

Covering Note

This is a covering introduction for the **Annual Governance Statement 2021/2022 (AGS)**, recognising the revised timetable for concluding the accompanying Statement of Accountants.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), in conjunction with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), have produced a framework for delivering good governance in local government. The framework guidance “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016” is used as a guide in compiling the AGS. Arrangements for compiling the AGS were coordinated through the Internal Audit team, with input from key stakeholders and management.

The current status of this document is draft. It is unaudited and may be updated and amended.

The draft AGS has been published as required by relevant legislation: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/234/regulation/15/made>. It has been prepared in accordance with regulation 6(1)(b). As a draft document the statement has not yet been approved in accordance with regulation 6(2)(b), and the final version will be approved by the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee in advance of the Statement of Accounts.

The AGS should reflect both events in the relevant financial year, plus significant governance matters up to when the Accounts are approved by Committee.

The final version of the 2020/2021 AGS is expected to be approved as part of the statement of Accounts in November 2023. Due to the additional time needed to approve the Statement of Accounts it is possible that further amendments may be required to this document following consultation and review by the externally appointed auditors.

This document will continue to be developed during this period and updated on our website.

Despite the delay to the 2020/2021 Statement of Accounts being approved and the impact on this AGS being produced, it is still a good opportunity for the Council to reflect on what has happened in the financial year, through the Review of Effectiveness.

The final version of the AGS, will accompany the Statement of Accounts for approval by the Committee, as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

Annual Governance Statement 2021/2022



Introduction and purpose

The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and that it also provides value for money. It has to effectively manage its risks and put in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs.

Definition of Corporate Governance

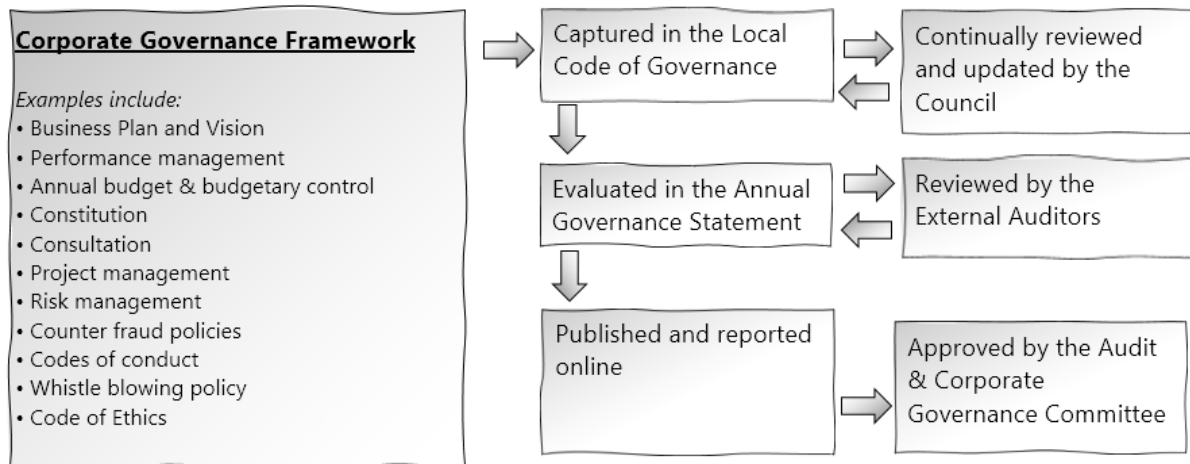
Corporate governance generally refers to the processes by which an organisation is directed, controlled, led and held to account.

Good governance in the public sector means: "*achieving the intended outcomes while acting in the public interest at all times*"

The Governance Framework

Our governance framework comprises the culture, values, systems and processes by which the Council is directed and controlled. It brings together an underlying set of legislative and regulatory requirements, good practice principles and management processes.

The Council has a robust process for reviewing and updating the governance framework.



The governance framework for the 2021/2022 financial year supports the Council aims and objectives, which are published on [our website](#)¹.



The Council produces a [Business Plan](#)² which sets out four Priority Areas, with specific and measurable actions, “Putting the heart into South Cambridgeshire by”:

- Growing local businesses and economies
- Housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in
- Being green to our core
- A modern and caring Council

Performance against the [Business Plan](#), is published in the [Performance Page](#) of our website.

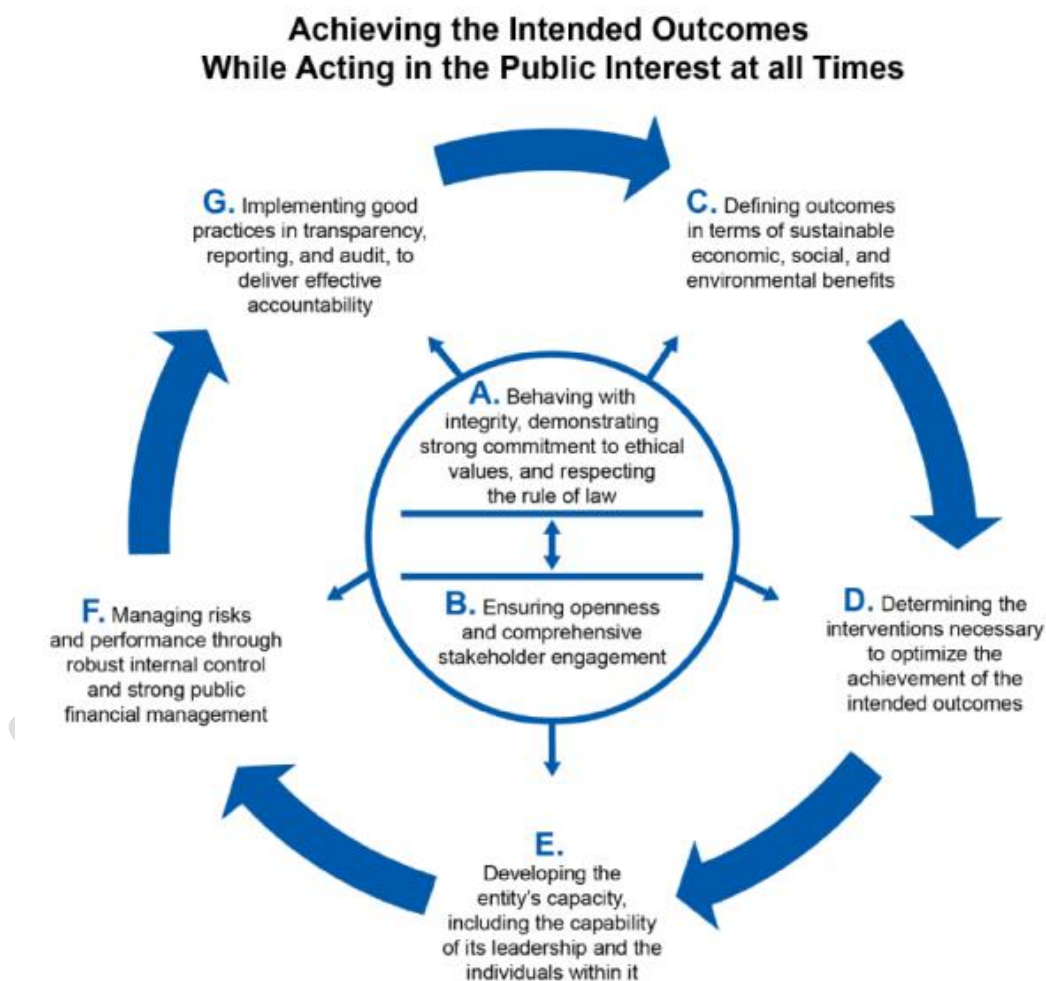
¹ <https://www.scams.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/performance-and-plans/>

² <https://www.scams.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/performance-and-plans/council-plans-and-reports/our-business-plan/>

Local Code of Governance

We are responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of governance which incorporates the system of internal control.

