

Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

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1. Executive Summary

The Leader of the Council and Chief Executive recognise the importance of having appropriate processes and controls in place to run the Council and ensure its services are delivered effectively.

The Council is required to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which describes how its corporate governance arrangements have been working. The Council's Audit and Risk Management Committee reviews the production of the AGS and considers and scrutinises the content.

Bromley is a Member led, commissioning authority, delivering services through whoever is best placed to provide quality and value for money to its residents, who are supported to manage their lives with the minimum of intervention from the Council. 'Making Bromley Even Better', the Council's Corporate Strategy, contains the guiding principles for Bromley Council, our vision and links with key partner organisations to help deliver important outcomes for residents, businesses and visitors to Bromley.

Making Bromley Even Better (Corporate Strategy)

Bromley's governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values, by which the authority is directed and controlled, and the activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads its community. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Bromley's policies, aims and objectives; to evaluate the likelihood and potential impact of those risks being realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The governance framework has been in place at Bromley for the year ended 31st March 2023 and up to the date of approval of the Leader's Foreword and Statement of Accounts.

The Council conducts an annual review of its governance arrangements, including the system of internal control. The purpose of the review is to provide assurance from a number of sources including Members, Chief Officers, internal and external audit, other review agencies and inspectorates that corporate governance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively; or where gaps are revealed, action is planned that will ensure effective governance in future.

With substantial additional savings to be made over the next four years, the financial situation continues to drive the future direction and work of the Council.

2. Significant Governance Issues

Overall, we can confirm that the Council has appropriate systems and processes in place to ensure that good governance is maintained in line with the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework, 2016 Edition'. Whilst we are satisfied that these generally work and can be regarded as fit for purpose, we have identified two areas as requiring further work during 2023/24 and these are detailed overleaf.

Progress made in dealing with the governance issues identified in the 2021/22 Annual Governance Statement is detailed on pages 18 to 23.

Governance Issue	Action	Lead Officer
Finance A balanced budget for 2023/24 has been achieved through the Transformation Savings Programme, an improved financial settlement including redesignation of funding set aside for Adult Social Care reforms and continuing with robust financial management. This has been achieved despite the significant increase in inflation (highest for around 40 years). There remains a "budget gap" of £1.7m in 2024/25 rising to £29.6m per annum in 2026/27. There is also an estimated increase in the Dedicated Schools Grant of £10.9m per annum by 2026/27, compared with 2022/23. The projections assume mitigation and transformation savings of £28.2m in 2023/24 rising to £59.5m by 2026/27. The projections from 2025/26 have to be treated with some caution, particularly as the Government's next Spending Review is awaited and the Fair Funding Review is not expected to be completed until at least 2026/27. There has been a significant review of the Council's capital programme funding shortfall to address the impact of the Operational Property Review and the need to address an inherent capital funding shortfall. This has resulted to a significant property disposals programme combined with borrowing to fund housing schemes in order to address the potential funding shortfall.	In considering action required to address the medium term "budget gap", the Council has taken significant action to reduce the cost base while protecting priority front line services and providing sustainable longer term solutions. Significant savings of over £120m were realised since 2011/12. Our council has to balance between the needs of service users and the burden of council tax on council tax payers. With the Government not providing funding to keep pace with growth/cost pressures, the burden of financing increasing service demand falls primarily upon the level of council tax and business rate income. Further information can be found in: Draft 2023/24 Budget and Update on Council's Financial Strategy 2023/25 to 2026/27 Further details of the updated capital funding strategy can be found in: Capital Strategy 2023/24 to 2026/27	Director of Finance
Statement of Accounts The Council's statement of accounts for the period 2019/20 onwards remain incomplete owing to considerable delays largely caused by issues concerning the valuation of the Council's Fixed Assets. Consequently, whilst the 2019/20 accounts are currently being finalised, production of the draft accounts for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 have been delayed beyond the statutory publication dates.	The Council has implemented a timetable to address the backlog of work required to produce draft accounts for the respective financial years. This includes the deployment of additional resources in the closing team and advance work taking place to ensure that asset valuations are properly supported.	Director of Finance

3. What is Corporate Governance?

3.1 Definition

The CIPFA International Framework 'Good Governance in the Public Sector' defines governance as:-

'The arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved'

It also states that:-

'To deliver good governance in the public sector, both governing bodies and individuals working for public sector entities must try to achieve their entity's objectives while acting in the public interest at all times'

'Acting in the public interest implies primary consideration of the benefits for society, which should result in positive outcomes for service users and other stakeholders'

Governance is about how local government bodies ensure that they are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It comprises the systems and processes, cultures and values, by which local government bodies are directed and controlled and through which they account to, engage with and, where appropriate, provide leadership to their communities.

Effective corporate governance and the capacity to lead and manage change are essential to meet the ever increasing challenges for the public sector. Good governance is important to all involved in local government and a key responsibility of the Chief Executive, the Leader of the Council and other statutory governance Chief Officers.

Our governance framework comprises the culture, values, systems and processes by which the Council is directed and controlled. It brings together an underlying set of legislative and regulatory requirements, good practice principles and management practice.

Bromley Council recognises that:

- ► Good governance leads to good management, good performance, good stewardship of public money, good public engagement and, ultimately, good outcomes for residents and service users.
- ► Good governance enables an authority to pursue its vision effectively, as well as underpinning that vision with appropriate mechanisms for control and management of risk.
- All authorities should aim to meet the standards of the best and governance arrangements should not only be sound, but also be seen to be sound.
- ▶ Governance processes should be both efficient and effective.

