



Broxtowe
Borough
COUNCIL

Annual Governance Statement

2023 - 2024



The Council's Responsibility for Sound Governance

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Council to prepare and publish a governance statement on an annual basis. The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) describes the Council's governance framework including the systems, processes, culture, and values that are used to direct and control the Council's activities.

The Council's governance framework enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money. The AGS establishes the Council's commitment to delivering robust governance arrangements and how it has reviewed the effectiveness of those arrangements. The Statement should explain how it has mitigated and intends to mitigate any significant risks or issues and set out the key issues to be addressed over the coming year. Maintaining a good governance framework that is owned and prioritised across the Council throughout this period is an essential element in ensuring that public money is properly accounted for, and that business is conducted in accordance with the law and appropriate standards.

Scope of Responsibility

Broxtowe Borough Council must ensure that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised. Governance is about how the Council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council must put in place proper governance arrangements to manage its affairs. The Council must ensure that there is a sound system of governance (incorporating the system of internal control) based on the principles of CIPFA's Code of Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework.



What is Corporate Governance?

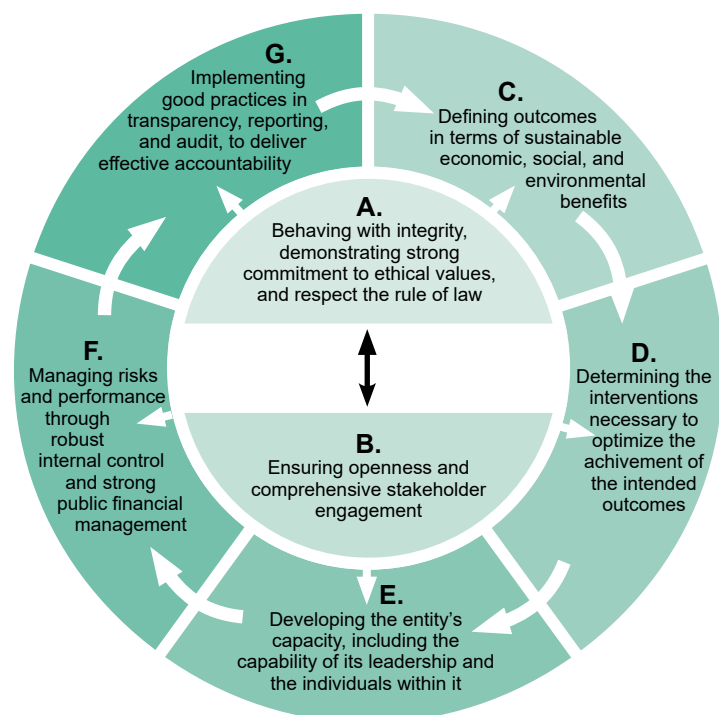
Corporate governance is the system of rules, practices, and processes by which an organisation is directed and controlled.

Corporate governance refers to how the Council governs itself and to what purpose. It defines who has authority and accountability and how decisions are made. In summary, it is a toolkit that enables management and the Cabinet to deal more effectively with the many and varied challenges of running an organisation as diverse as a local authority. Governance is about how the Council ensures that it does the right things in the right way and in a timely, open, honest, and accountable manner.

What is the Annual Governance Statement?

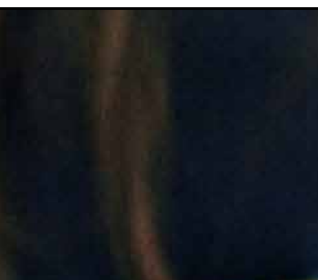
This AGS details how the Council Governance has complied with the Code of Corporate over the past year and meets the requirements of regulation 6 (1) (a) and (b) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which requires the Council to publish an AGS. It is the responsibility of all officers of the Council to comply with the approved Code of Corporate Governance Framework.

The Code of Corporate Governance sets out the documentation, systems and processes by which the authority transparently controls its activities and defines its cultures and values. It enables us to monitor achievement of our strategic objectives and to consider whether these have led to the delivery of appropriate value for money services. The code is based on a set of seven core principles:



The Council's governance arrangements are consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016 edition). This Statement explains how the Council has complied with these arrangements and also meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, regulation 6(1), which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an AGS.

A summary of how the Council meets with each of the seven core principles, including evidence of the principle in action, and where improvement action or new steps have been taken in 2023/24 is provided below:





CORE PRINCIPLE A:

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

Local government organisations are accountable not only for how much they spend, but also for how they use the resources under their stewardship. This includes accountability for outputs, both positive and negative, and for the outcomes they have achieved. In addition, they have an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies.

It is essential that, as a whole, they can demonstrate the appropriateness of all their actions across all activities and have mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and to respect the rule of law.

Ethical values, standards and formal codes of conduct are defined in the Council's Constitution and form the basis for developing the Council's policies, procedures, and the behaviour of Members and employees. The appropriate processes are in place to ensure that Members and employees are not influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest when engaging and making decisions with stakeholders, as well as effective systems to protect the rights of employees. All Council decisions consider legal and financial implications with support from the Council's Legal and Democratic Services teams.

Activity within Principle A in 2023/24

- 98% of our Borough Members have received Code of Conduct training and 75% of Parish Members.
- The Council holds Members to account for their behaviour by addressing allegations of breaches of the Member Code of Conduct, of which there were seven Code of Conduct complaints against Borough Council Members. There were 17 Code of Conduct complaints made against Parish Councillors. None proceeded to formal investigation. None involved allegations of fraud or corruption.
- The Constitution contains a protocol for Member and Officer relationships.
- The new starter induction programme includes a meeting with the Council's General Management Team to discuss the Council's Corporate Values. Every new employee undertakes a training course relating to the employee code of conduct which includes the Nolan principles, and ethical issues for example relating to declaration of gifts and hospitality and conflicts of interest.
- The Council collects data relating to its workforce and reviews this through the Annual Workforce Profile to identify any inequity, unfairness or prejudice in recruitment procedures or the operation of other HR practices, and as required by law published information regarding its gender pay gap. The Annual Employee Survey also asks employees to indicate whether they are aware of the Council's values. In the 2023/24 survey, 89% of employees were aware of the Council's values; and 84% of employees understood how the Council's vision and values related to the work they do – an increase of 3% over the previous year's results.



