

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**STATEMENT 2**

8.3 The now 14 statements cover the following areas of activity: -

- Anti-Fraud and Corruption - Head of Finance & Property Services
- Best Value Framework - Head of Finance & Property Services
- Councillors' Code of Conduct - Monitoring Officer
- Counter-Terrorism Duties – Depute Chief Executive (Corporate, Operational and Housing Services)
- Discipline and Grievances - Head of Corporate Services
- Employee Whistleblowing - Head of Corporate Services
- Information Governance - Head of Corporate Services
- Information Security - Head of Corporate Services
- Occupational Health & Safety - Head of Corporate Services
- Procurement - Head of Corporate Services
- Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) - Head of Corporate Services
- Public Sector Equality Duty - Head of Corporate Services
- Regulation of Investigatory Powers (RIPSA) – Depute Chief Executive (Corporate, Operational and Housing Services)
- Breaches of the Law - Monitoring Officer

8.4 Areas of concern covered in the compliance statements are reflected in the assessment of evidence in the Local Code of Corporate Governance. They may lead to inclusion in the annual governance statement's list of governance issues to be addressed in the next reporting year. The statement by the Monitoring Officer is particularly important. The Monitoring Officer holds a statutory post and is responsible for ensuring the council's compliance with its statutory duties and responsibilities. They are to report on and address any breaches of the law which are significant to the operations of the council.

8.5 The Monitoring Officer secured information from service managers and consulted with the Corporate Management Team, the Chief Solicitor and the Audit, Risk and Counter Fraud Manager. His opinion is that there have been no material or significant breaches of the law by the council in 2023/24 which have or will have a material or significant impact on the operations of the council. He has certified that the council is complying in all material respects with its statutory obligations.

8.6 He did identify a number of instances (reduced from previous years) where improvements to the council's compliance with legislation were required. None of those breaches was considered to present significant risk to the continuing operation and effective delivery of council services and control. Not all breaches are material to the council's operations or its finances. Those issues are described in the annual compliance statement. They concerned the council's homeless accommodation duty, full recovery of charges for council care home places, and breaches of procurement legislation. The last were also identified in the Procurement compliance statement. The causes have been identified and appropriate actions have been and are being taken to ensure lessons are learned.

9. Audit Committee

9.1 Audit Committee operates in compliance with PSIAS. It undertakes a corporate overview of the council's control environment, develops an anti-fraud culture to ensure the highest standards of probity and public accountability. It evaluates the arrangements in place for securing the economical, efficient and effective management of resources. It considers an annual review of the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's control framework. It monitors the independence and effectiveness of the Audit, Risk & Counter Fraud Team.

9.2 The Chair of the committee must be appointed from councillors who are not in the ruling administration political group. The majority of members are from outwith that group. The committee includes one non-councillor member to bring a different perspective and expertise to the work of the committee. The non-councillor member's appointment was renewed at full council in March 2023 for a further three-year period.

9.3 The committee meets four times each year. It operates through an annual work plan approved by the committee. It carries out an annual self-assessment exercise to identify improvements in the way it operates. The outcome of internal audit and counter-fraud investigations judged to be significant are reported individually. Summaries of other audit reports are reported bi-annually. Reports are presented and considered in public unless there is clear legal justification for excluding the public. They express an opinion as to whether control is effective, satisfactory, requires improvement or is unsound. Sixteen out of eighteen planned audits were completed with the two others in progress.