

Agenda Item No:	9	
Committee:	Audit and Risk Management	
Date:	26 September 2023	
Report Title:	Annual Governance Statement 2022/23	

## 1 Purpose / Summary

1.1 Regulation 6(1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, requires the Council to conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control and publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The CIPFA Finance Advisory Network has issued detailed practical guidance for meeting the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

## 2 Key issues

2.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations have been updated to bring them closer to corporate governance requirements in the private sector, and elsewhere in the public sector. The latest version applies to the financial year beginning on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016. Within the regulations, there is still a requirement to produce an AGS which should be approved in advance of the statement of accounts. The AGS should be prepared in accordance with proper practices, which reflects the approach already adopted by this Council.

2.2 The principles of good governance contained within the CIPFA Guidance on Delivering Good Governance (2016 Edition) have been reflected in the AGS. The guidance outlines the following principles for achieving good governance:

- Behaving with integrity;
- Demonstrating a 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 achieve the intended outcomes;
- Developing the entities capacity;
- Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management; and
- Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

2.3 The Corporate Governance Committee<sup>1</sup> approved a Local Code of Governance for the Council (minute CG22/06). This sets out the Policy within which a framework for governance of the Council is monitored.

<sup>1</sup> Now the Audit & Risk Management Committee.

- 2.4 Each year a statement is produced which assesses compliance of the Council’s actual governance arrangements with the themes within the Local Code of Governance. This statement is commonly referred to as the Annual Governance Statement, which itself includes “Governance Issues” arising in the year to which it refers and an action plan to address those issues.
- 2.5 An AGS has been produced for the year 2022/23, which summarises the position for the year in respect of governance and internal control, and again highlights any “Governance Issues”.
- 2.6 The statement is signed by the Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer and Leader of the Council as further assurance of the standard of governance that has been achieved by the Council. The statement must accompany the Council’s financial statements.

### 3 Recommendations

The Committee considers the content of the AGS and approves its content for inclusion in the Council’s published statement of accounts 2021/22.

Wards Affected	All
Forward Plan Reference	N/A
Portfolio Holder(s)	N/A
Report Originator(s)	David Thacker – Interim Internal Audit Manager
Contact Officer(s)	Peter Catchpole – Corporate Director & Chief Finance Officer Amy Brown – Head of Governance and Legal Services
Background Paper(s)	CIPFA Delivering Good Governance in Local Government CIPFA Addendum to Good Governance in Local Government CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 FDC Local Code of Governance

# FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

## 2022-23 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

### 1. **Scope of Responsibility**

Fenland District Council (FDC) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, and effectively, providing value for money. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, FDC is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, and for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of its functions, and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

FDC has approved and adopted a 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 on our website at [www.fenland.gov.uk](http://www.fenland.gov.uk) or can be obtained from the Chief Finance Officer. This statement explains how FDC has complied with the Code and also meets the requirements of regulation 6 (1) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in relation to the publication of an Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

### 2. **Definition of Corporate Governance**

Corporate Governance generally refers to the processes by which an organisation is directed, controlled, led, and held to account.

Good Governance in the public sector means “achieving the intended outcomes while acting in the public interest at all times”.

In undertaking all Council work, and exercising community leadership responsibilities, the Council will have regard for the four principles of good corporate governance.

- Openness
- Inclusivity
- Integrity
- Accountability

### 3. The Governance Framework

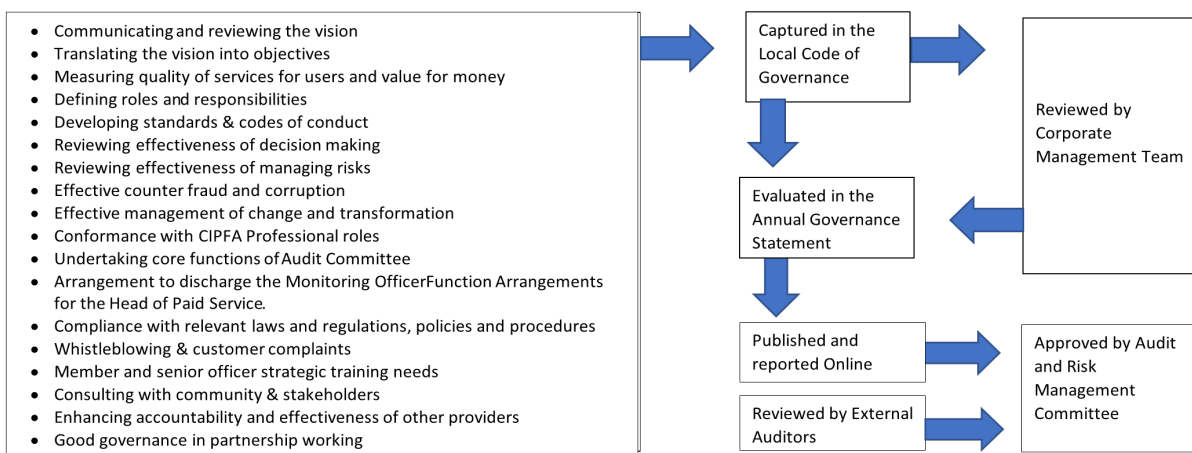
Our governance framework comprises the culture, values, systems, and processes by which the Council is directed and controlled. It brings together an underlying set of legislative and regulatory requirements, good practice, and management processes.

The Council has a responsibility for ensuring a sound system of governance to meet statutory requirements requiring public authorities to adhere to proper practices in reviewing the effectiveness of their system of internal control and preparing an AGS.

This AGS meets that requirement and sets out brief details of the arrangements that the Council has in place regarding the key systems and processes comprising the Council’s governance framework, which incorporates the Local Code of Governance adopted by the Council covering six themes, underpinned by the supporting principles contained within the “CIPFA/SOLACE Framework for delivering good governance in Local Government (2016 Edition)”.

#### Elements of the Framework

The key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the authority’s governance arrangements are as follows:



The Governance Framework for 2022-23 supports the Council’s aims and objectives. which are published on our website in the Business Plan. The vision states:

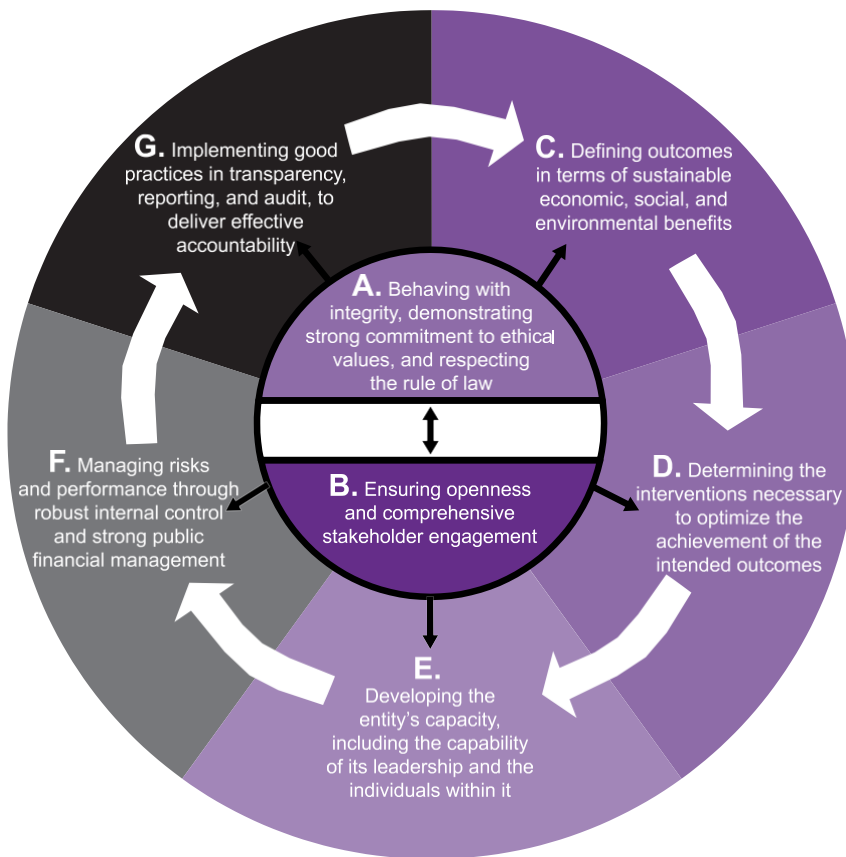
*“The outcomes we focus on, the actions we’ll deliver through working collaboratively with our partners and communities are what change people’s lives for the better and for the long-term. They help to improve opportunities for everyone and make Fenland an even better place to live, work and raise a family.”*

The Business Plan sets outs our Priority Areas with specific and measurable actions. Performance against the Business Plan is published in the Annual report and is available on the website.

## Local Code of Governance

We are responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of governance which incorporates the systems of internal control.

The governance framework is recorded in our Local Code of Governance, which is underpinned by the 7 principles of good governance as set out in CIPFA / SOLACE publication 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016'. The principles are:



## Roles and Responsibilities

Governance Structures	Roles and Responsibilities
Council	The Council agrees the budget and policy framework, such as the Business Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy, including the General Fund Budget and Council Tax levels and the Commercial and Investment Strategy. Further details are published on our website.
Cabinet	The Cabinet is the Council’s principal decision-making body, charged with implementing the budget and policy framework agreed by the Council. Further details are published on our website.
Corporate Management Team (CMT)	<p>The management team structure includes a CMT of a Chief Executive, Directors and Assistant Directors and is supported by an operational Management Team. Both teams consider policy formulation and future planning.</p> <p>In 2022-23 it was decided to support the three statutory roles, Head of Paid Service, Chief Financial &amp; s151 Officer and Monitoring Officer, with three Assistant Directors. Previously, the Assistant Directors had been appointed in an acting capacity pending review.</p>
Audit and Risk Management Committee (ARMC)	<p>The ARMC plays a vital role in overseeing and promoting good governance, ensuring accountability, and reviewing how things are done. It provides an assurance role to the council by examining areas such as audit, risk, internal control, anti-fraud, and financial accountability.</p> <p>The ARMC exists to challenge the way things are being done, making sure the right processes are in place. It works closely with Internal Audit and Senior Management to continually improve the governance, risk, and control environment. Meeting details and minutes are published on the website.</p>
Conduct Committee	The Conduct Committee is in place to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by all members. It reviews formal complaints, ensures compliance with requirements for ethical standards, provides advice on conduct matters and maintains a framework for identifying and implementing new legislative requirements upon the Council.
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	The Overview and Scrutiny committee monitors the performance of the Leader and Cabinet and scrutinises services and policies throughout the district. This may be services directly provided by the Council or services provided through partnership working arrangements and makes recommendations for improvement. Meeting details and minutes are published on the website.

## **Other Review and Assurance Mechanisms**

Management have helped to review the Local Code of Governance and inform the AGS. In addition, assurances can be provided from other sources, as detailed below:

### **Head of Internal Audit Opinion**

The Head of Internal Audit provides an independent opinion on the overall adequacy of the effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk management and control (GRC) arrangements and the extent to which the Council can rely on it. This has been considered in the development of the AGS.

The Internal Audit Annual Report was presented to the Audit and Risk Management Committee in July 2023. This report outlined the key findings of the audit work undertaken during 2022-23 and other sources of assurance that were used to support the Annual Audit opinion, including any areas of significant weakness in the control environment.

From the audit reviews undertaken, no areas were identified where it was considered that, if the risks highlighted materialised, would have a major impact on the organisation. In each instance where it has been identified that the control environment was not strong enough or was not complied with sufficiently to prevent risks to the organisation, recommendations have been issued to further improve the system of internal control and compliance. The implementation of the actions is followed up by Internal Audit and is reported to the ARMC.

It is the opinion of the Head of Internal Audit that, considering all available evidence, adequate assurance can be given over the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's overall internal control risk and governance arrangements during the financial year 2022-23.

### **External Audit**

The externally appointed auditors, Ernst & Young, issued their annual audit results report in September 2023 which provided an unqualified opinion on the 2021-22 statement of accounts and the Council's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources. The report praised the management and staff of the Council, and reflected positively on the co-operation, quality of working papers and timeliness of provision of information.

The Council continues to demonstrate compliance against the Customer Service Excellence standard, the UK Government's national standard for excellence in customer service. The standard demonstrates our culture and behaviours, and that we engage with customers and partners, and deliver effective use of resources.

#### **4. Review of effectiveness**

FDC has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its GRC arrangements. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the CMT and Management within the authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Internal Audit annual report, and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

As well as the annual review, the GRC arrangements are maintained and reviewed by a series of comprehensive processes throughout the year. The following actions and processes have been applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the system of internal control over the last twelve months:



Principle	Review of effectiveness for the 2022-23 Financial Year
<p>A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of the law.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Codes of Conduct for Council Members, with revised guidance procedures in place. All members are required to sign and registration of interest with 28 days of acceptance of office and all Council meetings require a declaration of interest to be disclosed.</li> <li>• Staff codes of conduct, capability and disciplinary procedures, anti-fraud and corruption policies, Whistleblowing policy, Values statement, and competency framework.</li> <li>• Training is provided for Members to support them in their roles, and they are encouraged to attend training including on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.</li> <li>• Specific legal and regulatory requirements and/or Standards and Codes of Practice are maintained by staff for membership of relevant professional bodies, including continuing professional development.</li> <li>• Up to date register of gifts and hospitality</li> <li>• Complaints policy</li> <li>• The Constitution, including terms of reference for committees, and compliance requirements with relevant laws.</li> <li>• Compliance with CIPFA’s statement on the role of the Chief Finance Officer</li> <li>• Monitoring Officer provision</li> <li>• Recording of legal advice provided</li> <li>• Statutory guidance is followed.</li> <li>• The Overview and Scrutiny Panel established a Task and Finish group to undertake a comprehensive review of the Council’s key performance indicators with reference to the strategic priorities set out in the Business Plan. To date the group has reviewed the Environment, Economy and Quality Organisation priorities with Communities remaining.</li> </ul>
<p>B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council’s policies and governance framework are published on the Council’s website including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The Constitution</li> <li>– The Council’s Business Plan</li> <li>– Annual Report</li> <li>– Agenda and reports for all meetings within the Council’s decision-making framework</li> <li>– Cabinet work programme</li> <li>– Annual budget &amp; Medium-Term Financial Forecast</li> <li>– Fees and Charges</li> <li>– Pay Policy and Gender Pay Gap Statements</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- Record of Executive Decisions
- Information required under the Transparency Code
- Annual Statement of Accounts

- The Council regularly carry out consultations on major policy initiatives which is conducted in an open way with all consultations available on the Council's website.
- Equality position statement reinforces how we will publish information to demonstrate compliance with the equality duty.
- The Council has an up-to-date Freedom of Information Act 2000 publication scheme in place on its website with links to information and guidance for stakeholders.
- The Council publicised all news and events on our website and social media, shared with all local news outlets and with Town and Parish Councils, to inform the community and businesses of the work and services carried out by the Council.
- Contracts are managed with a partnership approach and decisions are made in an open and transparent way, including open book accounting processes
- The Council has a consultation strategy and a communications strategy and uses channels such as the website and community hubs to consult on activities relevant to the community including planning, licensing, policy, and development. Examples of significant consultation exercises carried out during 2022/23 included:
  - Draft Business Plan & Budget
  - Local Government Boundary Commission
  - Taxi Tarff Consultation
  - Housing Enforcement
  - March Railway Station Redevelopment
  - Whittlesey Neighbourhood Plan
  - Draft Local Plan
  - Polling District Review
- The Council adopted the Local Plan on 8 May 2014, which involved participation from numerous stakeholders and is currently under review. Details are published on the Council's website.
- A scheme is in place within the Council's Constitution to have public participation at Member meeting. Therefore, meetings of the Council and its Committees are open to members of the public to attend, with agendas and minutes being publicly available on the Council's website. Also,

Committee meetings can now be viewed on You tube to engage with stakeholders via different mediums.

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

- The Corporate Planning Framework of the Council ensures the delivery of services and projects to improve quality of life for Fenland residents. Partners, through the Fenland Strategic Partnership, meet and establish priorities for delivery to address the statutory duty of promoting the well-being of the district.
- The Council, through its [Business Plan](#) establishes its objectives by consultation with its key partners and the public as well as with reference to statutory duties, local needs, and national priorities. The Business Plan communicates the Council’s vision of its purpose and intended outcomes for citizens and service users.
- The Business Plan has corporate priorities which are then cascaded down to team priorities. Achievement of corporate priorities is monitored regularly via the performance monitoring framework and monitoring reports to Portfolio Holders, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Full Council. Progress against intended outcomes is reported in the Council’s Annual Report.
- Option appraisals are undertaken for all key decisions and are a standard part of the operations.
- An active review of Service Plans is carried out during the year by Senior Management.
- Service quality is measured via customer communication channels and by measurement of performance indicators.
- The Council also approved the Economic Growth Strategy Refresh for 2022-2025
- The Council has adopted and implemented the Local Plan 2014-2034. Details are published on the Council’s website. Consultation was undertaken, and a proactive role was undertaken to engage as many residents and stakeholders as possible. Feedback from the consultation informed the submission of the Local Plan. Social, environmental and economic evidence was obtained to inform the development of the Local Plan, which is being revised and should be completed by Spring 2024.
- The Council has a Carbon Reduction and Climate Adaptation Plan, which was approved by Cabinet and Council in December 2022. The key aims are:
  - Reducing the Council’s Energy & Fuel use - Projects relating to the internal day to day running of the Councils services. These contribute the 'Council for the Future' agenda by ensuring that service delivery processes are continually refined to reduce energy and fuel use and to ensure that the Council's operational accommodation is able to meet changing business and working needs.
  - Supporting homes to reduce energy use and encourage active travel - Ensuring homes are warm, cheap to heat, comfortable and healthy places in which to live, encouraging active travel and transport options across Fenland#.
  - Building resilience - Ensuring Communities remain resilient and thrive.
  - Protecting our Environment - Work closely with all sections of the community to maintain and enhance the district.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further monitoring and reporting.</li> </ul>
<p>D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although in a healthy financial position, the Council still faces continuing financial challenges over the medium term, resulting from changes to central government funding. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy presented to Council in February 2023 highlighted the need for further savings of £1,918k up to 2027/28.</li> <li>• The development of the Commercial and Investment Strategy has the potential to generate additional significant returns over the medium term, through the trading company Fenland Future Ltd (FFL).</li> <li>• Cabinet also considered reports and proposals regarding the council Transformation programme to ensure continued achievement of outcomes through the efficient use of resources and improvements to service delivery.</li> <li>• The Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee considers the effective delivery of Council priorities and recommends interventions and remedies as appropriate. O&amp;S are consulted on major issues pre- implementation e.g., budget, business plan, major policy changes (garden waste charging). It then provides a review role especially on major partnerships such as ARP, Freedom, Clarion. Other internal changes through portfolio holder updates that go to O&amp;S.</li> <li>• Consideration of alternative courses of action for all decision making is undertaken.</li> <li>• The Assistant Director of Legal &amp; Governance is engaged in wider discussions with client teams on options for resourcing larger legal projects and higher profile actions to ensure these are resourced as efficiently as possible e.g., making use of the EM Lawshare framework discounted rates; considering alternatives to prosecution; considering the terms of a Public Space Protection Order; resourcing and managing appropriate external legal support for the projects.</li> </ul>
<p>E. Developing the authority's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and individuals within it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council appointed three Assistant Directors to support the two Corporate Directors to ensure sufficient leadership capacity within the organisation.</li> <li>• The Human Resource team lead on the development of the workforce planning and organisational development and training plan, supported by annual service planning.</li> <li>• The Council has a clear scheme of delegation contained within the standing orders and financial regulations which are reviewed by the Monitoring officer to ensure compliance. These are embodied in the Constitution.</li> <li>• Staff and members have access to induction programmes and training courses to support and develop their roles, which also include personal development plans that are reviewed at least annually.</li> <li>• The Council has approved practices and protocols for the management and processing of data ensuring that training is routinely updated to reflect current and evolving requirements.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both the Leader and the Chief Executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles, who provide a check and balance for each other responsibility and have established an effective relationship to maintain effective communication.</li> <li>• The Council, where possible, collaborates with other authorities to share information and best practice and third parties, e.g., Hampshire &amp; Isle of Wight Chief Executive group and subsequent groups.</li> <li>• CMT actively carries out reviews of their services and plans during the year.</li> <li>• The Council regularly makes use of ‘benchmarking’ exercises and other research to support corporate priorities and work.</li> <li>• The Council’s constitution defines the statutory and distinctive roles of the Leader and other Councillors and sets out to whom decision making powers are delegated.</li> <li>• The Member Development Group maintains a programme for Member training and development and the Council has secured the Charter for Member Development.</li> </ul>