3.2 The Principles

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

How we do this

- Having regard for the principles of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership
- Being accountable for decisions to the public and co-operating fully with whatever scrutiny is appropriate to one's office
- Commitment to promoting an anti-fraud and corruption culture evidenced through a detailed anti-fraud and corruption policy and ensuring fraud and corruption are dealt with effectively
- Adherence to ethical values and respect for the rule of law
- Creating a culture where statutory officers and other key post holders are able to fulfil their responsibilities

Principle B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

How we do this

- Ensuring transparency of decisions supported by an effective scrutiny and challenge process
- Consulting with residents during the budget setting process for 2023/24 and beyond
- Demonstrating engagement with all groups of stakeholders to determine the most appropriate course of action/effective intervention
- Ensuring a clear, evidence based, decision making path

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

How we do this

- Having a clear vision and strategy, with key partner organisations through 'Making Bromley Even Better'
- Delivering defined, sustainable outcomes within the limits of resources and authority

- Balancing competing demands with finite resources when determining priorities; managing service users' expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the available resources
- Taking a longer term view with regard to decision making, taking account of potential conflicts between the organisation's vision and short term factors such as financial constraints

Principle D – Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

How we do this

- Having a clear vision and strategy setting out our intended outcomes for citizens and service users
- Ensuring decision makers receive a robust best value option analysis detailing associated risks and outcomes to be achieved
- Considering stakeholder feedback and future impact when making decisions about service delivery, prioritising competing demands

Principle E – Developing capacity including the capability of leadership and individuals

How we do this

- Ensuring that the decision making process is clearly defined and supported by protocols to ensure a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained
- Ensuring that individuals have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities, reflecting the structure and diversity of the community
- Evaluating, and supporting, staff performance through regular reviews which take into account training and development needs
- Supporting the workforce to maintain their health and wellbeing

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

How we do this

- Regular review of Corporate and Departmental Risks and Risk Registers
- Integration of effective risk management arrangements into the decision making process

- Ensuring an effective scrutiny function which provides a constructive challenge and allows for debate at all stages of the decision making process
- Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption policies are in place and there is good staff awareness
- Having an effective Audit and Risk Management Committee whose remit incorporates financial delegation, fraud prevention, and internal and external audit

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

How we do this

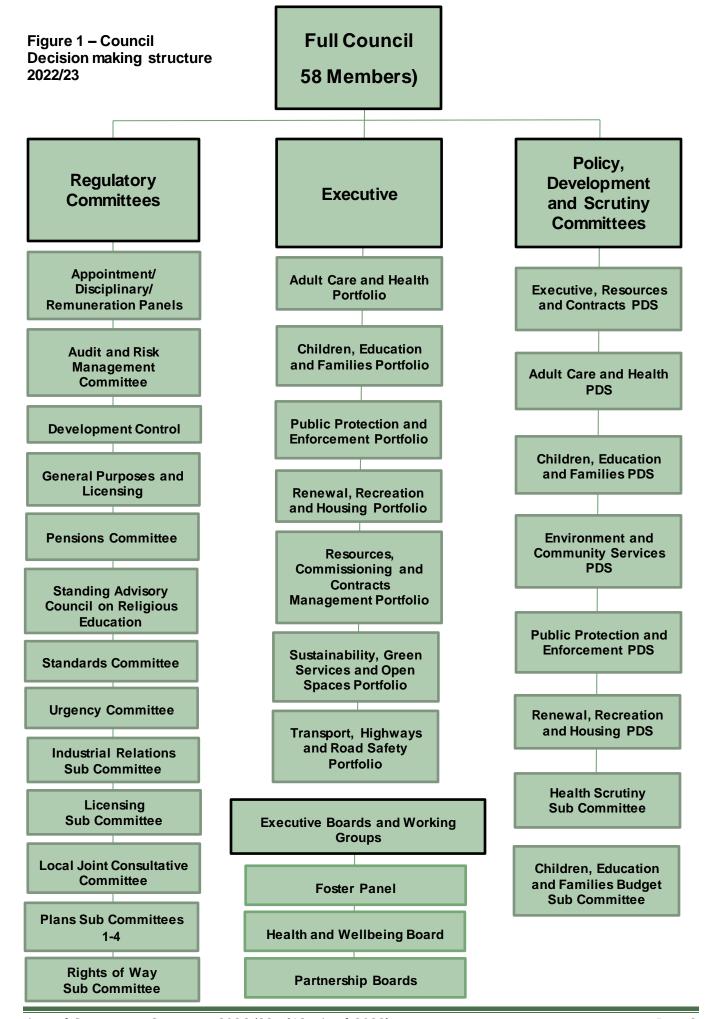
- Publishing information on our activities and decisions
- Maintaining a rigorous, effective and transparent decision making and scrutiny process
- Ensuring that public reports are easily accessible and use a style appropriate to the intended audience
- Embracing peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies, implementing recommendations for corrective action as required
- Maintaining an effective internal and external audit service, with direct access to Members

4. The Council: How it Works

This Annual Governance Statement covers the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023, but it should remain up to date until the accounts are approved and audited.

In the 2021/22 Council year the Council was made up of 60 Councillors, but this reduced to 58 Councillors at the local elections in May 2022. The decision making structure is divided between Executive and non-Executive matters. Executive duties are carried out by an Executive body of Councillors, which, in 2021/22 included the Leader and six Councillors (increased to seven in May 2022) with specific Portfolio responsibilities. Non-Executive duties are performed mainly by the Development Control Committee, the General Purposes and Licensing Committee, the Audit and Risk Management Committee, the Pensions Committee, and the Standards Committee.

The established decision making structure is depicted overleaf:



5. The Procurement process

In 2022/23, procurement practice and process continued to be led through the Corporate Procurement Team working in accordance with the LBB Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

The key governance arrangements in place continue to include:

- All procurement over £5k must be conducted in consultation with the Corporate Procurement Team;
- Member decision on proceeding to procurement and contract award for all procurements with a whole life value of £500k or higher;
- Member decision on formal extension options, extensions beyond term, variation (modifications) and exemptions at £100k or higher, including reporting to Audit and Risk Management Committee for anything £50k or higher;
- All procurement decisions at both Member and Officer authority to be supported by a formal Gateway paper;
- Annual monitoring reports to Members for all contracts with a whole life value of £500k or higher;
- Quarterly Contract Register report to Executive, Resources and Contracts (ER&C) Policy,
 Development and Scrutiny (ER&C) Committee on all contracts over £200k and to each PDS for
 contracts over £50k; including commentary on the status of the contract from the Contract
 Owner and additional commentary and RAG rating from the Corporate Procurement Team;
- Regular reports to Chief Officers Executive (COE) and Corporate Leadership Team on the status of all contracts due to end within the next twelve months with commentary from Corporate Procurement;
- Procurement Board led by Corporate Procurement to review and advise on key contracts in advance of seeking decisions on procurement actions;
- Regular training on Commissioning and Procurement available to all Officers;
- Quarterly meetings for all Contract Owners to provide news, guidance, advice and support.

