

Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

Scope of responsibility

Runnymede Borough Council (“the Council”) has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which it works, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. This includes a responsibility to ensure that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for.

In discharging this duty, the Council must put in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Council has formally adopted a code of corporate governance which is consistent with the seven principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016* and the Annual Governance Statement explains how the Council has complied with its code.

Production of the Statement also meets the requirements of Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to review its system of internal control and to publicly report on the outcome of that review. In line with the CIPFA/SOLACE framework, the Statement should be “an open and honest self-assessment” which:

- describes key elements of the Council’s governance arrangements, covering key corporate systems and the range of activities for which the Council is responsible
- describes processes applied in reviewing their effectiveness
- lists actions to deal with significant governance issues identified.

The purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises:

- the systems, policies, processes, culture and values by which the Council is directed and controlled; and
- the Council’s activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community.

The framework enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to:

- identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Runnymede Borough Council’s policies, aims and objectives;
- to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised; and
- to manage those risks efficiently, effectively and economically.

The governance framework outlined in this document has been in place at Runnymede Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2024 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts.

Response to the external environment

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While the governance framework sets out the internal processes that the Council follows in order to deliver outcomes, it must also be responsive to the changing external environment. For example, the effects of the cost-of-living crisis, including significant increases in energy costs and food prices, saw the Council continuing to administer grant funds during 2023/24, such as the Household Support Fund, requiring robust policies, processes and governance arrangements to be in place to ensure support reached those in need.

The Council continued to put additional measures in place to respond to other external stimuli, such as increased cyber security threat, through development of its cyber security action plan, and continuing to assist those fleeing conflict, for example through the continuation of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and its participation in the Local Authority Housing Fund to purchase properties to support both Ukrainian and Afghan refugees.

Most significantly in relation to external stimuli, all councils have been working in an environment where the sector is under increasing scrutiny in respect of concerns about financial resilience and financial risk. The Government has responded in a number of ways including:

- the launch of the [Office for Local Government](#) (OfLog) in July 2023 with the following objectives:
 - **(inform)** to increase understanding - among citizens, civil society, central government and local government itself - about data on the performance of local authorities;
 - **(warn)** to help identify local authorities that are at risk of serious failure but have not raised the alarm themselves; and
 - **(support)** to support local government to improve performance, productivity, and value for money: championing best practice, improving data capability and rationalising a complex data landscape
- Issue of draft guidance in July 2023 to support councils in assessing whether they were delivering against their Best Value duties. This [statutory guidance](#) was finalised 8th May 2024.
- Enactment of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) which contains a section on Capital Risk and a set of metrics for assessing this risk.
- Instigation of a number of statutory [Best Value interventions](#) and issuance of a number of non-statutory [Best Value Notices for local authorities](#)

Examples of the impact of external events on the Council's governance framework are included in the Annual Governance Statement and demonstrate a constantly evolving, responsive approach to risk, adapting and strengthening governance arrangements where appropriate.

Review of the Governance Framework

This annual review of the Council's governance framework ensures its continuing effectiveness in supporting the seven CIPFA/SOLACE¹ principles of delivering good governance.

Key elements of the governance framework in place at Runnymede Borough Council are shown against each of the seven principles in the following table. Processes undertaken to review effectiveness and examples of improvements to the system are also shown.

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

¹ CIPFA Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy / SOLACE The Society of Local Government Chief Executives and Senior Managers

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- ✓ The Council has adopted a [Constitution](#) which sets out how the Council operates and how decisions are made. The Constitution details the roles and functions of its various Committees and of its key statutory officers; namely

Chief Executive	Head of Paid Service	Section 4, Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Corporate Head of Law and Governance	Monitoring Officer	Section 5, Local Government and Housing Act 1989
Assistant Chief Executive	Chief Finance Officer	Section 151, Local Government Act 1972 and Section 114, Local Government Finance Act 1988

- ✓ The statutory officers each have specific responsibilities to ensure reports to Members for decision comply with Financial Regulations, Standing Orders and are lawful.
- ✓ A Member and Officer Code of Conduct form part of the Constitution
- ✓ The Member Code of Conduct is based upon [The Seven Principles of Public Life](#) (also known as the Nolan Principles) which promote Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership for everyone who works in public service.
- ✓ The Constitution also includes specific codes of conduct for Planning and Licensing Committees as well as protocols for Member/Officer relations and use of information technology (IT).
- ✓ The Council operates to a set of Corporate Values which underpin individual and collective behaviour and are reflected in discussion, communication and the decision-making process: Customer-focused, Passionate, Performance driven, Innovative, Promoting equality and diversity and Delivering excellent value for money. The Council is about to embark on an assessment of its Organisational Culture as one of the workstreams under its response to receipt of a non-statutory Best Value Notice from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in December 2023. This work may feed into a refresh of the Values and demonstrates how the Council intends to review the effectiveness of its Values framework.
- ✓ The [Standards and Audit Committee](#) continues to have oversight of governance issues including ethical standards and code of conduct.
- ✓ Following the publication of a series of best practice recommendations from the independent Committee on Standards in Public Life, the Council have introduced reporting of complaints and compliments about Councillors to the Standards and Audit Committee. In the municipal year 2023/24, five complaints were received, concerning general conduct and the requirement under the Code of Conduct to treat others with respect and not bring their office into disrepute. Two of these have been closed following initial consideration by the Monitoring Officer and three remain open: one awaiting the draft report of the independent investigator and the other two are open and with the Monitoring officer for consultation with the independent person. There were no Hearings held in 2023/24 in relation to the Member Code of Conduct.
- ✓ Standards and Audit Committee have received a number of follow up reports on the recommendations made by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, some resulting in changes being made to the Council's processes, as above, and some being for information purposes such as informing Members of the Government's response to the recommendations, in order to provide context for the Council's own response.
- ✓ The Council also has a [Customer Complaints Policy](#) which recognises the importance of providing an excellent service to every member of our community. A core part of this is an open, responsive approach to feedback and complaints, the central monitoring of which is a key governance role. Complaints (and compliments) are analysed quarterly and a report on these and any lessons learnt is considered by the Standards and Audit Committee.

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- ✓ During 2023/24, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman launched consultations on a joint Complaint Handling Code working together to produce a unified Code to be introduced from 1 April 2024, to raise the standard of complaint handling across housing and local government services. The Council has been working throughout the year to review its complaint handling processes to ensure compliance with the new Code and provide a more streamline process for its residents and customers to follow. This work has been undertaken under the Council's Service Review Programme. The new Code and associated guidance are anticipated to be presented to the Standards and Audit Committee for consideration at its July meeting.
- ✓ Members are required to declare any personal interest in items coming before Committees and as part of the governance regime all Members are required to declare if they held any executive positions with organisations that carry out business with the Council. All Related Party Transaction declarations were received from Councillors for 2023/24 as part of the evidence base to support the production of the relevant note in the Statement of Accounts.
- ✓ Members and Officers are required to disclose any [gifts or hospitality](#) received in the course of their duties, where the value exceeds £50.

Principle B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

- ✓ The Council is committed to making information available to the public as part of its normal business activities. Details about how to [access and request](#) information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, can be found on the Council's website along with the Council's FOI [Publication Scheme](#). The Council also publishes [information](#) in line with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015.
- ✓ The Council publishes its Contracts Register on a Quarterly basis of all live contracts with total contract value above £5,000 in accordance with the Transparency Code
- ✓ The Council's Annual Governance Statement is published online as part of its [Statement of Accounts](#). Information notifying local electors about their rights to access this information, and the periods in which they can raise issues with the Council's external auditors, is also published on the Council's website.
- ✓ All Council meetings are open to the public except where personal or confidential matters are to be discussed. All [agendas](#) are published on the Council's website and are available by contacting the Council should electronic access not be possible. A full record of decisions taken is also published.
- ✓ The Council engages with local businesses via [Business Runnymede](#), a partnership between the business community, education providers, police and the Council. In February, a breakfast briefing was held which included consultation on the Council's budget proposals for 2024/25 alongside updates on the 2024 Runnymede Business Awards and the availability of free mentoring and support to local, small businesses via Runnymede Business Boost.
- ✓ The Council publishes a magazine called Runnymede Talks which is delivered to every home in the Borough at least once per year. The Council also has a strong presence on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Nextdoor. These and other channels of communication are used to explain the work of the authority and promote decisions made by Members. They are also used to encourage residents and other stakeholders to engage through meetings, consultations and other methods. After consultation with the Service Review, Communication and Transformation Member Working Party, the Corporate Management Committee considered a Social Media Policy and associated workplan for 2024 - 26 which approved a six-month pause in use of X / Twitter during 2024 to create capacity to trial the use of Instagram.
- ✓ The Council runs a residents' e-newsletter which is sent to 2,000 subscribers as well as

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producing other service specific newsletters such as for housing or climate change.

- ✓ Internal communications include monthly all-staff emails, weekly “Friday message” from CLT, the Chief Executive’s forum and the staff intranet.
- ✓ During 2023/24 the Council carried out stakeholder engagement to support development of its [Climate Change Action Plan](#)
- ✓ In July 2023, Members considered the business case for [establishing a Citizens' Panel](#) which is anticipated to be taken forward in the new municipal year.
- ✓ A list of open [consultations and surveys](#) is published online.

Principle C – Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.

- ✓ Reports to Members for decision-making are assessed for any financial and legal implications and for any impact on equality and diversity. The Council has also introduced a mandatory requirement to consider any environmental, sustainability and bio-diversity implications of any proposed actions.
- ✓ The Council’s Medium-Term Financial Strategy seeks to deliver a sustainable budget to enable the Council to continue to deliver services into the future. Alongside its usual financial monitoring reports, the Council received a report on the [approach to financial sustainability](#) which set out the process for the identification and delivery of savings, efficiencies and income generation.
- ✓ The Council’s Corporate Business Plan 2022 - 2026 was approved at Full Council in October 2022. The plan contains 5 themes: Empowering Communities, Health and Well Being, Economic Development, Climate Change and Organisational Development. A golden thread flows from the Corporate Business Plan through to individual Service Area plans, ensuring that the work of services supports the strategic aims of the Council and is adequately planned and resourced. An action tracker has been developed internally to track progress against the plan and this is used both as a tool for performance management and to assist in business planning for the year. It is intended to perform a mid-point review of the Corporate Business Plan in June/July 2024 to ensure the overarching themes are still applicable, thus demonstrating the Council’s willingness for continuous improvement and to take stock of an ever-changing environment, and ensure its plans remain fit for purpose.
- ✓ Social Value is considered for all procurement activity and included in evaluation criteria where appropriate. A new Procurement Strategy for the period 2023-2026 to support delivery of the Council’s Corporate Business Plan and associated strategies was presented to Corporate Management Committee in March 2023 and adopted by Full Council in April 2023. Appended to the Strategy are procurement policies for Social Value and Sustainable Procurement (including Carbon Reduction) and an update to the procurement policy in respect of Modern Slavery.
- ✓ The Council has declared its intention that all its operations will be Carbon Net Zero by 2030 and has thereby committed to tackling climate change across every aspect of its service provision and estate. Significant work has been undertaken in this area during 2023/24 including setting a [baseline](#) for carbon emissions measurement and [developing a Climate Change Action Plan](#) and at [Full Council](#) on 7th December 2023, Runnymede Borough Council resolved to declare a climate emergency. The latest [Climate Change update report and report on Runnymede Borough Council's Green House Gas emissions for 2022/23](#) were presented to Members in April 2024. In March 2024, the Environment and Sustainability Committee recommended approval of a Sustainable Fleet Management Strategy and approved the business case for the switch from diesel to Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel for its Depot fleet.
- ✓ Review of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan commenced in January 2021 but was paused in September 2022 due to uncertainty at a national level because of the

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proposed planning reforms. A meeting of the Council's Planning Committee on [28th June 2023](#) revisited the pause to the Local Plan Review and a high-level timetable for resuming work on the Local Plan, based around three potential options was discussed. Members elected to proceed with the option for preparing a plan under the new plan-making arrangements (expected to commence at the end of 2024). The review of the Local Plan will strengthen the policies relating to Climate Change set out in the adopted Local Plan, including creating a strong, well-considered network of green and blue corridors and spaces, supporting adaptation and resilience to climate change, helping to halt the loss of, and improving biodiversity, and contributing to the health and wellbeing of our communities. In addition, as part of the production of the review of the Local Plan, a Sustainability/ Strategic Environment Appraisal (SA/SEA) will be produced at each stage in the process. The SA/SEA document will ensure that environmental/ economic and social issues are considered throughout the production of the Plan.

- ✓ A further update on the government's planning reforms was provided at the meeting of the Council's Planning Committee on [25th October 2023](#) including information about a further consultation paper on the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and its plan making reforms, and setting out a high-level picture of the current and future workstreams of the Planning Policy team up until the new plan making system was expected to commence in late 2024. These workstreams included production of a Design Code; production of climate change guidance documents to support the policies in the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan and encourage developers to build to higher standards to help reach net zero targets; updating the Strategic Flood Risk assessment; and supporting the Climate Change team where capacity allows (for example by leading on the [Electric Vehicle Strategy](#) and the Climate Change Action Plan).
- ✓ To support the introduction of stronger planning policies to address the impacts of climate change, the Council has commissioned consultants to undertake a Climate Change Study. The findings will help identify policy options and inform the development of revised and/or new policies as part of the Local Plan Review once this work resumes. Full details are available on the 2030 Local Plan Review Evidence Base documents page of the Council's website.

The Study is made up of five elements of work, presented in four reports as follows:

[Emission Pathways Report \(December 2023\)](#)

This report models two scenarios – a 'business as usual' emissions pathway to 2050 showing the likely impacts of already 'locked-in' decarbonisation actions; and an alternative 'emissions reduction trajectory' which illustrates the possible impacts of alternative, stronger actions, including societal changes. This trajectory demonstrates the scale of action/intervention required to reach net zero emissions in Runnymede and helps justify the introduction of stronger climate change planning policies.

[Low Carbon Development and Sustainable Design Principles Report \(December 2023\)](#)

This report identifies policy options to help ensure the revised Local Plan better supports the transition to a low/zero carbon Runnymede. The report draws on best practice case studies from other local authorities and references the latest standards and metrics that could be used in emerging planning policies. It provides policy options covering low/zero carbon buildings, renewable/low carbon energy generation, embodied carbon, addressing the performance gap, and sustainable transport and active travel. It also includes a section identifying measures that could be taken to strengthen the implementation of existing 2030 Local Plan climate change policies in the interim period until a revised Local Plan is adopted.

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[Renewable Energy Assessment Report \(December 2023\)](#)

The National Planning Policy Framework states that Local Plans should consider identifying suitable areas for renewable and low carbon energy sources, and supporting infrastructure, where this would help secure their development. This report goes some way to achieve this, identifying the 'technical' potential of various technologies being deployed in the Borough, including wind, solar, heat pumps and heat networks. The report also considers factors such as grid connection which may affect the extent to which these technologies can be deployed.

The report is accompanied by a [Key Assumptions Note](#) explaining the assumptions used in the assessment.

[Climate Change Adaptation Report](#)

This report identifies the likely future climatic conditions that will be experienced in Runnymede and identifies ways in which the Local Plan policies can be strengthened (or new policies introduced) to better adapt new development and the built environment to the changing climate. Policy options cover flood risk reduction, overheating, water resource management, supporting nature recovery and resilience, green infrastructure and carbon sequestration.

- ✓ The Council's Magna Square development in Egham, featuring eco-friendly features such as solar-controlled glazing, low energy lighting and highly efficient thermal insulation, was short-listed for a number of property industry awards during the year for its design quality, gaining a Highly Commended in the Residential project of the Year category in the British Construction Industry Awards in October 2023.
- ✓ Three Council-owned companies support the activities of the Council, allowing it to deliver long-term sustainable goals. The accounts of the Companies are consolidated into the Council's own Statement of Accounts.
 - RBC Investments (Surrey) Limited - manages properties in the private sector rental market
 - RBC Services (Addlestone One) Limited – administers service charges for commercial and residential properties within the Council's developments
 - RBC Heat Company Limited - provides heating and hot water as a commercial undertaking to all the dwellings on the Addlestone ONE development and those commercial tenants who choose to buy the service

Principle D – Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

- ✓ The Council sets overall strategy and policy, and has in place a well-defined organisational structure, with clearly understood lines of responsibility and delegation of authority to help ensure that strategies and policies are effectively implemented and adhered to. The system of internal control is based on a framework contained within the [Constitution](#) which sets out how decisions are taken and the processes and controls required in managing risk.
- ✓ The Constitution is reviewed each year. This process includes consultation with staff, Councillors (via the Constitution Member Working Party), a report to the Corporate Management Committee on proposed changes, and then approval of the revised Constitution by the Full Council. Matters considered during 2023/24 included updates to the Contract Standing Orders, review of the Publicity and Media Handling Protocol and

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the Member Training and Development Programme, discussion on the content of a survey of Members on the elections cycle and a review of the budget amendment process, following its first year of formal operation. Continual review of the Constitution ensures that it remains reflective of current practice and is kept up to date with changes in regulations and legislation as well as ensuring practices remain efficient and effective in supporting the delivery the Council's aims.

- ✓ As outlined under Principle B, the Council uses a number of methods of engagement with its stakeholders in order to determine when and how interventions are necessary.
- ✓ Option appraisal is undertaken for major schemes to ensure alternatives proposals and methods of delivery are considered. Reports to Members include discussion of alternatives considered.
- ✓ The Council has a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) which are [monitored by Members](#) alongside regular reporting on the progress of key projects. Enhanced Member scrutiny was approved in March 2024 and will be implemented when corporate KPI performance for Q1 2024 is reported to the Corporate Management Committee rather than through the Service Review, Communication and Transformation Member Working Party. This will improve transparency of this dataset in the public domain.
- ✓ The Council's Corporate Business Plan sets out the strategic objectives for the period 2022 – 2026 and is underpinned by an action plan to ensure delivery of these objectives. A midpoint review of the Plan will be conducted early in 2024/25.
- ✓ The Medium-Term Financial Strategy sets the context for the annual budget setting, ensuring resources are matched to priorities. Realistic estimates are drawn up, taking account of the whole life costing of capital projects, and ensuring a sustainable funding strategy is developed alongside [other key strategies](#) such as the Treasury Management Strategy, Annual Investment Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Statement and Capital Strategy. This provides a core framework to underpin the delivery of the Council's intended outcomes.
- ✓ The Council's rolling programme of service reviews has been relaunched with new governance arrangements in place and is considered an interdependent programme of the Council's response to receipt of a non-statutory Best Value notice. Four reviews commenced during 2023/24 (Community Transport, Complaints Process, Safer Runnymede, Trade Waste) with progress reported to the Service Review, Communications and Transformation Member Working Party. Interventions recommended following these reviews will be considered at the relevant Committee.
- ✓ The Council has refocused and prioritised the Savings and Efficiency Programme, implementing a Programme team led by the Programme Sponsor and supported by a dedicated Programme Manager to enhance governance and monitoring of progress and deliverables.
- ✓ A programme of digital transformation is also reported to the Service Review, Communications and Transformation Member Working Party to ensure the Council has the right tools to deliver its intended outcomes at the same time as supporting residents and customers to engage effectively with Council services. Digital Transformation governance has also been reinvigorated by drawing this into the overall Service Review Programme and reinstating regular, cross-department meetings to discuss digital proposals.
- ✓ A Corporate Risk Register is maintained to keep abreast of existing and emerging risks. The Standards and Audit Committee received three key risk reports during 2023/24, following a review of the Council's risk management process, covering the approval of a revised Risk Management Framework, implementing Risk Appetite Statements and approving a new dashboard mechanism for the reporting of strategic risks. The monitoring of risk and the measures put in place to mitigate risk is an important element of determining what further interventions may be necessary.
- ✓ To ensure that the Council's companies continue to comply with registration requirements of Companies House, Articles of Association, shareholder agreement and

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business plan, an external governance review is planned for early 2024/25.

- ✓ The Council has a risk-based [rolling programme](#) of internal audit work to ensure audit coverage across the organisation. Management agree responses to the recommendations and the audit team follow up to ensure the recommendations are implemented in a timely manner. Regular reporting on progress is made to the Standards and Audit Committee.
- ✓ The Council reviewed its provision of internal audit services during 2023/24 and approval was given to join Southern Internal Audit Partnership from 1st April 2024. The Partnership will provide resilience to the audit function and shared learning from other public sector bodies (including the majority of Surrey Councils) who belong to the partnership. The Council's Chief Financial Officer will sit on the Partnership's Key Stakeholder Board.
- ✓ The Council also responds to recommendations from external bodies such as the Regulator for Social Housing, in making plans to improve the quality of its housing stock, for example.
- ✓ The Council participates in external review through its participation in the Local Government Association's Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) process. This provides the Council with the opportunity to understand from others what interventions may be necessary to ensure it meets its objectives and demonstrates its desire to deliver continuous improvement in the way it operates. Participation is recommended at least every 5 years. The last CPC at Runnymede was during 2019 and the next engagement is planned during 2024/25. Ahead of the next review, the Standards and Audit Committee will receive a report updating Members on the actions delivered against the recommendations in the previous review.
- ✓ Throughout 2023/24, the Council continued its engagement with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) which had commenced during the sector engagement on the (then) proposed capital risk metrics to be included in the Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2023. At the end of 2022/23, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) was engaged by DLUHC to undertake a review of the Council's capital risk, given its investment and debt profile, and its arrangements for managing this risk. CIPFA's report was finalised in July 2023 and the Council responded with a plan to implement the recommendations made in the report.

Subsequently, in December 2023, the Council received a non-statutory [Best Value Notice](#) from DLUHC acknowledging the steps it had already taken to address the recommendations identified in the CIPFA capital review but requesting continued engagement to provide assurance of improvement and full delivery of those recommendations.

The Council has formed a robust governance programme to respond to the Notice and deliver the necessary interventions to ensure a positive outcome from the engagement with DLUHC. This includes the setting up of a Programme Board, and the development of a [Programme Charter](#), workstreams with sponsors and lead officers, a project plan and action tracker, alongside regular updates to DLUHC.

Principle E– Develop the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

- ✓ As noted under Principle D, the Council carries out service reviews to ensure it has the capacity to deliver outcomes.
- ✓ The Medium-Term Financial Strategy is aligned with the Corporate Business Plan so that appropriate levels of resources (financial and staffing) are allocated to programmes of work.
- ✓ The Council participates in a number of partnership arrangements which enable it to address capacity and resilience. These include:

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- In 2015/16 the Council set up an employee-led mutual with Spelthorne Borough Council called Applied Resilience. This has increased both Councils' capacity to respond to civil emergencies including severe weather events such as storms, flooding or heatwaves, and to address business continuity. This arrangement continued in 2023/24 with a new contract being awarded to Applied Resilience in September 2023 for a 3-year period.
 - Community Services provides a range of services in partnership with Surrey Heath Borough Council.
 - Safer Runnymede provides a CCTV service for a number of other organisations including neighbouring councils, Thorpe Park and various NHS establishments. The service has seen further expansion during 2023/24.
 - The Council entered into a shared management arrangement for its Building Control Service at the start of the 2022/23, with a view to exploring a full shared service arrangement during 2023/24. Further work on the financing model of the full partnership is required in order for this to progress.
 - The Council also works with other partners such as the Surrey Environmental Partnership and the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group which highlight potential future capacity and resource requirements allowing the Council to properly plan for them.
 - During 2023/24, the Council worked with colleagues across all Surrey councils to draw together a picture of their financial resilience. As part of this work, Surrey councils continue to explore opportunities for joint working across council boundaries.
- ✓ 2023/24 saw the continuation of Member working groups, providing access for all Members to be involved in developing policy, supported by a range of cross-departmental officer working groups. This has been particularly effective in progressing climate change activity which affects every service area within the Council. The working group provides a focus point to ensure a shared understanding of the aims and priorities of the climate change programme and how each department can contribute, bringing together the right people to ensure progress is made.
 - ✓ The Organisational Development Strategy includes a Talent Management Strategy.
 - ✓ Annual budgets are set aside for both corporate training and professional development. The Council commits to supporting the cost of membership of appropriate professional bodies for officers.
 - ✓ The Council has a leadership and staff competency framework that sets out the behaviours expected by managers and staff in the delivery of their daily work and the aims of the Council. The framework forms part of the conversations held during continuous performance management meetings which consist of regular one-to-one sessions, a six-month review and an annual appraisal. An individual development plan is produced alongside the appraisal process.
 - ✓ Senior Leaders in the organisation have continued to participate in management development sessions throughout the year alongside specific training on key strategic topics such as carbon literacy training and refresher risk assessment. Mandatory completion of a suite of e-learning modules is required of all staff including topics such as safeguarding, cyber security, data protection, manual handling and stress awareness. A variety of optional e-learning modules are also easily accessible.
 - ✓ The Council has continued to support the take up of apprenticeships within the Council and participation in the [National Graduate Development Programme](#) which supports new entrants to the local government sector and adds capacity to the organisation. Two members of staff have also been accepted onto the District Council's Network (DCN) Staff Development Programme which encourages future leaders in their professional development and leadership potential. The programme is delivered over 12 months and includes:

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- the opportunity to build leadership skills, delivery skills and strategic policy capability
 - a series of face-to-face professional development sessions
 - a senior officer mentor for advice and development
 - a Whitehall senior civil servant work-shadowing offer
 - the opportunity to undertake an improvement project within the Council
- ✓ The Project Management Office has responsibility for embedding a project management approach across the organisation to support, monitor and report on the progress of projects within the Council's Project Portfolio. This includes the provision of a range of in-house training and support tools.
- ✓ The Council is supported by bodies such as the Local Government Association who can provide advice and support where required, to Members and officers.
- ✓ The Senior Leadership Team, comprising the Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executives, Corporate Heads of Service and members of the Chief Executive's office, meet on a monthly basis to debate cross-service issues. The Corporate Leadership Team led by the Chief Executive and supported by the Monitoring officer and the two Assistant Chief Executives meets on a weekly basis.
- ✓ The officer structure in place at the end of 2023/24 is appended to this Statement. The management structure was enhanced in July with the addition of a second Assistant Chief Executive to provide strategic capacity in the organisation to take forward the extensive aims and ambitions of the Corporate Business Plan. The long-standing Chief Executive, Paul Turrell, retired at the end of July 2023 and Andrew Pritchard was appointed to the post from August 2023, following a rigorous recruitment process,
- ✓ The non-statutory Best Value Notice programme includes two key workstreams relating to organisational capacity and capability. One workstream is around the capacity and capability of the Assets and Regeneration team to support the essential work of managing the Council's large portfolio of both commercial and operational assets and the significant income stream flowing from its investment assets. The other workstream is to provide an assessment of organisational culture and leadership capacity across the Council. A key objective of this workstream is to develop an action plan to support a high performing, one team corporate culture across all council departments, that actively contributes to strong governance and delivery.
- ✓ Member induction sessions are held for new Members after local elections and an extensive Member training programme has been devised for all Members during 2023/24 for the new municipal year with input from Members and via the Constitution Member Working Party. During the year, Members participated in mandatory and optional training sessions including [Carbon Literacy training](#).

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

- ✓ The Council's system of internal financial control is based on a framework of regular management information, financial regulations, administrative procedures (including segregation of duties), management supervision, and a system of delegation and accountability. Managers within the Council undertake development and maintenance of the system. The system includes:
- Comprehensive budgeting systems
 - Clearly defined capital expenditure guidelines

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- Named budget managers who hold devolved responsibility for delivering services within their approved budget
 - Setting and monitoring of key performance indicators
 - Regular financial monitoring reports comparing financial performance against forecasts
 - Project management and procurement training and templates
 - Financial regulations and contract standing orders as set out in the [Constitution](#)
- ✓ The Council undertook a detailed self-assessment against CIPFA's new Financial Management Code and reported its findings to the [Standards and Audit Committee](#) in January 2022. While the self-assessment demonstrated compliance with the Code, a number of improvements or enhancements were recommended for implementation over the short to medium term, and an update on progress against the actions is set out in the final table appended to this Statement.
- ✓ The Standards and Audit Committee monitors the implementation of recommendations made by the internal audit service, ensuring that management action is taken to address any identified weaknesses or potential improvements to the system of internal control. The Assistant Chief Executive (s151 Officer) raises internal audit matters on a regular basis at SLT meetings, encouraging engagement with the audit team and timely response to the implementation of recommendations. As noted under Principle D, the Standards and Audit Committee recommended to Corporate Management Committee that the council join the Southern Internal Audit Partnership to deliver the Council's internal audit service from April 2024. The in-coming internal auditor has engaged with Members and senior officers and considered the Council's risk register and the Partnership's in-depth knowledge of the sector, to provide a risk-based audit programme.
- ✓ The [Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee](#) may review decisions made or actions taken relating to the discharge of any of the Council's functions. In exceptional cases it may "call in" the decision of another Committee for further consideration before it is implemented. The Committee makes reports and recommendations to the Full Council or the appropriate Committee and presents [an annual report](#) on its work programme to the Full Council. The main aim of the Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee is to act as a "critical friend" to the Council to promote better services, policies and decisions. No Member may be involved in scrutinising a decision in which they have been directly involved. The Committee also plays a key role in the monitoring of the delivery of savings and efficiencies under the approved approach to achieving financial sustainability.
- ✓ The Council also has [Planning](#), [Licensing](#) and [Regulatory](#) Committees which discharge the regulatory functions in respect of planning applications and enforcement, and the regulation of taxis, private hire vehicles and other licenses including liquor and public entertainment.
- ✓ Significant work has been undertaken during the year to improve the risk management framework, introduce risk appetite statements and develop a risk reporting dashboard. The Standards and Audit Committee's future work programme includes twice yearly reporting of risk matters while the Corporate Leadership Team review the Corporate Risk Register on a quarterly basis. The Standards and Audit Committee also recommended to Full Council that the Committee report template be amended to include a mandatory section on risk, which was approved and implemented. Internal audit carried out an assurance review of Risk Management in March 2024 which gained a "Reasonable" assurance rating and made 1 Important, 3 Routine and 1 Operational recommendation while recognising the significant progress made during the year. All recommendations were accepted and are due to be implemented in 2024.
- ✓ The Council carried out a debrief event following Storm Henck, using an external facilitator, to capture learning from the Council's response to the event and provide a programme of actions for implementation in 2024/25.

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- ✓ Business continuity plans are regularly updated.
- ✓ The Safeguarding policy and Home Assistance policy were both updated during 2023/24.
- ✓ To tackle cyber risk, all Digital Services policies were updated in November 2023 and are published on the staff intranet including:
 - Bring Your Own Device policy
 - Email policy
 - Mobile Phone policy
 - Password policy
 - Patch Management policy
 - Incident Management policy
 - Data and Cyber security policy
 - Acceptable Usage Policy
 - Change Management Policy
- ✓ The Council has a Continuous Performance Management system in place including regular one-to-one conversations and performance reviews, promoting the following benefits;
 - Greater individual and, as a result, Council success
 - The clarification of roles and responsibilities
 - The ability to adapt to change and align with Council priorities
 - Enabling succession planning through regular personal and career development discussions
 - The identification of training and development needs

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

- ✓ In March 2024, the Standards and Audit Committee considered a [report](#) on their draft work programme for the year ahead and a number of proposed improvements to support the effectiveness of the Committee in carrying out its governance role. These improvements included the development of a process for the self-assessment of the Committee's effectiveness; the provision of an annual report on the work of the Committee to Full Council; and exploration of the potential to seek co-opted independent members to sit on the Committee. In addition, Full Council approved in [April 2024](#) that the Standards and Audit Committee would have responsibility for approval of the Annual Governance Statement and the Statement of Accounts, aligning these tasks with the Committee's other governance work.
- ✓ The Council has a standard template for committee reports designed to capture relevant information for the reader, stakeholder or decision-maker in a fair, balanced and understandable way. The template has been updated during the year to improve clarity and consistency and to encompass recommendations from Committees on mandatory sections. Financial reporting on property transactions has been developed to include a greater level of detail to aid understanding of options when considering the sale or letting of assets.
- ✓ The Property and Assets Task Force has developed a standard reporting spreadsheet of the Council's investment assets to support its work.

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- ✓ All public reports are available on the Council's website. Where reports are not able to be made public due to containing sensitive personal or commercial information for example, this is made clear on the relevant agenda.
- ✓ Members of the public have access to formal Committee and Council meetings and have rights to speak at public meetings as laid out in the Constitution.
- ✓ As outlined under Principle F, the Council regularly reports on its performance, through the monitoring of key performance indicators, project performance and financial monitoring reports in addition to receiving reports from its internal and external auditors.
- ✓ The Council produces an annual Statement of Accounts in line with statutory deadlines, accompanied by a review of its system of internal control (Annual Governance Statement)
- ✓ The Council also produces an Annual Report that provides a summary of its activity and achievements throughout the previous year.
- ✓ As part of the annual governance review, senior managers are asked to complete a declaration that acknowledges their role in upholding the internal control and assurance framework. This covers areas such as reviewing internal controls and implementing audit recommendations, deployment of resources, achievement of targets and production of service plans, risk management, familiarisation with Council procedures and decision-making. The declarations also provide an opportunity for Managers to request further guidance or training.
- ✓ The implementation of internal and external audit recommendations is monitored by the Standards and Audit Committee. Both the Head of Internal Audit and the External Auditor have unfettered access to the Committee and can meet in private with Members should the need arise. Of concern for many local authorities is the backlog in external audit reporting. The Council's external auditors have yet to complete the audit and "value for money" conclusion for the financial year 2019/20. The formation of a new regulatory body to carry out audit quality reviews, provide annual reports on the state of local audit and take over responsibility for the updated Code of Local Audit Practice is one of the ways the backlog is expected to be addressed alongside the introduction of "backstop" dates for the completion of outstanding audit work.
- ✓ New external auditors have been appointed to Runnymede Borough Council by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd for the 5-year period from 2023/24. The new audit team are engaging with Members and officers and progressing their audit planning and Value for Money reporting for the 2023/24 financial year in line with timescales reported to the Standards and Audit Committee in [March 2024](#).
- ✓ The Council supports both the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government and its Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit.
- ✓ The Council reports its partnership arrangements in its Statement of Accounts and ensures robust mechanisms are in place for monitoring the delivery of partnership work, thorough contractual arrangements and Service Level Agreements.
- ✓ The Council's anti-fraud arrangements with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council cover all areas of fraud work including participation in the National Fraud Initiative data matching exercise. 544 cases were investigated and closed during 2023/24 with fraud or error detected in 126 cases (23.2%) resulting in financial savings to the public purse of £315,600 with an additional £87,180.88 of cashable savings to the Council.
- ✓ The Council has a Whistle-Blowing Policy included in its [anti-fraud and corruption policy](#)
- ✓ The Standards and Audit Committee receive an annual report on counter-fraud activity during the year which includes an action plan for the year ahead to improve fraud awareness and prevention.
- ✓ The Council has continued to participate in the delivery and monitoring of grant funding in relation to various support schemes such as schemes designed to mitigate the effects of the cost-of-living crisis, for example or to alleviate the impact of flooding. The Council

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has anti-fraud processes in place in relation to these payments, in line with government guidance.

- ✓ As noted under Principle B, the Council provides information on its website about how to access and request information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and publishes data, including its Contracts Register, in line with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015.

Conclusion

The review of effectiveness carried out as part of the production of the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement supports the conclusion that there is a sound system of internal control and governance in place at Runnymede Borough Council. The Council adapts to external change, moderating its plans in line with emerging risks, and responds to recommendations of auditing bodies and other external regulators. Where weaknesses in controls are identified, the Council acts to strengthen those controls.

As part of this review, no significant weaknesses in the governance framework have been identified. However, some areas of improvement to further enhance the Council's governance arrangements are planned.

The action plan appended to this Statement includes an update on action taken in 2023/24, in respect of areas identified for improvement in the previous year's Statement, alongside those issues identified during this review for action in 2024/25. A further table has been included to show progress against the areas for improvement or enhancement identified as part of the Council's self-assessment against Cipfa's Financial Management Code.

Signed on behalf of Runnymede Borough Council by:

Councillor L Gillham

Councillor R King

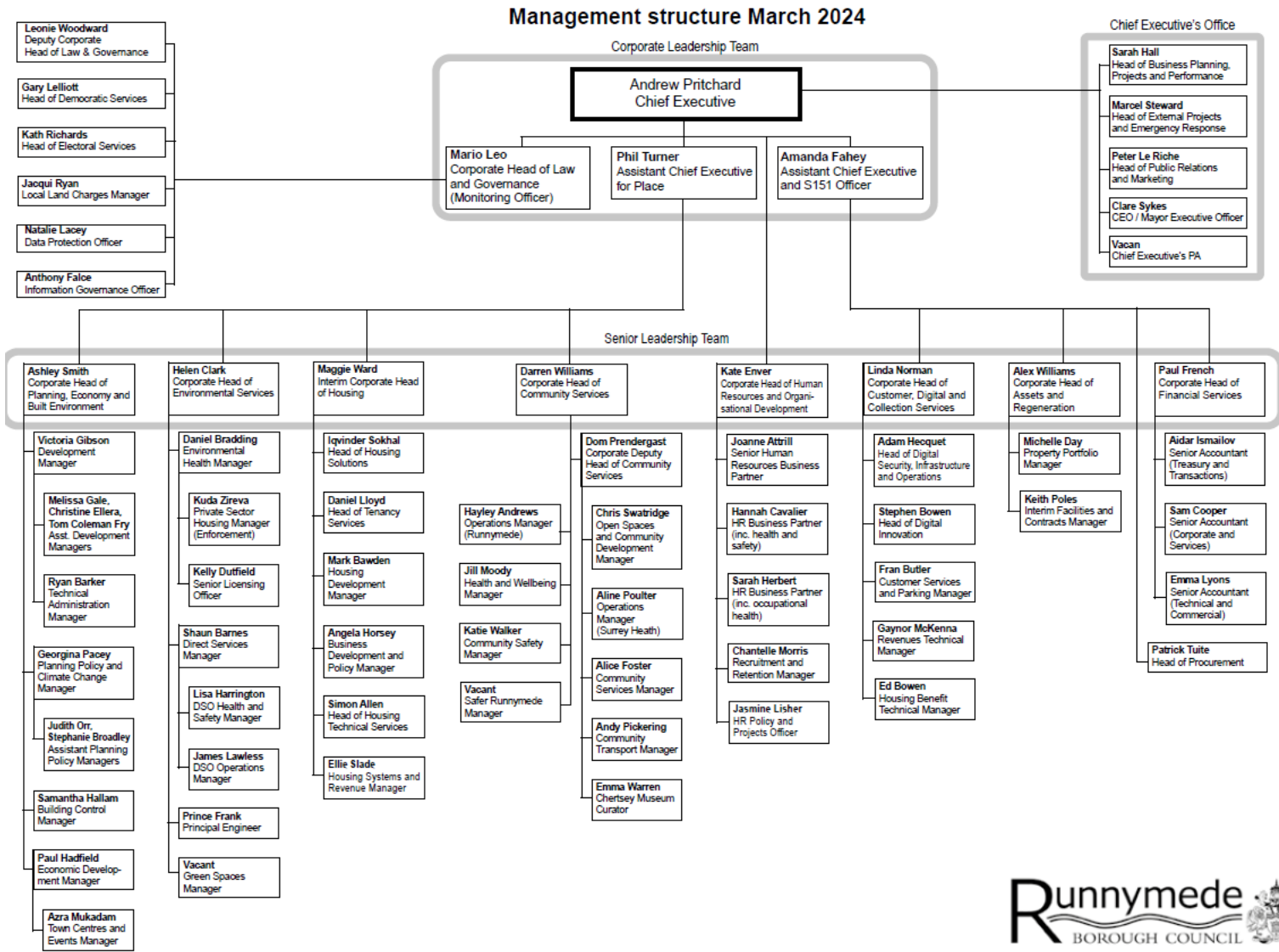
Councillor S Ringham

Councillor D Whyte

Co-Leaders of the Council
31 May 2024

Mr. A Pritchard
Chief Executive
31 May 2024

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Review of actions from 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement

Item	Issues raised in 2022/23	Action taken during 2023/24
1.	<p>Risk Reporting</p> <p>As part of the Financial Management Code review, an area for improvement was identified around reporting risk matters to the Standards and Audit Committee. This will be developed in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to ensure proper oversight of risk management arrangements.</p>	<p>It was established as part of a self-assessment exercise against CIPFA's Financial Management Code, and through the annual governance review, that the Council's arrangements for managing risk required a refresh. In addition, work undertaken with CIPFA recommended the introduction of risk appetite statements which set out the amount of risk that the Council is prepared to take in pursuit of its strategic objectives.</p> <p>Given the importance of risk management to the organisation, internal resource was identified to support the Assistant Chief Executive (s151) in ensuring the Council has a robust mechanism in place to maintain current and appropriate risk registers and associated documentation, policies and procedures.</p> <p>The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) commenced a review of the Corporate Risk Register, and a risk-mapping exercise was undertaken to fully understand and map the existing processes and risk management measures taking place across the Council and identify any gaps. From this work, a refreshed Risk Management Framework was developed and approved by Full Council in October 2023. Risk appetite statements were considered for each of the Council's risk categories, with input from Members and officers before consideration by the Standards and Audit Committee, receiving final approval from Full council in December 2023. In January 2024, the Standards and Audit Committee approved a new dashboard format for reporting risk, which will form the basis of future biannual reporting to the Committee.</p> <p>In March 2024, the Council's internal auditors undertook an assurance review of the Council's risk management processes which identified some areas for additional continuous improvement, whilst recognising the significant work that been undertaken during the year. All recommendations were accepted and will assist in further shaping and improving the new framework.</p>
2.	<p>Procurement</p> <p>A draft Procurement Strategy for the period 2023-2026 to support delivery of the Council's Corporate Business Plan and associated strategies was presented Corporate Management Committee in March 2023 ahead of formal adoption by Full Council in April. Appended to the Strategy are</p>	<p>The Procurement Strategy for the period 2023-2026 was approved by Full Council in April 2023. During the year, the Council's Toolkit and training materials were all updated to reflect the new Strategy and simplified to provide easy to use guidance.</p> <p>Following ongoing training and participation in webinars, the impact of the Procurement Act 2023 was assessed not to be as impactful on the Council's processes as previously anticipated. The Council's Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) were reviewed and recommendations for changes were taken through the appropriate channels including the Constitution Member Working Party. The changes were approved</p>

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	<p>procurement policies for Social Value and Sustainable Procurement (including Carbon Reduction) and an update to the existing procurement policy in respect of Modern Slavery.</p> <p>Following adoption of the Strategy and Policies, these will be implemented in the new financial year alongside updates to the Procurement Toolkit and training for buying managers. In addition, the anticipated introduction of the Procurement Bill during 2023/24 will reform the UK's public procurement regime and have a significant impact on the Council's procurement processes and procedures. Change will be required to be implemented within six months of the Bill being passed. This will impact on procurement processes and procedures contained within the procurement toolkit and Contract Standing Orders, which will require review in light of any changes in legislation.</p>	<p>by Members and will future proof the CSOs to accommodate the Procurement Act when it goes live in October 2024 following the completion of secondary legislation (regulations) and a 6 month notice period.</p> <p>It was planned that procurement staff would be undertaking Cabinet Office training early in 2024/25 and devising internal training for appropriate staff across the Council. However, both the Head of Procurement and one of the Council's two Procurement officers left the Council in April 2024. This may lead to a delay in rolling out the training until the team is fully staffed and this risk will be kept under review.</p> <p>It should also be noted that during 2023/24, Members requested a report be made to the Standards and Audit Committee on procurement activity, including the number of waivers to CSOs approved during the year. As part of the review of the Committee's work programme for the year ahead, it was agreed to include this as an annual item on the work programme.</p>
3.	<p>Embedding new Corporate Leadership Team arrangements</p> <p>It will be important for the maintenance of good governance in the organisation to ensure a smooth transition to the new Leadership Team with the arrival in 2023/24 of an additional Assistant Chief Executive (Place) and the recruitment of a new Chief Executive following the announcement of the forthcoming retirement of the current Chief Executive.</p>	<p>Following rigorous recruitment processes, Phil Turner was appointed to the post of Assistant Chief Executive (Place) in July 2023 and Andrew Pritchard was appointed to the post of Chief Executive in August 2023.</p> <p>Weekly CLT meetings continue to be held with the Chief Executive, Assistant Chief Executives and the Monitoring Officer in attendance.</p> <p>Monthly Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meetings (which include CLT, all Corporate Heads of Service and those officers who report directly to the Chief Executive) have continued throughout the year and are one of the ways in which information is cascaded in the organisation and new processes are consulted on.</p> <p>New agenda templates were introduced so that a common approach to these meetings could be taken, commencing with urgent business, then considering any items for decision, followed by items for information. A rotating Chair for the meetings has been introduced, providing an opportunity for different members of the team to take a turn chairing the meeting, emphasising the collaboration required from senior management.</p> <p>In May 2024, SLT completed a number of personality profiling exercises in preparation for facilitated sessions about how the team works together, as part of the assessment of organisational culture and</p>

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		leadership capacity which forms one of the workstream of the Council's non-statutory Best Value Notice programme.
4.	<p>Response to engagement with CIPFA and DLUHC</p> <p>During 2022/23, the Council participated in a series of meetings with colleagues from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and with CIPFA, as part of the engagement process with local authorities ahead of the enactment of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (LURB), in order to aid understanding of the financial risk mitigation measures proposed within the Bill. The Council will consider the implementation of changes to its risk mitigation measures, once feedback from these sessions has been received, as part of its consideration of the impact of the final measures included in the Bill and any associated guidance for Councils.</p>	<p>CIPFA finalised their Capital assurance review of Runnymede Borough Council in July 2023, reporting back to DLUHC their findings and making 6 key recommendations for improvement. The report recognised the steps the Council had already taken, or planned to take in the year, such as review of its risk management processes, and built on this, for example, by proposing the introduction of risk appetite statements. The Council responded to the report, setting out proposals for how it would implement the recommendations. During the same period, the Council's s151 officer attended webinar workshop sessions on the proposed metrics in the LURB and continued to feed into discussions about the proposed metrics and how they would be calculated. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act was enacted in October 2023.</p> <p>In December 2023, the Council received a non-statutory Best Value Notice from DLUHC acknowledging the steps it had already taken to address the recommendations identified in the CIPFA capital review but requesting continued engagement to provide assurance of improvement and full delivery of those recommendations.</p> <p>The Council has formed a robust governance programme to respond to the Notice and deliver the necessary interventions to ensure a positive outcome from the engagement with DLUHC. This includes the setting up of a Programme Board, and the development of a Programme Charter, workstreams with sponsors and lead officers, a project plan and action tracker, alongside regular updates to DLUHC.</p>

Areas of improvement for 2024/25

Item	Issues raised in 2023/24 for action in 2024/25	Responsible Officer
1.	<p>Non-Statutory Best Value Notice (NS-BVN) Response Programme – response to DLUHC</p> <p>The Chief Executive is the sponsor for the NS-BVN Response Programme and a Programme Board has been set up that meets monthly in order to ensure progress is made on each of the workstreams in the Programme and any other interdependent activities. The final output from the Programme will be the production of a report to DLUHC to demonstrate how the Council has addressed the concerns raised in the Notice, which will need to be produced ahead of the 12-month anniversary of its receipt (December 2024). Outputs from key workstreams will be reported to Members throughout the year.</p> <p>The workstreams within the Programme flow from the statutory best value guidance and aim to review how the Council secures continuous improvement in the way in which it works, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.</p>	Chief Executive

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<p>Key elements of the Programme include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking a self-assessment against Best Value guidance and developing a gap analysis and subsequent action plan • Review of the capital programme to provide a longer-term view of capital resource requirements • External independent review of the Council's subsidiary companies in terms of governance and financial position • Review of the resilience of the Council's commercial portfolio • Review of the capacity and capability of the Council's Assets and Regeneration team • Demonstrate implementation of the Cipfa report recommendations • Undertake an assessment of organisational culture and leadership capacity • Deliver an external governance review (LGA Corporate Peer Challenge) <p>Given the significant extent of the work to be undertaken under the NS-BVN Response Programme, this will form the focus of the governance improvement work to be undertaken during 2024/25.</p> <p>It should be noted that for some workstreams, the work undertaken will provide an assessment of the Council's position from which will flow a future action plan, depending on the results of the assessment. It is likely that some of these action plans will form a programme of work to be delivered beyond the production of the 12-month report to DLUHC, and into the year beyond.</p>	
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Progress on actions identified to strengthen compliance with the Financial Management Code

Item	Areas of improvement (short term actions)	Responsible Officer	Status
1.	<p>Update the Asset Management Strategy</p> <p>A revised Asset Management Strategy and associated policies was developed during 2022/23 and adopted by Full Council in March 2023</p>	Corporate Head of Assets and Regeneration	Closed
Item	Areas for enhancement (medium-term actions)	Responsible Officer	Status

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2.	<p>Integration of the Nolan Principles into a future version of the Staff Code of Conduct</p> <p><i>Update: Due to the changeover at Corporate Head of Service level, this action was not progressed in 2023/24.</i></p>	Corporate Head of HR & OD	To be progressed in 2024/25
3.	<p>Regular update to SLT on internal and external audit recommendations</p> <p>The Assistant Chief Executive (s151) ensures that that audit recommendations and progress on the implementation for any outstanding actions are discussed at regular SLT meetings. Internal Audit reports are circulated to SLT members to increase awareness of audit recommendations and to encourage engagement with the internal audit process.</p> <p><i>Update: The new internal auditor from 1st April 2024, has carried out interviews with the Senior Leadership Team to understand risk in the organisation and support the audit planning work for 2024/25. The Council's new external auditors have engaged Management in a risk assessment exercise also designed to feed into their audit work programme for the year ahead.</i></p>	Assistant Chief Executive (s151)	Closed
4.	<p>Update key financial risks facing the authority with “best” and “worst” case scenarios</p> <p>The format of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy has been revised to include alternative scenarios for levels of growth, income, inflation and funding assumptions for example and to demonstrate the effect of changes on the Council’s ability to balance its budget and on the level of reserves that it holds.</p> <p><i>Update: Further scenario modelling has been recommended by CIPFA as part of their review and is being taken forward with support from LGA and DLUHC.</i></p>	Assistant Chief Executive (s151)	Closed
5.	<p>Consider Commissioning an independent financial resilience assessment by a neighbouring authority</p> <p>As reported in the Financial Management Code self-assessment, the Council periodically participates in external reviews such as the Local Government Association’s Peer review process. During 2022/23, the Assistant Chief Executive (s151) engaged with the LGA’s Finance Improvement and Sustainability Adviser, and the Council participated in a series of meetings with colleagues from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and with Cipfa, as part of the engagement process with local authorities ahead of the enactment of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, in order to aid understanding of the financial risk mitigation measures proposed within the Bill. Further opportunities for external assessment will be considered on a rolling basis.</p> <p><i>Update: During 2023/24 the Council worked with all Surrey authorities, with external support, to review their financial resilience. A further Corporate Peer Challenge is set to take place in October 2024.</i></p>	Assistant Chief Executive (s151)	Closed
6.	<p>Introduce a PESTLE analysis for cost drivers such as demographic changes</p> <p>During 2022/23, the Council created a Graduate Policy Officer post, reporting directly to the Chief Executive. The addition of this resource has enabled greater analysis to be undertaken of Government policy and statistical data such as the 2021 Census, to</p>	Senior Leadership Team	Closed

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	inform decision-making. For example, analysis of the successful bids under the Levelling Up fund was carried out, to understand the distribution of the funding and the criteria that led to success, which may then inform future grant funding bids from the Council. Further work on embedding the use of PESTLE analysis in decision-making is on-going.		
7.	<p>More frequent reporting on the achievement of savings plans and targets</p> <p>The achievement of savings targets under previous efficiency plans has been reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee. The Council's latest MTFs commits to setting up a process for the identification of savings and efficiencies to capture ideas from across the organisation. From this, a set of targets will be defined, with progress on delivery monitored via the Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee, with greater focus being given to the timely delivery of the savings programme. A follow up report setting out more detail on these proposals will be presented to Corporate Management Committee in the new municipal year.</p> <p><i>Update: Reports on the savings process were taken to Members in July and October 2023. Reporting to the Overview and Scrutiny Select Committee commenced in March 2024, with quarterly updates to follow. A programmatic approach has now been implemented for delivery of the Savings and Efficiency programme. The Service Review, communications and Transformation Member Working Party were regularly updated throughout the year on progress with the programme of Service Reviews.</i></p>	Assistant Chief Executive (s151)	Closed
8.	<p>Reinstate risk reporting to the Standards and Audit Committee</p> <p><i>Update: As set out in the Annual Governance Statement, significant work has been undertaken to refresh the Risk Management Framework and reinstate regular risk reporting to the Standards and Audit Committee and to ensure risk is considered in all decision-making by making this a mandatory section in the committee report templates.</i></p>	Assistant Chief Executive (s151)	Closed
9.	<p>Increased reporting of Prudential Indicators (including Investment indicators)</p> <p>Under the latest Treasury Management Code update, reporting on both Treasury and non-Treasury indicators are required on a quarterly basis from 2023/24. The Treasury Management Strategy approved in February 2023 set out processes to be followed in the year ahead. This includes the development of performance indicators for the Council's property portfolio. As part of the growth bids for the 2023/24 budget, the Council is engaging with a specialist property analysis, to enable on-going benchmarking of our investment portfolio in the wider marketplace and analysis of the key drivers of risk and return.</p>	Corporate Head of Finance / Corporate Head of Assets and Regeneration	Closed
10.	<p>Undertake a formal balance sheet review to identify opportunities to improve the financial health of the Council</p> <p><i>A balance sheet review was undertaken as part of the Surrey-wide financial resilience work referred to under item 5. In addition, the development of the data explorer tool under OfLog allows Councils to compare their position with others for a range of data covering waste management, planning, corporate and finance with other service areas to follow.</i></p>	Assistant Chief Executive (s151)	Closed

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11.	<p>Include Chief Financial Officer’s specific responsibilities for ensuring that the statutory accounts comply with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom in the CFO’s role description, personal objectives and other relevant performance management mechanisms.</p> <p><i>Update: Due to the changeover at Corporate Head of Service level, this action was not completed during in 2023/24 but is now underway.</i></p>	Corporate Head of HR & OD	To be completed in 2024/25
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