

Annual Governance Statement

2018/19

This Annual Governance Statement is presented as a joint statement of Babergh District Council (BDC) and Mid Suffolk District Council (MSDC)



Introduction

The Leaders of each Council and the Chief Executive all recognise the importance of having good rules, systems and information available to guide the Councils when managing and delivering services to the communities of Babergh and Mid Suffolk.

Each year the Councils are required to produce an Annual Governance Statement which describes how its corporate governance arrangements have been working.

What is Corporate Governance?

Corporate governance is both the policies and procedures in place and the values and behaviours that are needed to help ensure the Councils run effectively, can be held to account for its actions and delivers the best possible outcomes for the communities it serves with the resources available.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance that sets out a commitment to corporate governance and summarises the governance arrangements and activities in place to which it is accountable to and engages with its communities.

The Local Code reflects the core and sub-principles outlined in the 2016 CIPFA/SOLACE* Framework, 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'.

(* CIPFA – Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, SOLACE –

The Councils' responsibility in relation to Corporate Governance

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and to proper standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Councils also have 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.

In discharging this overall responsibility, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils are also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which include arrangements for the management of risk.

This Statement explains how the Councils have complied with the Local Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles and reflects the requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework, 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'.

What is a Governance Assurance Framework?

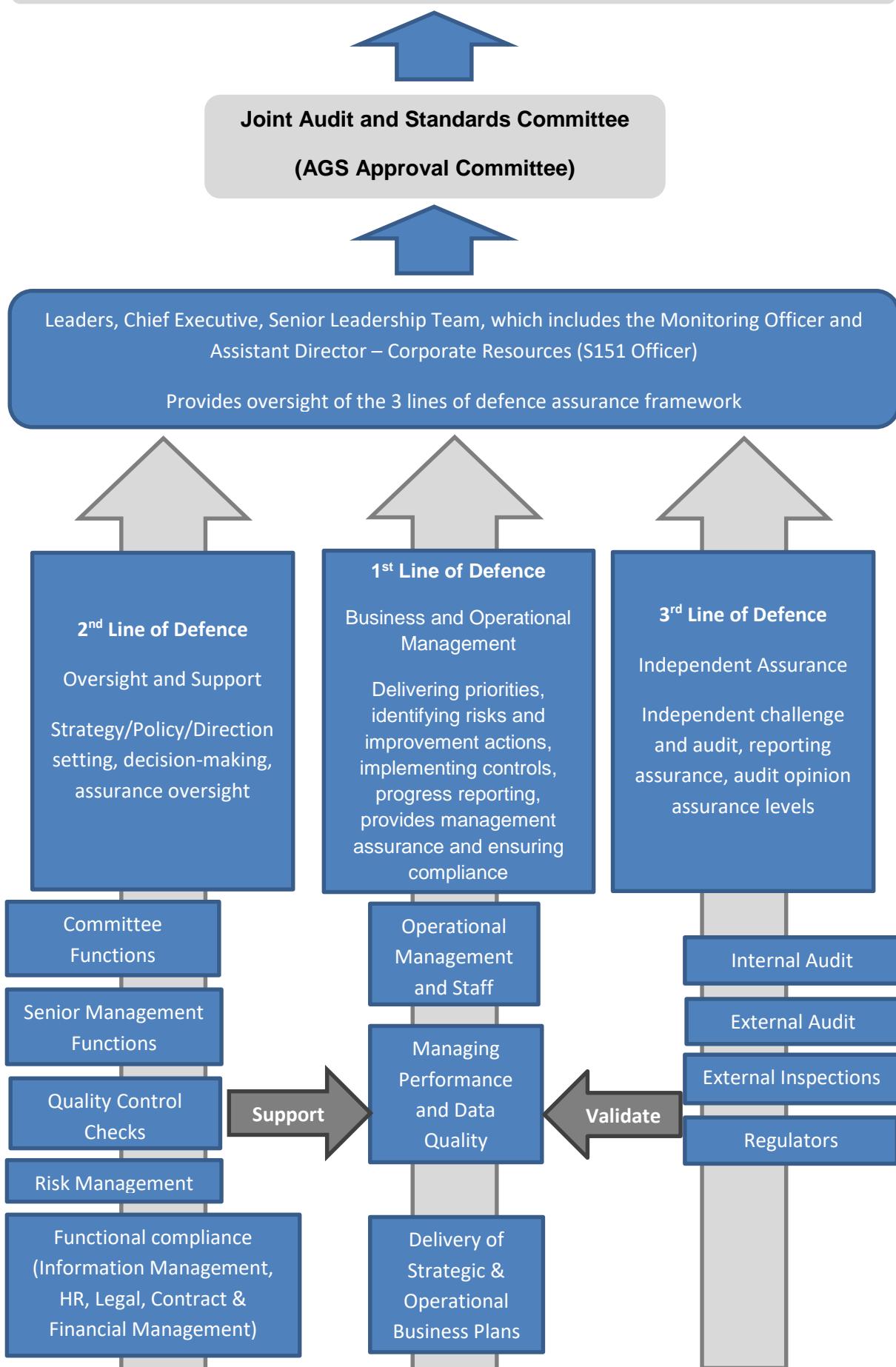
Assurance provides confidence. Based on sufficient evidence, that internal controls are in place and are operating effectively and that priorities/objectives are being achieved. An Assurance Framework is a structure within which Members and Senior Management identify the principal risks to the Council meeting its key priorities, and through which they map out both the key controls to manage them and how they have gained sufficient assurance about the effectiveness of those controls. The assurance framework underpins the statements made within the Annual Governance Statement.

