



Annual Governance Statement

2022-23

Good Governance is about how the Council strives to do the right things, in the right way and for the benefit of the residents it serves.

Supported by:

Appendix A – Local Code of Corporate Governance

Appendix B – Summary of Extreme Potential Risks (Snapshot from Service Risk Registers)

WELCOME DORSET COUNCIL'S ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The **Annual Governance Statement** is a statutory document, which explains the processes and procedures in place to enable the council to conduct its functions effectively. Dorset Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. It needs to ensure that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. The Local Government Act 1999 sets out the Council's duty to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. This is reflected in our commitment to transformation and to being a learning organisation.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations (2015) also require the Council to conduct a review, at least once a year, on the effectiveness of its system of internal control and include an Annual Governance Statement reporting on the review with the Statement of Accounts. This document is the third such Annual Governance Statement for Dorset Council, following its inception on 1 April 2019. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (CIPFA/SOLACE) Delivering Good Governance publication (2016) describes principles of good governance to be applied in the public sector. This document is based upon the seven core principles that underpin the CIPFA/SOLACE governance framework.

The Governance Framework is comprised of the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the Council is directed, and its activities through which it is accountable to, engages with and leads the community. The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable 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 process of review and monitoring of governance arrangements across Dorset Council is an ongoing process with updates provided throughout the year. This Statement explains how the Council has complied with The Code and meets the requirements of Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015.



Matt Prosser
Chief Executive
Dorset Council



Cllr Spencer Flower
Leader
Dorset Council

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1. Dorset Councils Governance framework

Dorset Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. It needs to ensure that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. The Accounts and Audit Regulations (2015) require the Council to conduct a review, at least once a year, on the effectiveness of its system of internal control and include an Annual Governance Statement reporting on the review with the Statement of Accounts. In 2014, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) collaborated to produce The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector. The Framework sets the standard for local authority governance in the UK. The purpose of the Framework is to assist authorities individually in reviewing and accounting for their own unique approach, with the overall aim to ensure that:

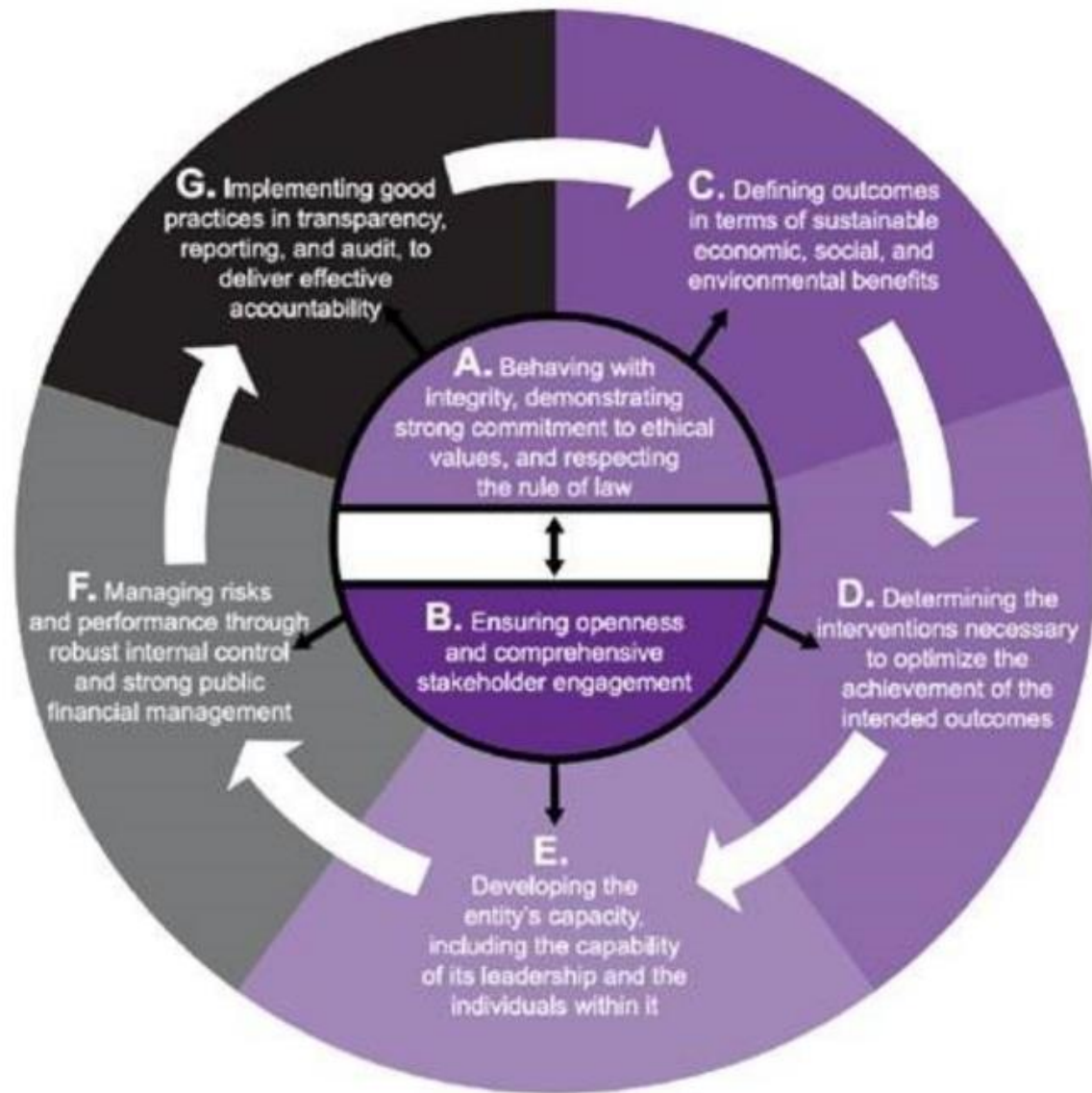
- Resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities; and
- There is sound and inclusive decision making.

The governance framework comprises the systems, processes, culture, and values, by which the Council is controlled. 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 system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable 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 the achievement of the Council's 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 for the year ended 31 March 2022, and up to the date of the approval of the Statement of Accounts.

2 Review of Effectiveness

Review and monitoring of governance arrangements across the Council is an ongoing process. This Statement explains how the Council has complied with its Local Code of Corporate Governance and meets the requirements of Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 regulation 6, in relation to conducting a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control and the publication of an annual governance statement.

Dorset Council is committed to the seven core principles of good practice contained in CIPFA/ SOLACE Governance Framework. A more detailed assessment can be found in the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance that supports this Annual Governance Statement:



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

Our Constitution establishes the roles and responsibilities for members of the executive (the Cabinet), Overview, Scrutiny, Audit and Governance and Regulatory Committees, together with officer functions. It includes details of delegation arrangements, codes of conduct and protocols for member/officer relations. The Constitution is kept under review to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose, with any proposed changes being considered by the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Constitution also contains procedure rules, standing orders and financial regulations that define clearly how decisions are taken and where authority lies for decisions. The statutory roles of Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer, and Chief Financial Officer (S151) are described together with their respective roles and contributions to provide for robust assurance on governance and to ensure that expenditure is lawful and in line with approved budgets and procedures.

The Head of Paid Service is the Chief Executive and is responsible for all Council employees. The Executive Director for Corporate Development is the Council's Chief Financial Officer and is responsible for safeguarding the Council's financial position and ensuring value for money. The Director for Legal and Democratic is the Monitoring Officer and is responsible for ensuring legality and promoting exacting standards of conduct in public life. Under Section 18(2) of the Children Act 2004, Local Authorities in England have a duty to appoint a Director of Children's Services. Local Authorities in England are also required to appoint a Director of Adult Services. Dorset Council have in place both Executive Directors for People (Adults & Children). Alongside these officers, the Executive Director of Place and the Director of Public Health comprise the Council's senior leadership team.

The Council's Constitution sets out how the Council operates. It states what matters are reserved for decision by the whole Council, the responsibilities of the Cabinet and the matters reserved for collective and individual decision, and the powers delegated to panels, committees, and partners. Decision making powers not reserved for councillors are delegated to chief officers (Chief Officer is defined as: Chief Executive; Executive Director; Director or Corporate Director). Each chief officer has a scheme of nomination setting out the powers that others may exercise on their behalf.

The Members' Code of Conduct advises an elected member (or voting co-opted member) what conduct is expected of them and whether their conduct constitutes a criminal offence. A Code of Conduct also exists for staff which sets out the standards of conduct expected of all council employees and prevents employees from being in a situation where they may be vulnerable to an accusation of favouritism or bias or other improper motives, whether this is real or perceived.

The Council operates under an Executive (Cabinet) model, which oversees the formulation of all major policies, strategies, and plans. The Cabinet also lead on the preparation of the Council's budget. The primary counterbalance to our Cabinet is through the two Overview

Committees, the two Scrutiny Committees and the Audit and Governance Committee. These Committees are in place to provide support and a robust level of challenge to the Executive.

We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity, valuing diversity, and eliminating discrimination. In early 2022 the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Board was established to oversee and embed equality, diversity, and inclusion within our organisation and in our external work. It also supports the implementation of the council's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy by prioritising activity within its action plan and monitoring progress.

B) Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

All elected members represent their electoral ward. Those not appointed to the Cabinet support the development of policy and scrutinise decisions made by the Cabinet or by officers under delegated powers. They also review services provided by the Council and its partners. The Council's committee structure as set out in the Constitution includes two overview committees and two scrutiny committees, one of which is the designated statutory health scrutiny committee responsible for reviewing proposals for significant changes to NHS services in Dorset. The Council's overall policy is represented through the Council Plan.

Committee meetings are open to the public, and agenda papers and minutes are transparently available on the internet. Since 2019, Committee meetings have been broadcast live using webcasting, and available for viewing via YouTube and the Council's website.

A complaints procedure and a whistle-blowing policy and procedure are maintained and kept under review, providing the opportunity for members of the public and staff to raise issues when they believe that appropriate standards have not been met. An annual complaints report analyses complaints received, their resolution and key lessons learnt. This is presented to both Scrutiny Committees. The Audit and Governance Committee has responsibility for overseeing the investigation of complaints against members.

The Council has a whistleblowing policy, which encourages employees and other concerned parties to report any instances of suspected unlawful conduct, financial malpractice, or actions that are dangerous to the public or environment. In addition to a fraud and whistleblowing intranet page, the Chief Executive communicates this to all employees on an annual basis to make them aware of this policy. The policy is supported by a confidential whistleblowing hotline and email address. The Council expects the highest standards of conduct and personal behaviour from councillors and employees. These standards are defined and communicated through codes of conduct and protocols.

Our Communications team provides a wide range of support for the whole council including using social media, internal communications, marketing and promotions advice, media relations. Public consultation plays a key part in the decision-making process, across the full range of the Council's services.

Minutes for the two Stakeholder committees, Care Dorset Holdings Ltd and Dorset Centre of Excellence, are available on the Council's website.

The Shareholder Committee for Care Dorset Holdings Ltd is responsible for conducting the Council's shareholder function for Care Dorset Holding Limited. This includes to provide social care across residential and non-residential settings for elderly and vulnerable adults in Dorset.

The Dorset Centre of Excellence (Company) was incorporated on 11 June 2021 and the purpose of the Company is to operate an independent special school and the longer-term vision at the former St Mary's School site. The membership of the committee is made up of 5 members of Cabinet, to perform its shareholder function - to oversee the strategic relationship between the Council and the Company and decision-making.

A disclosure log has been added to the Council's website, transparently including responses to Freedom of Information requests received.

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

A Council Plan incorporates ten cabinet commitments and focuses on five priorities:

- Protecting our natural environment, climate, and ecology
- Creating stronger, healthier communities
- Creating sustainable development and housing
- Driving economic prosperity
- Becoming a more responsive, customer focused council

Delivery of this plan is supported by service plans and individual staff performance reviews, via objectives set in our appraisal platform "My Roadmap." This demonstrates a 'golden thread' from the overarching Council Plan. These all include targets and, where appropriate, service standards against which service quality and improvement can be judged.

Service level reporting provides monthly management information in a range of formats determined by the senior leadership teams of each of the Council's directorates. To measure our performance, it is important to recognise that we carefully consider, amongst other things: statutory requirements, priorities, resources and how we compare to other places. We continue to strive to be open and transparent, and in line with our efforts to maximise the value in our business intelligence and information. The council provides performance dashboards that help to provide an insight into council activities. The framework makes use of a reporting by exception process whereby measures which are identified as off-track require explanation from accountable managers through a dedicated action tracking process with regular status updates.

New actions will be identified as part of the performance management process and added into the tracking process. This requires an accountable officer to explain why a target is off-track; identify actions to rectify; and a timeline for returning to within tolerance (path to green). A Data and Business Intelligence (BI) Strategy was approved in February 2022 and provides strategic direction to the council's next steps in our ambitions to place the use of data and intelligence at the core of decision making and policy development. It recognises the enormous potential that the better use of our data assets holds for improved decision-making, identification of new opportunities and service improvements both in terms of delivery and value for money.

D) Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of the intended outcomes.

Each Cabinet member has been assigned as a specific Portfolio Holder with roles and responsibility for different themes: i) Adult Social Care and Health; ii) Children, Education, Skills and Early Help; iii) Corporate Development and Transformation; iv) Culture, Communities and Customer Services; v) Economic Growth, Assets and Property; vi) Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy; vii) Highways, Travel and Environment; viii) Housing and Community Services; and xi) Planning. The Leader of the Council is the portfolio holder for Governance, Performance and Communications, business insight and performance, policy, democratic services and elections, legal services, and assurance.

A value for money framework sets out how to develop value for money service benchmarking across the council. Local Government bodies, auditors are required to give a conclusion on whether the council has proper arrangements in place to secure value for money and guidance identifies one single criterion for auditors to evaluate ***'In all significant respects, the audited body takes properly informed decisions and deploys resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people.'***

A climate change decision wheel was approved by Cabinet during 2022, to ensure that impacts on the climate are identified and responded to as part of the decision-making process.

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

The behaviours we demonstrate, the attitudes we hold and the approaches we take at work are key to the success of Dorset Council and our vision to be an employer of choice. We recognise that our people make our organisation, which is why our behaviours have been developed in partnership with members of our Employee Forum. Behaviours are the attitudes and approaches we bring to our work. They include how we do things; what we say and how we say it; how we treat people; and how we expect to be treated.

“My ROAD Map” is the Council’s continuous performance management framework for staff appraisal, designed to give staff the opportunity to focus on what is important to them to drive performance and development. Appropriate training is made available via a learning hub to ensure that staff can undertake their present role effectively and that they can develop to meet their and the County Council’s needs. This includes several mandatory modules: data protection; safeguarding; prevent; equality, diversity and inclusion and health and safety essentials. As part of an overarching People Strategy, the Council has developed an Employer Brand as part of our corporate priority to be an employer of choice. This brand is about defining who we are and what we have to offer as an employer, so we can build our reputation and attract, recruit, and retain employees.

The Employee Wellbeing team provide support to all employees and can offer links to a wide range of external sources of support for employees to look after both their physical and mental wellbeing.

The Staffing Committee determines staff terms and conditions; appoints and manages performances issues relating to senior officers.

F) Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong financial management

The Council’s monetary management arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) “Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government” (2010) as set out in the “Application Note to Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework”. The Chief Financial Officer (a role performed by the Executive Director for Corporate Development) has statutory responsibility for the proper management of the Council’s finances and is a key member of the senior leadership team. The Council’s assurance arrangements conform with the governance requirements of the CIPFA “Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit in Public Service Organisations” (2010).

We recognise that Risk Management is an essential part of delivering good governance and reduces the uncertainty of achieving outcomes as set out in the Council Plan. The Council remains committed to driving the organisation forward to achieve a risk aware culture and recognises that effective risk management is essential for a Council to demonstrate that it is acting in the best interests of its residents. Progress has been made with introduction of a risk PowerBI dashboard that helps stakeholders to focus on extreme and high-level risks. It is acknowledged that with such systems in place it will not eliminate all risks, but having systems, mitigations and controls will help to provide a robust process that considers any such risks. Dorset Council continues to work to better embed and help raise awareness of the principles of risk management and to assist officers, at all levels, in applying sound risk management and judgement.

Work continues to develop the council’s stance towards risk management to better assist colleagues, at all levels, in applying sound risk management principles and practices. Summary reports are received by the Audit and Governance Committee on a quarterly basis with an update on key issues from the Information Compliance and Emergency Planning services.

Risk update reports provide a quarterly view on Extreme and High-Level risks that are identified across all services, with separate schedules for Adults and Housing, Children's Services, Corporate Development Services and Place Services and considered by the Places and Resources and People and Health Scrutiny Committees. A summary page (Snapshot on Performance) also helps to provide focus on all the services with a series of graphs and headline statements. An internal audit on risk management during 2022/23 identified some improvements to be made to embedding the culture across all services, and this is reflected within the action plan. During 2023/24 the risk function will transfer into the Performance and Business Intelligence team to provide closer alignment with the performance framework and allow an existing business partner model to help embed the culture within services.

The council has appropriate arrangements in place to deal with fraud and corruption risks and is committed to maintaining its vigilance to tackle fraud. Southwest Audit Partnership reviewed the Council's fraud management arrangements during 2022 as part of a baseline review, and significant improvements were identified since the last review in 2020. A fraud risk assessment was undertaken and has been embedded within the Council's overarching risk register. An annual report on fraud and whistleblowing is received by the Audit and Governance Committee.

The Council's approach to information governance is led by a Strategic Information Governance Board, chaired by the Senior Information Risk Owner (the Director for Legal and Democratic). The work of the Board is supported by four working groups: i) Operational Information Governance Group; ii) Cyber Security Technical Group; iii) Digital Applications Governance Group; and iv) an Organisational Compliance and Risk Learning Group (which will be operational early 2023/24). The Council has an Information Compliance Team which is headed up by the Data Protection Officer and sits within the Assurance Service. Information and records management sits alongside the Archives service. A designated Cyber Security and ICT Continuity officer works within ICT Operations. These supporting teams have representation on the Strategic Information Governance Board. We complete the NHS Digital Security and Protection Toolkit annually to demonstrate that the organisation can be trusted to maintain the confidentiality and security of personal information, increasing public confidence that the NHS and partner organisations can be trusted with personal data.

The Council's Emergency Planning function sits within the Assurance Service and works in conjunction with Local Resilience Forum partners to plan, respond and learn from civil emergencies. The Covid-19 pandemic impacted upon people, assessing our resilience, requiring us to change the way we deliver services and driving the creation of new services to meet the needs of Dorset residents. Dorset Council has played a significant role in responding to the Covid-19 outbreak, both in the delivery of its own service responsibilities and as part of the multi-agency response coordinated through the Local Resilience Forum. The Council was able to maintain services to residents, prioritising services to those in greatest need and redeploying staff accordingly. Public Health Dorset, hosted by the Council, played a key part in responding to the pandemic. The Council's scheme of delegation enabled officers to make urgent decisions and transparency of decision making was maintained through the publication of decision notices. The Council recognises that the Covid-19 crisis has had a significant budgetary impact and will have a long-term effect on the level of resources available to the Council. As we move forward, we will continue to analyse the impact of Covid-19 and understand how the pandemic has impacted our strategic priorities.

Dorset Council continues to experience underfunding through central government annual settlements, limited increases in its council tax and under funding from the current business rates distribution methodology and the collateral ongoing impact surrounding Covid 19 Pandemic. Since the UK left the European Union in December 2020 the UK has been adjusting to the changing trade arrangements, reacting to the wider global economic impacts and Covid restrictions. The global economic challenges, and Ukraine conflict is placing cost of living pressure on households and businesses. There continues to be inflationary increases on food, fuel, and energy prices. These pressures are set to increase further in 2023. Dorset Council is supporting Ukrainian refugees and is offering support to the Ukrainian families living and working in Dorset. We also recognise the impact that the conflict in Ukraine is having on our wider EU communities, many of whom have links to neighbouring countries who are also affected. As a result of the conflict, energy and fuel prices are surging. The September 2022 mini budget saw increases in interest rates. As a result of soaring inflation, we have faced significant, and pay demands from public sector workers. We continue to deal with the unforeseen. Notable areas of risk and impacts for both the United Kingdom and the Council are:

- Continued political instability at a national level creating uncertainty in the financial markets and leading to a Bank of England intervention to help stabilise the position.
- Sixth successive quarter recording a fall in Real Household Disposable Income (Office for National Statistics data source).
- National Grid Demand Flexibility Service implementation, to support a continuous energy supply.
- Continued workforce pressures, including recruitment, retention and nationwide strike action, or threat of, within several sectors. Unions and workers demanding inflation matching pay rises.
- The continued impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, with ongoing support to Ukraine from the United Kingdom, amongst several other nations.
- Heightened awareness relating to environmental issues because of weather extremes.

The public sector is not in any way immune from the rising costs of energy and inflation placing additional, real pressures on the value of our Budget. We continue to work on our Covid Recovery Strategy, to create a more effective way of working together, focused on outcomes that matter to Dorset residents, with more flexibility, reduced reporting, and greater assurance. Many of our public services are on a journey to recovery following the acute phase of the pandemic. Moreover, during which the council has been experiencing cost pressures in relation to the range of services it delivers and uncertainty over future funding. The council is nevertheless obligated, under statute, to set a balanced budget for each budget year. Local government in Dorset has undergone a huge change with the county's nine councils being replaced by two entirely new organisations in 2019. This resulted in a reduction in costs by cutting duplication, benefiting from economies of scales, and further underpinned by a rigorous service transformation programme.

The money saved is being reinvested into important services for residents including housing, road maintenance, SEND provision within schools, social care, and waste collection. You can find out more about these changes and what it means for you at [Dorset Council External Audit review and report on the Council's financial statements \(including the Annual Governance Statement\)](#) and provide an opinion on the accounts together with the use of resources including providing a value for money opinion.

G) Implementing good practice in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability.

The work of internal audit aligns with the aims and objectives of the council, considering key risks, operations, and changes. To do this Internal Audit needs to be flexible in adapting audit plans to manage changing risks, priorities, and challenges. It is the responsibility of the Senior Leadership Team, and the Audit & Governance Committee to ensure that the audit work scheduled and completed throughout the year contains sufficient and appropriate coverage of key risks.

Dorset Council uses the services provided by SWAP (Southwest Audit Partnership) Internal Audit Services which is a public sector, not-for-profit partnership, owned by the public sector partners that it serves. The SWAP Partnership includes public sector partners, crossing eight Counties, but also providing services throughout the UK. The resulting programme is a combination of requested audit work aligned to service priorities, combined with audit work recommended by SWAP driven by our continuous risk assessment. This risk assessment is based on the live status of both the Council's strategic and service risk registers.

The results of these risk assessments are shared with senior management to obtain their view on the value of internal audit involvement. In developing risk assessments, SWAP take account of other sources of assurance, where relevant. Internal Audit is only one source of assurance, and the outcomes of internal audit reviews are considered alongside other sources, as part of the 'three lines' assurance model. It remains the responsibility of the council's Senior Leadership Team and the Audit & Governance Committee, to determine that the audit coverage contained within the proposed audit plan is sufficient and appropriate in providing independent assurance against the key risks faced by Dorset Council. SWAP provide a quarterly internal audit report to the Audit and Governance Committee.

External audit arrangements provide a financial audit statement, as per the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.

The Council is committed to achieving high standards of integrity and accountability. Our Anti-fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy sets out our zero-policy approach to such acts and records a clear commitment to deal with any cases robustly. We aim to provide an open environment whereby employees and those working for the Council can raise issues that they believe to be in the public interest. This policy sits alongside our Whistleblowing Policy and procedures which provides protection from any harassment, victimisation, or other detriment to any whistleblowing on serious wrongdoing.

3 Key Achievements during 2022-23

The Council continued to conduct significant transformation and restructuring as it began to harmonise the services inherited from the predecessor councils. These achievements included:

<p>New residential home for Dorset children</p>	<p>The council Invested in a new residential home for Dorset children in Weymouth to prevent them being placed in care outside of Dorset.</p> <p>The home officially opened in October 22.</p>	<p>Levelling up grant</p>	<p>Won government funding of £70,000, from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities for locally important buildings, sites, monuments, and features to be included on new Local Heritage Lists.</p>
<p>Awarded £2.13m from the Brownfield Land Release Fund</p>	<p>The grant funding will be used to help build almost 200 homes in Dorset on underused brownfield land.</p> <p>Helping local people and families get on the property ladder.</p>	<p>Homelessness and help for vulnerable adults</p>	<p>Awarded £500,000 of government funding to help tackle rough sleeping in the county. Established the 'Safe Space' project so people have a safe place to go when they are vulnerable or unable to get back to their accommodation in Weymouth.</p>
<p>Funding for local voluntary and community organisations</p>	<p>Local voluntary and community organisations across the county have been awarded a total of £209,689 in financial support from Dorset Council to help with their running costs. Dorset Council's community and culture project also awarded £66,094 to 18 local arts and sports organisations.</p>		
<p>Weymouth Regeneration</p>	<p>We reshaped Custom House Quay in Weymouth, giving priority to people rather than vehicles. This has resulted in better air quality and a new, harbour café culture. Dorset craftsmen and materials were used where possible. Part of this project included significant investment to improve Weymouth's railway forecourt. This work has created a more welcoming and accessible place for visitors, residents, and businesses, has better onward transport links and includes a nod to Weymouth's railway heritage through imaginative interpretation.</p>		
<p>Digital Technology</p>	<p>Dorset residents registered for the third Festival of The Future to learn about the benefits of digital technology. The five-day festival was staged at locations across Dorset to highlight the county's exciting digital future. More than 7,000 Dorset homes and businesses will be the first in the country to receive next generation broadband through the government's £5 billion Project Gigabit programme.</p>		
<p>Safer Streets</p>	<p>Initiatives to protect women and girls from violence will continue to operate after almost £250,000 of funding has been secured. Last year the council was awarded £380,000 for projects to help women and girls feel safer on our streets as part of the Government's Safer Streets Fund. A new project has been launched in Weymouth which will help to keep young women safer when they are outside of their family home. The Pineapple Project uses the principles of community guardianship to give young women a haven when things do not go to plan, by stepping into a local shop where they can charge their phone or put some distance between them and the person who is bothering them.</p>		

Investment in a new school for pupils with SEND in Dorset	Coombe House School, the new school for children in Dorset with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) officially opened in September this year. Over the next 18 months, the school will expand to its full capacity of 280 children and become a Dorset Centre of Excellence, providing a residential children's home, respite care centre and a workforce training centre for those who work with children with SEND. This is part of a £37.5 million investment over the next five years to provide the best education for Dorset children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.	
Planning	Combined the planning information from the six former district, borough, and county councils and 4.3 million documents have been transferred to a central system.	Community Governance Review of town and parish councils Completed a public consultation to ask residents their views on town and parish councils.
Climate and Ecological Emergency	<p>Delivery of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme which funded £19m programme of work to decarbonise council sites completed. This resulted in the installation of 350 energy saving measures at over 200 council-owned sites (including schools, leisure centres, country parks, waste depots, offices, and care homes). And is expected to save around 9 million kilowatt hours of energy annually. Just under £1million worth of grants have been awarded to 54 Dorset based organisations to support the installation of energy saving and renewable energy measures, through the council's ERDF funded Low Carbon Dorset programme. Combined, these projects are expected to save over 1,000 tonnes of CO₂ annually.</p> <p>Over £400,000 in grant funding awarded to farmers and land managers through the Dorset AONB Partnership's Farming in Protected Landscapes programme, which is hosted by Dorset Council and funded by Defra. Funds are supporting 57 projects focusing on nature recovery and climate change mitigation. Electrification of council pool fleet, funded through vehicle replacement fund and climate change capital budget, set to be complete by Mar 23. Dorset Council secured £2.7 million to increase the number of Electric Vehicle charging points. The funding comes from the new Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) pilot scheme. Dorset Council secured over £900,000 worth of funding to improve sections of two National Cycle Network routes in Dorset. Dorset Council also secured £2.5million in funding from the Environment Agency to stabilise, protect and repair the historic Cobb in Lyme Regis. This will be the fifth and final phase of their long-term Environmental Improvement Strategy in the seaside town. The overall cost of the project is expected to be around £3million, with the rest of the money provided by Dorset Council.</p>	
Waste Services	Successful changing of bin collections for 34,000 households in North Dorset leading to cost savings on vehicle use, increased reliability, and more efficient round configurations.	

Homes for Ukraine scheme	Around 720 Ukrainian refugees are calling Dorset home through the government's Homes for Ukraine scheme. Working with our Dorset Together partners, which includes local voluntary and community groups, the council is providing a range of advice and support to our Ukrainian guests and the 260 hosts who have kindly offered their homes.		
County Parks	Dorset Council's Durlston Country Park in Swanage received a grant of £35,400 from the Government's Culture Recovery Fund. Dorset Council has six countryside sites. All were awarded Green Flag status	Summer in Dorset	The council offered an incredible 18,000 funded places across 50 locations for eligible children to take part in Summer in Dorset activities. Over 1,500 children took part.
Family Hubs	Dorset Council was awarded £875,450 from the government's Family Hubs Local Transformation Fund for the work it is conducting on Family Hubs. Family Hubs are a network of welcoming places and spaces for children, young people, and their families where they will be able to chat without an appointment to get some help from a variety of services and take part in support groups or join in activities.		
Recognised Awards	For the second year in a row the ground-breaking 5G Rural Dorset project has been honoured with an award at this years' Connected Britain conference in London. Dorset Council received the Armed Forces Covenant Gold Award as part of the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme. Dorset Council's six countryside sites – all awarded the Green Flag this year. Moors Valley , Avon Heath and Durlston Country Park , plus Thorncombe Woods near Dorchester, and the Milldown and Stour Meadows in Blandford, was recognised by the Green Flag Award scheme as some of the best in the world. The communications team, along with colleagues from Dorset AONB and Visit Dorset, were winners of a national communications award for 'Best use of Research and Evaluation' for the Promise to Love Dorset campaign. This campaign had clear objectives - to change visitor behaviour, following on from some of the anti-social behaviours we saw during the 2020 pandemic.		
Defence Battle Lab opens	A £5.7m collaboration between the MOD, Dorset Council, and the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), to provide an ambitious Defence building programme at the heart of Dorset, dedicated to the pursuit of innovation and technologies of the future. Innovation hub officially opened at Dorset Council's Innovation Park Near Wool. It marks a £5.7m collaboration between the Ministry of Defence (MoD), Dorset Council, and Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).		
Cost of living crisis	Working with the 'Dorset Together' network, including our partners at Citizens Advice, Age UK, Help and Kindness and to put in place help where it is needed most. Webpage developed to feature up to date help and support available. Through the Government's Council Tax Energy Rebate schemes, over £18.2 million has been awarded from the main scheme and a further £875,300 has been awarded from the discretionary scheme. We expect to distribute £775K through the Household Support Fund (HSF) to eligible, low-income households. HSF has also been distributed to families, care leavers and via free school meal vouchers. In total our Household Support Fund allocation for this round is £2.29 million.		

4 What actions have been taken in response to 2021-22 Annual Governance Statement

<p>Head of Organisational Development</p>	<p>1 - Compliance with mandatory training remains low.</p> <p>Update – In 2022, the Mandatory training refresher cycle was changed resulting in a requirement for employees to complete Health and Safety, Prevent and Equality and Diversity learning pathways every 2 years. This has resulted in more employees being compliant in these disciplines due to an extended completion window being applied. A new Safeguarding awareness pathway was also introduced in 2022 for employees outside of Adults and Children’s directorates (these Directorates already require employees to complete Safeguarding training at Level 2 and/or 3).</p> <p>The safeguarding awareness pathway also includes a module aimed at raising awareness around Modern Slavery. Despite several communications, completion rates remain just below 50%. Employees need to complete this learning every 2 years.</p> <p>The remaining Mandatory Training pathway is Data Protection and this needs to be completed annually. Compliance rates remain low, and work is ongoing to raise awareness with key stakeholders, including managers, across the organisation as to the importance of completing this and how it is relevant to their role.</p> <p>Overall, organisational compliance rates for all mandatory training are 71.22%. Safeguarding awareness and Data Protection are the 2 pathways that have the lowest compliance rates.</p> <p>However, there is still ongoing work to ensure the accuracy of the data as there are several user accounts that are not correctly set up with blank information and place names instead of users.</p> <p>There is also a now identified pocket of employees that are digitally disconnected and do not have a user account set up as they do not have Dorset Council e-mail addresses.</p> <p>These employees (estimated to total around 700) are in the Place Directorate and all have front facing roles, dealing directly with members of the public. There is now some work starting around designing and delivering a face-to-face learning event for these employees to ensure full compliance with all legal and statutory duties. Most of these roles include a requirement to complete Health and Safety training at a higher level than the Mandatory training but that still leaves the need to complete the other pathways in an accessible format.</p>
	<p>Service Manager for Assurance</p>

Service Manager for Assurance	3 - Improve compliance rates for Subject Access Request responses
	<p>Update – There have been challenges in meeting the Information Commissioners Officer (ICO) timelines due to increasing numbers and complexity of requests, particularly in respect of care leavers. Due to the sensitive nature of the content, requests require substantial redaction. A significant amount of work has been undertaken to improve compliance, with the SARs team transferring across from Children’s Services to Assurance under the management of the Assistant Data Protection Officer. Internal staffing is being supplemented with an outsource arrangement with a redaction company, with the cost of this a budget pressure for Children’s Services.</p> <p>Since the transfer of the team, great progress has been made in reducing the length of response time and improving the number of requests that are responded to within Information Commissioners Office timescales. This is due to staff now having been recruited and trained, improved efficiency and reviews of process. This has improved from 53% at the beginning of April 2022 to 70% as at December 2022 (but still short of the 90% target). Further work continues to improve compliance. We are working with the Rees Foundation to support care leavers that submit SARs. This is to help focus in on the information that the care leaver is seeking rather than full document disclosure and support them in understanding what is disclosed. A project has been established to explore the potential purchase of redaction software, to further improve efficiency. This will continue as an improvement action for 2023/24.</p>
Service Manager for Assurance	4 Embedding “Data Protection by Design and Default” through improved Data Privacy Impact Assessments, potentially incorporating into a wider “whole impact” assessment (equality; climate change etc).
	Update – The new Strategic Information Governance Board will help to drive this work forward, but it remains an improvement action now.
Service Manager for Archives	5 - Rollout of Information Asset Register
	Update – The Information Asset Owner project has been initiated and is currently at the service design stage.

5 What actions will be taken in response to this 2022-23 Annual Governance Statement

Specific opportunities for improvement in governance and internal controls identified as part of the assurance processes have been addressed or are included in action plans for the relevant managers.

Action One	Ongoing work to improve compliance rates on Subject Access Requests
	Responsible Officer – Service Manager for Assurance

Action Two	Respond to internal audit actions on embedding risk management, including reassessment of Council's risk appetite. This will incorporate further work on assurance mapping.
	Responsible Officers – Service Manager for Performance and Business Intelligence; Service Manager for Assurance
Action Three	Develop and roll out the action plan to support the Council's data strategy
	Responsible Officer - Service Manager for Performance and Business Intelligence
Action Four	Embedding "Data Protection by Design and Default" through improved Data Privacy Impact Assessments, potentially incorporating into a wider "whole impact" assessment (equality; climate change etc).
	Responsible Officer – Service Manager for Assurance
Action Five	Ongoing development and rollout of a DC Information Asset Register
	Responsible Officer – Service Manager for Archives
Action Six	Rollout of Climate Change Risk Assessment
	Responsible Officer – Corporate Director TID and Climate
Action Seven	Improve compliance rates for mandatory training on data protection and safeguarding awareness
	Responsible Officer – Head of Learning and Development

6 Approval of the Annual Governance Statement 2022-23

The Council is satisfied that this statement provides a substantial level of assurance that good governance is in place in Dorset Council and that appropriate arrangements are in place to address improvements in our review of compliance. Progress on these improvements and on addressing any mitigating the risks will be monitored through the year by senior officers and elected councillors of Dorset Council.

Supported by:

Appendix A – Local Code of Corporate Governance

Appendix B – Summary of Extreme Potential Risks