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# Annual Governance Statement

## 2024/25

# Contents

Executive Summary and Approval of the Annual Governance Statement ..... 3

Introduction ..... 4

Code of Corporate Governance ..... 5

Governance Framework ..... 6

System of Internal Control and Review of Effectiveness ..... 7

Governance Conclusion, Governance Issues in 2024/25 and Action Plan ..... 25



## Executive Summary

The Annual Governance Statement is a statutory document, which explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the Council to carry out its functions effectively. Regulation 6 (1) of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 requires all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The AGS reports publicly on the effectiveness of governance and internal control arrangements and how the Council has complied with its Local Code of Corporate Governance, including how it monitors effectiveness. The Governance Framework was in place at Bedford Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2025 and up to the date of approval of the annual statement of accounts.

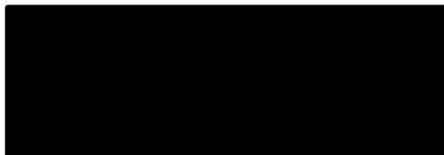
Bedford Borough Council is committed to enhancing Bedford Borough as a place where people, communities and businesses can grow and realise their potential. Following elections in May 2023, resulting in a new administration, the Council developed a new Corporate Plan, for 2024-2028, to reflect the new administration's priorities. The final [Corporate Plan 2024-2028](#) was agreed by Full Council on 27 November 2024.

To be successful the Council must have a solid foundation of good governance and sound financial management. The Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance ensures that we are doing the right things, in the right way, in line with our values. The Code is supported by a Governance Framework that sets out how and what the Council will seek to obtain assurance on. A copy of the Council's [Local Code of Corporate Governance](#) and [Governance Framework](#) are available on our website.

### Approval of the Annual Governance Statement

The Mayor and Chief Executive both recognise the importance of having a solid foundation of good governance and sound financial management. We confirm we have been advised of the implications of the review by Senior Management and the Audit Committee and are satisfied that the steps outlined in this document address the areas for improvement. Through the actions referred to in the Action Plan on pages 26-31, we have addressed the issues that have been identified. These steps identified improvements needed and we are monitoring their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

### Signed on behalf of Bedford Borough Council:



*Tom Wootton, Elected Mayor  
25<sup>th</sup> February 2026*



*Laura Church, Chief Executive  
25<sup>th</sup> February 2026*

## Introduction

Bedford Borough Council is a Unitary Authority with a directly elected Mayor. The present Mayor was elected in May 2023 for a four-year term. The Mayor has executive powers and selects councillors to be in his Cabinet. Each Cabinet member takes on a portfolio of responsibilities for particular service areas.

In May 2023, the Borough elected 46 councillors for a four-year term to represent the 28 local wards across urban and rural parts of Bedford Borough. Across the area of Bedford Borough, there are also 47 parish and town councils. Following the election in May 2023, and in by-elections since, the make-up of the Council is as follows, as at January 2026:

<b>Party</b>	<b>Seats</b>
Conservatives	15*
Liberal Democrats	13
Labour	12
Green	4
Independent	3

*\*including the Mayor*

The Council's gross expenditure budget for 2024/25, set on 7 February 2024, was £510.2 million. The net Budget requirement for 2024/25 was £170.2 million, funded from the following sources:

- Government Grant - £7.4 million
- Business Rates - £45.5 million
- Council Tax - £117.3 million

On 5 February 2025, the Council agreed the net budget for 2025/26 of £177.6 million, requiring savings of £10.5 million.

2024/25 continued to be financially challenging with demand-led pressures in Temporary Accommodation and Adults Social Care. There was also an emerging pressure in the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Providing support and care for the most vulnerable residents, and good quality services for all, remains the Council's priority and this informs decisions going forward.

The Council faces a financial challenge in the coming years with a budget gap of £32.5m for 2026/27 and a cumulative gap of £58.6m by 2029/30. Sound financial governance is a critical priority, requiring all areas to work together to manage demand and deliver savings. The Executive Director of Resources (EDoR-CFO) Section 25 Report to Full Council, on 5 February 2025, highlighted key risks including: demand pressures, particularly in Temporary Accommodation and Adults and Childrens Social Care, inflation as a result of national living wage increases and changes to employers National Insurance Contributions. The report included recommendations to enable the Council to further review its financial position and take positive action to remain financially sustainable including undertaking a CIPFA Resilience Review, completed in August 2025.

Recruitment and retention remain a challenge for the Council, and further actions were developed and implemented during 2024/25 to tackle this issue.

The Council developed a new Corporate Plan, for 2024/25 – 2027/28 accompanied by a rationalised performance framework to monitor the delivery of the Plan. The final [Corporate Plan](#) was agreed by Full Council on 27 November 2024. Directorate performance and key corporate indicators continued to be monitored effectively throughout the year.

This Annual Governance Statement assesses the governance arrangements that were in place during 2024/25. The governance framework was in place for the year ended 31 March 2025. Progress is being made to address the issues raised in the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement.

## Code of Corporate Governance

### Scope of Responsibility

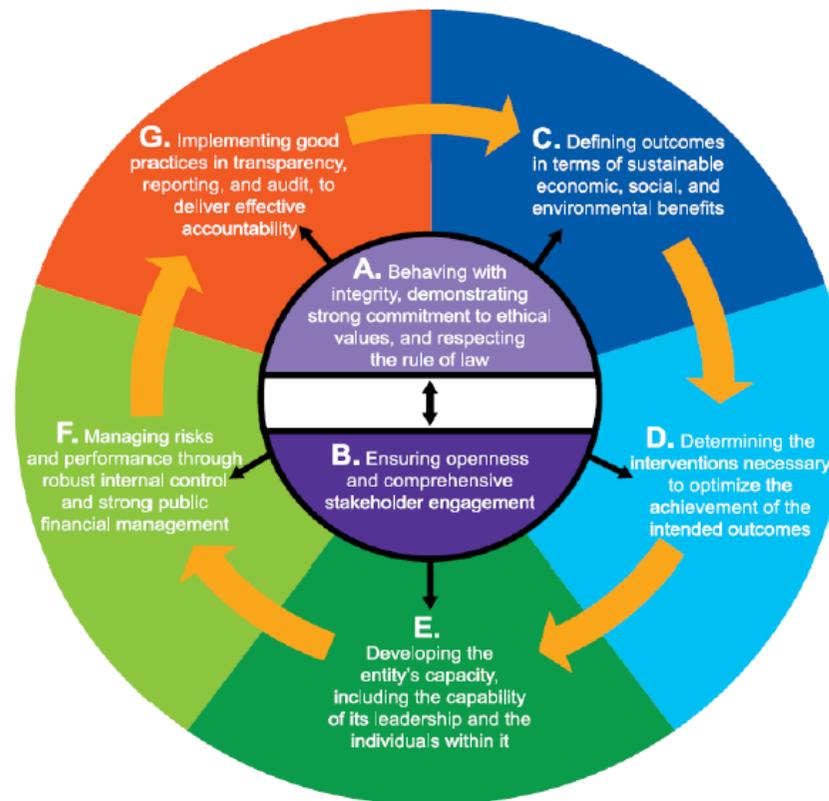
Bedford Borough Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money allocated to it is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively in accordance with the Local Government Act 1999 and to also make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised. In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.

Members and senior officers are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of the Council's affairs and the stewardship of the resources at its disposal. The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), which comprises the Chief Executive and Directors supported by Statutory Officers (Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer), manage this task.

The Council has adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), and Society of Local Authority Chief Executive's (SOLACE) Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Guidance Notes for English Authorities 2016. The Annual Governance Statement explains how the Council has complied with its Local Code and the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 (amended 2024), which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

The Local Code of Corporate Governance was updated during 2024/25, approved by the Audit Committee in March 2025, and was ratified at Full Council on 2 July 2025. The Code was updated to reflect the Role of the Statutory Officers as detailed in the new [Code of Practice on Good Governance for Statutory Officers](#), published in June 2024, and also includes references to other recent guidance

The Council's [Local Code of Corporate Governance](#) sets out the principles of good governance and describes the arrangements the Council has put in place to meet each of these principles:



# Governance Framework



## The System of Internal Control

The governance framework described above comprises the systems and processes, culture and values, by which the Council directs and controls its activities, and how it leads, engages with and accounts to the community it serves. 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, cost-effective services.

The Council's governance framework addresses the way the Council is controlled and managed, both strategically and operationally, and how it will deliver its services. The Framework recognises that the Council's business focuses on its corporate priorities and seeks to facilitate delivery to local communities of the goals set out in the Corporate Plan.

The Council has designed systems and processes to regulate, monitor and control its activities to achieve its vision and objectives.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework; designed to manage risk to an acceptable level. It cannot eliminate all risks of failure to achieve the Council's aims and objectives, but it seeks to provide reasonable rather than absolute assurance of effectiveness.

The system of internal control is designed to identify, prioritise and manage the risks to the achievement of the Council's aims and objectives.

## 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. This review is informed by:

- The work of the Corporate Governance Working Group, replaced during the year by the Statutory Officers Group, who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment.
- The Annual Internal Audit Assurance opinion, as provided by the Head of Audit, Insurance and Risk. The Audit Committee relies on the work of Internal Audit to ensure there is an adequate and effective internal control environment. This remained a key source of assurance for the Council in 2024/25.
- Comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates;
- The Audit Committee's work programme, which ensures that the elements of the governance framework are in place, to deliver compliance with the principles. An annual report of the Audit Committee for the full calendar year 2024/25 was presented to Full Council in July 2025; and
- Assurance statements, completed by the Council's senior managers for each of their areas of control, acknowledging responsibility for risk management and internal control. These statements certify compliance with the arrangements throughout 2024/25, or identify areas of non-compliance or weakness, as well as highlighting areas of good practice.

**The Review of Effectiveness identified the following governance issues in 2024/25 (the actions to address these are at the Action Plan on pages 26-31):**

**Financial Resilience**

The 2024/25 budget position in-year showed the Council continued to manage significant demand pressures specifically in Agency Staff, Adult Social Care, and Temporary Accommodation. Managing the budget dominated the financial year, with additional spending and recruitment controls put in place. It is likely additional reserves will be required to fund an overspend at year-end. The budget for 2025/26 includes investments of £7.8 million and service efficiencies of £10.5 million. There are several risk areas, particularly relating to demand-led services. Given the level of risk, the EDoR's Section 25 Report in January 2025 highlighted three key recommendations to enable the Council to further review its financial position and take positive action to remain financially sustainable. These are detailed at page 26.

**Constitution Review**

A key requirement of good governance is an up-to-date constitution to ensure that the Council acts in the right way and in a timely, open and honest manner. In 2024/25, there continued to be an increased focus on Constitutional matters, such as procedure rules for conduct of Full Council and committee meetings. The drive for effective governance and effective corporate administration has necessitated an external review of the Constitution to ensure that it is consistent with the law, unambiguous, and understood.

**Capital Programme**

The Council has an ambitious Capital Programme, approaching £1¼ billion in the next five years. Delivery of the programme is dependent on capital receipts and other sources of finance being accessible at the required stages of the programme. Monitoring the programme, management of slippage, transparency of decisions, and compliant contract procurement will be key governance requirements.

**Inward Investment and Infrastructure**

In April 2025, the Council shared the exciting news that the Universal Studios theme park project is going ahead. This once-in-a-generation investment means Bedford will become the proud UK and European home of Universal. The impact will be transformative for Bedford Borough; bringing 28,000 new direct and indirect jobs, and billions in economic benefits, including up to 12 million annual visitors. Planning permission was granted by Government on 12 January 2026 with a projected construction start date soon after. Local residents were kept updated of the status of the project's planning proposals. Openness and transparency around decision-making, including planning, will be subject to scrutiny both internal and externally.

**Continuing issues from previous years:**

**Procurement, Contracts Register and Contract Management**

There was improved contract management and oversight during 2024/25, particularly with recently retendered contracts, and a decrease in 'off contract' spend in some areas. Whilst recognising the progress that has been made, timely procurement, recording of contracts and subsequent contract management remains a focus for the Council into 2025/26 and beyond.

**Information Governance**

The Knowledge and Information Strategy, and Document Retention Strategies require reviewing and updating to ensure adequate and effective information governance. There are new risks arising due to the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI). An AI usage policy is in place, but there is a need to assess compliance, and also to consider how to facilitate the use of AI whilst managing the risks.

**Recruitment, Retention and Capacity**

Recruitment continues to be challenging in some professional, technical and demand-led service areas, affecting most local authorities. Initiatives taking place in relation to recruitment and retention are addressing workforce capacity and resilience, and therefore this issue is not significant to be included in the action plan.

## Key Governance Issues



A detailed action plan is included at pages 26-31

## The Role of the Statutory Officers

The Council's Chief Executive, EDoR (CFO), and Monitoring Officer are the statutory officers with direct responsibility for corporate governance. Other statutory officer posts may have specific responsibilities for governance within their service areas.

The [\*Code of Practice on Good Governance for Statutory Officers\*](#) was published in June 2024. In accordance with this Code, the statutory officers will work together to ensure that the Council has in place effective administrative, financial, and ethical governance in the exercise of its functions. The officers will advise on governance matters clearly with impartiality and integrity.

The Code sets out seven standards which the statutory officers will follow to support them in engendering sound and effective governance across the Council. These standards are to:

1. Understand Governance: Roles and responsibilities
2. Act Wisely: A duty of enquiry & the exercise of statutory functions
3. Lead Ethically: The Seven Principles of Public Life
4. Act Effectively: Robustness in working arrangements
5. Resource the Roles: Get the tools to do the job
6. Build Resilience: Deputies and development
7. Deliver sound decision making: The outcome of good governance.

Whilst the assurances mentioned on page 7 have been obtained from senior managers, to support the conclusion that the Council's governance arrangements are adequate and effective, it is important that the following specific assurances from the Council's statutory officers be considered to support this Annual Governance Statement:

## Chief Executive

The Chief Executive is the Council's Head of Paid Service and is responsible for the overall corporate and operational management of the Council.

The change of administration in May 2023 led to an additional focus on the Council's constitution including the Conflict Resolution Procedure and Call-In of Executive decisions which reflect that the Council is being run by a minority administration. There have been a number of call-ins during the year and further legal advice was sought. Some amendments to the Constitution have been completed and a further review is underway; overseen by the Members Constitution Working Group.

Regular meetings between the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer have continued. An Interim Monitoring Officer was put in place in January 2024 from an experienced Senior Officer within the Council. The role of the Statutory Officers Working Group has been developed to support the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and s151 officer, with overall governance and compliance oversight covering data, HR and risk management.

2024/25 has continued to be a tough financial challenge with demands from inflation, cost of living and increasing complexity of need. External support has been provided to Children's Services.

