

Local Code of Governance



Local Code of Corporate Governance

Good governance

Good governance is about how the Council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the communities it serves, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

A Council's Code of Corporate Governance is:

"The system by which local authorities direct and control their functions and relate to their communities"

Our commitment

South Cambridgeshire District Council is committed to upholding the highest possible standards of good corporate governance, believing that good governance leads to high standards of management, strong performance, effective use of resources, increased public involvement and trust in the Council and ultimately good outcomes.

Good governance flows from shared values, culture and behaviour and from systems and structures. This Code of Corporate Governance is a public statement that sets out the framework through which the Council meets its commitment to good corporate governance.

The Governance Framework comprises the systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and through which it accounts to, engages with and, where appropriate, leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its [strategic objectives](#) and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate cost-effective services.

This local code of governance has been developed in accordance with and is consistent with the Delivering Good Governance in Local Government framework, which builds on the seven Principles for the Conduct of Individuals in Public Life.

Core principles of good governance

The core governance principles of the council are:

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

Applying the core principles of good governance

This document describes how the Council achieves the seven principles of good governance and describes how the Council’s corporate governance arrangements will be monitored and reviewed.

Achieving the Intended Outcomes While Acting in the Public Interest at all Times



This Code takes each of the principles of good governance in turn and sets out the systems, processes and principles the Council has put in place to ensure good corporate governance.

The Code will be reviewed annually through the Annual Governance Statement process, which will identify the actions to be taken to enhance the code or address any limitations with in it.

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

Supporting Principles:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaving with integrity • Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values • Respecting the rule of law 		
	How does the Council achieve this?	Supporting examples
1	<p>The Council expects the authority's leadership – both Members and Officers - to create a climate of openness, support and respect and to uphold the Council's values.</p> <p>The Council operates within the legal framework for local councils complying with its statutory duties and making the most of its powers to meet the needs of the District and its residents.</p>	Constitution
2	Standards of conduct and personal behaviour are set out in the Employee Code of Conduct, the Member Code of Conduct and in the Member/ Officer protocol.	Employee Code of Conduct Member Code of Conduct Member/Officer Protocol
3	An up-to-date register of Member and Officer Senior Officer Interests is maintained. The underlying principles which underpin the Codes of Conduct build upon the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles).	Register of Interests
4	The Council has an Ethical Handbook with protocols and guidance, which includes guidance on gifts, hospitality and sponsorship.	Ethical handbook
5	The Council has put in place procedures for considering complaints so that members of the public can express dissatisfaction with Council services and their concerns can be monitored and addressed. The Council has appointed two “independent persons” to support this, in accordance with the requirements of the Localism Act, 2011. It has a key performance measure for the timeliness of complaint responses.	Handling of complaints, comments and compliments policy
6	The Council's Civic Affairs Committee is responsible for constitutional issues and ensures that the constitution is monitored and updated when required. The terms of reference of the Civic Affairs committee include responsibility for advising on the Council's ethical framework and the promotion of openness, accountability and probity to ensure the highest standards of conduct.	Terms of Reference for Civic Affairs Committee

7	The Council maintains a Whistleblowing policy to enable confidential reporting of suspected breaches of the Employee Code of Conduct or unethical behaviour. It also maintains an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy. Both policies are reviewed periodically by the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.	Whistleblowing Policy Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy
8	The Council's standing orders and financial regulations put in place processes designed to ensure that Members and employees of the authority are not influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest in dealing with different stakeholders.	Financial Regulations
10	The Council has a Monitoring Officer, who is responsible for ensuring that agreed procedures are followed and that all applicable statutes and regulations are complied with.	Constitution - Article 12: Functions of the Monitoring Officer
11	The Council ensures that Statutory Officers have the skills, resources and support necessary to perform effectively in their roles and that these roles are properly understood throughout the Council.	Recruitment, selection and training policies
12	The Council maintains Human Resources Behavioural Policies which are periodically reviewed.	Council Intranet (In-site) HR Policy pages
13	The Council has a clear Procurement Strategy designed to meet the Council's wider objectives and Contract Regulations designed to deliver robust and fair procurement processes.	Procurement Strategy. Contract Regulations