In December 2020, the Government issued a Green Paper on Transforming Public Procurement. The latest advice from Cabinet Office is that the Bill will be enacted in Spring/Summer 2023 following which secondary legislation will be developed. The new Regulations are expected to go live in Spring 2024. During the transition period between confirmation of legislation and implementation date, the Corporate Procurement team will review and update the Contract Procedure Rules and other relevant processes and procedures to ensure compliance with the new legislation. Changes are expected to be primarily technical in nature. Communication and training will be implemented to support any changes.

6. Outcomes and Value for Money

6.1 Making Bromley Even Better

Bromley Council's partner agencies formally signed up to work together with the Council to deliver a new Corporate Strategy – 'Making Bromley Even Better' in October 2021. Hundreds of organisations, councillors and residents contributed to the strategy which outlines five main ambitions for Bromley over the next ten years with the shared vision of making the Borough: 'A fantastic place to live and work, where everyone can lead healthy, safe and independent lives'. The Medium Term Financial Strategy will enable the delivery of the Corporate Strategy as a 'golden thread' that runs through all plans such as those that support Portfolios with teams and individuals reflecting the ambitions throughout their work.

'Making Bromley Even Better' has five overarching ambitions:

- 1. For children and young people to grow up, thrive and have the best life chances in families who flourish and are happy to call Bromley home.
- 2. For adults and older people to enjoy fulfilled and successful lives in Bromley, ageing well, retaining independence and making choices.
- 3. For people to make their homes in Bromley and for business, enterprise and the third sector to prosper.
- 4. For residents to live responsibly and prosper in a safe, clean and green environment great for today and a sustainable future.
- 5. To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents.

Working individually and in partnership we share responsibility for improving outcomes in the Borough. Agencies in our partnerships commission and provide many of the services which matter to residents and businesses in Bromley. We are convinced that by aligning ambitions and by strengthening our collaboration, we will succeed in making Bromley an even better Borough. It is crucial to have a sense of shared direction and a course to navigate for the future, no ten-year plan can ever be set in stone. Therefore we will monitor progress regularly and develop our plan as circumstances, demand and legislative changes require.

Underpinned by our shared organisational culture and values of Respect, Empowerment, Ambition, Leadership (REAL), the Council works to meet the needs and expectations of residents through enabling self-sufficiency, sustainable core services and improving outcomes for residents at the earliest point of need within a responsible financial envelope.

As a learning organisation we continue to reflect on "best practice" models of change and transformation. We are committed to adopting favourable solutions that are tried and tested.

Despite the unprecedented financial challenge, Bromley will serve and advocate on behalf of its residents and aim to deliver cost-effective services. Working with strategic partners, it will also continue to ensure that it receives the fairest deal from the Government on issues that are important to Bromley residents.

Bromley's achievements over the past year and plans for the future are reported in the Leader's Foreword and Statement of Accounts.

6.2 Portfolio Plans

Portfolio Plans set out each Portfolio Holder's aims in the current year and the supporting performance targets, using a range of national and local indicators. Overseeing the successful delivery of each plan is the joint responsibility of the Portfolio Holder and the Members of the appropriate Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee (PDS). The Portfolios are aligned to the priorities identified in Making Bromley Even Better. In addition, the Health and Wellbeing Board is a collaboration between Bromley Council and various partner agencies whose role is to understand their local community's needs, agree priorities and encourage commissioners to work in a more joined up way.

Adult Care and Health Portfolio Plan 2022-23 Refresh

Children, Education and Families Portfolio Plan 2022-23 Refresh

Housing, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Plan 2022/23 (including Quarter One update)

Environment and Community Services Portfolio Plan 2022-23

Public Protection and Enforcement Portfolio Plan 2022-23

Updates on progress are reported to Members through the Policy, Development and Scrutiny process. Examples of this include:

Adult Care and Health Portfolio Plan 2022/23 - Quarter Two Update Covering Report (November 2022)

Adult Care and Health Portfolio Plan 20220/23 - Quarter Two Update (November 2022)

Children, Education and Families Portfolio Plan 2022/23 - Quarter Three Update Covering Report (March 2023)

Children. Education and Families Portfolio Plan 2022/23 - Quarter Three Update (March 2023)

Housing, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Plan 2022/23 - Quarter Three Update Covering Report (January 2023)

Appendix 1 - Housing, Planning and Regeneration Strategic Project Tracker

Appendix 2 - Housing, Planning and Regeneration Operational Key Performance Indicators

Environment and Community Services Performance Overview 2022/23 - Quarter Three (March 2023)

Public Protection and Enforcement Performance Overview 2022/23 - Quarter Three (March 2023)

6.3 Managing our Resources (Value for Money)

Statement of Accounts

In relation to the Council's Statement of Accounts for 2019/20, draft accounts were published on 30th June 2020, with the external audit starting during August 2020. Whilst good progress was made in most areas, there were delays in the provision of information to EY and in responding to auditor queries. Some delays occurred due to the Coronavirus pandemic, with officers working off site and documentation not being readily accessible in an electronic format (in some cases paper documents and records required bulk scanning). Most significantly, the audit revealed a number of errors in relation to the Council's accounting treatment of fixed assets. These have required significant work by property officers to rectify core valuation information and owing to this and other outstanding matters completion of the audit has been delayed to 2023. The external auditor produced an updated Audit Results report which was considered by the Audit and Risk Management Committee on 8th March 2023. This report stated that the audit was 'substantially completed', though some matters remain outstanding. The auditor also stated that it will need to consider the impact of uncorrected misstatements and other areas of uncertainty on the final audit opinion for 2019/20. It is anticipated that the accounts audit will signed-off by the external auditor during April 2023.

The statement of accounts for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 remain incomplete mainly due to the valuation issues affecting the 2019/20 accounts which has significantly delayed their completion. It is now planned that the 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 will be published in draft form during 2023.