A senior officer restructure was completed in March 2025. This responds to some of the challenges for the organisation. It introduces the Executive Director for Resources role; providing oversight of all resources matters across the Organisation including commissioning and procurement, and HR. There is focused responsibility for the Director of Governance to cover legal services and democratic services.

Progress has continued to be made on the Council's approach to managing risk. There have also been two significant incidents that

the Council has had to respond to; in flooding and in the response to the Cleat Hill gas explosion.

During 2025/26 key priorities for the Chief Executive relating to Governance are:

- Ensuring financial stability for the Council.
- Appointment of a permanent Director of Governance and to lead on improvements to report writing to support decision making.
- Ensuring that the AGS Action Plan is delivered.

The Chief Executive has considered these responsibilities within the context of this Statement and can confirm that the Council has proper arrangements in place for the overall operation and management of the Council.



## Executive Director Of Resources (EDoR CFO Section 151)

The EDoR (CFO) role is responsible for the development and maintenance of the Council’s financial governance, risk and control frameworks, which ensure that financial decision-making is both lawful and prudent. The EDoR is also responsible, in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, for the proper administration of the Council’s financial affairs. The EDoR has considered these responsibilities within the context of this Statement and can confirm that the Council’s arrangements meet the requirement to be proper as set out in Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. Additionally, the Council complies with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the EDoR (CFO) in Local Government (2016) and the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting for 2024/25.

The EDoR presented the annual report on the adequacy of the current arrangements for the proper financial administration of the Council, for 2023/24, to the Audit Committee on 26 June 2024. This included a description of the key controls in place. The report for 2024/25 was presented to the June 2025 committee.

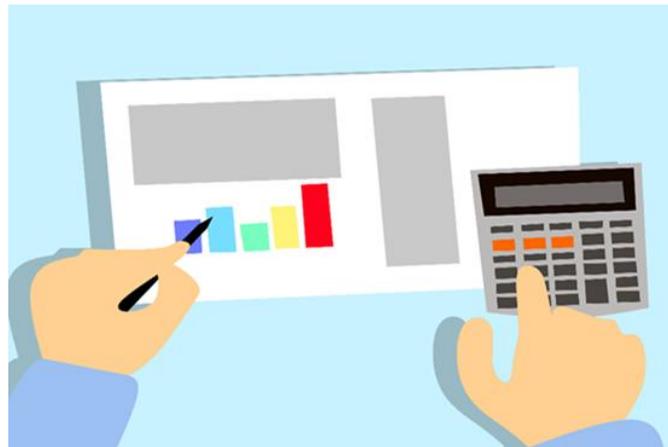
The governance arrangements and system of internal control aim to provide as much assurance as is reasonably possible (not absolute assurance) that assets are safeguarded, transactions are properly authorised and recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or can be detected promptly. The EDoR, in conjunction with the Finance Management Team, has reviewed the governance and effectiveness of the systems of internal control, informed by:

- Regular scrutiny of financial and performance monitoring data;
- Internal audit reports on the systems of internal control; and
- Self-assessment of the arrangements supporting the Annual Governance Statement.

During the year, the Government set out its plans to reset the public audit system including a set of backstop dates by which Local Authority Accounts must be audited. As a result, it is anticipated it will be several years before the Council receives an unqualified audit opinion. The Council's new external auditors, KPMG, issued a disclaimed opinion for the financial year 2023/24 in February 2025 in line with the delayed statutory deadline.

The EDoR is satisfied that internal control systems in operation during 2024/25 were adequate and effective, and that progress is being made to address the issues raised in the last AGS. The Action Plans to resolve the concerns on contract management are progressing. There has been significant improvements in recruitment and retention, particularly in the conversion of agency workers to permanent members of staff. Organisational capacity has improved in some areas but continues to be an issue for the Council.

The 2024/25 Budget position reported in-year showed the Council was continuing to manage significant demand pressures specifically in Agency Staff, Adult Social Care, and Temporary Accommodation. Managing the budget dominated the financial year, with spending and recruitment controls in place to manage the budget. The year end outturn of £1.6 million was funded from the General Fund Reserve.



Full Council agreed the budget for 2025/26 on 5 February 2025, including investments of £7.8 million and service efficiencies of £10.5 million. Whilst the Budget was not balanced with the use of reserves, several risk areas were highlighted, particularly relating to demand-led services.

Given the level of risk, the Section 25 Report highlighted three key recommendations to enable the Council to further review its financial position and take positive action to remain financially sustainable:

- Undertake a CIPFA Resilience Review;
- Take steps to rebuild reserves to within recommended limits within two years; and
- Put in place a Transformation Plan to manage the budget gap over the medium term.

These recommendations were adopted by the Executive and are in train in the current year, 2025/26. CIPFA completed the resilience review in August 2025 which was reported to the Executive.

In 2025/26 Children's Services have experienced a significant increase in the number of Looked After Children, resulting in additional pressures on placement costs, including residential and unregulated places and agency staff. There is a £14.4 million overspend projected of which £11.4 million is related to Children's Services. The Council has applied to the Government for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS).

On 7 January 2026 the Executive agreed an outline Improvement Plan setting out the direction of travel and governance framework. Work is progressing on the detailed programmes and projects to deliver the Plan.

The Council has established an Independent Improvement and Assurance Panel (IIAP) to provide external advice, challenge, and expertise in driving forward the development and delivery of the recovery plan.

Full Council did not agree a Medium-Term Financial Strategy during the financial year; however the latest forecast reported to the Executive in March 2025 identified a gap of £32.5 million in 2026/27 and £58.6 million to 2029/30, which included provisions to replenish reserves and a business rate reset from 2026/27.

The Executive have proposed a draft Budget for consideration by Full Council on 4 February 2026 based on the provisional settlement. This Budget is predicated on an EFS Application of £25 million and a savings programme of £18.5 million.

The introduction of three-year budgets expected with the financial settlement in December 2025 will bring some stability to plan for the future, albeit within a lower resource envelope.

The Council recognises the difficult financial environment and that it needs collective endeavour from Members and Officers to reshape the organisation to meet the short and medium-term challenges.

The Council has robust financial management arrangements in place and will continue to strengthen these arrangements with the Executive, Portfolio Holders, the Corporate Leadership team, and budget holders to manage services with limited resources.



## Monitoring Officer

The Council's Monitoring Officer is a statutory post with responsibility for the legal governance of the authority. The Monitoring Officer is required to report to the Council in any case where it appears that any proposal, decision or omission by the Council and/or Executive has given rise to or is likely to or would give rise to any contravention of any enactment, rule of law or code of practice or maladministration or injustice in accordance with Sections 5 and 5A of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

The Monitoring Officer has considered these responsibilities, within the context of this Statement, and to the best of their knowledge has no significant concerns to report and has had no reason to submit a report in accordance with the above. The current Monitoring Officer was appointed in July 2025.

The Monitoring Officer has responsibility for responding to complaints about the standards of conduct of borough and parish councillors and also the Bedfordshire Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Council's Executive continued to operate as a minority administration, however two additional members, one conservative and one independent, were appointed to the Executive during 2024/25.

There has continued to be an increased focus on Constitutional matters, such as procedure rules for conduct of Full Council and committee meetings. There was also an increase in the use of the "call-in" process to review Executive decisions, with four decisions being called in for scrutiny during 2024/25.

The Monitoring Officer is satisfied that the Council has robust processes for decision-making, but this will be kept under review and if any weaknesses are identified action will be taken to strengthen the processes.

