



East Cambridgeshire
District Council

Draft Annual Governance Statement 2025/2026

1. Scope of responsibility

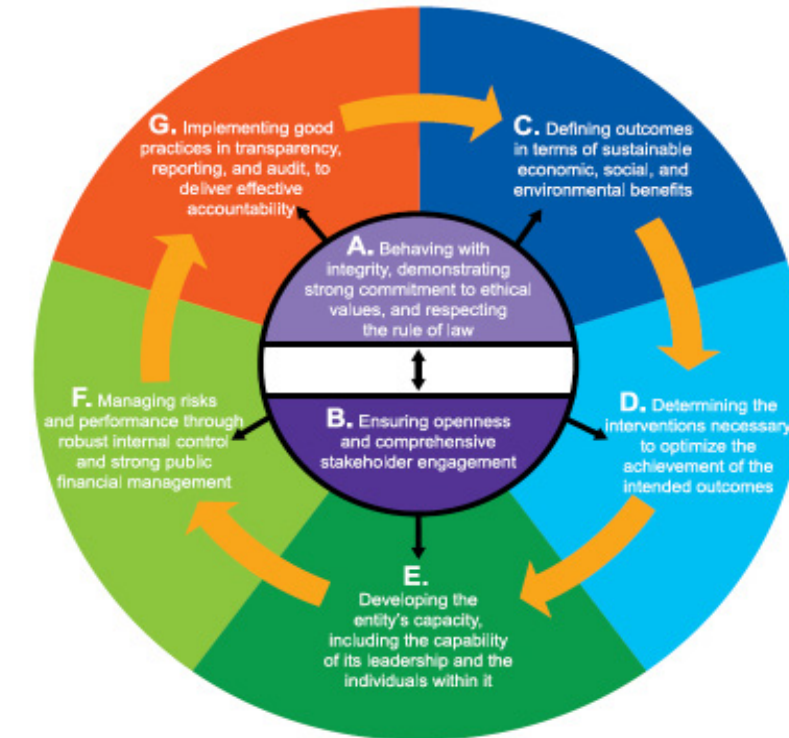
- 1.1. East Cambridgeshire District Council (the council) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.
- 1.2. The council also 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.
- 1.3. In discharging this overall responsibility, the 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.
- 1.4. The 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](#).
- 1.5. This statement explains how the council has complied with the principles of the code and meets the requirements of Regulation 6(1)(b) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, which require all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.
- 1.6. This Annual Governance Statement outlines the council's governance framework and provides an assessment of how the council has complied with the principles and the control measures set out in its Code of Corporate Governance during the year.

2. The Governance Framework

- 2.1. The council's governance arrangements comprise systems and processes, as well as the culture and values that underpin them. These arrangements provide an effective framework for ensuring that appropriate controls are in place and enable the council to be accountable to, engage with, and provide leadership for its communities.
- 2.2. The governance arrangements also enable the council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and assess whether these objectives are contributing to the delivery of appropriate, effective and value-for-money services.
- 2.3. The system of internal control is a significant part of the 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 the 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.
- 2.4. The governance framework incorporated into this Annual Governance Statement has been in place at the council for the financial year ended the 31 March 2026, and up to the date of the approval of this statement.
- 2.5. All service leads are responsible for producing their own assurance statements and where relevant for mitigating identified risks and governance weaknesses as part of the Service Planning process. The areas of governance reviews include but are not limited to legislative compliance, project management, risk management, conduct and conflicts of interest.

3. The delivering of good governance

- 3.1. The CIPFA/Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework sets out the 7 principles of delivering good governance in local government. The principles are set out as follows:



- 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 2025/2026 and areas of focus for 2026/2027.

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 2025/2026
Maintaining codes of conduct which define standards of behaviour for elected Members and staff, ensuring that policies are communicated effectively, and reporting/ investigating any allegations of breaching these Codes.	The Constitution contains a Members' Code of Conduct, which is underpinned by the Principles in Public Life (Nolan Principles). Members are required to maintain a Register of Interests, which is published on our website for transparency. The council has appointed independent persons to assist with the handling of councillor Code of Conduct complaints and the wider promotion of good councillor conduct. 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, and provides a route for raising concerns in confidence. Whistleblowing email inbox is monitored by the The Monitoring Officer (MO).	During 2025/2026, there was one Code of Conduct complaint against a councillor, which was resolved informally. There were no whistleblowing reports in 2025/2026.
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 council has a formal complaints procedure for members of the public to raise concerns in confidence. 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 several channels. The Chief Executive is responsible and accountable to the council for all aspects of operational management. The Director Finance and 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 Director Legal 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 2026/2027 pay policy was approved by council in February 2026. Service leads are asked to provide annual assurance that they have promoted relevant policies and ensure that all staff are aware of relevant requirements and exercise due controls. Statements have been received from all service leads in relation to 2026/2027 and assurances 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). The Monitoring Officer issues reminders on the recording of gifts and hospitality via email to all staff, twice yearly. Staff are required to declare gifts, and business relationships, financial/non-financial interests that could conflict with the council's interests. The Digital Services and Information Manager provides GDPR/Data Protection/Freedom of Information training for all staff on a yearly basis, including training at corporate induction and when new changes take place, to ensure staff are kept up to date and are aware of their responsibilities. Councillors have access to similar training, designed specifically for elected members. Contract Procurement Rules training is mandatory for all service leads at least once every 3 years.	During 2025/2026, the HR team updated four HR policies: Disciplinary Policy, Grievance Policy, Capability Policy and Induction and Probationary Period Policy. Annual Infrastructure Funding Statement completed, detailing CIL and S106 projects, income and expenditure. As part of the new waste service, the Waste Collection Service Standards were developed. These standards incorporate the requirements of Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act and provide guidance on waste collection service expectations. As part of their statements, service leads have provided assurance that they have maintained an up-to-date understanding of the legal requirements relevant to their service areas. They have also identified any anticipated legislative changes that may require action or consideration during 2026/2027. Six officers have recently undertaken 'Train the Trainer' training for our new procurement software platform, In-Tend.

Focus and further development for 2026/2027

The Government is undertaking a review of the LGR process. The first announcements relating to this review will be at the end of October 2026.

Currently MHCLG have confirmed that elections will now take place May 2027 on the existing boundaries for ECDC. Following the review, if LGR does move forward Shadow elections would be held in May 2028 with new unitaries coming into effect April 2029

Review of the Corporate Enforcement Protocol.

Refresher training on officer decision recording.

Principle B, ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Key element	How the council achieves this	Development in 2025/2026
Documenting a commitment to openness and acting in the public interest.	There is public access to all committee meetings, except for items which are of a confidential nature under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1974. 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. To demonstrate its openness, the council publishes the Constitution, Council and Committee agendas, reports, minutes, decision lists, allowances and Freedom of Information responses. 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. 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 • gender pay gap • progress against the 2025 to 2028 Equality Action Plan • the council's commitments for 2025 to 2028 This is published on the council's website. 'The Importance of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion' is compulsory training for all staff.	Most committee meetings in 2025/2026 were streamed live from the Council Chamber via the council's YouTube channel, with recordings available. This has improved accessibility and enabled members of the public to view proceedings remotely. There were some technical issues affecting the streaming and recording of meetings during 2025/2026; however, these were addressed as appropriate. Accessible documents relating to council and committees on council's website through redesign of agenda and report templates. Website and Intranet Governance approved by CMT in March 2026. Completion of the council's corporate website and intranet project, compliant with WCAG 2.1 and WCAG 2.2 accessibility standards.

Key element	How the council achieves this	Development in 2025/2026
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, collaborative working with the local media and social media. The council's Customer Charter states that customers are at the heart of everything we do and that feedback on our services is welcomed. The council has adopted a Constitution which sets out how the council operates, how decisions are taken and the procedures which should be followed. Adopted Community Engagement Strategy 2024 to 2028. The council undertakes regular consultation exercises, including small focus groups of customers, 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 2023 (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 covers consultation arrangements in respect of planning applications and planning policy matters, including the preparation of the Local Plan. Creation of a new Spatial and Address Management Service department, which will be responsible for GIS and the Asset Register. 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. All published/printed communications meet WCAG 2.2 statutory accessibility regulations. Equity of participation and wider social outcomes (for example in health) are fundamental principles of the council's leisure service provision and are reflected in service specifications and the physical activity programme. The Healthy You Programme is based on community engagement and specific user feedback forms, part of the evaluation process.	In 2025/2026 the Communications Team worked closely with the Waste Team and East Cambs Street Scene (ECSS) regarding the introduction of the new waste service. The Community Engagement Toolkit has been updated in 2025, informed by community engagement and feedback. Tailored comms and engagement for the LGR survey and seminars to Parishes, VCSE and businesses. Youth engagement has taken place throughout 2025/2026, including a Youth Fusion event in summer 2025. Budget consultation with Businesses on Business Rates. Public Consultation taking place for the Bereavement Centre Environmental Permit. Implementation of the new vehicle-related Anti-Social Behaviour PSPO. The Register of Consultees was promoted both internally and externally in 2025. A Register of Consultees toolkit has also been produced and promoted internally. Stakeholder and public consultation for the PSPO Anti-Social Behaviour driving. Changes to Healthy You funding in December 2025 has brought reporting changes and service reviews. Development Services to re-commence the planning agents panel, to be held twice a year and feedback utilised to address and update concerns/processes.

Key element	How the council achieves this	Development in 2025/2026
	Stakeholder engagement has taken place throughout the Lake View Bereavement Centre project, which will remain essential leading up to the opening and foundational operations of the centre. Bereavement centre to be an inclusive and accessible environment for all users, with consideration to equality, diversity and environmental impacts. Continued Landlord engagement through both the Housing Department and Environmental Services. This includes forums, bulletins, social media updates and provision of resolution services. The Communications Team has a close relationship with all parish councils, with regular communications and a dedicated parish council newsletter. Councils across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough developed and submitted proposals to government in November 2025, and government is now consulting on these options	Economic Development continues to work in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) to support the delivery of the Enterprise Zone development and the implementation of the Local Growth Plan. A Planning Service Customer Charter and Negotiation Protocol have been developed to enhance clarity and transparency regarding the operation of the service. Regular communications have been undertaken regarding Local Government Reorganisation. Information has been shared with residents, stakeholders, councillors, and staff through a range of communication channels.

Focus and further development for 2026/2027

As part of Local Government Reorganisation, ensure that comprehensive and accessible governance documents are prepared and published, including interim constitutions, schemes of delegation, and clear committee structures and decision-making arrangements.

Development of a customer feedback form for Building Control to be added to the website in summer 2026.

Promotion of Planning customer satisfaction surveys to be reviewed alongside Planning Agent Forums to gain feedback on the planning service.

Accessibility on the corporate website and intranet to be improved further with a review of PDF documents, adapted to html where possible.

Update the Statement of Community Involvement, to reflect the adoption of the October 2023 update to the Local Plan, the implementation of the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 and the impact on plan making.

Integration of IT systems to allow performance and insight reporting.

Consideration of council owned public spaces being transferred to town/parish councils in 2026/2027.

Services to work proactively with Legal Services and the new Spatial and Address Management Service to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the asset register in readiness for Local Government Reorganisation.