CIPFA Financial Management Code

The Council's financial management arrangements conform with good governance. An assessment was undertaken in the year against compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code. The Council is complying with all of the requirements however an action plan is being developed to improve the level of assurance with each standard contained within the code.

Value For Money (VFM) Conclusion

The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 requires auditors of local government bodies to be satisfied that the Authority 'has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources'.

The Council's external auditor has not yet been able to issue a VFM conclusion for 2018/19 owing to outstanding objections. As a result of the objections the audit cannot be formally concluded and an audit certificate issued. The detailed approach of the Council towards budgeting over the medium to longer term was reported to Executive on 18th January 2023 with the approach on using reserves and

other key financial matters reported to Executive on 8th February 2023. Forward financial planning and financial management is a key strength at Bromley. These reports continue to forecast the financial prospects for the next 4 years and include the outcome of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2023/24. It is important to note that some caution is required in considering any projections for 2023/24 to 2025/26 as this depends on the outcome of the Government's next awaited Spending Review period as well as the awaited impact of the Fair Funding Review and Devolution of Business Rates. The report on 18th January 2023 provided an update on the funding and costs of the Covid 19 pandemic and the estimated financial impact for 2023/24. The Covid 19 pandemic has created a higher level of uncertainty for the financial forecasting in future years, particularly with uncertain outcome of the 'new normal'.

Draft 2023/24 Budget and Update on Council's Financial Strategy 2023/25 to 2026/27
2023/24 Council Tax

Counter Fraud Arrangements

Ensuring that effective arrangements for counter fraud are in place is important to protect the Council's resources so that all funds are used to deliver the best possible outcomes for our residents. Through data from across the public sector, we know that fraud risks will have increased during the pandemic and continue to increase as the cost of living rises. During 2022, we reviewed our Counter Fraud arrangements using CIPFA's counter fraud assessment tool and Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally, the local government best practice fraud strategy. Subsequently, we revised our four key policies for counter fraud and corruption: the Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy, Raising Concerns (Whistleblowing) Policy, Anti-Bribery Policy and Anti-Money Laundering Policy. These were approved by Audit and Risk Management Committee at their meeting of 2nd November 2022. We also enhanced our pro active approach fraud work through the provision of fraud awareness and other exercises. We will continue to develop this work into 2023/24 and beyond.

7. How do we know our arrangements are working?

7.1 The Role of Management

The senior officer forum is the Chief Officers Executive (COE). Membership includes the Chief Executive and his senior leadership team:

- Chief Executive
- Director of Children, Education and Families
- Director of Environment and Public Protection
- Director of Housing, Planning and Regeneration
- Director of Corporate Services and Governance
- Director of Adult Services
- Director of Public Health
- Director of Finance
- Director of Human Resources, Customer Services and Public Affairs

The purpose of the Chief Officers Executive (COE) is:

- ► High-level officer decision making: COE is the highest officer forum for high-level decision making to facilitate the effective working of the organisation
- ▶ Discussion of governance issues / review of the Council's Forward Plan: COE is the officer forum for the discussion of any key governance issues and reviews the Council's Forward Plan on a regular basis to ensure smooth and timely decision making
- Information sharing: an opportunity for Directors to provide high-level updates of activity in their respective service areas in an informal environment
- ▶ Review progress of COE sponsored working groups reporting to Corporate Leadership Team (CLT): CLT working groups will report into COE for advice and guidance prior to reporting back to CLT
- Overview of the delivery of the Transforming Bromley agenda: COE Transformation Board is an extension of COE and meets fortnightly to oversee the successful delivery of the Transformation Programme and the key principles of the Transforming Bromley Roadmap.

The Corporate Leadership Team is responsible for the Strategic Leadership of the organisation, with managers having day to day responsibility for the management and control of service delivery. Our managers set the 'tone from the top' and develop and implement policies, procedures, processes and controls. They ensure compliance.

The Corporate Risk Management Group (CRMG), chaired by the Director of Finance and including the Head of Audit & Assurance in its membership, oversees the Council's risk management arrangements and delivery of the Annual Governance Statement.

Each Director retains responsibility for the Risks and Controls within their division, with Internal Audit coordinating the Risk Management process via the Corporate Risk Management Group and Audit and Risk Management Committee.

During 2022/23, the Corporate Risk Management Group met twice (May and September 2022), undertaking its usual programme of scrutiny.

Risk Registers remained live documents throughout the year, with the Risk Reporting cycle to the Corporate Leadership Team and Committee completed in full. Audit and Risk Management Committee received the refreshed Corporate Risk Register at their meetings of June and November 2022. The Departmental Risk Registers were presented in full to the June meeting and by way of Heat Maps at the November meeting. Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS received five Risk Information Briefings and each relevant PDS Committee had the opportunity to scrutinise the Departmental Risk Register falling within its remit.

The Standards Committee of 21st February 2023 considered the Monitoring Officer's General Report. This updated the Committee on a number of Standards issues including the Appeals Process for Members subject to Complaints.

Monitoring Officer's General Report 21st February 2023

The Council's Constitution requires that a report is made each year to full Council which summarises work carried out by Policy Development and Scrutiny (PDS) Committees. This report was considered by the Executive, Resources and Contracts PDS Committee on 22nd March 2023 and Full Council on 24th April 2023.

Policy, Development and Scrutiny Annual Report 2022/23

The outcome of this is that we have adequate governance arrangements in place and relevant to the environment we work in.

7.2 The Role of the Audit and Risk Management Committee

For 2022/23, the Council appointed an Audit and Risk Management Committee which considers financial delegations, fraud prevention, internal and external audit. It meets three times a year and reports directly to Full Council.

Audit and Risk Management Committee Meetings (Agendas, Papers, Minutes)

The Audit and Risk Management Committee plays an important role in ensuring that the Council learns from Internal Audit findings and rectifies identified weaknesses in control. All recommendations from Internal Audit are tracked by the Committee until implemented, with a particular focus on those deemed to be high risk (Priority 1).