<p>F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong financial management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet and the Audit and Risk Committee considered the 2020/21 financial statements and the Council’s corporate objectives, performance indicators and Corporate Risk Register</li> <li>• The Council has a Risk Management Strategy that has enabled the monitoring of risk within projects, Service Plans, performance management, financial planning, policy setting and decision making. The Council has a balanced risk appetite that allows new ideas to be explored and encourages innovation. The Risk Management Framework enables risks to be escalated to an appropriate authority in the organisation to be managed. The Risk Management Strategy is reviewed annually by Audit and Risk Management Committee. The Council has a Risk Management Group who are responsible for highlighting, assessing risks and applying a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) status to risks for consideration by the Corporate Management Team and ultimately by the Audit and Risk Management Committee, which is done three times a year.</li> <li>• The Council has a Port Marine Safety Code to manage potential major risks related to Marine Services. It is linked to the Council’s Business Continuity Plan as referenced above and is also regularly updated. A Port Management Group is responsible for monitoring and managing safety issues and a Duty Holder and Designated Person is appointed to review the safety management system and associated risks.</li> <li>• The Councils Overview and Scrutiny Committee received performance reports on Housing Enforcement Policy, Creativity &amp; Culture Strategy, Commercial Investment Strategy and Investment Board, Customer Complaints (3c’s) process, Business Plan, Budget Report, Fees &amp; Charges and Corporate Priorities of Communities, Planning and Transformation &amp; Communications. They also welcomed partnership updates from Public Health, Clarion Housing, Wisbech Rail update and CPCA Growth Service &amp; Impact on Economic Development in Fenland.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal Audit provides a risk-based audit plan and reports on the effectiveness of risk management to the Audit and Risk Management Committee. Internal Audit also provides an annual opinion on the effectiveness of the Council’s governance, risk management and internal control environment. This assurance is obtained from involvement with relevant governance, risk management and internal review groups and outcomes from audit reviews carried out within the year.</li> <li>• The Audit and Risk Management Committee adopted new terms of reference in 2020/21 and produce an annual report demonstrating compliance with best practice guidance.</li> <li>• IT Disaster Recovery and business continuity plans have been reviewed, updated and documented in the Service Plans.</li> <li>• IT follows End User Device (EUD) guidance issued by National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) when implementing security solutions and endpoint operating systems. Council IT infrastructure is audited annually, and results passed to NCSC for review and further guidance on actions to take to maintain compliance (including annual PSN assessment).</li> <li>• Effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data with other bodies, including processes to safeguard personal data in line with GDPR requirements. The Council has a Data Protection Officer with resilience provided via a s.113 Agreement with Peterborough City Council.</li> </ul>
<p>G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council received an unqualified opinion on the Statement of Accounts for 2021/22, which were approved in September 2023.</li> <li>• Agendas and minutes of Committee meetings are publicly available on the Council’s website and Committee meetings, where possible, are open to the public for contribution and attendance.</li> <li>• An Overview and Scrutiny Committee is in place to monitor and review performance, review and/or scrutinise decisions proposed to be made, review policy and strategy with a view to securing continuous improvement.</li> <li>• The Council is mostly compliant with the Local Government Transparency Code. The Council has commenced a programme to ensure compliance with all the mandatory publication requirements of the code. The Corporate Management Team own the elements of the code which are specific to their services while the Corporate Governance group have oversight.</li> <li>• On the Council’s website there is a Freedom of Information Act page to enable members of the public to have access to all recorded information held by the Council.</li> <li>• Decisions are recorded and published on the Council’s website.</li> <li>• As part of the Councils transformation programme, more forms have become available on the website and an increase in use has demonstrated the success of this project.</li> <li>• The Annual report has been refreshed and is now more readable and understandable to our stakeholders. This report includes information on performance, value for money and the stewardship of resources.</li> </ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Annual Governance Statement is discussed and owned by the Council's Management Team and is discussed with both officers and members periodically throughout the year.</li><li>• The Council has an effective Internal Audit function that provides assurance and makes recommendations to improve performance. The function conforms with the CIPFA statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit and the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.</li><li>• The Council has approved the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd to appoint external auditors on our behalf for 2023/24 onwards.</li></ul> |
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Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.	The Council's Transformation programme has placed the Council in a good position financially however, we will continue to look for more ways to become efficient and effective through looking at different service delivery models.  <i>Update: This action is continuous and can be closed for 2022-23</i>	Peter Catchpole, Corporate Director & Chief Finance Officer	31 March 2023  <i>Closed</i>
Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and <b>strong financial management.</b>	The Council has a Code of Procurement and Procurement Strategy which reflects current national practice. This is kept under regular review with significant changes expected in 2023 when a fuller and more detailed review will be performed before reporting the outcome formally to members for approval.  <i>Update: New legislation is expected in January 2024.</i>	Amy Brown, Assistant Director of Legal & Governance	31 March 2023  <i>31 March 2024</i>