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

Key element	How the council achieves this	Development in 2025/2026
Developing and communicating the council's Corporate Plan which specifies its corporate objectives, strategic priorities and key actions for residents and service users.	The Corporate Plan for the period 2023 to 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 Each of these themes includes a set of priorities for the year. These priorities are reviewed annually by council during the summer, with actions agreed to support progress towards the wider strategic goals. 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 council's Environment Policy (2024) confirms that the council is committed to act on urgent environmental issues facing the district and the wider world. The Policy is supported by the Climate and Nature Strategy 2024 to 2028, together with an annual commitment of Top 20 Actions. Mandatory Carbon Impact Assessments (CIAs) and Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are undertaken for policy development and decision making. The completed assessments are published on the council website.	Climate and Nature Strategy 2024 to 2028 approved. Top 20 actions for 2025/2026 identified. Integrated work with CPCA considering devolution relating to the Local Growth Plan. Council approved the Corporate Plan actions in July 2025.

Key element	How the council achieves this	Development in 2025/2026
Translating the vision into courses of action for the authority, its partnerships and collaborations.	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. 2025/2026 performance reporting against Service Delivery Plans was reported to the respective Policy Committees. 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 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy set out the council's commitment to an inclusive and supportive environment for staff, Members, contractors and visitors that are free from discrimination. New Community Safety related statutory duty action plan to complement the existing ECDC Prevent Action plan. Grant funding is utilised to support health initiatives and to offer value for money services to residents to combat health inequalities. Compulsory training for all staff on 'Understanding the Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Adults at Risk', PREVENT training and Domestic Abuse. Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation for the housing and community advice team. Local Enforcement Plan adopted in March 2023 details how planning compliance is achieved.	Service Delivery Plans reviewed and approved by committees in March 2026, with 6 monthly progress updates. Health and Wellbeing strategy action plan has been monitored and reviewed throughout the year. The Waste Collection Service Standards have been published on the council's website to provide transparency and clarity for residents and to support improved engagement. Community Fund grants of up to £1,000 are provided to support new and existing projects that enhance the quality of life for East Cambridgeshire residents. Shared Prosperity Business Grants, totaling £165,000, were awarded to businesses across East Cambridgeshire during 2025. Policies and procedures reviewed and updated in line with the Renter's Rights Act 2025.

Focus and further development for 2026/2027

Following the update to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Code of Practice in August 2026, Human Resources will review all relevant council policies to ensure they remain up to date and aligned with the revised requirements.

Review and implement any required changes arising from the Employment Rights Act 2025, which received Royal Assent in December 2025.

With the Healthy You and Public Health contracts coming to an end and uncertainty regarding the new contract arrangements, the service may be impacted by changes to contract management and service delivery across East Cambridgeshire.

Further revisions to Biodiversity Net Gain system anticipated in 2026.

Policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated in line with the Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026, which received Royal Assent in April 2026.

Principle D, determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Key element	How the council achieves this	Development in 2025/2026
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 council ensures the robustness of its data quality through Records Management Guidance and mandatory annual Data Protection training, requiring all data to be accurate, reliable, timely, relevant, complete, and secure.	Procurement support was informally provided through North Northamptonshire Council in 2025/2026, enabling ECDC to ensure procurement compliance and supporting preparations for Local Government Reorganisation. This arrangement was formalized on 1 June 2026.
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 for officers and quarterly budget monitoring reports for Policy Committees. Customer satisfaction surveys are carried out by numerous services, including Home Improvement Agency (HIA), Environmental Services, Customer Services. Feedback is reviewed and service improvements are made in relation to this. The Economic Development team have a specialised Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which is continually developed to support service delivery. The approved Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2025, sets out the council's strategy and action plan from 2025 to 2030, in accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002. Continued digitisation of paper records and forms for all departments. Information review taking place at the same time.	Building Control services have implemented changes to comply with new reporting requirements set by the Building Safety Regulator. The Building Safety Levy regulations come into force in October 2026. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) department will be responsible for collecting the Building Safety Levy. Changes to the election of Chairs/Vice Chairs to reflect changes to proportionality. Building Control introduced a cross reference of demolition and self-build relief for automated report generation for government returns. Increased use of Planning Performance Agreements has resulted in underspend and some external support cost neutral. Building Control now sends out over 95% of documentation electronically. Digitisation will assist with a smooth transition into Local Government Reorganisation.