7.3 Our Governance Framework

Key Policies/Processes/Posts/Functions in our Governance Framework include:

	Policy/Process
Α	Annual Audit Letter
	Annual Governance Statement
	Anti-Bribery Policy
	Anti-Money Laundering Policy
	Audit and Risk Management Committee
С	Capital Strategy
	Code of Conduct for Members
	Complaints System
	Constitution
	Contract Procedure Rules/Standing Orders
	Corporate Induction Process
	Corporate Leadership Team
	Corporate Operating Principles
	Counter Fraud and Corruption Strategy
	Customer Access Channel Strategy
	Customer Services Charter
D	DISCUSS Appraisal Scheme
E	Executive and Resources PDS Committee Annual Report
F	Financial Regulations
	Financial Strategy
	Forward Plan of Key Decisions
G	'Getting it Right' – Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions
	Gifts and Hospitality Code of Conduct
Н	Head of Audit and Assurance
	Head of Paid Service
	Internal and External Audit Reports
	Internal Audit Opinion and Annual Report
	Internal Controls
	IT Governance
L	Leader's Foreword and Statement of Accounts
	Learning and Development
	Local Development Framework
M	Making Bromley Even Better
	Member/Officer Protocol
	Monitoring Officer (Director of Corporate Services and Governance)
Р	Portfolio Plans
	Public Consultations/Meetings
R	'Raising Concerns' whistle blowing
	Register of Interests
	Risk Management Strategy
S	Scheme of Delegation
	Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance)
	Statement of Accounts
Т	Treasury Management Strategy

7.4 Annual Governance Assurance Statement

Each member of the COE is required to confirm that:

'In meeting my responsibilities above, I have:

- Contributed to the review of Risk Registers and the outcomes
- ▶ Ensured that there are controls in place to mitigate the risks highlighted in the above exercise
- ► Considered relevant assessments of key service areas within the Department e.g. benchmarking, peer review
- ► Taken into account internal and external audit and inspection reports and results of follow ups regarding implementation of recommendations

I am satisfied that to the best of my knowledge, the following procedures are in place:

- ► The service is planned and managed in accordance with the Council's Corporate Operating Principles
- Business risks are identified, assessed and reported on a regular basis
- Key controls over systems and processes are in place to ensure the Council's assets are safeguarded
- Business Continuity Plans are maintained and reviewed as circumstances change
- ► There are quarterly budget monitoring arrangements in place which are reviewed and agreed through budget holders, Senior Leadership Team, Directors and through PDS and Executive
- ► Key contract information is kept up to date in the Contracts Database to allow Contract Registers and other management information to be reported

Where unable to confirm all, or some of these, the areas for improvement and planned actions must be detailed'.

7.5 External Inspections/Peer Reviews

The Council received the annual Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman letter for the year ending 31st March 2022, which summarised Ombudsman complaints/enquiries received, and the decisions made about, the London Borough of Bromley. With a commitment to an ethos of continuous improvement and using feedback from a variety of sources to learn, understand and take action to improve services; we continue to place our focus on the outcomes of complaints and what can be learned from them.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2022 (20th July 2022)

An external Quality Assurance review of Children' services, aligned to the Ofsted framework, was undertaken during October and November 2022.

7.6 The Role of Internal Audit

Internal Audit is a key component of Corporate Governance within the Council. As required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Council must ensure an effective system of internal audit to evaluate the effectiveness of its risk management, control and governance processes, taking into account public sector internal auditing standards or guidance.

An independent and objective Internal Audit function will, through its risk-based approach to work, provide assurance to the Council's Audit and Risk Management Committee and senior management on the higher risk and more complex areas of the Council's business, allowing management to focus on providing coverage of routine operations.

Internal Audit's objectives include supporting a positive culture of internal control improvement, effective risk management and good governance. The purpose, authority and responsibility of the internal audit activity are formally defined in the Internal Audit Charter, which is periodically reviewed and presented to Chief Officers Executive and the Audit and Risk Management Committee for approval. The latest updates to the Charter were approved by the Audit and Risk Management Committee on the 8th March 2023.

7.7 The Role of the Head of Audit and Opinion on Governance Risk and Control

The Council is responsible for ensuring that it has a sound system of governance (incorporating the system of internal control).

The Head of Audit & Assurance is required to provide an independent opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk and control framework. Their Annual Report and Opinion has been considered and any significant issues incorporated as a result.

The Annual assessment is based on the following:

- The Audit work undertaken including the assurance opinion ratings
- The follow up of Priority 1 recommendations determining how the authority responds to key identified weaknesses
- Counter fraud work and other investigations throughout the year
- Ad-hoc advisory work
- Work to support energy grant schemes including risks and controls advice and pre payment assurance checks
- Informal observations of the organisation, for example through attendance at Corporate Leadership Team, Corporate Risk Management Group and other forums.

The results of the above provide reasonable assurance that there is an adequate and effective framework of governance, risk management and control within the Council, designed to meet the organisation's objectives. Where significant weaknesses are identified, Priority 1 recommendations are made and are tracked by Chief Officers Executive, Corporate Leadership Team and the Audit and Risk Management Committee until implemented or discharged. The Head of Internal Audit's Annual report (Audit and Risk Management Committee July 2023) provides details of exceptions and provides further context. Even sound systems of internal control can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance and may not be proof against collusive fraud.

Our Strategic Risks

Risk management is an important element of the system of internal control at Bromley Council. It is based on a process designed to identify, prioritise and control the risks to achieving Bromley's policies, aims and objectives.

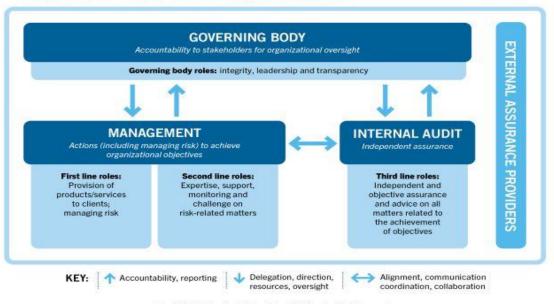
The Corporate Risk Register is a key document in the Council's approach to risk management; it captures the key strategic risks to the delivery of the corporate objectives as set out in the 'Making Bromley Even Better' vision. It also provides a context through which high level risks are identified and is used to inform decision making about business planning and service delivery. Chief Officers assume the lead role for Strategic Risks affecting their own service areas with the Corporate Risk Register reviewed quarterly. The Corporate Risk Management Group takes the lead in championing and coordinating the Council's approach to risk management and ensures that effective risk management processes are fully embedded.

The 'three lines' of assurance model, as detailed below, provides a simple framework for understanding the roles and responsibilities in the overall risk management and internal control processes of an organisation. The Council's third line includes Internal Audit, who provide independent assurance to senior management and the Audit and Risk Management Committee on how effectively the first and second lines have been operating.

- ► First line operational management controls
- Second line monitoring controls, e.g. the policy or system owner / sponsor
- ► Third line independent assurance

Figure 2 - 3 Lines Model

The IIA's Three Lines Model (2020)



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The published Corporate Risk Register can be viewed via following the link:-

Corporate Risk Register

9. Looking Back on 2021/22

Governance Issue Action **Progress Finance** The Council has delivered a A balanced budget for In considering action required to balanced budget for 2022/23 and address the medium term "budget 2022/23 has been achieved for 2023/24. gap", the Council has taken significant through the Transformation action to reduce the cost base while Savings Programme, an A prudent approach to financial protecting priority front line services improved financial settlement management, including and providing sustainable longer term from Government and transformation savings, the solutions. Significant savings of over continuing with prudent £110m were realised since 2011/12. accumulation of revenue reserves financial management. This and detailed in-year monitoring of Our council has to balance between has been achieved despite the expenditure, coupled with the needs of service users and the mitigations has ensured that the significant cost pressures burden of council tax on council tax Council's revenue budget position remaining, increasing inflation. payers. With the Government not and medium-term forecast remains providing funding to keep pace with impact of national insurance growth/cost pressures, the burden of stable but challenging. Without increase and the impact of the financing increasing service demand projecting future savings and the 'new normal' following the use of reserves, it is projected that falls primarily upon the level of council pandemic. There remains a the budget gap will continue to tax and business rate income. Further "budget gap" of £4.3m in information can be found in: 2023/24 rising to £19.5m per Draft 2022/23 Budget and Update on annum in 2025/26. This Council's Financial Strategy 2023/24 to excludes the impact of the 2025/26 Adult Social Care Reforms which could increase net costs further by between £10m and £15m per annum during the financial forecast period. The projections assume mitigation and transformation savings of £17.7m in 2022/23 rising to £30m by 2025/26. The projections from 2023/24 have to be treated with some caution, particularly as the Government's next Spending Review, outcome of the Fair Funding Review and Business Rate Devolution is now expected to be implemented in 2024/25 - the outcome, including the impact on individual councils, is still awaited. The Government had provided funding support to address the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic during 2020/21 and 2021/22 with no further funding provided from 2022/23.

Valuation of Fixed Assets

Issues have been identified relating to the methodologies used for accounting and the valuation of fixed assets for reporting in the Council's 2019/20 Statement of Accounts

Work is at an advanced stage to ensure that Fixed Assets are accounted for in full compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice in Local Authority Accounting, specifically:

- Asset Valuations are fully supported and are undertaken in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Code
- Depreciation and Impairment are properly calculated and appropriately applied to relevant asset categories
- Furniture and Equipment Assets are properly identified and valued on an ongoing basis

This may be updated once the External Auditors have concluded on the revised audit submissions.

The Statutory Asset Valuations have been completed and are awaiting sign off by EY. The methodology and processes have been shared with EY and a regular fortnightly meeting series is in place to ensure any issues raised by EY are dealt with promptly. In the last 9 months no issues have been raised.

Ongoing impact of COVID-19 pandemic on service delivery

Despite the many challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council has delivered some key achievements through our COVID-19 response programmes and our business-as-usual work, which includes a potential balanced budget for 2022/23.

The pandemic has highlighted a number of long-term challenges that the Council will need to continue to address. In particular, we will need to manage significant cost/growth pressures impacting on e.g., education, high needs transport, housing, adults, and children's social care as well as explore opportunities for the mitigation of costs. There also remains uncertainty about the ongoing impact arising from the 'new normal', with no increase in core funding identified beyond 2022/23.

Our COVID-19 response:

- On 21 February 2022, the Government published its 'COVID-19 Response: Living with COVID-19'. As part of the plan, routine contact tracing for the wider population ceases on 31 March 2022. A document will be prepared for Central Government to inform how the Council will reinstate this work within a two-week period if required.
- The plan also notes that the Targeted Community Testing Programme and Lateral Flow Testing Sites close on 31 March 2022. Lateral Testing Sites, with decommissioning expected in the months following.
- Work will continue to review data on our vulnerable groups, including care settings.
- The Council will report on its management of the pandemic later in the year.
- Weekly COVID COE briefings will end with a standing item on COVID going forward at fortnightly COE meetings.
- Work continues to determine the longer-term approach to working with the voluntary and

- The Pandemic has moved towards being endemic in the population, and in order to provide the support that is needed for this situation, two new members of staff have been recruited to support the Health Protection function within the Public Health Team. This small Team has taken over most of the Health Protection work around COVID as well as supporting local response to other outbreaks of infectious disease in the borough. The new staff have been recruited for a 12-month period initially.
- The Targeted Community
 Testing (TCT) Programme
 ran from July 2021 and
 was closed on 31 March
 2022 in accordance with
 the Department for Health
 and Social Care (DHSC)
 quidance.
- Decommissioning documents were produced and are the Council's operational procedure/

As we move towards 'Living with Covid-19', we will continue to explore opportunities to work closely with our partner agencies as part of our organisational and borough-wide recovery.

- community sector, including the retention and engagement of the 4500 volunteers who registered with the Council to support the COVID-19 response
- Through our Economic Strategy we will support the longer-term economic recovery of the borough.
- Continue our partnership working through the Borough Partnership Forum to ensure a co-ordinated and mutually supportive local area response across all agencies.