Principle B - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Supporting Principles		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness • Engaging comprehensively with Institutional stakeholders • Engaging stakeholders effectively, including citizens and service users 		
	How does the Council achieve this?	Supporting Examples
1	The Council holds its meetings, and those of its committees and Cabinet Portfolio Holders in public unless there are good reasons for confidentiality, or a relevant exemption applies. The public are allowed to ask questions at all Council and committee meetings.	Committee Agendas Committee Forward Plan
2	The Council records the deliberation of scrutiny committees and the reasons for Executive and Regulatory decisions and makes agenda papers and minutes available on the Council's website. The Council also records and publishes on the website written questions asked at Council meetings and their answers, and oral questions and answers where these are available.	Agendas and Minutes of Committees
3	Officers use standard report templates for committee and executive reports to help ensure that readers are provided with information that is accurate, complete and unbiased. Reports make clear the options available so that the implications of all decisions and strategic risks can be assessed before those decisions are made.	Standard Report Templates
4	The Council has a Joint Development Control Committee with Cambridge City Council for decisions affecting growth sites bordering both Councils.	Joint Development Control Committee Terms of Reference
5	The Council has a clear understanding of the needs of the district, strategically and locally, gathered from an understanding of our communities and the wider sub-region; ability to 'drill-down' to contextualise data which, at district-level, may hide vulnerability	Business Plan
6	<p>The Council has valued engagement mechanisms in place e.g. Community forums, agents and parish forums, tenant participation groups, Cabinet/Parish liaison meeting.</p> <p>The Council tailors its 'offer' to suit customer need e.g. Business Hub, Key Accounts, major developments, demand-led charging structures</p> <p>The Council uses local intelligence to shape services and partnerships e.g. Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.</p>	Website and engagement: Community, safety and health

7	The Council operates in accordance with principles of partnership working agreed with our key partner organisations.	Cambridgeshire Compact
8	The Council proactively leads local partnerships e.g., monthly multi-agency meetings to share intelligence and act on issues such as anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping	Community Safety Partnership meetings and strategic assessments
9	The Council ensures that the authority is open and accessible to the community, service users and its staff.	Customer Service Standards
10	The Council promotes the role of Councillors and lets the public know who the Councillors are, what roles they have on the Council and how to contact them.	Council website - Members
11	The Council makes clear through its website and other Council publications the services that it is responsible for, how people can contact the Council and the service standards they can expect.	Council website – Our Services Council Tax information South Cambs magazine
12	The Council undertakes surveys of residents to ensure that it has up to date information about their priorities and levels of satisfaction with the Council and its services.	Consultation Panel. Business plan annual consultation and engagement.
	The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridge City Council will involve communities on a wide range of planning matters throughout the planning process.	Statement of Community Involvement
13	The Council's consultation programme ensures that the Council proactively seeks the views of a wide range of people and engages with all sections of the community effectively.	Regular consultations programme evidence on the website
14	The Council seeks to ensure all views are actively considered when making decisions, recognising that it is not always possible to reconcile conflicting viewpoints. The Council ensures it makes feedback available to consultees on the outcomes of consultation, what has changed as a result and explaining how it has reached decisions.	Cabinet reports.

15	<p>The Council undertakes Equality Impact Assessments of all major policies and decisions and takes action to implement changes required, to ensure that council services and policies consider the diverse needs of its service users and citizens.</p> <p>It has an Equality Scheme covering all protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, containing commitments which are aligned to Business Plan objectives and reviewed annually.</p>	<p>Equality Implications section in standard report template.</p> <p>Equality Impact Assessments published on website</p> <p>Equality Scheme 2020-2024</p>
16	<p>The Council recognises two Trade Unions and holds regular liaison meetings involving the Chief Executive and Head of People and Organisational Development.</p>	<p>Trade Union Agreements</p>

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

Supporting Principles:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining Outcomes • Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits 		
	How does the Council achieve this?	Supporting Examples
1	The Council has a clear vision for the District and sets objectives to guide the Council's activities.	Vision
2	The Council Objectives are reviewed annually through Quarterly Position Report and the Business Plan and budget planning cycles.	Business Planning Cycle and associated guidance
3	The Council has a Medium-Term Financial Strategy to resource its aspirations and to assess and plan for any financial risks. The strategy is reviewed annually.	Medium Term Financial Strategy
4	The Council proactively contributes to key strategic partnerships, reflecting partnership objectives within its Business Plan where appropriate e.g., Health and Well-being, Greater Cambridge Partnership, and the Business Board of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (formally LEP).	Partnership objectives and websites Council updates on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
5	The Council has a Corporate Asset Plan which sets out 6 clear priorities to ensure that the Council acts as a responsible landlord, landowner and partner dedicated to ensuring public services are delivered efficiently and effectively.	Corporate Asset Plan 2020-2024
6	The Zero Carbon Strategy outlines how the Council aims to halve carbon emissions by 2030 and reduce them to zero by 2050, including delivering a reduction in our own carbon footprint of at least 45% by 2025, (on a 2019 baseline), and at least 75% by 2030.	Zero Carbon Strategy
7	Council Service Plans assess improvement projects for their economic, social and environmental benefits.	Service Plans

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

Supporting Principles:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determining Interventions • Planning Interventions • Optimising achievement of intended outcomes 		
	How does the Council achieve this?	Supporting Examples
1	The Council has a Medium-Term Financial Strategy to resource its aspirations and to assess and plan for any financial risks. The strategy is reviewed annually.	Medium Term Financial Strategy
2	<p>The Council puts service to the public first. The annual business planning process is used to agree the priorities for the Council. The Business Plan expresses the strategic objectives for the Council for over the current financial year and beyond.</p> <p>Alongside each of the objectives are detailed the outcomes to be achieved and performance measures that provide evidence that the outcomes are being delivered. This information enables members and the services contributing to the delivery of the plan to be clear about the priorities for the Council and assists in decisions about where resources should be focussed.</p>	Business Plan – Performance
3	Directors and Heads of Service prepare annual Service Plans indicating how they will meet objectives set in the Business Plan and setting out their priorities and work programmes for the year ahead.	Service Plans
4	The Council's overall spending plans are set out in an annual Budget Setting report for both revenue and capital expenditure.	Budget Setting Report
5	<p>There are arrangements in place for regular budget monitoring and the reporting of significant variances to senior management.</p> <p>The Council works to maximise its resources by delivering services as efficiently as possible, working in partnership with others and using other providers where these are the best options.</p>	Quarterly Position Reports on Finance, Performance and Risk
6	Performance against Key Performance Indicators for each service are prepared for and presented to the Corporate Management and Leadership Teams, and Members to consider necessary remedial action.	Transformation Programme

7	<p>The Council seeks expertise from outside the authority when it does not have the necessary skills in-house, making use of peer reviews and other mechanisms for ensuring challenge of Council services. The Council has LGA membership.</p>	<p>LGA Peer Challenge - (Position Statement and Final report)</p> <p>Benchmarking - Housemark, CIPFA and Rural Services Network</p>
8	<p>The Council has established a Project Management Toolkit to set out practical guidance for project managers and provide standardised templates for consistency across the Council.</p>	<p>Project Management Toolkit</p>
9	<p>Our Planning Enforcement Policy outlines the Councils performance standards and approach to the deployment of its statutory planning enforcement capabilities under the town and Country Planning Acts.</p>	<p>Planning Enforcement Policy</p>

Principle E - Developing the Council's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

Supporting principles:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing the Council's capacity • Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals 		
	How does the Council achieve this?	Supporting Examples
1	The Council sets out a clear statement of the roles and responsibilities of Executive Members, other Members and Council Officers in its Constitution. The scheme of delegation within the Constitution makes clear which matters are reserved for collective decision-making by Council.	Constitution: Scheme of delegation
2	The Council's Chief Executive is its Head of Paid Service and is responsible and accountable to the authority for its operational management.	Constitution - Article 12: Functions of the Chief Executive
3	When working in partnership the Council ensures that Members are clear about their roles and responsibilities, both individually and collectively, in relation to the partnerships and to the Council.	Partnership Terms of References
4	The behaviour expected of employees, and managers, is set out in the Council's competency framework and this is used as the basis for staff performance appraisal.	Corporate Values Management Competency Framework Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures
5	The Council's People & Organisational Development Strategy sets out how the Council will recruit, reward, and develop its employees to reach their full potential.	People & Organisational Development Strategy
6	Employees joining the Council are offered an induction programme and their training and development needs are reviewed regularly through the Council's annual performance review process, which applies to all staff.	Induction Programme
7	The Council has up-to-date job descriptions. It sets and monitors clear objectives for Officers through the annual performance review process.	Performance and Development Review Scheme
8	It agrees appropriate remuneration for officers based on a nationally recognised job evaluation scheme for the public sector, supplemented with local conventions.	Job Evaluation Scheme Pay Policy

