

Appendix 1

Self-assessment against the CIPFA/Solace Principles 2024/25

The **Annual Governance and Assurance Statement (AGAS)** provides an assessment of the effectiveness of the Avon Fire Authority's (AFA) governance arrangements. We are required to produce this in accordance with Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, to report publicly on the extent to which the AFA complies with its local code of governance (ours is based on the CIPFA/Solace principles of good governance).

The principles are explained in more detail within the [International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector](#).

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| Principle A | Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law. |
| Principle B | Ensuring Openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement. |
| Principle C | Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits. |
| Principle D | Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes. |
| Principle E | Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it. |
| Principle F | Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management. |
| Principle G | Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability. |

This review forms part of the 'review of effectiveness' and informs the AGAS by highlighting key areas which may need to be included. The statement is predominantly backwards looking, reviewing the arrangements that were in place for 2024/25.

The following pages set out the supporting evidence from each department or subject area, in table format. The principle(s) for which this evidence applies (A-G) is shown clearly. Where a weakness or improvement to our governance and assurance framework is identified, a summary of actions implemented in 2024-25 and actions planned in 2025-26 is included.

A	Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values & respecting the rule of law	D	Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	G	Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting & audit to deliver effective accountability
B	Ensuring Openness & comprehensive stakeholder engagement	E	Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership & the individuals within it		
C	Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	F	Managing risks & performance through robust internal control & strong public financial management		

		CIPFA/SOLACE Principles							Actions Implemented in 2024-25	Actions Planned in 2025-26
Department	Supporting evidence	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	<i>Please add any notable improvements made or planned in this area during the year stated.</i> <i>These should only be significant improvements for consideration to be included in the strategic level Annual Governance Statement. BAU not needed.</i> <i>Please type 'N/A' if no notable changes.</i>	
Clerk	Minutes and papers from the AFA Meetings and Committees are available on the separate AFA Modern.gov website. The AFA Standing orders require that all papers are published and submitted to every Member at least five clear days before a meeting.		B				F	G	N/A	N/A
Clerk	Work of the AFA and key decisions promoted on separate AFA website. Video recordings of all AFA and Committee meetings are uploaded to the AFA's YouTube Channel for the public to view.		B						N/A	N/A
Clerk	Discussion between Members and Officers on the information required in papers to support decision making at Agenda meetings and at Member Briefings. The Clerk ensures members have sufficient time to ask questions to support decision making.				D		F		N/A	N/A
Clerk	A Corporate Forward Plan is maintained by the Clerk to reflect (i) the ToR for the AFA and the Committees and (ii) the Scheme of Delegation. The Forward Plan enables effective planning for Officers, also supported by the Modern.gov system, which ensures that agendas are prepared in advance and all report writers are aware of the timeline for reports. Deadlines for submitting and publishing reports have been adhered to.				D		F	G	During this financial year some reports have been submitted late for checking pre-publication. As a result, SLB introduced a 48-hour pre-despatch hard deadline for final reports to be submitted to Democratic Services.	SLB have extended the time allocated to Officers to check reports for Committees they lead; extending that review period from 1 week to 2 weeks, this then allows the Clerk/SFO 1 week to review and 48 hours for the papers to be released as final to Democratic Services. Including the publication period, this means the timeline for reports will start 4 weeks before the meeting date. In addition, Line Manager Directors have asked to also review reports from their staff on Modern.gov, before they are submitted to the Committee lead director. So, staff will need to be submitting draft reports early.
Clerk	Members are appointed by the four unitary Authorities to AFA, following discussion with political group leaders to ensure political balance (each committee is chaired by a different political party and the split of members sitting on each committee represents the percentage of members from each party nominated to the AFA).					E			New Members joined the AFA in May 2024 and received a full Induction. Membership of Committees was reviewed to ensure unitary authority and political balance.	There are no elections in the 4 unitary authorities in May 2025, but the unitary authorities may choose to change their nominated Members. In case membership changes, a full-day Induction is planned for 27 June 2025.
Clerk	Public access statements, public consultation.					E			During the municipal year public access statements were received, read out at meetings and responded	

A	Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values & respecting the rule of law	D	Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	G	Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting & audit to deliver effective accountability
B	Ensuring Openness & comprehensive stakeholder engagement	E	Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership & the individuals within it		
C	Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	F	Managing risks & performance through robust internal control & strong public financial management		

		CIPFA/SOLACE Principles							Actions Implemented in 2024-25	Actions Planned in 2025-26
Department	Supporting evidence	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	<i>Please add any notable improvements made or planned in this area during the year stated.</i> <i>These should only be significant improvements for consideration to be included in the strategic level Annual Governance Statement. BAU not needed.</i> <i>Please type 'N/A' if no notable changes.</i>	
									Member/Officer Protocol. That workshop resulted in a complete re-draft of the Protocol which was approved by Members at their FA meeting on 6 November 2024. Members also noted that all remaining recommendations of the Independent Governance Review had been completed.	
Clerk	The AFA Constitution is a live document and constantly kept under review	A			D	E	F		During this municipal year, the Clerk updated the remaining chapters of the AFA Constitution (as recommended by an Independent Governance review dated March 2023 and considered at an Extraordinary AFA meeting on 25 April 2023). The remaining chapters (including the new Member/Officer Protocol referred to above) were approved by the AFA at their meeting on 6 November 2024. The Constitution Index and Chapters are published on the separate AFA website.	The AFA has recently appointed a new Independent Chair to the LPB, so this may result in a refresh of the LPB ToR.
Clerk	The AFA, AGOC and PRC ToR were re-drafted as part of an Independent Governance Review which reported in March 2023, and approved at an Extraordinary Meeting of the AFA on 25 April 2023.	A			D	E	F		No further amendments were required in 2024-25.	N/A
Clerk	The LPB ToR are kept under review by the Independent Chair.	A					F		No further amendments were required in 2024-25.	The AFA appointed a new Independent Chair to the LPB at their meeting on 19 March 2025 (who will Chair LPB from the July 2025 meeting). That new Chair will review the LPB ToR.
Clerk	The Scheme of Delegation and Contract Procedure Rules was re-drafted and approved at an Extraordinary Meeting of the AFA on 25 April 2023.	A				E		G	No further amendments were required in 2024-25.	N/A
Clerk	Standing Orders and Financial Regulations reviewed regularly, updated for AFA approval and published. The Financial Regulations were re-drafted, and an addition made to Standing Orders to facilitate 'Task and Finish Groups', which was approved at an Extraordinary Meeting of the AFA on 25 April 2023.	A			D	E	F	G	Further revisions were made to Standing Orders which were approved by the AFA alongside other chapters of the Constitution at their meeting on 6 November 2024. All new chapters of the Constitution have been published on separate AFA website.	N/A
Clerk	Members' Code of Conduct - AFA adopted the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Councillor Code of Code with two small amendments at their meeting on 4 October 2023. The AFA also approved 'Arrangements for dealing with complaints under the Members Code of Conduct'.	A				E	F		N/A	N/A

A	Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values & respecting the rule of law	D	Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes					G	Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting & audit to deliver effective accountability			
B	Ensuring Openness & comprehensive stakeholder engagement	E	Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership & the individuals within it									
C	Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	F	Managing risks & performance through robust internal control & strong public financial management									
		CIPFA/SOLACE Principles							Actions Implemented in 2024-25	Actions Planned in 2025-26		
Department	Supporting evidence	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	<i>Please add any notable improvements made or planned in this area during the year stated.</i> <i>These should only be significant improvements for consideration to be included in the strategic level Annual Governance Statement. BAU not needed.</i> <i>Please type 'N/A' if no notable changes.</i>			
Clerk	Regular training provided to all elected Members including quarterly AFA Member Development Briefings which include updates on key topics such as budget setting and draft budget, our Service Plan, HMICFRS and the values and behaviour framework.	A	B			E	F		At their meeting on 12 June 2024, the AFA approved a new Training and Development Strategy for Members which sets out the knowledge required for their role and the frequency of training to be delivered. Member Briefings have taken place quarterly on key topics.	N/A		
Clerk	The SFO and Monitoring Office are appropriately qualified and with high levels of experience. Annual Continuing Professional Development is required in their professions (accountant and solicitor).					E		G	Both the SFO and the Monitoring Officer complete annual professional development for their professions in addition to meetings/training of professionals in the same Fire sector.	N/A		
Clerk	Members receive initial induction and continued development. Welcome briefing, induction and development programme is regularly updated to reflect the changing environment.	A	B			E			Members who joined the AFA in May 2024 attended Inductions; those briefings are updated to reflect the latest issues facing the Service. Members are also provided with a Members' Handbook with key information, which is updated every year. As above, Members receive annual training and development in accordance with Training and Development Strategy for Members approved on 12 June 2024.	Annual training in accordance with the Training and Development Strategy for Members.		
Clerk	Members are required declare their interests annually and at all meetings. Standing agenda item requiring Members to disclose interests in advance of an agenda item discussing a tender exercise.	A					F	G	N/A	N/A		
Clerk	Register of interests and register of gifts and hospitality (Members and staff). The Clerk and CFO regularly review and monitor register of interests.	A					F	G	N/A	N/A		
Clerk	Grant of dispensation for Members is utilised once a year for voting on the council tax precept.											

A	Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values & respecting the rule of law	D	Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes					G	Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting & audit to deliver effective accountability	
B	Ensuring Openness & comprehensive stakeholder engagement	E	Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership & the individuals within it							
C	Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	F	Managing risks & performance through robust internal control & strong public financial management							
		CIPFA/SOLACE Principles							Actions Implemented in 2024-25	Actions Planned in 2025-26
Department	Supporting evidence	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	<i>Please add any notable improvements made or planned in this area during the year stated.</i> <i>These should only be significant improvements for consideration to be included in the strategic level Annual Governance Statement. BAU not needed.</i> <i>Please type 'N/A' if no notable changes.</i>	
									An annual report was presented to AGOC on 19 June 2024.	
Clerk	Anti-fraud and Anti-corruption Strategy and Response Plan.	A							At their meeting on 6 November 2024 the AFA approved a revised Anti-fraud and Anti-corruption Strategy and Response Plan.	N/A
Clerk	Modern.gov system provides effective reporting tool ensuring a clear chain where reports pass through appropriate Senior Managers/Lead Directors, to 'take ownership' of reports and carefully check accuracy.							G	The Modern.gov has worked well to ensure that the report writers and the reviewers can collaboratively work on the same report. The timelines for reports have been an issue and a hard deadline introduced of 48 hours prior to publication of papers.	As explained above, SLB have decided to extend the time for the lead director of a committee to review reports. Also, the line managing director of the report writer will also have an opportunity to review reports on the Modern.gov system.
Clerk	Standardised report templates for all the AFA meetings uploaded to Modern.gov. Templates contain the following subheadings for the report writer to outline summary, recommendations, background, financial implications, key considerations, risks, legal/policy implications and background papers. AFA papers have increased emphasis on the financial costs of any proposed changes in business cases.			C	D		F		N/A	N/A
Clerk	The AFA, its Committees and AF&RS utilise all the powers contained in the following legislation for the benefit of citizens, communities, and other stakeholders: Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004; Civil Contingencies act 2004; Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005; Fire Safety Act 2021; Building Safety Act 2022; Policing and Crime Act 2017	A							These statutory duties/powers are always utilised as 'Business as Usual'.	N/A
Collaboration	2021-2026 Collaboration Strategy.	A	B	C	D		F		N/A	The Collaboration Strategy is under review

A	Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values & respecting the rule of law	D	Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	G	Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting & audit to deliver effective accountability
B	Ensuring Openness & comprehensive stakeholder engagement	E	Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership & the individuals within it		
C	Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	F	Managing risks & performance through robust internal control & strong public financial management		

		CIPFA/SOLACE Principles							Actions Implemented in 2024-25	Actions Planned in 2025-26
Department	Supporting evidence	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	<i>Please add any notable improvements made or planned in this area during the year stated.</i> <i>These should only be significant improvements for consideration to be included in the strategic level Annual Governance Statement. BAU not needed.</i> <i>Please type 'N/A' if no notable changes.</i>	
	guidance (as an Appendix) where partners are collaborating on our premises.									
Collaboration	The Register of Collaborations & Formal Partnerships records an effectiveness Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating for each collaboration based on evidence provided during the last evaluation period.						F		Effectiveness ratings removed from the Register of Collaborations and Formal Partnerships as they served no purpose on this document and duplicated work. Effectiveness ratings are currently held by the Collaboration and Partnerships Manager whilst their purpose and reporting requirements are determined.	Effectiveness ratings and their purpose to be reviewed and agreed, and reporting requirements determined and actioned.
Collaboration	An annual monitoring of collaboration and partnerships report is presented to AGOC, in accordance with AGOC ToR.						F		N/A	N/A
Collaboration	Registers are in place to assist in monitoring collaboration, partnership, and HFSV referral arrangements.		B						N/A	N/A
Collaboration	A 'reporting lines' structure is in place to provide clarity of collaboration management reporting and responsibilities.							G	N/A	N/A
Comms	The AFRS website provides information regarding the Strategies, Policies, Service Plan (and supporting documents) as well as news and information about levels of performance, incidents, and the work that we do in the community.		B						N/A	N/A
Comms	Staff intranet ensures access to a wide range of documents, guidance, news and information to all staff. Video content to staff includes CFO updates and the SLT roundup videos.		B						New intranet launched, making all content more easily accessible to staff and for relevant staff to publish their own content for their areas of work.	N/A
Comms	Communications Charter to reduce the number of platforms the Service uses in line with the adoption of Microsoft 365.		B						N/A	New Communications Charter to be developed in line with development of new intranet and Service ICT upgrades.
Comms	Corporate Communications strategy and plan.		B		</					