Some of our key organisational priorities for 2022/23 include:

- Delivering Transforming Bromley Programme proposals for 2022/23 budget setting.
- Managing growth and delivering budget mitigations as part of our long-term financial management strategy.
- Building an equality profile to strengthen service delivery.
- Progressing development of Integrated Care System in South East London.
- Increasing housing supply and affordable housing and concluding options appraisals to bring forward further sites for housing and strategic regeneration projects.
- Reporting on outcomes of Operational Property Review.
- Delivery of the Digital Strategy and Digital Roadmap.
- Supporting hybrid meetings.
- Successful rollout of the 2022 Local Elections.
- Responding to legislative changes and macro issues from Central Government.

- strategy for what we could do if contact tracing needs to be reinstated.
- An internal Bromley system for the surveillance and management of COVID-19 in Care Homes continues, with data reviewed twice a week and follow-up action taken where needed.
- A report on the 'Public Health Management of the COVID-19 Pandemic' (including discussion on lessons learnt from the Pandemic) was reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 9 June 2022, and a report on 'Learning from the COVID Vaccination Programme' was reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board on 8 December 2022.
- Work to address vaccine hesitancy continues and the Borough Based Director for SEL CCG leads on plans to address wider general health issues and preventative services.
- As part of the retention and engagement of the 4500 volunteers who registered with the Council to support the COVID-19 response, all volunteers were contacted by Community Links Bromley (CLB), who is the voice of the voluntary sector in Bromley and contracted to the Council, and those volunteers who indicated a desire to continue registered with CLB. All clients were contacted, and those who indicated a need for further help were provided with Bromlev Well details. Volunteer recruitment continues to be an ongoing activity, and a draft Volunteer Strategy has been developed.
- Bromley has secured funding and launched its project as one of London's three Night Time Enterprise Zones, with a

series of high street activities planned to encourage the evening economy, and a businessled campaign for better work standards for related industries. Two new programmes of business support are set to launch funded by UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in September providing one-to-one support to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) and support with accessing supply chain opportunities, both designed to increase business resilience. The full fibre footprint of the borough continues to improve through relationships levered with the private sector to increase digital infrastructure.

Updates against our key organisational priorities for 2022/23:

- The '2023/24 Budget and Council's Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27' reported to Executive on 18 January 2023 includes the full year effect of the Phase Two Transformation Savings combined with new changes, totalling £2.9 million in 2023/24 increasing to £4.5 million per annum from 2026/27.
- The '2023/24 Budget and Council's Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27' includes significant growth/ cost pressures, with the net impact reduced to reflect mitigation assumed of £14.1 million in 2023/24 rising to £26.8 million per annum from 2026/27. It remains essential that there is ongoing scrutiny and review of growth/cost pressures, with options to help achieve a balanced budget, including any mitigation over the financial forecast period.

- The Council collects and analyses data to identify any potential inequalities or disparities in service provision and is extending the collection of data across all protected characteristics. Information is also collected on the workforce and a report on gender pay is published.
- The South East London Integrated Care Board (SEL ICB) was established on 1 July 2022. Key areas of focus include the delivery of the Annual Plan and development of a strategy for South East London. The One Bromley Partnership continues to look at the needs of the local population, and meetings are jointly chaired by the Leader of the Council and the GP Clinical Lead.
- The Council has committed to delivering affordable homes through direct delivery, acquisitions, and potentially joint ventures. Two affordable housing sites (Bushell and Anerley) have now been completed with another (Burnt Ash) near completion, one at York Rise is under construction, one at West Wickham is out to construction tender, and another at Bromley North is ready to progress to Planning. Beckenham Triangle is still going through feasibility. Further sites set out in the Operational Property Review are anticipated to move to feasibility later this year.
- A review of the Council's Operational Property has been undertaken to identify the optimal operational estate and understand the liability of it over a ten-year period together with the potential to undertake minor refurbishments where

appropriate to minimise future liability. The report to formally adopt the Operational Estate Strategy and the progressing of the various workstreams was reported to the Executive on 30 November 2022.

- A Digital Working Group meets monthly and acts as the driver and co-ordinator of the Council's Digital Strategy and Digital Road Map, which captures and reflects the organic change as well as the wider large-scale projects and any significant investments.
- In February 2022, the PA/audio-visual facilities in the Council Chamber were upgraded, with new loudspeakers, screens, and electrical equipment. The new equipment has made remote attendance much more practical and professional and was used for the first time at the full Council meeting on 28 February 2022.
- Local Council Elections were held in Bromley on Thursday 5 May 2022 and were the first elections to be held on the new electoral arrangements

Condition of the operational property estate to ensure that premises are compliant with Health & Safety legislation and can be operated to facilitate the delivery of the Council's various services.

A programme has been established to identify the Council's optimal operational estate taking into account maintenance liabilities, condition, business needs and funding.

The output of this programme will be an accommodation strategy, business case and delivery plan – subject to Member approval.

The Programme will report its findings to Members in Summer 2022.

A new supply chain has been established to ensure Health and Safety compliance together with a new Computer Aided Facilities
Management System to house said compliance data.

The Operational Property Review undertaken in 2022 culminated in a series of Reports taken to the Executive in Nov 2022 and ratified at Full Council in Dec 2022.

These highlighted the extent of liabilities across the operational estate and a series of proposed works packages to repair and renovate properties together with a disposal programme to part fund the said works.

A Programme Board has also been set up to oversee the above.

To the best of our knowledge, the governance arrangements as defined above, have been operating effectively during the year and remain fit for purpose.

We propose to take steps over the coming year to address the Significant Governance Issues defined on page 3 to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed	Signed
Chief Executive	Leader of the Council
Date	Date

