

Draft Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

1. Scope of responsibility

- 1.1. East Cambridgeshire District Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. East Cambridgeshire District Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the ways in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2. In discharging this overall responsibility, East Cambridgeshire District Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, and this includes arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3. East Cambridgeshire District Council has approved and adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/ SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*. A copy of the Code is included on our website at [Code of Corporate Governance 2016 V4](#).
- 1.4. This statement explains how East Cambridgeshire District Council has complied with the principles of the Code and also meets the requirements of regulation 4 (3) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

2. The purpose of the governance framework

- 2.1. The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled, and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with, and leads its communities. 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.
- 2.2. 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 East Cambridgeshire District Council'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.
- 2.3. The governance framework has been in place at East Cambridgeshire District Council for the year ended 31 March 2025 and up to the date of the approval of this statement.

3. The governance framework

The Council's Code of Governance recognises that effective governance is achieved through the following core principles:

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

4. Key elements of the Governance Framework

The following is a brief description of the key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the Council's governance arrangements, including any developments in 2024/25 and areas of focus for 2025/26:



Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		
Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
Maintaining codes of conduct which define standards of behaviour for elected Members and staff, and policies dealing with whistleblowing and conflicts of interest and that these codes and policies are communicated effectively.	• The Constitution contains a Members Code of Conduct, which is underpinned by the Principles of Public Life. Members are required to complete a declaration of interests which is published on the website for transparency. • There is a separate Employee Code of Conduct, which is supported by HR policies and procedures. Codes, policies and procedures are shared with new employees as part of the induction process. • The Council has a Whistleblowing Policy, which is available to employees.	• During 2024/25, there were no Code of Conduct complaints against Councillors which were subject to investigation and conclusion. • The Whistleblowing policy was subject to independent review by Protect and a revised policy was approved and adopted. • Member seminars were conducted to support the Debate Not Hate campaign, which the police hosted regarding Operation Ford and Hate Crime reporting.
Ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures, and that expenditure is lawful.	• Corporate policies and strategies, which are regularly reviewed, are available on the Council website. • The Constitution contains responsibilities for functions of the Council, Policy Committees, Regulatory Committees and other Committees, Joint Committees and Other Partnership Bodies. It also contains Proper Officer Functions and Rules of Procedure. The Monitoring Officer advises whether decisions are in accordance with the Constitution, and a summary list of responsibilities are included in a Monitoring Officer Protocol. • The Council ensures compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations through a number of channels. The Chief Executive is responsible and accountable to the Council for all aspects of operational management. The Director Finance & S151 Officer is responsible for ensuring that appropriate advice is given	• Updated Contract Procedure Rules were approved and adopted to reflect the Procurement Act 2023. • During 2024/25, the HR team introduced two new and four updated HR policies, including: Agency and Other Off payroll Working; Family leave and flexible working; Menopause at Work; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Performance Management Scheme; and



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

Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
	on financial matters, for keeping proper financial records and accounts, and for maintaining an effective system of internal control. The Legal Services Manager is responsible for ensuring that agreed procedures are followed and that all applicable statutes and regulations are complied with. • The Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to prepare a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year. The Statement must be prepared and approved by the end of March each year. The 2024/25 Pay Policy was approved by Council in February 2024. • Managers within the Council are responsible for putting in place systems of control to ensure compliance with policies, procedures, laws and regulations. This is a key control and as such Service Leads are asked to provide annual assurance that they have promoted relevant policies and made sure that all staff are aware of relevant requirements and exercise due controls. Statements have been received from Service Leads in relation to 2024/25 and assurances have been provided that policies and procedures have been suitably promoted across the service and staff are aware of key policies, procedures and expected standards (including the receipt of gifts and hospitality, contract procedure rules and the Code of Conduct). • Service Leads have provided assurance that they have maintained an up to date awareness of the latest legal requirements affecting their service and have noted where potential changes in legislation may require action in 2025/26. • The Monitoring Officer issues reminders on the recording of gifts and hospitality via email to all staff, twice yearly. • The Information Officer organises GDPR/Data Protection/Freedom of Information training for all staff on a yearly basis, including providing training at induction and when new changes take place, to ensure staff are kept up to date and are aware of their responsibilities. • Training on Contract Procurement Rules is mandatory for all service leads at least once every three years.	Employee Volunteering Scheme. • Within building control, targets and key performance indicators have been aligned with the latest requirements. The Council now operates within a Building Safety Regulator (BSR) Code of Conduct and an Internal Building Control Charter sets out the requirements of staff. • The Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy was approved, setting out the Council's strategy and action plan for the next five years, in accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002. • A staff social media policy has been written and approved, this has been communicated to staff and is available on the intranet. • Progress has been made with regards to the corporate compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidance (WCAG) 2.2 statutory accessibility regulations for the



