

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

Links to Council's values:

- Accountable, effective, efficient, and transparent; Working with and respecting others

How we do this:

- The Council's values and objectives provide clear direction to councillors and employees and are embedded in all policies and processes.
- Standards of conduct and integrity were promoted through the national Code of Conduct for Councillors and by the Standards and Procedures Advisory Forum. This is supplemented by role profiles which have a core accountability to maintain the highest standards of conduct.
- The employee Code of Conduct outlines standards of conduct and integrity. All breaches including reported cases of suspected unethical behaviour and non-compliance with the law/policy were investigated through the employee disciplinary process and the recommended actions taken.
- Professional Codes of Conduct ensured that ethical standards were maintained, and all breaches were investigated by the governing body.
- To support integrity in decision making, the Council has a number of Committee procedural documents including decision making protocols known as the Scheme of Delegation, terms of reference documents, standing orders on procedures and contracts and financial regulations.
- To ensure openness and transparency agendas and Committee reports are published to the council website at least five working days ahead of the scheduled meeting dates and any minutes of decisions taken by the Chief Executive during any period when committee meetings are suspended are publicised on the Council website. Committee meetings are live streamed to the Council's YouTube channel.
- To ensure openness and transparency in decision making processes, all declarations of interest made by councillors at meetings were recorded and made available online.
- There are a range of policies such as the Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy Statement and Strategy, Fraud Response Plan, Whistleblowing for Third Parties and Confidential Reporting procedures. These continue to be updated to reflect best practice and support a culture of ethical behaviour amongst employees and councillors.
- Health and Safety compliance during 2022/2023 was assessed as being within the top rating band of "good".
- Legal Services maintained an overview of legislation and regulations and worked with services to ensure compliance.

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Links to Council's values:

Accountable, effective, efficient, and transparent; Fair, open, and sustainable; Focused on people and their needs; Working with and respecting others

How we do this:

- To ensure transparency and openness in decision making processes, all agendas, reports, and decisions were published on the Council's website and printed copies were available for public inspection for all Committee and Forum meetings (except the Standards and Procedures Advisory Forum). From April 2021 all Committee meetings were live streamed to the Council's YouTube channel http://bit.ly/SL_Committees. From August 2021 all Forum meetings have been live streamed.
- The [Committee Management Information System](#) allows members of the public to register and be notified when Committee and forum papers are published. The system also facilitates the creation of [online petitions](#) to increase the potential reach of signatories.

- The work of the Council and key information from our partners is communicated regularly using a range of communication channels. The [South Lanarkshire View](#) pages on the Council website provide a dedicated source of local information and news for communities. A variety of social media channels are used to communicate updates and share information.
- A suite of dedicated Pandemic pages providing advice, help and public health information were created and maintained on the council website.
- A 'Let's Talk South Lanarkshire' campaign has been established and was used to engage local people in an initial discussion about their experiences of the pandemic and continues to be used for ongoing dialogue with communities on both the Council and community planning priorities.
- The Council's Community Engagement Team continue their work to increase stakeholder engagement and involvement in decision making processes through the continued development of new Community Planning Partnership Neighbourhood Plans which are aimed at improving outcomes and reducing inequalities.
- The Community Planning Partnership published its first [Community Participation and Engagement Strategy 2020 to 2025](#) which is also available online in [BSL](#) and the Council has produced an online course for employees to complement this.
- A partnership Participation and Engagement Group has been established to ensure that there is a consistent and co-ordinated approach to engaging with communities.
- The Council carried out circa 50 surveys and engagement activities with residents, employees, and partners, and through the council's Citizens Panel to inform policy and service delivery. Further information on our surveys is published on the [Council's website](#).
- To ensure inclusivity and help shape service delivery, the Council co-ordinates regular engagement with targeted groups of people such as young people, older people, people with disabilities, unpaid carers, black and ethnic minorities, etc. Groups considered items such as the budget consultation, rent setting and performance reporting.
- The [Participation Requests](#) and [Community Asset Transfer](#) processes support communities to engage with the Council to improve local outcomes.
- The Council's performance [Spotlights](#) summarise what the council has achieved and the [Public Performance Reports](#) provide a comprehensive overview of service performance. These, along with the council's [Benchmarking report](#) demonstrate the council's commitment to continuous improvement and achieving Best Value; summarise the progress that the council has made in meeting its priorities and how it is performing locally and nationally.
- The Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy 2020 to 2023 sets out the actions that the Council is taking to assist those people who are unable to get online to access services digitally. The Council also leads on a partnership Digital Inclusion Group.
- A comprehensive range of information on how the Council operates is available on the website. The [Freedom of Information Publication Scheme](#) ensures that key information about how the council works is accessible to the public.

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

Links to Council's values:

Accountable, effective, efficient, and transparent; Fair, open, and sustainable; Focused on people and their needs

How we do this:

- The Council has a Capital Strategy that has a long-term outlook on future capital investment (up to 2027/2028). This document is underpinned by a suite of Asset Management Plans which are aligned with the council's objectives and focus on creating an efficient, fit-for-purpose and sustainable core estate that delivers best value in terms of investment, running costs and environmental impact.

- The Council Plan 2022 to 2027 and Community Plan 2022 to 2032 have clearly defined economic, social, and environmental outcomes to be delivered during the period.
- A Community Wealth Building Strategy setting out the Council’s ambitions in relation to spending, workforce, land and property, finance and building the generative economy was approved in March 2021. A Community Wealth Building Commission was established to oversee the implementation of the Strategy .A Community Wealth Building Progress Group has been set up to ensure that timescales within the action plan are met.
- Annual Resource Plans which deliver the objectives of the Council Plan were reviewed and updated. These plans outline the outcomes and actions to be achieved within the year and reference linkages with other key strategic plans of the Council and partnership plans.
- The [Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy 2022-27](#) was approved by the Council in June 2022 and which sets out the Council’s strategic vision ,themes and priorities in terms of the Council, environment and communities for sustainable development and climate change during the period was developed using the principles of the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals and to reduce the council’s contribution to global warming.
- The Council’s [Climate Change and Sustainability Committee](#) oversees the delivery of the Sustainable Development and Climate Change Strategy 2022-2027, the council’s transition to carbon neutrality and climate resilience.
- The Council’s new [Procurement Strategy 2023-28](#) which will be complemented by an annual action plan, sets out how value for money, national and local priorities will be delivered. It also demonstrates how the council will deliver the wider social, economic, and environmental aims of procurement as required by the sustainable procurement duty.
- Sustainability principles are embedded in procurement processes and in recognition of the importance of our suppliers in achieving the Council’s aim to become more sustainable.
- Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) were completed for all relevant council led policies, plans and strategies developed during 2022/2023.
- The [South Lanarkshire Local Development Plan 2](#) was adopted by the Council on 9 April 2021. The spatial strategy of the plan is to encourage sustainable economic growth and regeneration, a move towards a low carbon economy, protect the natural and historic environment and mitigate against the impacts of climate change.
- A summary of the findings resulting from [Equality Impact Assessments](#) of the council’s key decisions on service users, communities and businesses have been published on the Council’s website.
- Strategic decisions of the Council have been subject to a Fairer Scotland Impact Assessment which considers how inequalities of outcome can be reduced.

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

Links to Council’s values:
Accountable, effective, efficient, and transparent; Ambitious, self-aware, and improving;
Focused on people and their needs; Working with and respecting others

How we do this:

- There is a standard approach to identifying savings across the Council. The Council’s efficiency programme is overseen by the Senior Management Team. Frameworks are in place for holding discussions with key stakeholders. Savings achievements are monitored monthly and reported to the Senior Management Team quarterly.
- The Financial Strategy which is aligned with the Council’s objectives was updated during the year to reflect the latest internal and external influences. This plan sets out the assumptions in terms of commitments, grant funding and efficiency requirement and demonstrates sound financial management and the ability to address projected funding gaps.

- The annual budget setting consultations took place with members of the public, groups and the Council’s partners in order to inform the budget process. The annual budget is open to scrutiny and amendment by councillors until the approval of the final budget.
- The Council’s Performance Management Framework has ensured that progress against intended outcomes has been regularly reported to Management Teams; Committees; and the Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum. Decisions and actions to address performance issues have been taken and monitored to ensure that they have been effective.
- The Council has complied with its statutory and regulatory reporting requirements during the year.
- The Public Bodies (Joint Working Act) sets out those Adult Care Services that are delegated to the Integration Joint Board (IJB) as set out in the South Lanarkshire Integration Scheme. These services continue to be operationally delivered by the council in line with the strategic direction set out in the Strategic Commissioning Plan and annual IJB Directions.
- The Council considers the specification and achievement of community benefits, which focus on the health, economic, social, and environmental wellbeing of the South Lanarkshire area, when awarding contracts.
- To improve efficiency and effectiveness, the Council is the lead authority for a range of collaborative projects and services delivered through the Clyde Valley Learning and Development Group.

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

Links to Council’s values:

Accountable, effective, efficient, and transparent; Ambitious, self-aware, and improving; Excellent employer; Focused on people and their needs; Working with and respecting others

How we do this:

- A Leadership Challenge Programme which is linked to succession planning has been developed and rolled out during 2022/2023.
- Learning and Development programmes were revised and employees at all levels can now access optional accredited management qualifications.
- Training requirements were identified and online learning and development opportunities including webinars and e-briefings were developed and offered to all councillors.
- Feedback from the survey on working from home/hybrid working, will be used to inform future agile working arrangements.
- A range of policies and activities are in place to support the Health and Wellbeing of employees including physical and mental health and these have been regularly communicated. Online wellbeing events were held in response to the new ways of working.
- The Council recognises that skilled and motivated employees are a key asset. All employees have an annual performance appraisal which links to the Council values and a Personal Development Plan. The council offers a range of training interventions to support employee development.
- The Council has a comprehensive and coordinated approach to workforce planning which also supports succession planning. Each Resource reviews their workforce plan and related action plan to better understand workforce capacity issues, further challenges, and opportunities to ensure that resources are in the right place, at the right time and people have the right skills. The Council-wide Workforce plan has been revised to consider the workforce requirements as a result of the pandemic response.
- Senior Managers have overseen the annual scrutiny of the Council’s assets through the review of a suite of Asset Management Plans. Service Asset Management Plans have been developed in line with CIPFA guidance and these feed into the Corporate Asset Management Plan which outlines priorities and provides an overview of how the Council has performed in this area.

- The Council’s Scheme of Delegation, Financial Regulations, Standing Orders on Contracts and Terms of Reference ensured that Committees, officers, and statutory officers were clear on the decisions that could be made within their area of authority. This is supplemented by councillor’s role profiles which outline the key purpose, specific and core accountabilities for each role.
- The Council continues to work with a range of public sector, business, and academic partners to improve outcomes for those living and working in South Lanarkshire. Strategic Partnerships include the Community Planning Partnership and the Glasgow City Region City Deal.
- Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) results continue to be reported to the Performance Review and Scrutiny Forum, containing all LGBF indicators. As other reporting arrangements mature, the scale of this report may be reduced and the strategic suite of indicators aligned to Council Plan outcomes will feature in a new appendix to the Council Plan Q4 report, giving an opportunity to assess the Council’s performance over time and comparative performance in the context of the Council Plan priorities.
- Further LGBF indicators will feature in the Council’s public performance reporting, both in the Annual Performance Spotlights and in the PPR pages on the website. These are topic-based and place the LGBF information in a richer context than is possible in the annual LGBF report. The results are analysed and an action plan developed which will be monitored by the Senior Management Team.
- The Council takes a risk-based approach to self-assessment which is used to review and redesign services with a focus on fundamental change. Progress and the impact of improvement activity was reported to the Senior Management Team and the Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum.
- The Council has a robust complaints process which is underpinned by national complaints handling standards. Complaints performance was regularly reported to Senior Management and Committee and [learning from complaints](#) which is integral to this process is also published on the Council’s website. Complaint handling procedures have been updated in line with national changes and communicated to all employees.

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

Links to Council’s values:
Accountable, effective, efficient, and transparent; Ambitious, self-aware, and improving

How we do this:

- The Council, in partnership with Trade Unions, ensured that safe systems of work were in place through a robust risk assessment process, changes to working methods and supply of personal protective equipment.
- The Council has put in place comprehensive arrangements for identifying, evaluating, and controlling significant risks which threaten the council’s ability to meet its objectives to deliver services to the public. There is also a robust process in place for compliance monitoring of the Council’s Risk Management Strategy, Resource Risk Registers and Control Plans.
- The annual end of year compliance statement evidenced that all Resources were compliant with Risk Management Strategic requirements.
- The Council’s risk scoring matrix was revised as an outcome of the 2021/2022 annual review of risks.
- The Council’s Internal Audit Service which complies with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards completed a revised annual programme of risk-based audits with an objective of providing an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council’s risk management, governance, and internal control arrangements. Where improvements were required, action plans were developed and monitored and where necessary follow-up audit work completed.

- In response to changes in working practices and the introduction of new systems, for example to process pandemic grants, Internal Audit has advised on key internal controls that should be maintained through the identification of alternative controls and has been involved in the development of new systems.
- The Information Governance Board is satisfied that Resources have followed the Information Governance operational arrangements to promote effective arrangements for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data.
- Information security incidents have continued to be monitored and considered for notification to the Information Commissioner’s Office. Throughout the period, the Council’s Data Protection Officer provided advice and assistance to Resources in relation to meeting their obligations under UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).
- The system of internal financial control is based upon the Financial Regulations which set out the rules to ensure robust internal control over the council’s finances. Control is maintained through regular management information, management supervision and a structure of delegation and accountability.
- The cost of the pandemic on the council’s budgets has been closely monitored and regular reports have been presented to the Senior Management Team and Committee.
- External Audit of the Council’s accounts is robust and a “clean audit certificate” was issued for 2022/2023.
- Through a well-established Performance Management Framework, the council has clearly defined processes in place for the identification, monitoring, and reporting of its objectives to ensure continued effectiveness and the achievement of Best Value. Progress is monitored and reported regularly to both managers and councillors. This includes areas of under-performance and the related improvement actions.
- Trustees of the South Lanarkshire Charitable and Educational Trusts received independent legal training setting out their duties and responsibilities in ensuring that the trusts operate in a manner designed to benefit communities.
- The Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources is a member of the Council’s Senior Management Team and as such, is integral in all major decisions taken by the Council, and in material matters which are submitted to councillors for decision. This involvement fulfils the expectation of CIPFA in terms of the role of the Chief Financial Officer.
- The Council previously completed a self-assessment using the principles of the CIPFA Financial Management Code identifying 3 areas to be progressed. Since then, the 2020/2021 annual budget consultation approach and a standard options appraisal process continue to be embedded across the Council, while our existing financial management controls and measures continue to provide comfort on the Council’s financial management and resilience. This includes the preparation of a medium term strategy presented to members regularly as part of the annual budget process, providing members with the information required to assist budget planning.

Principle G: Fair, Open and Sustainable; Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

Links to Council’s values:
Accountable, effective, efficient, and transparent; Ambitious, self-aware, and improving; Working with and respecting others

How we do this:

- The Good Governance Group has completed the annual review of governance arrangements at resource level and in line with the CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance Framework. Governance improvement actions have also been identified and are included in Resource/Service Action Plans. Progress against actions including those highlighted as significant governance areas for action will be reported to the Senior Management Team and Committee.

- In the 2022/2023 annual audit report, the external auditor reported that the council had in place appropriate arrangements to support good governance and accountability and they were of the view that governance arrangements remained effective in 2022/2023.
- All Directors completed their annual Statement of Assurance and relevant assurances have been provided.
- The Council prepares and publishes an Annual Governance Statement which is aligned with national guidance and reflects on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements. This is independently considered by External Audit and published with the Annual Accounts and separately on a dedicated [governance web page](#).
- The annual review of governance arrangements for the Council's at Arm's Length External Organisation (ALEO) and key external service providers has not highlighted any compliance issues.
- The annual review of the Local Code of Corporate Governance was completed, and the revised Code was approved by Committee and re-published on the Council's website.
- all agendas, reports and decisions continue to be published (except those exempt under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973) on the council's website. All Committee and Forum meetings are livestreamed to the Council's YouTube page http://bit.ly/SL_Committees.
- The Risk and Audit Scrutiny Committee considered the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements and internal control environment and approved the Annual Governance Statement and Accounts.
- Internal audit activity has continued to be reported to the Senior Management Team and to the Risk and Audit Scrutiny Committee.
- Internal Audit changed how their findings are presented to the Risk and Audit Scrutiny Committee to improve scrutiny.
- Outcomes from external audit and inspection activity was reported to the appropriate Committee and action plans were developed for implementation where required.