



Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

Hull City Council

Version 1.2

Drafted: June 2026

Finalisation: December 2026

Proposed review: May 2027

1. Scope of Responsibility

Hull City Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards; and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

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

The Council has adopted a Code of Corporate Governance (the Code), which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework: *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016 Edition)*. This statement explains how the Council has complied with the Code and also meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, regulation 6(1), which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

The Council reviewed and rolled forward its Code for 2025/26. This was approved by the Audit Committee in June 2025 and a copy of the Code is on our website www.hull.gov.uk as part of the Committee papers.

2. The Purpose of the Governance Framework

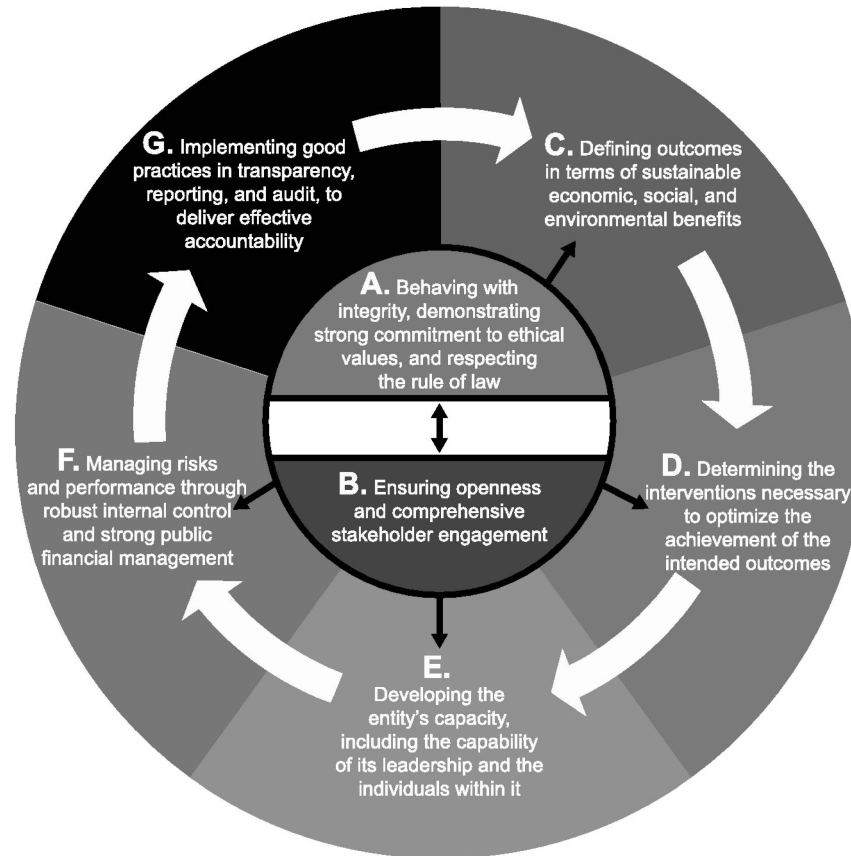
The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads its communities. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives 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 that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable and acceptable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to achievement of Council policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The governance framework has been in place within Hull City Council for the year ended 31 March 2026 and up to the date of the approval of the Statement of Accounts.

3. The Governance Framework

The Council's governance framework is consistent with the seven core principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE framework.



For each governance principle we have identified the sources of assurance and the governance mechanisms in place.

ASSURANCE CYCLE



ASSURANCE CYCLE

Understand

What are we seeking to receive assurances on?

Plan

What sources of assurance do we require?

Do

How we will arrange ourselves to receive adequate assurances.

- **The Children Service Improvement Board**
- **ASC Care Act Delivery and Improvement Board**
- **Housing Service Improvement Board**
- **Hull Children Safeguarding Partnership**
- **Consultation Boards**
 - **Eg Business Engagement Board, Skills Partnership, Project Boards**

Review

How we know that we are effective.

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

Sub principles	Demonstrated by	
Behaving with integrity	The Council's leadership sets a tone for the organisation by creating a climate of openness, support and respect. Appropriate policies and processes are in place to embed the principles. • Constitution • Councillors' Code of Conduct • Code of Conduct for Employees • Protocol for Councillor and Officer relationships • Corporate Equality Policy • Register of Interests • Gifts and Hospitality Policy • Role of the Monitoring Officer and Independent Person in reviewing Member behaviour. • People Plan	<u>Examples of good governance:-</u> All relevant codes and policies are periodically reviewed and there are established processes in place to respond to breaches. These include effective disciplinary, grievance, anti-fraud, complaints and whistleblowing procedures. The Council undertakes staff opinion surveys which ask questions around Council priorities, behaviours relating to equalities and learning opportunities.
Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values	The following corporate values are in place for both the council and its staff; and they are embedded through our People Plan and supported by our codes of conduct for members and staff: • People First – We strive to improve the quality of life for all people. • Respect – We treat everyone with respect. Honesty and fairness. • Learning – We are open to ideas by welcoming, listening to and acting on feedback. • Ambition – We are ambitious for our city and push the boundaries of what we can achieve. • Partnership – We work closely across communities, the council and with our partners.	There is a well-established pre-decision scrutiny process including input of Legal and Finance officers and via our OD/HR lead to ensure compliance to our equality duty to ensure the Council's Key Decisions are consulted upon and made in accordance with the decision making principles within the Constitution and the rule of law.
Respecting the rule of law	The Council has an agreed Constitution which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure these are within the law, efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.	

Principle B - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Sub principles	Demonstrated by	
Openness	A culture of transparency, openness and honesty. • Freedom of Information Act publication scheme • Compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code • Pre-decision Scrutiny • Report Writer's Guide	<u>Examples of good governance:-</u> The framework provides a model of good governance.
Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	The Council has an established structural framework for managing engagement with institutional stakeholders. Executive Members: The Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Public Health, Adult Social Care and the role of chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board has delegated powers in relation to Health and Social Care so that they are able to exercise decision making powers in common with health bodies at the Hull Health and Care Joint Committee. The decisions they make, as with Cabinet decisions, are based upon reports that are subject to consultation with the Council's Scrutiny Commission and its Cabinet, and based on Strategies developed through the Health and Wellbeing Board. Where they are Key Decisions they are publicised through the Forward Plan. Area Committees: The Area Committees of the Council have been re-organised into six Areas with a strategic focus. A Head of Service and Community Manager has been allocated to support the development of a system wide model for place based delivery and an NHS ICB representative, Local Policing Officer and a VCS Umbrella Organisation representative are invited to attend each Area Committee and work with Council Officers to bring together common data sets to inform the development of Area Based strategies to address the challenges faced in each area of the city. Cross-organisational strategic system leadership: The Health and Wellbeing Board brings together democratic and officer strategic leadership across the Health and Social Care sectors in the City, to provide integrated health and care system strategic leadership at Place. The Safeguarding Boards and the Better Care Plan report into the Board. Hull Health and Care Partnership Joint Committee: From 1 April 2023 a	The Council has a dedicated Information Governance Group which, amongst other things actively monitors performance on Freedom of Information requests. The Council publishes proposed key decisions through its CMIS website and considers the reports and supporting information proposing the making of key decisions through the relevant Scrutiny Commissions in advance of a key decision being made. The Council undertakes pre-decision Scrutiny of all key decisions through Scrutiny Commissions which have been aligned to the five Directorates of the Council. Decisions that are not classified as key decisions and supporting information are published through the Council's CMIS website as soon as they are made and there exists an established scrutiny challenge process to ensure that the information presented is open and transparent.

Sub principles	Demonstrated by	
	Joint Committee was established to translate the strategic system wide ambition at the level of place through joined up executive decision making. This has replaced the former Committee in Common structure and brings together the Executive Leadership of the Public Sector and Voluntary Sector umbrella bodies in the city building on the flexibilities in the Health and Care Act 2022 to develop shared outcomes through an alliance contractual framework. The Council and partner agencies are developing joint workforce development plans for key services in Adult Social Care and Children's and Family Services within this framework working together with the support of the Voluntary Sector. Private Sector: The Council maintains regular direct links with the private sector through a variety of partnerships and meetings including the Hull Business Breakfast. The Council, as part of Hull and East Yorkshire Combined Authority, is also an active member of the Business and Skills Boards representing the views of the private sector a to help inform economic strategy for the area. Sub-Region: At a political level Leaders across the Humber come together at: (a) Hull and East Yorkshire Combined Authority at which the Mayor, Leaders and Deputy Leaders of the two Councils come together with the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chairs of the Business and Skills Board to establish a shared vision and strategy for the area. (b) a Joint Committee of Humber Executive Leaders, the Humber Leaders Board, which provides governance for Humber wide legacy programmes to be managed delivering upon Humber priorities. (c) Mayoral Humber Growth Board Trades Unions: The Council and Trades Unions operate within an agreed Industrial Relations Framework led by an Industrials Relations Joint Council upon which elected members, officers and employee representatives meet. Leisure: The Council is represented on the Active Humber County Sports Partnership which brings together partners organisations across the Humber	The Council publishes through its website the governance documents in relation to its role within partner organisations. Area Committees bring together all local elected members together with key stakeholders in each area representing the Integrated Care Board and the Voluntary Sector to develop a shared vision and strategy for the three Areas of the City. The Council has developed with the City Learning Partnership which provides a forum for engagement with Multi Academy Trusts, to inform mutual resource application including the development of proposals for the Schools Forum in relation to funding decisions The Council has an Industrial Relations Framework for consultation, information and negotiation with trade unions.

Sub principles	Demonstrated by	
	with the aspiration to deliver an integrated leisure strategy. Culture: In the year of City of Culture two new cultural organisations were founded, Absolutely Cultured and Back to Ours, with Council sponsorship. The Council has continued to work closely with these key cultural organisations and this has complemented the existing Cultural organisations sponsored by the Council including Freedom Festival and Hull Truck. Work with the Arts Council has led to the development of three of these organisations into distinct and separate National Portfolio Organisation roles. Similarly with the support of the Arts Council the Council's in-house company, Hull Culture and Leisure has established a distinct National Portfolio Organisation role for Museums and Libraries. Cultural partners have formed a partnership and the Council has brought internally the City of Culture legacy volunteer service with the support of external funding to ensure that it continues to support the sector. Voluntary sector: The Council has worked with umbrella organisations in the city to develop an integrated partnership of infrastructure organisations with the brand name "Sector Connect". The funding for the partnership has been placed on a permanent footing through a pooled fund with the Integrated Care System and the engagement of the Community Foundation, Two Ridings, as VCS fundraiser to deliver three way sustainable funding provision. This supports the response to new citywide initiatives in the city such as "Changing Futures" (the introduction of Trauma informed practice) and the development of the Hull Health and Care Joint Committee. Importantly through the refocusing of Area Committees the umbrella organisations have been brought into those Committees to support the development of a joined up vision for each area of the city. Schools: A City Learning Partnership has been developed with Multi Academy Trusts operating in the city to allow for the negotiation of joint arrangements across the city that can be taken into the Schools Forum for formal agreement. University: A Partnership Delivery Board has been developed to provide the framework for developing joint initiatives with the University of Hull.	

Sub principles	Demonstrated by	
Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively	The Council ensures that clear channels of communication are in place with all sections of the community and other stakeholders, for example:- • People's Panel • Enterprise Panel • Customer Feedback Policy • Petitions scheme • Tenant participation • Ward Forums and Area Committees • Council's website • Young People's Parliament and Youth Council • Voluntary and Community Sector.	The Council has developed an integrated suite of digital solutions to engage with its citizens including a Citizen's Account, Consultation Platform and Communication Platform to support engagement with citizens and to bring together clearer data on customer service delivery across the city and support the work of Area Committees. Thus far 100,000 people have signed up to the Communication platform and 73,000 citizens have customer accounts, in a city with an electorate of circa 190,000. Complaints data is regularly reported to the Council's CST and Audit committee annually. A project board are leading investment in wider enhanced solutions. A suite of inter-related websites has been developed including the refreshed corporate Website supported by a Federated Search Engine that links the content of the separate targeted websites to enhance digital engagement and reduce the need to call the call centre. Calls to Council agents continue to reduce as a consequence of the implementation of the strategy over the last 5 years as customer preferences focus on digital access routes.

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

Sub principles	Demonstrated by	
Defining outcomes	Focusing on the purpose of the Council and on outcomes for the community. • Community Plan • Council Plan • Health and Wellbeing Strategy • Children and Young People's Plan • Youth Justice Plan • Crime and Disorder Strategy • Economic Strategy • Local Transport Plan • Licensing Authority Policy Statement • Street Trading Policy • Development of a new Local Plan • Customer insight analysis • Equality analysis and impact assessments • Service Business plans • Development of a new performance framework	<u>Examples of good governance:-</u> There are processes in place for these plans, and performance review mechanisms for them to be updated and priorities reviewed on a regular basis. Annually, Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee received an updated schedule of strategies and plans enabling reviews to be scheduled by each of the Commissions to help evaluate deliver as well as input into the review and development process. The Council together with partner organisations approved a new Community Strategy for the city, the 'Community Plan' during 2023/24 providing the framework for cross organizational working in the city. In response, the Council approved its own Council Plan in October 2024, which sets out how its activities will support delivery of the Community Plan's ambitions, in addition to a further Ambition of 'Getting the Basics Right'. This sets out the strategic direction and context for the Council's policy framework over the next four years. Regular finance, performance and risk management reports on the overall success and challenges across the Council are provided to the Executive and Scrutiny Committees.
Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	• Service strategies and plans • Medium Term Financial Strategy • Environmental policy statement and Climate and Nature Emergency Declarations • Environment management system • Policy development guidance notes • Capital programme • Commissioning and Procurement Policy • Adopted Local Plan • Living Wage/anti-poverty agenda.	

Sub principles	Demonstrated by	
	• Economic Strategy with a focus place, productivity and people • Environmental team undertakes statutory environmental health checks. • Commitment to sustainable procurement and fair trade. • Smart City Strategy	

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

Sub principles	Demonstrated by	
Determining and planning interventions	Published reports which communicate the Council's activities, achievements, financial position and performance. Regular monitoring of service and financial performance during the year which determines when action is required. Interventions required are identified through these reports, as well as external sources such as scanning for new legislation and successful initiatives by our peer authorities, partners and other organisations:- • Service and budget monitoring Reports • Financial Statements • Annual Governance Statement • Annual Audit Report • Quarterly service reviews of key risks • Quarterly Internal Audit reports • Service performance reports and programme management reports for major change programmes Reports from external inspectorates	<u>Examples of good governance:-</u> All of the expected reports are produced, analysed and acted upon. The Council actively participates in Peer Challenges and considers the implications of Best Value Guidance including its latest revisions made in May 2024. The Council's most recent Corporate Peer Challenge was completed in October 2024, and a progress review was held in September 2025. The final report provided impetus to move from strategy into delivery in relation to the Community and Council Plan, as well as reviewing its Medium Term Financial Plan and services' value for money. The Office of the Chief Executive (OCE) has been developed, sitting under the Deputy Chief Executive, to focus on strategy, policy and performance.
Optimising achievement of intended outcomes	Overall outcomes and performance indicators are in development to assess achievement of the Community and Council Plan's Ambitions: • Safe and Welcoming Neighbourhoods • A Healthier and Fairer Hull • Reaching our Potential • Economic Growth that Works for All • Responding to the Climate and Nature Emergency	External inspections are usually positive, (see Section 7) so provide assurance about service delivery and governance. Where that is not the case, clear remedial action plans are developed and monitored to ensure delivery.

Sub principles	Demonstrated by	
	• Our Culture, Our Heritage, Our City • Getting the Basics Right Delivery is guided through the decisions made by the Council's Executive (Cabinet), Corporate Strategy Team, Directors and Assistant Directors through individual reports, policies, strategies, and plans. Focused intervention and support is overseen through Transformation and Improvement Boards for key areas, including: • Children and Families • Adult Social Care • Neighbourhoods and Housing • Workday • Hull and East Yorkshire Devolution Effective challenge, evaluation and review is provided through the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Management arrangements.	Consistent unqualified ('clean') external audit opinions on the Council's accounts. Local Government Ombudsman reports in line with or better than peer authorities. The Governance structures, democratic and programme, established to support devolution led through the Hull and East Yorkshire Combined Authority provides a strong basis for sub-regional working drawing together strategies, services, and officers to work coherently towards a common vision.

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

Sub principles	Demonstrated by	
Developing the entity's capacity	Clear vision, strategy and direction, underpinned by capable leadership and management. • Partnerships • Transformation Programme • Service Planning • Workforce Strategy • Industrial Relations Policy and framework	<u>Examples of good governance:-</u> A permanent Transformation Team has been in place since 2017 to assist services with major change and financial savings projects. There is a clear industrial relations mechanism in place. Member induction has been reviewed and also validated by internal audit.
Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and	Recruitment and retention of high performing staff and providers • Member induction and development Programme	Leadership development remains a key priority for the council. Leadership development programmes are available at three different

Sub principles	Demonstrated by	
other individuals	• Cross party Committee to review and monitor Member training requirements • Competency Framework • Recruitment and selection policy • Employee development policy including appraisals and regular 1:1 meetings with line management • Prioritisation of corporate training budget • Availability of e-learning products aimed at building capacity and capability • Workforce metrics supplied to managers via Chameleon desktop portal • Investors in People accreditation and delivery of action plan • Apprenticeships	levels to support leaders at the frontline right through to more senior management, and the revised approach to establishing learning needs via workshops ensures that evidence and people metrics are used to support development plans. An additional Management Trainer will focus on delivering more courses to support managers to develop their skills and to embed good governance across the Council alongside the implementation of Workday. The Apprentice Levy continues to be used to support development across a range of subjects. The council continues to value IIP accreditation and service IIP action plans are being developed. PowerBI dashboards are were available to all managers detailing training undertaken of all their staff and of sickness absence and following the implementation of Workday, this will be automated into manager dashboards. The council has established a Leadership Equalities Group which brings together a wide range of service leads to embed equalities within service delivery and staff management. The corporate Leadership Network (CST, AD's and Heads of Service) meets monthly to undertake development activities and share information. Relevant policies and frameworks are reviewed on appropriate timescales. Pay and grading continue to be reviewed to ensure the council can compete for talent with market supplements and retention payments in place where necessary. The OCE has been developed sitting under the

Sub principles	Demonstrated by	
		Deputy Chief Executive to focus on strategy, policy and performance.

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

Sub principles	Demonstrated by	
Managing risk	Service risk management processes are monitored on a quarterly basis. A periodic review (at least annually) of the Authorities strategic risk register is undertaken by the Corporate Strategy Team and reported to Audit Committee. • Risk Management Framework • Quarterly meetings of the Risk Management Group to embed and champion risk management across the organisation. • Risks are specified in all executive reports and decision records • Health and Safety Framework, including Mental Health and Wellbeing Support.	<u>Examples of good governance:-</u> Ongoing Horizon Scanning incorporated into risk workshops. Fundamental review of the risk management framework was undertaken during 2024/25 and further developed in 2025/26 following implementation of defined risk officer capacity within the Council.
Managing performance	Corporate performance is regularly monitored and reported to the Executive and Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. Detailed reports on the key transformation programmes, Adult Social Care, and Children, Young People and Family Services are also considered on a regular basis.	Substantial progress in clearing high risk actions to address gaps in the internal control framework which previously impacted on the internal audit opinion. This progress is tracked and reported to the Audit Committee.
Robust internal control	Preventative controls in place include segregation of duties, approval/authorisation processes, security of assets, reconciliations and audits. • Financial Procedure Rules • Contract Procedure Rules • Finance, Legal and HR comments in executive reports and decision records • Internal Audit reports	Adequate internal audit opinion since 2018/19.
Managing data	Robust Information Governance standards and training to all staff. • Monthly meetings of the Information Governance Group at which Information Security Incidents are reviewed • Compliance with Data Protection Act and GDPR provisions • Records Management Policy • Public Sector Network (PSN) accreditation and Humber Information Sharing Charter to facilitate safe and lawful access to business critical data held by other public sector organisations. • Monthly review of information security incidents/near misses.	There is a Senior Information Risk Officer of sufficient standing in the authority, who chairs an Information Governance Group that monitors and develops high standards on managing data in addition to the Information Governance Group's ongoing work programme, including the Data Protection Impact Assessment and Cyber Security Supply Chain Assurance Processes.
Strong public financial management	Budget monitoring reports, audited annual statement of accounts and accountable budget owners. • Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy framework • Anti-Money Laundering Policy	Continued tracking of long term capital financing costs against established funding envelope and parameters.

Sub principles	Demonstrated by	
	Whistleblowing policy and procedures. Compliance with CIPFA Statements on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer and the role of the Head of Internal Audit.	Project Management Toolkit in place and rolled out across the Authority.

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

Sub principles	Demonstrated by	
Implementing good practice in transparency	Compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code Robust monitoring of performance in relation to Freedom of Information (FoI) and Subject Access Requests (SARs)	<u>Examples of good governance:-</u> Performance in relation to FoI and SARs is robustly monitored by the Information Governance Group.
Implementing good practices in reporting	Comprehensive consultation process for published reports ensuring Members and senior management own the results reported. Report Writer's Guide	The requirements in the Transparency Code are met through the publication of information on the revised Council website.
Assurance and effective accountability	Ensuring that recommendations for corrective actions made by external audit and internal audit are acted upon. - Internal Audit update reports including reporting of progress with the implementation of previously agreed action plans. - External Auditor's Annual Audit Report	There is an established process for audit action plans to be tracked. This involves services recording the progress, including sources of evidence, which is then validated by the auditors.

4. Review of Effectiveness

The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The Council has adopted the following methodology to review the governance framework for the purposes of this Statement.

Management Assurance

- A review of the adequacy of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance which entails;
 - an exercise which identifies the latest CIPFA/SOLACE guidance and compares this to the Council's Code, identifying any material differences.
 - an exercise to review the weight of evidence of compliance with the Council's Code e.g. the existence of various key policies/procedures and evidence of compliance with these.
- A review of the Risk Management Framework.
- A review of the Annual Internal Audit Report.
- A review of Internal Audit report findings and recommendations.
- A review of the fraud and related investigations completed during the year by the Fraud & Compliance Team.
- Consideration of issues arising from Risk workshops.
- Consideration of issues flagged in published reports into governance failings at other organisations.
- An examination of key minutes.

Performance Management

- A review of performance management reporting and outcomes.
- A review of financial management reporting and outturn.

External Review Assurance (further details in Section 7)

- An examination of the various reports received during the year from the external auditor
- An examination of external inspection reports, including those carried out by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission
- A review of complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
- Peer Challenge and other reviews

Other Sources

- An examination of the work of the Audit Committee
- An examination of the Audit Committee minutes and reports including the monitoring of the implementation of any action plan to address improvements to governance arrangements that may have been identified during the previous year's review of corporate governance.
- An examination of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees minutes and Review Panel reports
- An examination of Council and Cabinet minutes

5. Conclusion of Review of Effectiveness

We have been advised on the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by the Audit Committee, and that (with the exceptions noted in section 6), the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.

Matt Jukes
Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service)

Cllr Mike Ross
Leader of the Council

6. Significant Governance Issues and Action Plan

Financial Resilience

The external auditor's draft annual letter for 2020/21 reported a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements for financial sustainability (how the Council plans to bridge its funding gaps and identifies achievable savings). This was repeated in their 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 findings, with 2024/25 finalised within the period covered by this Statement. The concern centres on the use of short term and one-off measures to balance the financial position and the need to develop a sustainable plan to address the underlying deficit. The auditor recommended that the Council needs to develop sustainable plans to ensure services can be provided within available resources and should: undertake an assessment of the affordability of services in their current form; develop a detailed plan to address the deficit; and ensure sufficient information is provided to Members so they can monitor the delivery of planned savings.

The Council recognises the existence of the underlying deficit in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). However, the 2024/25 outturn confirmed a balanced in-year position with a small underspend reported. The 2025/26 Budget and updated MTFP also provide for a balanced position in 2025/26. As reported to Committee, the financial position for 2025/26 was challenging with outturn draft monitoring reports indicating a likely overspend year end position, with the budget affected by both national and local pressures. This is the result of additional pressures in Adult and Children Social Care. Given the ongoing inflationary pressures in the economy and the demand on Council services, cost control by Directors and Assistant Directors continues to be critical to bring the spending within the budget envelope.

The 2026/27 Budget and MTFP provide for a balanced budget for 2026/27. However, whilst inflationary and demand pressures have created sustained financial pressures throughout 2025/26, the 2026/27 budget can be balanced, and the Council can continue to deliver Council priorities and maintain key services.

Regular updates of the Council's MTFP, reflecting updated in-year positions, are considered by Cabinet and the Audit Committee during the year, to ensure financial stability can be maintained and appropriate plans formulated over this time frame.

Accounting Deadlines

Local authorities are required to publish draft accounts and final audited accounts in accordance with the timetable set by central government. Historically the Council has consistently met the draft and final accounts deadline.

The Government have recognised the requirement to address nationally the significant backlog of outstanding published Local Authority audited accounts and have therefore introduced a series of 'backstop' dates in order to clear the backlog and enable the system to recover over a period of time. The backstop date for 2023/24 accounts was 28 February 2025, for 2024/25 accounts 27th February 2026 and 2025/26 will be February 2027. By 2027/28 and going forward the backstop date will be 30th November each year. These measures, which are supported by all key local audit system partners, were implemented via legislative changes in autumn 2024.