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

Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
	Children and Adults at Risk Safeguarding Policy adopted and available to stakeholders.	Council's published communication. Newly written or revised policies, action plans, guidance documents and marketing materials, both external and internal, have been made fully accessible prior to publishing in the digital or printed format. - This year, the Reprographics team has taken the responsibility of managing the Council's intranet and introduced a more intuitive organisation of the content and creation of a new interface that follows the Government Digital Services (GDS) principles and ensures a user-friendly, accessibility compliant platform. - Increased use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs).
Focus and further development for 2025/26 Phase 2 of the Reprographic team's project will focus on further design and functionality improvements, and the introduction of governance standards to the Council's internal website.		



Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
Documenting a commitment to openness and acting in the public interest	• There is public access to all Committee meetings except where items for discussion are of a confidential nature. The Council continues to be committed to ensuring that members of the public are involved in the decision-making process. • There are specific schemes in place to allow members of the public to speak at both Planning and Licensing Committee meetings, and the Council has also issued general guidance on public question time at other meetings, including Full Council. • In order to demonstrate its openness, the Council also publishes on the website the Constitution, Council and Committee agendas, reports, minutes and decision lists. • The Council publishes on its website the recommended datasets in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government in February 2015. • The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy sets out the Council's commitment to an inclusive and supportive environment for staff, Members, contractors and visitors that is free from discrimination. • To demonstrate its compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Council produced and published an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring Report which presents an analysis of the following areas: ▪ Equality objectives; ▪ Service delivery; ▪ Equality impact assessments; ▪ Complaints and satisfaction; ▪ Access to information; ▪ Equality in employment;	• Ensuring accessibility of documents relating to Council and Committees on Council's website through redesign of agenda and report templates. • The Council's gender pay gap was reported to Finance and Assets Committee in September 2024. • Adoption of the updated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2025-2028. • The Elections Act required councils to comply with specific accessibility standards, which the council enacted in preparation for the June 2024 elections. • Within Planning, agents panel recommenced in May 2024 and will be held at least twice a year. Feedback from attendees was positive.



Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
	▪ Gender Pay Gap; ▪ Progress against the 2021-24 Equality Action Plan; ▪ The Council's commitments for 2021-24. This has been published on the Council's website. • Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Comprehensive Impact Assessments (CIAs) inform policy development and decision making. These are published on the Council's website. • e-learning training course for all staff and Members entitled 'Equality and Diversity Essentials.'	
Establishing clear channels of communication with all sections of the community and other stakeholders, ensuring accountability, and encouraging open consultation	• Residents are regularly informed about the Council's activities through the Council website, work with the local media, social media and other channels. • The Council has adopted a Constitution which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are taken and the procedures which should be followed. All meetings are open to the public except where there are confidential matters to discuss. • Community Engagement Strategy adopted and subject to action plans. • The Council undertakes regular consultation exercises, ranging from small focus groups of customers to large scale questionnaires and face-to-face surveys. A Register of Consultees is held which gives individuals, community groups and associations the opportunity to consider new or revised policies, strategies or functions and to express their opinions, concerns and make suggestions. To encourage as wide a participation as possible, an invitation for further individuals to join the register is included in the Consultation section of the Council's website. • The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) sets out how the Council involves and consults with the public and wider stakeholders when planning for future local development across the District. This is published on the Council's website and	• Project team delivered the new website in Autumn 2024, this required engagement with internal users and close stakeholders for their feedback and input into the navigation and content of the website. • In 2024/25 the Communications Team supported projects including: · Love Your Street (littering awareness) · Ask for Ani (domestic abuse) · Support for the Community Safety Partnership – for example



Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
	covers consultation arrangements in respect of planning applications and planning policy matters, including the preparation of the Local Plan. • Regular media releases are used as a means of keeping residents of the District informed of current and upcoming issues and Council decisions. The Council endeavours to ensure that all communications with the public are accessible to all by providing a translation service, large print and braille. • The Economic Development team have a customer relationship management (CRM) system which they use to communicate with local businesses. • Equity of participation and wider social outcomes (e.g. in health) are fundamental principles of the Council's leisure service provision and is reflected in service specifications and the physical activity generation programme. The Healthy You Programme is based on community engagement and specific user feedback forms part of the evaluation process. • Further examples of community engagement and networking include Landlord Forums, Agents Forums, Taxi Driver Forums, Growth Hub, Chamber of Commerce, Growth Works with Skills and the East Cambs Business Boost. • Live web-streaming of Council and Committee meetings. • Youth engagement takes place through planned events. • The Healthy You programme is based on community engagement, and specific user feedback is part of the evaluation process. • User and non-user market research is incorporated into the service specification for the ECDC owned leisure centre ('The Hive') operated by GLL.	the knife crime awareness sessions and also the Gateway underpass project which received significant media coverage. • Two Youth Fusion events were held over the summer of 2024. • Engagement events held informing stakeholders about the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain requirements. • The Communities and Partnerships team commenced work on updating the Council's Register of Consultees and community engagement toolkit. • Working with the integrated neighbourhood team, What Matters to You and MyCAW (Measure Yourself Concerns and Wellbeing) have been used more extensively in 2024/25.



Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
		• Agents panel recommenced in May 2024 and will be held at least twice a year. • Introduction of a negotiation protocol so that all stakeholders understand how the Planning service will engage with its customers post application submission was launched in May 2024. This will be continually reviewed. • Planning service customer charter and negotiation protocol released to improve clarity and transparency on how the service operates.

Focus and further development for 2025/26

- An external engagement exercise is to be run to gauge the thoughts about the new website from external users, including residents.
- Parish Council event to be held in 2025 to guide them on how best to interact with the planning service and contribute to planning decisions and to update on the changes in legislation within planning.
- Development of a customer feedback form for Building Control to be added to the website in 2025/26.
- The Register of Consultees will be promoted, following its update.



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

Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
Developing and communicating a vision which specifies intended outcomes for citizens and service users and is used as a basis for planning	- The Council has approved two Corporate Objectives;- To be financially self-sufficient and provide services driven by and built around the needs of our customers; and, To enable and deliver commercial and economic growth to ensure that East Cambridgeshire continues to be a place where people want to live, work, invest and visit. - The Corporate Plan for the period 2023-2027 was approved by Council in July 2023. It contains three themes which set out the main areas where the Council will concentrate work over the period: - Sound financial management - Cleaner, greener East Cambridgeshire - Sustainable communities Within each of these themes the Council set out the priorities for the year. Details of all the above, together with any committee reports referred to in this statement, can be found on the Council's website. - The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is presented to Council on an annual basis to support the budget papers and the Corporate Plan. The MTFS sets out the level of savings that need to be achieved over the medium term. Savings plans and income generation targets are developed to achieve the budget requirement set out in the MTFS. - The Environment & Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan sets out the Council's vision, which is that by 2050 the Council's operations will reach net zero carbon emissions, and steps that will be taken to support our communities and East Cambridgeshire's biodiversity and environmental assets so they can adapt and flourish as the climate changes. - Silver level Investors in the Environment accreditation.	Climate and Nature Strategy 2024-28 approved.



Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits		
Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
	Local Enforcement Plan adopted in March 2023 which sets out level of service to expect for all stakeholders in enforcement service.	
Translating the vision into courses of action for the authority, its partnerships and collaborations	- During 2024/25 performance reporting against Service Delivery Plans was reported to respective committees. - Service Delivery Plans are reviewed every year in line with any changes to the Corporate Priorities and in accordance with the development of the budget to ensure the necessary resources are in place for their delivery. - Staff appraisals and performance reviews are linked to corporate and service level plans. - Where commissioned services are delivered jointly with partners this is reflected in service delivery plans and performance against both service delivery targets and budgets are monitored. - There are service contracts in place between the Council and its Trading Companies. In addition, the Council, through the respective Shareholder Committee, approves each Trading Company business plan. There is a shareholder agreement in place between the respective companies and the Council. - The Communications Team undergoes an annual call round of Parish Councils to assess their feedback on the service it provides.	- Service Delivery Plans reviewed and approved by committees in March 2024, with six monthly progress updates. - New Health and Wellbeing, Community Engagement and Vulnerable Community strategies were adopted in March 2024 which identified an action plan and targets. Updates provided in year and included in service plan. - Working closely with the Integrated Neighbourhood Board, who will help deliver the recently adopted Health and Wellbeing Strategy. - Waste and Recycling Policy 2026 approved to ensure transparency and clarity for residents about the services they are entitled too.



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

Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
Focus and further development for 2025/26		
• An area of challenge has been the performance standards relating to the use of paper and the target for 25% of councillors to receive their agendas electronically. The percentage of councillors receiving some materials electronically has increased to 42.86%, and 28.57% are now receiving fully electronic agendas. The democratic services team will continue to explore ways in which paper document production can be reduced. • In relation to extensions of time (EOTs) for planning applications, to introduced reporting on how many are used and why.		



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

Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
Reviewing the effectiveness of the authority's decision-making framework, including delegation arrangements, decision making in partnerships and robustness of data quality	• The Council's decision-making framework is set out in the Council's Constitution including an effective scheme of delegation. The Council's Constitution is kept under continuous review in line with best practice. • The Constitution includes the Shareholder Committee roles of the Finance and Assets Committee and the Operational Services Committee for the East Cambridgeshire Trading Company (ECTC) and East Cambridgeshire Street Scene (ECSS), respectively, and the Anglia Revenues Partnership Joint Committee. • Business Continuity Management arrangements are in place to support delivery of services and outcomes in the case of unforeseen events. • The Housing Register has been brought back in-house from the 1st November 2024.	
Measuring the performance of services and related projects and ensuring that they are delivered in accordance with defined outcomes and that they represent the best use of resources and value for money	• Performance management in the Council is based on the Corporate Plan priorities supported by Service Delivery Plans. The Council's two Policy Committees (Operational Services and Finance and Assets) approve and monitor performance against Service Delivery Plans. • A summary of the overall performance of the Council, linked to the promises detailed in the Corporate Plan, is included in the introduction to the Statement of Accounts. • The Council has established a robust financial planning process which includes a Medium-Term Financial Strategy, frequent budget monitoring reports to officers and quarterly budget monitoring reports to Policy Committees. • Customer satisfaction surveys are issued by services such as the Care and Repair team. These seek to ensure that outcomes meet requirements i.e. improved accessibility and efficient and effective processes.	• Updated Performance Management Scheme for officers. • Building Control services have been applying the new reporting mechanisms required by the Building Safety Regulator. Better use and additional modules of existing systems is being explored to streamline processes and support this reporting. • Changes to the election of Chairs/Vice Chairs to reflect changes to proportionality



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

Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
	• Service Lead participation in professional networks enables sharing of latest best practice and benchmarking. • Measurement of sickness absence performance.	

Focus and further development for 2025/26

- Actions arising from Building Safety Regulator inspection for Building Control services.



Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it		
Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
Defining and documenting the roles and responsibilities of Members and management, with clear protocols for effective communication in respect of the authority and partnership arrangements	• The Council's Constitution sets out how the Council operates and decisions are made. This contains separate articles and key documents covering the Member Code of Conduct, Proper Officer functions, and protocols for the Monitoring Officer. • As the Head of Paid Service, the Chief Executive leads the officers and chairs the Council's Corporate Management Team. The other two statutory officers, the Monitoring Officer and S151 Officer report directly to the Chief Executive and are both members of the Corporate Management Team. • Regular meetings are held between the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council and Corporate Management Team in order to maintain a shared understanding of roles and objectives.	
Ensuring that financial management arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2015)	• The Council establishment includes a Chief Finance Officer (CFO), ensuring the financial management arrangements conform with the requirements within the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2015). This responsibility was discharged by the Director Finance, S151 Officer, during 2024/25.	
Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the discharge of the Monitoring Officer function	• The Monitoring Officer is a statutory appointment under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. These responsibilities were delivered by the Director Legal in 2024/25. The Monitoring Officer undertakes to discharge their statutory responsibilities with a positive determination and in a manner that enhances the overall reputation of the Council. In doing so they will also safeguard, so far as is possible, members and officers whilst acting in their official capacities, from legal difficulties and/or criminal sanctions.	



Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it		
Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
	- It is important that Members and officers work together to promote good governance within the Council. The Monitoring Officer plays a key role in this and it is vital therefore, that Members and officers work with the Monitoring Officer to enable them to discharge their statutory responsibilities and other duties. - There are working arrangements and understandings in place between the Monitoring Officer, members and the Corporate Management Team which are designed to ensure the effective discharge of the Council's business and functions. These arrangements are detailed in the Monitoring Officer Protocol, which is a key document in the Council's Constitution.	
Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the discharge of the Head of Paid Service function	- The role of Head of Paid Service is defined in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. In East Cambridgeshire District Council, it is assigned to the Chief Executive as set out in the Constitution and all necessary powers are delegated to fulfil the statutory role. - The Council is also required to provide the Head of Paid Service with staff, accommodation and other resources sufficient to enable the performance of the function. The annual budget proposed to Council, prepared by officers, seeks to align the provision of Council resources with the delivery of the Corporate Plan. In this manner, the Head of Paid Service is ensuring that the Council is fulfilling its duty.	
Providing induction and identifying the development needs of members and officers in relation to their strategic roles, supported by appropriate training	- There is a Member induction and training programme in place. Members are also required to undertake specific training before performing certain duties such as planning and licensing. Additional Member seminars are also arranged throughout the year to deal with specific issues as they arise. - There is a new induction programme for all new employees.	Member seminars in 2024/25 included: June 2024: Planning Regulations June 2024 and November 2024: LGA Model Code of Conduct July 2024: Anglia Revenues Partnership



Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it		
Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
	• Staff training and development needs are reviewed at performance appraisals and supervision meetings. • All officer posts within the Council have a detailed job description and person specification. The development needs of officers are determined through an annual performance appraisal, a key outcome of which is a Personal Development and Training Plan. This Plan provides a link between service and corporate priorities and career development. Requests for professional/vocational training are presented to Corporate Management Team annually for final consideration. • Staff training includes modules relating to data protection, accessibility, fire safety, mental health at work, bomb threats, safeguarding, risk management and procurement compliance. • Continuous professional development completed by professional officers. • Succession planning within key service area roles.	September 2024: Bus Cycle Walk October 2024: Hate Crime reporting January 2025: Council budget March 2025: Operation Ford • Building Control team members completed the BSR validation competency exams, enabling the Council to join the national register of Building Inspectors.
Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing	• Healthy You programme is promoted with Council staff. • Promotion of health and wellbeing resources available via the Council's intranet pages. • Remote Working Policy adopted and health and safety advice available to support staff working on and off site. • Grant funding is utilised to support health initiatives and to offer value for money services to residents to combat health inequalities. • Details of health and safety working group and codes of practice made available to all staff. • Flexible retirement policy in place.	• Updated the Family Friendly Guidance to include the new right to career's Leave and the changes to flexible working from April 2024. • Introduced a Menopause at Work policy to develop understanding and support of menopause at work issues. • Implemented a volunteering policy which supports staff to do a range of volunteering opportunities that positively impact the community, helps



Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it		
Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
		vulnerable people in our society and/or helps to improve the environment in East Cambridgeshire. • DAHA accreditation for the housing and community advice team (benchmark for how housing providers should respond to domestic abuse in the UK). • Training regarding the Council's PREVENT and domestic violence duties delivered in June 2024.
Proactive and effective use of technology to support service delivery	• Adoption of employee self-service systems for payroll and human resources activity. The HR service actively supports staff to access and use the HR and Payroll system. Using the Employee Self-Service (ESS) functionality, staff are able to submit mileage and expenses claims, childcare claims, book annual leave (and other forms of leave). The HR service also supports managers using the People Manager platform to manage their team's time and expenses claim forms, leave requests, sickness absence etc. • Refreshing and reviewing systems to ensure these remain effective and up to date.	• Increased use of electronic working in Building Control with over 95% of documentation now sent out electronically.
Focus and further development for 2025/26 • Ongoing development of CRM systems and use of these. • Staff survey to be undertaken in 2025/26.		



Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management		
Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
Reviewing the effectiveness of the framework for identifying and managing risks and for performance and demonstrating clear accountability	• The Council has a Risk Management Policy and framework to detail the approach to managing risks. The latest Policy was approved by Full Council in February 2024. • The Council's Corporate Risk Register is the result of continuous review by a Risk Management Group, the Corporate Management Team and the Audit Committee, of the key risks that may have an impact on achieving the Council's objectives. Each risk shows the owner, the key controls in place to minimise any impact on the Council and its provision of services to stakeholders and sources of assurance. Individual projects and partnerships are also subject to risk assessments. • Service Leads are asked to identify and highlight major risks at a service level for consideration by the Risk Management Group. Other service risks are managed by Service Leads via the Service Planning process. • The Strategic Business Continuity Plan ensures that the Council is able to plan for, and respond to, a disruptive incident in order to continue service delivery and business operations at an acceptable predefined level. • Risks are considered when drafting project and event plans and reviewed at the end of each stage, as part of the project planning process. • The Communications Team regularly enters into new partnerships and collaborations. It carefully monitors all formal and informal agreements and carries out risk assessments as required, for example when contracting work on behalf of other service leads, or hosting publicity events.	• Negotiation protocol and other streamlining projects have meant that time spent on individual planning applications has dropped. This has built additional capacity within the team and has improved timeliness of decision making.
Ensuring compliance with the principles of the CIPFA Financial Management Code	• The Council's s151 Officer's self-assessment in 2021/22 against key elements of the Code identified no areas requiring action for compliance.	



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

Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
Ensuring an effective scrutiny function is in place.	• The Council has a Call-In and Referral Up Procedure which is part of the Constitution. This enables councillors to call in decisions made through the Policy Committees. Council can then consider the matter afresh and make a final decision which could be to uphold, amend or reject the previous decision of the Policy Committee. • The Council provides Members to other Scrutiny Committees, where required, to review the performance and effectiveness of other public service providers as well as the Council. Examples include the Cambridgeshire Police & Crime Panel, Health & Wellbeing Board and the Community Safety Partnership. • Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) was appointed to make recommendations on allowances paid to councillors.	• Recommendations of the IRP took effect from 1st April 2024.
Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place	• An Anti-fraud and Corruption Strategy is in place which includes procedures relating to Money Laundering and Bribery Act. • The Council participates in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) exercises to identify potential indicators of fraud or error and is also participating in the Cambridgeshire Fraud Hub. • Fraud reporting email address made available for reporting concerns. The Whistleblowing policy also provides a route for raising concerns in confidence.	
Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties	• The Council's Corporate Risk Register details the governance controls that it maintains over its trading companies, to ensure that any risks associated with these are quickly identified. As part of the processes included in this, is the need for the companies to produce an annual Business Plan that includes a risk management section for approval at Committee.	



Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management		
Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
Undertaking the core functions of an audit committee, as identified in Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (CIPFA, 2022)	• The Audit Committee, for the financial year 2024/25, operated in line with its terms of reference and supporting procedure rules covering internal and external audit, risk management, annual statement of accounts, corporate governance and internal control arrangements, and anti-fraud and corruption arrangements. • In accordance with guidance, the Audit Committee does not engage in decision making which would impact upon its independence.	• Audit Committee members participated in a self-assessment against the CIPFA 2022 guidance and devised an action plan for ongoing improvement. • An Annual report to Council, reflecting on the work of the Committee was produced for 2024/25 and approved by Full Council in May 2025.
Arrangements for managing data to ensure security, quality and accuracy	• The Council has a Data Protection Officer (DPO) and Senior Information Responsible Officer (SIRO). • Training is provided to staff on data protection, including as part of induction processes. • Service Leads ensure data is managed in line with Council policy and procedure. • Where parts of the service are outsourced or delivered in partnership, and the third-party processes or has access to Council data, assurance is obtained from the third party regarding the robustness of systems and controls it has in place.	
Focus and further development for 2025/26 • Update of fraud policies, including to recognise the ‘failure to prevent fraud’ arising from the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023. • Implementation of the new waste collection service - go live in April 2026. • Ongoing development of the Bereavement Service and new service design.		



Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability		
Key element	How the Council achieves this	Development in 2024/25
Ensuring that the authority provides timely support, information and responses to external auditors and properly considers audit findings and recommendations.	The Council provides support and information to the externally appointed auditors (Ernst & Young LLP). Audit findings and recommendations are reported through the Audit Committee.	The External Audit of the 2022/23 and 2023/24 Accounts were both signed off by EY during 2024/25 with a disclaimed audit opinion. The disclaimed opinion was given as problems with the Local Audit Market had resulted in EY being unable to complete their testing by the backstop date legislated by Government. During debate at Audit Committee it was made clear that the Council could have done nothing to prevent the audit opinion given. It should be noted that the Council published their 2023/24 draft Accounts in line with the Statutory requirement.
Incorporating good governance arrangements in respect of partnerships and other joint working and ensuring that they are reflected across the authority's overall governance structures.	- The Council demonstrates a strong commitment to working in partnership with other agencies to deliver priority outcomes and ensure that this partnership activity provides value for money and added value. - The governance arrangements for key partnerships are kept under review. Governance arrangements for significant partnerships, such as the East Cambridgeshire Trading Company, East Cambridgeshire Street Scene and the Anglia Revenues Partnership, are documented in the Constitution.	'The Hive' was subject to Quest Leisure benchmarking in 2024, with an outcome of 'Good'.



Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place, providing assurance with regard to governance arrangements and that recommendations are acted upon	• During 2024/25 Internal Audit was delegated to North Northamptonshire Council which was led by a professionally qualified Chief Internal Auditor in accordance with the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit in Public Service Organisations, Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the Local Government Application Note. • The Internal Audit Charter is in line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and provides for the necessary access required to exercise this key role. • The Chief Internal Auditor has been an attendee at all Audit Committee meetings and progress reports on delivery of the audit plan have been provided throughout the financial year. • Implementation of audit recommendations are subject to monthly follow ups by the Internal Audit team and progress is reported to every Committee meeting via a progress report.	• Implementation of 96% of agreed actions from Internal Audit reports due during 2024/25. • The Audit Committee received a briefing on the implications of the Global Internal Audit Standards and approved a revised Internal Audit Charter to align with these from April 2025.
Focus and further development for 2025/26 • To receive the outcome of the External Quality Assessment of Internal Audit and monitor implementation of any actions arising.		

5. Review of effectiveness

- 5.1. East Cambridgeshire District Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the directors within the Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Chief Internal Auditors annual report, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.
- 5.2. The following is a brief description of the roles and processes that have been applied in evaluating the effectiveness of the governance framework:

1. The Council

- In July 2023 the Council approved the Corporate Plan for 2023-2027 which forms the basis of the performance management framework. Council reviews progress against the plan, ensuring it remains committed to the priorities whilst delivering a balanced budget. An updated action plan for 2024-25 was approved by Council in July 2024.
- Council approved financial documents including the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, Capital Strategy, General Fund Revenue Budget, Treasury Management Strategy, and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy provides the financial structure for the policy and budget framework, corporate planning, annual service planning and budget setting.
- Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires that every local authority shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall ensure that one of their officers has responsibility for administration of those affairs. This role was discharged by the Council's Director, Finance and S151 Officer during 2024/25.
- The CIPFA Financial Management Code published in October 2019 sets out the financial standards of financial management for local authorities. Full adoption of the Code commenced on 1st April 2021. A self-assessment by the s151 Officer in 2021/22 did not highlight any areas of non-conformance with key principles of the Code. An independent review by Internal Audit of the self-assessment was also conducted and areas for further consideration have been reported.
- The Council has appointed Independent Persons in accordance with the standards framework to be compliant with the Localism Act 2011.
- Council approved key strategies and policies such as the Corporate Plan and the revised Corporate Risk Management Policy are in place and communicated.

2. The Finance and Assets Committee

- The Committee reviewed and noted quarterly budget monitoring reports and regular updates on assets.
- The Committee recommend that Council approve financial reports, such as the Treasury Management Strategy, Treasury Management Annual Performance Review, the Annual Investment Strategy, Revenue Budgets, Capital Strategy, Council Tax, overall Council Budget reports, and reviewed the minutes of the ARP

Joint Committee, as the partnership which delivers revenues and benefits for the Council.

- In undertaking its role as the Shareholder Committee for East Cambridgeshire Trading Company (ECTC), the Committee approved the Business Plan for 2024/25 (March 2024) and 2025/26 (March 2025). The Committee also noted the ECTC accounts for 2023/24 in September 2024.
- The Committee received the annual Health and Safety report for 2023/24 in September 2024. This provided a summary of East Cambridgeshire District Council (Council), East Cambs Trading Company (ECTC) and East Cambs Street Scene (ECSS) health and safety performance to the end of the financial year 2023/24 and set out the commitments relating to health and safety for the year 2024/25.
- The Committee received the Annual Equality Monitoring report including actions aimed at reducing the gender pay gap.
- The Committee received an Asset Management Plan for 2024/25 in March 2025.

3. The Audit Committee

- The Committee performed the role of the Audit Committee as defined by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, which covered internal and external audit matters, risk management arrangements, corporate governance including internal control arrangements and the annual governance statement, anti-fraud and corruption arrangements, and the statement of accounts.
- The Committee received reports on corporate risks, the work and findings of internal audit, including the annual report, and external audit reports, letters and briefings. It also reviewed and approved the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24.
- The committee received regular updates on the outcome of internal audit assignments and the implementation of actions agreed based on those findings.
- Members of the Committee engaged in a self-assessment against the latest CIPFA guidance on Audit Committees (2022) to identify areas for further development.

4. The Operational Services Committee

- The Committee received and noted budget monitoring reports.
- An update on the Community Safety Partnership was received for the Committee's noting.
- The Committee approved an updated Housing Adaptation & Repairs Policy for 2025–30.
- The Committee considered and approved the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy, setting out the Council's strategy and action plan for the next five years.
- In January 2025, the Committee approved the updated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2025-2028.
- In undertaking its role as the Shareholder Committee for East Cambridgeshire Street Scene (ECSS), the Committee received performance reports for the delivery

of the waste and street cleansing services by ECSS. The Committee also approved the ECSS Business Plan for 2024/25 and half yearly performance report. The Committee also noted the ECSS statutory accounts and governance statement for 2023/24.

