

Report for: Audit Committee 29th January 2026

Item number: 13

Title: Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 Update Report

Report authorised by: Taryn Eves – Director of Finance and Resources

Lead Officer: Minesh Jani – Head of Audit & Risk Management
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Ward(s) affected: N/a

Report for Key/Non-Key Decision: N/a

1. Describe the issue under consideration

To update the Committee and provide assurance on the progress to address the significant governance issues identified within the 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

Not Applicable.

3. Recommendations

The Audit Committee is recommended to note the progress reported.

4. Reasons for decision

The Audit Committee's terms of reference include a review the Council's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework, including the ethical framework, and consider the local code of governance as well as –

- To review the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances, including the head of internal audit's annual opinion.
- To consider whether the annual evaluation for the AGS fairly concludes that governance arrangements are fit for purpose, supporting the achievement of the authority's objectives.

The Audit Committee is responsible for approving the Draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

5. Alternative options considered

Not Applicable.

6. Background information

The Council is required, by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to annually review the organisations governance arrangements and to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for publication as part of the Council's annual statement of accounts. The AGS documents and reports on the Council's governance framework as a whole, identifying any actions required as well as presenting any significant governance issues relating to the financial year.

Prior to its final approval, the Council needs to demonstrate that the AGS has been reviewed and agreed by senior management across the authority and an appropriate member body. The AGS was therefore presented to the Audit Committee in July 2025. In prior years the committee requested that going forward an update be presented to them, in year, with regards progress on the action plan to ensure that action plans were progressing.

The information in this report has been compiled from information provided by the issue and action owners, other reports and follow up activity by Forvis Mazars and the In-house team in Audit & Risk Management.

There were six significant issues identified for 2024/25; relating to Finance, Commercial Property, Statutory Compliance in Housing, Contracts and Procurement, Information Governance and Workforce Strategy, Appendix 1 contains an update with regards each.

The Head of Audit & Risk Management has reported to Statutory Officers group in year re the actions taken and is satisfied with the progress noted regarding all actions at the time of the follow up. The action plan will continue to be tracked as part of the preparations for producing the 2025/26 Annual Governance Statement, planning for this work commenced in December 2025.

7. Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-2026 High level Strategic outcomes’?

The work to strengthen the governance framework in the council makes a contribution to all strategic priority outcomes, as good governance is central to effective organisational health.

8. Carbon and Climate Change

There are no carbon or climate change considerations arising directly from this report.

9. Statutory Officers comments on behalf of Director of Finance & Resource and Director of Legal and Governance.

Corporate Director: Alex Altman - Business Partner Finance

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Procurement

There are no direct contract and/or procurement implications arising from this report.

Director for Legal & Governance: Haydee Nunes De Souza - Head of Legal Services

The Council's Head of Legal and Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report, and advises that there are no direct legal implications arising out of the report.

Equality

The Council has a public sector equality duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to:

- tackle discrimination and victimisation of persons that share the characteristics protected under S4 of the Act. These include the characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (formerly gender) and sexual orientation.
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not.
- foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

The Audit & Risk team is required to demonstrate a strong commitment to equality and fairness in their actions and work practices, and adherence to the Equality Act 2010 and this is built into the team's operational procedures. Ensuring that the Council has effective counter-fraud arrangements in place will assist the Council to use its available resources more effectively.

10. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 Follow Up Table

11. Background papers

2024/25 Annual Governance Statement – final (amended) version July 2025