Further Improvements from the AGS 2022-23:

Governance Issue	Action	Lead Officer	Target Date
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, <b>demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values</b> , and respecting the rule of the law	The Council is undertaking a full review of internal policies to develop a Corporate Policy Register. All documents will be displayed on either the Intranet or Website. Decision to be made by CMT.	David Wright, Head of Policy & Communications	31 March 2024
Principle F: Managing risks and performance through <b>robust internal control</b> and strong financial management	ICT is arranging for a compliance review of NCSC Cyber Essentials Plus to be conducted by an accredited third-party provider. Results will be fed into a Cyber Treatment Plan, which will be reviewed by CMT.	Stephen Beacher, Head of ICT, Digital & Resilience	31 December 2023

**5. Conclusion**

Having completed the processes set out above to review the effectiveness of the Council’s governance framework, we are satisfied that we have sufficient assurance regarding the effectiveness of the framework in place and the governance issues identified are as set out above. We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

**6. Certification**

As Leader, Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer, we have been advised on the implications of the results of the review of effectiveness of the Council’s governance framework, by the Audit and Risk Committee. Our overall assessment is that the Annual Governance Statement is a balanced reflection of the governance environment and that an adequate framework exists within Fenland District Council to ensure effective internal control is maintained. We are also satisfied that there are no significant governance issues during 2022/23.

Signed: .....

Peter Catchpole  
Corporate Director and Chief Finance Officer

Signed: .....

Paul Medd  
Chief Executive

Signed: .....

Councillor Chris Boden  
Leader, Fenland District Council