Appendix 1 – Links to Documents

Page 2	Making Bromley Even Better
https://www.bromley.gov.uk/downl borough-of-bromley	oads/download/142/making-bromley-even-better-corporate-strategy-london-
Page 3	Draft 2023/24 Budget and Update on Council's Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docum	ents/s50102358/BUDGET%20202324%20FINAL%20v2.pdf
Page 3	Capital Strategy 2023/24 to 2026/27
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docum %20Q3%20Capital%20Programm	ents/s50103134/Capital%20Strategy%20202324%20to%20202627%20and e%20Monitoring.pdf
Page 10	Adult Care and Health Portfolio Plan 2022/23
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docum- 022%20Appendix%202%20ACH%	ents/s50098952/ACH22- 620Portfolio%20Plan%202022-23%20ACH%20PDS%2028.06.22.pdf
Page 10	Children, Education and Families Portfolio Plan 2022/23
Page 10 https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docum/%20CEF%20Portfolio%20Plan%2	Plan 2022/23 ents/s50098354/App.%202%20-
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https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docume/20CEF%20Portfolio%20Plan%2 Page 10	Plan 2022/23 ents/s50098354/App.%202%20- 0202223.pdf Housing, Regeneration and Planning Portfolio Plan 2022/23 (including Quarter One
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docume/20CEF%20Portfolio%20Plan%2 Page 10	Plan 2022/23 ents/s50098354/App.%202%20- 20202223.pdf Housing, Regeneration and Planning Portfolio Plan 2022/23 (including Quarter One update)
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docume/20CEF%20Portfolio%20Plan%2 Page 10 https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docume/	Plan 2022/23 ents/s50098354/App.%202%20- 0202223.pdf Housing, Regeneration and Planning Portfolio Plan 2022/23 (including Quarter One update) ents/s50100127/HPR%20Portfolio%20Plan%20Q1%20Updates.pdf Environment and Community Services
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docume/20CEF%20Portfolio%20Plan%2 Page 10 https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docume/	Plan 2022/23 ents/s50098354/App.%202%20- 0202223.pdf Housing, Regeneration and Planning Portfolio Plan 2022/23 (including Quarter One update) ents/s50100127/HPR%20Portfolio%20Plan%20Q1%20Updates.pdf Environment and Community Services Portfolio Plan 2022/23
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docum/%20CEF%20Portfolio%20Plan%2 Page 10 https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docum/ Page 10 https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docum/ Page 10	Plan 2022/23 ents/s50098354/App.%202%20- 0202223.pdf Housing, Regeneration and Planning Portfolio Plan 2022/23 (including Quarter One update) ents/s50100127/HPR%20Portfolio%20Plan%20Q1%20Updates.pdf Environment and Community Services Portfolio Plan 2022/23 ents/s50097171/ECS%20Portfolio%20Plan%20Appendix%20202223.pdf Public Protection and Enforcement Portfolio

Page 11	Adult, Care and Health Portfolio Plan 2022/23 - Quarter Two Update Covering Report (November 2022)
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docum 23%20Q2%20update.pdf	nents/s50101673/ACH22-038%20ACH%20Portfolio%20Plan%202022-
Page 11	Adult Care and Health Portfolio Plan 2022/23 Quarter Two Update (November 2022)
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docun %20Q2%20update.pdf	nents/s50101674/ACH%20Portfolio%20Plan%202022-23%20-
Page 11	Children, Education and Families Portfolio Plan 2022/23 - Quarter Three Update Covering Report (March 2023)
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docum df	nents/s50103895/CEF%20Portfolio%20Plan%20202223%20Q3%20Update.p
Page 11	Children, Education and Families Portfolio Plan 2022/23 - Quarter Three Update (March 2023)
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docum	nents/s50103896/App.%201%20-%20CEF%20Portfolio%20Plan.pdff
Page 11	Housing, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Plan 2022/23 Quarter Three Update Covering Report (January 2023)
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docun n.pdf	nents/s50102565/Housing%20Planning%20Regeneration%20Portfolio%20Pla
Page 11	Housing, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Plan 2022/23 - Quarter Three Update - Strategic Project Tracker (January 2023)
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/docun	nents/s50102569/HPR%20Strategic%20Project%20Tracker.pdf
Page 11	Housing, Planning and Regeneration Portfolio Plan 2022/23 – Quarter Three Updat – Operational KPIs (January 2023)

Page 11	Environment and Community Services Performance Overview 2022/23 – Quarter Three Update (March 2023)	
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50103991/ECS%20PO-Final-070323.pdf		
Page 11	Public Protection and Enforcement Performance Overview 2022/23 – Quarter Three Update (March 2023)	
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50104176/PF	PE%20Performance%20Overview.pdf	
Page 12	Draft 2023/24 Budget and Update on Council's Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27	
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50102358/BUDGET%20202324%20FINAL%20v2.pdf		
Page 12	2023/24 Council Tax	
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50102832/Co	ouncil%20Tax%20Report%20202323%20FINAL%20v2.pd	
Page 13	Monitoring Officer's General Report 21st February 2023	
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50102997/MonitoringOfficerReport%20-%20Feb%202023.pdf		
Page 13	Policy, Development and Scrutiny Annual Report 202/23	
https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50104062/ERC%20PDS%2022.03.23%20- %20Annual%20Scrutiny%20Report%202022-2023.pdf		
Page 14	Audit and Risk Management Committee Meetings (Agendas, Papers, Minutes)	
http://cds.bromley.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Cld=135&Year=0		
Page 16	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2022 (20 th July 2022)	
https://www.lgo.org.uk/documents/councilperformance/2022/london%20borough%20of%20bromley.pdf		
Page 18	Corporate Risk Register	

https://www.bromley.gov.uk/council-budgets-spending/corporate-risk-management Draft 2022/23 Budget and Update on Page 19 Council's Financial Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26 https://cds.bromley.gov.uk/documents/s50094496/Executive%20120122%20Budget%20Report.pdf Public Health Management of the Covid-19 Page 21 **Pandemic** http://cdslbb/documents/s50098234/ACH22-013%20Public%20Health%20Management%20of%20Covid-19%20Pandemic%20v.9%20HWB%2009.06.22.pdf **Learning from the Covid Vaccination** Page 21 **Programme** http://cdslbb/documents/s50102011/Learning%20from%20the%20Covid%20Vaccination%20programme%20N ov%2022%20V1.2.pdf Draft 2023/24 Budget and Update on Page 22 Council's Financial Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27 http://cdslbb/documents/s50102579/DRAFT%20BUDGET%20202324%20updated%20Appendix%2013.01.23. pdf Draft 2023/24 Budget and Update on Council's Financial Strategy 2024/25 to Page 22 2026/27 http://cdslbb/documents/s50102579/DRAFT%20BUDGET%20202324%20updated%20Appendix%2013.01.23. pdf Page 24 **Operational Estate Strategy** http://cdslbb/documents/s50102100/Enc.%201%20for%20Operational%20Property%20Review.pdf