

Local Code of Corporate Governance 2026

North Herts Council

March 2026



**North
Herts**
Council

Introduction to Delivering Good Governance

North Herts District Council is committed to achieving good corporate governance and this Local Code of Corporate Governance confirms its ongoing commitment to do so. This Code outlines North Herts District Council's (NHDC's) approach towards corporate governance and the principles against which its arrangements will be measured.

What is Corporate Governance?

Governance comprises the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Government Chief Executives (SOLACE) set the standard for local authority governance in the UK through their Framework principles and published this set in April 2016. These principles are themselves derived from the International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014) (the 'International Framework'). CIPFA and SOLACE recommend that authorities adopt a local code of governance which sets out their governance arrangements, showing how governance principles are put into practice at their authority.

NHDC's Local Code is therefore based on the following principles:



These principles set by CIPFA and SOLACE underpin North Herts Council's:

- planning, priorities and objectives
- decision making
- policies and procedures
- culture, values and ways of working

[Delivering Good Governance in Local Government \(CIPFA and Solace, 2016, addendum 2025\)](#)

The principles A-G in the tables below indicate the core arrangements that North Herts District Council has and the things it does to support the principles. When we complete the required review of effectiveness each year and prepare our Annual Governance Statement, it will be in reference to these principles and how effectively our core arrangements are working in practice.

Governance Structure and Responsibilities

Council	Made up of 51 elected Councillors. It is the decision-making body for the Authority and determines the overall strategy and policy of the Council, including approval of the Council Plan.
Cabinet	The Cabinet takes decisions on service and management matters, except statutory matters reserved to Council. Cabinet consists of 9 elected members, including the Leader of the Council. An Executive member is assigned for each Council Directorate (7).
Finance, Audit, and Risk Committee (FAR)	Oversees the governance of the Council, making sure the Council has the processes in place to enable it to be run effectively. Carries out the statutory role of approving the Council's accounts and Annual Governance Statement. Keeps track of all the work that is being carried out by Internal Audit, the Anti-Fraud service and the Council's External Auditors- all with a focus on making sure things are done in the right way. Supports Cabinet in reviewing finance reports and ensuring we have processes in place to manage risk.
Overview & Scrutiny Committee (O&S)	Reviews and scrutinises decisions. They examine and make recommendations to Cabinet on service delivery of both Council services and other agencies. The Committee sets its own Work Programme and deals with matters under the Council's call-in procedure. They have the ability to set up Task and Finish Groups on specific issues.
CEO	Head of Paid Service. They co-ordinate discharge of all functions and exercise overall managerial and operational responsibility for staff. Leads the Leadership Team. Represents the Council on partnership and external bodies (as required by statute or the Council) and Strategic Partnerships. Emergency Planning Officer.
Section 151 Officer (S151)	Chief Finance Officer. Ensures lawfulness and financial prudence of decision-making and administration of financial affairs. They contribute to corporate management, providing advice, giving financial information and advising whether decisions of the Cabinet are within the Budget and Policy Framework.
Monitoring Officer	Maintains the Constitution, ensuring lawfulness and fairness of decision-making. Provides advice. Supports the Standards Committee. Receives complaints about Councillors and conducts investigations. Advises whether decisions of the Cabinet are within the Budget and Policy Framework.
Leadership Team	Comprised of the Chief Executive and 7 Directors, one for each directorate: Customers, Enterprise, Environment, Governance, Regulatory, Place, and Resources. They provide strategic leadership and oversight, helping support delivery of the Council Plan and its priorities, statutory services, and other work identified in Service Plans.

Chief Audit Executive–	This role is undertaken by the Shared Internal Audit Service, through the Council's Client Audit Manager. They manage the work to provide an overall opinion on adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's framework of governance, risk management and control.
Policy & Strategy Team	Compile the Local Code annually, to inform the drafting of the Annual Governance Statement, ensuring engagement with relevant teams for input into wording.

Sources of Assurance

Assurance sources provide evidence of whether the council's governance arrangements are functioning effectively. The table highlights the key sources of assurance, but this is not an exhaustive list.

Self-Assessment	We conduct a self-assessment annually to review how we are complying with the CIPFA and SOLACE principles and how effectively our governance arrangements are operating in practice. This self-assessment is overseen by the Leadership Team, with the Chief Executive and each director producing an assurance statement. The self-assessment informs our Annual Governance Statement and Action Plan.
Internal Audit	Conducted by the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS), internal audit provides an annual independent opinion on the council's governance and risk management frameworks and how substantially these comply with the CIPFA/SOLACE best practice guidance on corporate governance.
External Audit	Conducted by external auditors, external audit provides assurance on the accuracy of the year-end Statement of Accounts, the consistency of the Annual Governance Statement, and the adequacy of value for money (VFM) arrangements.
Anti-Fraud	The Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS) provide assurance around anti-fraud work. They are responsible for counter-fraud work and report cases of suspected, actual, or alleged fraud to the Finance, Audit, and Risk Committee.
Risk Management	Our risk management processes and reporting provide assurance in this area. Projects, risks, and performance indicators have been amalgamated into the Council Delivery Plan to ensure a more integrated corporate approach. It is reported to Overview & Scrutiny Committee each quarter.
Scrutiny	Assurance can be gained from scrutiny, particularly the work of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee who review and scrutinise decisions. They examine and make recommendations to Cabinet on service delivery of both Council services and other agencies.
Complaints Outcomes	Assurance can be gained from the outcomes of complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO); the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO); and to the Monitoring Officer regarding Councillor behaviour.

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 and have mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and to respect the rule of law

Sub-principles	Council's commitment to achieving good governance in practice
A1: Behaving with integrity	<p><i>Ensuring Members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operates Codes of Conduct for Members (refreshed LGA model adopted in April 2021 and effective after the 2021 election) and Employees, maintaining arrangements for sign off of these, awareness of key policies and reporting / investigating any allegations of breaching those Codes. The Codes cover topics such as conflicts of interest, whistleblowing, gifts and hospitality, political restriction, member and officer relations, fraud and corruption, bribery, outside interests, confidentiality, and information security. - As part of staff induction, employees are required to read and confirm they understand the Code of Conduct and other key governance-related policies, and to undertake essential e-learning trainings such as anti-bribery, before the end of their probationary period. Managers are responsible for checking that the required training has been undertaken. - Employees are required to complete an Annual Declaration letter which requires them to confirm that they understand the requirements of the key governance-related policies and to request further training or clarification if they do not. This is done via the e-learning platform (GrowZone) and HR keep a record of who has completed the letter and chase those who have not. - The Council has an Employee and Agency Worker Conflicts of Interest Policy, which lays out the process for declarations to be made. There is also guidance on Managing Organisational Conflicts in Council Roles and Duties. All employees and agency staff should complete a form prior to commencing employment and at least annually regarding conflicts. - Members sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office upon being elected, and in doing so agree to abide by the Code of Conduct. Code of conduct training prepared by the Legal Team is provided to Councillors.

- Members are expected to complete their Register of Interest form within 28 days of election. The Council maintains records of Member interests (including Parish Councillors) and publishes these on the website as part of the Localism Act 2011 requirements.
- The Council has a Member Training Protocol which sets out which elements of training are compulsory.
- The Council has a Media relations protocol to provide direction and guidance to council officers and Councillors on issues relating to the media, as well as providing the media with an indication of the service they should expect to receive from the council.
- The Council has a Comments, Compliments, and Complaints Policy which outlines the complaints process.
- The Council has a Complaints Handling Procedure for matters relating to the Councillor Code of Conduct. Complaints are made to and overseen by the Monitoring Officer (MO). The MO determines the course of action in consultation with the Independent Person. The MO reports summaries of the complaints and actions taken to the Standards Committee on a regular basis.
- Party Group Leaders and the Standards Committee Chair are kept informed of Monitoring Officer and standards matters monthly. The MO also holds quarterly meetings with the Independent Person, Reserve Independent Person (IPs) and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Standards Committee to discuss general Code issues/practice and any ongoing matters.
- The IP and Reserve IPs are appointed by Full Council under the Localism Act 2011. They receive internal training. They play a key role in promoting high standards of conduct by elected and co-opted Members. They act as advocate and ambassadors in promoting ethical behaviour, attend relevant training where Member conduct is discussed and are involved in dealing with complaints against Councillors. They are also involved in reviewing Policy and procedure prior to any revisions being presented to Standards Committee.
- Complaints concerning employees are dealt with according to the Managing Misconduct Policy (for relevant officers the process will also potentially involve the Independent Person/ Reserve Independent Person (IPs), Employment Committee and Full Council).
- The Council has a Members Planning Code of Good Practice which can be found at Appendix 1 of Section 8 of the Constitution. It is based on the Lawyers in Local Government 'LLG' model from January 2024.
- The Council has a Whistleblowing Policy which is available on the intranet and the external website. The Policy is promoted online and in our offices via posters. Advice is also available on the intranet for managers on handling Whistleblowing situations.
- There is an overarching Fraud Protection Policy that covers fraud, corruption, money-laundering, and bribery. The council is supported in its anti-fraud work by the Shared Anti-Fraud Service.

Ensuring Members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles).

- The Council has a Standards Committee which oversees and promotes high standards of Member conduct. The Independent Person and Reserve IPs are invited to attend meetings of the Standards Committee.
- The Chair of Standards Committee provides an annual report to Full Council. This is to help promote shared values with Members, employees, the community, and partners.
- All but the most minor amendments to governance-related policies are approved by Members. Where changes are made through delegated Member or officer delegations, they are published and notified to Members through the Member Information Service (MIS) and on the Council's website.
- Service areas are linked to specific Executive Portfolios. There is also a specific Executive Member for Governance and for Local Government Reorganisation.
- Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee, act as a critical friend Member body and reviews several areas including the 3Cs Full Year Update Report, the Annual Safeguarding Report, and the Annual Report on the Regulation of Investigation Powers Act (RIPA). The Committee consider and recommend action on a range of issues.
- Overview & Scrutiny Committee have a Scrutiny Charter (adopted in September 2024). The charter defines what scrutiny is and helps ensure meetings of the committee are conducted with independence, initiative, and integrity.

Leading by example and using these standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions.

- The Council Plan and other relevant strategies provide guiding principles for decision-making.
- The Council's scheme of delegation and terms of reference for each of its Committees and decision-making practices are outlined.
- The Council's Constitution is reviewed annually.
- The council has a set report / delegated decision format and guidance on how to complete the report and use of the delegated decision form and process. This includes a section to declare any relevant interests. Records of delegated decisions record any interests noted.
- Member declarations of interest are a standing item on committee meeting agendas. Minutes show declarations of interest were sought, and declarations made.

- A legal adviser attends all Council, Cabinet, Planning and Licensing Sub-Committee meetings to advise on Code and other issues where this is requested or otherwise considered appropriate.
- A legal advisor reviews delegated decisions and other committee reports prior to these being published.
- The Council operates an effective and pro-active Standards Committee as outlined above.
- The O&S Committee sets an agreed work programme for Task and Finish Groups and reviews.
- The O&S Committee can make recommendations to Cabinet which reflect their findings to further inform the decision-making process.

Demonstrating, communicating, and embedding the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively.

- The council's Fraud Prevention Policy covers Fraud, corruption, money laundering and bribery prevention.
- The council participates in a Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS), which has been operational since April 2015. The Council has a Board and Partner role in the Service. SAFS presents an Anti-Fraud action plan, progress reports and Annual Fraud report to FAR Committee.
- Fraud alerts are issued by SAFS to appropriate employees and managers as new threats arise and publish a Fraud & Corruption newsletter for employees.
- The mechanism to report fraud to SAFS is available on the website, with people able to report online or via phone.
- The Council Code of Conduct for Councillors sets out the requirements regarding Member interests, both statutory Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs), 'Other Registrable Interests' and other 'Non-Registrable Interests.' The Code sets out when and how declarations should be made and is part of the Council's Constitution.
- Members are obliged to declare interests to the Monitoring Officer and at relevant meetings. Records of interests are available on the website.
- Members receive a declaration form as part of their Induction Pack and receive annual reminders from the Monitoring Officer regarding declaration of interests.
- The council's Guidance for Managing Organisational Conflicts applies to Members and officers in the roles they undertake.
- There is a procedure to follow with regards to employee and agency worker conflicts of interest. All employees are required to complete the Register of Interest (ROI) form annually as part of the annual declaration and RPR process. The ROI form should be sent for approval by the Relevant Person (typically their Director). Any conflicts relating to Members will be dealt with by the Monitoring Officer if they arise.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council has a standing item on the agenda for Council meetings for the declaration of interests. This is minuted and recorded, with both available on the Council's website. - The Council has an Employee Handbook which covers code of conduct and refers to the Conflicts of Interests Policy. Employees are obliged to declare personal conflicts under the Policy to their Appropriate Officer and will be retained by those Officers. - The council maintains registers for Employee Gifts & Hospitality for each directorate as per the Employee Gifts and Hospitality Policy; and Members' declarations are retained by the Monitoring Officer as per the Members' Protocol for Gifts and Hospitality. - The Annual Declaration Letter for employees confirms that they are aware of key governance policies. - The Whistleblowing Policy enables Members and those working for the council (employees, agency staff and trainees) to report wrongdoing or potential wrongdoing. It is available on the intranet and the external website. Posters in the council offices remind staff what they can do regarding Whistleblowing. The Policy and webpage highlight the concern and the application of the Policy to services provided by third parties. It provides contact details for the Monitoring Officer, Chief Finance Officer and also the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS), SAFS and independent charity, Protect – for those who do not wish to contact the internal Council officers or those connected with the Council. - The council has a Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy (3 Cs) and summarises the 3Cs and learning outcomes. It reports these to the Leadership Team. Details of the 3 C's are also reported to O&S Committee on a regular basis. - Relevant Council officers attend the County wide customer services benchmarking group, which meets quarterly to discuss/ implement shared good practice. - The Leadership Team oversee a self-assessment of governance arrangements, and development of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) in line with the CIPFA / Solace Framework Principles. Scoring of effectiveness is based on: Full/ Substantial/ Moderate/ Limited/ No assurance
<p>A2: Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values</p>	<p><i>Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complaints concerning employees are dealt with according to the Managing Misconduct Policy, and/ or Employment Procedure rules for officer (for relevant officers will also potentially involve the Independent Person Panel, Employment Committee and Full Council). - The Council has a Standards Committee which oversees and promotes high standards of Member conduct. It is composed of 12 Councillors and 2 non-voting co-opted Parish Councillors. The Independent Person and Reserve Independent Persons (IPs) are invited to attend the meetings of the Standards Committee. The Committee oversees the Complaints

Handling Procedure and Final Determination Hearings through a Sub-Committee. The Chairperson of the Standards Committee provides an annual report to Full Council. This is designed to promote shared values with Members, employees, the community, and partners.

- The O&S Committee and Finance, Audit, and Risk (FAR) Committee also play a role in scrutiny of ethical decision-making. Both Committees present an annual report to Full Council detailing actions, recommendations, and contributions to the council's overall governance.
- The Monitoring Officer (MO) is responsible for providing advice on ethics and governance to the Standards Committee and to the Members of this Council. The MO or Deputy Monitoring Officer attends Full Council and Cabinet, and Lawyers attend regulatory Committees - such as Planning, Licensing and Standards to be on hand to provide advice. A Finance Officer attends Full Council, Cabinet and FAR Committee. Legal services/The MO maintain records of advice provided.
- The Leadership Team oversees the review of governance arrangements and production of the AGS as outlined above. The AGS is then presented to FAR Committee for their consideration and approval, both in draft and final form. The AGS includes an action plan to address weaknesses of governance. Progress on this action plan is reported back to FAR Committee.

Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation's culture and operation.

- The Council has organisational values which are Adaptable, Inclusive, Learning, Listening, and Together. These values are clearly communicated both via online channels and via posters in the district council offices. Staff must indicate how they demonstrate the values in their Regular Performance Reviews, and Staff Recognition Awards are explicitly tied to the organisational values.
- Training on the Code of Conduct and other key areas is provided to Members as outlined above.
- Specialist training is provided to Members who sit on Planning, Licensing, and FAR Committees.
- Training is provided to staff on key aspects of ethical awareness, including: Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion; and safeguarding vulnerable adults and children.
- The Council has White Ribbon accreditation and is working on delivering an action plan to tackle the root causes of male violence against women and girls. Staff are encouraged to sign-up as Ambassadors or Champions.
- Senior Managers Group (SMG) receives updates and training on ethical awareness-related areas as relevant.

Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values.

- The Council has policies and procedures for Members and Employees to declare interests, including Organisational ones. Members are obliged to comply with such arrangements under their Code of Conduct and employees sign an Annual Declaration Letter to ensure that they are aware of and will comply with key governance policies. A Register of Interests is kept. Members interests are published on the website.
- The Regular Performance Review (RPR) system incorporates the compulsory Annual Declaration Letter (see A1). The RPR also asks staff to discuss how they are meeting the organisational values and behaviours.
- The Recruitment and Selection Policy promotes a fair selection process to ensure compliance with equality and employment legislation and that the best candidate is offered the job.
- The How We Work document outlines the expectations that employees and managers can have of each other.
- The Contract Procedure Rules (Section 20 of the Constitution) underpin the Council's approach to Procurement. They highlight that the evaluation criteria must adhere to principles of non-discrimination and equality.
- General procurement guides are available on the Council's intranet (the Hub) covering Public Procurement Rules and Legislation, Procurement Processes, Contract Management, and the Social Values Act.

Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with high ethical standards expected by the organisation.

- An Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2022-2027 which outlines the Council's legal duties as well as its broader commitment to EDI.
- A Cabinet Sub-Committee, with oversight of Local Authority Trading Company participation, promoting consistency in shareholder approach.
- A CCTV Joint Committee with remit to agree, for example, strategic, Policy, Code of Practice issues relating to the jointly owned and operated CCTV Control and Monitoring Service.
- The council is part of the North Herts Community Safety Partnership (CSP) that works together to deliver several projects which support community safety and crime and disorder issues. The partnership develops an annual plan which addresses their strategic priorities each year.
- The wholly owned Local-Authority Building Control Company which the council helped set up. The council is one of eight equal shareholders, with other Herts local authorities being the other

	<p>shareholders. It continues to be an example of a key collaborative working initiative. Governance arrangements are reviewed regularly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The council's Procurement Strategy sets out key aims around how we will maximise value for money and public benefit within procurement. - Procurement Guidelines for Suppliers / Tendering guidance is available on the Council's website, making it clear that contractors must comply with the Contract Procurement Rules and Financial Regulations, and what is expected from them during the process. - The council has a "Go Local" policy for procurement under £100,000. - The Contract Procurement Rules place requirements on employees to incorporate Anti-Bribery and Social Value provisions (the latter where relevant) as part of the contracts with suppliers. - Contracts should ensure that suppliers are under a contractual obligation to adhere to the requirements of the Bribery Act 2010 and the Councils' requirements as set out in the Councils' Anti-Bribery Policy. Standard Procurement Templates are available covering Invitations to Tender that include standard wording requiring potential suppliers to confirm that the supplier has adequate anti-bribery procedures in place and will adhere to the council's policy. - The council uses a Social Value Portal which provides a mechanism for maximising social value at the tender stage of procurement. The portal enables us to measure, manage, and report on social value, looking at how the organisation and its suppliers make a difference in communities according to Themes, Outcomes, and Measures (TOMs). - The council has a comprehensive approach to reviewing its Contract Procurement Procedures. It has a Procurement Officer and Contracts & Procurement Group (CPG) with relevant service area representation on the CPG. The Procurement Officer and a specialist Contracts & Procurement Lawyer lead on any review, with this being considered by the CPG prior to initial consideration by FAR Committee, and then Full Council.
<p>A3: Respecting the rule of law</p>	<p><i>Ensuring members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council has a Monitoring Officer (MO) whose role is to ensure that decisions are taken lawfully, in a fair manner, with procedures followed. After consulting the Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer (CFO) the MO has a statutory duty/power to report any proposal, decision or omission that he/she considers would give rise to unlawfulness or any decision or omission that has given rise to maladministration ("Section 5 report"). - The Legal Team maintain records of legal advice provided. - Committee reports must be sent to the Legal Team, the Chief Finance Officer, the Risk Team, the Policy Team, and HR for review and comment, prior to being uploaded.

- The Council's Constitution includes a scheme of delegation and terms of reference for each of the Council's Committees, and decision-making practices are outlined. The Council's Constitution is reviewed annually and often in-year as issues arise.
- The Council's Fraud Prevention Policy, which includes the Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Bribery, Anti- Fraud and Tax Evasion. In addition, the Whistleblowing Policy, are kept under review and are available on the internet.
- Contract Procurement Rules in Section 20 of the Constitution underpin the Council's approach to Procurement. Standard Contracts include an obligation to adhere to the requirements of the Bribery Act 2010 and the Councils' requirements as set out in the Councils' Fraud Prevention Policy.

Creating the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders and members are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements.

- See details of training arrangements in A1 and A2.
- The Constitution identifies the key statutory officers (Head of Paid Service – Chief Executive; Chief Finance Officer (CFO) [the Director for Resources], and the Monitoring Officer [(the Director for Governance), and sets out their roles. All are part of the Leadership Team to oversee matters.
- The Council's CFO (s151 Officer) has a duty to the Council's taxpayers to ensure that public money is being appropriately spent and managed and reports directly to the Head of Paid Service. The CFO ensures that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, is responsible for keeping proper financial records and accounts and for maintaining an effective system of internal control.
- The CFO is a Member of a specified accountancy body (section 113 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988) and has a duty under section 114 of the 1988 Act to consult with the Head of Paid Service and Monitoring Officer on any unlawful expenditure and/or an unbalanced Budget, and to report this to all Members.
- The Council's financial management arrangements conform to the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016).
- The Council's financial management arrangements are underpinned by a regulatory framework comprising of the Financial Regulations, Contract Procurement Rules, annual audits of key financial systems, audits of other systems undertaken on a risk-based basis and the role of the statutory Section 151 (Chief Finance) officer.

- The Monitoring Officer (MO) is responsible for providing advice on ethics and governance to the Standards Committee and to the Members of this Council. The MO maintains a record of advice provided.
- Terms of Reference for Full Council, Cabinet and Committees are set out in the Constitution. The Constitution reflects the legislative arrangements for defining executive and non-executive functions.
- A Legal advisor attends Full Council, Cabinet and regulatory Committees – such as Planning, Licensing and Standards. They are able to provide legal advice.
- The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) or their Deputy attends Full Council, Cabinet and the Finance Audit and Risk Committee.
- All Committee reports and delegated decision templates have required areas for legal advice (as well as Finance, Risk, Social Value, and Equality and Environmental Implications requirements). Report writers must comment on the implications the report's recommendations will have in these areas. This helps inform decision making. Part 1 reports are published and available for inspection as per the statutory requirements.
- Committee Member Overview & Scrutiny Services provide support to the Council, Councillors and the democratic processes of the Council. The team organise the civic calendar of Committee meetings dates, the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions, prepare and dispatch agendas and reports in advance of the meetings and take and dispatch minutes and decision sheets after the meetings. Delegated decisions are retained by them and are available on-line.

Striving to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders.

- As outlined above, all Committee reports and delegated decision templates have required areas for legal, financial, and other relevant advice and part 1 reports are published and available for inspection as per the statutory requirements.
- Legal services maintains records of advice provided.

Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively.

- As outlined above, the council has a Monitoring Officer appointed by Full Council, with role and remit set out in statute and the Constitution. See above for details.
- The Monitoring Officer has a key reporting role in terms of the Whistleblowing arrangements.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Any potential illegality that could result from decisions would be reported to the Monitoring Officer by relevant legal officers, having reviewed a report or delegated decision. Any issues would be resolved by the MO. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-fraud and corruption arrangements as set out in A1. - Complaints made to the MO and reported to the Standards Committee, as set out above. - The Whistleblowing Policy as set out above. - Assurances are provided by the Council's internal audit function that is delivered by SIAS and are a significant source of assurance. - The Shared Anti Fraud Service (SAFS) reviews arrangements and presents reports to FAR Committee on types of fraud, outcomes of closed cases and ongoing investigations.
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Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Local government is run for the public good; organisations therefore should 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.

Sub-principles	Council's commitment to achieving good governance in practice
B1: Openness	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual reports are presented to various committees including 3C's, Annual Report on the Regulation of Investigation Powers Act, Risk Management, Overview & Scrutiny, Standards Committee, SAFS and FAR annual report. - Continue to be directed by the Council Plan 2024-2028 the priorities and vision as developed by the Labour administration, assessed by Cabinet members and Leadership Team, and referred to Council from Cabinet, approved in September 2024. - Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers achievement against the key projects as outlined in the Council Delivery Plan. - The relevant documents are made available on the Council's website, including the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Council Delivery plan that is reviewed and updates provided quarterly.

- An Investment Strategy (which includes the Capital Programme and Treasury Management Strategy) is considered by FAR, Cabinet and approved by Full Council, and sets the treasury management and capital programme operations that are
- associated with the MTFS. It is reviewed each year and monitored quarterly.
- The Council's Corporate business planning programme is used to assess identified projects against criteria including the Council's agreed policy, its priorities, the outcomes of public consultation, demonstration of continuous improvement and changing
- legislative need. Performance figures are reviewed by O & S Committee and relevant recommendations made.
- The Council publishes a report that accompanies the Statement of Accounts, explains any amendments that have been required by the external auditors, and the Letter of Representation, including Signed Audit Opinion of the CFO & Chair of FAR Committee enables the external auditors to form an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the Council financial position and of its income and expenditure for the year ended, in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.
- An Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Report sets out the annual internal audit position and provides an overall assurance level for the Council.
- An External Auditors Audit Results report for year end, reported through to FAR Committee will be compiled annually.
- Projects will be reviewed by O & S Committee/ Task & Finish Groups and recommendations made where necessary or requested.
- The Council has a Freedom of Information (FOI) publication scheme that details information that is routinely made available by the Council and whether there is a charge for this information, FOI annual request figures, information about FOI/ Environmental Information and Data Protection, Review and complaints procedures.
- Open Data is regularly published on the website, and is open to use and re-use, through the terms of the Open Government Licence. This covers: Budgets for the year; contracts register; Constitution; Council meeting dates; agendas and minutes; Councillor allowances; election results; fraud; grants and awards; land and property assets; Organisation structure chart; Parking revenue (on-street and off-street); Pay Policy Statement; Payments to Suppliers; Performance management; Senior employee salaries and job descriptions; Statement of Accounts; Trade Union Facility Time; Waste contracts.
- The 'Council Tax Information' webpage provides information on the Council's performance, expenditure and efficiencies. Business Rates Annual Notification, explanatory notes and background information are also provided via the webpage. NHC provided Published data sets on NNDR, including full list and monthly credit balances.
- NHC publishes an Annual Monitoring Report, containing indicators and targets across the district to aid with future planning decisions and identification of local priorities.

- The North Herts Community Safety Partnership (NHCSP) develops an Annual Strategic Action Plan.
- An Air Quality Annual Status report will be compiled regularly.
- The Council's website complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) AA rating for Local Authorities.

Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided.

- There is an effective Committee administration process in places so that all Council meeting agendas, reports, minutes available for inspection, and these, together with public meeting recordings are made available online.
- Pre-meetings and report deadlines dates are circulated in advance to Members and officers by Committee services. Statutory notice of key executive decisions is provided through the Council's Forward Plan in accordance with Access to Information requirements. Outlook magazine publishes details on how to find future meeting dates including councillor surgeries, circulated twice a year.
- NHC presumes openness and transparency, with reports, or confidential parts of reports, only being exempt for the public so long as statutory exemption requirements apply. Report author will consider matters like these with the designated 'Proper officer' as the Constitution lays out.
- Meetings are open to the public, held both hybrid and virtually via Zoom, streamed live to YouTube and made available on the council's YouTube channel afterwards - unless an exemption applies (and the press and public only required to leave for so long as such items are considered). There is a system to record public meetings and welcomes the ability of the press and public to record meetings under an adopted Protocol - Protocol for Recording of Council Meetings.
- The council keeps up to date a Council and Democracy page on the NHDC website, that links to information about the Council, Councillors, MPs, Council meetings, Council departments, Forward Plan of Key Decisions, Petitions, Notices of Part 2 (exempt) decisions that the Council intends to take in the near future, delegated decisions, recordings/ the right to record Council meetings, Notices of Urgent Decisions.
- The council makes available on the website; Public Registers and Delegated Decisions, Planning applications, and review decisions made in the last 3 years, and Delegated Executive and Non-Executive decisions.
- The Council's Constitution also sets out what information is available to the public and how to engage with the Council in Section 3.

- Community forum meetings are accompanied by notes on recommendations made. Papers of recommendations are uploaded to ModGov in advance of the meeting, and notes uploaded following the forum. Where forums are held in the Council Chamber, meetings will be recorded.

Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear.

- The Council's Constitution sets the basis of decision making delegations/ remit for Council, Cabinet, Committee meetings, Member and officer delegations.
- A calendar of meetings is approved each year at Annual Council in May.
- The Forward Plan, with key decisions is updated and placed on the Council's website, with reminders regularly circulated to officers to ensure it is up to date.
- An Annual Report on Key Decisions and cases of special urgency is provided to Full Council and placed on the Council's website.
- The council has Adopted a standard report, Information note and delegated decision format, with guidance, with the report and delegated decision templates covering: an Executive summary, reasons for the recommendation(s), options considered, consultation, forward plan, background, relevant considerations, legal/ financial/ risk/ equalities/ social value/ environmental and human resource implications. Report templates and guidance notes can be found on the internal Hub for officer use.

Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions/courses of action.

- North Herts Council reports go through a review process with officers to identify gaps or opportunities in decisions to make amends for the benefit of service users.
- Where necessary, council staff will organise member and staff workshops to develop plans and priorities for key projects such as the Council Plan and Local Plan to ensure wide consultation with relevant service areas and course of action for the authority.
- The Council has a 5 year Consultation Strategy for 2022-2027 that sets out the methods that will be used to consult and practical considerations for doing so. This entails various approaches to consultation and availability through the Council's website.
- The Council has engagement pages using a digital engagement platform linked to the existing website. The pages set up include Climate Change and Environment, The North Herts Climate Hive, as well as pages on the Churchgate Regeneration project and one dedicated to the work of Community Engagement.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the Council will involve the community in preparing the Local Plan and in considering planning applications. A review of the statement is undertaken every 5 years, with the most recent review taking place in 2023. - The Council's Marketing and Communications Strategy 2024-2028 outlines how we will plan and manage our marketing and communications activities. - The Council continues to focus on effective and inclusive consultation between the authority and the service users of North Hertfordshire. Methods of engagement will include Citizens Panels, focus groups, e- letter communication, and online surveys. The report and decision record template prompts authors and documents consultation that has taken place and is part of the retained record for examination. The communications team assist services to carry out and understand the value of consultation in their areas. - Joint Staff Consultative Committee (JSCC) and Staff Consultation Forum (SCF) ensure staff consultation and open involvement in decision making. - The Council uses Microsoft forms for the creation of surveys to consult with residents and stakeholders. - The Council's Member and Officer involvement in outside bodies assists with community engagement and reviewing use of resources to ensure that outcomes are achieved as intended, for example, but not limited to Citizen's Advice North Herts, North Herts Ethnic Forum, Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, Walsworth Community Association, Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, and Royston First Advisory Council.
<p>B2: Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders</p>	<p><i>Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives, and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our Customer Service Strategy 2021-2027 aims to put people first and ensure accessible services. - As in Section B1, the Council's Marketing and Communications Strategy 2024-2028 outlines how we will plan and manage our marketing and communications activities. - The Council's 'Outlook' Magazine is provided to all households in the District and is available on the Council's website. It contains information about the Council's services and events, distributed biannually (Summer and Winter Edition). - The Consultation Strategy as outlined above in Section B1. - The Councils' Media relations protocol provides direction and guidance to employees and Councillors on issues relating to the media as well as to provide the media with an indication of the service they should expect to receive from the Council. - The Social Media Acceptable Use Policy outlines ways stakeholders can contact NHC via social media and out guidelines for dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Guidance is also provided to Members to comply with this policy as part of Member Development.

- Social Media sites and text alert service are used to widen communication with local residents.
- The Council has a engagement platforms providing space for council updates and community engagement on the council's budget, Climate and Sustainability and Churchgate Regeneration.

Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively.

- NHC continues to make use of the Citizens Panel.
- NHC remains part of the Hertfordshire Growth Board that is responsible for countywide growth and is made up of leaders and Chief Executives from each council in the county.
- North Hertfordshire continues to be part of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), which looks to work collaboratively to tackle climate change and environmental degradation across Hertfordshire.
- North Hertfordshire forms part of Hertfordshire Futures, to ensure a prosperous economy for the district's residents and businesses. Officers also attend various cross District equivalents meetings across service areas, for example for Legal, Planning, Corporate Policy and Environmental Services, which aids shared good practice Shared services / partnerships arrangements are explored as and when appropriate to do so.
- The Council's report and record of decision format clearly documents consultation and outcomes as part of the decision making process with any changes suggested and actioned.
- The Council has a list of stakeholders to be consulted with including a Local Plan consultation list and Local interest group list for specific topic areas.
- The Council is part of Hertfordshire Property Partnership (HPP). Legal Services are part of "Herts First" Legal Service provision and the Public Law Partnership (PLP).
- Legal Services (with other authorities in Hertfordshire) have a protocol in place with Hertfordshire Constabulary for the reporting of alleged offences by Councillors.

Ensuring that partnerships are based on: — trust — a shared commitment to change — a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners and that the added value of partnership working is explicit.

- NHC continues to work with Town Centres in Partnership to co-ordinate and progress the work in the town and tackle growth and development challenges.
- NHC's work with Shared Service Partnerships for Internal Audit, Anti-Fraud and Insurance, recognise the benefits of partnership working, accepting challenge and a shared commitment to change and improvement of services and practices.
- NHC has a Grants policy that sets out the basis of supporting local groups and partner organisations.

B3: Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users

Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes.

- The Council hold records on public consultation for the last 4 years on its website.
- The Council has Strategic Policies in place with stakeholders and partner organisations to contribute to the achievement of the intended outcomes. See A2 & B2.

Ensuring that communication methods are effective, and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement.

- The Council has a Marketing and Communications Strategy, a Consultation Strategy and Media Relations Protocol.
- The Council provides media training for Executive Members/ Chairmen of Committee.
- The Council's Community Engagement team ensure communication with stakeholders, partner organisations and community groups on a local level which is directed by the Annual Service Area Plan.

Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs.

- Hertfordshire County Council host a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which includes a district breakdown of health, social care needs and areas of inequality, results of these are shared to the relevant teams within the Council to inform decision making.

Implementing effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how their views have been taken into account.

- As covered in Sections B1,2&3.

Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity.

- The Council's Citizen panel is open to all residents and is made up of a cross section of the community in terms of demographic mix of age, gender, education, status and location.

Taking account of the interests of future generations of taxpayers and service users.

- The Council has a multi-media approach to contact – online, in person, by phone, by post, with self-service and social media sites (on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram, dedicated e-mail bulletins and digital magazine). The use of social media sites and text alerts are geared towards engagement with younger residents.
- The Council has access to and uses the Hertfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which holds district and county-level data on our population.
- The Council assesses needs through evidence-based Strategic needs assessments assisting with planning process and Local Plan Development.
- The Council produces a monitoring report for key indicators: business development, housing, transport, local services, performance of policies in the adopted Local Plan, employment monitoring. It also looks at any deficiencies in the scope of current monitoring and how it can be improved in future. This report and previous ones are available to residents via the Council's website
- The Council engages with different groups through its nominated Members on bodies such as Baldock Community Association, Royston Community Association and Hitchin Educational Foundation.

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 authority'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

Sub-principles	Council's commitment to achieving good governance in practice
C1: Defining outcomes	<p><i>Having a clear vision which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provides the basis for the organisation's overall strategy, planning and other decisions.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council has a clearly defined vision and priorities set out in the Council Plan 2024-2028. The Priorities of the plan are Thriving Communities, Accessible Services, Responsible Growth

and Sustainability. These provide the foundations for the Service planning process, and officers are required to indicate on their reports which priority the report relates to. Delivery is monitored through detailed Senior Management, Committee and Executive Member / Member procedures. The Council Delivery Plan supports the delivery of the Council Plan. It is set in March of each year and monitored and reviewed quarterly at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. It sets out the key projects the Council is looking to carry out during the year and shows key risks and performance indicators.

- The NHC values are intended to define how we work as an organisation, striving to be Adaptable, Inclusive, Learning, Listening and Together.
- The Regular Performance Review process ensures alignment of staff to the council's adopted Values and Priorities set out in the Council Plan.

Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer.

- The Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027 sets out equality objectives and how the authority complies with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Equalities implications on service users and stakeholders are monitored through committee reports and an Annual Cumulative Equalities Assessment.
- Joint Staff Consultative Committee (JSCC) and Staff Consultation Forum (SCF) ensure staff consultation and open involvement in decision making.

Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available.

- The Leadership Team reviews key projects, and performance indicator reports including top risks identified through the Performance Management System and Risk Reporting System (Ideagen).
- The NHDC Project Management Framework including the Risk Management Framework Strategy assist in the review, planning and progress deliver of projects in line with the council priorities and encourages evaluation and lessons learnt. The Performance and Risk Management Group oversees the Project Management Framework, and offers support and guidance relating to its application and use.
- Reporting performance figures to O & S; Finance, Audit & Risk and Cabinet.
- Reporting quarterly budget, capital and treasury management information to FAR Committee and Cabinet.
- Reporting Risk Management Information to FAR Committee and Cabinet.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SIAS and SAFS provide updates on progress as against their Audit/ Service Plans to FAR Committee. <p><i>Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Processes, resource and dedicated teams for performance management and reporting aim to keep Leadership Team and Members informed of progress in line with priorities. - Officers present reports on Risk Management Governance to the FAR committee twice a year, with a year-end report reported to Full Council. - Risk management protocols in place to identify and manage risks through the Performance and Risk Management Team, Risk and Performance Management Group that meets quarterly, Risk Management Member 'champion' (currently the Executive Member for Finance and IT). These arrangements are underpinned by the Risk Management Framework Strategy, Risk Management Framework Policy and Policy Statement, Risk Management Toolkit and the Ideagen Risk Management System to keep all members and staff informed via a guest log in. - The FAR Committee has the responsibility to monitor risk and Cabinet for awareness and overall management of risk. - Officers present reports on Risk Management Governance to the FAR committee twice a year, with an year-end report reported to Full Council. <p><i>Managing service user's expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Customer Services Strategy 2021-2027 outlines the aims and actions for customer service for NHC. - Customer care standards that aims to deliver high responsive, high quality, value for money, customer focussed services [Customer Care Standards page]. - 3C's Policy 2025-2028 - Outlook Magazine produced and delivered twice a year outlining service provision.
C2: Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	<p><i>Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) looks five years ahead to ensure the Council's commitment to the delivery of its Objectives. This is accompanied by the Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury). Regular Treasury Management reviews will be presented to Finance, Audit and Risk Committee with an end of year report.

- The Finance Audit & Risk Committee and Cabinet reviews the Council's revenue, capital and treasury management activity on a quarterly basis.
- All reports and records of decisions record the financial, social value, equality and environmental impacts. The Social Value policy and approach is covered in terms of the impact on procurement and the "Go Local" Policy, detailed in the Contract Procurement Rules that are part of the Council Constitution (under Section 20).

Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the organisation's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints.

- NHDC has an established Cabinet and or Full Council decision making process to take account of risk, making decision making transparent, allowing issues to be teased out and further information requested prior to a final decision being made. Where relevant, decision call in by O & S before implementation of Executive Decisions.
- 3-5 year Strategies/ Policies (such as the MTFs) that balance risk and opportunity within the political cycle and financial constraints.
- Member involvement in reviewing, recommending and then approving, Report/ Record of Decision templates.

Determining the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs.

- NHDC will continue to use and update A Consultation Strategy that sets out the methods that will be used to consult.
- The Council launched engagement pages using digital engagement platform for various topics, these are to be used as regularly as possible for engagement with the public.

Ensuring fair access to services.

- The Council's Priority of Accessible Services ensures all services are accessible and easy to use by all residents, communities and stakeholders.
- The Council has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2027 and Customer Service Strategy to ensure needs of all residents and stakeholders are met accordingly.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council carries out review of equality impacts in Committee reports, and where necessary completes and reviews Equality Impact Assessments, including where necessary, consideration of assessment for key decisions. These Assessments are collated to form the Annual Cumulative Equality Impact Assessment, with results reported to Leadership. - The Council has passed a motion around Digital Inclusion which ensures those without access to digital services are supported equally from access to services and engaging in consultation. - Continue to monitor accessible services through the 3C's Policy, while reviewing and updating practice.
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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. Determining the right mix of these courses of action Page | 5 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 continually to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.

Sub-principles	Council's commitment to achieving good governance in practice
D1: Determining interventions	<p><i>Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and including the risks associated with those options. Therefore ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council's constitution outlines delegation and decision-making processes, including annual review, as covered in Section A1. Also outlined previously are alternative options considered and risk analysis included within report and delegated decision templates - A Legal adviser attends all Council, Cabinet, Planning and Licensing Committee meetings to advise on Code and other issues where this is requested or otherwise considered appropriate. - As covered in A3, the Civic Calendar of committee dates are organised, and notification of deadlines and agenda despatch are circulated. - As covered in B3, the calendar of meetings is approved at annual council, with key decisions on the Forward Plan updated on the Council's website. - The Procurement Team monitors the Council's contract register and renewal timescales to ensure the commissioning cycle is applied and relevant officers renew in time / meet the needs of the Council and try to achieve improved outcomes.

	<p><i>Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sections B and C outlined our Consultation Strategy, Digital Strategy. Section C outlined project, performance and risk review process from various groups, boards, Leadership Team and Committees, including Council and/or Cabinet. Also the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Financial rules as part of the Constitution. - Statement of Account statutory publishing and inspection process that allows the local government electors to inspect object to the local auditor.
D2: Planning interventions	<p><i>Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Processes previously described in Section B1 on Corporate business planning process. Consultation Strategy and Digital Strategy as covered in Sections B and C. - Project Management Framework and guidance and risk review process as outlined in Section C. - A Statement of Community Involvement – Formally adopted in September 2023 at Cabinet, it sets out how the Council will involve the community in the planning process. The current version reflects that the Local Plan 2011-2031 has now been adopted and sets out how the public can be involved in subsequent elements including Supplementary Planning Document, neighbourhood plans, pre-application masterplans, and the review of the Local Plan. The final version reflects amendments made as a result of a six week public consultation period. Government has issued regulations to enact a new plan-making system from the end of March 2026. This includes new requirements around community engagement. These will be incorporated as necessary into the planned review of the Local Plan. - The council's calendar of meetings and Forward Plan process indicates when strategic and operations matters will be considered. <p><i>Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council's Marketing and Communication Strategy sets out our approach for engaging with internal and external stakeholders as mentioned in Section B. The Council also has the Customer Service Strategy 2021-2027, and Digital Strategy 2023-2027.

- The council works within partner organisations, such as: The Co-operative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN), East of England Local Government Association, East and North Herts NHS Trust – Involvement Committee, Groundwork Hertfordshire East, Herts Leaders’ Group, Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, London Luton Airport Consultative Committee, The Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), and Hertfordshire Policy and Partnerships Network.
- The Council notifies yearly the Nominations of Representatives of Outside Bodies.
- The Council funds Citizens Advice North Herts, North Herts Centre for Voluntary Service, and the North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum through more formal contractual arrangements for service delivery.

Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks.

- Service Directors have to identify threats to service delivery/performance in their own work areas, when undertaking projects, letting contracts, formulating or introducing new policies and engaging in partnership working. The Risk Management Group reviews minor changes to the Risk Management Framework regularly.
- Cabinet receives a year-end update on Risk Management Governance
- As included in section C, the Council has a Project Management Framework. Contract Procurement Rules include an initial requirement to carry out a new procurement risk assessment with the Risk Manager and post procurement lessons learnt log.
- Risk Management and control of resources are crucial elements of the Financial Regulations section 19 of the Constitution, to develop, maintain robust management, which are key to delivering services (whether delivered internally externally or in partnership).

Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering outputs can be adapted to changing circumstances.

- Section D2 provides detail on processes, which demonstrate the systems in place.
- Project Management at the council continues to follow the Prince2 Framework, enabling organisation, control and clear outcomes through the project if and when circumstances change.

Establishing appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured.

- Appropriate Performance Indicators are agreed and implemented through the processes described in C1 and included in service plans.
- Shared service indicators, such as for SIAS and SAFS are agreed and included in the service plan approved by FAR Committee.

Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly.

- The Council has Performance Indicator Monitoring Reports include results, reasons and any corrective action with reports provided to the Leadership Team.

Preparing budgets in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan.

- Quarterly updates are provided on the Council Delivery Plan to ensure a corporate and integrated approach with risk and performance, this is taken to O&S committee.
- As demonstrated in Section B1, the Council Plan is supported by the corporate business planning programme – and the five year Medium Term financial strategy (MTFS) which is reviewed annually.
- The Council considers the delivery of value for money as part of the budget setting process, especially in relation to budget changes.
- Quarterly Revenue Budget & Capital Programme monitoring, & Treasury Management reports to Finance, Audit & Risk Committee and Cabinet.
- SIAS and SAFS progress against Plans reports to Finance, Audit & Risk Committee.

Informing medium and long term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy.

- The MTFS, as indicated at B1, is reviewed annually to set an indicative 5 year financial plan for the longer term strategic vision as well as a detailed one year budget. The MTFS and annual budget are prepared in line with the agreed Objectives and Council Plan/ business planning process. The Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury also ensures sustainable funding and investment.
- Budget workshops are provided to Political groups in or around November prior to budget setting.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council provides Employee Procedure Guides and Training Manuals on Budgetary matters as well as Learning Management System e-learning modules on: Accounting – An introduction; Financial Regulations Workshop; Procurement for Budget Holders; Contract Management Training; and Closure of Accounts; which are accessible to employees and Members.
D3: Optimising achievement of intended outcomes	<p><i>Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council’s Project management lessons log and details of the relevant lessons in Corporate Lessons Learnt Log provides details of priorities and ability to deliver within resources. - The council has a 3 C’s Policy to ensure feedback from service users is understood and changes made as a result. - The Council ensures communication of background information for the budget that informs the budget workshop and monitors these as part of the efficiencies. <p><i>Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Details of budgeting guidance is demonstrated in D2 above. <p><i>Ensuring the medium term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A MTFS is in place and further detail available in Sections B1, C2, D1 and D2 above. <p><i>Ensuring the achievement of ‘social value’ through service planning and commissioning. The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 states that this is “the additional benefit to the community...over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council’s Service Plans reflect the need to consider the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, with implications of the authority’s investment into local projects (and where relevant in procurement). - The Council has it’s Procurement Strategy 2025-2028 demonstrating the consideration of social value and maximising public benefit aligned with our Council priorities.

- All reports and records of decisions require consideration of Social Value Act 2012 implications of a decision. Social Value is also covered in the “Go Local” Policy, detailed in the Contract Procurement Rules see Section 20 on Constitution page (two version pre and post Procurement Act 2023 enactment from February 2025) Social Value and Go Local guidance is provided for procurement on the Hub for employees.
- The Council has an Equality, Diversity and inclusion Strategy 2022-2027.

Principle E: Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

Local government needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications and mindset, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve their intended outcomes within the specified periods. A local government organisation must ensure that it has both the capacity to fulfil its own mandate and to make certain that there are policies in place to guarantee that its management has the operational capacity for the organisation as a whole. Because both individuals and the environment in which an authority operates will change over time, there will be a continuous need to develop its capacity as well as the skills and experience of the leadership of individual staff members. Leadership in local government entities is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of backgrounds, reflecting the structure and diversity of communities.

Sub-principles	Council’s commitment to achieving good governance in practice
E1: Developing the entity’s capacity	<p><i>Reviewing operations, performance, use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The council is part of shared services for internal audit and anti-fraud – the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) and (SAFS), with regular performance reviews. - SIAS audit various projects and service areas each year and report on these as part of their annual report to FAR committee. They make recommendations as needed. - Asset Management Group meet regularly and discuss the use and future of council assets. - The council has a Property Acquisition & Development Strategy 2020/21 - 2025/26. This strategy is to be renewed and refreshed, and incorporated into an overarching Asset Management Plan which is in preparation. This will set out how the Council will manage its properties efficiently and effectively so that they are fit for the purpose for which they are held, meeting requirements in terms of function, size, environmental performance, cost, financial return and location, now and in the future. <p><i>Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how the authority’s</i></p>

resources are allocated so that outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently.

- Members and employees engage in various groups and benchmarking initiatives. These assist the Council in analysing/ improving its capability, such as the informal County Benchmarking, LG Inform (local area benchmarking tool from the Local Government Association), HR Salary benchmarking, Sport England's National Benchmarking Scheme (NBS), and Customer Services benchmarking.
- Budget workshops take place each year with Members to help determine how the authority's resources are allocated so that our council priorities and desired outcomes can be achieved effectively and efficiently.
- Weekly Leadership meetings are held where ongoing issues are discussed and during monthly business meetings, Policy, Projects, Performance and Risk are (amongst other things) monitored. The Council encourages close working liaison between Senior Officers and Executive Members.

Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved.

- The Council participates in various partnerships in order to achieve added value and improved outcomes. These include: The Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP); Shared Service Arrangements for Waste; Internal Audit; Anti-Fraud Service; SADA.
- The Council also considers and participates in Shared Service/ commercial ventures to develop services and resilience, such as the CCTV Partnership, the Local-Authority Building Control Company, Hertfordshire Building Control, and has been a Lead authority developing the Herts Home Improvement Agency and shared Waste service with East Hertfordshire District Council. It has its own private holding company – Broadwater Hundred Limited, set up as a contingency matter.
- The Leader is part of Herts Leaders Group, East of England Leaders Group and County wide Growth board, has weekly Managing Director/ Leader Briefings. Political Liaison Board (PLB) meetings are held, and opposition Member/ shadow Member briefings provided by the Managing Director / Service Directors and other senior officers.

Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources.

- The Council has a Digital Transformation Project which seeks to improve our services to residents using Artificial intelligence and development of self-serve systems. It also seeks to improve Council working and efficiency by automating processes that are currently manually handled.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Inclusion Group considers staff experiences and looks to make improvements around equality, diversity, and inclusion through making recommendations to the Leadership Team and implementing actions. The group also receives updates from HR on the gender pay gap. A subgroup of the Inclusion Group has been formed to further consider the drivers of the gender pay gap and develop actions for reducing it. The subgroup reports their progress to the Leadership Team. - Staff Learning and Development sessions have been instituted on the morning of every first Friday of each month. These are a mixture of themed and non-themed sessions. The themed sessions allow the organisation to help staff develop knowledge and skills in priority areas through the provision of guidance or training materials. The non-themed sessions enable teams or individuals to focus on an area of development most useful for them. - Work commenced on a refreshed People Strategy in Autumn 2025, which will be finalised in Spring 2026. - The council has a Recruitment & Selection Policy which highlights selection methods.
<p>E2: Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals</p>	<p><i>Developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council's Constitution includes descriptions of the roles of the Leader, Executive Members, Chief Executive, and Directors. - Weekly briefings are held between the Chief Executive and the Leader. The Leader also receives briefing on various areas including HR and Policy. - The Leader is part of Herts Leaders Group and East of England Leaders Group. - Political Liaison Board meetings comprise The Cabinet and the Leadership Team and occur monthly. - Regular briefings occur between Executive Members and Officers to discuss projects and issues relevant to their portfolio. - Opposition Member/Shadow Briefings occur between the relevant Members and Officers. - Weekly Leadership Team update meetings are held, with one meeting per month being a Business Meeting for dealing with issues and decision-making. - Robust Recruitment process with appointment at an appropriate level, and job profiles which clearly lay out the responsibilities of the role. - Regular 1:1s between employees and their managers. - Regular Performance Reviews (RPRs) which are a chance for managers and staff to discuss performance and learning needs. The Chief Executive's RPR is conducted by the Group Leaders and Deputy Leader of the Council (elected Members who lead each political party) - Corporate Induction Programme (including various training activities and opportunities to meet relevant colleagues) for both Members and Officers.

- Corporate Learning and Development activities in areas including: time management, conflict management, dealing with difficult situations, succession planning, and conducting RPRs.
- Essential learning modules are provided on the e-learning platform - GrowZone. The Leadership Team agree which modules constitute essential learning.
- Other types of Professional, Technical, Personal and Managerial Development are organised through the service areas.

Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body.

- The Council's Constitution includes a scheme of delegation.
- The Constitution (which includes Standing orders in the form of Rules) is reviewed annually.
- Sub-delegations are reviewed at appropriate points to check for accuracy. For example, following organisational restructure.

Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads the authority in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other's authority.

- Section 5 of the Council's Constitution includes a description of the role of the Leader. Section 14 of the Constitution provides further details on the scope of the Leader's responsibilities including that it spans all Portfolios. Section 14 states their remit around ensuring co-ordination and a coherent approach to the Council's decision making.
- Section 12 of the Constitution includes a description of the role of the Chief Executive, while Section 14 provides more detail on their functions and responsibilities.
- The respective roles of Members and Officers, and information about how Members and Officers function together, is laid out in Section 18 of the Constitution – Protocol for Member-Officer Working Relationships.

Developing the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective shared leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by:

- ***ensuring members and staff have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and that ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged.***
- ***ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources, support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources, and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis.***
- ***ensuring personal, organisational and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external.***

- Learning is one of the Council's organisational values.
- Induction arrangements, and training and development for Members and employees as identified in Principle A.
- Member Champions who seek to increase uptake of key trainings amongst Members.
- Training & development as identified in Principle E above.
- Essential training programme for managers, and succession planning and career development for managers and leaders. Promotion of ILM Leadership, and Management qualifications such as ACAS. Information and opportunities are promoted on the intranet.
- Internal coaching network for workplace coaching. Coaches are ILM qualified.
- The Council supports where possible the pursuit of relevant professional or vocational qualifications. Staff can apply for assistance and to enter into a study agreement.
- Personal Development Mornings on the morning of each first Friday of the month. There are a mixture of themed sessions based around key knowledge or skills that are priorities for the council, and non-themed sessions in which teams and individuals can focus on learning and development areas most pertinent to them.
- Strategic Leadership Team Meetings.
- Specific trainings organised by HR around areas like dealing with difficult situations, managing conflict, Member and Officer relations, Chairing skills, Minute taking, and conducting Regular Performance reviews etc.
- Regular Performance Reviews conducted for staff on an annual basis. These review performance and ascertain training and development needs.
- The Council supports Apprenticeship training programmes, and graduates via the Local Government Graduate Programme.
- Member and Officer attendance at relevant conferences, such as Town and Country Planning Association or APSE Energy.

- Training budgets for Members for external training, are allotted to groups or independent Members on a pro-rata percentage basis.
- The Gender Pay Gap reporting and subsequent Action plan to reduce the gender pay gap. Actions include training and development opportunities.
- Engagement with Leadership Team on the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and development of the AGS Action Plan provides an opportunity to share information on governance weaknesses and to develop actions to improve these areas.
- Joint Staff Consultative Committee (JSCC), comprising elected councillors and staff representatives (including the Trade Unions), is the regular corporate interface with employees on major human resource issues.

Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation

- The Council has a Citizens Panel who are consulted on a variety of topics related to council business. They play a key role in informing council decisions. Residents can contact the Communications Team if they would like to be a part of the Panel.
- The Council runs Community Forums (whose remit is laid out in Section 9 of the Constitution) for Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth, Royston, and Southern Rural. Each Forum typically meets 4 times per year, and provides an opportunity to discuss issues pertinent to that particular local community and to hear updates on council activity or the activity of other relevant groups. In addition to the local community, County Councillors, Parish/Town, Community Councillors and other partners such as the Police, are welcomed to the Forum meetings, and to speak on an item.
- Members of the public can attend and register to speak at Committee Meetings.
- Councillor Surgeries are held regularly in each of our four urban areas. Surgeries in Hitchin, Letchworth, and Baldock happen monthly, while Royston Surgeries are held every other month. Surgeries provide an opportunity for the public to meet their Councillors, raise issues, get advice, and make their views known.
- The Cabinet Panel on the Environment provides a forum to engage the public on sustainability issues.
- Online digital engagement platforms on a range of topics: North Herts Communities; The Budget Hub; The Climate Hive; and Churchgate conversations.
- The Community Consultation Strategy highlights why, how, and when we consult, and how we will keep residents updated.
- The Marketing and Communications Strategy highlights our approach to communications, how we will reach residents and how residents can reach us. The Strategy notes a digital-first approach but while maintaining other communication options such as in-person in recognition that online is not best or accessible for everyone. A review of actions arising from the

Communications Service action plan is undertaken every year and incorporates any actions from the Marketing and Communication strategy.

- The Statement of Community Involvement explains how we will involve residents and stakeholders in the planning process.

Taking steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections.

- The Council participates in regular Corporate Peer Challenges which review the effectiveness of leadership (both Members and Officers).
- A general staff survey is conducted every other year. This gives staff the chance to comment anonymously on a range of issues including leadership and culture. An action plan is developed to address the key issues raised. This survey is supplemented with staff surveys on specific topics (e.g. Local Government Reorganisation) as and when needed.
- The individuals in the Leadership Team provide assurance statements for the AGS, which highlight effectiveness of governance across a range of topics within their service areas. This informs the AGS Action Plan.
- A record of Member committee attendance is available on the [website](#).

Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs.

- Staff undertake an annual Regular Performance Review (RPR). These provide the opportunity for managers to discuss performance with the staff member, and for discussion and planning of training and development needs. These performance reviews are returned to HR.

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.

- Professional Health and Safety advice provided via Herts County Council.
- Display Screen Equipment (DSE) assessments for staff to ensure their desk and screen equipment is set up and being used in the correct way to prevent health issues.
- Pre-paid Specsavers vouchers are available to all those who use DSE. This entitles them to a full eye examination. If it is identified that glasses are required solely and specifically for DSE use, then the individual can select a pair of glasses from a specified range free of charge.

- An Occupational Health service that can advise on issues such as fitness for work, sickness absence, disability, rehabilitation, ill-health retirement, travel health, health promotion, or indeed any health and work issue. Managers are also invited to refresher courses to raise awareness of the Occupational Health service and can make Occupational Health
- Policies and guidance available on the intranet on a range of topics, including: Health and Safety; Homeworking Health and Safety; Lone Working; Handling Difficult Customers; Bullying and Harassment; Managing Pressure; Mentoring & Coaching; Driving and use of vehicles for work; Personal Protective Equipment; Personal Safety; Smoking and the workplace; Whistleblowing; and Working Time.
- Dedicated staff Wellbeing pages for support on a range of topics including fertility, financial wellbeing, bereavement, miscarriage & still birth, separation and support for carers.
- Mental Health First Aiders who are trained to offer support, listen non-judgementally and signpost officers to further information.
- Key safety and wellbeing issues covered within the Safeguarding trainings and e-learning module, including domestic abuse and modern-day slavery awareness and reporting information.
- An Incident Register to make staff aware of incidents related to health and safety concerns. Managers and those who work with the public have access to the Register and emails are sent to all staff and councillors notifying them when the Incident Register has been updated with a new entry. The Register includes suggested ways to reduce risk.
- Staff are encouraged to get flu vaccines annually and can be reimbursed for the cost.
- Resources for Women's Health and Men's Health are promoted to staff on the intranet.
- The Social Committee organise activities and events for staff to enhance the employee experience and encourage interaction across the council.
- The Inclusion Group aims to drive forward equality and inclusion within the council and provides a space for staff to share their workplace experiences in relation to the protected characteristics outlined under the Equality Act.
- Staff Recognition Awards on a bi-annual basis helps celebrate the excellent work of staff from across the organisation and recognises those who embody the organisational values and behaviours.
- The Council has a confidential Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) which is a free service for all staff (including their partner/spouse and dependent children over 16 still living at home). It gives around the clock access to confidential, independent, professional information and emotional support and also provides individual counselling for employees and couples and family counselling where there is participation by the employee.
- Staff can download the Spectrum.Life app on their smartphone to access all of the North Herts Be-Well features.

- The Council provides staff with access to a 24/7 GP Helpline service. This allows staff to receive a call from a GP who can provide advice, diagnosis and reassurance on a range of medical matters. There is also a private prescription service.

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

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 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 is 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 delivery. Importantly, this culture does not happen automatically, it requires repeated public commitment from those in authority.

Sub-principles	Council's commitment to achieving good governance in practice
F1: Managing risk	<p><i>Recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Processes for Risk Management as set out above in Principle C. - This Risk Management Framework indicates that risk management is embedded across all service areas and helps to inform decision making. - The council uses the Ideagen software for performance/ risk management monitoring. - Corporate Risks are reviewed regularly by FAR Committee. <p><i>Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The council has a Risk Management Framework Policy Statement which sets out our commitment to the proactive management of external and internal risks within seven key principles. - The council also has a Risk Management Framework Strategy which highlights the objectives which must be achieved to meet the principles outlined in the Policy Statement. It provides additional detail on how we intend to ensure the objectives are met. - The Risk Management Framework is reviewed regularly and regular risk management updates are provided to FAR Committee.

	<p><i>Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - See details above. - Ideagen assigns ownership of risks to individuals, including who administers the risk, who the risk is managed by, and who it is assigned to. It also highlights who is the Cabinet Owner (the responsible Executive Member).
<p>F2: Managing Performance</p>	<p><i>Monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The council has a Council Plan including priorities and actions as outlined in Principle A. The priorities inform the Service Planning process for each Directorate, while the actions inform the Council Delivery Plan. - Performance management measures as described in Principle C. - Use of Ideagen for monitoring risks as described above. - Regular Performance Reviews (RPR) as highlighted in Principle A which aid with planning of training and development needs. - Committee involvement regarding review of Annual Safeguarding Performance and 3 Cs monitoring. - The council produces an Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) which reports on a number of things, including: contextual and core output indicators - including business development, housing, transport, local services, flood protection, biodiversity, renewable energy and gypsies and travellers; the performance of policies in the adopted Local Plan; whether we are still on track with regard to the Local Development Scheme; and deficiencies in the scope of current monitoring and how it will be improved in the future. These reports are published on our website. - Hertfordshire County-wide customer services benchmarking group for informal benchmarking. - Informal benchmarking with other local authorities via the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) and other networks such as Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Practitioners Network. - A calendar of dates for submitting, publishing, and distributing timely reports. - A grants database to enable easier administration and monitoring of grant applications. <p><i>Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Numerous processes have been explained above regarding Reports / Record of decisions, areas covered in the reports as standard for professional advice on financial, social and risk implications of a decision.

- Publication of agendas/ minutes and timescales also covered above.

Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which encourages constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the organisation's performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible.

- The council has a Committee Work Programme which is linked to the Forward Plan.
- The council's Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee has a Scrutiny Charter which defined effective scrutiny. O&S establish Task and Finish Groups each year to provide challenge and debate before and during the decision-making process. Once a review is complete, a report is prepared which is approved by the Committee and is then sent to the Cabinet or other relevant partners for consideration.
- The Committee has a presentation on each Executive Member's service portfolio (at each meeting), which includes performance indicators – targets and outcomes for those services.
- The Chairman of Committee presents an annual report to Full Council.
- Agenda, reports, and minutes with recommendation (and the recording of public meetings) are available to inspect on the Council's website.
- The Code of Conduct institutes an obligation for all members to attend compulsory training (as decided by Council, Cabinet or Committee or the Monitoring Officer, Statutory officer, Group Leader or standards sub-committee), in addition to voluntary training opportunities.
- The Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SIAS) conduct internal audits of various service areas or projects each year. These audits are often done after a project completes, but some projects can also be audited in live time to improve decision-making and performance in real-time.

Providing members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement.

- See details on reporting performance to the Leadership Team and Members described above and in Principles A, B, and C.

Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (e.g. financial statements).

- As per Principle A, the Council's financial management arrangements are underpinned by a regulatory framework comprising of the Financial Regulations, Contract Procurement Rules (and other measures).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training around finance is provided to Members and officers where needed. This has previously included in-person learning sessions as well as e-learning covering a variety of subjects around accounting, financial regulations, procurement and closure of accounts. - SIAS presents an Annual Assurance Statement and Internal report to FAR Committee. This highlights data around the audits completed as well as recommendations made.
F3: Robust internal control	<p><i>Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving the objectives.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council's Risk Management Strategy, Policy and arrangements are described in various sections, notably Section C1. - The SIAS Internal Audit Plan forms part of the Council's assurance framework. It supports the requirement to produce an audit opinion on the overall internal control environment of the Council, as well as a judgement on the robustness of risk management and governance arrangements, which will be contained in the Head of Internal Audit's (SIAS) annual report. - As per Section A3 and above, the Head of SIAS (Internal Audit) is required to deliver an annual internal audit's opinion and report, covering overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control. This forms one of the key assurances for the AGS. It is presented to the FAR Committee. - SIAS Audit Plan complies with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) which came into effect on 1 April 2013 and revised on 1 April 2017. - The council's Audit Plan and update review reports against the Plan are provided to FAR for approval. - External Auditors provide key timetabling/ stage of audit reports to FAR Committee (Audit Fee Letter, Audit Plan, testing routine procedures, Audit on financial statement and value for money conclusions/ Audit completion certificate and Annual Audit Letter). <p><i>Evaluating and monitoring the authority's risk management and internal control on a regular basis.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council's Risk Management Strategy, Policy and arrangements are described in various sections, notably Section C1. <p><i>Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As per Section A1 The Council has an overarching Fraud Prevention Policy and this includes the Anti-Money Laundering Policy, Anti-Bribery, Employee Personal Conflicts of Interest, Benefits Anti-Fraud. The Whistleblowing Policies and Fraud Plans all available on the Council's webpage.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council participates in a Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS) and they present an Anti-Fraud plan and progress reports to FAR Committee. The Council has a Board and Partner role in the Service. - The Anti-Fraud action plan sets out to comply with the five key principles of the Code of practice on managing the risk of fraud and corruption. <p><i>Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Leadership Team are responsible for overseeing the preparation and content of the AGS. The Policy & Strategy Team draft the AGS for Leadership consideration and amendment. - The Council has a Local Code of Corporate governance that it reviews annually, and is the basis of the AGS year on year. - As per Section A3, Internal Audit arrangements are provided through SIAS. They provide an Audit Plan for approval, prior to the new financial year; progress reports against the Plan and an Annual Assurance. - The Head of SIAS is required to deliver an annual internal audit's opinion and report, covering overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control that can be used by the organisation to inform its AGS. <p><i>Ensuring an audit committee or equivalent group or function which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment</i> • <i>that its recommendations are listened to and acted upon.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FAR is the main governance Committee. The terms of reference of the Committee are set out in Section 10 of the Constitution. The Committee will, when relevant, make recommendations to the Executive, on Executive functions. No Executive Member is a Member of the Committee. - The FAR Committee provides an Annual report to Full Council. - SIAS undertake a review of the effectiveness of the FAR Committee. - The Membership of FAR is offered relevant training.
F4: Managing data	<p><i>Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data.</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council has an Email Encryption system "Mimecast" with features to safeguard against data or access being compromised. - Certain Service areas have their external emails encrypted by default (Housing, Revenues and Benefits, Systems Technical [Revenues and Benefits], Cashiers and Careline). - Employees/Members are instructed that encryption must be used when sending sensitive or confidential data. Secure Transmission Layer Security (TLS) email connections to some outside organisations have been set up by IT. This means emails to certain organisations are automatically encrypted when sent. - The Council has a designated Data Protection Officer (DPO) – this is the Revenues Manager. The Council also has a Data Controller who is the Director – Customers. - The Council has Data Protection Act (DPA) policies and procedures including; DPA Statement, Subject Access Request form, CCTV Footage Requests and Fair Processing Notice. - The Council has a Data Sharing Protocol which provides a framework for the Partner Organisations for the regulation working practices between Partner Organisations and is in accordance with the ICO's data sharing code of practice (which includes a pro-forma Data Sharing Agreement/ deletion certificate). - The Council has a Privacy Impact assessment (PIA scope and full screening) documents process. These assess impacts on privacy in accordance with the ICO PIA Code of recommended practice. <p><i>Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council has a Data Sharing Protocol (which includes a pro-forma Data Sharing Agreement). - A data sharing register is retained by the Freedom of Information (DPA) team. <p><i>Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ideagen provides a significant checking procedure for data, with this entered and checked by one officer and checked by another from the Performance team. These are used for projects and KPIs.
F5: Strong public financial management	<p><i>Ensuring financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance.</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council's financial management arrangements conform to the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016) and the CIPFA Financial Management Code as demonstrated in A3 and F2 above. - The Council's key financial systems are audited by SIAS annually. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As outlined in Sections C1 and D2, quarterly budget monitoring of budget, capital and treasury management information is taken to FAR Committee and Cabinet.
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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.

Sub-principles	Council's commitment to achieving good governance in practice
G1: Implementing good practice in transparency	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in an understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council's 'Outlook' Magazine is provided to all households in the District and is available on the Council's website. It contains information about the Council's services and events, distributed biannually (Summer and Winter Edition). - Report templates with clearly defined headings are available for staff on the intranet and must be used when drafting Committee reports. The defined headings help ensure all relevant information is included and that the report is easy to follow and interrogate. Committee report guidance is also provided on the intranet and highlights the rules that reports must follow. These include: use of the template; use of Arial font size 11; use of plain English and avoidance of technical terms which the public or Members may not be familiar with; avoidance of abbreviations; and being concise.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A list of Committees and Panels can be found on the council website, with the public able to view agendas, minutes, and reports for each committee meeting. Public report packs collate all the reports for a particular meeting for easy access by the public. - Staff have access to a web style guide which sets out how content on the website should be written to ensure the needs of website users are met. This is available on the staff Hub (intranet). Staff are advised to review web pages every three months to ensure that information is current and accurate. A web page review checklist is available to staff on the Hub
G2: Implementing good practices in reporting	<p><i>Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and the stewardship of its resources.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The external auditors annual report to the FAR committee reports on value for money, financial sustainability, governance, and improving effectiveness. <p><i>Ensuring members and senior management own the results.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The AGS and Action Plan is signed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive, ahead of going to FAR Committee for approval. - The AGS Action Plan assigns actions to specific teams or individuals within the Leadership Team for responsibility and progression. Updates on the actions are reported to FAR committee regularly. - Through the scheme of delegation as set out in the Council's Constitution, senior officers are assigned various functions, powers and duties, and have delegated authority to provide reports to various committees. Reports state clearly who the relevant Executive Member is, and Executive Members are expected to present reports to Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet, and Full Council, with officers supporting in the answering of questions. Delegated decisions are required to state who is the decision taker, and to be approved by the relevant Executive Member. Delegated decisions are available on the council's website. <p><i>Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in the Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (annual governance statement).</i></p> <p><i>Ensuring that the Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate.</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance includes the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework principles (2016) and is the standard against which we complete an assessment of compliance and effectiveness for the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) - The Policy & Strategy team conduct an initial review of effectiveness for the AGS, assessing the extent to which the principles within the Framework are being applied within the council. The Leadership Team oversee this process, providing assurance from their respective areas, reviewing the self-assessment document and the draft AGS, and developing the Action Plan for improvement. The Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS), Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS) and the external auditors are given the chance to comment on the draft AGS and action plan. The draft AGS (including Action Plan) is taken to FAR Committee for comment. FAR also approves the final AGS, and notes progress on the Action Plan. These documents are published on the council's website. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ensuring the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other similar organisations.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Chief Financial Officer follows the latest CIPFA Code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom, and the CIPFA Statement on the role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government 2016. This includes ensuring that the financial statements are prepared on a timely basis, meet legislative requirements, financial reporting standards and professional standards as reflected in CIPFA's Code of Practice. - External auditors, who review the financial statements are currently appointed through Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd, and on terms 'Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies' (available via Terms of Appointment from 2023/24 - PSAA) and 'Terms of Appointment' from April 2023. The latter set out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and statute.
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - External Auditors present an Annual Report, a Year End Report, and an External Audit Plan and Strategy report to FAR Committee. These reports can make recommendations and follow up on previously made recommendations in line with National Audit Office (NAO) guidance. - The Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) and the Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS) provide plans and progress updates to FAR committee. SIAS and SAFS can provide recommendations, which are reported on.

- SIAS, SAFS, and the external auditors are given the chance to comment on and contribute to the draft AGS and action plan. The AGS and its action plan are approved by FAR committee, and progress on the actions are reported to the committee.

Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place which provides assurance with regard to governance arrangements and recommendations are acted upon.

- The Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) present an Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Annual Report to FAR committee. This report provides an overall assurance opinion on corporate governance and risk management for the council. It also provides an overview of internal audit activity including what proportion of the planned audit days have been delivered; a list of auditable areas and their respective assurance levels; the number of reports receiving the various assurance levels; the number of recommendations at each of the recommendation priority levels; and a description and implementation status for high priority recommendations.
- The Head of Assurance at SIAS makes a statement of conformance with the requirements of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), using the results of an annual self-assessment and Quality Assurance and Improvement Plan (QAIP) required by PSIAS. The statement details the nature and reasons for any impairments, qualifications, or restrictions in scope for which the Committee should seek reassurances from management. Any improvement plans arising will be included in the annual report.
- The Chief Audit Executive (CAE) at SIAS must confirm annually that the internal audit function is suitably qualified to carry out the work that informs the assurance opinion. This includes that the CAE maintains and enhance their own qualifications and competences.
- The Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) requires that SIAS be subject to an external quality assessment (EQA) at least every five years. This should be conducted by a qualified, independent assessor or assessment team from outside the organisation. The latest review was conducted in 2021 and reported to FAR committee. The next EQA is due in 2026/27.

Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations.

- Participates in Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC). CPC is facilitated by the Local Government Association (LGA) and comprises a review by senior local government officers and councillors from other authorities to assess areas like local priorities and outcomes, leadership, governance, and financial management. The report highlights good practice and makes recommendations for improvement. The Council must publish the report within three months of the CPC, and should publish an action plan within five months. A progress review takes place around ten months after

the initial review. The Council's latest CPC took place in 2024. Cabinet approved the action plan in March 2025, and a progress review took place later in 2025.

- Participates in benchmarking exercises.
- The Council is part of shared service arrangements (e.g. SIAS and the Shared Anti-Fraud Service – SAFS), which effectively benchmark the Council against participating authorities for Internal Audit, Anti-Fraud and Insurance.
- Public Service Network accreditation.

Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement.

- Risk management arrangements apply to partnership projects and to procurement.
- The Council Delivery Plan monitors key projects and services including those delivered by contract with third parties. It notes all relevant risks and provides a risk level and score for each project. The Delivery Plan is set in March each year and updated and reported on quarterly to Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.
- Risk Management is reviewed by SIAS and is one of the key parts of the assurance provided for the AGS.

Ensuring that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and that the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met.

- The Council has a Council Plan which sets out a vision of 'Working with you for a fairer, greener North Herts' and the following priorities: Thriving Communities; Accessible Services; Responsible Growth; and Sustainability. The Council Delivery Plan is set annually and lays out the key projects that we will carry out to support delivery of the Council Plan.
- The Council has a Community Consultation Strategy which sets out our consultation objectives, when we consult, how we consult and how we keep the public updated.
- As a Local Planning Authority, we must prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), explaining how we will involve local residents and stakeholders in the planning process. The current North Hertfordshire Statement of Community Involvement was formally adopted by the Council in September 2023.
- The external auditor's External Audit Plan and Strategy (reported to FAR committee) includes performance improvement observations, and can include recommendations as part of this. These recommendations can be, and have previously been, related to partnership arrangements.