This Governance Framework has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31 March 2022 and up to the date of approval of the statement of accounts. It is recorded in our [Local Code of Governance](#), which was reviewed by our Audit & Corporate Governance Committee in January 2023. Our code is underpinned by the 7 principles of good governance as set out in the CIPFA / SOLACE publication 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016'. The principles are:



Role and responsibilities

All of the Council is responsible for developing and complying with its Local Code of Governance. There are a variety of governance structures, and some of the key roles include:

Governance structures	Roles and responsibilities
Council	Council agrees the budget and policy framework, such as the Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy.
Cabinet	This is the Council's principal decision-making body charged with implementing the budget and policy framework agreed by Council.
Leadership Team	The management team structure includes a strategic Leadership Team and is supported by an operational Corporate Management Team. Both teams consider policy formulation and future planning.
Audit and Corporate Governance Committee	<p>The Audit and Corporate Governance Committee also plays a vital role overseeing and promoting good governance, ensuring accountability and reviewing the ways things are done. It provides an assurance role to the Council by examining areas such as audit, risk management, internal control, counter fraud and financial accountability.</p> <p>The Committee exists to challenge the way things are being done, making sure the right processes are in place. It works closely with both Internal Audit and senior management to continually improve the governance, risk and control environment.</p>
Civic Affairs Committee	This committee reviews the Council's Constitution, including proposals for substantive changes for consideration by the Council. It also considers changes to electoral arrangements, setting ethical standards and monitoring the Councils Code of Conduct.
Scrutiny and Overview committee	It monitors the performance of the Leader and Cabinet and scrutinises services and policies throughout the district, whether or not South Cambridgeshire District Council provides them, and makes recommendations for improvement. The committee also has an overview function in which it considers matters that may affect South Cambridgeshire and decides whether the Council is appropriately responding to these issues. It works closely with external organisations to come up with solutions to these problems and provide recommendations that will improve Council services.

Purpose of the Annual Governance Statement

The Council conducts a review of its system of internal control, prepares and publishes an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) in each financial year.

This enables us to demonstrate whether, and to what extent, the Council complied with its Local Code of Governance.

The Local Code of Governance is updated regularly. This process records our good practice, and also helps us to plan further action which can improve our governance arrangements.

Statutory compliance

Producing the Annual Governance Statement helps the Council meet the requirements of Regulation 6(1)b of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015. It is reviewed by the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee and approved in advance of the Statement of Accounts.

The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. That duty has grown in importance with the reduction in resources being made available for Local Authorities as part of the Government's on-going austerity programme.

The Council's financial management arrangements are consistent with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government.

Other review and assurance mechanisms

Management activities contribute to the continuous review of the Local Code of Governance, and also inform the Annual Governance Statement. In addition, assurance can be provided from other sources, as detailed below:

Head of Internal Audit Opinion

The Head of Internal Audit provides an independent opinion on the overall adequacy of and effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk and control framework and the extent to which the Council can rely on it. This has been considered in the development of the Annual Governance Statement.

The audit opinion was regularly communicated to the [Audit & Corporate Governance Committee](#) throughout 2021/2022. The reports outlined the key findings of the internal audit work undertaken during the year, including any areas of significant weakness in the internal control environment.

From the audit reviews undertaken, no areas were identified where it was considered that, if the risks highlighted materialised, it would have a major impact on the organisation as a whole. In each instance where it has been identified that the control environment was not strong enough, or was not complied with sufficiently to prevent risks to the organisation, Internal Audit has issued recommendations to further improve the system of control and compliance. Where these recommendations are considered to have significant impact on the system of internal control, the implementation of actions is followed-up by Internal Audit and reported to Audit and Corporate Governance Committee.

It is the opinion of the Head of Internal Audit that, taking into account all available evidence, reasonable assurance may be awarded over the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's overall internal control environment during the financial year 2021/2022, and this remains at a similar level to the previous year.

Partnership Assurance

The Council has services which are delivered in partnership with other Councils. Where other Councils are the lead authority, they will provide assurance back to South Cambridgeshire District Council that controls are effective, and where there is opportunity for improvement. This includes Legal Services, plus Information and Communications Technology.

External Reviews

The Trade Waste function of the Shared Waste Services received positive assurance from their Internal audit reviews and maintained their accreditation with the ISO9001 (Quality Management) and ISO14001 (Environmental Management) standards following external inspections.

The [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#) resolve complaints in the public sector and provides annual statistic on performance. No public interest reports were published.

The DVLA completed a review of Information Assurance & Governance in our Fraud and Environmental Teams. Their assurance report provided a "green" rating (No issues were observed; or any non-conformance observed is minor) on our management of DVLA data and internal controls.

External Audit

Ernst & Young (now EY) are the appointed external auditor. Their results report (ISA260) and audit opinion for 2021/2022 will be presented to the Audit & Corporate Governance committee once the work is concluded.