Focus and further development for 2026/2027

To develop robust governance frameworks, effective resource planning, and risk management arrangements, while ensuring compliance with statutory obligations arising from Local Government Reorganisation.

Recruitment to be able to meet the requirements of the Building Safety Levy.

Recruitment concerns in Development Services. Development Management Manual being created which will address expectations for new colleagues.

Recruitment of S106 Officer to monitor compliance with conditions, income and expenditure.

The council will consider the implementation of the National Delegation Scheme on 15 October 2026 which will be reflected in the council's Constitution and training for Members will be provided.

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 2025/2026
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 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 2025/2026.	The council has a Chief Financial Officer (CFO), who also holds the statutory Section 151 Officer role, with responsibility for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs. Financial management is supported by Financial Regulations, procedures and guidance, which set out budget holder responsibilities, alongside regular budget monitoring, financial advice and training for budget holders. During 2025/2026, changes to the Finance function included the appointment of a new Section 151 Officer and a Principal Accountant. The Principal Accountant role strengthens oversight of the year-end Statement of Accounts process and provides additional supervision of budget monitoring, strengthening the capacity and resilience of the Finance function.

Key element	How the council achieves this	Development in 2025/2026
Assessment of CIPFA SOLACE's Code of Practice for Good Governance that was issued in June 2024 on the role of Statutory Officers CEO, S151 and MO.	Statutory officers meet quarterly, and meet regularly with CMT, Leader of the Council, service leads. Statutory officers are supported to undertake continuous professional development. MO is gold command under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.	A self-assessment of the council's Statutory Officers, comprising the Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer, and Monitoring Officer, was undertaken in May 2026 in accordance with CIPFA guidance. Statutory Officers are satisfied that the Council is compliant and that no issues or changes were identified other than those already mentioned in the 2026/2027 development sections.
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 2025/2026. 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 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, 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 the 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 ensures that the council is fulfilling its duty.	New Chief Executive appointed in November 2025.

Key element	How the council achieves this	Development in 2025/2026
Providing induction and identifying the development needs of members and officers in relation to their strategic roles, supported by appropriate training.	A Member induction and training programme is in place to support Members in carrying out their roles and responsibilities effectively. Members are required to undertake specific training before performing certain duties, including planning and licensing functions. Annual Data Protection training is available to Members. Members of the Audit Committee will undertake relevant training during 2026/2027. Additional Member seminars are arranged throughout the year to provide training and guidance on specific issues as they arise. There is a corporate induction programme for all new employees. Service lead participation in professional networks enables sharing of latest best practice and benchmarking.	Member seminars included: • May 2025, Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) • June 2025, Agricultural Reservoirs • July 2025, Local Nature Recovery Strategy • September 2025, New Waste Service • September 2025, Kingsway NSIP • October 2025, ARP Briefing (Finance and Assets members) • November 2025, Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) Cycle Routes • January 2026, Council Budget • February 2026, LGR update • May 2026, Planning Regs
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.	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. Continuous professional development completed by professional officers. Succession planning within key service area roles. 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. Health and Safety codes of practice made available to all staff on the Intranet. Flexible retirement policy in place.	The staff training budget has been increased in 2026, in preparation for Local Government Reorganisation. Every department now required to have a Health and Safety representative attend the quarterly working group. Volunteering Policy which supports staff to do a range of volunteering opportunities that positively impact on the community, helps vulnerable people in our society and/or helps to improve the environment in East Cambridgeshire.