5. Relationship between the Council and its Trading Companies

The shareholder arrangements for the Finance and Assets and Operational Services Committee are detailed above. In addition, there are a number of matters reserved for Council (as the sole shareholder) as detailed in the Shareholder Agreement. The Council continues to implement the revised arrangements for the membership of the ECTC and ECSS board and wider member scrutiny (ref: Council – 17 October 2019 Agenda Item 14 and 15) specifically the appointment of the Leader of Council or Deputy Leader of Council and the respective Chairman of Committee to the Boards as Observers, the membership of the Boards to include the respective Director, delegations of functions of Council to the respective Committee to meet its shareholder responsibilities and an annual all member shareholder seminar.

6. Internal audit

- The Council takes assurance about the effectiveness of the governance environment from the work of Internal Audit, which provides independent and objective assurance across the whole range of the Council's activities. It is the duty of the Chief Internal Auditor to give an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control within the Council. This opinion has been used to inform the Annual Governance Statement.
- The Chief Internal Auditor's annual report was presented to the Audit Committee in July 2025. This report outlined the key findings of the audit work undertaken during 2024/25 including any areas of significant weakness in the internal control environment.
- The Chief Internal Auditor's annual opinion for 2024/25 is that:
'It is my opinion that **Good Assurance** can be given over the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's control environment for 2024/25 This control environment comprises of the system of internal control, governance arrangements and risk management. Any limitations over this opinion are detailed and explained further [within the report]'.

The following is noted:

'For the audits completed by the Internal Audit service in 2024/25, 100% of the opinions given in relation to the control environment and compliance have been of at least Moderate Assurance. There have been no reports issued with an opinion of 'high' organisational impact. Of the audits completed by the Internal Audit service, 73% of opinions were of 'Substantial' or 'Good'; and

'Of the agreed management actions due for implementation during 2024/25, 96% had been completed during the year'.

7. External audit

- Under the Government's local public audit regime, the Audit Commission initially, and more recently Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited, have awarded contracts for work previously carried out by the Audit Commission's audit practice. As a result, Ernst & Young (now EY) have been the appointed external auditor for East Cambridgeshire District Council since 1st September 2021.
- EY reported to the Audit Committee on 4th November 2024 in the Audit Completion Report to Those Charged with Governance, that they had issued a disclaimed audit report on the Council's financial statements for 2022/23 under the arrangements to reset and recover local government audit. It was confirmed to the Audit Committee that the Council could not have avoided this outcome and this related to the national 'backstop' position.
- EY's report on the 2023/24 accounts was presented to the Audit Committee in February 2025. As a result of the 2022/23 disclaimed audit report, whilst they have commenced limited work to rebuild assurance ahead of the 2023/24 backstop date, they had not been able to complete the planned programme of work to obtain sufficient evidence to have reasonable assurance over all closing balances. As a result of the 2022/23 disclaimed audit report, they do not have assurance over the brought forward balances from 2022/23 (the opening balances). This means they do not have assurance over 2023/24 in-year movements and some closing balances. They also do not have assurance over the 2022/23 comparative amounts disclosed in the 2023/24 financial statements. Taken together with the requirement to conclude their work by the 2023/24 back stop date, the lack of evidence over these movements and balances mean they were unable to conclude that the 2023/24 financial statements are free from material and pervasive misstatement of the financial statements. They therefore reported to the Audit Committee that they anticipated issuing a disclaimed 2023/24 audit opinion.

8. Other inspection agencies

- In 2025, the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) carried out an inspection of the Council's building control functions under Section 58Z8 of the Building Act 1984. The inspection was to assess compliance with the Council's legal duties under the Building Act 1984 and ascertain the efficiency and effectiveness of systems, controls and procedures in exercising your building control functions in relation to BSR's Operational Standards Rules (OSRs). The outcome was a single contravention for which actions are already underway to resolve.

6. Significant governance issues and actions

The review of the effectiveness of the Governance Framework has provided a satisfactory level of assurance. The review process has highlighted the following significant issue:

- The 2023/24 Accounts have been signed with a disclaimed opinion, and it is considered highly likely that the 2024/25 Accounts will also be subject to a disclaimed opinion as the external auditors are unlikely to be able to validate all reserve balances carried forward prior to the backstop date for these Accounts of February 2026.

- Recruitment to statutory role of s151 Officer to take place in 2025.

Based on the work that has been completed, assurance can be taken that the governance arrangements at East Cambridgeshire District Council are fit for purpose.

7. Statement by Leader of the Council and Chief Executive

The Council has in place strong governance arrangements which we are confident protect its interests and provide necessary assurances to the community and stakeholders.

We propose over the coming year to continually address any issues arising that need addressing in order to further enhance its governance arrangements.

Signed:

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Anna Bailey
Leader of the Council

Date:

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John Hill
Chief Executive

Date: