



# **Annual Governance Statement**

## 2023-2024



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## Foreword

Across the country, councils' finances remain under strain from. Government funding has not kept pace with the cost pressures. At the same time, councils are expected to do more with fewer resources.

Tandridge District Council ('the Council') has made £6.1m of savings over the last four years which has enabled it to achieve a stable financial position as well as maintaining services.

However, to ensure the Council's continued financial stability, it is crucial to make further savings in the order of £4m over the next four years. In addition, we must continue to make the best possible use of the public money that we are entrusted with.

Therefore, the Council is entering into the second phase of its transformation programme ('FTP').

A key part of the FTP is the rigorous review of all services which fundamentally challenges how and why the Council provides the services it does and the costs of those services. The focus for the next phase will be on identifying outcomes and achieve the necessary savings in 2024/2025.

We both recognise the importance of having good management, effective processes and other appropriate controls in place to enable the Council to deliver services and achieve the best possible outcomes for the people of the District.

Each year the Council is required to produce an Annual Governance Statement ('AGS') which describes how our corporate governance arrangements have been working. To help us do this, the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee assisted by Internal Audit undertakes a review of our governance framework and the development of the AGS.

Members of the Extended Management Team ('EMT') have also considered and added to the content and have satisfied themselves that the AGS properly reflects how the Council is run. Specific opportunities for improvement in governance and internal controls are detailed within the AGS Action Plan.

The AGS 2023/2024 is in draft format and is published alongside the draft Statement of Accounts. This document is subject to change and the final version will be published alongside the audited Statement of Accounts for 2023/2024. To the best of our knowledge, the governance arrangements as defined within the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance ('the Code') have continued to operate effectively.

We will continue to ensure proportionate and appropriate governance is in place at the Council and that the matters highlighted in the Action Plan for 2024/2025 which sets out specific improvements targeted in the next 12 months are addressed.

We approve this statement and confirm that it forms the basis of the Council's governance arrangements.



Councillor Catherine Sayer  
Leader of the Council



David Ford  
Chief Executive

## Governance assurance framework

### The Council

- Consists of 43 Councillors.
- Approves the Constitution.
- Appoints committees and sub-committees.
- Sets council tax.
- Set budget framework.

### Policy Committees

- Main decision-making function of the Council.
- Comprise four committees who have responsibilities for particular areas.
- Membership is politically balanced.

### Audit & Scrutiny Committee

- Provides assurance to the Council on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance arrangements, risk management framework and internal control environment.
- Approves the Local Code of Corporate Governance, Annual Governance Statement and the Statement of Accounts.
- Review and scrutinise decisions and performance of the Council and audit arrangements.

### Other regulatory committees

- Licensing: deals with all aspects of local licensing for which the Council is responsible.
- Planning: makes decisions on certain planning applications and deals with other development control issues such as enforcement.
- Standards Committee: promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Councillors and co-opted Councillors.

### Extended Management Team

- Responsible for developing, maintaining and implementing the Council's governance, risk, performance and control framework.
- Contribute to the effective corporate management and governance of the Council.
- Operationalised by attending and contributing to management team, extended management team, departmental leadership team, partnership and other corporate cross-cutting board meetings.

## Introduction

1. This AGS is a document which looks back retrospectively over the past year and identifies where the Council has demonstrated good governance and looks forward to areas where focus should be given in relation to governance over the coming year.
2. The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and provides value for money. To achieve this the Council must ensure that it has a governance framework that supports a culture of transparent decision making.
3. The AGS includes activities that may need improvement, but which do not constitute 'significant weaknesses' in the Council's governance and internal control arrangements.
4. Appendix 1 of the AGS details the actions that will be undertaken for 2024/2025.
5. The current status of this document is draft. It is unaudited and it is possible that further amendments may be required to this document following consultation and review by the externally appointed auditors. The final version of this AGS, will accompany the Statement of Accounts for approval by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

## What do we mean by governance?

6. By governance, the Council means the arrangements put in place to ensure the intended outcomes for local people are defined and achieved. It comprises the systems and processes, cultures and values, by which local government bodies are directed and controlled. Good governance is about making sure the Council does the right things, in the right way for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

## Statutory compliance

7. Producing the AGS helps the Council meet the requirements of Regulation 6(1)b of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015. It is reviewed by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee and approved in advance of the Statement of Accounts.
8. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to secure continuous improvement in the way in which it exercises its functions, including proper arrangements (Governance Framework) for:
  - i. the governance of its affairs; and
  - ii. the management of risk.
9. That duty has grown in importance with the reduction in resources being made available for local authorities as part of the Government's ongoing austerity programme and the high number of recent examples of governance failures in the local government sector.

## Scope of Responsibility

10. The Council expects all Councillors, Officers, partners and contractors to adhere to the highest standards of public service with particular reference to the [Councillor Code of Conduct](#), [Constitution](#), [Corporate Plan](#) and [Values and Behaviours](#) as well as applicable statutory requirements.
11. The Council has a separate [Code](#), which is consistent with the seven good governance principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework (2016) (see Figure 2). It sets out the commitment of the Council to work to uphold the highest possible standards of good governance.
12. The Code was updated and reported to the [Audit and Scrutiny Committee in September 2023](#).
13. The overall aim of the Code is to ensure that:
  - The Council is clear on what it achieves for residents, the environment and the economy.
  - The Council is clear on the actions needed to achieve its aims.
  - The Council has the skills, ability and money to achieve its aims.
  - The Council manages risks, budgets and performance.
  - The Council operates in an open, accountable and transparent way.
14. The responsibility for leading and directing the annual reviews of the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements against the Code and providing ongoing oversight and robust challenge, is the Council's Statutory Officers, comprising, the Chief Executive, Director of Resources (s151) and the Monitoring Officer and when completed, the findings are also reported to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

## The Purpose of the Governance Framework

15. The Council's Governance Framework comprises the legislative requirements, principles, policies and processes by which the Council is directed and controlled including activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads its communities. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money. The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework.
16. It should be noted however, that any system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. Risks are reported to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee quarterly.
17. As the Council changes the way it provides services, it is important that the governance arrangements remain robust but are also flexible and proportionate.

## Council's Governance Framework

18. The key elements of the Council's governance framework are the:

- Council Constitution which sets out how the Council operates and how it makes decisions. The Constitution says what the Council must do to make decisions efficiently, transparently and accountably. Periodic reviews of the Constitution are undertaken to ensure alignment with the strategic objectives and to incorporate legislative change and developments in case law. Any major changes to the Constitution are reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee for approval and adoption by Full Council.
- Council policy framework and budget, including the Tandridge Strategic Plan. The latter expires this year and as part of the work to improve corporate governance and set out a clear strategic direction for the Council, a new draft Corporate Plan was agreed by the Strategy and Resources Committee in June 2024.
- Key policies, procedures and systems by which the Council is controlled and governed. This aims to ensure that the Council carries out its functions in a way that demonstrates accountability, transparency, effectiveness, integrity, impartiality and inclusivity.

## Review of Effectiveness

19. The Council annually reviews the effectiveness of its governance arrangements. The assurance gathering process is set out in Figure 1.

20. The governance framework has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31 March 2024 and up to the date of approval of the Statement of Accounts. Any matters identified as a significant governance issue are reported within the AGS, and the progress made by EMT in 2024/2025 to address these issues will be reported in December 2024 to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee as the body charged with ensuring good governance.

21. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of EMT who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, by the Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion and comments made by the Council's External Auditors.

22. Each EMT Member has signed annual assurance certificates confirming that key governance issues across the seven core principles of good governance have been complied with. They have also been asked to confirm that risk management is embedded in their service areas and ensure scrutiny of their assurance responses.

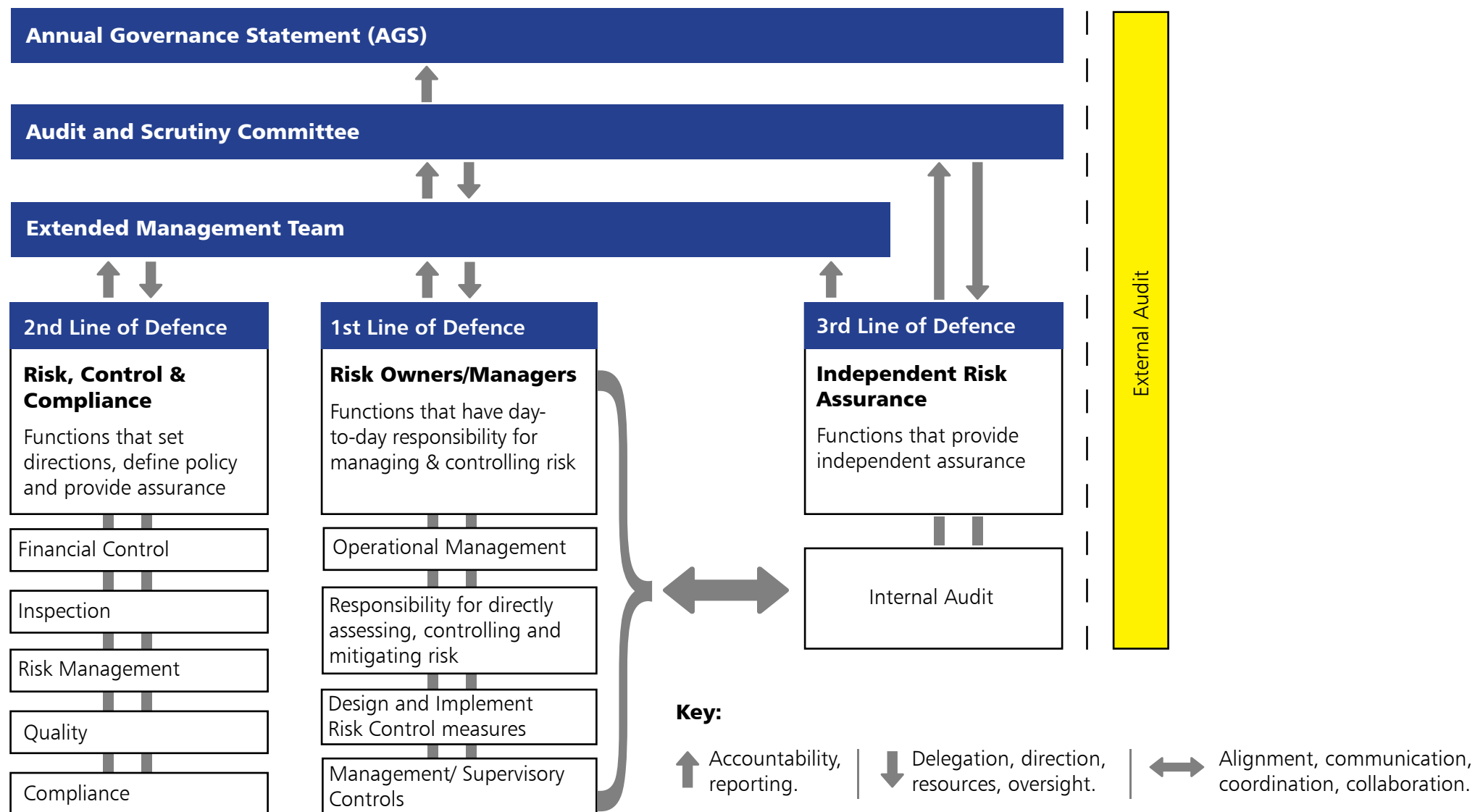
23. Areas for development have been identified in the Action Plan attached at Appendix 1, and addressing these will further enhance the Council's governance arrangements.

**Figure 1: Assurance Gathering Process**





24. In addition, the 'three lines of defence assurance model' is in place which helps Councillors 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.



25. Assurance can come from many sources within the Council. The Three Lines of Defence is a concept for helping to identify and understand the different sources of assurance. By defining these sources into three categories i.e. the First Line (functions that own and manage risks e.g. management and supervisory controls), the Second Line (functions that oversee risks e.g. Governance structures and processes such as Audit and Scrutiny Committee) and the Third Line (functions that provide independent assurance on the management of risks e.g. Internal/External Audit), helps the Council understand how each contributes to the overall level of assurance and how best they can be integrated and supported. Please see page 4 which summarises the Council's governance assurance framework, which is based on the three lines of defence model.

## Audit and Assurances

26. The Council is externally audited by its External Auditors (Deloitte LLP). Their annual audit includes examining and certifying whether the financial statements are 'true and fair', and assessing our arrangements for securing economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the use of resources. Our external auditors provide regular updates to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee. The external auditor reviews the AGS as part of the assessment of their value for money responsibilities.

27. As with many other local authorities, delays remain with Deloitte LLP completing their work on the 2021/2022 financial statements. This has caused knock-on delays for the publication of draft accounts for 2022/2023. Grant Thornton have now been appointed and will be completing and the 2023/2024 financial statements. Delays in the production and audit of annual accounts are primarily due to the capacity shortfalls in the external audit sector. To clear the backlog of audits and 'reset' the system, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) proposes putting a date in law (the 'back stop date') – namely 31st December 2024 - by which point local bodies would publish accounts for all outstanding years up to and including 2022/2023. While the proposals support the return to a timely delivery of local audits, there will

be implications to not completing a full audit for 2022/2023, which will most likely be subject to a qualification or disclaimer of opinion.

28. Regular updates on the progress of the external audit of the 2021/2022 accounts have been reported to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee with the latest update taken in September 2024.

29. Despite the challenges with the 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 financial statements, ministerial proposals made it clear that value for money is a high priority. Deloitte are intending to consider value for money across the three financial years 2020/2021 to 2022/2023 and their opinion on these matters is awaited. In the meantime, a range of financial processes, documents and rules are in place to secure value for money, including the Council's robust approach to delivering savings. The Council has delivered successive budgets without the use of reserves and has grown the base budget contingency to £445k for 2024/2025 (from zero in 2020/2021). A further £721k of unused contingency from previous years is available to support the budget.

## Internal Audit

30. Independent and objective assurances are provided by the Southern Internal Audit Partnership (SIAP) whose function as internal auditors, including the Chief Internal Auditor role, is designed to add value and improve the Council's operations.

31. The Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) state that the 'Chief Audit Executive must deliver an annual internal audit opinion and report that can be used by the organisation to inform its governance statement.' Independent and objective assurances are provided by Southern Internal Audit Partnership (SIAP) whose function as internal auditors, including the Chief Internal Auditor role, is designed to add value and improve the Council's operations. This in turn helps the Council accomplish its strategic ambitions by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to evaluating and improving the effectiveness of the Council's risk management, internal control and governance processes.

32. The Client Audit Manager reports to the Council’s Director of Resources (s151 Officer) providing updates on internal audit progress and issues at regular liaison meetings. Note that a reasonable audit opinion has been given in relation to the framework of governance, risk management and control for the year ended 31 March 2024 - the first time in 3 years that the Council has received a reasonable assurance.

## Internal Audit Annual Report 2023/2024

33. In the Client Audit Manager’s opinion, sufficient assurance was carried out over the course of 2023/2024 resulting in an overall reasonable assurance audit opinion to be issued for the Council’s framework of governance, risk management and management of controls. This was based on the approved audit plan agreed by the EMT and the Council’s [Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 16 July 2024](#).

34. 100% of the approved Audit Plan was completed (two reviews to draft report), with 9 audit opinions issued. Further detail regarding the Internal Audit work undertaken and the team’s performance is included within the Internal Audit Annual Report 2023/2024 which was presented to the [Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 16 July 2024](#). The table below provides an overview of the following opinions issued in 2023/2024: Audit Opinion.

	No. of Audits (2023/2024)	% of Audit Opinions (2023/2024)
Substantial	2	14%
Reasonable	4	29%
Limited	2	14%
No	1	7%
Other	5	36%
Total	14	100%

35. Regular updates are presented to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee throughout the year which outline the key findings of the internal audit work undertaken during 2023/2024, including any areas of significant weakness in the internal control environment.

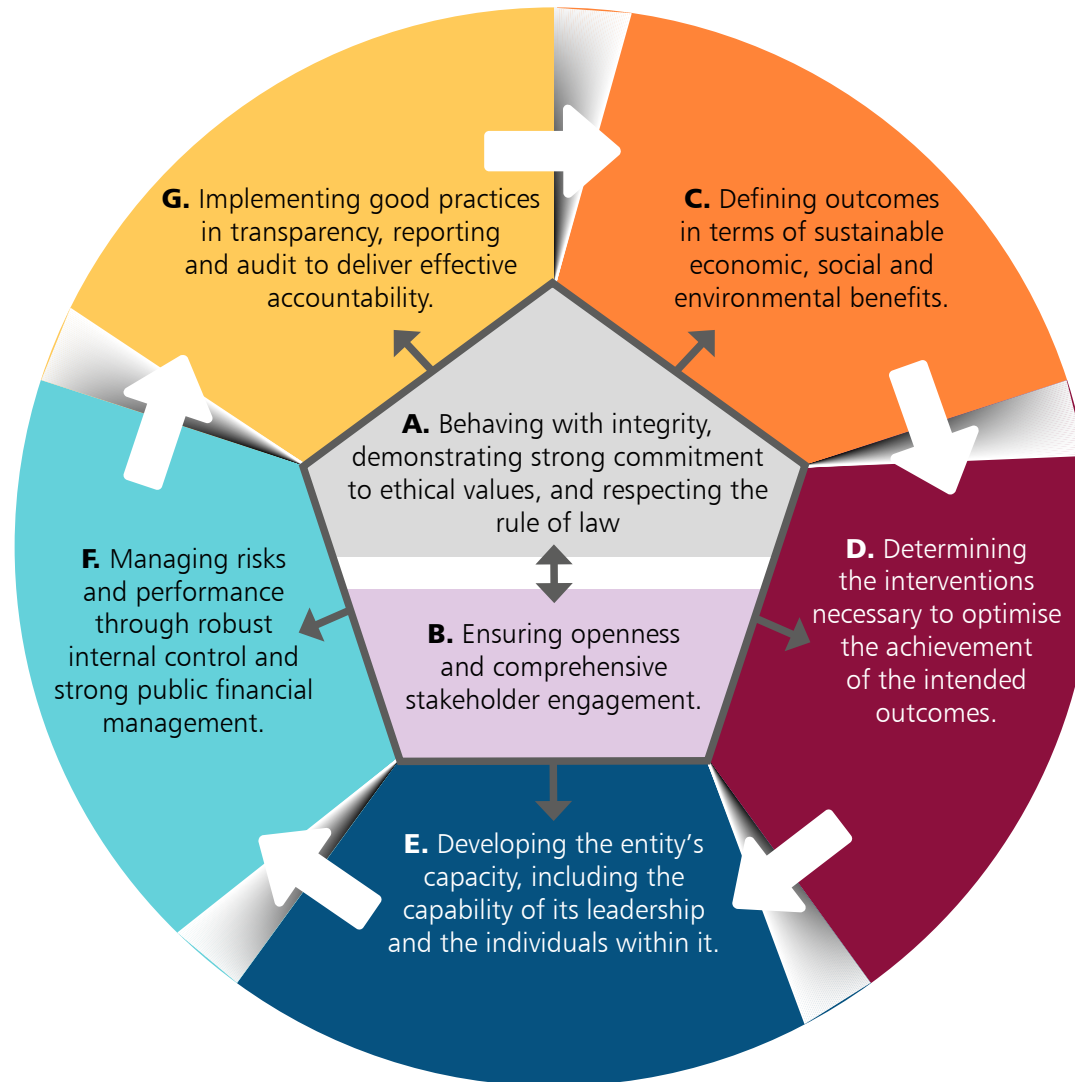
36. In each instance where it was identified that the control environment was not strong enough or was not complied with sufficiently to prevent risks to the organisation, SIAP highlighted such issues through reporting to EMT. EMT has developed management actions to further improve the system of control and compliance. All management actions are followed through to implementation and reported regularly to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

37. This Internal Audit Opinion has been considered in the development of the Annual Governance Statement.

38. Based on the internal audit work undertaken throughout 2023/2024 and evidence from other assurance providers, it is the opinion of the Client Audit Manager that reasonable assurance can be placed on the Council’s framework of governance, risk management and control. Generally, risks are well managed, but some areas require improvement to the control environment to ensure the achievement of objectives.

## Figure 2: The seven principles of Good Governance

This diagram 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 should be committed to improving governance on a continuing basis through a process of evaluation and review.



The following pages includes examples of how the Council has adhered to the seven core principles and associated sub principles and includes hyperlinks to sources of further information which include more detail about how the Council has implemented these.

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

### Supporting Principle: Behaving with integrity

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Constitution	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Head of Legal	The Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the policies which are followed. It is made of six parts and sets out the basic rules for governing the Council's business, as well as detailed procedures and codes of practice and protocols.	Reviews of the Constitution can be found on our <a href="#">website</a> .  The Constitution is kept under review to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose, with any proposed changes being considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee for approval to Full Council. A further review is due in the Autumn of 2024 to incorporate changes to the Council's Contract Standing Orders.
Member Code of Conduct	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Head of Legal	Standards Committee has the ability to undertake a review should any Councillor fail to adhere to the Code of Conduct for Members. Each Councillor receives annual training on their duties under the Code of Conduct for Members	The Member/ Officer Protocol Relations was reviewed by the Standards Committee on 9th April 2024.  Renewal in April 2026.
Officer Code of Conduct	The Intranet (the Hub)	Director of Resources	This sets the standards of conduct that the Council expects of its employees in the performance of their duties. It was last reviewed in May 2023.	It was last reviewed in May 2023.  Renewal in May 2025.

## Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Register of Member Interests		Head of Legal	All Councillors' and co-opted Councillors are required by law to complete a declaration of interests form to register their financial and other interests that could potentially conflict with their role as a local councillor. They are also required to declare any interests at the start of any council meeting.	Annually
Register of Officer Interests	<a href="#">The Intranet (the Hub)</a>	Director of Resources	Processes for ensuring the appropriate recording of offers of gifts and hospitality and interests on an ongoing basis throughout an Officer's time at the Council is reviewed and new necessary procedures embedded.	It is timely to undertake a periodic review of this Policy and this will be planned and implemented.
Complaints Policy	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Head of Policy and Communications	The Complaints Procedure was updated in September 2023. Information on how to submit complaints, the process, and relevant FAQs are provided on the external website.  The Council has sought feedback from the public through its complaints and comments procedures and has responded to the outcomes as appropriate.	Reviewed annually.
Anti-fraud and corruption strategy	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Director of Resources	This forms part of the Constitution.	Reviewed and updated by Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 26th September 2023.  Renewal in September 2025.
Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Director of Resources	This forms part of the Constitution.  Information on how to report concerns are easily located on both the external facing website and the staff intranet.	Reviewed and updated by Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 26th September 2023.  Renewal in September 2025.

## Respecting the Rule of Law

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Head of Paid Service	<a href="#">Local Government and Housing Act 1989</a>	Chief Executive	<p>It is the role of the Chief Executive, also known as the Head of Paid Service, to ensure that all the authority's functions are properly co-ordinated as well as organising staff and appointing appropriate management.</p> <p>The Chief Executive has overall accountability for the governance arrangements operating within the Council.</p>	
s151 Officer	<a href="#">Local Government Act 1972</a> <a href="#">Local Government Finance Act 1988</a>	Director of Resources	<p>The Council's Director of Resources (s151 Officer) has a duty to the Council's taxpayers to ensure that public money is being appropriately spent and managed and reports directly to the Head of Paid Service. The Director of Resources ensures that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, is responsible for keeping proper financial records and accounts and for maintaining an effective system of internal control.</p>	
Monitoring Officer	<a href="#">Local Government and Housing Act 1989</a>	Head of Legal	<p>The Council has a Monitoring Officer (MO) whose role is to ensure that decisions are taken lawfully, in a fair manner and procedures followed. After consulting the Chief Executive and Director of Resources (s151) the MO has a statutory duty/ power to report any proposal, decision or omission that he/she considers would give rise to unlawfulness or any decision or omission that has given rise to maladministration ("Section 5 report"). The MO is responsible for providing advice on ethics and governance to the Standards Committee and to the Members of this Council. The MO/ or Legal advisor attends Full Council and Regulatory Committees - such as Planning, Licensing and Standards - and to be on hand to provide advice as and when requested for other Committees.</p>	

## Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

### Openness

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Openness and access to meetings/decisions.		Democratic Services	<p>There are eight main <a href="#">committees</a> which Councillors attend. These carry out the detailed business of the Council. Council <a href="#">agendas and minutes</a> are published online.</p> <p>Council meetings and Committees are routinely held in public unless there are good reasons for not doing so on the grounds of confidentiality/disclosure of exempt information which are provided for in statutory provisions.</p>	An online library of meeting agendas, attendance, supporting papers, decisions and minutes is maintained on the Council's website. As a result, the decision-making process can be considered and reviewed by stakeholders and the public from inception through to final decision and any ultimate scrutiny.
Committee Forward Plan	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Democratic Services	The Forward Plan provides details of reports that will be considered at upcoming Council and Committee meetings.	Discussed at Management Team meetings.
Staff Briefings	Recordings circulated via email to all Officers.	Chief Executive	A forum for the Chief Executive Officer, Senior Officers and the Leader of the Council to address any Officer questions and provide additional background on matters coming before the council / committee for decision	Monthly staff briefings take place keeping Officers up to date with new initiatives and feedback of ongoing work. The Leader of the Council attends these briefings quarterly.
EMT / MT Meetings	Communication Services cascade a summary of the key points discussed via email to all Officers.	Chief Executive	Senior Managers' meeting meet weekly.	



### Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Consultations	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Deputy Chief Executive	The Council's planning and decision-making processes are designed to include consultation with stakeholders and the submission of views by residents.	

### Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Leader of the Council column	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Leader of the Council	There is a monthly column for the CR3, CR6, RH8, RH9, TN16 series of magazines, as well as for the Tandridge Independent.	
Outside bodies	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Councillors	<p>The Council defines outside bodies as a body which does not exercise a Council function, but which operates within the District. Such a body is one which seeks a representative from the Council.</p> <p>In order that the Council can maintain effective partnerships with a number of these organisations, the Council annually nominates Councillors to sit on the various committees and forums that are responsible for them.</p>	
Councillors	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Councillors	<p>Elected members are democratically accountable to their local area and this provides a clear leadership role in building sustainable communities.</p> <p>The Councillor monthly bulletin keeps all Councillors informed on a wide range of issues so they can better serve their constituents. Recordings and slides of Councillor training sessions are circulated to all Councillors to allow them to review training material as required.</p>	

## Principle C: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

### Defining outcomes

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Corporate Plan	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Chief Executive / Head of Policy and Communications	<p>In February and March 2024 a stakeholder consultation about the draft Corporate Plan was carried out. The aim was to invite feedback on the vision, priorities and objectives. The online survey was shared widely across all communication channels, as well as e-mailed directly to stakeholders.</p> <p>These priorities will be supported by the Code of Corporate Governance as good governance should underpin all the work of the Council.</p>	The Corporate Plan was adopted by Full Council in July 2024.
Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Director of Resources	The Budget for 2024/2025 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was approved by Full Council in February 2024. Its aim to inform Councillors of the current budget position for the Council.	Reviewed annually.

## Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Climate Emergency	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Head of Policy and Communications	<p>A Climate Change Working Group was set up in 2024 with the aim to advise the Council on the new Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>The Council sets out the climate change implications it has taken into consideration when making decisions in reports, which are available on its website.</p>	
Risk Management Policy and Strategy	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Head of Policy and Communications	<p>The Council has a process in place to identify and manage risks to the achievement of its objectives, as set out in the Risk Management Strategy. The Corporate risk register is part of this framework and is used to inform decision making and provide assurance over actions being taken to manage key risks.</p>	
Business Continuity Plans	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Head of Communities	<p>The Council has developed business continuity plans to ensure that critical service delivery can be maintained or recovered during an emergency.</p>	<p>New templates to be reviewed and completed by EMT in Autumn 2024.</p>

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

### Determining interventions

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Our vision, values and behaviours	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	EMT	The behaviours the Council demonstrates and the approaches it takes at work are key to the success of the Council and its vision to be an employer of choice. The behaviours framework has been developed in partnership with staff.	

### Planning interventions

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Performance Indicators	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	EMT	<p>Various Committees receive regular reports on performance monitoring and other policies and procedures which demonstrate the level to which intended outcomes are being achieved as well as addressing any statutory duties that are required to be adhered to.</p> <p>The Performance and risk reports are reviewed regularly by EMT before presented to the respective committees. This is to ensure all required risks are escalated and reported.</p>	The Council publish four performance and risk reports a year, one for each policy committee - Strategy & Resources, Community Services, Housing and Planning Policy. Officers also take a combined performance and risk report to the Audit & Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis. All of these can be found in the Council's committee section on the website.
Key Planning Performance Indicators	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Deputy Chief Executive	<p>The Council is required to submit this data quarterly to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.</p> <p>Information is also provided to Councillors on the applications and other areas of work not reported in the national statistics, in order to provide a more rounded picture of the Planning Services Team workload.</p>	Key planning performance indicators are reported to the Planning Policy Committee.

## Determining interventions

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Member Reference Group - FTP		Transformation Programme Director	<p>A Member Reference Group ('MRG') has been established to help steer the Council's response to the challenging financial environment, guide the preparation of a sustainable MTF5 consistent with the FTP, and oversee the delivery of the Council's work programme in terms of service transformation, investment and revenue generation.</p> <p>Reports on the FTP are taken to both the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Audit and Scrutiny Committee.</p>	
Cost of Living	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Head of Housing	As the Council moves forward, it will continue to analyse the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and how that may impact on corporate priorities. The Council will continue to work with residents and local businesses to review and respond to their changing needs.	

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

### Developing the Council’s capacity

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Appraisal / check-ins	The Council’s intranet (‘the Hub’)	Director of Resources (HR)	<p>Officers undertake regular 121 meetings with their line manager. As part of these 121 meetings, Officers discuss work plans/tasks and any training requirements associated with the successful delivery of the work plan. Officers are encouraged to complete Continuing Professional Development as relevant to their professional qualifications and there is a central training budget to ensure that training can be undertaken to maintain skills and knowledge.</p> <p>The appraisal period will run from 1 April to 31 March each year, and paperwork to be submitted by end of June.</p>	<p>Continual performance review for all staff under check-ins (iTrent).</p> <p>Appraisal / Performance Procedure updated March 2024. Next review to take place before November 2025.</p>
Staff role profiles	The Council’s intranet (‘the Hub’) and <a href="#">website</a>	EMT	<p>On joining the Council, Officers are provided with a contract outlining the terms and conditions of their appointment.</p> <p>The Head of Paid Service, Director of Resources (the Section 151 Officer), the Monitoring Officer have clear statutory responsibilities. Roles and responsibilities are contained within the Constitution along with the Member/ Officer Relations Protocol.</p>	

## Developing the capability of the Council's leadership and other individuals

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Member / Officer Development Programme		EMT	An induction programme is available to new employees and Members. Training is also provided for both Members and Officers on an on-going basis as appropriate and necessary. Members on certain Committees (e.g., Planning, Standards and Licensing) are required to undertake training before attending the Committee meetings, and to attend if necessary further training to remain up to date and improve their knowledge. A new induction process has been introduced for Councillors in 2023/2024.	Ongoing
Officer Mandatory training		EMT	An online training facility – Workrite - is in place for Officers and in 2023/2024 certain training modules were categorised as mandatory – for example Safeguarding, Display Screen Equipment, Data Protection and Anti-fraud.  EMT will continue to monitor completion of the training and address any related areas of non-compliance.	Ongoing

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

### Managing Risk

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Risk Management Policy / Strategy	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Head of Policy and Communications	<p>The Council has reviewed its approach to managing risks over the last year and approved a revised Risk Management Strategy, which seeks to embed a culture of risk awareness within everyday activities.</p> <p>The Risk Management Strategy defines the roles and responsibilities for managing risk, confirming that risk management is an integral part of the Council's business activities including all aspects of business planning, option appraisals and decision making.</p>	Approved by Strategy and Resources Committee on 30th January 2024.
Resilience and Emergency arrangements	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Head of Communities	The Council's Emergency Planning function sits within the Communities Service and works in conjunction with Local Resilience Forum partners to plan, respond and learn from civil emergencies.	There is an "Out of hours" rota that is updated weekly and shared with Councillors.

### Managing Performance

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Statutory Officers Meeting		Chief Executive	The Statutory Officer Meeting is a meeting of the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service), the Monitoring Officer and the Director of Resources (s151 Officer) of the Council – the three statutory officers of the Council – as well as the Deputy Chief Executive. This group needs to provide a space for the Officers to share intelligence related to areas of governance, assurance, budgets, risk and organisational decision making.	



## Robust internal control

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Whistleblowing Policy	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Director of Resources	There are effective arrangements for “Whistleblowing” with reporting to the Monitoring Officer and for receiving and investigating complaints from the public. The policy makes it clear that you can do so without fear of victimization, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage.	Reviewed and updated by Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 28 November 2023.  Renewal in November 2025.
Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Director of Resources	The Council takes fraud, corruption and maladministration very seriously and has established policies and processes which aim to prevent or deal with such occurrences.  The Policy forms part of the Constitution. Information on how to report concerns are easily located on both the external facing website and the staff intranet.	Reviewed and updated by Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 26 September 2023.  Renewal before September 2025.

## Managing Data

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Data Protection Policy	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Head of Legal	<p>There are Information Governance Management Team meetings in place to ensure the effective safeguarding, collection, storage and sharing of the Council's data. A Data Protection Officer is in post to oversee the Council's data protection strategy and its implementation to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).</p> <p>The Council regularly reviews policies relating to records management, data quality, data protection and information security and provides data protection training.</p> <p>The Council is committed to sharing appropriate data safely with other agencies; where this improves effective and efficient service delivery, supports its objectives and the vision for the district and is compatible with the rights of individuals.</p>	Ongoing - information governance policies to be refreshed to ensure consistency and compliance with statutory regulations.
Freedom of Information policy	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Head of Legal	The Council makes information available to the public via the information access regimes provided for by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Individuals may also access their own personal data by exercising the right of subject access under the Data Protection Act 2018.	Improvements to be made to the process of managing FOIs / SARs as part of the 2024/2025 Action Plan.

## Strong public financial management

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Audit and Scrutiny Committee	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Director of Resources	<p>The Audit and Scrutiny Committee has the responsibility for receiving many reports that deal with issues that are key to good governance. The Committee undertakes the core functions of an Audit Committee identified in CIPFA's practical guidance. The Committee has an agreed set of terms of reference, which sets out roles and responsibilities of its members.</p> <p>The Committee has 8 Members plus one Independent Person who attends its meetings.</p>	The Audit and Scrutiny Committee has met quarterly throughout the year and has considered reports from Internal and External Audit as well as other updates, reports, and advice from the Director of Resources (s151 Officer) and the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer.

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

### Implementing good practices in transparency

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Transparency Code	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Head of Legal	Working towards compliance with the Local Government Data Transparency Code which sets out the minimum data that the Council should be publishing, the frequency it should be published and how it should be published e.g. expenditure exceeding £500, grants to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations, senior salaries etc. This makes it easier for local people to contribute to the local decision making processes and help to shape public services.	Ongoing

### Implementing good practices in reporting

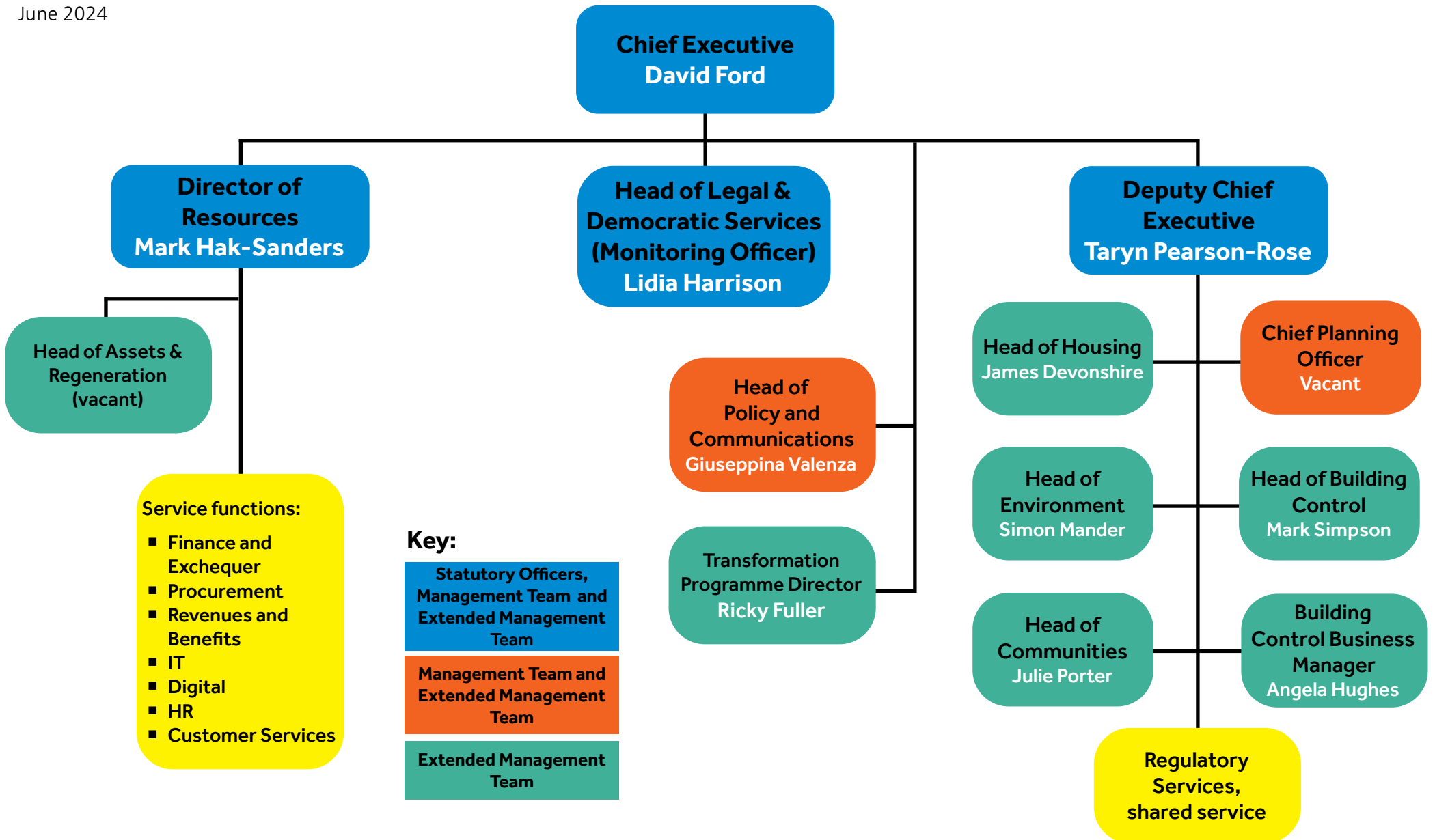
Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Budget, including medium term financial strategy		Director of Resources	The financial implications of delivering against the Council's priorities are included within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy ('MTFS'), revenue budgets and capital programme. These key financial documents are updated annually during the budget setting process. Variance to budget is reported quarterly to the relevant Committees.	Ongoing
Annual Statement of Accounts	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Director of Resources	The published Annual Statement of Accounts is the statutory summary of the Council's 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 Council and to demonstrate the Council's stewardship of public money for the year	Update report was presented to Audit & Scrutiny Committee on 11th April 2024
Annual Governance Statement	<a href="#">Tandridge website</a>	Head of Legal	The Council publishes an Annual Governance Statement in order to report how the Council has monitored the effectiveness of its governance arrangements (self assessed against the seven key principles set out within the Council's Code of Corporate Governance) in year and on any planned changes in the coming year.	Report was presented to Audit & Scrutiny Committee on 26th September 2023.

## Assurance and effective accountability

Source of assurance	Where found	Who is responsible	How the Council meets this Principle?	Last review/action planned
Internal Audit		Director of Resources	<p>The Council's internal audit work has been carried out SIAP – Southern Internal Audit Partnership. This includes an annual independent and objective opinion to the Council on its risk management, governance and control environment.</p> <p>Their work aligns with the aims and objectives of the Council, considering key risks, operations, and changes. The plan is flexible in adapting audit plans to manage changing risks, priorities, and challenges.</p>	<p>The Committee receive quarterly a progress report from the SIAP which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ an analysis of live audit reviews that still had management actions pending or overdue.</li> <li>■ a progress update against the 2023/2024 Internal Audit Plan.</li> <li>■ a summary of any adjustments to the Internal Audit Plan and any significant issues that would impact on the Chief Internal Auditor's annual opinion.</li> </ul>
External Audit of Accounts		Director of Resources	<p>External Audit (Deloitte LLP) reports on the Council's financial statements (including the Annual Governance Statement), providing an opinion on the accounts and use of resources, concluding on the arrangements in place for securing economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the use of resources (the value for money conclusion).</p>	<p>Still outstanding.</p>

# Senior Management Structure

June 2024



## Resilient and robust resources services, financial governance and value for money



**Mark Hak-Sanders**  
Director of Resources (s151 Officer)

As Section 151 Officer, I have responsibility to ensure the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs. Key elements of this are to make sure the Council's budget and reserves are robust and arrangements are in place to secure value for money. Across the wider Resources Directorate, I am responsible for providing resources services, (HR, IT, Assets, Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits) in robust and resilient way, within the confines of the funding available to a small Council.

### Financial Governance

The annual Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is the Council's key General Fund financial planning document and sets out the Council's strategic approach to the management of the General Fund including Council tax levels, capital funding and treasury management. This is supplemented by the Housing Revenue Account 30-year business plan which is refreshed regularly and reported in summary form to Housing Committee each January.

The Council has robust arrangements for effective financial control through accounting procedures, key financial systems, Financial Regulations and procedural responsibilities, which are compliant with accounting and auditing standards and guidance. To ensure financial sustainability, the Council plans and manages its resources so it can deliver its services. The responsibility for the effective management of the Council's budgets is delegated to designated

managers within its services. The Budget Accountability Statement and Finance Business Partnering Agreement sets out clear responsibilities for budget holders and demarcation of duties between Finance and Heads of Service.

The Council's financial statements and arrangements to secure value for money (VFM) in the use of resources are reviewed each year by its external auditor. For financial years up to 2022/2023, the external auditor was Deloitte. For 2023/2024, the external auditor is Grant Thornton.

The Council's budget for 2023/2024 included a comprehensive and challenging savings target of £1.65m, equivalent to 14% of the Council's budget. Delivery of the savings target is managed through the Future Tandridge Programme, with a robust system of governance that was deemed to offer 'substantial assurance' (the highest available rating) in two successive annual internal audits.

Comprehensive financial reports were provided to the four Policy Committees for each quarter of 2023/2024, including tracking delivery of the savings target. A significant overspend (albeit contained within contingency) for 2023/2024 was forecast early in the financial year with pressures arising in the Planning Service. These pressures in Planning remained throughout the year, with a £404k total overspend for the Planning Policy Committee. However, due to savings made elsewhere, the Council completed the year with a small surplus of £179k / 1.5%, prior to an unused contingency of £721k. The underspend of £179k was added to the General Fund reserve, with the contingency retained to meet future budget risks. 91% of the Council's £1.65m savings target was delivered, with mitigating actions identified for the remaining 9%.

To address the budget pressures within Planning, the Committee's budget was increased by £479k for 2024/2025, including additional investment in Planning Appeals and an allocation of £320k to invest in the service. The Council's budget for 2024/2025 also included, for the first time, a £200k Service Capacity Fund, to allow the Council to strengthen service delivery in-year where needed:

*"The Service Capacity Fund recognises the financial pressure faced by services across the Council, particularly Planning, some of which will not become clear until after the budget is set. The fund will be held Corporately initially and*

*distribution will be subject to Member approval as and when proposals are put forward for its use. It differs fundamentally from the contingency fund in as much as it is expected that the Council will draw down the Service Capacity Fund and deploy it to supplement service budgets, once the need is clear. Contingency remains reserved for risk management."*

The affordability of the Council's capital programme remains under regular review, with cost management more important than ever, given acute inflationary pressures and the increased cost of borrowing. The Investment Sub Committee has met regularly to ensure that compliant financing plans are in place.

Capital resources are scarce, especially given recent rises in interest rates and inflation, so not all requests for investment by directorates can be accepted for inclusion in the capital programme. This is considered as part of the Council's overall budget setting process.

Budget planning for 2024/2025 commenced in June 2023 and continued up to the Full Council meeting in February 2024, where the 2024/2025 budget was approved. The budget included a tactical savings plan of £586k, mainly delivered without substantial changes to services. The Council's budget strategy recognises that, for the Council to continue delivering the best possible services within available resources in 2024/2025 and beyond, it is essential to take a medium-term view of the Council's budget, focus on meeting the Council's Corporate Plan objectives and associated service plans, and rise to the challenge presented by the economic environment and constrained Government funding. Savings plans under development for the two years from 2025/2026 are likely to be substantial, so a significant financial challenge exists. Continued effective financial management will be essential. Regular monitoring of savings will be undertaken to ensure these remain on track. Any adverse trends in any deviation from budgets will require management action. The Council has invested in a Transformation Programme Director and other resources, including a Commercial Finance Business Partner, to develop the savings plan and MTFs from 2025/2026 onwards.

The CIPFA Financial Management Code ('FM Code') provides guidance for good and sustainable financial management in local authorities and provides assurance that authorities are managing their resources effectively. The FM Code sets out the principles local authorities should be guided by in managing their finances and the specific standards that they should seek to achieve. The Council adheres to the FM Code.

### **Conclusion**

It is my opinion that the Council continues to operate robust internal controls and good public financial management. Further action is required to manage financial pressures and develop strategies to meet the long-term financial challenges that face the Council. There has been no need for me to exercise my statutory powers and the Council complies with its financial regulations and procedures together with relevant codes of practice and guidance. The Finance Services Team continues to provide an effective and efficient service while enabling the Council to meet its objectives within a robust financial framework.

### **Counter Fraud**

The Council's Constitution states that the s151 Officer is responsible for the development and maintenance of an anti-fraud, bribery and corruption policy, and that managers are responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented within their service area. The Policy was last reviewed in October 2023 and the next renewal will be in or before October 2025. Several policies that make up the Council's anti-fraud governance arrangements are in place and regularly reviewed.

Overarching capacity for managing fraud is delivered through a joint working agreement with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council ('RBBC'). This was developed by the Council's Head of Housing with further input from the s151 Officer. The agreement is governed by a s113 Agreement (Local Government Act 1972) which allows one authority to discharge functions on behalf of another. The agreement was finalised in December 2022 and sets out key activities to be provided, separated into those deemed to require urgent attention when the agreement was signed and a further set to become business as usual.

Key activities to-date include:

- Review of the following strategies:
  - [Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy](#) (September 2023).
  - [Whistleblowing Policy](#) (November 2023).
  - [Anti-Money Laundering Policy](#) (February 2024).
- Training roll-out for Housing and Revenues and Benefits Teams provided in 2023 to then be expanded to other Officers including Exchequer and HR in September 2024.
- Fact-finding investigations into any potential fraud referred from teams within the Council, with full activity reported to Audit & Scrutiny Committee annually, including in September 2024.
- Production of a monthly Fraud Management report, detailing the work undertaken by RBBC on behalf of the Council each month, received by the Head of Housing and Director of Resources.

The work undertaken by RBBC is coordinated with further anti-fraud measures undertaken by service teams within the Council. This includes the following, which is not intended to be exhaustive:

- Revenues and Benefits: Standard checks on all claims, regular reviews of discounts and the recent recruitment of an Inspector to ensure that premises liable for Council Tax and Business rates are comprehensively identified.
- Surrey-wide single person discount review: The Council took part in a Surrey-wide initiative to review single person discounts which, for this Council alone, secured a reduction in fraudulent or inaccurate discounts of approximately £300k, of which 88% is due to Surrey County Council and Surrey Police and the remaining 12% (£36k) passed to the Council.
- Exchequer: Standard checks on payments and income, reviews of accounts payable and receivable processes and robust controls over refunds and credit notes.

- Both teams have participated in the National Fraud Initiative where data is uploaded every two years into a national database to allow cross referencing across local authority boundaries. Referrals are dealt with throughout the year.
- Housing Teams: Standard checks on both housing register and homelessness applications, review of all Right to Buy applications, review of all potential tenancy fraud cases, referrals to RBBC for further fact-finding investigation where appropriate and regular review of anti-fraud arrangements.
- HR: A rolling programme of mandatory Fraud e-learning has been rolled out to all Officers and has so far been completed by 166 Officers, out of 238 (70%). The remaining Officers will be contacted to ensure they complete the training.

### Human Resources

In response to budgetary pressures, a more rigorous establishment control mechanism has been introduced across all services with monitoring oversight by the Finance Business Partner. This requires documented consideration of wider resourcing options and solutions, with proposals being considered at EMT level before recruitment or contractual changes are undertaken.

To maintain good people management and compliance with legislation and best practice, the Council has a comprehensive and accessible suite of employment policies, guidance, toolkits, and procedures. An ongoing programme of work ensures that these are regularly reviewed, updated, refreshed, and promoted so that they remain relevant and are utilised effectively by Officers.

### Information Technology

The Council's Information Technology Service continues to enable the Council to deliver modern, sustainable, and scalable frontline services underpinned by technology and digital capabilities. A new operating model, which is now fully embedded, is enabling the IT service to work closely with services and helps support the Council's ambitions both proactively and reactively, while the [IT and Digital Strategy](#) continues to evolve to accommodate and respond to the changing needs of the organisation. The Strategy is due for renewal in 2025 and will be updated to reflect the Council's Corporate Plan.



The IT Service continues to support hybrid working models across the Council. This has entailed a redesign of our corporate network, including our WiFi infrastructure, optimising our wide area network, and building additional resiliency into our cyber security.

Priorities for the next year include supporting the ongoing transformation of our services and service improvement activities across all our frontline services. This includes the implementation of an enhanced package of online tools to enable residents and businesses to access Council services online through a bespoke 'MyAccount', where they are able to do so.

An IT disaster recovery solution was successfully implemented in 2023/2024, with real-time backup of Council systems taking place at Warren Lane Depot. This disaster recovery work was delivered alongside continued work to achieve Public Sector Network (PSN) security compliance. PSN compliance was achieved in July 2024, a major milestone in network security and IT governance.

The Council's obsolete telephone system was replaced successfully in February 2024 with a robust solution that provides enhanced data on customer contact, along with integration with other key Council systems. Plans were put in place during 2023/2024 to replace the Council's Income Management System, Adelante. These plans were successfully implemented with cut-over to the new system taking place in July 2024.

## Procurement

The Council spends approximately £20m each year on goods and services on behalf of Tandridge's residents (source 2023/2024 supplier spend), a figure which can vary significantly from one year to the next, particularly with the timing of council house building projects. The range of goods and services is varied but includes services for waste collection; parks and services; encouraging business growth and housing development works.

Effective procurement and commissioning is about managing the whole life cycle of the goods and services the Council procures, and ensuring that specifications are right and fit for purpose with clear outcomes and purposes.

The Corporate Procurement Board ('CPB') has effective oversight, control and provides direction to procurement activity Council wide. The Board last year extended its membership to other EMT Members and is also attended by the Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Resources and Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer. The CPB meet monthly.

The Procurement Officer delivers a professional service to help the Council procure goods and services commercially, legally and at minimal risk, while supporting the Council's policies, and in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and Council's [Contract Standing Orders](#). The Council's directly employed Officer is supplemented by a Joint Working Agreement with Orbis (a shared service between Surrey County Council, East Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council). This service provides procurement expertise to various projects across the Council, including more complex examples such as the new Grounds Maintenance contract.

The Council's internal Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) have been maintained in line with the national Procurement Policy Notices and guidance issued by the Cabinet Office. A new Contract Management Guide was launched in 2023/2024, setting out the arrangements for robustly managing contracts. A working group including the s151 Officer, Procurement and Legal has been established to review the suite of documents including CSOs and the Contract Management Guide to ensure they are compliant with the Procurement Act 2023 (due for adoption in February 2025). A report to the Strategy & Resources Committee will summarise this work and seek approval for any changes in November 2024.

The contracts register is in the public domain so that any interested parties may view it. This has led to greater visibility of Council spend which is fed into procurement and resource planning and should lead to greater opportunities for efficiency savings. It will also make it easier for members of the public to have their requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 ('FOIs') answered quickly and efficiently.

The Council needs to manage its contracts more actively to drive continuous improvement in performance and efficiency. In particular, the Procurement Officer needs to work with operational contract managers in departments to build on best practice and provide training in contract management techniques.

Through a clear commercially led approach to contract management, the Council needs to ensure a greater focus is directed towards obtaining the required outcomes. This will include increased monitoring, management of supplier performance through robust SLA's and KPI's (including the delivery of community benefits), and where performance is not being achieved, an action and improvement plan to be implemented.

### **Asset Management**

The Council's Asset Management function has been restructured to provide clear responsibility for and capacity to deliver critical Health and Safety compliance work. This structure is now in place, with an internal Service Level Agreement setting out various roles and responsibilities. Asset Health and Safety is now delivered by the Community Surveyors team of circa ten officers which offers greater resilience, expertise and capacity than the previous structure of two posts responsible for this area. Urgent work is in place or under way to address the findings of an internal audit report into Asset Management – Statutory Checks compliance across General Fund and Housing Revenue Account properties, which concluded with no assurance. This was reported to the Audit & Scrutiny Committee on 16th July 2024. Further work is under way to comprehensively assess the Council's asset portfolio to determine the appropriate future management approach, including whether the assets should be retained, developed, or disposed.

The Council has robust arrangements in place to manage its wholly-owned asset management companies, including Gryllus Holdings, Gryllus Properties and Gryllus Housing (which is dormant). The Director of Resources represents the interests of the Council, whilst Gryllus's Directors consist of the Deputy Chief Executive and the Strategic Finance Business Partner for Commercial. Regular Member-level reporting on Gryllus properties takes place through Investment Sub-Committee, feeding into Strategy & Resources Committee.

### **Overall**

Providing value for money and robust Resources services is extremely challenging in a Council with a relatively small revenue budget. The Council is required to deliver the same services as much larger District Councils, with greater resources available to them. The challenges of continuing to balance reduced Government funding against the need to improve governance and resilience of Council services will remain a key feature over the medium-term and is likely to involve increased partnership working to build resilience, share costs and mitigate risk.

## Deputy Chief Executive



**Taryn Pearson-Rose**  
Deputy Chief Executive

### Planning Department

The Planning Service continues to rely on interim staffing across all three teams, Development Management, Policy and Infrastructure. During 2023/2024 there has been some success in recruiting permanently to entry level roles, however many of the more senior roles within the service are still filled by interim staff, including the lead professional role for Planning Policy and Development Management. The Council is not alone in the challenge of recruiting and retaining Planning Officers. In May 2024, the Royal Town Planning Institute reported that 82% of local authorities struggled to recruit to planning roles and that a quarter of planners had left the public sector between 2013 and 2020.

As a result of having interim planning professional leads, a Planning Improvement Plan, overseen by the Deputy Chief Executive, has been introduced, and this aims to drive improvements across the Development Management Service. The Director of Resources (s151 Officer) and the Deputy Chief Executive are directly monitoring the service's budgets, and consulting regularly with the Chairs of the Planning and Planning Policy Committees, particularly as the programme for the new Local Plan progresses.

There are five key workstreams within the Development Management Improvement Plan. This Plan incorporates improvements and actions required to respond to internal audit conducted in the final quarter of 2023/2024, which achieved a limited assurance.

- **People** - stabilise staffing and capacity to deliver an acceptable level of performance; agree and sign off a costed "to be" staffing structure. Reduce dependency on interim staff. Train & develop staff skills and knowledge. Provide opportunities for career progression. Improve resilience (eliminate single point of failure dependencies in certain areas) and cross-training of officers. Ensure responsiveness to users and other stakeholders.
- **Processes** - document core business processes and procedures. Review, simplify, improve and standardise core processes. Ensure that these are aligned with system functionality. Work with digital team to maximise use of self-service tools (e.g. MyAccount) and reduce the need for contact by email or phone. Ensure agreed processes are understood and followed by staff.
- **Systems and technology** - define and deliver a phased programme of systems development and enhancement (configuration, reporting etc.) to ensure systems align with core processes, support key performance reporting and the Council's digital first and customer contact strategies.
- **Communication and Engagement** - review communication needs of key audiences (Members, residents, service users). Produce an agreed plan to ensure these are met (outlining outputs, frequency and methods). Measure responsiveness and ensure that standards exist and are met. Ensure communication methods to support the Council's digital first and customer strategies.
- **Performance** - track and report on overall performance against targets for key service metrics, including statutory KPIs, operational measures, backlog reduction, financial (cost and income vs budget), HR measures and customer service measures.

## Local Plan

The new Local Plan will be a key priority for the Council over the next two years. Initial work on timescales, resource requirements and overall approach has been developed, with most of the work to commence at pace in 2024/2025. There is no doubt that the timescale and resource available to the Council will make the production of the Plan is challenging, yet there is a level of confidence that the set timeframe for delivery is achievable.

## Environment Service

Within the Environment Service, transformation and improvement needs have had to be prioritised due to the available capacity and skills both within the department and corporately. The future grounds maintenance operating model and procurement has necessitated the highest priority task, due to the risk to the Council of not having robust value for money viable provision in place.

During the year, progress has been made in a number of other areas, including the decision to cease the Cesspool Service at the [June Community Services Committee](#) due to the fall in income and need for the Council to subsidise the service.

A Project Board comprising several senior Officers has been established to support transformation within the department, and the terms of reference of this Board have just been refreshed to ensure that the Board has a clarity of remit for 2024/2025. The main objective is to drive forward the next tranche of improvements within the department including Housing Revenue Fund Grounds Maintenance, Customer and Stakeholder contact and exploring commercial opportunities.

## Community Facilities

Appointing a Project Manager to support the improvement and investment in Community facilities has provided some pace to the refurbishment and renewal of some Public Conveniences and Play areas throughout the District. This, alongside the UKSPF investment, has started to see some long-awaited expenditure in community facilities including parks and open spaces and closer contact and links with Parish Councils.

Play and Public Convenience strategic approaches will follow in 2024/2025, setting out how the Council will improve and maintain the remaining sites, closely followed by some initial work procuring a contractor to support the Council develop a Leisure Strategy for the District. The work to improve community facilities and spaces across the District is critical to the delivery of the new Corporate Plan and several of its priorities and associated objectives such as: invest in and improve parks and open spaces, develop and implement a wellbeing and leisure strategy for the District and the funding of high quality services.

## Shared Services

In general, the two Shared Services of Environmental Health (Mole Valley and Tandridge Councils) and Southern Building Control Partnership (Reigate & Banstead, Mole Valley and Tandridge Councils) have worked effectively during the year. Both Services have Boards, which have Officer and Councillor representation, meet quarterly and provide a strategic context and approach, robust challenge and monitor performance and risks. Both Services have had their challenges this year, in particular Southern Building Control Partnership in terms of needing to adopt significant new legislation.

Environmental Health frequently attend Community Services Committee and provide contributions to the quarterly performance report. The Southern Building Control Partnership reports into the Planning Policy Committee.

## Governance and Information Governance



**Lidia Harrison**  
Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer

The Council has a Constitution made under Section 37 of the Local Government Act 2000. The Constitution sets out the Council's governance, decision-making structure, standing orders and other rules and protocols. The Constitution ensures that decisions are taken while respecting the rule of law.

In line with good practice, the Council reviews the Constitution annually. As part of the review, consultations have taken place with Officers and Councillors both individually and through meetings with the Leader of the Council and the respective Chairs of Committees. Changes to the Constitution can be viewed on our [website](#).

Residents have every opportunity to know how decisions are made, and there are webcasts for a range of meetings including meetings of Council and committees. The public can participate in Committee meetings by asking questions or raising petitions. The webcast page can be found on our [website](#).

### Elections

The Council is elected by thirds, which means that three years out of four, a third of the Council retire and elections take place to fill those seats. In May 2023, elections took place in 14 wards. The results of these elections meant that 7 new Councillors were elected. The elections were also combined with elections to 16 of the District's 22 Parish Councils.

### Boundary Commission Review

A full review of polling places and polling districts was conducted in 2023/2024 following the ward boundary review undertaken by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE). The resulting change to the number of Councillors from 42 to 43 came into effect from the May 2024 elections. There were also several changes to ward boundaries, with the biggest changes in Caterham.

A full review of the Polling Districts and Polling Places was also carried out and details of the outcome of the review can be found on our [website](#).

### Councillor Induction Programme

This was overseen by EMT and covered aspects such as the Code of Conduct, Data Protection and Equalities.

The Council has undertaken training with Chairs and Vice Chairs to ensure they have a full understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and how these contribute to the governance of the Council.

### Committee Meetings

The Council and Committee meetings continue to be held face-to-face, in line with legislative requirements.

Various committees ensure that the Council is subject to rigorous scrutiny and held to account in its work by robustly challenging the Council's plans and overarching decision making for the residents of Tandridge.

### Audit And Scrutiny Committee

This currently consists of nine Councillors from different political groups, plus [one Independent Person](#). This Committee is part of the arrangements for making sure the Council carries out its responsibilities properly.

## Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO)

The Council has a designated Senior Information Risk Owner ('SIRO') ('the Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer') who is accountable and responsible for information risk across the Council. The SIRO's role is to ensure information assets and risks within the force are managed as a business process rather than as a technical issue.

The SIRO is supported by the DPO and FOI Officer, who assist the Council in monitoring internal compliance, informing and advising on information governance obligations, training and also act as a contact point between the Information Commissioner and the Council.

## Siro Annual Report

The following paragraphs represent the SIRO Annual Report. The main purpose of such reporting and management is to provide accountability and greater assurance that information risks are addressed.

## Information Governance Management Group

Information governance is concerned with how information is held, obtained, recorded, used and shared by the Council. The Information Governance Management Team ('IGMT') is the Council's primary forum for ensuring that the Council has effective information governance arrangements in place.

The Senior Information Risk Owner ('SIRO') chairs the IGMT.

IGMT includes the following disciplines: Data Protection, Freedom of Information, Environmental Regulations, Cyber Security, Transparency Code, and Records Management.

The Group comprises:

- The SIRO- Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer.
- The Data Protection Officer and the Freedom of Information Officer.
- The IT and Project Delivery Manager.
- The Deputy Freedom of Information Officer.
- The Deputy Data Protection Officer.
- The Information Governance Assistant.

## Data Champions Group

The Council also has in place, a Data Champions group, which acts as a two-way conduit in respect of information governance issues within the Council. Each department/service area within the Council has nominated an officer to serve as their Data Champion. The group meets quarterly.

## Internal Audits

The Council has recently undergone several internal audits relating to Information Governance. The first of these was a follow up review of an Information Governance Audit which took place in 2020/2021 where a limited assurance had been given. This review took place in September 2023 and found that of the 14 outstanding management actions, 11 had been fully implemented, with work ongoing to complete the remaining actions.

An Ethical Governance audit took place in May 2024 and a reasonable assurance was given by the Council's internal auditors. Five management actions were identified, and the auditors are satisfied that the management actions planned, and once implemented, should mitigate against the risks identified. The majority of these actions have already been implemented.

A Freedom of Information audit took place in July 2024, and whilst at the date of writing, the Final Report is awaited from the Council's internal auditors, certain management actions have been identified where internal processes can be improved. These will be implemented as part of the wider Information Governance remit.

## Policies

Key information governance documents are promoted across the Council through its Data Champions, training and having dedicated information in a shared folder.

It is coming up to 24 months since most policies were reviewed and updated. The 2024/2025 action plan provides for this task to be completed.

## Activities

The Council's Data Protection Officer ('DPO') and the IT and Project Delivery Manager have been collaborating on a project aimed at ensuring greater synthesis between the functions of data protection and information security. This work encompasses an in-depth review of all IT and data protection policies, and proactively identifying areas where internal controls can be improved to provide enhanced data security measures. There are several strands to this project, and work progresses despite resourcing challenges.

Some of the other activities undertaken in 2023/2024 include FOI training of the Council's Data Champions, a complete re-work of the Council's Record of Processing Activity ('ROPA') document and implementation of a weekly reporting system to EMT highlighting overdue data requests. The Council's DPO continues to work with partners and across the Council to ensure data sharing agreements are developed / are in place to support the Council's business activities now and in the future.

The focus on the 2024/2025 action plan will be to continue to strengthen the Council's approach to data management, alongside the development of innovative and dynamic processes, housed within a smaller number of digital applications, that evidence improved performance and allow Officers to target intervention in areas that may require it.

## FOI, EIR and SAR requests

The Council continues to receive a high number of Freedom of Information ('FOI') and Environmental Information Regulations ('EIR') requests.

The last 3 years' performance data is set out below:

Timescale	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
1 April - 30 June	91	147	209
1 July - 30 September	115	176	210
1 October - 31 December	140	158	234
1 January - 31 March	159	226	269
<b>Total</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>707</b>	<b>922</b>

The past 3 years' performance data for Subject Access Requests (SARs) is set out below:

Timescale	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
1 April - 30 June	5	3	12
1 July - 30 September	3	5	7
1 October - 31 December	3	5	5
1 January - 31 March	8	7	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>30</b>

No issues have been highlighted to the SIRO over concerns raised by the Information Commissioner's Office during the year.

## Data Protection Incidents

The Council has an excellent culture of reporting incidents regardless of the nature or level of risk concerning the incident. Incidents can provide valuable insight into the Council's information security arrangements, including training, policy and process which may need to be strengthened as a preventative measure. Not all incidents reported have resulted in a breach.

No reportable data breaches to the ICO were recorded in 2023/2024. Most incidents occurred as a result of human error, such as information being sent to the incorrect recipient via email. The DPO continues to emphasise the need for diligence and accuracy in respect of the processing of personal data.

## Information Governance Framework

- Policies
  - Data Protection
  - Records Management
  - IT Security
  - IG Policy
  - Retention

- Standards
  - Redaction.
  - Encryption/Passwords.
  - Privacy Notices.
  - Publication Scheme (ROPA).
  - Transparency Code.
- Procedures
  - Access Requests handling.
  - CCTV.
  - Records Management.
- Outputs
  - Data Champions.
  - IGMT.
  - EMT.
  - Guidance Notes.
  - Policies, Training.

### Changes to legislation during 2023/2024

There have been no significant changes to primary legislation in the reporting period.

The SIRO continues to monitor and share where necessary, guidance and developments from the Council's DPO and the ICO.

The Council's DPO and SIRO are aware of the Procurement Act 2023 which amongst other key objectives will place transparency and integrity at the heart of the procurement system. As such the Council's DPO is engaging with the Procurement Officer to understand the implications on the Council. The focus will be to ensure that the Council enhances transparency whilst remaining compliant with Data Protection Legislation.





## Policy and Communications



**Giuseppina Valenza**  
Head of Policy and Communications

### Internal, external and corporate communications

The Council works hard to raise awareness and understanding among stakeholders about objectives, policies and services, as well as to improve and encourage proactive engagement between the Council and its stakeholders. In addition, the Council aims to consult widely and inclusively, listen to feedback and use it to inform policies.

The Council uses a range of channels to communicate with residents and businesses. These include the website, e-newsletters which provide the latest information about initiatives and services, the media and social media.

The Leader of the Council writes a monthly column for the CR3, CR6, RH8, RH9, TN16 series of magazines, as well as for the Tandridge Independent. The [Leader of the Council column](#) is published on the website.

There are a number of internal communication channels including monthly staff briefings and a quarterly Leader's briefing. After each EMT meeting there is an e-mail cascade which gives brief details about what has been discussed.

EMT takes it in turns to write a monthly blog, which is posted on the intranet. The current intranet, The Hub, is in the process of being replaced to develop a new intranet which will be more engaging and a key source of information for staff.

A staff newsletter, Hub news, is sent out every 4-6 weeks. Viva Engage is being used as an internal chat space for social purposes, as well as recognising and celebrating success. Bright Ideas is the staff suggestion scheme.

A Corporate Induction has been introduced for new starters. New staff are invited to an informal meeting with the Chief Executive and representatives from EMT and encouraged to provide feedback and ask questions.

Staff Awards were held last year to celebrate the great work of staff and to thank them.

### One Team

As part of the work to improve the culture of the organisation and working relationships, a One Team approach has been developed. A group of staff from all levels in the organisation worked on small projects to make improvements and respond to requests from staff. Work is ongoing to embed this approach.

The One Team vision is:

- A positive One Team mindset across officers and councillors.
- Aligned values and behaviours that demonstrate this mindset.
- Collaborative and effective working routines and communication.
- Leadership consistency and support at all levels within the Council.
- An enjoyable, supportive, trusting and happy environment to work.
- A progressive and evolving culture of embracing change.

## Key Officer Forum

The Key Officer Forum, which meets every two months, has strengthened relationships between senior and middle management. This group, which is made up of EMT and managers and team leaders, was set up about 18 months ago with the aim of:

- Improving engagement and two-way communication with managers and team leaders.
- Ensuring a consistent management approach and messaging to staff.
- Creating opportunities for managers to contribute to the transformation programme and corporate working.

This group has been successful in bringing Officers from different teams together and setting up cross service project groups.

## Corporate performance

Over the last few years, the Council has worked hard to improve its corporate governance.

A new Corporate Plan has been adopted which sets out new priorities and objectives for the Council for the next four years. The new plan has been developed in consultation with residents, local businesses, councillors, staff and other partners and marks the start of a more strategic, resource focused and partnership focused approach.

Key performance indicators have been reviewed and revised. Each service has performance indicators which are reported to EMT and the relevant service committee, as well as to Audit and Scrutiny. EMT also reviews these and operational performance indicators on a regular basis.

A master list of the Council's strategies, policies and plans has been developed to ensure these are up to date and available on the [website](#) where appropriate.

In addition, work has taken place to improve the approach to implementing and monitoring audit actions, as well as strengthening the complaints policy and response.

A [residents' survey](#) is carried out every two years, while other consultations are carried out as required.

## Project management

The Council's approach to project management has been revised in the last 18 months to provide greater oversight of projects underway and to ensure the correct processes are followed before projects start.

The Project Management Handbook was updated to make it simpler and easy to follow and a series of templates introduced to support the delivery of projects.

Details of key projects are shared with staff to ensure they are aware of the work taking place across the Council.

## Risk management

As part of our improvements to corporate governance, a new [Risk Management Strategy](#) was approved earlier this year. Training related to the strategy was provided to around 60 officers with responsibility for risk at different levels in the organisation and also to councillors.

Corporate and Policy Committee risk registers are reviewed by EMT on a regular basis and reported to the relevant committees quarterly. Departmental risk registers have been reintroduced.

There is a clear escalation of risks from projects and operational risks to the committee risk registers.

The new approach to risk management needs to be fully embedded across the organisation, but good progress has been made.

## Climate change

A review of climate change work has been undertaken and a new approach developed to draw up a practical, deliverable strategy and action plan, which will need to reflect the Council's resources (staffing and financial) and ability to deliver.

The draft strategy and action plan has been discussed and shaped by a councillor working group and recommended for approval to the Strategy and Resources Committee in September 2024.

An internal working group has also been set up to co-ordinate the work the Council is doing in this area.

## Economic development

The approach to economic development has been strengthened. The Council has excellent working relationships with the two Business Improvement Districts in Oxted and Caterham, as well as the Lingfield Chamber of Commerce.

A number of business events have been held to provide information, support and networking opportunities to businesses. More are planned.

The Council is holding its first business awards in October 2024. There has been overwhelming support and interest from the business community in the awards.

The Council was awarded £400,000 from the Rural Prosperity Fund to support more rural businesses. The fund is almost fully allocated ahead of the 2025 deadline.

A joint working arrangement for economic development is in place with Epsom & Ewell, Mole Valley and Reigate & Banstead Councils, to explore the potential for aligning economic development activities more formally in East Surrey to better enable the area to fulfil its growth potential. A joint action plan has been drawn up.

In addition, the Council is working with Business Surrey, which has taken over some of the responsibilities of the Local Enterprise Partnership.



## Operations/Environment



**Simon Mander**  
Head of Environment

In 2023/2024 a major procurement exercise is being delivered for the grounds maintenance on the Council's open spaces. The exercise has involved carrying out an options appraisal to understand the different procurement options available, and a request to commence the procurement exercise was agreed by the [Community Services Committee at its meeting on 19th September 2023](#).

The procurement is being run in compliance with procurement legislation. The services of an external technical consultant have been procured to help with delivering the procurement. External legal advice has been sought on the contract drafting.

As part of the above, the current grounds maintenance contract had to be extended and in addition the arboricultural contract had to be extended. Both extensions were approved by the Corporate Procurement Board, and extension contracts have been put in place.

In 2023/2024 and to date there have been no reportable RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) incidents to the Health and Safety Executive.

The focus in 2024/2025 is to implement the recommendations of the external Health and Safety audit including:

- Producing a Health and Safety strategic plan.
- Ensuring that the Council has in place arrangements for delivering the "competent person role". Budgets have been identified to recruit a permanent Health and Safety Officer as an interim measure specialised consultancy advice will be sourced.
- Reviewing and updating Risk Assessments and creating a central repository for them.

The performance of the Recycling and Waste Contract, the Council's largest single contract, is still good with the major key performance indicators being adhered to by the contractor, Biffa PLC.

In 2024/2025 the focus will continue on compliance with the Contract Standing Orders in the Council's Constitution. A marked improvement in this regard since 2022/2023, has been achieved.

## Future Tandridge Programme (FTP)



**Ricky Fuller**

Transformation Programme Director

### Delivery of Savings and focus on front line services

Major aims of the FTP, since it began in 2021/2022, have been to:

- achieve savings equivalent to 15% of the Council's net budget
- direct a higher proportion of the budget to front line services (front line services are those which are provided directly to residents)
- deliver a smaller directly employed workforce.

The programme has actually delivered:

- savings equivalent to c25% of the net budget (£3.2m on a net budget of £12.8m in 2024/2025)
- an increase in spend on front line services from 50% to 55%, with movements in net Committee budgets as follows:
  - Communities and Housing Committees: increased by 6%.
  - Planning Committee: increased by 52%.
  - Strategy and Resources Committee: reduced by 13%.
- a reduction in the proportion of Council net budget spent on staff directly employed by the Council from 77% in 2021/2022 (£8.749k) to 69% in 2024/2025 (£8,888k). Over the same period, the number of posts (full time equivalents) has reduced by c5% across the Council as a whole.

### Priorities in 2024/2025 and beyond

A realistic forecast going forward is that the Council will need to save a minimum of an additional £2m over 2 years (2025 to 2027), the equivalent of another c15% of the Council's net budget.

In many service areas it is becoming increasingly challenging to reduce costs further below a core de-minimis level needed to continue to provide support across the range of services the Council provides. As such the focus needs to be on finding ways to increase productivity going forward.

Within the overall net budget, some services are "statutory" (ie the Council is legally required to deliver them) and some are "discretionary" (ie they are provided by the Council in pursuit of its wider objectives and/or in support of delivering statutory services).

Savings can of course continue to be made in statutory areas, but it is evident that there are substantial pressures already in services such as Planning, Waste and Housing, and discretionary areas will need to come under very close scrutiny.

The Council will face tough choices going forward over which discretionary services it can afford to continue to deliver.

### Programme Delivery

The FTP provides the Council's approach to tackling these challenges. The overall objective is to accelerate and energise the Council's approach to becoming a modern, business-like, digital and customer centric Council, and to deliver the productivity improvement and cost savings required.

Delivery will be through cross cutting themes:

- Talent attraction, development and management.
- Digital Ways of Working - improving the customer experience.
- Staff productivity - ways of working.
- Modernising and improving Services - focused on Planning, Waste and Operations.

An aligned savings plan will be developed to deliver the necessary £2m of savings.

FTP2 is a key programme for the Council and its development and delivery is being overseen by the Chief Executive, working with the Transformation Programme Director and other senior officers from the Council.

A Member Reference Group and Senior Officers from within the Council continues to monitor progress and provide guidance on priority areas going forward.

The governance of FTP and savings delivery has been assessed as providing 'substantial assurance' in two successive internal audit reports, the highest assurance level provided by auditors. Work will continue to ensure that governance remains robust and proportionate.

The most recent report is available on our [website](#).

As part of the governance, programme and project level risks are recorded in a risk register. Monthly meetings are held with the EMT stakeholders to review progress and discuss and agree mitigating actions against risks to delivery.



## Building Control



**Mark Simpson**  
Head of Building Control

The Building Control function at the Council is performed by the Southern Building Control Partnership (SBCP). The Partnership has been formed through the signing of an Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) between the Councils of Tandridge, Mole Valley and Reigate & Banstead, in 2017. Tandridge is the Host Authority in terms of the IAA.

Governance of SBCP takes place through Joint Partnership Board meetings which take place three times a year.

### **Changes to the regulatory environment that require(d) improvements to controls or governance within the service.**

Due to the Grenfell Tower fire and the subsequent Dame Judith Hackitt report, there have been far-reaching changes to the Building Regulations.

The Building Regulations changed on 1 October 2023, along with the implementation of the Building Safety Act 2022. Any building work that requires Building Regulations will now need to include the new Duty Holder Regime by law.

The Changes to Building Control procedures from 1 October 2023 include:

- New building control regime for Higher Risk Buildings (HRBs).
- Changes to the Building Control regime for non-HRBs.

- Changes to the Building Regulations for non-standard construction methods.
- Notification of duty holders.
- Notice before starting work and further notice once work has commenced.
- Compliance declaration.

These changes have required the Partnership to review its controls and governance measures, and the following actions are identified for 2024/2025:

- Legislation changes.
- Retention and recruitment of staff.
- Future-proofing the Partnership by employing trainees and suitably developing their competencies.
- IT developments to enable the necessary information, as legally required, within the [Operational Standards Rules for Building Control Bodies](#).
- Registered Building Inspector competencies (required to re-register every 4 years).
- Actioning items identified in audits.

## Communities



**Julie Porter**  
Head of Communities

The Council has an overarching Corporate Business Continuity Plan and an Emergency Plan which provides critical information to enable the Council to continue operating during an unplanned significant event, including loss of premises, IT/telecommunications systems and utilities, national lockdown (e.g. pandemic) and major travel disruption. The plan relates to events that impact all or most of the Council's operations and that require immediate action. Measures to respond to other identified and predictable business risks (such as significant loss of income or key staff) are covered elsewhere, including within our risk registers and individual project plans.

In addition, the Council has Emergency plans which set out the response arrangements for dealing with major incidents such as natural disasters i.e flooding and storms or other events such as major traffic accidents, large fires or acts of terrorism.

The Council's Emergency Planning and Resilience Specialist oversees and monitors the Council's range of business continuity plans including the Corporate Business Continuity Plan and all the emergency plans. All Service areas have recently drafted new Business Impact Assessments. The document helps the service prioritise the needs and identify critical activities, it also highlights the impact to the council if these functions were not carried out. These documents are reviewed annually by the Heads of service and a record of the review is kept by the Emergency Planning Specialist. All service areas will be completing new Service level plans in 2024.

The Tandridge District's Safety Advisory Group (SAG) advises on safety aspects for public events planned to take place in the District. The group consists of Council Officers and the emergency services and meets regularly to discuss large scale public events (those over 1000 participants) to be held in our parks and open spaces.

Events considered by the SAG would include:

- Agricultural shows.
- Marathons.
- Open air music festivals or concerts.
- Processions.
- Sporting events.
- Trade shows.

The role of the SAG is to provide advice and guidance to event organisers and to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities. The notes of the meeting are shared with all participants and the organisers of the event. The group does not have any decision making powers, it can only share best practice and advice. The Emergency Planning Specialist chairs the Safety Advisory Group.

### Community Safety

The Tandridge Community Safety Partnership (CSP) has a statutory responsibility for responsible bodies to identify local community safety needs and work together to address them. The CSP provides strategic leadership and co-ordination between partners with the overall aim of improving well-being in the District. It specifically discharges the statutory responsibilities of the District's Community safety partnership including acting jointly to seek to reduce crime and disorder in the District.

An annual presentation is given to the Community Services Committee in Partnership with Surrey Police. A link to the 13th June 2024 Minutes of this meeting can be found on [our website](#).



The Community Safety and Partnership Specialist chairs the CSP and oversees the priorities. The Priorities for 2024/2025 are as follows;

- Protecting the vulnerable from harm.
- Anti-Social Behaviour.
- Strengthening relationships with communities and partners.
- Serious Organised Crime and Prevent.

### **Wellbeing Prescription**

The Wellbeing Prescription team has been supporting both Tandridge and Reigate and Banstead residents since 2015. The team is commissioned by NHS Surrey Heartlands ICS to support residents in East Surrey to improve their health and Wellbeing. The Strategy & Resources Committee approved a one-year extension to the current contract till March 2025. A link to the 30th November 2023 Strategy and Resources Committee can be found [on our website](#).

A new service will be launched in 2025 to align East Surrey Social prescribing services at a more local level through integrated neighbourhoods. The aim is for residents to access the care and support they need in local neighbourhoods, where community-based activities and resources are accessible and can be tailored to the specific needs in each community. A digital platform will automate and streamline the social prescribing referral process and make it easier for healthcare providers to find and connect patients with non-clinical community resources to support their health and wellbeing. A new provider will be overseeing this contract from April 2025.

### **Equality And Diversity**

Processes are in place to enable the Council to meet its legal duties under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), and the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011. The Council recognises its statutory duties and recognises the rule of law, including that the PSED is non-delegable, so it always remains the responsibility of the Council.

2023/2024's focus has been on updating the policy to include a focus on Sexual Harassment. Focus has also been on setting [three equality objectives for the Council for 2023/2026](#).

In November 2023 all members of EMT attended an equalities training session. The training included the practical use of our equality Impact assessment forms, a review of our policies and procedures and discussions around Nuro divergence in the workplace.

An action plan is being drafted with the intention to track progress against these objectives. This will be monitored quarterly through the EMT meetings.

### **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding is recognised as a key responsibility of the Council. The [Council's Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy](#) sets out how the Council will meet its obligations to safeguard children and adults at risk and applies to Officers, Councillors, agency workers, volunteers and contractors employed by the Council or working on behalf of the Council.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are reviewed annually, and self-assessments are required to be completed for both the Surrey Safeguarding Adults Board and Children's Board each year.

All new Officers and Councillors are required to complete online training modules through a software package known as Workrite. Refresher training is required through this module every 3 years. Adherence to this training is monitored through the Safeguarding working group which meets quarterly. A report is generated from the Workrite system and line managers are advised of any staff who have outstanding training to complete.

In addition lunchtime webinars have been offered to all Officers to attend on the following topics: Domestic Abuse, Modern Day Slavery and frauds and scams. Between 20-30 Officers attended each session.

## Housing



**James Devonshire**  
Head of Housing

### Housing Landlord Service

Over the past 18 months, several key pieces of legislation have been introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing. Two key pieces of legislation are the Building Safety Act 2023 and the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023.

### The Building Safety Act 2023

The Building Safety Act has introduced reforms to give residents and homeowners more rights, powers, and protections – so homes across the country are safer.

The Act created three new bodies to provide effective oversight of the new regime: the Building Safety Regulator, the National Regulator of Construction Products and the New Homes Ombudsman.

With a focus on fire and other safety matters, the Act focuses heavily on the safety of high-rise blocks or those with a height of more than 11 meters. While the Council does not have any high-rise blocks within its housing stock, the same principles to block management and maintenance have been adopted.

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans ('PEEPs') have been adopted for vulnerable residents, a scheme information box has been provided with relevant information such as PEEPs, floor plans and relevant access and contact information. Fire Risk Assessments are undertaken on a rolling programme with a process in place to undertake any remedial work necessary. Officers have undertaken additional training to ensure compliance with the Act where necessary.

### The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

There are several changes that were introduced through the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 which have impacted on the Council as a landlord of council housing, including the Housing Ombudsman's New Complaint Handling Code and requiring an individual to lead the oversight of consumer regulation and to drive the housing safety agenda. Actions have already been undertaken, such as Officers identifying the requirements of the Act and working through an action plan. Policies are under review and changes are being drafted for the updates to the Complaints Handling Code. Tenant Satisfaction Measure ('TSM') surveys are being analysed to inform priority areas of improvement for 2024/2025.

The Regulator of Social Housing will conduct an inspection of all registered providers of social housing who have a stock holding of more than 1000 units over the next 4 years. Learning from inspections conducted in quarter one of 2024/2025 are now available for guidance purposes and feedback sessions have been provided by the Regulator. All inspection results will be published by the Regulator once the inspection process has been finalised.

These new regulations impact every team within the Housing Landlord Service creating additional pressure for frontline officers to keep up with the demand of managing and maintaining the Council's Housing stock. As a result, additional roles have been introduced following a restructure of the Housing Services team in 2023. This, together with the need to undertake additional inspections, surveys and works is likely to place financial pressure on the Housing Revenue Account.

### Internal Audit Findings

AA recent internal audit has found shortcomings with the way in which health and safety compliance measures are monitored throughout the Council's property assets. As a result, an action plan is currently being progressed to resolve these issues as quickly as possible. Actions within this plan include the development of a corporate asset management tool, procurement of contracts and adoption of a corporate contract management approach. Recruitment to roles such as a specialist compliance surveyor and a damp and mould surveyor is also underway. Recruitment across the housing sector has, however, become

more challenging especially within the property services and maintenance areas. This is due to increased demand for specialist roles and the sharp increase in costs associated with the recruitment of such staff.

### **The Housing Revenue Account ('HRA') Business Plan**

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

The HRA Business Plan was fully reviewed in 2023/2024 to ensure a balanced HRA financial plan for the next 30 years and to ensure there are sufficient HRA funds to support the Council's Housebuilding and Acquisitions Programme as well as to reflect new requirements placed on social housing providers under the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, for example, the decent homes standard and building regulations and environmental improvements like decarbonisation of the Council's housing stock as well as compliance with revised consumer standards and a new inspection regime.

### **Statutory Housing Services**

Pressures continue to grow for the statutory housing service. High levels of homelessness together with reduced delivery of affordable accommodation throughout the District has resulted in an increase in the use of bed and breakfasts and other forms of temporary accommodation. Numbers on the Council's housing register also continue to grow as a result of these issues.

The Council has a fraud agreement in place with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council. All new applications for housing are reviewed by the fraud service.

### **Disabled Facilities Grant**

Applications and occupational therapist referrals continue to increase for grants and funding via the Disabled Facilities Grant. The Council procured a new contract which commenced early in 2024.

### **Service Plan**

The following service plan objectives have been set for the Housing Department in accordance with the objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan:

- Reduce homelessness in the District.
- Improve private housing standards.
- Continue to deliver the Resident Engagement strategy.
- Minimise arrears and evictions due to impacts of welfare reform and cost of living crisis.
- Maximise income to the HRA by improving Leasehold Management expenses processes.
- Ensure compliance with the RSH compliance measures and new codes of conduct.
- Continue to build on and review the structure implemented across housing in 2023/2024.
- Review Void and repairs management process.
- Continue to deliver the Homes for Ukraine and Afghan Resettlement schemes.
- Procurement of various contracts including asbestos, electrical, voids and cleaning.
- Development of new strategies - homelessness, housing, empty properties and de-carbonisation.

### **Risk Assessment**

- Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (fraudulent contractors) – Fraud from bogus decarbonisation companies is rising. The Council has a contract in place with a sector-wide consultancy firm to oversee and project manage the decarbonisation plan. This consultancy ensures that correct and compliant procurement processes are followed, provides monthly reports to MHCLG on grant spend and works with the RBBC fraud service to monitor and review risks.
- Fraudulent Right to Buy ('RTB') Applications – all new applications for RTBs are reviewed by the RBBC fraud service with regular reports provided on performance across all services provided.

## Conclusion

2023/2024 has been another challenging year, with the continued rise in the cost of living alongside the long-term effects of the pandemic having a profound effect. The Council has continued to support its most vulnerable residents during challenging times and worked tirelessly to tackle inequality, though the cost of living crisis also means that people will need more from the Council at a time when it expects future funding from central government to decline.

In response, the Council has an updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy in which it further committed to securing a sustainable balanced position across the medium term, and ensured its budget can support delivery of Council priorities and address the significant financial challenges facing it.

Whilst some progress has been made as evidenced in the EMT individual statements, significant challenges remain, including issues around service performance and budget management in some areas. The Council recognises that good governance requires a culture of continuous improvement and challenge, and Officers continue to seek improvement.

There are action plans in place to address any issues and regularly report progress via the EMT and relevant Committees.

The opinion of the Director of Resources (s151 Officer) is that the Council continues to operate robust internal controls and good public financial management. Further action is required to manage financial pressures and develop strategies to meet the long-term financial challenges that face the Council. There has been no need for the s151 Officer to exercise their statutory escalatory powers. The Council complies with its financial regulations and procedures together with relevant codes of practice and guidance.

It is the opinion of the Monitoring Officer, that the Council has complied with its Constitution and its corporate governance arrangements are sound.





# **Annual Governance Statement**

## 2023-2024

Tandridge District Council  
Council Offices, 8 Station Road East, Oxted, Surrey RH8 0BT.  
[customerservices@tandridge.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@tandridge.gov.uk)  
[www.tandridge.gov.uk](http://www.tandridge.gov.uk)