9	The Council runs a Leadership Development programme for current and aspiring managers.	Leadership Development Programme
10	The Council offers all new Members an induction programme and the opportunity to develop, with a briefing and development programme to meet their needs. The Council also provides resources for training, attending conferences/seminars and briefings in-house for all elected Members. It keeps a register of the training received by Members and involves Members in reviewing training needs and the resources available during the year.	Member Induction Programme
11	The Council obliges Members to have appropriate training or briefing before performing certain roles (e.g. dealing with staff recruitment or disciplinary issues, being a member of the Planning or Licensing Committees).	Member Training Programme
12	The Council has developed Shared Services with their partners, and this helps to build resilience and expertise across partners.	Shared Services Business Cases, service plans and performance reports

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

Supporting Principles:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing Risk Managing Performance Robust Internal Control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing data Strong public financial management
	How does the Council achieve this?	Supporting Examples
1	<p>The Council has a Risk Management Strategy, supplemented by procedures and guidance. It maintains strategic and service risk registers which are reviewed regularly. It undertakes systematic risk assessments in all areas of Council activity, including those covered by Health and Safety legislation.</p> <p>The Council ensures that risk management is embedded into the culture of the authority; with managers at all levels recognising that risk management is part of their job. Risk assessment is incorporated into the Council's decision making and Members are advised of the Council's risk profile at key stages.</p>	<p>Risk Management Strategy, Procedures and guidance</p>
2	<p>The Council respects the personal data of its citizens, employees, suppliers and others. The Council has a Data Protection Policy and publishes Privacy Notices. The Council follows best practice recognising the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act; and has action plans in place to ensure compliance and to respond to emerging guidance and good practice.</p>	<p>Information Governance Policies</p> <p>Website Privacy Notice</p>
3	<p>The Council respects the privacy of members of the public if it has to carry out investigations under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, and ensures that privacy is only interfered with when the law permits and there is clear public interest justification.</p>	<p>Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 – Guidance</p>
4	<p>The Head of Finance is the Council's Chief Finance Officer and S151 Officer, responsible to the authority for ensuring that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, for keeping proper financial records and accounts, and for maintaining an effective system of internal financial control. They are compliant with the CIPFA Code of Practice.</p>	<p>Constitution - Article 12: Functions of the Chief Finance Officer</p>
5	<p>The Council's Scrutiny & Overview committee undertake constructive challenge to enhance the Council's performance.</p>	<p>Constitution – Scrutiny and Overview</p>
6	<p>The Council also has clear protocols about Members' access to information and officer advice to enable them to perform their roles.</p>	<p>Constitution: Access to Information Procedure Rules</p>

7	The Council has emergency and business continuity plans in place, including co-ordination and joint working arrangements with partners.	Emergency Plan / Business Continuity plans
8	The Development Management team have developed a set of online reports that track performance in real time, accessed through an internal WiKi resource. This includes the Service ISO9001 compliant protocols and procedures for the Development Management (planning application) process along with staff guidance and "how to" guidance.	Online Performance Management Framework

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

Supporting Principles:

- Implementing good practice in transparency
- Implementing good practices in reporting
- Assurance and effective accountability

	How does the Council achieve this?	Supporting Examples
1	<p>The Council makes sure members of the public have access to information about the workings of the Council. It makes clear what information is routinely published through its Freedom of Information Publication scheme and responds promptly to requests for information.</p> <p>The Council publishes on its website all responses to Freedom of Information requests and has privacy notices and information-sharing agreements to ensure GDPR compliance.</p>	<p>Publication Scheme Freedom of Information Requests</p>
2	<p>The Council publishes a Year-End Position Report and Statement of Accounts giving information on the authority's vision, strategy, performance, plans and financial statements.</p>	<p>Year-End Position Report and Statement of Accounts</p>
3	<p>Shared services arrangements with other local authorities or partners document their governance arrangements, which are clear, open and accountable.</p>	<p>Shared Services Collaboration Agreements</p>
4	<p>The Council maintains an independent Internal Audit function, with a risk-based audit plan, designed to test regularly that the Council's policies and processes operate in practice and that the Council complies with legislation and good practice.</p> <p>The Head of Internal Audit produces an opinion on the Council's internal control environment and the risk management framework to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.</p> <p>The Head of Internal Audit opinion is used to inform an Annual Governance Statement.</p>	<p>Risk based internal audit plan Head of Internal Audit Opinion Annual Governance Statement</p>
5	<p>The Council also agrees an annual work plan with its External Auditors to test the Council's response to major legislation and the soundness of its financial and governance processes.</p> <p>Recommendations arising from internal and external audit and inspection processes are used to inform future decision-making.</p>	<p>External Audit Plan</p>
6	<p>The Council has an Audit & Corporate Governance Committee which regularly reviews their terms of reference and skills to best practice guidance. An annual report is produced to provide assurance to full Council.</p>	<p>Audit and Corporate Governance Committee Annual Report</p>

7	The Council uses an Independent Remuneration Panel to give advice on payments to Members and considers their advice when setting the Members' Allowance Scheme. The Panel's recommendations are set out in a public report to Council. The Scheme is available to view on the Council's website and is subject to regular review.	Members' Allowances Scheme
8	The Development Management Team within our Greater Cambridge Shared Planning achieved accreditation with the ISO9001 (Quality Management) for the systems within our Development Management and Compliance teams.	ISO Quality Management System - Development Management

Monitoring and reporting

The Council will undertake an annual review of its governance arrangements to ensure continuing compliance with best practice to provide assurance that corporate governance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively in practice. Where reviews of the corporate governance arrangements have revealed gaps, actions will be planned to enhance the governance arrangements accordingly.

The Council will prepare an Annual Governance Statement which will be submitted to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee for consideration and will form part of the Council's annual Statement of Accounts.

The Governance Statement will include:

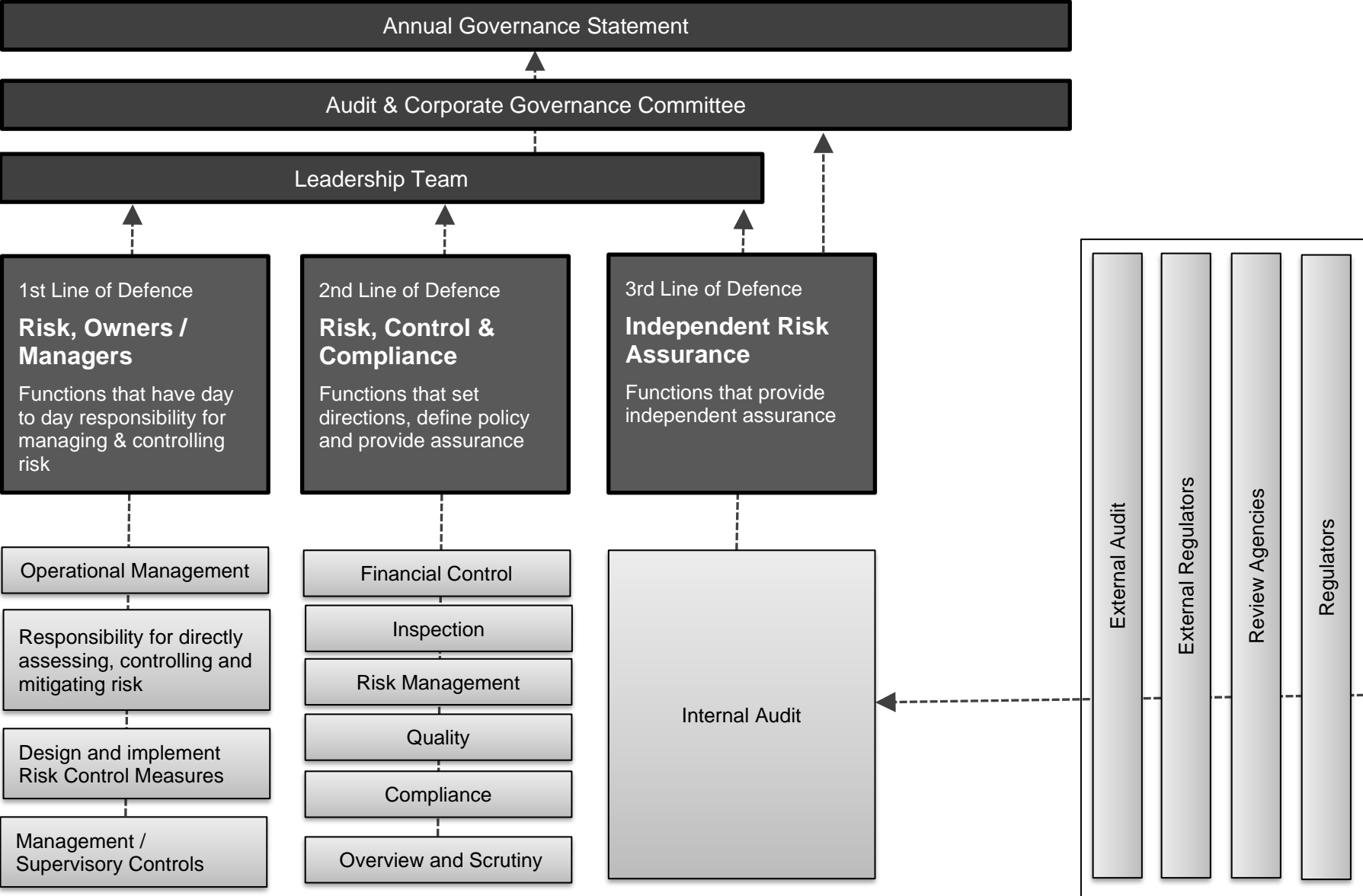
- an acknowledgement of responsibility for ensuring there is a sound system of governance (incorporating the system of internal control) and reference to the authority's code of governance;
- a reference to and assessment of the effectiveness of key elements of the governance framework and the role of those responsible for the development and maintenance of the governance environment;
- an opinion on the level of assurance that the governance arrangements can provide and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework;
- a reference to how issues raised in the previous year's annual governance statement have been progressed; and
- a conclusion including a commitment to monitoring implementation as part of the next annual review.

In reviewing and approving the Annual Governance Statement, members will be provided with detailed information regarding the effectiveness of the governance arrangements and system of internal control and how these address the key risks faced by the Council. Those assurances will be available from a wide range of sources, including internal and external audit, a range of external inspectorates and managers from across the Council.

The Council will continually strive to operate an assurance framework, embedded into its business processes, that maps corporate objectives to risks, controls and assurances. This framework and regular reports on its application and effectiveness will provide members with assurances to support the Annual Governance Statement and will help members to identify whether corporate objectives and significant business risks are being properly managed.

Our assurance channels

The review of effectiveness is informed from various sources (also known as the Lines of Defense):



Seven principles of public life

The governance framework is supported by the [seven Principles of Public Life](#), and apply to anyone who works as a public office-holder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the Civil Service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), and in the health, education, social and care services. All public office-holders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources. The principles also have application to all those in other sectors delivering public services.

Selflessness	Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.
Integrity	Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.
Objectivity	Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.
Accountability	Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.
Openness	Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.
Honesty	Holders of public office should be truthful.
Leadership	Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Version Control

Major iterations and updates are published below.

Date updated	Summary of changes
16/07/2024	Presented to Audit & Corporate Governance Committee with draft 2023/2024 AGS
16/05/2024	Presented to Audit & Corporate Governance Committee with draft 2022/2023 AGS
12/01/2024	Presented to Audit & Corporate Governance Committee with draft 2021/2022 AGS
24/02/2023	Updated to reflect the recommendations of the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee
19/01/2023	Presented to Audit & Corporate Governance Committee with draft 2020/2021 AGS