EY have most recently issued an "unqualified" audit opinion on the financial statements which provided assurance for the Statement of Accounts. They issued an "except for qualified" value for money conclusion in respect of the Authority's proper arrangements to make informed decisions as a result of having reliable and timely financial reporting. This was because of the consecutive years that the Authority has been unable to prepare and publish its accounts by the dates outlined in the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

This ongoing challenge is reflected in our Opportunities for Improvement.

Public Services Network

The Council completed the Cabinet Office compliance verification process for the Public Services Network Code of Connection (PSN), and a certificate was issued. This demonstrated that the information technology infrastructure was sufficiently secure to connect to the PSN.

The Financial Management Code

Strong financial management is an essential part of ensuring public sector finances are sustainable, and CIPFA launched a Financial Management Code to support this. A key goal of the code is to improve the financial resilience of organisations by embedding enhanced

standards of financial management. The code incorporates existing requirements on local government to give a comprehensive picture of financial management in the Council.

Councils are required to be compliant with the code from the 2021/2022 financial year, and we must demonstrate that the requirements of the code are being satisfied.

An independent Internal Audit review of the Financial Management Standards (FMS) contained within the code has already been completed, to provide assurance and develop any actions needed to achieve compliance.

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Challenges to Local Authority Governance

Significant events have the potential to affect our governance, risk and control environment. Immediate impacts could include the Council's decision-making processes, risk management, and the overall capacity and capability of the Council. In the longer term it can also impact our strategic outcomes, financial and organisational resilience, stakeholder engagement and accountability.

Impact of Coronavirus

The pandemic Covid-19 had the potential to significantly impact the governance risk and control environment. Immediate threats included the Council's decision-making processes, risk management, and the overall capacity and capability of the Council. In the longer term it was also appropriate to consider the impact on our outcomes, financial and organisational resilience, stakeholder engagement and accountability.

The AGS considers the effectiveness of our Code of Governance, both during the financial year plus significant issues up to the time it is approved, and it is appropriate to recognise the longer-term impact of Covid-19 pandemic.

The financial year 2021/2022 was another year in which council services were disrupted by the impacts of the global coronavirus pandemic. Restrictions and regulations changed during the year. Some services continued largely unaffected, whilst others were not able to operate "normally" until later in the year. Even when services were allowed to operate normally, the continuing presence of coronavirus in the community lead to periods of sick leave and isolation, reducing our capacity to deliver some services at times.

In response to the pandemic we implemented various measures through our business continuity framework, with continuous risk management, and proactively worked with our stakeholders, partners and customers. We drafted a Reset and Recovery Plan to outline the key areas across the Council that would be prioritised. This positively contributed to many of the principals from our Local Code of Governance, such as engaging with stakeholders, determining interventions to achieve outcomes, managing risk, and adapting our internal controls.

The use of Council Anywhere technology helped us to continue working from remote locations and maintain service delivery. This has helped us to maintain our governance arrangements, and further specific reference due to the impact of Covid-19 are included below where it helps to communicate the impact.

It was an exceptional year and our [Covid Response](#) highlighted how our council services adapted to the restrictions imposed by the government in response to the global coronavirus pandemic, seeking new ways of working – including with communities and partners - to deliver the services that are important to local people and to respond to the challenges of Covid-19.

The pandemic has also illustrated how important 'good governance' has been to enable and sustain a whole system response. It has highlighted the systemic risks beyond the Council's control that can have a significant impact on achieving intended outcomes for the residents of South Cambridgeshire. This includes, for example, our ability to sustain partnerships, joined up delivery of services and multi-agency co-ordination mechanisms with police, fire, NHS, and other local authorities, where they are under significant strain, or under-resourced, or take a different approach to managing risk, accountability and transparency.

Transformation and new ways of working

The Council has significantly changed the way it works as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, with an increase in the use of technology, more flexible working, and more home working, all while maintaining standards across frontline services for residents and businesses. We are however still faced with recruitment issues, across a range of services, and an increasingly challenging financial environment.

The need to continue to develop new ways of working that will protect services to residents and businesses, whilst maintaining a motivated and highly productive workforce has led to a proposal to trial a four-day week.

Our [four-day week trial](#) is helping to deliver changes to services that have not been possible in the past. This new model of working that we are trialling, creates a social contract between our officers and the Council with an aim of ensuring our services are maintained and improved where possible.

Cabinet approved a proposal to trial a four-day week at the Council, running from January to March 2023, and preceded by a planning period of three months. The proposal considered potential risks of innovating a new way of working, such as adverse publicity, short term disruption and dissatisfaction from those not involved in the trial.

In March 2023 Cabinet confirmed the arrangements for the next steps of the Four-Day Week Trial, to ensure clarity around the process of reviewing the first trial and considering the next steps.

In May 2023 Cabinet [approved an extension to the trial](#), up until March 2024, in order to assess the impact on recruitment and retention, with regular reports on progress being submitted to Employment & Staffing Committee during 2023/2024 and a final report to Cabinet and Council at the end of the extended trial period. Cabinet also approved a three-month trial for Facilities Management colleagues at South Cambs Hall.

The trial has attracted scrutiny, publicity and debate since its launch. In November 2023 the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities issued a [Best Value Notice](#) to the Council. The department expects authorities to identify and implement arrangements to secure continuous improvement. The Notice is a request that we engage with them to provide assurance of improvement (and was not issued using any legislative powers). Consequently, we are providing them with information about the impact of the trial and productivity.

We have continued to keep our customers and stakeholders updated about the trial on the [Council website](#).

Impact on our governance arrangements

We have proactively taken action to meet these challenges. This has positively contributed to many of the principals from our Local Code of Governance, such as engaging with stakeholders, determining interventions to achieve outcomes, managing risk, and adapting our internal controls.

Review of effectiveness

The Council records policies and procedures, and ongoing good practice, in our [Local Code of Governance](#). These are mapped to the seven principles of good governance. We have a positive risk appetite, and the governance framework is designed to manage risk to an acceptable level. It provides a reasonable level of assurance, as it is not possible to eliminate all risks which may impact the achievement of its vision, policies, aims and objectives.


The effectiveness of the key elements of the governance framework is reviewed throughout the year. This activity is informed by the work of senior officers who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Internal Audit's annual report, comments received from external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.


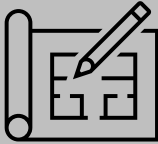
The [Performance Page](#) on the Council's website sets out details of how the examples below have contributed to the delivery of quality services and the Council's Corporate Plan objectives.


The Council is involved in partnership working and has group relationships with other entities. It is the sole owner of [Ermine Street Housing](#), a contributor and partner to the [Greater Cambridge Partnership](#). Additionally, the Council owns a leasing company [Shire Homes](#) which looks to house vulnerable adults and families into short term let accommodation. Activities of the groups are also reflected in our review of effectiveness where these have a significant impact on our governance arrangements.


The 2021/2022 Statement of Accounts was not concluded by the statutory deadline, due to the delay in the previous 2020/2021 Statement of Accounts, and the Annual Governance Statement must be approved in advance of the Statement of Accounts. As good practice the Council is also reporting items up to the date that the Statement of Accounts is concluded. As they relate to the next financial year, they may also feature in the next AGS too.

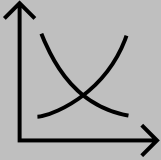
Our review concludes that the Council has complied with its Code. Additional examples of good practice, emerging controls, and governance issues from the last twelve months, considered when completing the review are recorded below, and may be incorporated into the next revision of the Code where appropriate:

Principle	Review of effectiveness
<p data-bbox="203 327 526 422">A Behave: integrity, ethical values, respect rule of law</p> 	<ul data-bbox="611 327 2038 885" style="list-style-type: none"> • The Local Code of Governance was reviewed and updated to reflect the latest professional standards and guidance. • Council adopted a new Model Code of Conduct from May 2022, with training for Councillors across the 106 parishes in the District. • The Employment and Staffing committee approved a revised Disciplinary Policy for employees. • The Audit and Corporate Governance Committee adopted the Corporate Fraud Policy and acknowledged the governing body's responsibility for ensuring that risks associated with fraud, theft, bribery and corruption were managed effectively across all parts of the organisation. • We proactively implemented risk-based controls to mitigate the increased potential for Business Grants fraud and delivered prompt funding support to businesses in the community. • We continued to work closely with Public Health colleagues to coordinate and support the wider county' public health response to the pandemic, including sharing local community intelligence to help contain outbreaks and reduce community transmission of the virus. We redeployed staff to Covid activities, and used our website to signpost to national guidance, policy and advice on Health and Safety.

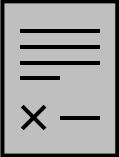
Principle	Review of effectiveness
<p data-bbox="203 284 450 384">B Openness & stakeholder engagement</p> 	<ul data-bbox="611 288 2033 986" style="list-style-type: none"> • We actively communicated with residents throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. This included using the website to signpost people to where they could get help, keeping them updated on changes to services, and financial support for businesses and residents. • The Development Management Service established quarterly meetings with parishes to engage them on planning issues of concern, provide training and answer queries about Development Management. • We maintained openness through access to meetings, information and online support. • The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered a report on the draft Empty Homes Strategy 2021 - 2025, following a survey of owners of empty properties undertaken in July 2021. This Strategy relates to the issue of empty homes in South Cambridgeshire and the tools available to the District Council to help bring them back into use. Cabinet subsequently approved the Strategy to go out to wider public consultation. • The Council maintains a webpage for consultations. • Cabinet agreed the Greater Cambridge Local Plan: First Proposals (preferred options) (Regulation 18) (Appendix A) for public consultation; • Cabinet supported a public consultation on the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Document prior to its return to Cabinet for review and adoption in late 2021. • Cabinet received the Cambridge South Infrastructure Enhancements consultation response and confirmed the Council's position as set out in the Statement of Case for the Public Inquiry.
<p data-bbox="203 1023 528 1118">C Defining outcomes - economic, social, environmental</p> 	<ul data-bbox="611 1027 2033 1358" style="list-style-type: none"> • Council considered and approved the 2020-25 Business Plan for both the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 financial years. The Action Plan focussed on the delivery for 2021-2022 recognising the context of the pandemic. • Cabinet agreed the joint response with Cambridge City Council to the Government's Creating a Vision Oxford-Cambridge Arc Consultation. Updates were regularly reported to Council meetings. • We actively tackle climate change, and detailed information is published on our website. The Council passed a motion to become the first authority to support the designation of a Fens Biosphere and encouraged other neighbouring local authorities to do the same. The Council also received a Certificate of Excellence from IESE for the Council's "Green to Our Core" work.

Principle	Review of effectiveness
<p data-bbox="203 284 524 384">D Determine interventions to achieve outcomes</p> 	<ul data-bbox="611 288 2038 1090" style="list-style-type: none"> • In response to the Covid-19 pandemic we took swift action to help support the public and provided regular updates on our website. We also provided support to businesses by providing information, and financial assistance through the distribution of national and local business support grants. • We established a working group to discuss the best way to support members of the community seeking to assist Ukrainian refugees. • Cabinet approved the Private Sector Housing Policy, to ensure the Council follows guidance from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to tackle substandard conditions in the private rented sector. • Cabinet approved the Cambridgeshire Council Tax Compliance and Counter-Fraud Initiative Business Case, to procure data matching software that enables comparison of data sets across the Cambridgeshire Councils and detect fraud and anomalies. • Cabinet approved the proposal to end the use of fixed term tenancies for its own housing tenants and replaces these with lifetime tenancies for both existing and new tenants. • Cabinet approved the property acquisition to deliver interim community facilities in Northstowe. • Cabinet approved, in their capacity as shareholder, the Ermine Street Business Plan for the period 2021/2022 to 2030/2031. • Cabinet approved the revised Equality Scheme 2020-2024 and reviewed the Equality Scheme action plan progress report, detailing progress against actions set in the 2020-2021 iteration of the Equality Scheme. By virtue of the Public Sector Equality Duty, Councils should publish at least one equality objective every four years. We met this requirement through our Equality Scheme and action plan.

Principle	Review of effectiveness
<p data-bbox="203 284 515 384">E Develop capacity and capability of entity</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="611 288 2033 421">• The Scrutiny and Overview Committee reviewed the Re-set and Recovery Plan outlining the key areas the Council would prioritise during the period 2021-23 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Plan focused on practical recovery and sought to identify a small number of critical activities or changes to ways of working, that might help South Cambridgeshire communities and businesses recover. <li data-bbox="611 443 2033 576">• The pandemic challenged our capacity to manage the governance framework. Digital enabling technology enabled the Council to adapt and respond with different ways of working. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee examined the procedures and backups in place for the delivery of hybrid meetings, should the technology fail. <li data-bbox="611 598 2033 799">• The Employment and Staffing Committee recommended that Cabinet approve a Hybrid Working Policy, allowing us to continue meeting our residents needs while also accommodating the needs and wellbeing of our employees, and the increased flexibility that the modern workforce expects. This should also positively impact our recruitment and staff retention, as it demonstrates we are a modern and caring council. To support this, we introduced Team Charters to outline how we would continue to provide services to residents and customers, and be accessible. The policy was adopted in the following financial year. <li data-bbox="611 821 2033 911">• Council adopted the Member Parental Leave Policy, granting all councillors the right to take extended leave for reasons of maternity, paternity, adoption, or shared parental leave whilst continuing to receive their allowances. <li data-bbox="611 933 2033 1102">• The Employment and Staffing Committee approved a Performance Development Policy, to replace the current Performance Management Policy. The new policy emphasises development opportunities and long-term career aspirations. This should improve employee engagement, which in turn may improve talent retention and our ability to plan for long-term staffing by giving us a better understanding of our overall performance and skill-level. <li data-bbox="611 1125 629 1150">•

Principle	Review of effectiveness
<p data-bbox="203 284 488 416">F Manage risk & performance, internal control, finance</p> 	<ul data-bbox="611 288 2033 847" style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet adopted the Corporate Fraud Strategy; acknowledging the governing body's responsibility for ensuring that risks associated with fraud and corruption are managed effectively across all parts of the organisation. The Audit & Corporate Governance Committee reviewed the Annual Fraud report, which detailed the counter fraud activity undertaken by the Fraud Investigation Services in 2020/2021 and noted that nationally the amount of fraud had increased due to the pandemic. • The Audit & Corporate Governance Committee reviewed Treasury Management activities in the financial year 2020/2021, and noted that the Council had achieved a better investment return on average than others similar authorities in the same benchmarking group. • The Council maintains a Risk Management framework, which considers both risk and opportunity. We also considered risks in response to Covid-19 to help manage the impact with timely and proportionate mitigation as part of our Contingency Planning. The Audit & Corporate Governance Committee reviewed the current processes for managing risk for the Council and Chief Operating Officer outlined proposals to improve risk management across the authority. • Cabinet received a bi-annual update on the delivery of activities and services which promote physical and mental health and wellbeing in the community. This contributes to our Health & Wellbeing Strategy.

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Principle	Review of effectiveness
<p data-bbox="203 284 495 384">G Transparency, reporting, audit, accountability</p> 	<ul data-bbox="611 288 2038 1015" style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Council and the Audit & Corporate Governance Committee opted into the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) contract and framework for appointing external auditors. • There has been a continued delay to the Statement of Accounts. The Audit and Corporate Governance Committee approved the Statement of Accounts for 2019/2020 in January 2023. The 2020/2021 accounts are anticipated to be approved in November 2023, and the 2021/2022 accounts are being drafted for audit in the early 2024 (although it is unclear nationally whether audit firms will be expected to undertake full audits or will provide something less complete; this is a decision that rests with central government). The ongoing challenge is already recognised in our action plan for improvement in the 2019/2020 Statement of Accounts. • Cabinet agreed the Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council - Authority Monitoring Report for Greater Cambridge 2020-2021 for publication on the Councils' websites. • The Scrutiny and Overview Committee considered an Internal Audit review of Planning Performance. The report included information and analysis relating to the numbers of decisions that met the Government's statutory targets, the numbers of decisions made with and without extensions of time (EOTs) and the numbers of applications in hand or outstanding at the end of each month within the assessment period. The aim was to review the calculation process, and the supporting evidence used to complete the returns made to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. A limited assurance report was issued in April 2021, and an action plan was developed for improvement. A further follow-up review in November 2021 and this provided reasonable assurance that the Council had made satisfactory progress at implementing the action plan.

Conclusion and opinion

The Council has in place strong governance arrangements which we are confident protect its interests and provide necessary assurances to our citizens and stakeholders.

No significant governance issues were identified from our review of effectiveness. Where we have identified opportunities for improvement, these are included in the Annual Governance Statement. We are satisfied that any planned actions will improve our governance arrangements, identified from our review of effectiveness. We will monitor their implementation and operation throughout the year and report their progress as part of our next review.

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