

Annual Governance Statement 2020-21

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 way 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 which 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 <https://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/>.
- 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 2021 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:

1. Developing codes of conduct which define standards of behaviour for 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 to 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.

2. 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 and 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 Finance Manager & S151 Officer is responsible for ensuring that appropriate advice is given 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.
- 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 conduct a self-assessment of the systems of internal control within their services and highlight actions intended to address any areas for improvement.

3. 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. Due to the restrictions on gatherings of people, all meetings in the period 4th April 2020 to 7th May 2021 were held remotely via Zoom, with a live stream of the meetings available on YouTube.
- 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.
- In order to demonstrate its openness, the Council also publishes on the website the Constitution, Council and Committee agendas, reports, minutes and decision lists.
- In terms of transparency, 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.

4. 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.
- The Council has developed a Community Engagement Strategy covering the period 2018 to 2023 to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to engage

with the Council and have their say regarding the services and resources that they need.

- 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.
- 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.
- In 2020/21 engagement with parish councils was conducted via a newly established Parish and Community Forum, a multi-agency network consisting of a variety of agencies and organisations, from across the public and voluntary sector, including parish councils. This approach was introduced as a result of the pandemic and proved an effective method of engagement to address matters arising from the ever-changing Covid-19 situation.
- Further examples of community engagement include Landlord Forums, Agents Forums, Taxi Driver Forums and the East Cambs Business Boost.

5. 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.
- A new Corporate Plan for the period 2020-2023 was approved by Council in July 2020. It contains five themes which set out the main areas where the Council will concentrate work over the period:
 - Sound financial management
 - Improving transport
 - Housing
 - Cleaner, greener East Cambridgeshire
 - Social and community infrastructure
- Within each of these themes the Council has set out the priorities for the next three years.
- Details of all the above, together with any committee reports referred to in this statement, can be found on the Council website at www.eastcambs.gov.uk

- 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.

6. Translating the vision into courses of action for the authority, its partnerships and collaborations:

- In normal circumstances, the Corporate Plan is underpinned by Service Delivery Plans, which set out in more detail how the Council's priorities will be delivered. These Plans contain more specific targets, which are allocated to teams, contractors, partners and employees to deliver.
- 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. Performance is formally reported to the relevant Policy Committee.
- See note 8 below.

7. 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.

8. 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. For the financial year 2020/21 the Council's Corporate Management Team made the decision to suspend service delivery planning and monitoring / reporting to Committee due to the pressure to maintain services during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is planned to reintroduce the Service Delivery Plan process from April 2022 for the 2022/23 year.
- A summary of the overall performance of the Council is published annually on the website.
- The Council continues to undertake service reviews to minimise bureaucracy, duplication and increase efficiency.

- 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.

9. 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 contains separate articles and key documents covering Members 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 in order to maintain a shared understanding of roles and objectives.

10. 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 is discharged by the Finance Manager & S151 Officer.

11. 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 are delivered by the Legal Services Manager. 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.
- 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.

12. 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.

13. Providing induction and identifying the development needs of members and senior 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 an induction programme for all new employees, which consists of a mix of one-to-one meetings covering specific aspects of employment and group meetings that deal with more common areas.
- 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 Management Team annually for final consideration.

14. 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 October 2020.
- The Council's Corporate Risk Register is the result of continuous review by a Risk Management Group, the Corporate Management Team and (in 2020/21) the Finance and Assets Committee, of the key risks that may have an impact on achieving the Council's objectives. Each risk shows the owner and the key controls in place to minimise any impact on the Council and its provision of services to stakeholders. Individual projects and partnerships are also subject to risk assessments.
- 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.

15. Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are developed and maintained in accordance with the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (CIPFA, 2014).

