



West Suffolk Council Annual Governance Statement 2022 to 2023

Introduction

The West Suffolk Council [Local Code of Corporate Governance](#)¹ defines good governance as how we ensure we are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. This comprises the systems and processes and cultures and values, by which the council is shaped, directed and controlled and through which we are accountable to, engage with and lead communities.

Operating under a leader and cabinet model of governance, West Suffolk Council's arrangements for delegation of council functions to committees and officers are set out alongside the Leader's executive arrangements in the Constitution, which is always under review, to ensure robust arrangements for open, transparent, and accountable decision making.

Decision making, financial arrangements and procurement activity are bound by clear rules of procedure that focus resources on the achievement of the council's strategic outcomes and are rooted in legal compliance. All these arrangements are kept constantly under review, including by considering best practice from other councils and organisations.

This Annual Governance Statement sets out how the council complies with its code of corporate governance throughout 2022 to 2023, how the effectiveness of governance arrangements has been monitored, and any planned changes.

Key features of West Suffolk Council's governance, including specific activities from 2022 to 2023

In order to secure the outcomes and aspirations of elected members, the West Suffolk Council's governance arrangements seek to ensure that we serve local communities in a way that demonstrates accountability, transparency, effectiveness and value for money, integrity, and inclusivity.

Governance processes

The council monitors the achievement of its strategic objectives as set out in the Strategic Framework and supporting strategies; and assesses whether those objectives have led to appropriate outcomes and value for money.

¹ The code was prepared in accordance with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Framework, 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'

Defining outcomes

West Suffolk Council uses data to better understand the issues facing its communities and their challenges and opportunities. This includes working in partnership through the Suffolk Office of Data & Analytics (SODA) which was set up as a collective endeavour between Suffolk public service organisations to improve our usage of data to generate new insights into public services and the needs they serve.

One of the ways West Suffolk Council is meeting the issues that are identified is by building capacity in the community. This is primarily achieved through the council's Families and Communities approach, which guides its broader frameworks and plans.

West Suffolk's identified ambition for growth is achieved through the implementation of the Growth Investment Strategy, supported by the Investing in Growth Fund. These measures seek to support and invest in communities and businesses to encourage and manage ambitious growth in both local prosperity and quality of life.

A key element to this is ensuring that the council has a sustainable budget. The West Suffolk Council Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) sets out how we are working more efficiently, through transforming services, moving to digital forms of communication, and behaving more commercially.

Interventions

West Suffolk Council is innovative in its approach to delivery models, including partnerships, a wholly-owned housing company and a strategic relationship with the leisure trust. These structures are kept under review to ensure they remain fit for purpose and meet the council's code of corporate governance.

The council also has a Target Operating Model which acts as a template for the delivery of services to individuals and businesses and which ensures digital transactions are maximised where appropriate and routine back-office functions are carried out in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Managing risks and performance

West Suffolk Council has in place a comprehensive framework to monitor and challenge performance and appraise projects.

In 2022 to 2023, the council implemented a refreshed set of key performance indicators (KPIs), reporting monthly to Leadership Team and portfolio holders. The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee (PASC) receives the KPIs and financial performance through quarterly reports for monitoring and scrutiny.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee promotes open and transparent decision-making, democratic accountability and holds the Cabinet to account for its actions.

Building capacity

The council recognises the importance of developing its capacity as an organisation, including the capacity of its leadership through continuous development and collaboration between the council's Leadership Team and Service Managers.

West Suffolk Council also recognises the benefits of improving expertise and staying up to date in our practice. As a result, the council invests in the development of its councillors and staff through training.

This included establishing in 2022 to 2023:

- Treasury management training for members
- Core management training for Service Managers and Team Leaders
- An Aspiring Leaders programme, as well as a peer networking and self-mentoring group
- A new Workforce Strategy

In 2022 to 2023, a statutory officers' group was established, to formalise the ongoing liaison between the Head of Paid Service, Section 151 officer and Monitoring officer.

Ensuring openness

The council shares information on its investments, partnerships, and other achievements through the council's website, news releases and social media.

A number of consultations, with new engagement methods, were also carried out during 2022 to 2023, in particular in relation to the Local Plan. In addition, 'West Suffolk Council: The story so far' was published, reviewing the activities of the council over the last four years.

Proposed activity, 2023 to 2024

Following the local government elections on 4 May 2023, a new administration has been formed to lead West Suffolk Council. The administration will set out a policy programme and agree governance arrangements to ensure the delivery of its commitments for the coming municipal term. As such, governance and scrutiny arrangements may be altered, and new priorities and processes agreed.

The council has a number of proposed activities relating to governance for 2023 to 2024. This includes:

- The council will be inviting the Local Government Association (LGA) to carry out a Corporate Peer Challenge review.
- Working in partnership with other authorities to work towards finalising the potential of a County Deal.
- Implementing the Rural England Prosperity Fund.
- Responding to changes in Government policy, such as planning, waste and recycling and levelling up.
- Producing a new Strategic Framework and Housing Strategy.
- Submitting the draft Local Plan for examination.
- Reviewing council contracts as part of the internal Change and Service Improvement programme
- Reviewing of learning of other councils, specifically looking into measures to prevent governance failings.

Review of effectiveness

The annual review of the governance framework and system of internal control involves:

- a self-assessment exercise.
- consideration of audit issues raised and audit opinions issued during the period.
- the external auditor's comments, and other review agencies and inspectorates' reports.
- where appropriate, production of an action plan where progress is assessed and recorded.

Based upon the audit work undertaken during the financial year 2022 to 2023, as well as assurances made available to the council by other assurance providers, the Service Manager (Internal Audit) has confirmed that reasonable assurance can be provided that the systems of internal control within these areas of the council, as well as the risk management systems, are operating adequately and effectively.

Significant governance issues

The review of the effectiveness of the governance framework for 2022 to 2023 concluded that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.

There are no significant governance issues to disclose.

Appendix – Elements of governance framework (by Principle)

Principle A	Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law
Key elements of the council's governance framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution • Employees Code of Conduct • Councillors Code of Conduct • Contract Procedure Rules • Anti-fraud and Anti-corruption Policy • Whistleblowing Policy • Anti-Money Laundering Policy • Registers of interests • ICT Security Policy • Monitoring Officer • Statutory Officer Group • Safeguarding Policy • Modern Slavery Statement • Equality Scheme • Camera Surveillance Code of Practice
Principle B	Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
Key elements of the council's governance framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report • Environmental Statement • Reports and minutes available on the council's website • Consultation Statement • Equality Scheme • Use of complaints and feedback to aid learning for future service development. • Media and social media releases. • Council website

Principle C	Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits
Key elements of the council's governance framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Framework • Growth Investment Strategy • Housing Strategy • Families and Communities Approach • Medium Term Financial Strategy • Local Plan • Treasury Management • Capital Strategy • Business plans • Risk Management Policy and toolkit • Investment Framework • Environment and Climate Change Action Plan
Principle D	Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
Key elements of the council's governance framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation statement and programme • Families and Communities approach • Enforcement • Performance monitoring • Project management framework • Procurement Policy • Medium Term Financial Strategy • Business partner model • Business case model • Partnership working across the public and voluntary sectors in Suffolk • Change and Service Improvement (CSI) programme
Principle E	Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
Key elements of the council's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce plan • Learning and development policy

governance framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution • Employee performance review framework • Disciplinary procedure • Job descriptions • Agile working guidance
Principle F	Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
Key elements of the council's governance framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial procedure rules • Contract procedure rules • Treasury management strategy and growth investment strategy • Budget monitoring • Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee • Strategic risk register • Investment framework • Risk management toolkit • Performance Dashboards • Internal audit • Business continuity plan • Corporate Complaints and Compliments Policy
Principle G	Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability
Key elements of the council's governance framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council website • Statement of accounts • Annual Governance Statement • Annual Report • Environmental Statement • Medium Term Financial Strategy • Anti-fraud and Anti-corruption Policy • Whistleblowing Policy • Data Protection Policy • Officer Information Governance Group • Performance Dashboards • Annual internal audit report and opinion

Assurance by Chief Executive and Leader of the Council

We approve this statement and confirm that it forms the basis of the council's governance arrangements and that these arrangements will be monitored and strengthened in the forthcoming year as described above.

Signed:

XXXXX
Leader of the Council

Date:

Signed:

Ian Gallin
Chief Executive

Date: