



ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

2021-22



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FOREWORD

The Covid-19 pandemic has continued to dominate 2021-22. At the start of the year, the Government published its roadmap and slowly the country started to open-up, only to be hit by the infectious Omicron variant in Autumn and Winter.

The Council's arrangements, including support for the vaccination programme, have stood up well and, in November, the Audit Committee considered a review of the corporate governance and assurance arrangements in place for the Covid-19 response. The report concluded that the Council has shown considerable adaptability in its response to the pandemic whilst retaining a focus on proportionate governance and assurance.

There will be a national inquiry into the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The draft terms of reference for the inquiry have recently been published with the aims of examining the Covid-19 response and the impact of the pandemic, producing a factual narrative account and identifying the lessons to be learnt to inform the UK's preparations for future pandemics. It is expected that this inquiry will commence in 2023.

Responding to Covid-19 has had a knock-on effect on other work. This includes rescheduling planned pipeline work, such as technology projects, the delayed implementation of transformation activity and the reprioritisation of actions and extensions of deadlines, including those from audit reports and the Annual Governance Statement. There remain areas where further work is required including the development of the Council's People Strategy and the transition to a business-as-usual way of working for the Oracle Fusion Enterprise Resource system.

Despite this impact, many recommendations from the 2020-21 AGS have been adopted and embedded as ongoing activity. As such, these are covered in the assurance statements in this document.

The Council has continued its business with elections to for the new Council taking place in May 2021. This was followed by an extensive induction for new and returning councillors and the development of a new Corporate Strategy 2022-26 with new 4-year objectives, including a renewed focus on value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer. These objectives now form the basis for the Council's Annual Plan which sits alongside the AGS as a key delivery document of the Council.

This year's Annual Governance Statement conveys the ongoing efforts of staff and councillors to comply with and uphold the standards for public services at a time of increasing uncertainty around financial sustainability. The Action Plan sets out the additional actions we will be taking alongside our ongoing stewardship of the authority and underlines the importance of good judgement in balancing governance, with the investment in and delivery of services for the people of Suffolk.



CHRIS BALLY
Deputy Chief Executive,
Suffolk County Council



APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

We have been advised on the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by the Audit Committee, and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.

To the best of our knowledge, the governance arrangements as defined within the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance have continued to operate effectively.

Whilst Covid-19 will undoubtedly have continued to impact on governance, risk, and the internal control environment during 2021-22, the Annual Governance Statement shows that our high standards have been maintained and no significant issues are reported.

Specific opportunities for improvement in governance and internal controls are detailed within the action plan and we propose, over the coming year, to take steps to address these opportunities to further enhance our governance arrangements.

We are satisfied that these actions will deliver, over appropriate timescales, the improvements necessary and these will continue to be monitored, evaluated, and reported on as part of our next annual review.



COUNCILLOR MATTHEW HICKS

Leader of Suffolk County Council



NICOLA BEACH

Chief Executive,
Suffolk County Council



SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

Suffolk County Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised. It is also responsible for ensuring that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, and effectively.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting proportionate and appropriate arrangements for the governance of its affairs in place and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Council has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) / SOLACE (the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) Framework: 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (2016 Edition)'.

This document explains how the Council has complied with the code and meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control.

The governance arrangements over the Council's wholly owned companies: Vertas, Concertus Property & Design Consultants (Concertus), and Opus People Solutions (Opus), are incorporated within this Annual Governance Statement.

WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?

Good governance is about: "Achieving the intended outcomes while acting in the public interest at all times"

Governance is about how the Council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest, and accountable manner.

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

The Council's governance framework aims to ensure that in conducting its business it:

- operates in a lawful, open, inclusive, and honest manner.
- makes sure public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and spent wisely.
- has effective arrangements in place to manage risk.
- meets the needs of Suffolk communities.
- secures continuous improvements in the way it operates.





THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The governance framework includes a set of legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes which the Council follows:

Principles of corporate governance

Principle A: Integrity and Values

- Staying true to our strong ethical standards of conduct
- Respecting the rule of law
- Creating a culture where statutory officers and other key post holders are able to fulfil their responsibilities
- Ensuring fraud, corruption and abuse of position are dealt with effectively
- Ensuring a safe environment to raise concerns and learning from our mistakes

Principle B: Openness and Engagement

- Keeping relevant information open to the public and continuing their involvement
- Consultation feedback from the public is used to support service and budget decisions
- Providing clear rationale for decision making – being explicit about risk, impact and benefits
- Having effective scrutiny to constructively challenge what we do and decisions made

Principle C: Defining Outcomes

- Having a clear vision and strategy setting out our intended outcome for citizens and service users
- Balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies and plans when taking decisions about service provision

Principle D: Optimising the Achievement of the intended Outcomes

- Ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided
- Ensuring arrangements are flexible so that mechanisms for delivering services can be adapted in changing circumstances
- Monitoring key performance indicators
- Ensuring the achievement of 'Social Value' through service planning and commissioning

Principle E: Capability

- Clear roles and responsibilities for Council leadership
- Maintaining a development programme that allows Councillors and officers to gain the skills and knowledge they need to perform well in their roles
- Evaluating Councillor and officers' performance, compliments and compliments to enable results (outcomes) to be measured and enable learning

Principle F: Managing Risk and Performance

- Ensuring that effective risk management and performance systems are in place, and that these are integrated in our business systems / service units
- Having well developed assurance arrangements in place – including any commercial activities
- Having an effective Audit Committee
- Effective counter-fraud arrangements in place

Principle G: Transparency and Accountability

- Having rigorous and transparent decision making processes in place
- Maintaining an effective scrutiny process
- Publishing up to date and good quality information on our activities and decisions
- Maintaining an effective internal and external audit function

This framework is used to examine the services being provided and whether they are satisfying the objectives set. The governance framework has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31 March 2022 and up to the date of approval of the annual report and statement of accounts.

HOW THE COUNCIL WORKS

1. Elected Councillors set the Council's strategic leadership by developing and keeping under review the corporate priorities of the Council. The priorities give a clear direction for what is important politically and how that will drive the work of Council services every day.

The priorities for 2021/22 were:

- I. **Living with Covid-19 and Suffolk's Recovery** – how the Council redesigns and transforms the way it works to deliver public services in response to Covid-19.
- II. **Inclusive Growth** – Improving Suffolk's economic productivity, levels of educational attainment and building more homes to benefit local people.
- III. **Health, Care & Wellbeing** – Caring for Suffolk's vulnerable residents, enabling everyone to live long, healthy and fulfilling lives.
- IV. **Efficient & Effective Public Services** - Changing the way the Council operates to meet customers' needs and balance the budget despite diminishing resources, increasing demand, and changing customer expectations.

2. There is an established integrated planning process which ensures Council services are delivered in accordance with the Council's priorities and represents the best use of resources (the 2021-22 Business Plan was approved at the meeting of the County Council, alongside the budget, in February 2021).
3. Performance is measured against corporate objectives.
4. There is a written Constitution in place which specifies the roles and responsibilities of the executive, non-executive, scrutiny, and officer functions, setting clear delegation arrangements and protocols for effective communication.
5. Codes of Conduct have been developed which define the standards of behaviour for Councillors and employees.
6. The Constitution, Schemes of Delegation to members and officers, Financial Procedure Rules and other supporting procedures clearly define how decisions are taken and highlight the processes and controls required to manage risks, with appropriate review procedures.



HOW THE COUNCIL WORKS

- 7. The Audit Committee promotes and maintains high standards in relation to the operation of the Council’s Code of Corporate Governance ensuring that the Council operates within the law, in accordance with the Council’s internal procedures, and follows the framework and guidance issued by CIPFA. The Committee is also responsible for monitoring the risk management framework and control environment to ensure the Council’s financial and non-financial performance is properly monitored.
- 8. Statutory officers support and monitor the Council’s governance arrangements, ensuring expenditure is lawful and the Council continues to comply with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies, and procedures.
- 9. There are arrangements for whistleblowing and for receiving and investigating complaints from the public, supporting the measurement of the quality of services for users.
- 10. The Council seeks to keep communities informed, giving local people the opportunity to get involved in the decision-making process, promoting local democracy, supporting and shaping places and local communities.





KEY ROLES

The key roles of those responsible for developing and maintaining the Governance Framework are:

<p>The Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Approves the Business Plan ■ Approves the Constitution (including the Financial Regulations) ■ Approves key policies and budgetary framework.
<p>Cabinet</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The main decision-making body of the Council ■ Made up of the Leader of the Council and a number of Cabinet members with responsibility for different portfolios.
<p>Audit Committee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provides independent assurance to the Council on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance arrangements, risk management framework and internal control environment. ■ Promotes high standards of Member conduct and approves the Annual Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement.
<p>Scrutiny Committees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Support and challenge the Council in carrying out its responsibilities.
<p>Corporate Leadership Team</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Chief Executive has overall accountability for the governance framework. ■ Implements the policy and budgetary framework set by the Council and provides advice to Cabinet and the Council on the development of future policy and budgetary issues and oversees the implementation of Council policy. ■ Accountability for developing and maintaining the Council's governance and risk framework.
<p>Chief Finance Officer (s151)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Leads and directs the financial strategy of the Council and ensures the Council controls and manages its money well, being suitably qualified and experienced, and ensures the Finance Team is fit for purpose. ■ Accountability for developing and maintaining the Council's internal control and counter-fraud framework. ■ Contributes to the effective corporate management and governance of the Council.
<p>Monitoring Officer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advises the Council on ethical issues, standards, and powers to ensure the Council operates within the law and statutory Codes of Practice. ■ Overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of the Whistleblowing Policy and contributes to the effective corporate management and governance of the Council.



KEY ROLES

The key roles of those responsible for developing and maintaining the Governance Framework are:

Internal Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Provides independent assurance and opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk management and control framework.■ Delivers an annual programme of risk-based audit activity, including counter-fraud and investigation activity.■ Makes recommendations for improvements in the management of risk.
External Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Audits / reviews and 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).
Directors & Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Responsible for developing, maintaining, and implementing the Council's governance, risk, and control framework.■ Contribute to the effective corporate management and governance of the Council.



REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

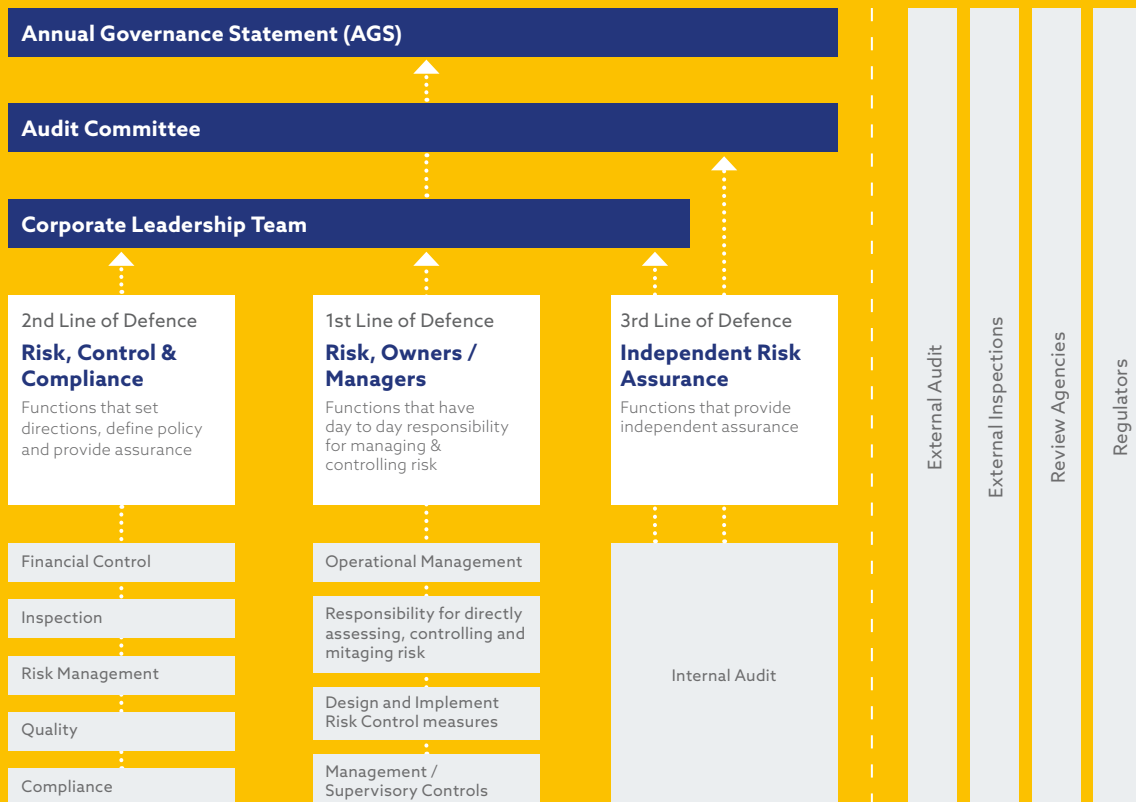
In preparing the Annual Governance Statement the Council has:

- reviewed the Council’s existing governance arrangements against the revised CIPFA / SOLACE ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government framework - 2016 Edition’ good practice guidance.
- reviewed the Council’s Local Code of Corporate Governance to ensure it reflects this guidance, including the revised seven principles of good governance and associated required actions and behaviours taken by the Council that demonstrate good governance.

- assessed the effectiveness of the Council’s governance arrangements against the revised Local Code of Corporate Governance.
- obtained assurance statements from officers relating to their areas of responsibility, including actions from the 2020-21 Annual Governance Statement.

The review of effectiveness is informed by the three lines of defence (i.e., the relationship between managers responsible for the operational delivery; accountable managers who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment; the Head of Internal Audit’s independent risk assurance role; and inspections made by external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates).

This is demonstrated here:










The roles and responsibilities are applied in a pragmatic real-world manner. In reality a significant amount of policy, associated guidance, training and tools are provided at second line with a proportionate risk-based application of assurance and compliance activity. Internal Audit use a risk-based methodology to determine their annual programme to support the application of the governance model within the organisation. This allows the second and third lines of defence to put emphasis in the right place and work effectively and efficiently to help management achieve organisational objectives through delivery, support and challenge.



GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK ASSURANCE

The key sources of assurance that inform this review and where it is obtained from are outlined below

WHERE DO WE NEED ASSURANCE?	WHERE CAN / DO WE GET ASSURANCE FROM?
 Compliance	 Constitution
 Democratic Engagement & Public Accountability	 Audit Committee, Council Executive & Scrutiny
 Management of Risk	 Internal & External Audit
 Financial Management	 Independent & External Sources
 Members & Officers Roles & Responsibilities	 Financial Strategy
 Standards of Conduct & Behaviour	 Complaints System, Counter Fraud & Whistle Blowing
 Action Plan Approved & Reported on	 HR Policies & Codes of Conduct
 Effectiveness of Internal Controls	 Risk Management Strategy & Framework
 Services Delivered	 Performance Management System

GOVERNANCE



TIM RYDER
Monitoring Officer

The Council has a Constitution made under Section 37 of the Local Government Act 2000. Its purpose is to enable the Council to set a strategic vision for the provision of local public services and to act as champion for Suffolk. The Constitution supports development of the Council's capacity and the capability of the individuals within it, and ensures that decisions are taken whilst respecting the rule of law. Through openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement, local people have every opportunity to know how decisions are taken and how to influence those decisions. The Council consults on major decisions, agendas and papers for meetings are published, Council and Cabinet meetings are webcast, and the public can participate in such meetings by asking questions or raising petitions.

The legislation and regulations published by Government which allowed the Council to hold remote meetings lapsed in May 2021. With elections being held in May 2021, remote meetings of Council ceased in March 2021 and resumed in person with the AGM held on 27 May 2021 at an external venue that allowed for social distancing and other Covid-secure measures. Subsequently, Council, Cabinet and other committees normally met in the King Edmund Chamber, with appropriate measures in place and numbers in attendance kept to a minimum.

Where necessary, contributors to meetings have been able to join remotely if they wished, but the decision makers have all been in the room as required by legislation.

Elections for the County Council took place in May 2021. A comprehensive induction programme was arranged for all Councillors, whether returning or new to the authority. This incorporated the Council's governance arrangements including decision making, the Council's values, the Code of Conduct, and sessions relating to equality and inclusion, safeguarding, and health and safety. Specific training was provided to cabinet members, chairmen of committees and committee members to ensure they had a full understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and how these contribute to the governance of the Council. Sessions were held on-line and repeated to allow as many councillors as possible to attend.

In March 2022, Council agreed to adopt the Model Code of Conduct prepared by the Local Government Association from May 2022. The Model Code was also adopted by the borough and district councils in Suffolk, to maintain the benefits of having one Code for the County. Training sessions for all councillors will take place from May 2022.

The Audit Committee considered the Annual Standards Report in March 2022. During 2021-22, there were 13 complaints about seven incidents that resulted in Code of Conduct complaints against Councillors. The Monitoring Officer concluded that two of these instances had resulted in a breach of the Code of Conduct with a local resolution. Counting the multiple complaints received regarding a former councillor in 2020-21 as one complaint, there have been a total of 63 complaints since the current arrangements prescribed by the Localism Act 2011 were introduced in July 2012.



GOVERNANCE cont...

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) Annual Review Letter for the year ending 31 March 2021 was discussed at Audit Committee in September 2021. Of the 94 decisions made by the LGSCO during the reporting period of the Annual Review, 30 (32%) were forwarded for investigation of which 20 (67%) were upheld compared to 77% last year. The remaining ten complaints were not upheld.

The Council has continued to demonstrate sound decision making throughout the pandemic, and this has continued following the election of the new Council in May 2021. This is a testimony to the robust governance arrangements that the Council has in place. It is the opinion of the Monitoring Officer that the Council has complied with its Constitution and its corporate governance arrangements are sound.



VALUE FOR MONEY



LOUISE AYNSLEY
Chief Financial (s151) Officer

The statutory role of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in relation to financial administration and stewardship of the Council and their role in the organisation are both key to ensuring that financial discipline and strong public financial management is maintained.

The Council's 2021-22 budget, set in February 2021, was against the backdrop of unprecedented uncertainty as the country continued to respond to the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on society. The rapidly changing environment and the associated uncertainty this brings meant that budgeting and forecasting throughout the year has been challenging. Despite this, quarterly reporting to Cabinet on the Council's financial positioning has continued, including the reporting of Covid-19 spend and funding received.

The Government continued to provide significant additional funding of £58.6 million during 2021-22 (£14.8 million non-ringfenced and £43.8 million specific grants) to deal with the additional costs and loss of income, with a further £5.7 million to compensate for the adverse impact on Council Tax funding. Specific grants continue to be managed by the appropriate directorates in accordance with grant rules. Following the review of Covid grants management by Internal Audit, the grant control guidance has been updated and enhanced to reflect key requirements and responsibilities of lead officers.

During 2021-22, regular reporting to Government on forecast costs for the additional expenditure, and loss of income resulting from Covid-19 impact has continued. The Council has submitted eight returns with a final return due at the end of May 2022. The year's outturn position for the financial impact of Covid-19 shows £8.8 million additional expenditure and £1.3 million loss of income, net of specific grants.