- The Council has in place an Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy, the latest version being approved by Full Council in October 2019, which specifies the process by which allegations will be investigated and reported. The Council also acknowledges its responsibility to embed effective standards for countering fraud and corruption that supports good governance and demonstrates effective financial stewardship and strong financial management.
- The Council's Whistle-Blowing Policy covers the arrangements for staff to report concerns anonymously. The Council's Complaints Scheme, and how to complain to the Ombudsman, are documented on the website. The Council has a dedicated resource in place to manage the complaints process.
- For the public there is also a procedure in place to report suspected cases of fraud via a dedicated fraud reporting mailbox reportfraud@eastcamb.gov.uk.
- The Council fully participates in the Cabinet Office's regular National Fraud Initiative (NFI) and reports the results to Finance and Assets Committee.

16. 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.

17. Ensuring that assurance arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit (2010) and, where they do not, explain why and how they deliver the same impact:

- Internal Audit is resourced externally and is 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.

18. Undertaking the core functions of an audit committee, as identified in Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (CIPFA, 2013):

- The Council has a Finance and Assets Committee that fulfilled the role of the Audit Committee during the 2020/21 financial year, with a 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.

- On 26th February 2021 Council approved a revised committee structure to include a separate Audit Committee from the Annual Council Meeting in 2021.

19. 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 Finance and Assets Committee. Moving forward these will be reported through the new Audit Committee.

20. 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.

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 2020 the Council approved the Corporate Plan for 2020-2023 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.
- 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 is discharged by the Council's Finance Manager & S151 Officer.

- The CIPFA Financial Management Code published in October 2019 sets out the financial standards of financial management for local authorities. Adoption of the Code commenced on 1st April 2021 and Councils should have used 2020/21 to demonstrate by a self-assessment that they are working towards full implementation. The Council's Finance Manager & S151 Officer reviewed the Council's compliance against the consultation version and identified that the only area of non-compliance related to the reporting of reserve account details to committee and action was taken to include details in reports to the Finance and Assets Committee during the financial year 2020/21. Internal Audit has been asked to undertake a review of the Council's implementation of the Code during 2021/22 to get independent confirmation that the Council is fully compliant.
- The Council has considered the appointment of Independent Persons for the Council in accordance with the standards framework to be compliant with the Localism Act 2011. The appointment was made by Full Council in May 2019 and is for a period of four years.
- Council approved key strategies and policies such as the Corporate Plan 2020-2023 and the revised Corporate Risk Management Policy.

2. The Finance and Assets Committee

- During the financial year 2020/21 the Finance and Assets Committee performed the role of the Audit Committee 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 of internal audit, including the annual report, and external audit reports, letters and briefings. It also reviewed and approved the Annual Governance Statement for 2019/20.
- The Committee reviewed and noted quarterly budget monitoring reports.
- The Committee approved 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. The Committee also approved a revised Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy 2020-2023.
- In undertaking its role as the Shareholder Committee for East Cambridgeshire Trading Company (ECTC), the Committee approved the revised Business Plan for 2020/21 and the Business Plan for 2021/22 and noted the ECTC accounts for 2019/20.

3. The Operational Services Committee

- The Committee received and noted quarterly budget monitoring reports, and approved the Environment & Climate Change Strategy & Action Plan, Homeless &

Rough Sleeper Strategy 2020-25 and the East Cambridgeshire Youth Strategy & Action Plan.

- 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 2021/22 and noted the ECSS statutory accounts for 2019/20.

4. 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 held at the end of each financial year.

5. 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 2021. This report outlined the key findings of the audit work undertaken during 2020/21 including areas of significant weakness in the internal control environment.
- The Chief Internal Auditor's annual opinion is that:

It is my opinion that **Satisfactory Assurance** can be given over the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's control environment for 2020/21. This control environment comprises of the system of internal control, governance arrangements and risk management. This remains consistent with the opinions given in recent years.

Financial control

Controls relating to the key financial systems which were reviewed during the year were concluded to be generally operating effectively.

Risk Management

Established structures and processes for identifying, assessing and managing risk remained consistent during 2020/21. The risk register was reviewed by the

Finance and Assets Committee on a six monthly basis, considering the outcomes of quarterly reviews conducted by the Council's risk management group.

Internal Audit work is targeted upon the Council's key areas of risk and work completed in 2020/21 has assessed assurances in relation to controls in some these key areas.

Internal control

For the audits completed in 2020/21, 100% of the opinions given in relation to the control environment and compliance have been of at least Satisfactory Assurance.

Of these audits, none have resulted in an opinion of 'major' organisational risk, which would impact upon the annual assurance opinion. There are three audits where the findings were assessed as posing a 'moderate' organisational risk and action plans are in place to address all risks identified within the reports, which will be subject to follow up testing.

Of the recommended actions agreed during the year, and due for implementation, 92% had been completed during the year. An action remains overdue in relation to the review of the Council's Contracts Register and this will continue to be followed up by Internal Audit in 2021/22.

Internal Audit has not been made aware of any further governance, risk or internal control issues which would reduce the above opinion. No systems of controls can provide absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss, nor can Internal Audit give that assurance.

6. 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) became the appointed external auditor for East Cambs District Council from 1 September 2012.
- EY's audit results report (ISA260) for the financial year 2019/20 was presented to Finance and Assets Committee on 26 November 2020. The annual audit letter 2019/20 was presented to the Committee on 25 January 2021.
- For the financial year 2019/20 EY issued unqualified audit opinions on the Council's financial statements and value for money conclusion.

7. Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-21

- The Council's governance arrangements have been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic during the financial year 2020/21. Social distancing measures brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic have had an impact on the Council's governance arrangements. Due to the restrictions on gatherings of people and in accordance with regulations, all meetings in the period 4th April 2020 to 7th May 2021 were held remotely via Zoom, with a live stream available on YouTube for the press and public. This has allowed elected members to be fully involved in the decision making process and allow for public participation.

- The Council has put in place alternative working methods such as remote working to ensure services have continued to be provided to ensure there was little or no effect on 'business as usual'.
- The Council has moved from the response to the recovery stage of the Covid-19 pandemic, and has established an internal officer recovery group led by the Operations Director. This was set up to maintain key services, continue to help those in need, support local businesses and keep everyone informed. Work stream examples include:
 - Continued focus on working with businesses, offering help, support and guidance;
 - Working with parish councils to offer support, and guidance including the introduction of a Covid-19 local outbreak response plan;
 - Ensuring local outbreaks of the virus are managed and monitored;
 - Ensuring that residents self-isolating have access to food deliveries, hardship payments and general support;
 - Continued homelessness prevention, access to benefits and hardship grants;
 - Working with statutory partners including Public Health and the County Council to ensure a joined up approach;
 - Getting messages out to residents on how to stay safe by social distancing; and,
 - Administering the Governments test and trace self-isolation payments.
- The Council is part of the Local Resilience Forum who have convened a County-wide Recovery Coordination Group, which allows the Council to work collaboratively with a multitude of organisations towards a common goal. A number of sub-groups have been set up covering different areas of work with the Council being represented by officers.
- The Council established a Covid-19 Member Working Party to feed into the wider district recovery plan.
- The Council is fortunate in that it has had one of the lowest number of positive Covid-19 cases in the country, however the Council are committed to, and will endeavour, to maintain low numbers of Covid-19 positive cases and to maintain key services, be open for business, help those in need.
- The Council received £1,159,532 of un-ringfenced grant from Government to assist it with additional costs linked to the pandemic and was also able to recover a proportion of lost income in relation to Sales, Fees and Charges and Collection Fund deficits from Government Compensation Schemes. This resulted in the Council showing a cash surplus in relation to pandemic costs in the 2020/21 management accounts.
- The long term impacts of the pandemic, especially in relation to Council Tax and Business Rate receipts in future years, however remain unclear, but the Council has taken a prudent view of these in its budget and MTFs approved in February 2021.
- The Internal Audit Work Plan 2021/22 (agreed by Audit Committee, 26 July 2021, Agenda Item 8) includes an allocation of 15 days to COVID 19 recovery.

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 no significant issues.

7. Conclusion

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.

8. 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 its citizens 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: