



**WELWYN
HATFIELD**

Annual Governance Statement for the Financial Year 2024/25

Scope:	Welwyn Hatfield conducts a review of its system of internal control, and prepares and publishes an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) in each financial year.
Effective Date:	25 th June 2025
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Policy Owned by:	Gavin Ramtohal, Assistant Director (Legal and Governance)
Statute:	<i>i) Local Government Act 1972;</i> <i>ii) Local Government Act 1999</i> <i>iii) Localist Act 2011</i> <i>iv) Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014</i> <i>v) Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015</i>
Related Policies & documents	Welwyn Hatfield Constitution Local Code of Governance – Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

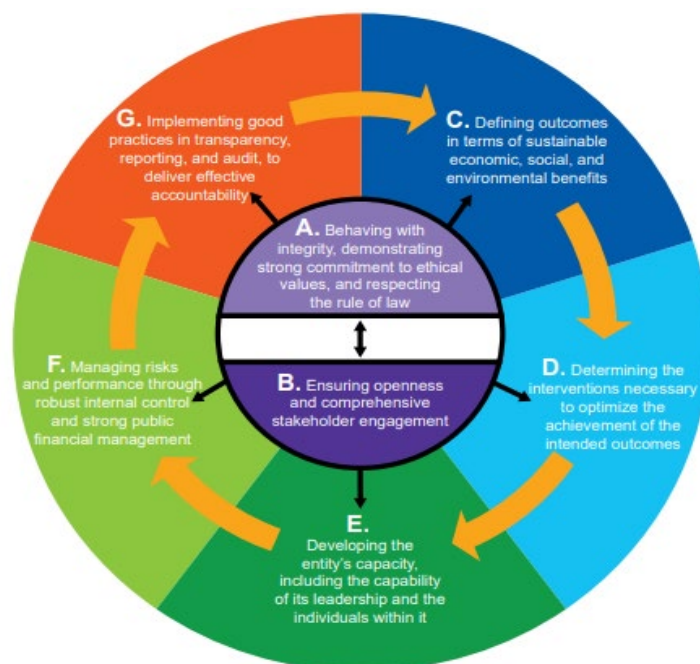
1 Scope

- 1.1 Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (The Council) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. The Council has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2 The Council is responsible for ensuring arrangements are in place for the good governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions including risk management.
- 1.3 The Council has adopted a Local Code of Governance which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016.
- 1.4 This statement explains how the Council has complied with the Code and also how it meets the requirements of Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 in relation to the review of the Council's internal control system and publication of a statement on internal control. This statement covers the Council's governance activities during the 2024/25 financial year.
- 1.5 We have identified a number of areas for attention during 2025/26, and these are detailed in section 7 of this statement.

2 The Purpose of the Governance Framework

- 2.1 The governance framework, which has been in place for the financial year 2024/25, is made up of procedures and values which the Council is directed by, and how it engages with the community.
- 2.2 The governance framework is designed to reflect the principles set out in the Council's adopted [Local Code of Governance](#). This document is presently being reviewed and updated. The principles are shown below in **diagram 1**:

Diagram 1



3 The Council's Governance Arrangements

3.1 The Council operates a Leader and Cabinet style of political management. For the 2024/25 municipal year, the Cabinet was made up of six Executive Members from the joint administration and the Leader of the Council. Each Executive Member of the Cabinet looks after a portfolio of services, working closely with the respective Executive and Assistant Directors.

3.2 The Cabinet for 2024/25 financial year is shown in the below table:

Position	Councillor	Areas of responsibility
Leader of the Council, Executive Member Economic Development and Climate Change	Councillor Max Holloway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change • Performance Management • Business Excellence • Business Centres • Safeguarding • Transformation • Economic Development and Estates • Resilience (Emergency Planning)

Deputy Leader of the Council, Executive Member Leisure and Community	Councillor Jane Quinton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Grant • GLL, (Youth and sports Partnership) • Campus West • The Hive • Mill Green Museum and Roman Baths • Customer and Cemeteries • Comms • Marketing and Website • Community Outreach
Executive Member Environment	Councillor Sandreni Bonfante	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Services • Landscape and Ecology • Environmental Health • Parking and Playground • Street Wardens • Community Safety Partnership • Community Partnerships (excl. sports partnership) • Private Sector Housing • CCTV • Antisocial behaviour
Executive Member Governance	Councillor Kieran Thorpe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elections • ICT Services • Governance Services • Digital • HR • Equality and Diversity • Member Development • Hackney Carriages • Licensing • Legal Services • Risk Management
Executive Member Housing	Councillor Gemma Moore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned Maintenance (Housing) • Repairs • Housing Options • Housing Development • Housing Allocations • Independent Living • Income and Home Ownership • Quality Assurance • Building Services • Compliance • Neighbourhoods
Executive Member Finances	Councillor Astrid Scott	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance • Revenue and Benefits • Procurement • Internal Audit and Fraud
Executive Member Planning	Councillor Rose Grewal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Policy • Estates Management Scheme • Development Management • GIS

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration • Building Control
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- 3.3 The [Constitution](#) sets out how the Council functions, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure these are efficient, transparent, and accountable to the local community.
- 3.4 The Council's Committee structure is set out in **diagram 2**.
- 3.5 The Cabinet is supported by the Chief Executive, Executive and Assistant Directors. The Council's Management Structure is set out below in **diagram 3**.
- 3.6 Cabinet members can take decisions using [Executive Member Decision Notices](#) (EMDN) which speed up the decision-making process where appropriate. EMDNs are published on the Council website and are subject to call-in.
- 3.7 The Senior Leadership Team is led by the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service), supported by Executive Directors, the Monitoring Officer and the Human Resources & Organisational Development Manager.
- 3.8 Key performance indicators (KPI) are reviewed by a performance clinic and then published on the Member Hub. Updates on progress and performance are provided to Cabinet, Cabinet Panels and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee as appropriate.

Diagram 2

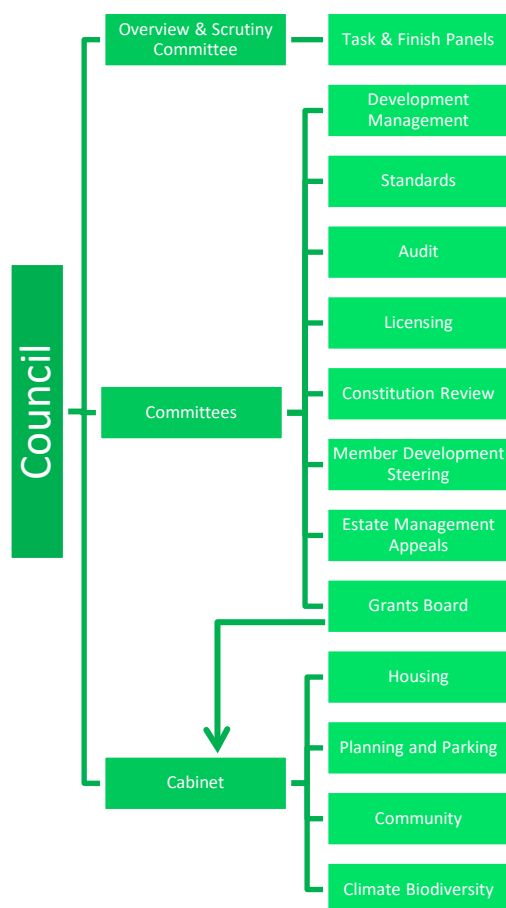
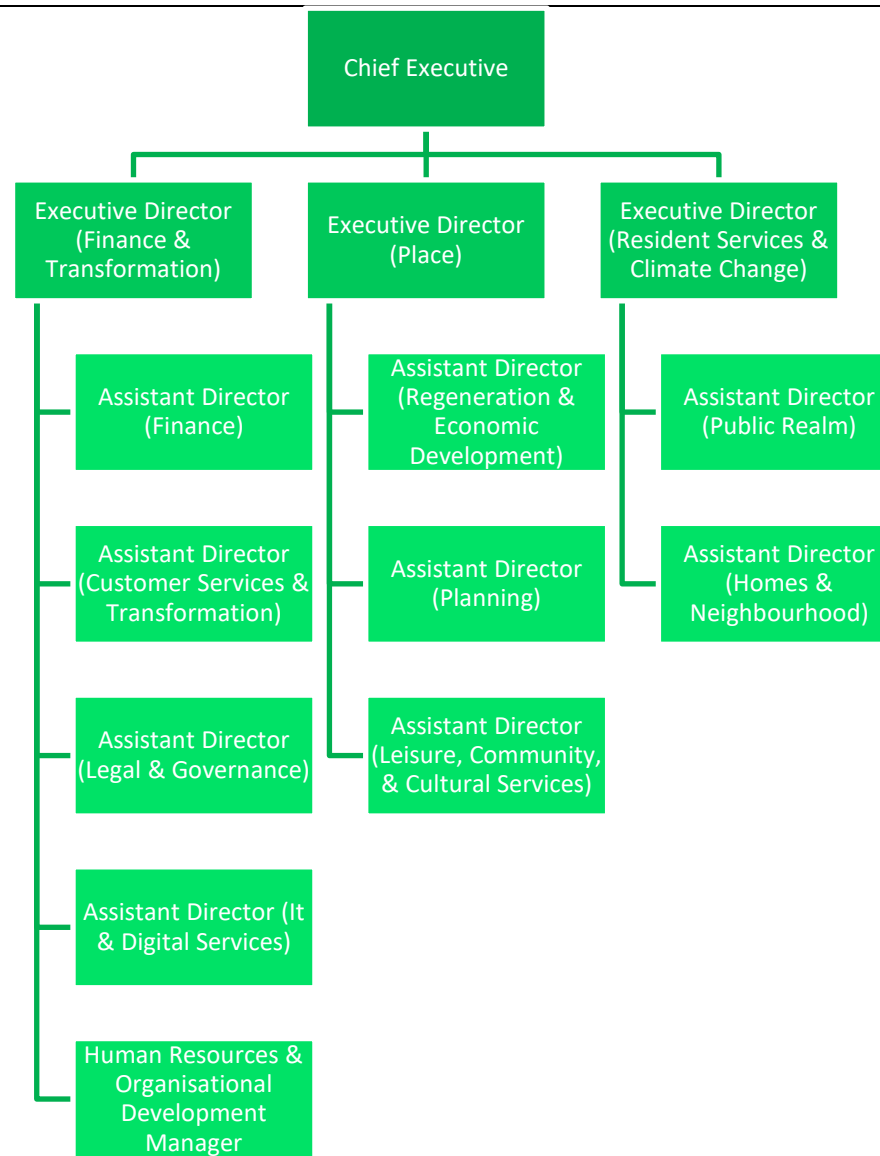


Diagram 3



- 3.9 Internal governance arrangements are monitored by the Corporate Governance Group. The Corporate Governance Group is chaired by the Chief Executive and its membership includes the Monitoring Officer, the Deputy Monitoring Officer, the Section 151 Officer, the Deputy Section 151 Officer, Executive Directors, Human Resources and Organisational Development Manager, the Chair of the Operational Health and Safety Board, Shared Internal Audit Service, Shared Anti-fraud Service and representatives from Governance Services. Key internal corporate groups report to the Group.
- 3.10 The Constitution Review Group considers the effectiveness of the Council arrangements set out in the constitution. The Constitution Review Group is chaired by the Leader of the Council and made up of Councillors from all political groups. Some minor changes may be made by the Monitoring Officer using their delegated powers; or if the changes are more substantial, then changes will be taken to Full Council for approval.
- 3.11 The Forward Plan is published monthly to provide residents and members with notice of key decisions due to be taken.
- 3.12 Risk reports are reviewed periodically by the Audit Committee and the Cabinet.

4 Review of Effectiveness

- 4.1 The Council is required to prepare an AGS to report publicly on the extent to which it complies with the principles of good governance. The following paragraphs set out the Council's assessment of the key elements of the governance framework for 2024/25 using the CIPFA/SoLACE Delivering Good Governance framework to guide this review.

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

- 4.2 The Council's political and managerial leadership take the lead in a culture that encourages openness, support and respect.
- 4.3 The [Constitution](#) sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to the local community. The Constitution is available on the Council's website.
- 4.4 The Constitution sets out how decisions are to be lawfully made. The Constitution contains the following key sections:
- Part 3 – Responsibilities for Functions
 - Part 4 – Rules of Procedures

These documents set the framework for the conduct of the business of the Council, including delegated powers, financial regulations, and contract procedure rules.

- 4.5 In relation to behaviour, the Constitution sets out the following key elements:
- The Code of Conduct for Members
 - The Officers Code of Conduct
 - The Protocol on Member/Officer Relations

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- 4.6 The Council adopted the Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct (the Model Code), which was published in December 2020. All elected Members undertake that they will observe the Code of Conduct and receive training on it.
- 4.7 The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by Members and Co-Opted Members, and for advising and assisting Town and Parish Councils and their Councillors to maintain high standards of conduct within those Councils. When required, the Committee hears and determines complaints about Members and Co-Opted Members referred to it by the Monitoring Officer. The Monitoring Officer carries overall responsibility for legal compliance with the Code. Breaches of these rules are dealt with under the Arrangements for dealing with complaints about the Code of Conduct for Councillors.
- 4.8 The Standards Committee is also responsible for arranging training for Members and Co-Opted Members on matters relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.
- 4.9 Members are required to register their interests in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 and to register any changes to their interests within 28 days. In the circumstances set out within the Act and the Members Code of Conduct, Members are required to declare their interests at meetings.
- 4.10 The Employee Code of Conduct sets out the requirements of staff to abide by. Each employee is required to comply with the Employee Code of Conduct with further guidance available from senior managers. Breaches of these rules are dealt with under the Council's disciplinary procedures.
- 4.11 The [Whistleblowing Policy](#) contains an external and internal whistleblowing number and email address. The policy covers any malpractice or wrongdoing by any employee, contractor, supplier, consultant or partner of the Council in their work for the Council. The Council also maintains an [Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy](#) as well as an [Anti-Bribery Policy](#) and [Anti-Money Laundering Policy](#). These policies are regularly reviewed and approved by committees where necessary.
- Supporting principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.**
- 4.12 The Council welcomes public participation in meetings as set out in the Council's Procedure Rules.
- 4.13 A schedule of Council meetings is available on the Council's website.
- 4.14 Information requests received by the Council are processed by Governance Services. In 2024, 832 information requests were processed by the team; the average response time to requests was 10 days and 94% of all requests were responded to within 20 working days.
- 4.15 The Council complies with the UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA) requirements when handling residents, partners, and customers' data, and maintains procedures to ensure compliance. Regular training for staff is on the Council's Learning Management System. Policies and procedures have been produced to support Council staff on securely managing the data they handle. Data Protection and Information Governance training for Members is provided.

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- 4.16 The Council's approach to Data Protection is overseen by the [Data Protection](#) Officer. Data Protection information relating to performance indicators, statistics and activity is provided to and reviewed by the Corporate Governance Group.
- 4.17 The Member Information Hub keeps all Councillors informed on a wide range of issues so they can better serve their constituents. Recordings of member training sessions are uploaded to the Members Information Hub to allow members to review training material as required.
- 4.18 Residents can engage with the Council by email, telephone and digital platforms, including by the [have your say](#) webpage and the website's chatbot feature. Citizens can engage with their ward Councillors at their monthly surgeries.
- 4.19 The Council launched a Transformation Strategy 2022-2025 in December 2022. The Strategy focused on 5 key themes: Technology and Automation, Data and Performance, Culture and Workforce, Customer Experience and Channel Shift and Project Management and Service Improvement.
- 4.20 Council meetings are accessible by webcasting, as well as in person, with meetings available to view on the Council website for up to six months after the meeting has taken place.
- 4.21 An Annual Statement of Accounts is published to inform stakeholders and service users of the previous year's achievements and outcomes.
- 4.22 The Council commit to ensuring any weaknesses in Internal and External Audit Reports are addressed.

Supporting principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable, economic, social and environmental benefits.

- 4.23 The Council recognises the long-term impact of its decisions and adopts a [Business plan](#) and an annual budget to support outcomes. Individual service areas develop their own service plans.
- 4.24 The Council will engage with other bodies on matters that may have a sustainable economic, social or environmental benefit to the borough such as Hertfordshire County Council, and East & North Hertfordshire Health Trust.
- 4.25 The Council agreed a new [Corporate Plan](#) for 2024-2026, which helped outline the Council's vision and Corporate Plan going forward.
- 4.26 The [Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Financial Governance Framework](#) set out the Council's financial forecasts, risks, challenges and strategies for the period 2023/24–2026/27. This is reviewed annually and supports the Council's overall direction and provides details of financial strategies to deliver objectives. It is a crucial component of the Council's strategic planning framework.
- 4.27 In January 2025 the then Cabinet adopted a [Transition to Net Zero Strategy](#), which was developed by the Climate Change Sub-group.

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- 4.28 The Council has a clear, published Procurement and Commercial Improvement Strategy 2021-2025.

Supporting principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

- 4.29 Cabinet Members meet regularly with the Senior Leadership Team to discuss the strategic direction, plans and progress of the Council. Corporate targets are individually owned by the Council's services teams and are performance managed. These are monitored and exception reported through quarterly meetings of an internal performance clinic attended by senior Members and officers.
- 4.30 Performance clinics also include a summary of financial and budgetary performance data for both capital and revenue spending. They review complaints data for all services, local public relations and media activity involving the Council. Performance information, audit, risk and finance information is used to identify any areas of concern and plan required interventions.
- 4.31 Key Decisions are monitored on a regular basis and are open to scrutiny. The Council's [Forward Plan](#) provides the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) with proposed and recently made executive decisions for scrutiny. In June 2024, the OSC Members held a workshop and identified a number of areas for scrutiny as part of the Committee's work programme for the year. All Members are also able to view Executive Member Decision Notices and Officer Delegated Decisions are published online. These arrangements are flexible enough to enable Members to intervene by way of the call-in procedure or the calling of extraordinary meetings at any point in the year.
- 4.32 Performance management systems set the objectives for the year for services and individual members of staff. The outcomes of these are regularly reviewed. The Council has a planned and agreed annual cycle of meetings.
- 4.33 Both the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer have statutory powers of intervention and are members of the Senior Leadership Team.

Supporting principle E: Developing the organisation's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

- 4.34 The Head of Paid Service is responsible for the organisation of the Council's staff.
- 4.35 Benchmarking exercises are undertaken comparing performance with other authorities. Reviews of structures are undertaken when required.
- 4.36 The Council considers collaborative working with other authorities and bodies to increase capacity and improve efficiency.
- 4.37 Induction training on a range of topics for new members is provided after their appointment to the Council. Members have been able to utilise virtual training opportunities. This programme is overseen by the Member Development Steering Group.

Supporting principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.

- 4.38 The Council has a Risk Management Policy and Strategy embedding risk management processes and procedures of the Council. Risk registers are maintained at both strategic and operational levels.
- 4.39 The Strategic and Operational Risk Registers are maintained on a corporate risk management system and are reviewed once every quarter to ensure that they reflect the risks facing the Council and ensure mitigation measures are in place. Strategic and operational risk information is taken to performance clinics, SLT and Audit Committee.
- 4.40 The Council has a robust budget setting process with the budget and medium term financial strategy agreed annually by the Council. A Budget Task and Finish Group is set up annually to scrutinise the budget proposals. Regular budget update reports are provided to the relevant committees. Treasury Management, Investment, and Capital Strategies are updated annually and approved by Full Council.
- 4.41 All Council expenditure is governed by Financial Regulations contained in the Constitution which set out the rules and procedures for managing budgets and assuring appropriate stewardship of funds.
- 4.42 The Council's External auditors are required to produce an Annual Audit letter which is presented to the Audit Committee which contains the audit of the Council's financial statements; and an assessment of the Council's arrangements to achieve value for money in its use of resources.
- 4.43 The terms of reference for the [Audit Committee](#) can be found in the Constitution. To effectively discharge these responsibilities, the Committee may require any officer to attend meetings to receive explanations on any matter it is considering.
- 4.44 Internal audit services have been provided by the Hertfordshire [Shared Internal Audit Service](#) (SIAS). SIAS has undertaken a work programme approved by the Audit Committee and has compiled an annual report on the overall adequacy of the Council's internal control environment and highlights any issues which are judged to be relevant to the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement.
- 4.45 The Council has an [Anti-fraud and Anti-Corruption policy](#) in place that sets out its arrangements for dealing with fraud and corruption. The Council's anti-fraud functions are undertaken by the [Shared Anti-fraud Service](#).

Supporting principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

- 4.46 The Council is committed to openness and publishes information [online](#) in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 also requires the Council to adopt a Publication Scheme. Information is regularly published in line with the Council's publication schedule.

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- 4.47 Committee reports are considered in open session (Part 1) with a minimal number of reports considered in closed session (Part 2), subject to the provisions of Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972. The report template contains sections for relevant implications such as legal and financial and must contain explanations of the reason behind decisions. The decision making framework and access to information are included in the Constitution.
- 4.48 All Committee agendas and background papers are published using Modern.Gov five clear days prior to the meeting.
- 4.49 Minutes are published within 10 days.
- 4.50 Cabinet decisions are taken in public apart from those containing Part 2 information.
- 4.51 The Council's accounts are published in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, along with the statutory public inspection notice.
- 4.52 Reports are regularly produced for managers and Members on the Council's performance in responding to certain requests, such as those made under FOIA/EIR.
- 4.53 The Corporate Governance Group meets regularly and monitors Council compliance with the Governance Framework, including areas for improvement, as part of the AGS process.
- 4.54 Members' Allowance details are published on the Council's website.
- 4.55 Recommendations for corrective action made by external and internal audit are acted upon by the Council. An annual work plan is agreed with the External and Internal Auditors to test the Council's response to major legislation and the soundness of its financial and governance processes.

5 Review and Assurance Mechanisms

Internal Audit - Annual Audit Coverage

- 5.1 The work of the SIAS assists the statutory officers in discharging their duties effectively, including providing updates on internal audits. An annual report is presented to the Audit Committee which includes an opinion on the overall adequacy, reliability, efficiency, compliancy and effectiveness of the Council's internal control environment, recommending improvements where necessary.

Internal Audit - 2024/25 Audit Report

- 5.2 The Client Audit Manager's Annual Internal Audit Report and Assurance Statement was reported to the Audit Committee in June 2024. The SIAS 2024-25 Internal Audit Plan Report has been presented to the Audit Committee.

The Council's External Auditors

- 5.3 External auditors provide an external review function through the audit of the annual accounts, assessment of value for money, and certification of grant claims. The Annual Audit and Inspection Letter is circulated to all members and formally reported to the Audit Committee.

External reviews

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- 5.4 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman resolve complaints in the public sector and provides annual statistic on performance. No public interest reports were published.

Risk Data

- 5.5 The Council assesses potential risks and mitigates any identified risks. Where incidents occur, the Council reassess the risks and implement changes to prevent a repeated incident.

Public Service Network Compliance

- 5.6 The Council are compliant with the Public Service Network. This is a [national standard](#) that Council must comply with in order to receive benefits data from the Department for Work and Pensions.

Financial Management and Code

- 5.7 Strong financial management is an essential part of ensuring public sector finances are sustainable, and CIPFA launched a Financial Management Code to support this.
- 5.8 The Council's financial management arrangements are consistent with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government.

Management Assurance Statement

- 5.9 The Chief Executive and all Executive/Assistant Directors are required to complete and submit a declaration of compliance, in the form of a Management Assurance Statement, at the end of each financial year to help inform the AGS.

6 Issues Identified in the previous years' progress

- 6.1 In the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement the Council identified three actions on which to make progress. The paragraphs below provide an update on those actions, and other governance issues that have occurred in 2024/25:

Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

- 6.2 With the introduction of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 in July 2023, the Council needed to review and update its policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the legislation.
- 6.3 In 2023/24, the Council assessed itself against the consumer standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing under the Act. An action plan was created of areas to develop further, and this was completed during 2024/25. This involved matters such as updating various housing policies, revising the complaints policy and procedures, updating website content and action plan following tenants feedback from the Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey. Five managers also commenced Chartered Institute of Housing qualifications ahead of the proposed consumer standard that will require such qualifications.
- 6.4 In addition, the Council have a number of projects plans for further developments in the following areas: complaints, assets, voids, damp and mould, repairs, tenant data, and digital development.

Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code

- 6.5 During 2024-25, the Council reviewed its approach to complaint handling, including the Complaints Policy, against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. At the same time, the Council's Complaints Policy was also independently reviewed by housing consultancy, HQN.
- 6.6 A number of changes were identified to improve compliance against the code and these changes were agreed by Cabinet in August 2024, following consultation with the Council's Cross-party Customer Services Board and Resident's (tenant & leaseholders) Panel. Relevant staff have been trained on the updates and relevant internal process and system changes.
- 6.7 The Council submitted its self-assessment to the Housing Ombudsman in summer 2024. The Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report was reviewed by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2024 and Cabinet in January 2025. This has also been shared with the Housing Ombudsman.

Damp and mould

- 6.8 In 2023/24, damp and mould were identified to be a high priority in the housing sector due to potential risks to tenants.
- 6.9 To mitigate risks, the Council implemented ongoing communications during winter months to raise awareness of damp and mould, reviewed and revised a Damp and Mould Policy, and provided updates in relation to the imminent Awaab's law to the Housing Cabinet Panel. The Council also undertook stock condition surveys of our housing properties and any damp and mould issues or category one hazards identified were actioned immediately. The Council were also recently successful in bidding for £6.4million of funding for decarbonisation works in Council homes to improve the energy efficiency of our housing stock.

Financial Sustainability - Focus on ensuring medium-term sustainability given the ongoing financial pressures and medium-term funding forecast

- 6.10 The Council's Medium-Term Strategy was approved at Full Council in February 2024, which presented a budget gap for 2025/26 of £2.040m. These financial forecasts were updated in the summer of 2024 which revised the forecast budget gap to £4.458m. The main increases in the forecast stemmed from areas of pressure identified through robust and regular financial monitoring over the course of the year.
- 6.11 In particular, the Council was seeing an ongoing increase in subsidy losses from the payment of housing benefits, specifically on the temporary accommodation and exempt accommodation elements of the subsidy claims. In response to this particular pressure a programme board and a number of project groups to seek to mitigate some of these increases, both in the short term and the medium to longer term.
- 6.12 As part of the budget setting process for 2025/26, a range of savings and efficiency proposals were considered, and included in formal budget proposals by Cabinet, following scrutiny from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Budget Task and Finish Panel. The final budget approved at Full Council in February 2025, included a draw down from general reserves of £808k, and the medium-term strategy included an updated Reserves Strategy for 2025/26-2028/29. The gap for 2026/27 is currently forecast at £1.694m but this is heavily dependant on the delivery of the proposals included in the 2025/26 budget, and more

importantly the outcome of the anticipated local government funding reforms. An update will be undertaken in the summer of 2025 to consider any updates from the finance monitoring, and any key updates from the progress of the local government finance reforms.

- 6.13 Pressures are mounting on the Councils Housing Revenue Account, as legal duties increase alongside a rise in the market costs for repairs, component replacement and the development of new housing. Further focus will be required in this area over the coming year.

Temporary Accommodation Costs

- 6.14 The Council continued to take measures to try to limit unrecoverable costs where a homelessness duty is owed by using government grants and interventions to help reduce the demand on homelessness and rough sleeping initially.

7 Issues identified in the reporting year & Action Plan 2024/25

- 7.1 The Corporate Governance Group have considered the actions required to respond and action any key areas identified for action over the next 12 months. These are set out below:

Action	Lead Officer(s)
Financial Sustainability Continued focus on ensuring medium-term financial sustainability given ongoing pressures (benefits subsidy, rising costs on the Housing Revenue Account and other matters) and medium-term funding uncertainty.	Executive Director (Finance & Transformation)
Local Government Reorganisation Following the English Devolution White Paper in December 2024, all the authorities in two-tier areas in England have been asked to reorganise in order to create new unitary authorities. All the authorities in Hertfordshire, including Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, jointly submitted an interim plan in March 2025 to show progress made on the reorganisation proposals in Hertfordshire. Work is now progressing to submit a final reorganisation proposal by the end of November 2025, per the timetable set out by the Government. Although Hertfordshire was allocated a capacity grant of £378k to develop the final proposal, the level of resources required including staff time, would	Chief Executive Officer

<p>inevitably divert attention away from delivering our services.</p> <p>Based on the current timetable, the new unitary authorities are set to go live from April 2028. Between now and the go live date, the Council will be impacted by issues such as staff recruitment and retention, decision-making such as the duration of contracts, and how the transition plan will need to be put in place to ensure a seamless transfer of service to the new authorities.</p>	
<p>Damp and Mould</p> <p>Awaab's law is expected to be introduced in October 2025. This will introduce statutory deadlines to resolve damp and Mould issues as well as housing repair issues. An improvement plan will be developed in early 2025/26 with actions being overseen by the Strategic Leadership Team.</p>	<p>Executive Director (Resident Services & Climate Change)</p>
<p>Housing Repairs</p> <p>The Council receive 30,000 reports per year in relation to housing repairs, and new statutory time limits will require significant resources and good management to remain compliant. An improvement plan will be developed in early 2025/26 with actions being overseen by the Strategic Leadership Team.</p>	<p>Executive Director (Resident Services & Climate Change)</p>
<p>Voids</p> <p>The performance for voids works completions has exceeded the target over the last 12 months. This is due to a number of factors, including more substantive works being undertaken when a property becomes void. A number of workstreams are taking place to improve performance. This includes an improvement plan by the contractor and a review of the end to end process.</p>	<p>Executive Director (Resident Services & Climate Change)</p>

8 **Monitoring**

- 8.1 The Annual Governance Statement is produced annually.

9 **Certification**

- 9.1 We have been advised on the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by the Audit Committee and the Governance Group and the plan to ensure continuous improvement of the system is in place.
- 9.2 We propose over the coming financial year to take steps to further enhance our governance arrangements. We will continue to monitor our governance arrangements until the time of the next annual review.

Signed

Chief Executive

Leader of the Council