The Council continues to enhance its work on the Capital Strategy and Capital Programme, ensuring accountability and visibility for all projects in the programme. A capital project pipeline has been developed over the past year to aid the Council in its resource allocation decisions, with work also ongoing to ensure a longer-term programme (10 years) is developed.

During the year, the Infrastructure Projects Delivery group undertook a review of how the Council are delivering major projects, with the outcomes and recommendations detailed in a presentation shared with key stakeholders. A number of recommendations were made and will be considered in all 'high risk' capital projects.

The Council has delivered an integrated system for HR & Payroll, Finance and Purchasing on one platform, Oracle Fusion. The governance for the system and the transition from implementation to ongoing development is overseen by the Oracle Fusion Steering Board. Internal Audit has conducted audit reviews on the various operations associated with the new Oracle Fusion system to determine the effectiveness of controls in these key operations.

Following the increase in Public Interest Reports which have highlighted evidence of failings in some local authorities and the introduction of the Financial Management Code, the Council's Chief Financial Officer has assessed the Council's current processes, procedures, and governance arrangements against the Code. This was reported to Audit Committee in January 2022.

VALUE FOR MONEY cont...

The Council's Budget Strategy is based on a recognition that, to continue to deliver the best possible services within available resources in 2022-23, it is essential for it to take a medium-term view of the Council's budget. This will require focussing on meeting the Council's Corporate Ambitions (as outlined in its Corporate Strategy for 2022-26) and associated Directorate Business Plans and rising to the challenge presented by an ongoing response to, and recovery from, Covid-19. Delivery of this Strategy will also require the Council to optimise the use of its resources by focussing both on completing the delivery of the Transformation Programmes launched in 2018, and on implementing further programmes from 2022.

A further key element of the Budget Strategy is having adequate reserves available to manage any unexpected changes to its spending and funding plans. This involves the Council assessing and, where possible, quantifying the financial risks it is facing. A core principle is that reserves should not be used to cover ongoing gaps between expenditure and funding and should be replenished as soon as practicable when used.

Continuing to follow this Strategy, the Council has been able to set a one-year budget for 2022-23, taking into consideration particularly challenging circumstances. These challenges include the ongoing response to Covid-19, inflation rising to levels not seen for many years, the one year 2022-23 Local Government Funding Settlement, expected reform in Local Government, and policy changes relating to Adult and Children's Social Care and Special Educational Needs & Disabilities.

The Council is in a robust position to face the financial challenges and uncertainty ahead based on its healthy reserve balances and a history of strong financial management. It recognises that these will both need to be maintained moving forwards enabling it to take effective mitigating actions in a timely manner should this be required.

The Council is constantly monitoring its long-term position using a model which currently goes to March 2026. The Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) projects an increasing budget gap from 2022-23, necessitating urgent action over the coming months to develop plans to ensure financial sustainability.

The opinion of the Chief Financial 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 re-course for the Chief Financial Officer to exercise her statutory powers and the Council complies with its financial regulations and procedures together with relevant codes of practice and guidance. The Finance Function continues to provide an effective and efficient service whilst enabling the Council to meet its priorities within a robust financial framework.





INTERNAL AUDIT



PETER FROST
Head of Internal Audit

Internal Audit is an independent and objective function with all audit work carried out in this capacity and in accordance with the Audit Charter, Code of Ethics and Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

The continued impact of Covid-19 has meant that work contributing to the 2021-22 annual Head of Internal Audit opinion has predominately been undertaken optimising technology and virtual platforms to share, monitor and observe operations to substantiate Internal Audit findings. The Head of Internal Audit is confident that the revised operating model has not compromised the quality of the Service's ability to complete assurance work throughout the year or the conclusion drawn.

Throughout 2021-22, front-line services have operated in an environment of increased risk and resource strain and, as such, access to, and evaluation of, specific service controls has not always been considered viable or practical during the year. This has also meant that the implementation of audit actions has, in some instances, needed to be delayed. As a result, Internal Audit has adapted, particularly in terms of designing and carrying out different styles of audit work and taking assurance from others. The Head of Internal Audit is happy that the work performed, and assurances gained, enables a robust opinion to be provided.

An Internal Audit review of the Council's compliance with the seven core principles of good governance, underpinned by detailed risk, assurance &

governance audits, has provided substantial assurance that there are sound governance arrangements in place.

92% of Internal Audit work completed during 2021-22 has yielded an acceptable level of assurance (substantial or reasonable) over the design and operation of the services, systems and processes audited. For those audit reviews that have presented significant concern, actions have been agreed to improve controls and are closely monitored until such a time they are addressed. Any outstanding weaknesses in the governance, risk and control framework will continue to be followed up by Internal Audit.

The Head of Internal Audit has performed his duties in accordance with CIPFA's guidance on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit.

The Head of Internal Audit is required to provide an independent opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk, and control framework and therefore the extent to which the Council can rely on it. In giving the audit opinion, it should be noted that assurance can never be absolute. The most that can be provided is a reasonable assurance that there are no major weaknesses in risk management, governance, and control processes.

Based on the findings of the managed audit and governance reviews carried out throughout 2021-22 and evidence from other assurance providers, and considering the current climate in which the Council is operating, it is the opinion of the Head of Internal Audit that the Authority's governance, risk and control environment provides reasonable assurance that the significant risks facing the Authority are addressed. Generally, risks are well managed, but some areas require the introduction or improvement of internal controls to ensure the achievement of objectives. The Head of Internal Audit does not consider there to be any areas of significant corporate concern.



COUNTER-FRAUD



CHRISTOS CONSTANTINOU
Counter Fraud Manager

The Corporate Leadership Team has committed to tackling fraud and corruption affecting the Council, aiming to adopt a culture in which all employees maintain a proactive attitude towards preventing fraud. The Council's Constitution states that the Chief Financial Officer is responsible for the development and maintenance of an anti-fraud and corruption policy, and that Directors are responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented within their directorates. Several policies that make up the Council's anti-fraud governance arrangements are in place and regularly reviewed.

The Council has in place a 2021-23 Counter-Fraud & Corruption Strategy and in line with best practice is based on the National Fighting Fraud & Corruption Locally Strategy for the 2020s. The Council's Strategy directs the work of the Counter-Fraud Service under four workstreams: Governance & Strategy; Fraud Awareness & Prevention; Proactive exercises; Investigations & Redress.

The Counter-Fraud Service has an annual action plan which is approved by the Audit Committee and carries out an annual review against the Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally checklist, and the Local Government Counter-Fraud Standards to ensure best practice is followed.