The Monitoring Officer has responsibility for keeping the Council's Constitution updated. The Constitution Review Working Group continued its work through 2024/25 to review and update further parts of the Constitution. This included an important update to clarify the role and remit of the Full Council when called on to exercise the scrutiny function. The review of the Constitution has continued in 2025/26, supported by external expertise and resources.

The Standards Committee agrees a programme of work each year and during 2025/25 there were no significant matters highlighted for consideration by the members.

In accordance with the Constitution, the Standards Committee monitors standards of conduct of Members and advises the Council, where necessary, on probity issues.

Based upon the complaints received and dealt with over the year, the Monitoring Officer is not aware of significant concerns regarding Borough Council Member conduct. There were a small number of complaints alleging a breach of the Member Code of Conduct during 2024/25. However, significant concerns remain regarding the conduct of one parish council due to an exceptional volume of complaints received from members of that parish council. A sub-committee of the Standards Committee is working to assist that parish council in improving standards of conduct.

The Monitoring Officer has recognised the improvements that have been made in information governance, but further improvement remains a priority.



### Head of Audit

In accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the Public Sector Internal Auditing Standards (PSIAS), which were still in effect for the UK Public Sector during 2024/25, the Chief Audit Executive (the Head of Audit, Insurance and Risk at the Council) is required to provide independent assurance and an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's risk management and control framework. The internal audit service delivers an annual programme of risk-based audit activity, including counter-fraud and investigation activity and makes recommendations for the improvement of management of risk and control.

The Audit Committee approved the Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25 in March 2024. The Head of Audit is satisfied that sufficient work was undertaken during 2024/25 to draw a reasonable conclusion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's arrangements to manage its systems of internal control and its governance processes, including risk management.

The Head of Audit's annual report for 2024/25 was presented to the Audit Committee on 25 June 2025, with an opinion on the effectiveness of these arrangements:

"The opinion on the Council's Internal Control environment, based upon the audit work undertaken, is that overall it provides good controls, in most but not all areas, with a low risk of not achieving objectives and that the key controls in place are adequate and effective, such that reasonable assurance can be placed on the operation of the Council's functions."

It should, however, be noted that all risks of failure cannot be eliminated, and the assurance given is therefore reasonable and not absolute.

During 2024/25 Internal Audit completed its annual self-assessment of compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), confirming substantial compliance, which was reported to the Audit Committee at its meeting in June 2025. New Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS) took effect in the UK Public Sector from 1 April 2025, and the Council is due an external compliance assessment for the 2025/26 year, to be completed in May 2026. The new CIPFA Code on The Governance of Internal Audit also applies from 1 April.

All key financial systems were audited in 2024/25; audit reports were provided to management and outcomes reported to the Audit Committee. One high priority recommendation was outstanding from 2023/24, relating to the Leisure contract, and this was monitored by the Audit Committee in 2024/25 until it was resolved. Three high priority recommendations were made for 2024/25. One of these related to the Wixams Station project, however this was immediately implemented. Two relate to the s106 contributions audit; implementation will be monitored by the Audit Committee.

Internal Audit assessed the Council's corporate governance arrangements by measuring them against the requirements of the governance framework outlined in the CIPFA/SOLACE publication "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government". This included an audit of the Council's Risk Management and Performance Management arrangements, both of which received a Substantial Assurance audit opinion. The Risk Management Strategy was updated during the year and approved by Executive in June 2024. The operational risk registers were also all updated during 2024/25. The Strategic Risk Register was received and reviewed by the Executive at its June 2024 meeting.



## Anti-Fraud and Corruption

The Council is committed to the prevention and detection of fraud and has established a robust framework in this regard which includes:

- Anti-Fraud Strategy
- Fraud Risk Register
- Corporate Confidential Reporting Policy
- Bribery and Anti-Money Laundering Policies

The Head of Audit attends Audit Group meetings with other Local Authorities, which share fraud intelligence, and the Council is a member of the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN) receiving regular fraud alerts. The Council also participates in the bi-annual national Fraud Initiative (NFI). The Fraud team's annual performance results are reported to the Audit Committee each year.

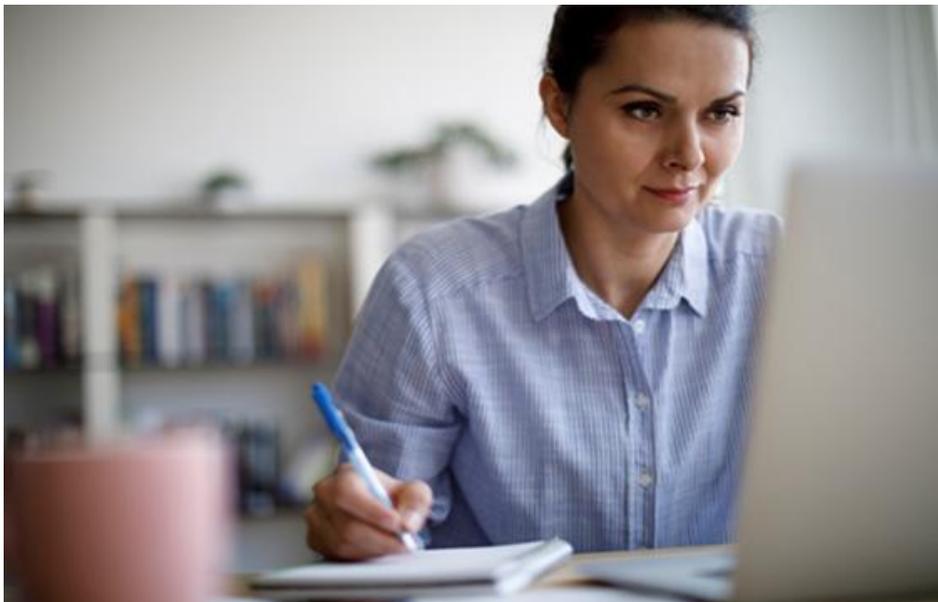
## External Audit

The Council's external auditors (KPMG LLP) completed their audit of the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts, by the end of February 2025. This was a "disclaimer opinion" due to the 2022/23 accounts also being disclaimed by the Council's previous auditors, EY LLP. This was due to the previous auditor's lack of capacity to conduct the audit, and not reflective of the Council's finances.

KPMG also concluded they are satisfied that the Council made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources in 2023/24.

The full audit opinion can be seen in the [2023/24 accounts](#).

The auditors are due to provide their audit opinion on the 2024/25 accounts by the end of February 2026.



## Other assurances

### Budget Monitoring

The Council has continued to enhance the robustness of budget management processes, to enable more informed and timely resource management decisions.

Budget monitoring meetings are held with Portfolio Holders, Executive Directors, Service Directors and Finance to discuss and analyse the monthly forecasts for revenue and capital budgets. The breadth and inclusivity of the discussions at Budget Monitoring meetings has enabled Budget Holders to be more informed and able to give greater insight into their budgets and forecasts to ensure better financial decisions are made.

This was particularly important in 2024/25 due to significant pressures in demand-led services. The Council implemented a range of cost reduction strategies to reduce the projected overspend including reviews of commitments by senior managers, maximizing grant funding, reducing costs, and delaying projects where possible. In addition to this, budget monitoring reports during 2024/25 put an enhanced focus on high-risk areas and project boards continued to address spending related to the high-risk demand-led services.



### CIPFA Financial Management Code

The CIPFA Financial Management Code translates the principles of good financial management into a series of financial standards that comprise leadership and accountability, governance and financial management, medium term financial planning to inform and ensure financial resilience, monitoring financial performance to address emerging issues through to financial reporting. Taken together these financial management standards underpin the effective governance of the use and control of resources utilised by the Council in pursuance of its stated objectives.

2021/22 was the first full year requiring demonstration of compliance. The Council complies with the requirements of the Financial Management Code. Most statements are 'Green' but there are some 'Amber'-rated statements reflecting opportunities for strengthening existing practice and/or ensuring that existing practice is embedded across the Council. There are no 'Red' statements, or areas of non-compliance. The full report on compliance with the Code for 2024/25 was considered by the Audit Committee in June 2025 as part of the EDoR's report on the financial administration of the Council.

### CIPFA Resilience Review

In February 2025 Full Council received the statutory Section 25 report from the Council's section 151 officer which made three recommendations to improve financial resilience, including carrying out a Resilience Review during 2025/2026 in light of the diminishing level of revenue reserves. CIPFA completed this review in August 2025 and their report, and the Council's 'roadmap' to address the actions, was approved by Executive decision in September.

## Corporate Plan and Business Support Reporting

2024/25 was a transitional period moving from the previous Corporate Plan (2022-2026) to the new Corporate Plan 2024/25 to 2027/28.

Quarterly (key indicator) performance reports and a monthly dashboard of high-level performance indicators were provided to the Executive and Corporate Leadership Team for review and intervention. Overview and Scrutiny Committees also reviewed performance on a regular basis.

The year-end outturn for 2024/25 against the Corporate Plan 2022-26 was reported to Executive on 9 July 2025 via the Corporate Plan Year End Performance Report.

The Council's ongoing Efficiency Plan is aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2026. The Efficiency Plan sets out the changes to the operating model in relation to support and enabling activities and strategic core activities. How these are organised (structures), delivered (commissioned / procured) and process re-engineered (digital operating model) will reduce the cost of delivery and better meet the needs of residents and businesses.



## Corporate Plan 2024/25 to 2027/28

As part of the development of the new Plan, the Council engaged with its staff, stakeholders and residents over an extended timetable, taking into consideration comments from the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge to take more time to consider the Council's priorities. The Executive considered the outcomes of the engagement work in Autumn 2024, and Full Council approved the [Corporate Plan 2024/25 to 2027/28](#) in November 2024.

The plan sets out four priorities and key objectives:

- Supporting Individuals and Families and Empowering Communities
- Protecting the Environment
- Stimulating Economic Growth in Bedford Borough
- Promoting Health and Wellbeing

The high-level Plan will be supported by directorate service plans, policies and strategies.

## Overview and Scrutiny

The Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee process has provided challenge and has monitored the Council's policies and performance on an ongoing basis.

During 2024/25 the Members of O&S continued to work together, developing and using their knowledge and expertise, and that of others to the best effect. An evidence-based approach to the O&S work has been instrumental in achieving useful results.

There have been contributions from a range of stakeholders, including voluntary sector organisations, officers and Members of the Council.

Key areas considered by [overview and scrutiny committees](#) include Adult Care Charges, Recruitment and retention of frontline adult social care staff, family hubs, Bedford Borough Year of Reading 2025, Budget scrutiny, Major review on financial support for residents, special area charges, acquisition of property, leisure contract, kerbside glass trial, bus service review, accessing health services and GP services, mental health services for children and young people, maternity services at Bedfordshire hospitals and many more key areas affected residents of Bedford Borough.

There has also been joint scrutiny between overview and scrutiny committees to work collaboratively with issues crossing over one or more committee work programmes.

## Audit Committee

In May 2022, CIPFA published its *Position Statement on Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police 2022*. It also issued, in October 2022, *Audit Committees Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police CIPFA, 2022*. These documents represent CIPFA's view on audit committee practice and principles that local government bodies in the UK should adopt. CIPFA expects that all local government bodies should make their best efforts to adopt the principles, aiming for effective audit committee arrangements.

This will enable those bodies to meet their statutory responsibilities for governance and internal control arrangements, financial management, financial reporting and internal audit.

The Audit Committee carried out a self-assessment of its effectiveness in September 2022, which resulted in a number of actions including appointing an independent member of the Audit Committee, in line with good practice. The exercise is due to be carried out again in 2026.



## Member Training and Development

The Council is committed to supporting the development of all Elected Members to enable them to perform effectively in their current roles and to develop to meet future challenges.

A full Member Induction and Development Programme was delivered to all Councillors in 2023, including the newly elected Councillors, and this continued in 2024 with specific training and development provision to ensure that Councillors receive full support in understanding the role of a Borough Councillor to better support the residents of the Borough. This includes statutory training such as Planning and Licensing legislation and processes.

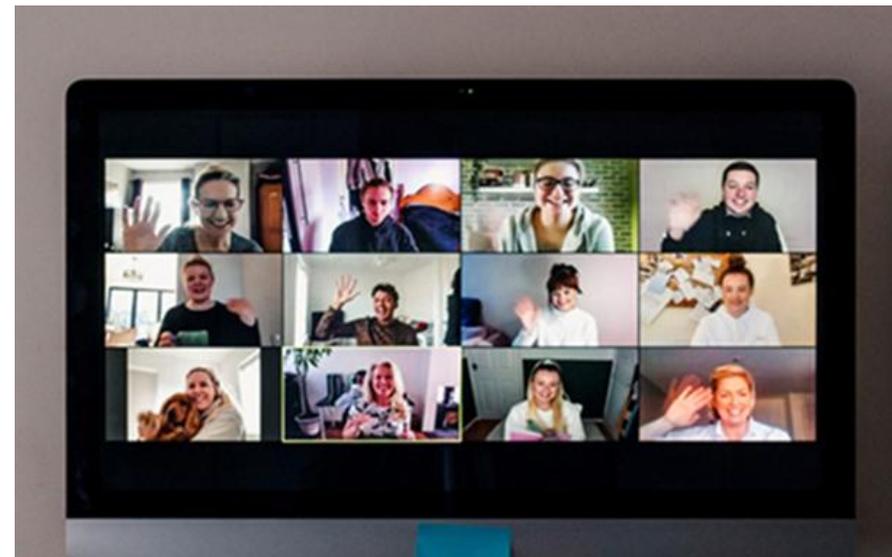
## Staff Training and Development

Statutory, mandatory, and essential continuous professional development training requirements within service areas are determined by Heads of Service through the completion of a training needs analysis on an annual basis. This is informed by development needs identified through the Council's Annual Performance Development Review process and ongoing supervisory and 1:1 meetings throughout the year.

The Chief Executive is also subject to an annual performance review by a member panel.

## Online Learning Platform

The Council's online learning platform, BBOLT, offers an innovative and accessible approach to satisfy the learning needs of our agile workforce. The wide range of e-learning courses available via BBOLT offer the core of the Council's staff training programme, including statutory, mandatory, essential CPD and personal development training. It also provides an online booking functionality for in-person or virtual classroom training.



## Staff Engagement

The Council has in place a Workforce Strategy for the period 2022-2026 which sets out the Council's bold ambition to empower and support staff to fulfil their potential and undertake their job in the best possible way and to make sure the Council is an employer of choice.

Initiatives within the strategy that are already in place are an Apprenticeship Strategy to maximise apprenticeships within the Council and the use of the apprenticeship levy; a number of Staff Networks; Staff Recognition Scheme and wellbeing initiatives such as an Employee Assistance Programme, a Work Well page on the intranet, the introduction of Wellbeing Champions and a Workplace Mental Health Action Plan. A review of the Workforce Strategy for the period until 2029 is due to commence.

In addition, staff engagement and collaboration actions are in place including Staff Pulse Surveys, the Big Conversation, Bedford Leaders, Bedford Stars Awards, One Team Hour a general One Team and a One Team which spotlights on activities and achievements within specific services across the Council.

## Stakeholder Engagement

To provide services that are best suited to its customers, the Council listens to its citizens and stakeholders. Consultation around an issue helps tailor services and meet the needs of the community.

Consultation helps garner views and preferences, help understand possible unintended consequences of a policy or decision, or to get views on implementing change. This ensures that decisions and policies are made from a strong evidence base.

The Council now also undertakes a more comprehensive Citizens' Survey (introduced in September 2023). This is an initiative designed to empower residents to help shape the future of Bedford Borough and make their voices heard and share their valuable insights and feedback on a number of services provided by Bedford Borough Council along with other essential agencies and stakeholders. The Citizens' Survey is a crucial tool for the Council to understand the needs and aspirations of our community. This feedback contributes to the key decisions we make as a Council, and we are committed to ensuring that the voices of all our residents are heard to help shape policies and priorities.



During 2024/25, key public consultations included:

- Family Hub Parenting Survey
- Draft Corporate Plan 2024-2027 Survey
- Country Parks Customer Satisfaction Surveys
- Budget Efficiency Savings 2025/26
- Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26
- Adult Services Telecare Charging Survey
- BLMK Residential Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment Survey
- Taxi & Private Vehicle Hire License Survey
- Community Engagement Survey
- Public Spaces Protection Order Surveys
- Statement Of Community Involvement Survey

## Complaints

In 2024/25, the Council responded to 396 complaints at stage 1 and 42 complaints at stage 2 of our Corporate Complaints Procedure. Additionally, 13 complaints were addressed via our Adult Social Care Complaints Procedure and 18 were addressed via our Children's Social Care Complaints Procedure. In total, 92.5% of complaints were responded to within the prescribed timescales. The Council identified some learning outcomes from the complaints received and these have been incorporated into changes in service provision.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Annual Review Letter for 2024/25 was presented to Executive in September 2025.

## Health and Safety

Health and Safety risk management is integrated within the Council's Constitution through its Financial and Contract Procedure Rules, its overall Risk Management Policy, Corporate Asset Plan, Contract Procedure Rules, Corporate Plan, the management of human resources, organisational development and change management, and is included in all the Council's management systems when and where appropriate.

The Council's Corporate Safety Steering Group, attended by a representative from each Directorate, meets every four months to review the effectiveness of health and safety management systems, arrangements, and organisation within each Directorate. The group is also open to Trade Union and non-Trade Union Health and Safety representatives.

Each Directorate provides a written report through its nominated Directorate Health and Safety Coordinator on its status in respect of the implementation of this Corporate Health and Safety Policy and progress against the respective Directorate Reports and Actions Plans, as appropriate.



## External Reviews

### Children's Services - OFSTED

In November 2024 there was a joint Ofsted/CQC Area SEND inspection of Bedford Borough Local Area Partnership.

The inspection outcome was that the local area partnership's special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership is taking action where improvements are needed. The next full area SEND inspection will be within approximately five years.

The local area partnership is to update and publish its strategic plan based on the recommendations set out in the report, which were:

- The partnership should establish more effective processes to ensure that children and young people's needs are identified quickly and accurately. This is so that unmet needs in schools are addressed earlier and better, and so children and young people with SEND at risk of exclusion are helped more proactively.
- Some children and young people with SEND wait too long for neurodevelopmental assessment in Bedford Borough. The partnership has a limited oversight of how long these children are waiting. The partnership should improve how it uses information and data to work collaboratively to reduce the delays in neurodevelopmental assessments that some children and young people currently face.



### Adults Services – Care Quality Commission review

The Council was notified on 7 April 2025 that it had formally entered the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection process.

Since 2023, CQC have had a new duty to assess how local authorities are meeting their adult social care statutory duties under part 1 of the Care Act (2014).

The CQC assessment of adult social care is an important change for adult social functions. It marks a shift from a system founded on council owned sector-led improvement (SLI) to one of external assessment.

CQC will use their new single assessment framework to assess local authorities across four themes:

- Working with people
- Providing support
- Ensuring safety
- Leadership

The Council submitted its information return to CQC on 2 May, and the review was carried out in September 2025. The Council is awaiting the formal outcome.

## Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge

The Council undertook a Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge (sometimes referred to as a 'peer review') from 31 October to 3 November 2023, with a focus on governance and financial planning and management.

The LGA has a programme of Corporate Peer Challenges for member local authorities where a team of member and officer peers from fellow local authorities will provide a "robust, strategic and credible challenge and support to councils".

As part of the process, the Council published the LGA's [Feedback Report](#) on its website. The Executive agreed an [Action Plan](#), in January 2024, to deliver against those recommendations. Actions focused on governance development, budget processes, and supporting the workforce.

There was a follow-up visit by the LGA, in October 2024, within 12 months of the Peer Challenge. The Audit Committee received an update on the progress on the actions identified in the [Peer Review Action Plan](#) at its meeting on 18 March 2025.



## Best Value Inspection

The Council has been notified by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, on 10 February 2026, that a best value inspection will take place between February and June 2026.

## Governance Conclusion, Governance Issues in 2024/25 and Action Plan

This Statement is intended to provide reasonable assurance. It is stressed that no system of control can provide absolute assurance against material misstatement or loss. The governance framework was in place at Bedford Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2025 and up to the date of approval of the annual statement of accounts. Overall, the Council's governance arrangements remain adequate and effective.

Following the review of the Council's governance arrangements, by the Head of Audit, **five** significant issues have been identified for 2024/25 that need to be addressed to ensure continuous improvement in the Governance Framework. The Council will complete the following key actions to address these issues (more detail at pages 26-31):

- **Financial resilience** – further review the financial position and take positive action to remain financially sustainable.
- **Constitution Review** – complete external review of the Constitution and strengthen training, streamline Executive and Scrutiny & Overview arrangements, and improve communication of Council decisions.
- **Capital Programme** - increase oversight over the capital programme and capital receipts.
- **Procurement, Contracts Register and Contract Management** – strengthen arrangements for managing contracts and the contracts register and improving adherence with Contract Procedure Rules.
- **Information Governance** - review and update the Knowledge and Information Strategy, the Document Retention and Destruction Policy and Electronic Document Retention Strategy.

The aim is to address these issues during the 2025/26 financial year, by way of an action plan as tabled below, which is subject to monitoring by the Audit Committee.

<b>2024/25 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTION PLAN</b>		
<b>Issue No.</b>	<b>Issue Identified and Recommendation</b>	<b>Summary of Action Taken/Proposed</b>
<b>1</b>	<p><b><u>FINANCIAL RESILIENCE</u></b></p> <p>The 2024/25 budget position reported in-year showed the Council was continuing to manage significant demand pressures specifically in Agency Staff, Adult Social Care, and Temporary Accommodation. Managing the budget dominated the financial year, with spending and recruitment controls in place. It is likely additional reserves will be required to fund an overspend at year-end. The budget for 2025/26 includes investments of £7.8 million and service efficiencies of £10.5 million. There are several risk areas, particularly relating to demand-led services.</p> <p>Given the level of risk, the EDor's Section 25 Report highlighted three key recommendations to enable the Council to further review its financial position and take positive action to remain financially sustainable:</p>	<p><b>PARTLY IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <p><b>Responsible Officer: Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and the Executive Director of Resources</b></p> <p>The decision taken by Executive on 22 January 2025 was that the information contained in the s25 report be taken into account before taking decisions on the 2025/2026 Annual Revenue Budget proposals and noted the following proposed recommendations for the Council to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• carry out a Resilience Review during 2025/2026 in light of the diminishing level of revenue reserves;</li> <li>• put in place plans to replenish the General Fund Balance to within the recommended risk assessed range within a two-year period taking into consideration the potential for further use of reserves in 2024/2025; and</li> <li>• develop a Transformation Plan to manage the expected reduction in Government Funding from 2026/2027.</li> </ul> <p><b>Update on Recommendation 1a: IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <p><b>Target date: 30 June 2025</b></p> <p>The CIPFA Resilience Review was completed in August 2025, and the Council developed a financial roadmap to recovery in response.</p> <p><b>Update on Recommendation 1b: IN PROGRESS</b></p> <p><b>Target date: 31 March 2027</b></p> <p><b>Update on Recommendation 1c: IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <p>The Council put in place a <a href="#">Stability Plan</a> which was approved by Executive on 23 April 2025. Actions set out in the Stability Plan were categorised as short (immediate), medium (Year 2) and long (Years 3 and 4) to align, as far as possible to the medium-term financial plan that covers the period to March 2029. Many of these actions are ongoing. The Council has now published its <a href="#">Improvement Plan</a>, noted by Full Council on 14 January, consolidating the Stability Plan and roadmap into one clear plan that will enable the Council to transform the way it operates in future.</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 1a:</b> <b>Undertake a CIPFA Resilience Review.</b></p>	
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 1b:</b> <b>Take steps to rebuild reserves to within recommended limits within two years.</b></p>	
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 1c:</b> <b>Put in place a Transformation Plan to manage the budget gap over the medium term.</b></p>	

<b>2024/25 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTION PLAN (CONT.)</b>		
<b>Issue No.</b>	<b>Issue Identified and Recommendation</b>	<b>Summary of Action Taken/Proposed</b>
<b>2</b>	<p><b><u>CONSTITUTION REVIEW</u></b></p> <p>Governance is important to ensure that the Council acts in the right way and in a timely, open and honest manner. A key requirement of good governance is an up-to-date constitution. The Council will continue to ensure that reports provide appropriate levels of information for decision-making and scrutiny. This will include publication of business cases for key investments such as property acquisition.</p>	<p><b>IN PROGRESS</b></p> <p><b>Responsible Officer: Service Director for Governance and Monitoring Officer</b></p> <p><b>Target date: 31 December 2025 Revised target: 30 June 2026</b></p> <p>During 2024/25 the Council continued its focus on improving the Constitution. The cross-party Constitution Working Group commissioned the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS), supported by the Local Government Association (LGA), to provide some independent oversight to assist in a comprehensive review of the Constitution.</p> <p>Some slight changes were made to the Constitution during 2024/25 outside of the comprehensive review, the most significant being an amendment to the rules regarding Call In which corrected an anomaly associated with potential referrals to Full Council. Use of the Call In mechanism increased during 2024/25, with four decisions ‘called-in’ for consideration by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to their implementation.</p> <p>The Council appointed a new permanent Monitoring Officer in July 2025 and has been reviewing the Constitution to complement the work of the CfGS and LGA, working closely with the Constitution Working Group. A report from the CfGS was received, including a number of recommendations, which were considered by the Constitution Working Group in December 2025 and have been embedded into a timetable which should result in the Council having a refreshed Constitution in place at its Annual Meeting in May 2026. Agreement between the political groups on the scope of the constitution review is still to be resolved.</p> <p>Revised versions of Council Procedure Rules and Executive Procedure Rules, as part of the first stage of this timeline, were recommended to Full Council for approval at the General Purposes Committee held on 6 January 2026 following consideration by the Constitution Working Group in December.</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 2:</b></p> <p><b>The drive for effective governance and effective corporate administration will necessitate an external review of the Constitution to ensure that it is consistent with the law, unambiguous, and understood.</b></p>	

<b>2024/25 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTION PLAN (CONT.)</b>		
<b>Issue No.</b>	<b>Issue Identified and Recommendation</b>	<b>Summary of Action Taken/Proposed</b>
<b>3</b>	<p><b><u>CAPITAL PROGRAMME</u></b></p> <p>The Council has an ambitious Capital Programme, approaching £½ billion in the next five years. Delivery of the programme is dependent on capital receipts and other sources of finance being accessible at the required stages of the programme. Monitoring the programme, management of slippage, transparency of decisions, and compliant contract procurement will be key governance requirements.</p> <hr/> <p><b>RECOMMENDATION 3:</b></p> <p><b>Increase oversight over the capital programme and capital receipts, including:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- overall monitoring of the programme;</li> <li>- linkage of projects in the programme, and their timing, to specific capital receipts e.g. expected government financing, or s106 receipts; and</li> <li>- obtaining specialist advice where necessary e.g. legal, procurement, construction or accounting experts.</li> </ul>	<p><b>PARTLY IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <p><b>Responsible Officer: Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and the Executive Director of Resources</b>  <b>Target date: 31 December 2025 Revised target: 31 March 2026</b></p> <p>There is now increased oversight and monitoring of the capital programme, and capital receipts, through monthly meetings with the Finance Portfolio holder, the Mayor, and relevant officers, where Capital Programme delivery is reviewed.</p> <p>There is a weekly meeting between Property, Finance and the Mayor on the delivery of capital receipts.</p> <p>There are individual Project Boards in place for some capital projects, where they are more significant.</p> <p>The Council has procured specialist advice for some recent projects, for example the Wixams Station where the Council engaged the services of legal advisors with rail expertise, and also engaged a specialist rail cost consultant. The Council has engaged a consultant to deliver strategic financial advice now that the station project is to be handed over to central government and Universal, to ensure that the Council accounts for the project correctly. Conclusion of this project is dependent on the project plans for the four station platform by DFT/Network Rail being finalised.</p> <p>Additional oversight through an officer scrutiny meeting is to be put in place, independent of the SAG.</p>

**2024/25 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTION PLAN (ACTIONS FROM PRIOR YEAR)**

Issue No.	Issue Identified and Recommendation	Summary of Action Taken/Proposed
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4</b></p> <p><b>(c/f FROM 2023/24)</b></p>	<p><b><u>PROCUREMENT, CONTRACTS REGISTER AND CONTRACT MANAGEMENT</u></b></p> <p>Adherence to the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs) remains an issue of concern, particularly in relation to the recording of contracts and subsequent contract management, including the capacity of managers and services to procure and manage contracts effectively and efficiently due to conflicting demands on staff resources.</p>	<p><b>IN PROGRESS</b></p> <p><b>Responsible Officer: Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and the Chief Officer for Commercial Services and Business Transformation</b></p> <p><b>Update on Recommendation 4a: <i>IN PROGRESS</i></b></p> <p><b>Target date: 31 December 2024</b></p> <p><b>Revised target date: 30 September 2026</b></p> <p>A Procurement Board made up of CLT and Senior Procurement staff was established in March 2024 with the aim of the Board being the primary strategic decision-making body through which commissioning and procurement activity is governed.</p> <p>A review of the commissioning and procurement arrangements across the Council, to ensure resources are sufficient and are in the right places to address the current weaknesses, was in progress, but was delayed by the Council-wide restructure (Phase 2) which was completed in June 2025. The Chief Officer retired in July 2025 and was replaced by an interim Head of Service in September, who is reviewing the structure of Commissioning and Procurement.</p> <p><b>Update January 2026:</b> CLT gave approval on 6 November for the interim HOS to launch a comprehensive commercial maturity assessment using the Commercial Continuous Improvement Assessment Framework, sponsored by the UK Cabinet Office. Self-assessment and external Peer Review is due to be concluded by 3 February 2026. This will lead to a comprehensive and structured commercial improvement programme to be approved by CLT. An additional workstream will be added to the programme called operating model, people and structures. There is a separate ongoing review regarding the relationship between Commissioning and Procurement. This will feed into the discussion around the operating model, people and structures in SCP.</p> <p>A new Procurement Board will be launched in March 2026; chaired by the Executive Director of Resources and HOS of SCP will be deputy chair.</p>
	<p><b>RECOMMENDATION 4a:</b></p> <p><b>Review the structure of Commissioning and Procurement arrangements across the Council to create sufficient capacity across all service areas and provide support to comply with the Council’s Contract Procedure Rules.</b></p>	
	<p><b>cont...</b></p>	

<b>2024/25 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTION PLAN (ACTIONS FROM PRIOR YEAR)</b>		
<b>Issue No.</b>	<b>Issue Identified and Recommendation</b>	<b>Summary of Action Taken/Proposed</b>
<p><b>4</b> (c/f FROM 2023/24)</p>	<p><b><u>PROCUREMENT, CONTRACTS REGISTER AND CONTRACT MANAGEMENT - CONT</u></b></p> <p>In some service areas, there is still some off-contract expenditure that has not been entered into the contracts register, and a number of contracts that have expired and need to be re-tendered. This has arisen in some teams following restructure where budgets sit in one team, but many of the contracts are let and managed by another.</p> <p><b>RECOMMENDATION 4b:</b>  <b>The Strategic Commissioning and Procurement team should continue to analyse all expenditure across the Council, producing the Procurement Dashboard, with the aim of working with service areas to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Reduce off-contract spend.</b></li> <li>- <b>Ensure that contracts are retendered on a timely basis.</b></li> <li>- <b>Ensure that contract extensions are reviewed and approved by the Procurement Board; and</b></li> <li>- <b>Provide effective procurement and commissioning support and training.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>IN PROGRESS</b></p> <p><b>Responsible Officer: Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and the Chief Officer for Commercial Services and Business Transformation</b></p> <p><b>Update on Recommendation 4b: <i>IN PROGRESS</i></b></p> <p><b>Target date: 31 December 2024</b></p> <p><b>Revised target date: 30 September 2026</b></p> <p>In 2024/25, the SCP team continued to use their Procurement Dashboard tool to analyse expenditure across the Council which identified non-compliance with the CPRs in some areas.</p> <p>There was success in recruiting to the role of Senior Compliance Officer within the SCP team who works with service areas to ensure increased compliance with CPRs by reviewing off-contract spend, providing training, and support with commissioning and procurement regulations and ensuring contracts are recorded and placed upon the contracts register.</p> <p>Regular Procurement Dashboard reports will continue to be produced by the team, and monitored by the Procurement Board, to ensure compliance with CPRs and identify issues.</p> <p><b>Update January 2026:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new Gateway process is being developed with final implementation for March 2026 (Gateway 1 Procurement Strategy, 2 Contract Award and 3 Contract Management Review 12-month post Contract Award);</li> <li>• The Performance Dashboard is being reviewed to include Summary of Contract Register and Pipeline activity, Waivers, PO Compliance, KPI Data, Commercial Improvement Initiatives as delivered on a monthly basis. SCP engaged with Performance team to develop this Dashboard.</li> <li>• By the end of the financial year March 2026, all SCP team members will have a Personal Progress Discussion (PPD).</li> <li>• Improved analytics capabilities - New Contracts Register and Pipeline Intend Modules – we are in the process of implementing two new Intend Modules to improve data analytics and the relationship between our Contracts Register and Pipeline to enhance Compliance and improve visibility.</li> </ul>

<b>2024/25 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT ACTION PLAN (ACTIONS FROM PRIOR YEAR)</b>		
<b>Issue No.</b>	<b>Issue Identified and Recommendation</b>	<b>Summary of Action Taken/Proposed</b>
<b>5</b> <b>(c/f from 2023/24)</b>	<p><b><u>INFORMATION GOVERNANCE</u></b></p> <p><b>Information Governance Strategy:</b> The Knowledge and Information Strategy is dated 2018. An Information Governance framework helps organisations manage and protect their information assets in line with business objectives, legal and regulatory requirements, and industry standards.</p> <p>There are also new risks arising due to the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI) and the ability to utilise it for Council activities. An AI usage policy is in place, but there is a need to assess compliance with the Policy, and also to consider how to facilitate the use of AI whilst managing the risks.</p> <p><b>RECOMMENDATION 5a:</b> <b>The Knowledge and Information Strategy should be reviewed and updated to ensure adequate and effective information governance arrangements, including compliance with the AI Usage Policy.</b></p> <p><b>Retention of data:</b> The Council processes significant volumes of data in hard copy, within structured databases, and in unstructured data storage such as emails.</p> <p>The Local Government Classification Scheme published on the Intranet is considered as the Council’s corporate Document Retention and Destruction Policy. However, there is no date on the document to confirm its publication date.</p> <p>The Electronic Document Retention Strategy (EDRS) dated April 2023 on the Intranet does not cover all Directorates.</p> <p><b>RECOMMENDATION 5b:</b> <b>The corporate Document Retention and Destruction Policy and EDRS should be reviewed and updated.</b></p>	<p><b>PARTLY IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <p><b>Responsible Officers: Service Director for Governance and Monitoring Officer, Data Protection Officer (DPO) and the Information Governance Board (IGB)</b></p> <p><b>Update on Recommendation 5a:</b> <b>Target date: 31 December 2024</b> <b>Revised target: 30 September 2025</b></p> <p>The updated version of the Knowledge and Information Governance Strategy (KIGS) has now been published. This is a strategic framework that sets out how councils manage, protect, share, and use knowledge and information. Its purpose is to support effective decision-making, enhance service delivery, ensure legal and regulatory compliance, and promote transparency and public accountability. The KIGS was considered by the Information Governance Board Information Governance Board in November 2025 and was published subsequently in advance of the revised target date. <b>IMPLEMENTED</b></p> <p><b>Update on Recommendation 5b:</b> <b>Target date: 31 December 2024</b> <b>Revised target: 31 March 2026</b></p> <p>The existing Corporate Records Management Policy has been reviewed and confirmed that update is required, including linkage to an updated retention and destruction framework. Some progress has been made with reviewing the Retention and Destruction Procedures, collating the procedures from the various directorates and obtaining examples of policies from other authorities.</p> <p>However, as part of the corporate restructure, the new post of Manager for Higgins, Libraries &amp; Archives has only recently been appointed to. To help inform the LGCS / EDRS workstream, the DPO Team is updating the Corporate Record of Processing Activity (CRoPA) due March 2026, and this is intended to support the new Manager for Higgins, Libraries &amp; Archives with this workstream. It is anticipated that progress on this will be discussed at the upcoming Information Governance Board meeting on 11 February 2026. <b>IN PROGRESS</b></p>

## Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please telephone or write to us at our address below.

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**01234 267422**



**Bedford Borough Council**

Borough Hall

Cauldwell Street

Bedford MK42 9AP



[laura.church@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:laura.church@bedford.gov.uk)



[www.bedford.gov.uk](http://www.bedford.gov.uk)