back findings and themes to Standards Committee on a regular basis. The plan for observations to be undertaken during 2026/27 was agreed by Committee on 26th March 2026. • Members of Standards Committee are now invited to Member Briefings and have access to MemberNet to access wider learning tools and resources, alongside e-learning, through their Council devices. • Progress has been made on the Civility in Public Life programme, including improving the consistency and transparency of reporting to the Standards Committee, strengthening training and awareness for members, and using feedback from observation activity and complaints data to identify trends and drive continuous improvement in member behaviour and culture
	• Preparations for Member development and induction ahead of the May 2027 elections will begin, alongside a review of the	• The Council has commenced development of its Member Development and Induction programme for May 2027, which is due

	Council's Constitution and the Whistleblowing Policy, with more outcome-focused reports to the G&A Committee.	to be presented to Democratic Services Committee for approval in June 2026. As part of this programme refresher training on ethical standards and the Members Code of Conduct will be delivered on an annual basis. • The Council continues to review its Constitution on an on-going basis, with amendments presented to Full Council for approval as and when required. • Developmental work has been undertaken with G&A Committee to improve focus upon outcomes, and a revised Committee report template has been developed for 2026/27 which should support Members in producing more outcome focused decisions. • A mid-year review of the Whistleblowing Policy was undertaken in July 2025, identifying a series of improvement actions to be progressed during 2026/27. These include further strengthening monitoring arrangements through enhanced identification of trends by Directorate and improved data presentation using clearer tabular and graphical analysis. Plans are also in place to develop more robust outcome-focused reporting, including systematic tracking of case outcomes, and to review and enhance support arrangements for whistleblowers to ensure they are effective and accessible.
	• Undertake further observations of Town and Community Council meetings across the Vale of Glamorgan to promote high standards of conduct by Town and Community Councillors	• Throughout the year, members of the Committee undertook observations of TCC briefings and reported back findings and themes to Standards Committee on a regular basis. The plan for observations to be undertaken during 2026/27 was agreed by Committee on 26th March 2026.

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement		
	• The e-petitions function is being reviewed in 2025/26 as to how best raise awareness, as the number of petitions received by the Council is minimal.	• A revised Council Petition Scheme was approved by Full Council in December 2025. Following this, the Council's e-petition web platform was updated to improve its accessibility, and publicised via the Council's social media channels.
	• A new Public Participation Strategy will be developed and priority actions to respond to the results of the Let's Talk about Life in the Vale survey delivered.	• The final results report was received from Data Cymru (now part of WLGA) in May 2026. In response to the "Let's Talk about Life in the Vale" findings, a new Public Participation Strategy, short-term action plan, and Communications Strategy have been developed. These will be considered by SLT on 9 June 2026 and presented to Cabinet on 25 June 2026.
	• The Council regularly engages Members beyond Cabinet within its decision making and is seeking to enhance this further during 2025/26 because of the Reshaping Scrutiny workstream and revised Members Communication Strategy.	• Reshaping Board established and regular briefings on the Reshaping Programme and MTFP throughout the year.

	• As the Council seeks to embed Task and Finish as part of its new Scrutiny arrangements, it is exploring alternative means to encourage participation from the wider public.	• The Council has increased and promoted a number of means to promote public participation in Scrutiny throughout the year including:
		  • A digitised topic request form
		  • Public speaking
		  • Written representations
		  • Involvement within Task and Finish
		• These mechanisms have all been promoted via the Council's social media channels and through awareness campaigns to various community groups throughout the year.

	• Improvement in the completion rates of our performance appraisal process, a wider review on the reason for the decline in completion in 2024/25 will take place.	• In 2025/26 we haven't been able to make progress against this action due to the planned changes to the iDev system.

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits		
	• Ongoing communications about Vale 2030 as part of the Signalling Change Programme to raise awareness with all partners about priorities detailed in the new Corporate Plan.	• A Signalling Change Plan has been developed in response to the Panel Performance Assessment. This plan sets out a number of projects to be undertaken within Corporate Resources. Primarily by HR, Democratic Services, and the Communications teams. For example, a new Communications Strategy for the Council has been drafted and will be finalised and published following the conclusion of the Resources Scrutiny Committee task and finish group on misinformation. The organisation's corporate branding has been reviewed and updated. A new intranet site has also been launched and a new set of internal news values established.
	• Stronger emphasis on outcomes when reporting progress through 2025/26.	• New Power BI performance reports and the introduction of a more detailed Quarter 2 performance report have notably improved the quality and consistency of performance information. The Quarter 2 report, aligned to the Council's Annual Self-Assessment (ASA) approach, provides performance information by Well-being Objective and incorporates narrative on key challenges, Directors' and the Chief Executive's reflections. • Feedback from Members, officers and SLT has been positive, particularly around improved clarity and usefulness. Work will continue to reinforce the importance of evidencing impact and outcomes alongside narrative and data.
	• Promotion of the partnership statement to partners and officers	• The statement continues to guide partnership activity, and work will continue to ensure that across the Council it is reflected in how we work collaboratively. Through the year opportunities to highlight the statement have been taken internally e.g. through management development sessions, externally e.g. through the PSB, work with GVS and TCCs and the Section 16 Forum. The importance of partnership working has been highlighted in performance reporting and has been included in all five Directorate Plans for 2026/27 and also in the Directorate Self Assessments which will inform the 25/26

		Annual Self Assessment. Partnership working is also a strong theme within the Reshaping Programme and will continue to shape work going forward. There have also been opportunities through the Member briefings and Learning cafes to spotlight some of our partnership work e.g. with public health, GVS and Citizens Advice.
	• Review of the approach to the Annual Self Assessment to reflect feedback and align to Vale 2030 and Directorate Plans.	• Learning from the 2024/25 ASA has informed improvements to the 2025/26 ASA, including greater emphasis on partnership working, streamlined content, and a strengthened challenge process involving wider officer input. The introduction of the Q2 performance report has also supported a more continuous and embedded ASA approach throughout the year. Learning from the 2024/25 ASA has informed improvements to the 2025/26 ASA, including greater emphasis on partnership working, streamlined content, and a strengthened challenge process involving wider officer input. • The introduction of the Q2 performance report has also supported a more continuous and embedded ASA approach throughout the year.
	• Review of the Strategic Insight Board.	• A review has been completed with revised terms of reference, some changes in membership and changes to the forward plan and agendas. Other changes have been made to ensure better alignment of the role of the board with SLT.
	• It is anticipated that changes to Scrutiny ways of working will see an increase in the amount of task and finish activity during 2025/26.	• During the year, the Council has completed 5 Task and Finish topics covering a range of areas, with final reports and recommendations viewable online, and commenced a further 3 Task and Finish topics during the year, anticipated to be completed in 2026/27.

	• Early budget decision making to ensure full delivery of savings programmes	• The timings of the UK and Welsh Government announcements made this difficult. This is being carried forward into the approach for 2027/28 budget setting.

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes		
	• Development of new performance reports aligned to Vale 2030 and the new Directorate Plans and new scrutiny arrangements and reflecting Audit Wales recommendations regarding service user perspective, more outcome focused reports and alignment with financial information. • From April 2025/26, an annual statement will replace the current Annual Delivery Plan outlining some of the key outcomes to be achieved in the coming year informed by the ASA, resident voice and political priorities. Strategic annual Directorate Plans will replace existing Service Plans.	• As part of Vale 2030 there have been a number of changes, performance is reported quarterly to SLT with a Power BI report. It is reported twice yearly to a Joint Performance Committee through the ASA and a Q2 report which provide a clearer picture of progress and outcomes achieved. SLT all attend the committee supporting a more integrated approach and dialogue with members. The new Power Bi reports have been well received and are available on Membernet. • A new Annual Statement was produced for 2025/26 informed by Vale 2030 and 5 Directorate Plans. This new approach has supported a more streamlined and focused reporting of performance.

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within		
	• The effectiveness of the revised Scrutiny arrangements will be evaluated at the end of the 2025/26 municipal year.	• The Council's Annual Self-Assessment report and Scrutiny Annual Report present an overview of the Council's reflections on the Scrutiny function in 2025/26. Audit Wales have also undertaken a review of the effectiveness of the function, with the findings due to be reported in July 2026.
	• Further development of digital competence. • A Council wide Skills Mapping exercise as part of the new People, Strategy and Target Operating Model, looking at the requirement	• During the year, we have further developed MemberNet to include resources surrounding digital skills and competency, and also host a regular drop in session in conjunction with ICT where Members are able to share any challenges whereby, they may require digital support

	for skills of the future, gaps identified and pathway to achieve and close the gaps.	