The 2021-22 action plan was delivered including compliance with all statutory requirements of the Cabinet Office's National Fraud Initiative exercise, the delivery of fraud awareness training, proactive exercises to spot fraud, and investigations carried

out in line with the Council's Fraud Response Plan. Blue Badge enforcement was launched in parts of Suffolk and plans are in place to roll this out further across Suffolk.

During the year, the Counter-Fraud Service received 27 new referrals of potential fraud / theft, with a third of these relating to social care. Due to the nature of investigations and timings of referrals, investigations can often be completed in a different financial year to the year the referral was received. In 2021-22, 28 investigations were completed from referrals received in the last three financial years. 11 investigations remain open as of 31st March 2022. In addition, 26 referrals of Blue Badge misuse were received with 2 cases still ongoing.

The Counter-Fraud Service successfully prosecuted the first direct payment fraud case in Suffolk showing that fraud against the public purse will not be tolerated and perpetrators will be held to account.

Covid-19 has not significantly impacted on the Council's fraud risks and this is being kept under constant review.





RISK MANAGEMENT & PERFORMANCE



PAUL EMENY

Performance & Risk Manager

Risk Management

The Council follows an 'Active Risk Management' approach to managing its risks, a flexible framework with a focus on actively identifying the likelihood of something happening, and its impact on the organisation delivering its priorities and services.

The Corporate Risk Register (CRR) and high-level risks are recorded on JCAD Core, industry standard software that records, monitors, and reports risks and mitigation actions in a structured and consistent way.

The Council undertakes an annual review of its high-level risks to assess their relevance and suitability and make recommendations to the relevant directorate and risk owner. The annual review is an opportunity to consider high-level risks at a cross-departmental level to moderate and assess appropriateness, balance and coverage for all significant issues facing the organisation and alignment to the Council's Annual Plan.

Throughout 2021-22 all high-level risks were regularly reported and reviewed by senior management teams (at both corporate and directorate level). The Corporate Risk Register is reported to the Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet Members on a quarterly basis.

All high-level risks were reviewed in response to the potential impact of Covid-19.

The Audit Committee has received two reports on risk management during 2021-22 at six-month intervals. One report provides an oversight of the Council's approach to risk management which includes sight of

the Council's corporate risks and how these are being mitigated. The second report is focused purely on the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

Corporate Performance

The Council continues to provide statutory data returns to Government in accordance with Single Data List requirements, notably Social Care and Education services. This process provides accountability, transparency, and evidence to support the regulatory and external inspection process.

Every quarter, the Corporate Performance Reporting Board oversees and reviews the Corporate Performance Report in advance of presentation and discussion at Corporate Leadership Team and Joint Leadership Team.

The Scrutiny Committee receives an executive summary of each Corporate Performance Report to help inform its forward work programme and areas of focus. In addition, the Audit Committee received a report on the Council's performance management process in March 2022.

The Council shows its commitment to transparency through the publication of the Corporate Performance Report on the Council's website, in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015.

Directorate Leadership Teams continue to report and have oversight of performance issues within their respective areas of responsibility. The directorate process aligns to the corporate model but reporting frameworks do vary according to business need.

The Council continues to share performance information with other authorities to support benchmarking tools and activities. The Suffolk Fire & Rescue Service publishes comparative value for money information as part of their annual statement of assurance. Children & Young People's Services routinely share performance information with the Eastern Region Benchmarking Network which promotes collaboration and the sharing of good practice.

The process of reporting and managing performance (at both directorate and corporate level) has continued throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.



HUMAN RESOURCES



JEANETTE BRAY

Head of Human Resources, Performance & Change

To ensure that Suffolk County Council most effectively deploy their staff resources through good people management and compliance with legislation and best practice, the Council has a full complement of employment policies, guidance, toolkits, and procedures in place. These are regularly reviewed, refreshed, and promoted so that they remain relevant and are utilised effectively by managers and staff.

This year has seen the introduction of the Oracle Fusion HR system. This system will provide a comprehensive suite of staffing data reports when fully implemented. Until that time, we have ensured that essential staffing data has continued to be shared on a regular basis with managers and directorate leadership teams to enable core workforce monitoring to continue, including detailed absence data and contractor spend.

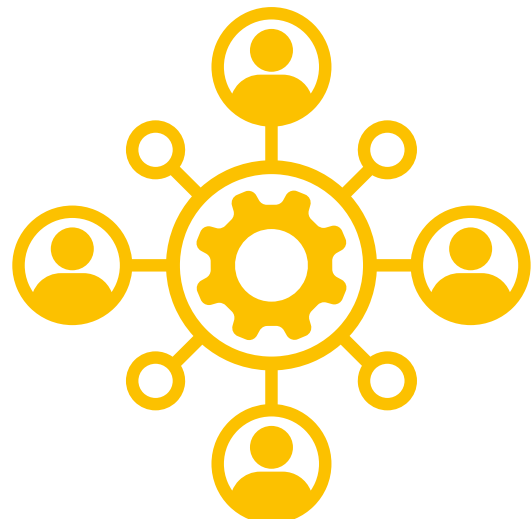
Establishment control mechanisms are in place within the directorates with oversight at directorate management team level to ensure that employment budgets are closely managed. This ensures that vacancies and employment changes are scrutinised with HR and Finance input before recruitment or contractual changes can be undertaken.

Covid related activities, including redeployment, home working, early vaccination eligibility and the introduction of mandatory vaccinations for some of the workforce have all been managed tightly within the HR service, with clear records, monitoring and GDPR compliance.

Performance management of staff (Performance Development Review or PDR) continues to operate well with the established relationship to reward supporting the process. The development of the behaviour-based framework which provides additional material and resources that translate the We ASPIRE values to practice has been shared and received well by managers this year. This work continues to be developed and extended in a collaborative way.

HR have continued to lead the workplace planning group to ensure the safe management and control of Covid for employees. This has extended through the year to look at future ways of working, with a full survey to all staff in early 2022 to establish views, needs, concerns etc. that will inform planning for hybrid working.

Monthly webinars for managers have continued throughout the year reflecting the pace of change in employment and staffing and ensuring that managers are well informed and supported in a timely way. The typical attendance for the webinars is 200-300 with others listening after the event to the recording – feedback received continues to be very positive.





INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



KRISHNA YERGOL
Chief Technology Officer

The Council's Technology Strategy is enabling the Council to become a modern, information orientated organisation which maximises the benefits of technology for the people of Suffolk.

Like other services during 2021-22, the IT Service has had to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and has continued to change, adapt, and embed new ways of working to continue supporting the Council's services.

During 2021-22, there has been an increase in web portal usage compared with phone and email, to access Social Care services. The year has also allowed services to benefit from Health Integration Exchange (HIE), which enables the Council to securely receive and access health data from various sources into its systems.

