

Division: **ALL**

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
14 January 2026

**ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2024/25 – UPDATE ON
ACTIONS**

Report by the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to receive this update on the actions from the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 and to make any comment upon them.

Executive summary

2. On 4 June 2025, this Committee approved the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the year 2024/25. Local authorities are required to prepare an AGS to be transparent about their compliance with good governance principles and to give an opinion on the effectiveness of those arrangements. As part of the process, authorities are expected to highlight areas of focus for the year following.
3. The Director of Law & Governance, and Monitoring Officer presented an update to Committee on 26 November 2025 on the eight specific areas of focus identified in the 2024/25 AGS for action in 2025/26. This report is therefore a report on only those actions where an additional update is required.

Annual Governance Statement actions for 2025/26

4. The eight actions were:

| Service area | Action |
|--|--|
| A. Schemes of Delegation | Work is still being undertaken with the new services formed as a result of the Tier 3/ 4 restructure, implemented on 16 December 2024. |
| B. Review of Members' and Officers' fiduciary | It is important that the legal status of and responsibilities and |

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| responsibilities and accountability, and legal status in respect of outside bodies including indemnities. | accountabilities of Members are clearly understood in relation to outside bodies they are appointed to by the Council. |
| C. Contract Management | <p>A Contract and Supplier Management project has been mobilised with the following five workstreams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Contract Management Framework • Ways of Working • Governance and Oversight • Systems, processes and data • Skills, capability and knowledge |
| D. Executive Officer Decisions | To provide guidance to officers on the procedure for making officer executive decisions, in particular the process that applies to key decisions |
| E. Code of Practice on Good Governance for Local Authority Statutory Officers | To undertake a self-assessment against the Code of Practice on Good Governance for Local Authority Statutory Officers. |
| F. Appointment of Independent Member of the Audit & Governance Committee | To appoint into this role. |
| G. To commission an Independent Remuneration Panel | To appoint a panel – to consider member allowances. |
| H. Inspections Review: Readiness and Sharing Learning | <p>To facilitate opportunities for assurance colleagues to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share experiences and learning; • Raise awareness through internal communications and cultural change; • Leverage technology for data efficiencies. |

UPDATES

5. An update on the progress made on the eight actions is below:

A. Schemes of Delegation

No further update; as reported previously drafting and review of service level delegations continues with support from the Strategic Leadership Team.

B. Review of Members' and Officers' fiduciary responsibilities and accountability, and legal status in respect of outside bodies including indemnities.

Completed, no further update.

C. Contract Management

The redesign of the Commercial & Procurement Service was completed in December, with the new structure becoming operational from 15 December 2025. There is now a designated lead for contract and supplier management within the council, who is currently building the team, with recruitment for existing vacancies underway. Internal recruitment was launched on 19 December 2025, with external recruitment planned for the end of January 2026 if required. In the interim, substantial work has been undertaken to cleanse commercial data in preparation for the new structure. This effort has led to an improvement in the proportion of contracts with a designated contract manager listed in the system, rising from 94.7% in September to 97.8% by Christmas. The new team is now developing delivery plans for the remainder of the year and into the 2026–27 financial year. These plans will include:

- Establishing a community of practice to connect the c.320 contract managers across the Council to share best practice
- Establishing a training and development package for contract managers to support their upskilling and the development of contract management as a profession
- Implementing the contract & supplier management framework, including a new risk assessment tool to ensure contract management activity matches the relative risk and complexity of the contract
- Implementing a contract management system to enable a single view of supplier performance across the Council, and for support to be deployed to areas of underperformance.

D. Executive Officer Decisions

No further update. An officer working group is developing guidance, with training planned by March 2026, as reported to Committee in November 2025.

E. Code of Practice on Good Governance for Local Authority Statutory Officers

As reported to Committee on 26 November 2025, the self-assessment against the Code of Practice on Good Governance for Local Authority Statutory Officers will be undertaken in February 2026 as planned.

F. Appointment of Independent Member of the Audit & Governance Committee

Completed, no further update.

G. To commission an Independent Remuneration Panel

Completed, no further update.

H. Inspections Review: Readiness and Sharing Learning

No further update. As reported in November 2025, a report with shared findings/learnings will be collated by 31 March 2026 with review and implementation within Quarter 1 of 2026/27.

Financial implications

6. The financial implications for an enhanced Commercial & Procurement Service have been included in Budget 2026/27, other than this there are no direct financial implications directly relating to, or arising from, the recommendation in this report.

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Staff Implications

7. There are no direct staff implications directly relating to, or arising from, this report.

Legal implications

8. The Council has a legal duty to agree an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The purpose of the document is to set out the Council's controls, how it manages risk effectively and complies with laws to deliver services efficiently and ethically. The AGS details the Council's governance process, systems and any improvements made to ensure good financial and operational management. This report does not itself raise legal implications but is an update on the actions arising from last year's AGS (2024/25) and is consistent with the responsibility of this Committee to ensure the effectiveness of the Council's governance.

Checked by: Jay Akbar, Head of Legal & Governance Services, and
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Equality and inclusion implications

9. The recommendations in this report do not themselves raise equality implications. However, the effectiveness and inclusivity of the Council's governance arrangements are integral to the effective running of the Council and of the outcomes for the community.

Sustainability Implications

10. There are no sustainability implications directly relating to, or arising from, this report.

Risk Management

11. There are no risks directly related to, or arising from, this report.

Anita Bradley

Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Annex: Nil
Background Papers: Nil

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January 2026