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management		
	• Further integration of risks within Directorate Plans to reduce duplication. • Development of performance reporting in line with Vale 2030, feedback form members and new scrutiny arrangements. • Development of ongoing Member briefings to address short term training needs alongside to compliment wider, more strategic Member Development Programme.	• The move to Directorate Plans in 2025/26 has helped identify risks at a higher level and a more Directorate wide response to managing the risk. • Power Bi reports have been developed and well received from officers and members. The new Joint Performance Committee has enabled a more integrated approach to scrutiny of performance, and this has been supported by the new Q2 performance report which is aligned to the ASA and provides a half year position with statements from each Director. • The Council has developed a programme of Member Briefings throughout the year, covering a variety of strategic themes including Placemaking and Participation alongside “State of the Nation” addresses. An update surrounding the Member Development Programme was shared at Democratic Services Committee in April 2026.

Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability		
	• Review the governance cycle for Audit Wales reports to minimise duplication between Scrutiny Committees and Governance and Audit Committee.	• As part of the Reshaping Scrutiny arrangements, audit reports are now only presented to Governance and Audit Committee to minimise duplication. However, a committee is still able to consider an audit report if they wish to do so. Findings from audits are used to inform individual Committee’s Forward Work Programmes.

Appendix C

Areas Identified for Improvement in 2026/27 (as per the 2025/26 AGS)

Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	
	• Finalise the review of the Local Dispute Resolution Procedure, procedures for hearing complaints, and refresher training, as well as section 19 of the Council's Constitution. • Prepare for Member development and induction ahead of the May 2027 elections, alongside a review of the Council's Constitution and the Whistleblowing Policy, with more outcome-focused reports continuing to be reported to the Governance and Audit Committee. • Explore improved ways of working with Town and Community Clerks to enhance their knowledge of Constitutional processes • Undertake further observations of Town and Community Council meetings across the Vale of Glamorgan to promote high standards of conduct by Town and Community Councillors.

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	
	• Explore alternative mediums to enhance public participation in the Council's decision-making processes • Improvement in the completion rates of our performance appraisal process, a wider review on the reason for the decline in completion in 2024/25 will take place. • The Council is currently working to produce new Communications and Public Participation strategies in response to the Let's Talk about Life in the Vale survey, the results of which will be published early in 2026/27. • Despite extensive engagement activity, participation and insight are not consistently representative. Some groups remain too seldom heard and response levels vary between services, limiting the depth and consistency of insight. • In 2026/27, the Council will strengthen use of engagement and complaints insight to support prevention, service redesign and demand management, improving data integration, consistency of analysis, and targeting of underrepresented groups, while maintaining clear feedback loops to build trust and sustain participation.

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	
	• Ongoing communications about Vale 2030 to raise awareness with residents, staff and partners about the priorities detailed in the new Corporate Plan. • Strengthening outcome-focused reporting • Embedding Vale 2030 and associated planning arrangements. • Review of the approach to the Annual Self Assessment to reflect feedback It is anticipated that changes to Scrutiny ways of working will see an increase in the amount of task and finish activity during 2025/26. • Early budget decision making to ensure full delivery of savings programmes. • Work to better track Value for Money outcomes as a result of schemes delivered in the Capital Programme.

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	
	• Review of the Directorate Self Assessment process and how judgements are reached for the Annual Self Assessment. • Further strengthen decision-making through enhanced use of performance and insight • Continue to develop outcome-focused reporting including Power BI performance reports and more outcome focused commentary.

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within	
	• A Council wide Skills Mapping exercise as part of the new People Strategy and Target Operating Model, looking at the requirement for skills of the future, gaps identified and pathway to achieve and close the gaps. • Delivery of the Signalling Change Plan.

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	
	• Further integration of risk and performance arrangements • Improved use of data and insight to inform decision-making • Continued development of Member support and capability. • Development of ongoing Member briefings to address short term training needs alongside to compliment wider, more strategic Member Development Programme.

Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability	
	• Improve upon how the Council responds to and learns from complaints, including consideration of Audit Wales recommendations following their review of the function.