- The latest Workforce Profile was reviewed by the General Management Team and reported to Cabinet in September 2023.
- An annual complaints report is presented to the Governance, Audit and Standards Committee. The report provides details, in particular, of those complaints that are referred to the Ombudsman and where improvements to systems and processes have been made as a result of complaints. Any complaints where a financial settlement is appropriate, or has been made, are also reported in detail to this Committee. Arrangements for reporting have been reviewed in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's recommendations.
- Through its Annual Equality and Diversity Report, Members review whether there may be any inequality or unfairness indicated/apparent through the protected characteristics of complaints. The report explains in detail the actions taken to promote equality and diversity. The Gender Pay Gap figure reported in 2023/24 was 3.66%, compared to 6.06% in 2022/23, this was a reduction of 2.40%.
- The Council holds employees to account in respect of their conduct and behaviour. Included in the Workforce Profile are figures that show there were nine grievances, four suspensions and one dismissal. The Council has a Whistleblowing Policy, of which there were no incidents in 2023/24.
- Every employee has an annual appraisal which leads to a learning plan for the coming year.
- Due diligence is undertaken in the delivery of contracts, ensuring compliance with financial regulations and the involvement of the appropriate legal counsel.

Links to Key Supporting Policies and Procedures

Member Code of Conduct

Protocol for Councillor/Officer Relationships

Council Complaints

Equality and Diversity

Employee Code of Conduct

Whistleblowing Policy

Complaints Policy

Compensation Policy

Proposed activity for the coming year:

- Implement the Housing Ombudsman's Code for Complaint Handling.
- Review and Implement the current ASB Case Review (Community Trigger) process, procedure and documentation.
- Employee Code of Conduct Review

CORE PRINCIPLE B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

Local government is run for the public good. Organisations should therefore ensure openness in their activities.

Clear, trusted channels of communication and consultation should be used to engage effectively with all groups of stakeholders, such as individual citizens and service users, as well as institutional stakeholders.

Activity within Principle B in 2023/24

- There are internal working groups on which there is cross departmental representation, such as the Equality Working Group, Disability Working Group, the Senior Management Team and the Local Joint Consultative Committee which has cross-representation with Officers and Members.
- The Council has a webpage dedicated to consultations, those carried out during the period have been the Emergency Help Point Camera System, Surveillance Cameras Upgrade Consultation, Budget Consultation 2024/25, Polling Place Review, Parks and Open Spaces Survey 2023, Bramcote Hills Park Survey, Smoke Control Order, the Annual Tenants' Survey and the Climate Change and Green Futures Strategy Consultation.
- Let's Talk Broxtowe – a consultation over the new Corporate Plan took place and consisted of a survey and drop-in workshops throughout the Borough informing emerging plan priorities.
- Members have been allocated £200 each to assist with the facilitation of surgeries to enhance resident engagement. This is a means by which Councillors keep in touch with local people and identify action which needs to be taken which they feed back to Officers or committees, and community meetings at which Officers provide updates on key areas of work.
- The Local Strategic Partnership, chaired by the Leader of the Council, The Health Task Group and Children and Young Peoples Task Groups are organisations which need joint action. There is a Cost of Living Partnership Group which includes external partners and was set up to support local people to respond to cost of living pressures.
- The Council's Planning Department supported the development of local Neighbourhood Plans. The Cossall Neighbourhood Plan was adopted and the Toton and Chetwynd Neighbourhood Plan will be subject to a formal referendum in May 2024. There is a Greater Nottingham Joint Advisory Group at which the Council works with authorities in the Greater Nottingham area to review the Core Strategy in an aligned manner.
- The South Notts Community Safety Partnership chaired by the Chief Executive of the Council and Broxtowe Crime Reduction Group are a mechanism through which leaders of the public and voluntary sector organisations in South Nottinghamshire co-ordinate activity and identify strategic issues which need joint action. The Council also has representation on the Safer Notts Board.





- There are regular tenant led service review groups for Housing services. The Resident Involvement Group meets monthly at different locations throughout the Borough and consults on ideas and service improvements, while the Tenants Panel, a strategic group for high level work on policies chaired by a resident Tenant Involvement Network, has quarterly workshops on specific topics.
- Broxtowe Matters residents' newsletter continued to be sent out and Email Me bulletins on various categories of interest to residents. Regular press releases, and publicity on Twitter and Facebook kept residents abreast of the Council's activities and matters of local relevance. The distribution of the publication was amended to maximise on the growth of the digital channels with increased engaging with hard to reach groups who are not on-line.
- There are quarterly GMT/employee question time events to ensure employees have the opportunity to ask questions of senior managers.
- In the delivery of Capital Works there is a planned maintenance programme that is shared with other areas of the Council for review and feedback. Proposals are put forward for spend and delivery of services to internal stakeholders through GMT and Cabinet while providing opportunities for residents to feedback on completed works allowing for improvements in service delivery.



Links to Key Supporting Policies and Procedures

The Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan

Economic Regeneration Strategy 2017/21 (due to be refreshed in 2024)

Fraud Charter

Hate Crime Pledge

Communication Strategy

Cultural Strategy

Proposed activity for the coming year:

- Public Consultation on Brinsley Headstock replacement options
- Public Consultation on the refreshed Climate Change and Green Futures Strategy
- Employee Consultation
- Budget Consultation
- Regulation 19 Consultation on the Core Strategy Review

CORE PRINCIPLE C:

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

The long-term nature and impact of many of local government's responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable.

Decisions should further the organisation's purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes, and remain within the limits of authority and resources. Input from all groups of stakeholders, including citizens, service users and institutional stakeholders, is vital to the success of this process and in balancing competing demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available.

Activity within Principle C in 2023/24

- The Council's vision and priorities are set out in its Corporate Plan. Under the Corporate Plan there are business plans for each of the Corporate Plan priorities, these are: Housing (including Tenant Satisfaction Measures), Business Growth, Community Safety, Health, Environment, Liberty Leisure Ltd, Bereavement Services, Resources, Revenues, Benefits, and Customer Services, and ICT.
- Each Corporate Plan priority is supported by a number of strategies which informs the strategic direction of the subject area and sets the framework within which annual business plan tasks and targets are set
- Performance reporting to Cabinet focuses on Critical Service Indicators and financial information indicating variances from the expected position. This takes place on a quarterly basis.



- The Council's financial plans are based on a Medium Term Financial Strategy which identifies future budget pressures. This is revised annually as part of the budget setting process and is kept under review throughout the financial year
- The Council's annual Business Strategy has the following four objectives: that the Council should be: lean and fit in its assets, systems and processes, customer focused in all its activities, commercially-minded and financially viable and making the best use of technology.
- Detailed reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are produced at the year end to highlight financial variances from the expected position. This also happens in relation to capital plan monitoring. Within quarterly financial reporting to committees there is reporting on progress on major income streams, progress on capital schemes and salaries spending
- The Council has a Strategic Risk Register which is regularly reviewed and reported to the Governance, Audit and Standards Committee. The Committee continues to consider a further level of risk control involving a dashboard on key projects.
- Progress on delivering business plan targets, tasks and achievement of outcome indicators are regularly reported to Councillors for scrutiny.
- The development of a new strategies for Climate Change and Economic Development & Regeneration are underway.
- A Tree Strategy for 2024-27 was adopted.
- There was revision to the Climate Change and Green Futures Strategy 2023-27, incorporating information gathered during the public consultation exercise in the Summer of 2023.
- EPC surveys have been undertaken through all residential properties to identify opportunities to improve energy efficiency. Retrofit work has been delivered that will see a reduction in carbon and improved efficiency for Broxtowe's residents.
- Planned maintenance works will ensure properties meet the decent homes standard and maintain viable use in the longer term for residents.
- A housing stock condition survey has begun which will commit to a 100% maintenance and retrofit programme.



Links to Key Supporting Policies and Procedures

Green Infrastructure Policy 2015-2030

Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan

Local Plan Part 2 2018-28

Climate Change and Green Futures 2023-27

Playing Pitch Strategy 2016-28

South Nottinghamshire Homelessness and Rough Sleepers Strategy 2022-27

Housing Engagement Strategy

Broxtowe Play Strategy 2017-2025

Economic Regeneration Strategy 2017-21

Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2023/24

Capital Strategy, Asset Management Strategy and Treasury Management and Investment Strategies

Apprenticeship Strategy 2022-24

Customer Services Strategy 2023-2026

Communications and Engagement Strategy 2023-2026

Nottinghamshire ASB Protocol

White Ribbon Accreditation

ASB Policy

Safeguarding Adults Policy

Serious Violence and Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

Serious Organised Crime Strategy

Vulnerable Person Policy

Proposed activity for the coming year:

- Refresh the Economic Regeneration Strategy
- Updates to the South Notts Community Safety Partnerships Strategic Plan
- Deliver the Health and Wellbeing and Crime Reduction Action Plans
- Updates to the Serious Violence and Violence against Women and Girls Strategy
- Updates to the Sanctuary Policy Procedure and Documentation
- Produce a Blue and Green Infrastructure Strategy
- Adoption of an EVI Strategy





CORE PRINCIPLE D:

Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

Local government achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory and practical interventions (courses of action). Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that local government has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved.

They need robust decision making mechanisms to ensure that their defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best trade-off between the various types of resource inputs while still enabling effective and efficient operations.

Decisions made need to be reviewed frequently to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.

Activity within Principle D in 2023/24

- The Council takes time to analyse options in relation to major decisions.
- The Council examines options for the future use of its assets in order to improve public value, Developments of Beeston and Stapleford business hubs are almost fully let, food and beverage outlets built by the Council supporting the new cinema use in Beeston town centre are almost fully let. Work has begun to understand the financial performance of properties and the investment required, the outcomes of which may determine disposal, tenure change reinvestment or redevelopment.
- The Council considers the impact on customers when considering options to change patterns of service delivery - there is consultancy support to develop the LUF bid in Kimberley and extra staff have been recruited. Extra resources are in place to implement the UKSPF programme, and external consultants support to implement Stapleford towns fund projects
- The Council has regard to external events and is pro-active in examining whether its arrangements respond to identified risks and threats, evidenced by being a founder shareholder of East Midlands DevCo.
- The Council is pro-active in identifying threats and risks to safety and works in partnership to mitigate these. The Capital Works team is provided with the necessary PPE and has received lone worker devices, a safety consultant has been procured to review risk assessments.
- The Council works with outside experts as well as internal and external stakeholders to identify potential better ways of delivering services, such as Environmental Strategy Working Group, and other external partners including both Nottingham universities. Capital Works liaises with the internal financial and procurement team to procure new services and seeks procurement support in the tendering process.
- The Council regularly revises and updates its proposals to achieve savings and generate additional income the Business Strategy



was updated in 2023 in preparation for the 2024/25 budget as was the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

- The Council is pro-active in tackling areas of poorer performance. A Housing Improvement Board was formed to assist with the accountability and delivery of a programme of improvements relating to the housing service. Measures were put in place in 2023/24 to improve the Housing Repairs Service, including the creation of a Housing Repairs Contact Centre to ensure better responsiveness to tenants' needs. Regular monthly contractor performance meetings take place to provide feedback on the quality of housing works.
- The Council has regard to external events and is pro-active in examining whether its arrangements respond to identified risks and threats. There has been an active and positive part in a bid to have a county deal for Nottinghamshire. The Council plays an active part in receiving asylum seekers and refugees and has in place a refugee and asylum seekers steering group. Issues identified within Domestic Homicide Reviews and Serious Case Reviews are discussed both countywide and locally to ensure the Council's responses are appropriate.
- The Council works with outside experts as well as internal and external stakeholders to identify potential better ways of delivering services.
- The Rent Collection team has built on previous achievements through the installation of new software, employing extra capacity and supporting tenants with financial resilience.
- New arrangements have been agreed for health and safety compliance monitoring with the creation of a new Head of Service role and strengthening capacity in the health and safety area. Also, the formation of a Health and Safety Sub-Committee to oversee compliance improvements, commissioning fire risk assessments, new asbestos management reports, stock condition surveys and agreement to appoint a new data analyst.
- Restructures have been agreed in different sections to strengthen capacity, resilience and succession planning. These areas include Economic Development, Environment, Housing, Benefits and ICT.

Links to Key Supporting Policies and Procedures

Greater Nottingham Joint Planning Advisory Board

Broxtowe Local Strategic Partnership

Counter Terrorism Local Profile and Summary Situational Risk Assessment

Proposed activity for the coming year:

- Refresh the Economic Regeneration Strategy
- Update the Counter Terrorism Local profile and Situational Risk Assessment
- Refresh the Business Strategy
- Adoption of a new Corporate Plan
- Adoption of a new Housing Strategy

CORE PRINCIPLE E:

Developing the entity's capacity including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

Local government achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory and practical interventions (courses of action). Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that local government has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved.

They need robust decision making mechanisms to ensure that their defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best trade-off between the various types of resource inputs while still enabling effective and efficient operations.

Decisions made need to be reviewed frequently to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.

Activity within Principle E in 2023/24

- The structure and cost of service delivery is continually reviewed, reviews took place in the area of Asset Management to ensure the ability to deliver services.
- The Council enhances its capacity, increases resilience and broadens access to skills through sharing a range of services with neighbouring authorities such as with Erewash Borough Council to run a crematorium and burials service and with Erewash runs its Building control service, a partnership with Ashfield regarding collection of Business rates, works in partnership with Newark and Sherwood, Ashfield on surveillance camera management and Rushcliffe on car parking. There is joint provision with Gedling and Rushcliffe around rough sleeper provision.
- As much as identifying ways of reducing expenditure the Council is also prepared to invest in additional capacity to respond to changing needs of residents and customers, to enhance knowledge and insight and improve the quality and cost effectiveness of service delivery. Furthermore, Housing Repairs vacancies have been reduced which has resulted in reducing expenditure on sub-contractors. As we seek to deliver an affordable Housing Delivery Programme the team has been expanded to include posts at trainee level and interim support has been provided to meet the needs of the Homes England requirements.
- Business and financial performance is regularly scrutinised by all Committees.





- Committees consider a range of data including benchmarking data to assess the quality of Council services, the Cabinet receives information on the results of Housemark benchmarking data. The Council uses the LGInform website as a data comparison tool. External consultants also produce feedback on performance comparisons with peers.
- New strategies were developed for organisational development and workforce capacity. Work commenced on developing a new People Strategy and a report was submitted to the Policy Overview Working Group.
- There were 16 participants in the Institute of Leadership Management’s Level 5 programme, and 31 employees undertook Refresher Training with the HR Manager.
- The Council uses the Modern.Gov software system to produce agendas and circulate reports prior to publication which enables increased consultation between officers prior to publication.
- The Overview & Scrutiny Committee is undertaking a review of Diversity and Inclusion at the Council and will present its recommendations to Cabinet.



Links to Key Supporting Policies and Procedures

Organisational Development

Learning and Development Policy

People Strategy

Proposed activity for the coming year:

- Development of a People Strategy
- Annual Constitution Review

CORE PRINCIPLE F:

Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial managements.

Local government needs to ensure that the organisations and governance structures that it oversees have implemented, and can sustain, an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services.

Risk management and internal control are important and integral parts of a performance management system and are crucial to the achievement of outcomes. Risk should be considered and addressed as part of all decision making activities.

A strong system of financial management is essential for the implementation of policies and the achievement of intended outcomes, as it will enforce financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery and accountability.

It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny are in place as a key part of accountable decision making, policy making and review. A positive working culture that accepts, promotes and encourages constructive challenge is critical to successful scrutiny and successful service delivery. Importantly, this culture does not happen automatically; it requires repeated public commitment from those in authority.

Activity within Principle F in 2023/24

- The Council integrates risk management approaches into its performance management arrangements through the development of a Risk and Compliance Action Plan, which integrates action planning arising from the need to improve governance (actions identified through the SOLACE/ CIPFA review); risk management mitigation actions identified through the Strategic Risk Register and compliance with the law - both current and future. A risk concerning Housing Repairs has been added to the Register.



A GAP analysis has been undertaken in Capital Works to ensure services are being delivered and any risks to the delivery of services are being captured.

- The Council has a Strategic Risk Management Group that reports to GMT.
- The Governance, Audit and Standards Committee regularly consider and approve updates to the Strategic Risk Register.
- All key decision reports submitted to Cabinet contain a risk assessment where appropriate, which is used to update the Strategic Risk Register. All action points within business plans are required to be risk assessed.
- The Governance, Audit and Standards Committee has oversight and decision making responsibility for determining: Internal Audit Plan and progress made with the plan, implementation of audit recommendations and the Strategic Risk Register.
- Members of the Governance, Audit and Standards Committee can have independent access to the Chief Audit and Control Officer where considered to be necessary. The Chief Audit and Control Officer is satisfied that in all respects he has the necessary authority and resources to assess the Council's governance, risk and internal control environment and highlight any problems that he considers should be drawn to the attention of the Council. The results of the most recent External Quality Assessment of the effectiveness of Internal Audit were considered by the Governance, Audit and Standards Committee as part of the Annual Review in July 2023. This review was conducted by an experienced and independent assessor. The outcome of this review was positive and indicated that Council's Internal Audit service generally complies with the expectations of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. This provides the Council with confidence in the assurance work that is provided by Internal Audit. Furthermore, the outcome of the review was benchmarked against other providers in both the sector and the wider industry and this showed that the team compares favourably in comparison with its peers. Whilst the review did identify a handful of recommendations, these were made in order to further improve existing arrangements rather than to correct any potential deficiencies.
- The Safety Committee and Civil Contingencies Planning Group, chaired by the Chief Executive and comprising relevant senior officers, consider and develop plans to mitigate risks arising in workplace settings, or threats from flooding, major emergency events or risks to health.
- A corporate Business Continuity Plan seeks to mitigate the effects of a potential disruption to services so that the impact of such a disruption is minimised and services restored to an acceptable level within pre-set timescales. The Business Continuity Plan is reviewed by the Strategic Risk Management Group. Departmental business continuity plans also exist.



- The Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy Statement is that the Council takes a zero-tolerance approach to fraud and corruption. The Fraud and Corruption Prevention Policy and Money Laundering Prevention Policy were approved by Cabinet in November 2023. An annual report relating to fraud and corruption prevention activity and a fraud risk assessment is submitted to the Governance, Audit and Standards Committee, the latest being in September 2023. The delivery of the action plan helps to further strengthen the arrangements in place. Data matching exercises are regularly undertaken in conjunction with the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) through the Cabinet Office. In addition, a Single Person Discount Review was undertaken jointly across the Nottinghamshire authorities.
- A proactive approach has been undertaken by introducing the Fraud and Error Reduction Incentive Scheme (FERIS) approach and a risk-based assessment framework for benefits applications, including the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, for which the Council remains fully accountable.
- The Council is committed to establishing a strong anti-fraud/ corruption culture and will take all necessary steps to prevent, detect and punish fraudulent and corrupt acts. Any indications of potential benefits fraud are forwarded to SFIS for investigation.
- The Council has processes in place which help to identify and tackle fraud. An analysis of residual non-benefits related fraud investigation requirements was undertaken prior to the transfer which identified no substantial areas of immediate concern for the Council other than that which can normally be addressed as part of the work of Internal Audit.
- Chief Officers are required to prepare an annual statement of compliance with internal control stating compliance with the law and approved policy.
- The Council has information governance arrangements in place including safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data. A suite of online information management products has been developed and are required to be completed by employees at various levels. Comprehensive Information Management Policies are in place. The Council has a full time dedicated Information Governance Officer an online Data Protection Act 2018 employee training product was completed by all employees and an annual SIRO audit is conducted and the results reported to GMT.
- Regular quarterly reports on service performance and financial performance are produced. Areas of underperformance are highlighted and improvements recommended.
- The Council welcomes external agencies to provide feedback on performance and responds positively to suggestions for improvement, the occasional use of external consultants for specific areas of focus provides an independent and expert view of the Council's current





activities and potential for improvement. For example, the Housing Benefit Subsidy Audit was performed by KPMG and found that no amendments were necessary.

- Additional capacity has been employed to assist the Housing Delivery Manager prepare for the Homes England audit.

Links to Key Supporting Policies and Procedures

[Information Security Policy](#)

[Information Management Strategy](#)

[Data Quality Policy](#)

[Network Access Policy](#)

[Data Protection Policy](#)

[Data Retention Policy](#)

[Development Policy](#)

[Information Classification and Handling Policy](#)

[Information Security Breach Policy](#)

[Legal Responsibilities Breach Policy](#)

[Freedom of Information \(FOI\)](#)

[RIPA](#)

[Risk Management Policy](#)

[Strategic Risk Register](#)

Proposed activity for the coming year:

- Update the Safer Notts Board Information Sharing Protocol



CORE PRINCIPLE G:

Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

Accountability is about ensuring that those making decisions and delivering services are answerable for them. Effective accountability is concerned not only with reporting on actions completed, but also ensuring that stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the organisation plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner. Both external and internal audit contribute to effective accountability.

Activity within Principle G in 2023/24

- The Council complies with its obligation to produce a Publication Scheme which is published on the Council's website and reviewed regularly.
- The Council publishes data in a transparent way which is accessible through the website.
- The Council reports annually on performance and financial stewardship through a newsletter which goes to every household in Broxtowe.
- A Governance, Risk and Compliance Action Plan is produced which incorporates governance improvements identified as a result of the annual governance check
- Internal Audit and External Auditor recommendations are acted upon and reports are regularly made to Governance, Audit and Standards Committee on progress in implementing agreed actions following an Internal Audit.
- Internal approval processes are followed ensuring there is transparency in reporting and auditing.
- Following the positive outcomes of the Peer Review undertaken in 2022 Cabinet received a report on the Improvement Plan which set out measures captured in the recommendations from the review. Many of these have been mentioned elsewhere in the document, but others include:
 - o The 2024/25 Service Plans for Environmental, Housing, and Bereavement Services, explicitly identify actions and activities that contribute to meeting the Council's Carbon reduction plans. Similarly, the Council's medium term capital programme identifies capital schemes contributing to carbon reduction.
 - o The member training programme was refreshed with many opportunities available for new members to participate. New member induction included some innovative new approaches.



Links to Key Supporting Policies and Procedures

Publication Scheme

Transparency Code 2015

ICT Strategy

LGA Peer Review Improvement Plan

Proposed activity for the coming year:

- Produce a Productivity Strategy



Conclusion

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 senior managers within the organisation who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Chief Audit and Control Officer's annual report and also by comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates, such as the LGA Peer Review.

The operation of the Governance Framework during 2023/24 has provided the Council with substantial assurance that proper practices are in place governing the conduct of the Council's business. Additional improvement actions have been identified through the annual review of the standard and are included in the new Governance Risk and Compliance Action Plan.

Implementation of the governance related actions specified in the attached action plan will help to ensure that the Council's governance arrangements continue to improve and be fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.



Governance Risk and Compliance Action Plan 2023/24

Progress against the actions included in the Annual Governance Statement from 2023/24 is included in the following table:

Action	Progress
Induction training for new Councillors on code of conduct	Following the Borough Council elections in May 2023, all new Members received training on the Code of Conduct prior to signing Acceptance of Office forms.
Relaunch and refresh membership of a forum led by people with disabilities	The Disability Forum was relaunched with officers and members of the public.
Review citizen engagement arrangements	Cabinet considered options for citizen engagement in September 2023. It was agreed that each Member have access to an allowance of £200 to enable individual or joint surgeries to increase citizen engagement across the Borough.
Develop a new Corporate Plan	The final version of the Plan is being prepared, aligning the corporate plan priorities, targets and outcomes. This will go to a full Council meeting after the budget is agreed.
Develop a new strategy for climate change	The Climate Change and Green Futures Strategy was approved by Cabinet in March 2024.
Develop a new strategy for Economic Development and Regeneration	Work has continued on the Strategy but progress has been slowed by events relating to economic development bids and the Levelling Up Fund. The development of the Strategy will be presented to Cabinet during 2024
Set up a Housing Improvement Board and deliver a programme of improvements relating to the housing service	A Housing Improvement Board was formed to assist with the accountability and delivery of a programme of improvements relating to the housing service.



Action	Progress
Develop a new strategy for people management, organisational development and workforce capacity programme of improvements	The People Strategy was submitted to the Policy Overview Working Group in March 2024 prior to its presentation to Cabinet.
Review and update financial procedure rules	Officers reviewed and amended the financial procedure rules which were submitted to full Council on 12 July 2023. The procedure rules were adopted and are now contained within the Council's Constitution.
Review and update contract procedure rules	Officers reviewed and amended the contract procedure rules which were submitted to full Council on 12 July 2023. The procedure rules were adopted and are now contained within the Council's Constitution.





Draft Annual Governance Statement

The Council's Governance Arrangements

Corporate Values

The Council's governance arrangements are reflected in our corporate values which are:

- Integrity and professional competence
- A strong caring focus on the needs of communities
- Continuous improvement and delivering value for money
- Valuing employees and enabling the active involvement of everyone
- Innovation and readiness for change.

Competency Framework and Employee Performance Appraisal

These values are consistent with the SOLACE/CIPFA governance code and act as the basis for the Council's competency framework and the assessment of individual employee performance appraisal.

The Constitution, Standing Orders and Delegated Authority

The Council's Constitution sets out the roles of Members and officers and the terms of reference of the Council's Cabinet and Committees. Officer's delegated powers to take decisions are set out in this document, as are the protocols and codes of conduct regulating the way employees and Members should behave and relate to each other, and how debate is conducted at Council meetings. Limits of financial expenditure are set out in standing orders and in standing orders relating to contracts.

The main checks and balances on the respective power of officers and Members is summarised in the table below. The table provides some of the key ways in which officers and Members are held accountable to local residents.



Officer checks/ balances	Member checks/ balances	Accountability to residents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Officer delegations within Constitution • Pay Policy underpinned by Job evaluation policy • Disciplinary Policies • Employee Code of Conduct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elections • Independent Remuneration Panel • Members Allowances scheme • Governance Audit and Standards Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broxtowe Matters Annual Report • Public Questions at Council Meetings • Petitions at Council Meetings • Community Trigger for Anti-social Behaviour



Officer checks/ balances	Member checks/ balances	Accountability to residents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Officers (Chief Executive Head of Paid Service; Deputy Chief Executive Section 151 Officer; Monitoring Officer; Chief Information Officer-Interim Executive Director • Financial standing orders within Constitution • Contract standing orders within Constitution • Fraud Prevention Policy • Treasury Management policy • Business Continuity Plans • Whistleblowing Policy • Strategic Risk Register • Risk Management Policy • Health & Safety Policy; Procedures; Health & Safety Group • Information Management Arrangements • Staff engagement exercises • Complaints and compliments procedure • Licensing and Appeals Committee (employment and grievance appeals) • Statement of Internal Control (SIC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Officers (Chief Executive Head of Paid Service; Deputy Chief Executive Section 151 Officer; Monitoring Officer; Chief Information Officer-Interim Executive Director • Questions to Committee chairs at Council meetings • Member Code of Conduct • Reports at Council by Members of Outside Bodies at Council meetings • Ward Member reports at Council meetings • Public Consultations • Register of Members Interests • Declaration of interests at all meetings • Protocol for Councillor/ Officer Relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications strategy 2018-21 • Publication scheme • Open Data • Transparency framework • Publication of Committee decisions • Tenant and Leaseholder Matters • Broxtowe Parks Standard • Public satisfaction surveys • External audit annual letter to Governance Audit and Standards Committee • Internal and external audit progress reports at Governance and Audit Committee • Periodic external inspections e.g. EFLG/ IIP/IIE/LGA • Peer review • Benchmarking through APSE/CIPFA/ SOCITIM/ Housemark • Finance Data online • Licensing and Appeals Committee (Taxi, alcohol, licensing matters) • Commenting on planning applications and speaking to Planning Committee

Corporate Plan and Business Plans

The Council’s Corporate Plan sets out the Council’s Vision and Priorities. The vision is “Broxtowe- a greener, safer healthier place where everyone prospers”.

The priorities are succinctly expressed:

Housing: A good quality home for everyone

Environment: Protect the environment for the future

Business: Invest in our towns and our people

Health: Support people to live well

Community safety: A safe place for everyone

Strategy and Policy Framework

Within each priority area, a range of strategies and policies are devised to guide the decision making of officers and Members. These are approved by Cabinet or the respective committees apart from those which are reserved for full Council for determination.

<p>The Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consists of 44 Elected Members. • Approves the budget and policy framework including setting the Council Tax. • Approves the Constitution (including Standing Orders and Financial Regulations). • Establishes Committees to discharge non-executive functions.
<p>Cabinet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The main decision-making body of the Council responsible for executive functions. • Leader of the Council appointed by the Council with responsibility for executive functions and who appoints a Deputy Leader and Cabinet Members with responsibility for particular portfolios.
<p>Governance, Audit and Standards Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides independent assurance to the Council on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance arrangements, risk management framework and internal control environment • Approves the Annual Statement of Accounts and the Annual Governance Statement.
<p>Scrutiny Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has an Overview and Scrutiny Committee which has the ability to appoint Task and Finish Groups • The Committee holds Cabinet and Officers to account and scrutinises performance.



Head of Paid Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall corporate management and operational responsibility for the Council, including overall management for responsibility for all employees • The provision of professional advice to all parties in the decision-making process and, representing the Council on partnerships and outside bodies • The Head of Paid Service will determine how the Council's functions are discharged, the number and grade of Officers required to discharge the functions and how Officers are organised.
Chief Finance Officer (s151)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountable for developing and maintaining the Council's governance, risks and control framework • Ensuring lawfulness and financial prudence of decision-making and the administration of financial affairs • Providing advice to all Councillors on the scope of powers and authority to take decisions, maladministration, financial impropriety, probity and budget and policy framework issues, and will support and advise Councillors and Officers in their respective roles • Contributes to the effective corporate management and governance of the Council.
Executive Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for the Council's Information Governance, Environment Service, Payroll, Administration, Communication, Health and Safety and Emergency Planning Services • Contributes to the effective corporate management and governance of the Council.
Monitoring Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring, reviewing and maintaining the Constitution • Ensuring lawfulness and fairness of decision-making • Supporting the Standards processes • Contributes to the effective corporate management and governance of the Council.
Chief Audit and Control Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides independent assurance and opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's risk management and control framework • Through the internal audit service delivers an annual programme of risk based activity, including counter fraud and investigation activity and makes recommendation for the improvement in the management of risk and control.
General Management Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implements the policy and budgetary framework set by the Council and provides advice to Cabinet and the Council on the development of future policy and budgetary issues. • Oversees the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and implementation of Council policy.
Heads of Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for developing, maintaining and implementing the Council's governance, risk and control framework • Contribute to the effective corporate management and governance of the Council.

Two joint committees exist – the Economic Prosperity, which consists of the Leaders of all Councils in Nottinghamshire to consider countywide development matters; and the Bramcote Bereavement Service Joint Committee which oversees the operation of Bramcote Crematorium, which is jointly owned with Erewash Borough Council.

Two internal committees recommend changes to employee policy pay and conditions – the Local Joint Consultative Committee which considers employee related matters and the Independent Remuneration Panel, which considers matters relating to the remuneration of Members. The Independent Remuneration Panel reviewed Members' allowances in January 2024 and decided to recommend a 4% increase in the allowance in-line with the employee pay award. Full Council received the report of the Panel's findings on 6 March 2024 and accepted the recommendation.

Delegation arrangements to officers are set out in detail within the Constitution. In order to ensure that decisions are made in compliance with the law and approved policy, Chief Officers are charged with responsibility for the operation of controls within their areas of responsibility and for statutory functions as necessary. They make an annual declaration of compliance through the annual statement of internal control.

Regular meetings take place between relevant senior officers and Members of the Council to discuss and propose policy.

The Constitution also includes sections on the conduct of meetings, Financial Regulations, Financial Regulations (Contracts) and Codes of Conduct for Members and officers.

The Council established a wholly owned leisure services company, Liberty Leisure Limited, from October 2016. These arrangements have delivered cost reductions and increased income through the company operating as a commercial entity and opportunities to better fulfil the Council's aims through increased flexibility in day-to-day operations.

Full control of the company is maintained by the Council through the governance arrangements that are in place, with the Advisory Shareholder Sub-Committee maintaining an oversight of the company.

A Shared Services Board, chaired by the Chief Executive, meets regularly to keep shared service arrangements under review.

Strategies, Policies and Business Plans

The Council has a suite of strategies, policies and business plans which mirror its corporate priority themes and ensures that service delivery follows a clearly set out, politically approved and strategically led approach.



Electoral Arrangements

Elections for the Borough Council and Town/Parish Councils were held during 2023. The Council operates an 'all out' system of elections every four years.

Statutory Officers

The Council's statutory officers are the Chief Executive (as the 'Head of Paid Service'), the Deputy Chief Executive (as the 'Section 151 Officer') and the Monitoring Officer. All three officers are Members of the General Management Team (GMT) and have the authority to place reports in front of an appropriate Member body where an aspect of concern and within their statutory remit comes to their attention.

In particular, they are responsible for ensuring that the Council acts within the law and in accordance with established policies and procedures. The Section 151 Officer is specifically responsible for the proper discharge of financial arrangements and must advise the Council where any proposal might be unlawful or where expenditure is likely to exceed resources.

Regular discussions are held at weekly meetings of the General Management Team (GMT) about issues where governance is of concern and periodically a specific discussion takes place to identify areas of concern on the horizon, whether these may arise from such as legislative changes, changing service demands, political matters or financial problems, risk assessment that has been undertaken and any changes in the risk environment in which the Council is operating, and matters to be reported to future Committees.

The Deputy Chief Executive is the appointed Section 151 Officer and is a key Member of GMT. Being part of GMT, together with meeting with leading Members and attending full Council, Cabinet and other appropriate committees, as required, ensures that the Section 151 Officer can provide corporate financial advice to the Council at the appropriate level and that financial implications and risks are properly taken into account.

All reports to decision making Committees incorporate a statement on financial implications where appropriate which are subject to review by the Section 151 Officer and the Head of Finance Services. As such the Council's financial arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016).

The Section 151 Officer's responsibilities include ensuring that GMT and senior Members are made aware of any financial issues at the earliest opportunity and making sure that these are acted upon as appropriate.



The Monitoring Officer also attends GMT. Part of their responsibilities include ensuring that any legislative changes are known about and implemented as appropriate, together with monitoring that the Council does not act unlawfully.

Chief Officers are responsible for ensuring that legislation and policy relating to service delivery and health and safety are implemented in practice. Each Chief Officer signs a Statement of Internal Control to acknowledge responsibility in maintaining and operating functions in accordance with the Council's procedures and practices that uphold the internal control and assurance framework.

Internal Audit

The Chief Audit and Control Officer is the Council's designated 'Head of Internal Audit' and is under the management of the Deputy Chief Executive. Whilst the Chief Audit and Control Officer is not a Member of GMT, in all other respects the role is in accordance with guidance as laid down in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit, including their attendance at the Governance, Audit and Standards Committee and presenting reports in their own name.

The Chief Audit and Control Officer is responsible for the review of the systems of internal control and for giving an opinion on both the corporate and service specific standards in place. As reported to the Governance, Audit and Standards Committee, he has undertaken such a review and concluded that, in his opinion, "the current internal control environment is satisfactory such as to maintain the adequacy of the governance framework".

The Internal Audit Charter covers all activities of the Council at a level and frequency determined using a risk management methodology. The approach is designed to be risk-based so that it can focus resources on the key areas of risk facing the Council. The current arrangements include sharing Internal Audit management resources with Erewash Borough Council.

In advance of each financial year the Governance, Audit and Standards Committee is responsible for approving the Internal Audit Plan that governs each year's activity. Upon completion of each audit assignment, a report is produced for management with agreed actions for improvement. Regular progress reports on Internal Audit activity are submitted to the Governance, Audit and Standards Committee for scrutiny. This Committee can request further reviews to be undertaken and can request other committees to further investigate matters arising from any activities within their remit.





External Audit

The external auditor reviews the Council's arrangements for:

- preparing accounts in compliance with statutory and other relevant requirements
- ensuring the proper conduct of financial affairs and monitoring their adequacy and effectiveness in practice
- securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The external auditor gives their opinion on the Council's accounts and whether or not proper arrangements exist to secure value for money. The Council continues to examine the use of its financial systems to help produce information for financial management, the capacity of the Finance Services teams and the financial reporting processes used to advise Members during the course of the year.

Fraud and Corruption

The Department of Work and Pensions established a Single Fraud Investigation Service (SFIS) to manage benefit fraud investigation on a national basis. Officers employed by the Council to investigate benefit fraud transferred to SFIS in November 2015.

The Chief Audit and Control Officer is the central contact for non-benefit fraud allegations. The role of Internal Audit has been extended to act as a co-ordinating and investigating service for all non-benefit related fraud and corruption reports and to manage the Council's response to such reports. Internal Audit is supported in this by procuring specialist fraud investigation services as required from local partners, including Erewash Borough Council.

Partnerships

The Governance, Audit and Standards Committee has the responsibility to examine further procurement and collaborative working opportunities with the private sector and other local authorities. Cabinet has included in its remit the power to direct the work of any delivery vehicles established to deliver services within their remit. This may include partnership arrangements, including those with the voluntary and community sector. Where grants are provided to voluntary sector organisations, conditions are applied regarding the reporting of the activities of the grant receiving body and its financial standing. In particular, where grant funding exceeds a given value a service level agreement may be used to gain assurance over the use of funds.

Significant Governance Issues – Action Plans

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the matters listed as “opportunities for improvement” to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Actions

Implement the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman’s Joint Code for Complaint Handling

Review and Implement the current ASB Case Review (Community Trigger) process, procedure and documentation.

Employee Code of Conduct Review

Refresh the Economic Regeneration Strategy

Update to the South Notts Community Safety Partnerships Strategic Plan

Deliver the Health and Wellbeing and Crime Reduction Action Plans

Update to the Serious Violence and Violence against Women and Girls Strategy

Updates to the Sanctuary Policy Procedure and Documentation

Update the Counter Terrorism Local profile and Situational Risk Assessment

Update the safer Notts Board Information Sharing Protocol

Public Consultation on Brinsley Headstock replacement options

Adoption of an EVI Strategy

Actions

Refresh of the Climate Change and Green Futures Strategy

Produce a Blue and Green Infrastructure Strategy

Employee Consultation

Budget Consultation

Regulation 19 Consultation on the Core Strategy Review

Development of a People Strategy

Annual Constitution Review

Refresh the Business Strategy

Adoption of a new Corporate Plan

Adoption of a new Housing Strategy

Produce a Productivity Strategy

To understand the net present value analysis to allow for the best use of housing stock following the survey.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth E Hyde".

R Hyde
Chief Executive
Broxtowe Borough
Council



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M Radulovic".

Councillor
M Radulovic MBE
Leader of the Council
Broxtowe Borough Council



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