The IT service has continued to service the demand for data and insights. Examples include: supporting the Public Health Covid response; supporting Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) processes using data from the Council's Education Management System and service data related to Educational Psychology; new data and improvements for the Suffolk Office of Data Analytics (SODA) Domestic Abuse project; building a data warehouse to support the Passenger Transport service; and a children's data warehouse solution to

support processes and services in the Children and Young People Directorate.

Improvements to the Council's Core Technology platforms include the implementation of a new storage solution and a new backup solution, which delivers a more robust and secure approach to back up the Council's data. Support was also provided to Vertas to separate their technology infrastructure, which should enable them to work with their new service provider to design and implement a technology platform to accommodate their growth.

A major project to deliver next generation connectivity has resulted in the migration of most legacy wide-area-network services across to the new Suffolk Core Wide Area Network service. This should provide further resilience to the Council's network services across all its sites.

Improvements were also made to processes and technology to manage corporate devices, including mobile phones. This enables the delivery of a richer selection of devices and support options for users and partners.





INFORMATION GOVERNANCE



PETER KNIGHT

Head of Information Governance

Information governance in the County Council is overseen by the Corporate Information Governance Board (CIGB), ensuring the Council has effective information governance arrangements in place. The CIGB is supported by service-specific information governance boards or information governance leads. The Council also has a network of Strategic Information Agents (SIAs) across the organisation who promote and encourage information governance best practice within their service areas.

The Council has a number of key individuals who have specific roles and responsibilities with regard to information governance, including a Senior Information Risk Owner; Head of Information Governance; Data Protection Officer & Compliance Manager; IT Security Manager; and Caldicott Guardians.

The Council is subject to several external information and IT assurance regimes, including various mandatory inspections to facilitate access to various networks and systems, such as the Public Service Network (PSN) Compliance and the Data Security & Protection Toolkit.

Increased awareness of the rights of citizens to access information about themselves under Data Protection Law has resulted in a high number of Subject Access Requests (SARs) submitted to the Council (264 in 2021-22), although this is a slight reduction on the previous year (276 in 2020-21). This has placed considerable pressure on the organisation and achieving statutory compliance rates for responding to SARs has proved a challenge (55% for 2021-22). However, batch release plans for

particularly voluminous requests are always negotiated with requesters where required.

The Council also continues to receive a high number of Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests. The Council received 1,247 information requests in 2021-22 (compared to 1,196 in 2020-21), but the compliance rate for meeting statutory FOI/EIR deadlines remains high at 94.5%.

The Council has seen an increase in the overall number of security incidents this year compared to the previous year (577 in 2021-22 compared to 456 in 2020-21), although there has been a very significant drop in the number of more serious incidents (64 in 2021-22 compared to 148 in 2020-21). Five data breaches were serious enough to require notification to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), compared to nine in the previous year. Most data breaches are a result of human error, such as information being sent to the wrong person via email or in the post.

Some of the specific information governance activities undertaken in 2021-22 include:

- Reviewed and updated the Council's suite of information governance policies.
- Strengthened security incident reporting and management arrangements in response to the increase in data breaches.
- Fully revised information risk assessment processes, guidance and documentation, with over 180 Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) undertaken across the organisation.
- Relocated the Records Management Centre from leased premises to Council buildings previously occupied by Suffolk Records Office, thereby improving security of the records held there whilst achieving financial savings for the Council.
- Launched updated mandatory e-learning training on information management for all staff.
- Provided information security training for all 75 County Councillors following the elections in May 2021.



PROCUREMENT



MATT WEST

Head of Assets and Investment

The Assets and Investment Procurement Team deliver a professional service to help the Council procure goods and services commercially, legally and at minimal risk, whilst supporting the Council's policies and in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

The procurement response to the Commissioning, Procurement and Contract Management Assurance Framework and progress on agreed actions to strengthen assurance has continued to be reviewed quarterly with Internal Audit.

The Council's internal Procurement Rules, processes and advice to staff have been updated and maintained in line with the Procurement Policy Notices (PPNs) and guidance issued by the Cabinet Office.

The first year-end using the new Oracle Fusion system was successfully completed in 2021 with no significant issues regarding Procurement. The Procurement Team provide advice and guidance relating to Oracle Fusion P2P ensuring users deal with their purchase orders and invoices are paid. All user guides and additional supporting documents are up to date and available for all staff to utilise and regular drop-in sessions were held to further support staff and requisitioners.

The Council's Contract Management Minimum Standards and supporting checklist have been reviewed and updated.

Our Climate Change Commercial Ask is now available on our website together with supporting documentation, which includes a checklist for contract managers and guidance when evaluating Social Value Environmental responses in bids. Since the Ask was introduced in 2021, 165 staff in commercial roles have attended training regarding the Ask. The Procurement Team has seen a significant improvement in the quality of the environment Social Value bid responses from suppliers since its introduction.

The Council's Annual Social Value Ask has been updated for 2022 and published on the Council's website. The Ask provides a comprehensive list of ideas regarding how suppliers can deliver Social Value in Suffolk.

The Procurement Team have continued their work supporting the Commercial Statement's aim of helping the Council become a stronger commercial client by reviewing key SLAs on Building Maintenance and Soft FM, considering new performance and value for money measures with Concertus, and developing a new SLA and performance framework with Schools Choice.

Commercial Network webinars are held on a quarterly basis to share best practice with staff across the Council in commercial roles and commercial training is included in the Council's mandatory training modules.

A Contract Management Network has been established to provide additional advice and support for staff with contract management roles. Webinars will be held on a quarterly basis, alongside a Contract Management group on Teams for sharing information and peer advice and regular Contract Management Bulletin emails.





COMMUNICATIONS



ANDREW ST. LEDGER

Head of Communications, Consultation & Media

As we move out of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Communications Team continues to meet the Council’s evolving communications and engagement needs. During 2021-22, the Team delivered a variety of Covid and non-Covid projects and campaigns. The Team is continuing this work in 2022-23 with ongoing post-pandemic related programmes, the return of some pre-pandemic work, and further new projects.

The Council’s high-profile priority projects and work continue to be supported by the Communications Team, including (but not exclusively) Lowestoft’s Gull Wing bridge, the highways resurfacing programme and improvements to services provided to children with special education needs and disabilities.

Throughout 2021-22, the Communications Team worked with colleagues from Public Health and BMG Research who were commissioned to undertake quantitative research into public attitudes towards Covid-19 in Suffolk. In total 4 waves of research were undertaken across 2021-22. This greatly informed our understanding of attitudes within the County and how these evolved during 2021 as Covid levels and related rules developed. The Council’s campaigns were then directly influenced by this learning.

Following the pandemic, Adult and Community Services faces significant challenges within the social care market from recruitment and retention of staff. The Communications Team therefore designed and developed a new public facing brand for Social Care which was launched in December 2021, and helps to tie social care communications together, making them easier for the public to identify and engage with. Significant communications support was also given to ACS as it ended the Section 75 agreement with the Norfolk and Suffolk Foundation Trust, seeing the return of a number of staff; the launch of the new Adult Learning and Disabilities Strategy and the development of the new All Age Carers Strategy for Suffolk.

Activity also includes the Active Travel consultations, which took place across the County throughout 2021, designed to improve cycling and walking whilst reducing car usage and congestion. Locations included Sudbury, Stowmarket, Ipswich, Felixstowe and Lowestoft.

Other notable work this year included the annual Travel to Work Survey, budget consultation and migrating, where appropriate, staff SmartSurvey users to Microsoft Forms. The latter was aimed primarily at enhancing data protection.





EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION



RICHARD CRACKNELL

Assistant Director of Public Health and Communities

The Strategic Equalities and Inclusion Board, comprised of councillors, senior managers, Trades Union and staff network representatives, is chaired by the Cabinet Lead for Equalities and Inclusion and has oversight of the Council's activities for this area of work. This year's key work area was developing a set of three new corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) objectives (agreed in January 2022).

The Corporate Leadership Team has been working with the Race Equality Officer (in post since June 2021) to deliver on the Council's Race Equality Action Plan objectives. This work is being overseen by the Race Equality Oversight Group, chaired by the Corporate Race Equality lead and supported by the Race Equality Officer and the Black and Asian Staff Network.

Alongside the Race Equalities Officer, a Specialist Lead - Inclusion, post was filled in June 2021, and a Specialist Officer - Equalities took up their position in September 2021. These three posts and the HR Equalities Lead, supported by the Corporate Leadership Team, have triggered an increase in positive EDI-related activity.

Increased EDI activity has included each directorate working on developing and delivering their own EDI Action Plans, the development of a cross-County

Council EDI Champions Network and a Race Equality Champions Network, and re-engaged Staff Networks representing various protected characteristics within the organisation.

Within the corporate values, "We ASPIRE", the 'e' denotes Equality. Every staff member is expected to have an EDI objective in their annual Personal Development Review and there is a comprehensive set of EDI related e-learning, webinars, and policies to support this work area.

Core equalities and inclusion activities have continued throughout the response to the Covid-19 outbreak, such as the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process, which is used to ensure the Council is paying due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Overall, 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.





SAFETY, HEALTH & WELLBEING



MIKE LEAKE

Head of Health & Safety

The Council continues to benchmark its Safety, Health and Wellbeing (SHAW) Strategy and performance through both internal assurance and externally through the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Occupational Health and Safety awards scheme. In 2021 RoSPA awarded the Council the 'Gold Medal award in the Public Services & Local Government Sector' award.

The Safety, Health and Wellbeing service provides competent advice to the Council as required by Regulation 7 of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.

In accordance with Section 2(7) of the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 the Council has robust levels of Corporate Health & Safety communication arrangements through the SHAW Board which comprises of representation from the Corporate Leadership Team, Senior Managers and Trade Union representation. These quarterly events have continued to function throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

During 2021-22, the Council has reviewed its SHAW Strategy and priorities. The new SHAW Strategy for 2022-25 will continue to prioritise four key themes, Procurement & Contract Management, Schools, Supporting Wellbeing and Culture in the Council (the Council's corporate staff health and

wellbeing agenda) and Assurance. As part of the implementation of this Strategy, a new suite of Health and Safety mandatory e-learning has been introduced. The performance framework for Health and Safety will be reviewed during the year.

A full review of all our SHAW provision for staff and councillors is ongoing as part of changes to our Future Ways of Working, therefore ensuring we continue to meet our statutory and morale obligations to our Safety, Health and Wellbeing management arrangements.





WHOLLY OWNED COMPANIES



MATT WEST

Head of Assets and Investment

In November 2021, the annual report on Suffolk Group Holdings was considered by the Audit Committee. At that meeting the Committee expressed their satisfaction with the governance and assurance arrangements in place with the Wholly Owned Companies.

The Suffolk Group Holdings Limited Board meets quarterly and, in the run up to Board meetings, there are a series of briefings held in preparation. The Suffolk Group Holdings Limited Board met in June, August, December 2021 and in February 2022. Preceding each meeting there have been a series of meetings gathering feedback relating specifically from the Council's clients to feed into the Board.

- There are now dedicated meetings for each Wholly Owned Company bringing together key service representatives who commission work with Vertas, Concertus and OPUS to meet and discuss what is working well and what needs to improve.
- The contract leads for relationships with each of the individual companies meet with the Head of Assets and Investment to consider issues to raise with the Shareholder.
- The Head of Assets and Investment meets with senior managers in Vertas, Concertus and OPUS on a regular basis to ensure improvement and issues are resolved in a timely way and as part of ongoing dialogue.

The Chief Financial (s151) Officer, Monitoring Officer, Deputy Chief Executive and Cllr Robert Everitt, as the Council representative on the Suffolk Group Holdings Board, are briefed by the Head of Assets and Investment based on the feedback received from the meetings above, and events and experience picked up in the last quarter.

The briefing is also produced as a written document. Following the Suffolk Group Holdings Limited Board meeting, the Chief Executives from Vertas, Concertus and Opus meet with the Suffolk County Council Shareholder Group which consists of six Councillors, including Cllr Robert Everitt, four further Conservative Councillors, and one Liberal Democrat, Green and Independent Councillor. The Shareholder Group was chaired by Cllr Peter Gould in 2021-22.

A review of the Council's Shareholder arrangements for the Wholly Owned Companies was completed in 2021-22 and the Council and Suffolk Group Holdings implemented the findings from their independent Governance Review.

The last 12 months have continued to be a challenging period for Suffolk Group Holdings Limited. The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the business in 2020-21 with an initial view that it would take the next few years to recover and return pre-Covid-19 dividend levels.

Despite the challenge the outturn for 2021-22 has been successful, returning higher turnover and profit than budgeted for. The proposed dividend payable for the year is £1.12 million.



EXTERNAL ASSURANCE

In its annual report to the Audit Committee in January 2022, the Council's external auditors (Ernst & Young) provided assurance that the organisation has adequate arrangements in place to secure efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The 2020-21 Annual Audit report issued the Council with an unqualified audit.

During early 2021-22 Covid-19 continued to have a significant impact on the external inspection and quality assurance process, notably Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) who had previously suspended routine visits to settings such as schools and residential care services. However, as 2021-22 progressed, some inspection activity did resume, most notably Ofsted who have now resumed their full programme of school inspections and monitoring visits to schools previously judged as 'Inadequate' or 'Requiring Improvement'.

Notable inspections during 2021-22 included:

1. In June 2021, the Council commissioned an independent review to focus on the processes, communication protocols and family-facing elements of Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) services. This was carried out by a team from Lincolnshire, including Lincolnshire County Council and the SEND Parent Carer Network. As part of the review, the team made a series of recommendations to improve elements of the Council's SEND provision and a subsequent action plan addresses each of these recommendations.
2. In July 2021, the CQC published their inspection report of Community Health Services in Suffolk, giving the service a 'Good' rating across all domains.
3. In January 2022, Ofsted concluded their focused inspection of children leaving care and the journey of young people through the various stages of care. The inspection was a follow-up to the full inspection in 2019 when Children's Services in Suffolk were rated Outstanding. Feedback from this latest inspection was positive and the findings shared with Leadership Team.
4. The Suffolk Safeguarding Partnership ensures arrangements are in place for safeguarding adults and children with care and support needs to minimise risk of harm, adopting a zero tolerance to abuse and neglect. Safeguarding is more than protection. It also means protecting the safety, independence and wellbeing of children and adults with care and support needs. This involves a statutory duty to conduct case reviews of known or suspected abuse, neglect, or harm. The reviews provide an opportunity to learn lessons and improve practice.
5. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspects England's Fire and Rescue Services. The inspection process examines how effective and efficient services are keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks. Moreover, all Fire and Rescue Services are required to publish an Annual Statement of Assurance that sets out financial, governance, performance, and operational arrangements.

The outcomes from all external inspections are shared with the relevant Director or Chief Executive and usually have action plans that will need consideration and monitoring by senior leadership teams to ensure recommendations and areas identified for improvement are actioned within satisfactory timescales. Most external inspections will conclude with a final written report that is published in the public domain (usually on the inspection team's website).

ACTION PLAN FOR 2022/23

A number of new actions are planned for 2022/23 to further strengthen the Council's governance alongside the standing arrangements already in place.

Area	Governance matters identified	Lead Officer
Corporate Ambitions	Deliver actions set out within the 2022-23 Annual Plan in relation to the Council's four ambitions: promoting and supporting the health and wellbeing of all people in Suffolk; strengthening our local economy; protecting and enhancing our environment; providing value for money for the Suffolk taxpayer.	Chris Bally
Corporate Governance	Training for all Councillors on the Model Code of Conduct, approved by Council in March 2022.	Tim Ryder
Finance	Work with Cabinet and CLT to review the 2022-23 budget and financial challenges given the excessive cost of inflation and the impact on services from the Russian Invasion of Ukraine. To develop the 2023-24 budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy addressing these challenges, continued demand pressures on our services, and impact of government reforms / policies.	Louise Aynsley
Finance	To review the role of the budget manager / guidance and training following the full implementation of Oracle Fusion.	Louise Aynsley
Counter-Fraud	Delivery of targeted fraud awareness training to social work practitioners.	Christos Constantinou
Risk Management	Successfully manage the upgrade to JCAD Risk Management ensuring enhancements and improvements are fully utilised, that risk owners are trained, and that key monitoring and reporting processes are maintained throughout.	Paul Emeny
Corporate Performance	Implementation of new Corporate Performance Dashboard (Power BI) for all service performance sections, and further rollout of some corporate health sections.	Paul Emeny
Human Resources	Ensure all County Council staff complete their relevant mandatory training programme for 2022-23.	Jeanette Bray

ACTION PLAN FOR 2022/23

cont...

Area	Governance matters identified	Lead Officer
Human Resources	Develop policies / toolkits / contractual changes / training and support for staff and managers to enable successful implementation of full hybrid working.	Jeanette Bray
Human Resources	Develop a new People Strategy, and ensure a continued, proactive approach to meeting future workforce challenges.	Jeanette Bray
Human Resources	Establish improved workforce data reporting for managers from Oracle Fusion.	Jeanette Bray
Information Technology	Develop focused and specific technology strategies for each directorate.	Krishna Yergol
Information Governance	Review of the Council's data protection compliance tools, including Privacy Notices, Registers of Datasets, and Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) and Information Sharing Agreements (ISA).	Peter Knight
Information Governance	Complete the review of the Council's legacy data held at the Records Management Centre, to ensure these records are not held for longer than necessary.	Peter Knight
Procurement	To develop, maintain and publish an accurate contracts 'pipeline' for the Council and to effectively manage the risk of procurement work peaks due to contracts delayed by the Covid-19 Pandemic.	Matt West
Procurement	To track progress of the Council's suppliers regarding the implementation of the Climate Change Commercial Ask and the reduction of our Scope 3 emissions.	Matt West
Communications	Carry out further public engagement exercises to support the Council in delivering its ambitions for Suffolk and reinstate the Council's public engagement roadshows.	Andrew St. Ledger



ACTION PLAN FOR 2022/23

cont...

Area	Governance matters identified	Lead Officer
Equalities & Inclusion	Work towards delivery of equality objectives, agreed in January 2022, for delivery between 2022 and 2026. These include implementation of the Race Equality Action Plan, strengthening action on the Public Sector Equality Duty and developing a culture of inclusion across the organisation in partnership with external organisations and communities.	Richard Cracknell
Equalities & Inclusion	Implement actions arising from the Ethnicity Pay Gap Report and the Gender Pay Gap Report.	Richard Cracknell
Wholly Owned Companies	To review the suitability of the governance arrangements in light of the new Suffolk Group Holding (Vertas Group) structure and implement any necessary improvements.	Matt West
Wholly Owned Companies	To review and implement a new Group Partnership agreement to reflect current priorities and practices.	Matt West
Joint Venture Governance	To put in place governance arrangements within the County Council to work with the new Housing Joint Venture.	Rob Hancock
Inspections & Reviews	To implement actions arising from inspections & reviews (e.g., SEND review; HMICFRS inspection; Counter-fraud investigations).	Various officers
Government Policy Reform	To recognise and, where appropriate, take action on the impact of new and emerging government policy review, reform and consultation (e.g. MacAlister Review of Children's Social Care; Fair Cost of Care for Adult Social Care; Fire Reform White Paper; Elections Bill; Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill including County Deals).	Various officers

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