Key element	How the council achieves this	Development in 2025/2026
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 can submit mileage and expenses claims, childcare claim and book leave. The HR service also supports service leads using the People Manager platform to manage their team's time and expense claim forms, leave requests, sickness absence and so on. Refreshing and reviewing systems to ensure these remain effective and up to date. The council continues to strengthen its cyber security, ICT resilience and disaster recovery arrangements. This includes regular cyber security and GDPR awareness training, backup and restoration testing, disaster recovery and ransom-ware exercises, enhanced monitoring and incident response arrangements, and ongoing work to strengthen system resilience. Internal Audit has also provided assurance over cyber security and disaster recovery arrangements. Improvements to the council's digital infrastructure, including the new intranet and staff directory, Microsoft 365 and Copilot, continue to support staff and effective service delivery.	Microsoft Copilot has been introduced to support the analysis of data, preparation of reports, production of meeting minutes, and project planning. Its use is governed by the council's AI Acceptable Use Protocol, which provides guidance on the appropriate and responsible use of AI within the council. The promotion of CRM self-serve accounts via the corporate website has resulted in increased uptake of CRM self-serve forms, streamlining the reporting process for customers and reducing the number of steps required. Digital Services has introduced six-monthly service review meetings across all services to review and update webpages, supporting customers in finding accurate and helpful information and reducing unnecessary customer contact. Building Control moving to paperless. Introduction of new website and intranet in 2025/2026. Open Digital Project - using GIS to support planning application process and access to information. Local Land Charges now fully digital.

Focus and further development for 2026/2027

Continued development and promotion of self-serve accounts, including the introduction of a Waste Services customer portal.

Moving away from on-premise shared drives to cloud.

Principle F, managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

Key element	How the council achieves this	Development in 2025/2026
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. Audit Committee receives regular risk updates. The Business Continuity Plan ensures that the council can plan for, and respond to, a disruptive incident 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. Data Protection Impact Assessments are undertaken for all new data processes that are deemed to have risks to personal data. Where appropriate, post-incident reviews are undertaken to identify improvements to controls and inform future risk assessments. The Communications Team regularly enters 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.	The creation of a Negotiation Protocol and other streamlining initiatives in the Planning Department has reduced the time spent on individual planning applications. This has created additional capacity within the team and improved the timeliness of decision-making.
Ensuring compliance with the principles of the CIPFA Financial Management Code.	The council's S151 Officer is satisfied that there is compliance with the principles in the Financial Management Code.	

Key element	How the council achieves this	Development in 2025/2026
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 by 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 and Crime Panel, Health and Wellbeing Board and the Community Safety Partnership. Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) was appointed to make recommendations on allowances paid to councillors.	
Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place.	An Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy is included in the Constitution, which includes procedures relating to Money Laundering and Bribery Act. All Officers undertake compulsory Fraud Awareness training The council is a member of the Cambridgeshire Fraud Hub and participates in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) exercises to identify potential indicators of fraud or error. Both ARP and Licensing National Anti-Fraud Network membership, which can be utilised for fraud investigations. Fraud reporting email address made available for reporting concerns, this is monitored by Head of Internal Audit. ARP has a fraud department and investigates under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Regulations 2014.	In October 2025, the Audit Committee approved an update to the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy to reflect the introduction of the “failure to prevent fraud” offence under the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023. In 2025/2026, the most common type of fraud identified is the misuse of Council Tax Single Person Discount. Fraud statistics are published as part of the council’s Open Data on its website.
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. The council enters into sharing agreements, service level agreements and memorandums of understanding with external bodies, which provide assurance on risk. This includes, for example, agreements with Sanctuary, ARP and the Community Safety Partnership.	Development of new ECSS contract and KPI’s.

Key element	How the council achieves this	Development in 2025/2026
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 2025/2026, 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.	The Audit Committee undertook a self-assessment against the CIPFA guidance, the findings of which were referenced in the Annual Report considered by the Audit Committee in July 2026. An annual report to council, reflecting on the work of the Audit Committee, was produced for 2025/2026 and will be considered by council in October 2026.
Arrangements for managing data to ensure security, quality and accuracy.	The council has a Data Protection Officer (DPO) and Senior Information Responsible Officer (SIRO). Service leads ensure data is managed in line with the council's data protection guidelines. 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.	Annual Information Governance Report provided to Audit Committee, detailing DPO performance data. Sharing agreements created for new partnerships and regularly reviewed for current partnerships.

