

Division: **ALL**

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
26 November 2025

**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. This report therefore updates the Committee on the eight specific areas of focus identified for 2025/26.

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 responsibilities and accountability, and legal status in respect of outside bodies including indemnities.	It is important that the legal status of and responsibilities and 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

Finance and Governance officers continue to progress work on local Schemes of Delegation. Key officers have met to discuss strategies for improved coordination of workflows to ensure the March 2026 deadline

is met. The Finance team is working towards completing all Financial Schemes of Delegation by the end of December 2025, with four remaining to be finalised. Governance officers finalised the Law & Governance scheme of delegation in early November 2025. Draft Schemes of Delegation will be sent to all services for review and revision, with the Strategic Leadership Board supporting the process.

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

Audit & Governance Committee considered a report on 16 July 2025 on the "Review of Appointments to Outside Bodies"

The review incorporated the newly developed document, "Guidance for Members who are appointed to Outside Bodies." Both the review and guidance were submitted to Council on 9 September 2025, where the guidance received formal approval. The document has since been distributed to all Members.

C. Contract Management

The Contract & Supplier Management Framework has been developed and approved with implementation beginning through Autumn 2025. Other workstreams are making progress but successful implementation is intrinsically linked to the successful Commercial & Procurement service redesign. The new team structure is due to go live on 15th December 2025 which will establish a new contract management centre of excellence for the Council which will then fully implement the identified workstreams and build a multi-year continuous improvement plan to mature the service offering.

D. Executive Officer Decisions

Changes to the Constitution have highlighted a need to refresh training and templates on officer decision making. An internal officer group to develop guidance, manage changes to process and templates and to develop training for officers has been set up.

Training will follow by March 2026. Training delivery is being coordinated with the Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO). Initial training is scheduled for the council's governance and legal teams. A second phase of training will cover broader organisational implementation, with ADSO assisting in the creation of annual online governance training.

Templates are being updated, with completion due by March 2026. The Governance Management Team will manage the updates and training across the organisation.

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

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

On 8 July 2025 Council approved:

- i) The appointment of Kate Cartwright and Paul McGinn as Independent Members of the Audit and Governance Committee for a term of four years.

G. To commission an Independent Remuneration Panel

On 8 July Council approved:

- i) the appointment of Benjamin Anim-Antwi, Martyn Hocking, Stephen McKechnie and Dave Shelmerdine as Members of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP); and,
- ii) to formation of the Independent Remuneration Panel for a period of two years.

The IRP has commenced its full review of the scheme of allowances. A questionnaire has been circulated to Members and interviews are being conducted with a cross-section of Members. The IRP plans to present its final report to the Council meeting on 9 December 2025.

H. Inspections Review: Readiness and Sharing Learning

The Terms of Reference for the working group have been circulated for review; the cohort needs to extend to ensure representatives across all key services are included. Recent inspections have reprioritised colleagues away from this group.

The Director of Transformation will work with the coordinator to establish a clear membership, frequency of meetings and sharing of findings/lessons learned.

A report with shared findings/learnings will be collated by 31 March 2026 with review and implementation within Quarter 1 of 26/27.

6. A further update will be presented to this committee in January 2026.

Financial implications

7. There are no direct financial implications directly relating to, or arising from, the recommendation in this report.

Checked by: Drew Hodgson, Strategic Finance Business Partner
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Legal implications

8. The Council has a legal duty to agree an Annual Governance Statement. This report does not itself raise legal implications but is an update on the actions arising from last year's AGS and is consistent with the responsibility of this Committee to ensure the effectiveness of the Council's governance.

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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.

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