For 2025/26 the Council set a deadline for publishing the draft accounts by 30th June in line with the Government deadline.

Children' Services

In previous years, the Council has highlighted significant governance issues following adverse inspection outcomes in relation to Looked After Children and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Improvements to those services, validated by subsequent inspections and the stepping down of external intervention and monitoring, were reported in the 22/23 Annual Governance Statement. Further improvements continue to be made through existing processes and ongoing risks are managed through the Council's risk management processes. As such, while recognising that the improvements need to be continued and maintained, these matters are no longer considered to be significant governance issues.

The national SEND policy review and associated reform will require the council to submit a plan for transition to the new policy model during 2026/27. This will be a key enabler to the Government's proposal to offset DSG deficits nationally up to the end 2025/26 by 90%. The DSG financial position continued to see increased pressures in both demand and cost during 2025/26, a picture seen nationally, and one which was raised by the external auditor within their value for money report. The council will continue to ensure the proposed plan and associated delivery model will be achieved in line with the DfE timescales.

7. External Reviews

External Auditor

The External Auditor has issued clean audit opinions in line with the backstop dates mentioned in section 6 above.

The auditor is no longer required to issue an audit opinion on the Council's arrangements for securing value of money (VFM). They instead produce a narrative report on three sets of criteria: financial sustainability; governance; and improvements in economy, efficiency and effectiveness, (the three E's). They have raised concerns about sustainable resource development, (see above re. financial resilience), whilst commenting positively on the Council's arrangements for governance and the three E's. The Council recognises the sustainability issue, which had already been identified in its strategic risk register.

Care Quality Commission (CQC)

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) undertook its annual inspection for Adult Social Care during 2025/26 and the report was published on 24th October 2025, rating Hull City Council's Adult Social Care service as "Requires Improvement". The report prepared by CQC highlighted both areas of good practice and the areas that require significant improvement, with two quality statements concluding a significant shortfall in evidence of meeting statutory duties, with a score of '1' (Assessing needs and Supporting people to lead healthier lives).

In response, the Council has implemented a CQC Improvement Plan with revised governance through the Care Act Delivery and Improvement Board focusing on the following overarching objectives:

1. Statutory Compliance and Assurance

- To provide strategic oversight and assurance that Hull City Council is meeting its statutory duties under the Care Act 2014.
- To ensure Care Act responsibilities are delivered lawfully, consistently and equitably across Adult Social Care.
- To identify, monitor and mitigate legal, operational and reputational risks associated with Care Act delivery.

2. Quality and Practice Improvement

- To drive continuous improvement in practice quality, ensuring services are strengths based, person centred and outcome focused.
- To ensure learning from audits, safeguarding activity, complaints, feedback and reviews is translated into service improvement.
- To promote consistency of practice and decision making across Adult Social Care.

3. Performance and Outcomes

- To monitor key indicators relating to outcomes, experiences, demand, timeliness and quality.
- To ensure improvement actions are measurable, clearly owned and regularly reviewed.

4. Risk Management and System Resilience

- To provide a forum for the early identification and escalation of risks impacting Care Act delivery.
- To oversee mitigating actions relating to capacity, demand pressures, workforce and market sustainability.
- To ensure that Adult Social Care remains inspection ready at all times, demonstrating sustained improvement rather than reactive compliance.

5. Governance and Accountability

- To provide effective governance and decision making in relation to Care Act delivery and improvement.
- To ensure clear accountability for actions agreed by the Board.
- To escalate issues appropriately to Hull City Council senior leadership and or corporate governance forums where required.

6. Partnership and System Working

- To support effective collaboration with internal directorates and external partners, including health and commissioned providers.
- To consider Care Act delivery within the wider health and care system context, addressing cross organisational dependencies and risks.
- To promote joined up approaches that improve outcomes for people with care and support needs.

7. People and Lived Experience

- To ensure that people with lived experience and carers are central to improvement activity.
- To promote dignity, choice, independence and safeguarding in all aspects of Care Act delivery.
- To support a positive, learning focused culture within Adult Social Care.

The Board will provide robust strategic leadership and assurance that Hull City Council is fully compliant with the Care Act 2014 while driving continuous improvement in adult social care practice, outcomes and experiences. The Board will oversee the delivery of a measurable Improvement plan to ensure the Council meets its statutory duties under the Care Act 2014 and addresses the areas of concerns identified by the CQC.

Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)

Since the last AGS, Ofsted undertook its inspection of the Local Authority Children's Services. The inspection took place from the 2nd to 13th March 2026. The report was published on the 18th May 2026 and noted an Ofsted judgement rating the Local Authority as 'Good

overall, achieving 'Outstanding' grades in leadership and support for care leavers. The Local Authority Children's services will now be in the ILACS schedule for authorities good or better. This will involve a short, focused inspection within a 3-year period.

The Council continues to be in the schedule for the inspection of arrangements for children and young people with special needs and/or disabilities, (SEND). This is a joint inspection carried out by Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC). Inspectors will work together as a single inspection team. All Local Authorities will receive a full inspection at least once during a 5-year period. Hull's last SEND inspection was November 2023. Inspection outcome stated that

- 'The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.
- 'The next full area SEND inspection will be within approximately 3 years'.

Children's services will continue to monitor the quality and performance of work through regular meetings chaired by the Director and key leaders across the service. Preparation for inspections expected over the next year are well underway with oversight by the senior leadership team.

Housing Regulator

The Regulator of Social Housing introduced four new Consumer Standards for Social Landlords, effective from April 2024: Safety and Quality, Transparency, Influence and Accountability, Neighbourhood & Community and Tenancy. The Council established a Service Improvement Board, chaired by the Council's Chief Executive, early in 2024 to manage both a self-assessment against these standards and all actions required to ensure full compliance. Each standard is led by a Council Assistant Director or Head of Service bringing together stakeholders to critically assess performance and develop a roadmap to ensure sustainable compliance. As the Regulator had introduced a duty to self-refer under-performance, the Council made a self-referral in June 2024.

Action plans were shared with the Regulator, who was content to monitor progress. Significant progress has been made and this will be reported to the Regulator as part of standard reporting procedures which they have introduced. The Service Improvement Board continues to meet roughly 6-weekly to oversee continued progress.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO)

The LGO considers complaints about council services that remain unresolved after being considered through internal procedures. They publish an annual letter reporting on the number of complaints in various categories. The Customer Feedback Team work closely with the Ombudsman Services to identify and address concerns and have implemented the revised Complaint Handling Codes. For the most serious cases they also issue Formal Maladministration Reports, which the Council is required to discuss in public. The letter received during 2025/26 continued to show only a relatively small number of cases, none of which led to a formal report. It is a very small

percentage of customers which approach the Ombudsman, which provides the insight that in the vast majority of cases (97.78%) are resolved complaints without the need for LGO involvement.

Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC)

Best Value Guidance and the LGA recommend that Corporate Peer Challenges are held every four to five years, which assesses performance against five high-level themes: Local Priorities and Outcomes; Organisational and Place Leadership; Governance and Culture; Financial Planning and Management; and its Capacity for Improvement. The Council works closely with the LGA on an ongoing basis to develop its overall performance, review of policies, and service improvement. The latest Peer Challenge, held in October 2024 and reviewed in September 2025, demonstrated that the Council had effectively mobilised people around a positive vision for the future (the Community Plan), widely respected leadership, and was able to demonstrate good examples of innovation and resilience. The report also identified nine overall recommendations, which focussed on delivery, financial planning, and organisational leadership. The Council has continued to provide Cabinet updates in relation to the CPC action plan during 2025/26 demonstrating delivery of the overall response to the CPC report.

Appendix 1 - ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Corporate Arrangements		
Constitution		
Policies		
Procedures		
Strategies & Plans		
Financial Monitoring & Reporting	Performance Monitoring & Reporting	Risk Management

Senior Managers & Partners		
Corporate Strategy Team		Directors
Assistant Directors Team		Assistant Directors
Place Based Board Executive (Chief Executive, NHS Place Director, Chief Constable)	Wholly owned companies and other strategic partners	Schools Forum

Audit & Governance	
Opinion on governance, risk management & controls	Monitoring Officer/s151 Officer

Non-Executive Committees	
Audit Committee	Overview & Scrutiny

External Bodies				
External Auditors	Inspectorates	Ombudsman	Professional bodies	Other external bodies