Focus and further development for 2026/2027

Maintain comprehensive and accurate financial records throughout Local Government Reorganisation, in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.

Work closely with other councils to develop a clear understanding of the emerging risk landscape that could affect governance, financial sustainability, service delivery, and organisational resilience from day one.

Ongoing development of the Bereavement Centre and new service design.

IPCO is due to conduct RIPA inspection due at the end of 2026.

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

Key element	How the council achieves this	Development in 2025/2026
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 and Young LLP). Audit findings and recommendations are reported through the Audit Committee.	The external audits of the 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 accounts were completed by Ernst and Young LLP (EY), with disclaimed audit opinions issued. EY identified significant weaknesses in the Council's accounts preparation process, which were reported through the audit findings and as a governance issue. In response, the Finance function has been strengthened, with improvements to the accounts preparation, review and quality assurance processes. Further work to address EY recommendations and strengthen the year-end accounts process will continue in 2026/2027.
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 partnerships 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 new Waste Service was successfully implemented. The project was externally audited with a high level of compliance/assurance received.

Key element	How the council achieves this	Development in 2025/2026
Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place, providing assurance regarding governance arrangements and that recommendations are acted upon.	During 2025/2026 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, the Global Internal Audit Standards, the Local Government Application Note and the CIPFA Code of Practice. The Internal Audit Charter is in line with the Global Internal Audit Standards in the public sector 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.	During 2025/2026, 95% of agreed actions arising from Internal Audit reports due for implementation were completed. These included measures to strengthen financial controls and enhance processes for the identification and management of risk. The Audit Committee approved a revised Internal Audit Charter to align with the Global Internal Audit Standards in the public sector from April 2025 and again in March 2026. The Audit Committee received a full copy of the External Quality Assessment of the Internal Audit service in July 2025. This provided very positive feedback on the quality of the service and an assessment that the service 'generally conforms' with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (the highest rating available) and highlighted that performance exceeded that of comparable local authorities assessed. The report also identified areas to develop further, with an action plan presented to the Committee with the Chief Internal Auditor's responses and actions taken.

Focus and further development for 2026/2027

To receive the outcome of the External Quality Assessment of Internal Audit and monitor implementation of any actions arising.

Work collectively with other councils for Local Government Reorganisation, including representation on LGR workstreams, creating terms of reference for joint committee, the S24 Direction and Structural Changes Order.

To develop and deliver a training plan for the Audit Committee.

5. Review of effectiveness

- 5.1. The 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 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 to 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 2025 to 2026 was approved by council in September 2025.

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 2025/2026.

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 1 April 2021. The council's s151 Officer is satisfied that there is compliance with the principles in the Financial Management Code.

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 to officers and Members.

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), in March 2026, the Committee approved the Business Plan for 2026/2027. The Committee also noted the ECTC accounts for 2024/2025 September 2025.

The Committee received the annual Health and Safety report for 2024/25 in September 2025. This provided a summary of the council, East Cambs Trading Company (ECTC) and East Cambs Street Scene (ECSS) health and safety performance to the end of the financial year 2024/2025 and set out the commitments relating to health and safety for the year 2025/2026.

In September 2025 the Committee approved the Health and Safety Policy 2025.

In March 2026, the Committee received the Annual Equality Monitoring report, in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Committee received an Asset Management Plan for 2026/2027 in March 2026.

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 2024/2025.

The committee received regular updates on the outcome of internal audit assignments and the implementation of actions agreed based on those findings.

4.) The Operational Services Committee

The Committee received and noted budget monitoring reports.

In March 2026, an update on the Community Safety Partnership was received for the Committee's noting.

The Committee approved a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) to address Vehicle Related Anti-Social Behaviour.

The Committee approved Resource and Waste Strategy (2025 to 2031), a joint document produced by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership.

The Committee received performance monitoring updates on the Citizens Advice Service and our agreement with Voluntary and Community Action.

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 2026/2027 and half yearly performance report. The Committee also noted the ECSS statutory accounts and governance statement for 2024/2025.

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 several 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 2026. This report outlined the key findings of the audit work undertaken during 2025/2026 including any areas of significant weakness in the internal control environment.

The Chief Internal Auditor's annual opinion for 2025/2026 is, 'It is my opinion that Good Assurance can be given over the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's control environment for 2024/2025 This control environment comprises of the system of internal control, governance arrangements and risk management. Any limitations regarding this opinion are detailed and explained further (within the report)'.

The Chief Internal Auditor also noted, 'For the audits completed by the Internal Audit service in 2024/2025, 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 2024/2025, 96% had been completed during the year.'

7.) External audit

Under the Government's local public audit regime, the Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA) awarded contracts for work previously carried out by the Audit Commission's appointed auditors. As a result, Ernst & Young (EY) were appointed as the external auditors for East Cambridgeshire District Council for the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2028. This appointment was made under Regulation 13 of the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015.

In April 2025, EY provided their Auditor's Annual Report, including the Value for Money (VfM) arrangements work for the council. The report concluded that no significant weaknesses were identified in the council's arrangements during the year. EY concluded that the council had proper arrangements in place to enable it to plan and manage its resources to ensure that it can continue to deliver its services, and that the council had proper arrangements in place to make informed decisions and properly manage its risks.

EY reported to the Audit Committee in January 2026 that the council's financial statements were published on time, meeting the statutory deadline of 30 June 2025, and that the supporting evidence for key accounting estimates was generally of good quality and delivered as agreed.

In February 2026, EY issued a Disclaimer of Opinion on the council's 2024/25 financial statements. This was issued in the context of the wider national local government audit backlog and the statutory backstop arrangements introduced to support the recovery of the local audit system. In the case of the council, the time available to complete the audit and the evidence required meant that EY were unable to complete sufficient audit procedures to support an unmodified opinion.

EY also identified a number of recommendations to further strengthen the council's financial reporting arrangements, including working papers, technical capacity and expertise, and audit communication and responsiveness. These recommendations are being addressed through the council's improvement actions and are set out in Section 6 of this Annual Governance Statement.

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 identified the following significant issue, based on the criteria set out in guidance from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) for determining what constitutes a significant governance issue.

The 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 financial statements resulted in Disclaimer of Opinions. These should be considered in the context of the wider national local government audit backlog and the statutory backstop arrangements. The time available to complete the audits, together with the evidence required to support the audit work, meant that EY were unable to complete sufficient audit procedures to support unmodified opinions.

The council has responded to the recommendations arising from the audits by strengthening finance team capacity and expertise, improving the preparation and quality of working papers, strengthening group accounting and valuation processes, reviewing opening balances and associated risks, and correcting and improving relevant financial reporting processes. The council is also working to ensure that all required processes and supporting evidence are completed in a timely manner to support the 2025/2026 audit and future audits.

Based on the work completed and the actions being taken, the council can take assurance that its governance arrangements are fit for purpose and that appropriate action is being taken to address the areas identified through the external audit process.

The council has put into place an internal programme of work to manage its readiness for Local Government Reorganisation. This programme is now paused until the Government review. Externally the council plays an active role in the Chief Executives’ LGR Board and wider regional governance arrangements.

7. Statement by Leader of the Council and Chief Executive

The council has in place strong governance arrangements which we are confident protects 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 to further enhance its governance arrangements.

Signed

Anna Bailey
Leader of the Council

Date

Signed

Emma Grima
Chief Executive

Date

End of document