	Governance and Audit Committee	**Item** **7**

	26 November 2019	
Report of	**Monitoring Officer**	**Author** **Andrew Weavers** ☎ **282213**
Title	**Review of the Council's Ethical Governance Policies**	
Wards affected	Not applicable	

1.   Executive Summary

1.1   This report requests the Committee to review the Council's updated Ethical Governance policies. These are the key policies which set out the standards of conduct and integrity that the Council expects of councillors, staff, partners, suppliers and customers when conducting Council business. They contain procedures for dealing with breaches of the policies and processes to be followed.

1.2   The report also requests the Committee to recommend to Full Council to include the updated policies in the Policy Framework which comprises all of the Authority's key polices.

2.   Recommended Decision

2.1   To review the following revised policies:

- Anti-Fraud and Corruption
- Whistleblowing
- Anti-Money Laundering
- Covert Surveillance
- Information Security
- Data Protection
- Acceptable Use
- Data Retention
- Income and Debt Management

and to recommend to Full Council that they be approved for inclusion in the Council's Policy Framework.

3.   Background

3.1   The Council is committed to maintaining the highest standards of governance including the elimination of fraud and corruption and to ensuring that all activities are conducted ethically, honestly, openly and accountably in order to protect public safety and public money.

3.2   A varied range of policies and procedures form the Corporate Governance framework and a selection of these relate to Ethical Governance - those specifically regarding conduct and integrity.

3.3   The Ethical Governance policies set out the standards of conduct and integrity that it expects from staff, elected members, suppliers, partners, volunteers and the public. Breaches of the policies will be pursued and procedures have been introduced to enable

any person to raise genuine concerns they may have about the conduct of anybody acting for or on behalf of the Council.

3.4   At its meeting on 6 December 2018 full Council adopted a statement of intent in relation to both Ethical and Corporate Governance which gave a high organisational commitment to zero tolerance of fraud, corruption and bribery.

4.   Review of Ethical Governance Policies

4.1   The Anti-Fraud and Corruption, Whistleblowing, Anti-Money Laundering, Information Security, Data Protection, Covert Surveillance and Income and Debt policies were last reviewed by this Committee at its meeting on 30 October 2018. The Ethical Governance policies were subsequently adopted as part of the Council's Policy Framework by Full Council.

The following table indicates the number of times a policy was invoked in the past year and where appropriate whether it was effective.

Policy	No. of times invoked during 2017/18	No. of times invoked during 2018/19	Whether procedures effective
Anti-Fraud and Corruption	None	None	n/a
Whistleblowing	None	1	Yes, procedure effective
Anti-Money Laundering	None	None	n/a
Covert Surveillance	None	None	n/a
Information Security	None	None	n/a
Data Protection	None	None	n/a

The Anti-Fraud and Corruption, Whistleblowing, Anti-Money Laundering, Information Security and Covert Surveillance policies have been reviewed to ensure that they remain fit for purpose and no changes are proposed to these policies which are appended to this report.

4.2   The Monitoring Officer writes an annually to both Members and Officers reminding them of their obligations regarding the Anti-Fraud and Corruption and Whistleblowing policies.

4.3   The Data Protection policy has been rewritten to comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018 which enacts the General Data Protection Regulations. The policy sets out the required roles and responsibilities of both officers and councillors. Data Protection training has been provided for both councillors and officers and refresher training will be provided going forward.

4.4   As a consequence of the Data Protection Act 2018 it has been necessary to strengthen the Council's Acceptable Use policy which states the organisations requirements for both councillors and officers when using its information and communications technology to ensure the integrity of the Council's systems. This policy has now been included within the suite of Ethical Governance polices.

4.5   In addition the Council has refreshed its Data Retention Policy in light of the Data Protection Act 2018. and This policy is broadly to ensure that that all personal data held by the Council is retained and disposed of correctly. This policy has now been included within the suite of Ethical Governance Policies.

4.6   The Income & Debt Management Policy has been reviewed and there are no proposed changes for this year. The processes are still relevant and meet legislative requirements, whist supporting strong collection rates. During the last full financial year, the Council achieved its highest ever collection rates for Council Tax and Business Rates, achieving 97.91% collection of Council Tax, with an increase in tax base of £6.65million and achieving collection of 99.36% for Business Rates.

4.7   The Council continues to improve processes to support residents and businesses to pay on time, including the use of text messages, email and more complex enforcement where necessary. It is proposed to undertake a full review of the policy in 2020 to integrate emerging technology and legislation.

5.   Strategic Plan References

5.1   The manner in which the Council governs its business is an underpinning mechanism in the Council's Strategic Plan aims to set out the direction and future potential for our Borough.

6.   Publicity Considerations

6.1   The Council's ethical governance polices will be published on the Council's website.

7.   Financial, Equality, Diversity and Human Rights, Consultation, Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management Implications

7.1   None.