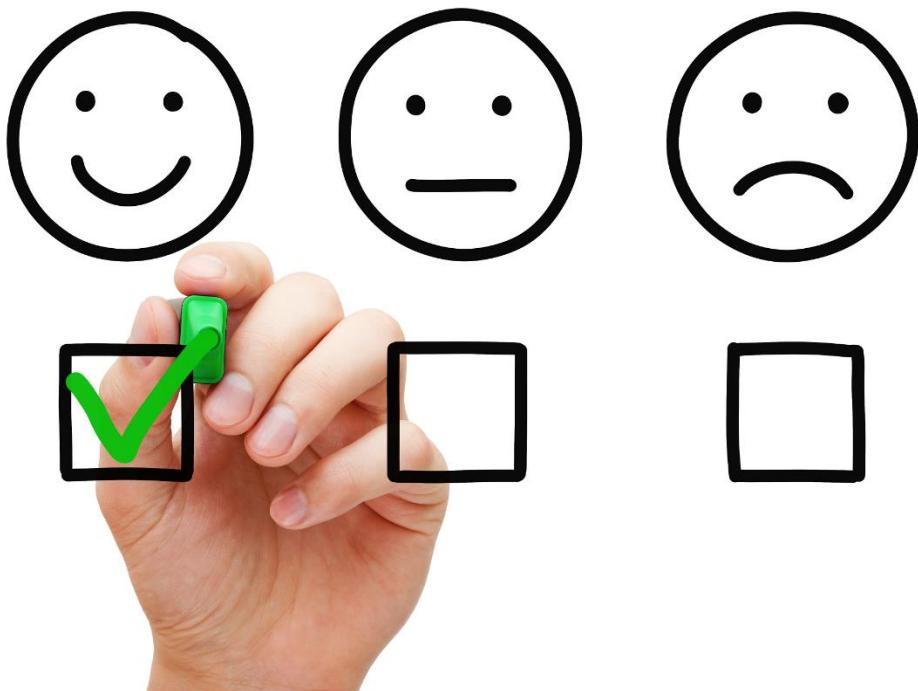
An assurance process is in place to provide a framework for the annual assessment of the effectiveness of the governance arrangements operating within the Councils. This includes robust challenge by the Councils' Joint Audit and Standards Committee, Statutory Officers i.e. the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Assistant Director – Corporate Resources (S151 Officer) and the Senior Leadership Team.

In addition, 'the three lines of defence assurance model' is in place which helps Members and Senior Management to understand where assurances are being obtained from, the level of reliance they place on that assurance and identify potential gaps in assurance.

Below summarises the Councils' governance assurance framework, which is based on the three lines of defence model.

Annual Governance Statement





How do the Councils monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its governance arrangements?

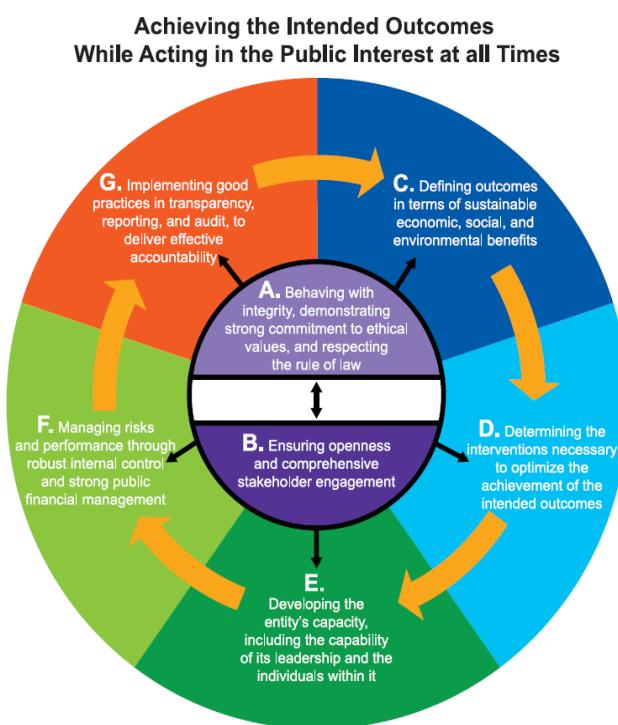
The Councils annually review the effectiveness of its governance arrangements. The key sources of assurance that inform this review are outlined below:

- The development and implementation of a Governance Assurance Framework, which enables the Councils to gain assurance that good governance actions and behaviours are operating within the Councils;
- The work of Members and Senior Officers of the Councils who have responsibility for good governance;
- The Corporate Manager – Internal Audit's annual report on Internal Audit activity 2018/19, which provides the independent assurance that key risks (financial and non-financial) are being managed and provides an opinion on the effectiveness of these arrangements;
- Reports on Risk Management and Performance activity during 2018/19;
- Any comments made by the Councils' External Auditors; and
- Any other reviews by inspectorates.

Core Principles of Good Governance

The diagram from the *International Framework*, below illustrates how the various principles for good governance in the public sector relate to each other. Principles A and B permeate implementation of principles C to G. The diagram also illustrates that good governance is dynamic, and that an entity as a whole should be committed to improving governance on a continuing basis through a process of evaluation and review.

A summary of the local arrangements in place for 2018/19 to comply with each of the principles is set out on the following pages.



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

The standards of conduct and personal behaviour expected of Members and Officers and its partners are defined and communicated through Codes of Conduct and Protocols and each Council's Constitution. Arrangements are in place to ensure that Members and Officers are aware of their responsibilities under these codes and protocols. The Councils' website outlines the arrangements for making a complaint that a Member of the Council has failed to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct and sets out how the Council will deal with allegations of a failure to comply with the Council's Code of Conduct. Complaints about Members and allegations that a Member has breached the Code of Conduct would be dealt with initially by the Monitoring Officer and referred to the Standards Committee where appropriate under the Localism Act 2011. In addition, the Councils have appointed an Independent Person, to consult on alleged breaches to the Member Code of Conduct. Each Council's Constitution sets out the employment procedures for the Head of Paid Service. Strategic and Assistant Directors, Monitoring Officer and Assistant Director – Corporate Resources (s151 Officer).

The Councils' five corporate values are underpinned by a behaviour framework for staff. The values have been developed by our own employees and set out what we 'believe in'. These values influence everything we say and do – from our working environment to our policies, leadership, language and, of course, our behaviours. A set of desired behaviours associated with each of the Values has been developed and form part of the Councils' formal review and 121 conversations process for officers.

The Councils' also have a Prevention of Financial Crime Policy, which includes the Whistleblowing Policy.

The Statutory Officers' Group continues to meet regularly and review processes and procedures as well as any breaches that may have occurred to establish lessons learned.

Our Values



OUR
PEOPLE



OUR
CUSTOMERS



BEING OPEN
and HONEST



TAKING
OWNERSHIP



BEING
AMBITIOUS

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

The Councils have laid out its purpose, direction, vision and objectives in its Joint Strategic Plan which can be obtained either on the Councils' website or the Councils' office. The Plan also seeks to enthuse our councillors and staff – now working in totally new and more flexible ways – to build on their track records of innovation and success to focus even more of their energies on delivering our key outcomes for our communities and businesses.

The Councils' planning and decision-making processes are designed to include consultation with stakeholders and the submission of views by local people. This is evidenced as follows:

- ❖ The Councils have developed a Home's Strategy and Homeless Reduction Strategy following engagement with residents, covering the period 2019-24, The Homes Strategy lays out how the councils aim to increase the number of new homes being delivered in their districts. This strategy also aims to increase housing options for older households and those requiring accessible homes and to ensure the existing housing stock is fit for 21st century living. The Homelessness Reduction Strategy aims to reduce homelessness in both districts and support the most vulnerable Babergh and Mid Suffolk residents in finding and sustaining a home.
- ❖ The Councils have developed a Joint Communities Strategy (2019 – 2036) following engagement with residents, Town and Parish Councils, representatives from the Voluntary and Community sector as well as District Councillors. The strategy is the Councils' collective response to some of the big community-related changes we have experienced in the districts and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. The Strategy seeks to find the right balance between creating a sense of expectation that the Councils can live up to and empowering those who want to do more and can make a real difference. Ultimately, the Councils' ambition is for communities that thrive; stronger and healthier places, built on a balanced and targeted range of services and support, equally accessible to all our residents and to future generations.

The Councils publish certain data in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code, which enables more power to be placed into citizens' hand to increase democratic accountability. And make it easier for local people to contribute to the local decision-making process.

The Councils' democratic function is responsible for ensuring agendas and key decisions are published in line with the statutory legal requirements.

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable, economic, social and environment benefits

The Councils take an annual approach to business planning, allowing a close link between business and financial planning. The Joint Medium Financial Term Plan is reviewed annually and forms the basis of the annual budgeting process.

The Councils' operational services are divided into Directorates. Business plans for each service area are regularly reviewed between the Assistant Directors and their Corporate Managers and which identify objectives and targets. In addition, monthly forecasts are discussed and variances challenged with the budget holder. This process is further supported by the Finance Business Partners who meet regularly with the Assistant Directors and attend Portfolio Holder's meetings to discuss the quarterly financial performance. Quarterly financial reports are discussed with SLT providing challenge and scrutiny of the major variances as they occur throughout the year.

As part of the 2018/19 budget review SLT supported a thorough review of each service area and the associated resources; explored the productivity and efficiency, and identified the priorities along with the risks, as well as a thorough review of the use of reserves.

The Councils' business planning, performance and risk management framework enables the monitoring of progress against service strategic/business plans priorities and objectives, key performance indicators and targets.

The Councils aim to ensure that the purchase of goods, services or works required to deliver services is acquired under Best Value terms.

The Councils have developed business continuity plans to ensure that critical service delivery can be maintained or recovered during an emergency.

The Councils' decision-making process requires consideration of the economic, social and environmental impacts of policies and plans when taking decisions about service provision.

Programme and project management arrangements require consideration of Political, Environmental, Societal (i.e. increased demand for a service and demographic changes), Technological, Legislative, Economic and Efficiency issues, risks and opportunities and value for money.

Each Council has a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan. It's a strategic plan for managing and maintaining their housing stock. It sets out the Council's short to medium plans and priorities for its housing management services and provides a long term (30 year) perspective on stock investment and financial planning.

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended

The Councils' Joint Strategic Plan was formulated following the results of a survey which sought feedback from the public, Members, staff and other key stakeholders. The Joint Medium Financial Term Plan is used to align resources to key priorities. The Councils have templates to ensure authors cover all the requirements to enable a decision to be made; they include options, if required, cost and risk analysis in addition to key signatories such as legal, finance and risk.

Financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016)

Internal financial control is based on a framework of management information, financial regulations and administrative procedures, which include separation of duties, management supervision, appropriate staffing structure including appropriately skilled, trained or qualified staff, and a system of delegation and accountability.

The Councils' framework of internal financial control is supported by Financial Regulations, Contract Standing Orders, Scheme of Delegation and the Constitution. The regulations provide the framework for managing the Councils' financial affairs. They set out the procedures that the Council has adopted for financial planning, budgeting, risk management, auditing, treasury management and procurement of goods and services.

All Committees meetings are held in public and decisions made by Cabinet Members and officers are published in line with the statutory legal requirements, although some items are considered as exempt. Minutes of all Council meetings are made available to the public, and members of the public have the opportunity to contribute to Council meetings. The Councils have a complaints and feedback system, which records and monitors customer comments, complaints and requests for information.

We maintain an effective scrutiny function which encourages constructive challenge and enhances the Councils' performance overall.

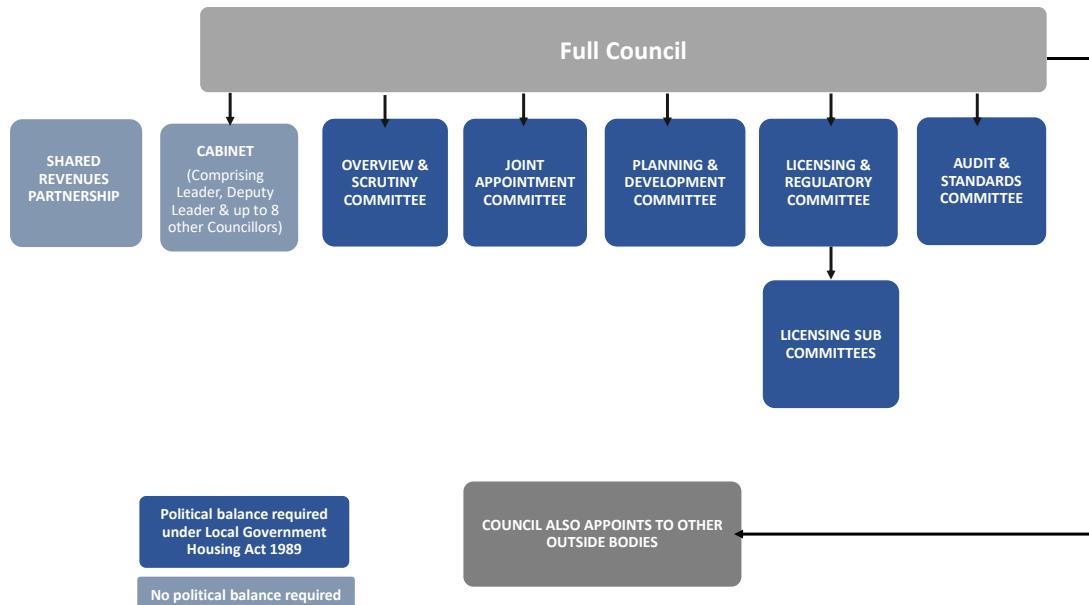
The Councils have a performance management and monitoring process in place. Performance reports analysing trends are monitored by management Portfolio Holders and the relevant Committees.

The Councils' have a Data Quality Policy which outlines the Councils' commitment to ensuring data quality and arrangements are in place to monitor and enhance the quality of performance data.

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

The following diagram shows the Council's political structure which mirrors one another in their make-up. Councillors from each council meet together as a Council. Meetings are generally open to the public, now streamed live onto YouTube and feature a main topical debate item. Each Council has an approved Constitution which details how the Councils operate, how decisions are made and the procedures that are to be followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. The Monitoring Officer ensures that the Constitution remains fit for purpose, that legal requirements are met and that the public interest is paramount in all decision making.

Governance Structure of Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils



The Chief Executive is the Councils' Head of Paid Service and is responsible for delivering the Councils' vision and leadership supported by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The Chief Executive leads the organisation to achieve demanding strategic goals, ensuring that SLT drives performance that focuses on outcomes and delivery. The Chief Executive has strong and productive relationships with all stakeholders, working especially with the Leaders of the Councils and their senior councillor colleagues.

The Councils also appoint officers, qualified to undertake statutory responsibilities, such as:

- ❖ Chief Financial Officer as contained in the Local Government Act 1972 – S151 – responsible for ensuring the proper administration of the Councils' financial affairs; and
- ❖ Monitoring Officer as contained in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 – S5 – responsible for ensuring that decision making is lawful and fair.

The SLT has been structured to drive the development of a more sustainable, customer orientated and commercial operating model. The model is focused upon delivering the right services to the right standards, at the right time for the district's residents and businesses. Recent appointments have been made to ensure Senior Leadership Team have the right skills and experience to deliver the priorities.

Following District Elections, all Members are required to undertake a comprehensive and compulsory training programme. This includes Planning training, Code of Conduct training and Licensing training. Members are not allowed to sit on the Planning or Licensing Committees until such training has been undertaken. The training programme ensures that they understand the procedures and protocols of the Councils. In addition, other non-compulsory training has been provided, e.g. Finance, Internal Audit and Risk Management.

Skills required by officers are assessed through 121's and the appraisal process to identify and address any training gaps, to enable roles to be carried out effectively.

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

The Councils consider and counter risk across a broad range of areas supported by an approved Risk Management Strategy. As part of good governance, the Councils manage and maintain a register of its Significant risks which are linked to the Councils' priorities and reviewed and monitored on a quarterly basis by the Senior Leadership Team, and regularly reported to both Cabinets and the Joint Audit and Standards Committee. Operational and Project risk registers are in place and managed by the appropriate Corporate Manager. Their Assistant Director and the Lead Risk Officer have oversight of these.

The Joint Audit and Standards Committee receive an annual report entitled 'Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption' that provides a summary of the outcomes of our work to deter, prevent and detect frauds and corruption.

Internal Audit has produced a Fraud Risk Register, which contains a list of areas where Internal Audit and service managers believe the Councils are susceptible to fraud. The register enables the Councils to focus on suitable internal controls to mitigate any subsequent risk. The register also influences the Internal Audit planning process.

Internal Audit has also produced a single document entitled 'Prevention of Financial Crime Policy' which includes the Whistleblowing Policy, which is available to all staff on the Councils' intranet.

Information governance issues including processes, procedures and breaches are now taken to and reviewed by the 'Statutory Officers Group', which meet regularly throughout the year.

Each committee report is required to be formally signed off by a representative in Legal, Finance and Internal Audit – Risk to ensure due consideration has been given by the author to address areas before the report is released to Councillors.

The Councils consider their Internal Audit and Risk Management Services team to be a key component of its governance framework. One of the key assurance statements the Councils receive is the annual report and opinion of the Corporate Manager – Internal Audit. In respect of the twelve months period ending March 2019, it is the Corporate Manager – Internal Audit's opinion that the Councils' framework of governance, risk management and internal control is '(Sufficient) – Reasonable Assurance' – the system, process or activity should achieve its objectives safely and effectively. However, whilst there are some control weaknesses most key controls are in place and operating effectively. Where weaknesses have been identified through internal audit review, Internal Audit have worked with management to agree appropriate corrective actions and a timescale for improvement.

Our outcome performance framework enables officers, Councillors and Communities to track progress against the delivery of the Joint Strategic Plan, understand our key risks and share in the celebration of our achievements. Performance data is available and visible through quarterly formal reports provided to both Cabinets.

The outcome framework shifts us from the traditional measurement of outputs and inputs, to one that focuses us on measuring the desired results and outcomes of our key projects, activities and services, and in particular the impact we have on our communities. It provides a strong evidence base for service improvement and transformation, and facilitates better decision making and the efficient use of our resources.

The Council has adopted the Plan, Do, Check & Act approach to managing health and safety as recommended by the HSE to help it to comply with the law, HSE encourages a common-sense and practical approach to managing health and safety.

Robust budget management arrangements are in place including regular monitoring and reporting to senior management and Members. External review and report on each Council's financial statements by the Councils' External Auditor to the Joint Audit and Standards Committee (including this Annual Governance Statement), providing an opinion on the accounts and concluding on the arrangements in place for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources (the value for money conclusion).

The Joint Audit and Standards Committee are responsible for undertaking the Councils' responsibilities in relation to financial governance issues. Furthermore, they support the S151 officer responsible for the administration of the relevant Council's financial affairs in their statutory role in connection with financial probity.

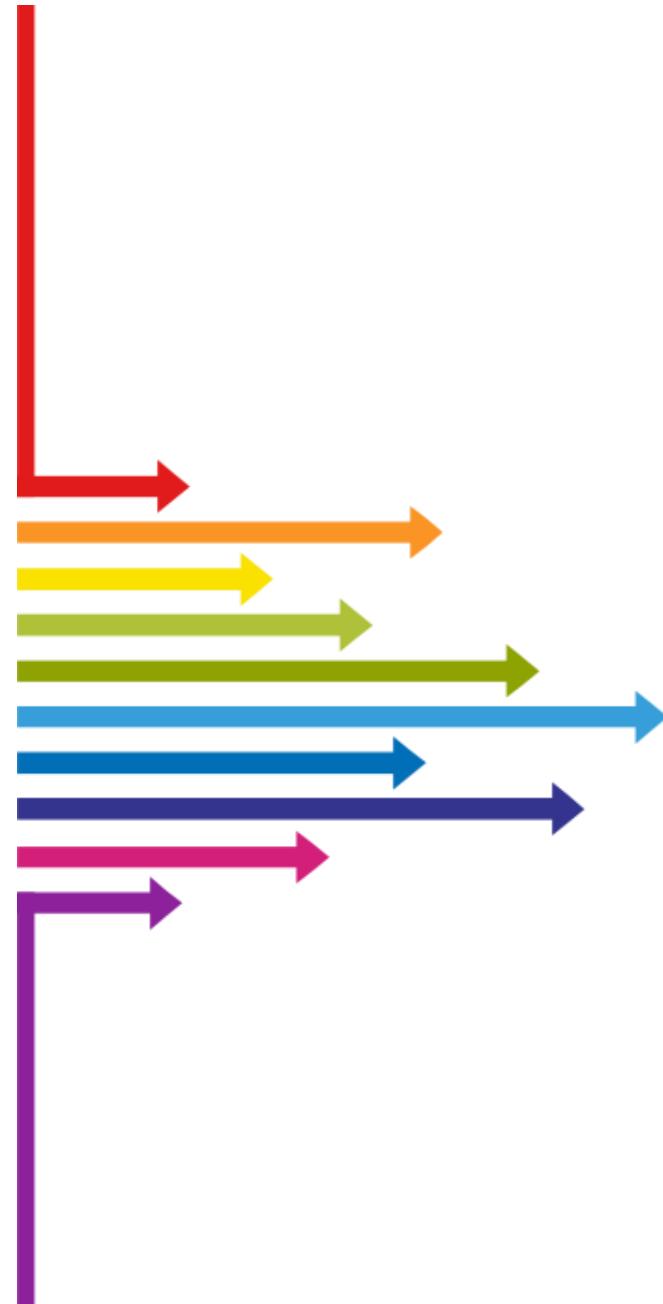
The Councils have a record of setting balanced budgets and no history of overspending; modest increases in council tax; and no significant reductions in service levels during reductions in government funding.

MOVING FORWARD

The approach over the medium term is to transform the Council into an organisation that is thriving and not just surviving, by reviewing, remodelling and reinventing the way the Council operates. The Councils agreed that the following overarching principles should be considered when evaluating ideas and opportunities for change as set out below:

- ❖ Provide a better service for our customers
- ❖ Increased social value
- ❖ Reduce our costs (both internally and across the wider system)
- ❖ Increase our income
- ❖ Provide better / "best" value
- ❖ Reduction in administration costs, without compromising service

The focus will be on internal efficiencies and improvements within existing structures. Continuously looking to streamline work and reduce waste in processes. Greater cross-functional working and multi-skilling and improving ways of working to move away from 'professional silos' and toward integrated services for the public. Where customer demand is understood, analysed and met through new services and business models, and where the demand itself is re-shaped and managed while engaging service users to ascertain priorities.



Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

Agendas and minutes of Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings are publically available on the Councils' website. A live stream of Council meetings held in the King Edmund Chamber is now available on YouTube.

The Councils' have a Freedom of Information Act publication scheme to ensure the members of the public have access to all recorded information held by the Councils.

Compliance with the Local Government Data Transparency Code which sets out the minimum data that the Councils should be publishing, the frequency it should published and how it should be published. This makes it easier for local people to contribute to the local decision-making processes and help to shape public services.

The published Annual Statement of Accounts is the statutory summary of each Councils' financial affairs for the financial year. The purpose of the Annual Statement of Accounts is to give clear information on the income and expenditure of the Councils and to demonstrate the Councils' stewardship of public money for the year.

The Councils publish an Annual Governance Statement in order to report how we have monitored the effectiveness of our governance arrangements against the seven key principles set out within our Code of Corporate Governance in year and on any planned changes in the coming year.

The Joint Audit and Standards Committee review and approve the Annual Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement. The Committee also provide independent assurance to the Councils on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance arrangements and internal control environment operating within the Councils.

Accountability and decision-making arrangements are clearly defined within the Councils' Constitution. It is an important mechanism through which public accountability can be exercised. The primary role of the Councils' Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to hold Cabinet to account and to help improve services.

Risk based internal auditing provides ongoing assurance that the key risks material to achieving the Councils' objectives are being managed.

Last year's improvement areas

In the 2017/18 Annual Governance Statement a number of improvement areas were identified. Below are the actions taken during 2018/19.

Improvement area	Action Taken
<p>A small number of senior officers have been tasked with facilitating the development of a set of core values across both Councils. It is intended that the core values will support the vision, shape the culture and reflect what the Councils value and how we operate. They will be developed in consultation with all staff across the organisation and will then form the essence of the Councils' identity. Establishing strong core values provides both internal and external advantages in terms of decision-making processes and educating our stakeholders. Once established they will underpin how we go about our everyday business.</p>	<p>Following a significant amount of work with officers, a set of values was established and a 'soft launch' carried out in January 2019. The 5 values are, 'we believe in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Being open and honest❖ Our Customers❖ Our People❖ Being Ambitious❖ Taking Ownership <p>These values will influence everything we do, from our working environment, HR policies, recruitment, training, performance management, leadership, language and will ultimately contribute to the culture we want for our future.</p> <p>MOVING FORWARD</p> <p>Much of the work to date has been behind the scenes, our HR recruitment site, corporate inductions, performance review sessions and 121s. There is further work to do, to ensure that the building blocks are in place to embed our values across the organisation, so that we can ensure our values are more than just a poster on a wall.</p>
<p>The Councils are refreshing their Customer Access Strategy, which will build on; our vision of improving public access, making it easy for customers to do business with us, ensuring our channels are effortless to navigate, promote individual and community self-service and services which are available when our customers want them. The Strategy will focus on 4 overlapping customer themes including: insight/understanding, access, experience and organisational customer focus. This will ensure we are working towards providing excellent access to our services for customers.</p>	<p>During the Summer of 2018 both Councils agreed a refreshed Customer Strategy, whose focus is to put the customer at the heart of our organisation, and by doing so helps us to better understand and be able to deliver their needs. An action plan is in progress with improvements made during 2018/19 with respect to customer service performance, including satisfaction levels, time taken to answer calls/fewer abandoned calls and increases in website visitors. We have also been working in partnership with Suffolk Libraries to trial alternative methods of in-person customer service delivery and will continue to review this.</p>

Improvement area	Action Taken
<p>The Councils will need to develop a procurement strategy by mid-2018 that will set out options for the future management of the Councils' leisure facilities. The future contractual management arrangements will have a greater emphasis on the delivery of the Councils' wider strategic objectives and will be a key factor in the delivery of the Councils' strategy. The Councils will also need to develop an action plan and key performance indicators with its key stakeholders for the delivery of the Leisure, Sports and Physical Activity Strategy.</p> <p>In addition, the Councils will look to develop an Environment Strategy; Housing Strategy; and Communities Strategy, as well as a refresh of the Councils' Joint Strategic Plan.</p>	<p>Leisure Procurement Strategy – Officers continue to investigate options for the future management arrangements for the Mid Suffolk leisure facility contract. Both legal and procurement advice has been received and informal soundings were presented to the Council's Administration (in December 2018) and to Overview and Scrutiny (in December 2018). A Cabinet report will be presented in July 2019 confirming the future approach.</p> <p>Environment Strategy – the joint authorities commissioned consultants, Insight Intelligence, to scope out a future Environment Strategy. A cross party task and finish group of Councillors was established, and a number of key stakeholders were consulted.</p> <p>The joint authorities produced a joint Environment Position Statement that will be considered by the new Administrations after the 2019 elections as the basis for an Environment Strategy.</p> <p>Housing Strategy – The Councils have developed the Homes and Housing and the Homelessness Reduction and Rough Sleeping Strategies 2019-2024, which were approved by Full Council in March 2019. Both strategies created the strategic direction for the next five years and include associated detailed action plans. 'Our vision is for residents to live in affordable and high-quality homes that enable them to build settled, safe and healthy lives, within sustainable and thriving communities'.</p> <p>Communities Strategy - The Councils have developed a Joint Communities Strategy which was approved by Full Council in March 2019 following public consultation.</p> <p>A working group formed from Senior Leadership Team members were tasked with reviewing the Councils' Corporate Plan pre-election. Officers are continuing to develop the Plan alongside the newly elected Members.</p>

Improvement area	Action Taken
During 2018/19 work will be undertaken to develop a finance strategy 2019-22 and focussed work to deliver a balanced budget for the 3-year period.	As a result of the budget setting process savings were identified as well as additional income invested in commercial opportunities to provide income over the medium term to mitigate some of the impact of the reduced funding from central government. The work is continuing during 2019/20.
Specific health of the organisation indicators are being developed with our Senior Leadership Team to ensure regular internal monitoring.	<p>The following sickness absence indicators are regularly reported to senior management:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Highest sickness % - focus on service area ❖ % off sick based on available working hours ❖ Number of days lost to sickness per person ❖ Total number of days lost to sickness and by team ❖ Number of days due to mental health.
<p>Each service area to produce an annual service plan to give a detailed picture of how the Councils will operate designed to align current delivery arrangements with changing patterns of demand, making the most effective use of available and future resources. Each service plan will detail the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Sets out the key activities the service area delivers; ❖ Reflects on the key service activity and achievements for 2017-18; ❖ Sets out the key targets for the service area and the resources allocated to achieve these targets; ❖ Identifies the main risks and performance measures associated with the delivery of the service; ❖ Provides a high-level workforce development plan for the service. <p>Each service plan to be 'signed off' by senior management and will be used throughout the year to manage service delivery.</p>	Each service area has a plan. Each directorate has identified how they will deliver their services and what they will be doing to support the Councils' Strategic priorities, as outlined in their service plans. These plans directly link back to the Councils' priorities and are performance managed by the relevant Assistant Directors.

Improvement area	Action Taken
<p>An Organisational Development Plan is being developed that will better assess the skills required by Members to ensure they are adequately equipped to enable their roles to be carried out effectively.</p>	<p>A Training and Development Policy, role descriptions and a rolling 4-year programme of training and Member Induction were approved by Cabinet in March and has been implemented.</p>
<p>Internal Audit will look to further embed risk management across the Councils, particularly at an operational level and develop stronger links to performance.</p>	<p>Risk registers are now in place for all service areas. The Risk Officer prompts the update of these on a quarterly basis and oversees that this is done.</p> <p>Project risk registers are being created. Project Managers and Corporate Managers are working together to identify links between operational and project risks.</p> <p>Ongoing improvements to register and reports have been made. Internal Audit are working with our performance and finance colleagues to ensure reporting times are aligned.</p> <p>This also has the advantage of helping officers and Members to have a better understanding of the Councils' overall strategic and operational position.</p>

Approval of Statement

Approval of Statement by Chief Executive and Leaders of each Council

The Annual Governance Statement provides an assurance of the effectiveness of each Council's system on internal control. The arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework. There have been no governance issues identified during the year that are considered significant in relation to each Council's overall governance framework.

We are already addressing the key governance risks and challenges set out in this Annual Governance Statement and will continue to do so over the coming year to further strengthen our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will continue to address the need for any improvements that are required and that arrangements are in place to monitor the issues raised as part of each Council's annual review.

Signed

Signed

Arthur Charvonia, Chief Executive

John Ward, Leader of the Council – Babergh DC

Date

Date

Signed

Suzie Morley, Leader of the Council – Mid Suffolk DC

Date