



# Annual Governance Statement **2024-2025**

Date: September 2025

# 1. Executive Summary

Following the government's announcement and plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), Epsom & Ewell Borough Council developed [7 Strategic Priorities](#) which we are committed to deliver during 2025-27. These priorities now stand in place of a new Four Year Plan, in light of the timescales associated with LGR.

We continue our drive to work as efficiently and effectively as possible in delivering our strategies and services, while prudently managing our assets, income and expenditure. Yet we remain adaptable to changes in government legislation and other external factors.

Governance can be defined as comprising “the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved. The fundamental function of good governance in the public sector is to ensure that [local authorities] achieve their intended outcomes while acting in the public interest at all times.” Governance includes processes, procedures, policies, administrative systems, legal arrangements and so forth, “through which [an organisation's] objectives are set and pursued in” their environmental context, while “ensuring that stakeholders can have confidence that their trust in [the organisation] is well founded.”

For an account of the key processes, procedures and controls we have in place to ensure we have a robust foundation of good governance and sound financial management, please see our local [Code of Corporate Governance](#). The Code provides assurance that we are meeting the CIPFA principles of good governance.<sup>1</sup>

Each year we are required to produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The AGS incorporates the continuous assessment of our governance arrangements throughout the last year, identifying areas where we can improve,<sup>2</sup> and ultimately providing us with an honest and transparent assessment of our governance arrangements. Therefore, this helps us to ensure we are doing the right things in the right way, and ultimately delivering value for money.<sup>3</sup> Hence why the AGS sits alongside our annual Statement of Accounts.

**Our assessment** of the status of our governance, for the year ending 31 March 2025, indicates that we generally have a sound foundation of governance, systems of internal control and risk management in place. However, there are some areas where we can further improve. These areas may impact our ability to manage risks effectively and achieve our aims and objectives. Yet we are aware of these issues, outlined in Section 3, and have plans in place to address them.

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<sup>1</sup> CIPFA (2016) Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework, 2016 Edition. CIPFA: London.

<sup>2</sup> See the following sections: “Rationale for the Statement's Assurance Opinion” and the “Action Plan”.

<sup>3</sup> HM Government (2024) Best value standards and intervention: a statutory guide for best value authorities, Dept. for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. Online available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/best-value-standards-and-intervention-a-statutory-guide-for-best-value-authorities/best-value-standards-and-intervention-a-statutory-guide-for-best-value-authorities#best-value-powers> [last accessed 31/05/24].

LGR has, and will continue to have, a significant impact on our governance. Most notably, the impacts relate to our strategic development, both as an organisation and our vision for the Borough, continuous improvement, and human resources.

Given the council is being combined with neighbouring authorities to make a new larger unitary council in 2027, setting long-term goals beyond this date is redundant. We believe the 7 strategic priorities we've developed will yield the most benefit to the Borough over the next two years. However significant investments and spend in continuous organisational improvement is less likely to happen, as the value of these will not be realisable in the next two years, and the new local authorities will have their own plans for this. To that end, some of the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) action plan items will not be progressed in agreement with Local Government Association Principal Advisor. We also face the challenge of managing our workforce and delivery of services in an environment of uncertainty, in that we are aiming to retain and recruit officers in an organisation that will change significantly in 2027.

## 2. Review of the Effectiveness of the Council's Governance Framework

### Gaining assurance for the review

Throughout the year, we regularly review the effectiveness of our governance arrangements, which culminate in this annual statement. In addition to the controls listed within our [Code of Corporate Governance](#),<sup>4</sup> we gain assurance for the content and overall governance assessment of the AGS through the following:

- Management assurance statements: all Heads of Service are required to review and sign a statement regarding the status of governance in their department. Any weaknesses that are identified by Heads of Service are then reviewed by the Strategic Leadership Team, and those that are significant governance issues are included in this statement's action plan (below).
- Statutory Officer Statements: Each statutory officer of the council provides a governance statement related to their areas of responsibility (see "Statutory Assurances" below).
- Code of Governance review: as part of the production of this statement officers review our Code of Governance and assess whether the controls and processes listed within are working effectively at present.
- Internal Audit's annual opinion: central to forming our governance assessment is consideration of our Internal Auditor's annual conclusion on our organisational governance, having completed the last annual audit plan.
- External Audit: we review the outcomes of our last External (financial) Audit, including the value for money element. Any observations are considered for inclusion in this Statement.
- Draft AGS review: the Strategic Leadership team conduct a final officer review of the draft version of this Statement, before it is submitted to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee for final review and approval.
- Delivering Good Governance update: CIPFA have recently (May 2025) published an [addendum](#) to their "Delivering good governance in local government: framework," which provides further guidance on the contents and presentation of the AGS. These updates have been reviewed and incorporated into this year's Statement.

### Compliance with CIPFA Financial Management Code

CIPFA published its first edition 'Financial Management Code' for local authorities in October 2019. CIPFA considers that compliance with this Code is mandatory for all local authorities although such compliance is not specifically mandated by statute.

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<sup>4</sup> CIPFA (2023) *Developing an effective assurance framework in a local authority*, December 2023. Online available: <https://www.cipfa.org/cipfa-thinks/briefings> [last accessed 22/06/2024].

The code is essentially a best practice guide to financial management in the local authority sector. It covers the following areas:

- The responsibilities of the chief financial officer and the leadership team (including members).
- Governance and financial management style.
- Medium to long term financial management.
- The annual budget.
- Stakeholder engagement and business plans.
- Monitoring financial performance.
- External financial reporting.

Officers have undertaken an assessment of the council's compliance with the Code and in general terms the council's arrangements meet the recommended standards.

### **Subsidiary Company**

The Council has one subsidiary company – Epsom & Ewell Property Investment Company Ltd (EEPIC) – a 100% wholly owned trading company of the Council. It was set up in September 2017 to provide the Council with the flexibility to undertake commercial trading activities in property investment.

In accordance with Government guidance introduced in April 2018, no further out of Borough property investment acquisitions have been made. As the sole shareholder of EEPIC, the Council ensures strong governance through regular meetings of the Shareholder Sub-Committee. It approves EEPIC's Annual Business Plan and receives an Annual Review each November as provided by the Shareholder Agreement.

In addition to its role as shareholder, the Council is also EEPIC's lender with separate governance provided through Strategy & Resources Committee for loan agreement matters. EEPIC Board Meetings are held quarterly with quarterly management and finance monitoring reports submitted to the Council's S151 Officer to ensure loan monitoring compliance.

As a property investment company holding property investment assets for income generation, the key risks to EEPIC are tenancy void periods i.e. tenant default or tenant failure to renew at lease expiry. To mitigate these risks, EEPIC holds long term leases (the shortest lease in the portfolio doesn't expire until 2036) and quarterly management reporting ensures Directors are kept fully informed of tenant matters. All Directors are senior officers of the Council, and all have received appropriate training.

### **Statutory Assurances**

Several officers at the Council hold [statutory roles](#), which are established in legislation and have specific responsibilities. It is important that assurances from these officers are included in this AGS to support its conclusion on the Council's governance arrangements.

### Head of Paid Service

The Head of Paid Service is responsible for the overall corporate and operational management of the Council. These responsibilities have been considered within the context of this statement and the Head of Paid Service can confirm that proper arrangements have been put in place for the overall operation and management of the Council.

The Head of Paid Service has significant concerns around the impact of the unprecedented increase in both the cost and demand for temporary accommodation on the council, particularly as this is a statutory requirement and must be met. We continue to face service and economic pressures and whilst the council remains relatively financially stable, this situation is unsustainable for the period of our current MTFS.

There has been a continued and sustained focus on governance, performance and risk management.

The Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) announced in December 2024 has placed Surrey on an accelerated timeline to Unitarisation, which has required a wholesale reconsideration of longer term plans and priorities. Staff turnover has stabilised well in the last year but the uncertainty of LGR has begun to impact on turnover, with the loss of a few key roles already having occurred. We anticipate this will continue and may place additional pressure on key services, particularly as retention and attraction will both become difficult.

The Council has worked with other Surrey authorities on the LGR submission and will be focussed on designing and implementing the future governance and service delivery models with potential unitary partners going forward into 2025/26 and beyond.

### Chief Financial and Section 151 Officer

The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) is responsible for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs. The Chief Financial Officer confirms that the Council's arrangements conform to Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the Council complies with CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) in Local Government (2016).

While the Council has robust financial management arrangements in place, it is important to note that the 2025/26 budget was produced in the context of prevailing uncertainty around local government future, finances and macro-economic developments. In 2024 we witnessed a change in government after 14 years which also saw discussion on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) resurface.

Government wants to see a new 'single-tier' system in Surrey with a far smaller number of unitary councils each delivering all the local council services. This has initiated added uncertainty within councils and stresses the ongoing importance of

good financial management to enable the Council to respond to the changing landscape.

During these developments, in 2024/25, the council approved its Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025-29, which aims to deliver corporate priorities while addressing the future budget gap to maintain the financial health of the organisation. Financial risk remains high, particularly with regard to service demands including temporary accommodation, the future of the council, inflationary pressures and risks of reduction in council income. However, a healthy level of provisions are in place to manage risks as far as possible, but these risks will need to be monitored regularly.

As part of LGR, there are also advanced discussions with other Surrey authorities on how to respond to the expected changes in Surrey. We continue to use these platforms to ensure the council responds to challenges ahead where we assess financial resilience, collaborative initiatives and partnership opportunities, alongside a review of our statutory and discretionary services during 2025/26 and beyond.

### Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer (Head of Legal Services – which includes oversight of the Council's Democratic Services and Election Team) is required to report to the Council in any case where it appears that any proposal, decision, or omission by the authority 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.

During the course of the last year, the council's Constitution was reviewed and updated; work to review the constitution in other areas continues, subject to the impact of a Community Governance Review (CGR) and LGR. The council shall be considering the commencement of a Community Governance Review at its extraordinary Full Council meeting scheduled for 26 June 2025, which shall explore via public consultation the potential creation of parish areas to be served by parish councils from 2027 onward.

As identified by both the Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer, the council has worked with other Surrey authorities on the LGR submission and will be focussed on designing and implementing the future governance and service delivery models with potential unitary partners going forward into 2025/26 and beyond, to ensure that any changes proposed either comply with or amend the current governance arrangements in place so as to ensure compliance with any relevant legal requirements.

### Internal Audit Annual Opinion<sup>5</sup>

SIAP's Deputy Head of Partnership has stated: "I am satisfied that sufficient assurance and advisory work has been carried out to allow me to form a conclusion on the

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<sup>5</sup> Please note our Internal Audit function is delivered by the Southern Internal Audit Partnership (SIAP), operated by Hampshire County Council. This paragraph is a direct quote from the *Annual Internal Audit Report & Opinion 2024-2025*, prepared by SIAP's Deputy Head of Partnership. It is available in the committee papers for [this meeting](#). The meaning of "reasonable" is defined in sections 4 and 9 of the annual report.

adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control environment. In my opinion the framework of governance, risk management and control are 'reasonable' and audit testing has demonstrated controls to be working in practice.

Where weaknesses have been identified through internal audit review, we have worked with management to agree appropriate corrective actions and a timescale for improvement."

### External Audit

External auditors Grant Thornton provided an unqualified (i.e. favourable) opinion on 26 February 2025 on the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts. The Auditor also has a responsibility to review the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. When reporting on these arrangements, the Code of Audit Practice requires auditors to structure their commentary on arrangements under three specified reporting criteria, see below:

- **Financial sustainability:** how the Authority plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;
- **Governance:** how the Authority ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
- **Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness:** how the Authority uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.

In the report issued on 26 February 2025, they reported that there was nothing to report in respect of whether the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2024 except that significant weakness in the Authority's governance arrangement, in particular in the manner that the constitution was updated. The exact wording can be seen in the auditors 2023/24 certificate which can be found via the link below:

[Audit Completion Certificate 2023.24.pdf](#)

The audit of 2024/25 Statement of Accounts is expected to take place from September onwards 2025 along with the Value for Money assessment. The review will consider the 2024-25 Statement of Accounts and VfM arrangements and report back to A&S. You can find the draft Statement of Accounts 2024-25 here:




[Draft Statement of Accounts 2024-25 v1.pdf](#)



### 3. Rational for this Annual Governance Statement's Assurance Opinion

This section highlights the factors that contribute to our overall assurance opinion, in addition to Internal Audit's annual opinion.

The first section focuses on the actions that relate to CIPFA's principles of good governance, while the second section presents actions that fall within the seven Best Value themes. Note, there will be some cross-pollination of actions between both sections, as certain actions will be applicable to both a CIPFA principle and a Best Value theme. Both sections use the following traffic light icon descriptors.



Definition <sup>6</sup>	Description
<p>Adequate</p> 	<p>There are sound policies and processes in place that are working effectively across services, which provide for good governance arrangements and support compliance with requirements of the CIPFA Principle, and the achievement of the Council's Best Value aims and objectives.</p> <p>There may be minor areas for continuous improvement, but these do not represent a significant or material risk to the Council's overall governance framework.</p>
<p>Some development or areas for improvement</p> 	<p>Whilst there are policies and processes in place, there are some areas that remain a challenge for the Council or require further improvement, which may impact the effectiveness of elements of the Council's governance arrangements, compliance with the CIPFA principle and the achievement of the Council's Best Value aims and objectives. The Council has an action plan in place to address challenges and improvement matters.</p>
<p>Key development or many areas for improvement</p> 	<p>We have identified significant challenges in relation to the policies and processes, which may impact the effectiveness of elements of our governance arrangements, compliance with the CIPFA principle and achievement of our Best Value aims and objectives. We have implemented plans for corrective actions to manage these risks.</p>




<sup>6</sup> We have referred to [Basildon Council's criteria](#) to inform this section's assessment (last accessed 11/06/2025).



**Please note**

The items included in the table below are controls, processes etc. that have changed in the year, that is, where we improved or identified an area to improve. It is therefore not a list of all the governance arrangements we have in place. For a full list and further detail on our arrangements and assurance framework, please see our [Code of Corporate Governance](#).



Documents listed in square brackets following items in the table below indicate where the item is being tracked. If it says Section 4 in the square brackets, this relates to the action plan contained within this statement.

Core CIPFA governance principle	Overall assessment	What's working well	Where we can improve
A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. New 'People Framework' for officers has been implemented. which is restyled on our hybrid working policy</li> <li>2. We updated our Contract Standing Orders to meet the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023.</li> <li>3. We have publicised the <a href="#">Seven Principles of Public Life</a> to staff via a news article and hard copy and digital posters displayed across Council buildings and intranet.</li> <li>4. We produced a our annual <a href="#">Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework</a> report for 2024/25 and have an action plan for 2025/26 in place.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We have experienced delays in reviewing and updating our Health and Safety policies. However, this work has been assigned as a priority for completion in 2025/26 [Health and Safety Action Plan].</li> </ol>
B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We submitted our Local Plan for inspection on time.</li> <li>2. We've published new guidance on managing contract for officers.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We are investigating ways to create a corporate repository for all our resident engagement activities to provide a better overview of this work. Further emphasis has been given to this through our governance review consultation. New consultation platform to be launched shortly (updated June 2025)</li> <li>2. We will finalise the updates to our Procurement Strategy in July 2025, which has slipped by a few months due to the government's delayed implementation of the Procurement Act 2023 [Service Delivery Plan].</li> <li>3. We're reviewing appeals related to the Local Plan to ensure they do not relate to the governance of the Plan [Section 4].</li> </ol>



C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We've agreed our second Climate Change Action Plan and achieved our 2024/25 objectives.</li> <li>2. We delivered our 2024/25 Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy objectives.</li> <li>3. Our updates to our procurement documentation includes reference and guidance related to social value.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Approve the updated Health &amp; Wellbeing Strategy following public consultation (July 2025). Progress has slipped past our intended completion date of the end of March 2025 [Service Delivery Plan].</li> <li>2. Local Government Reorganisation impacted our delivery to develop proposals for the current Town Hall site. Elements of this action are now included in our new strategic priorities [Corporate Performance Report].</li> <li>3. The delivery of our 2024/25 Community Safety Action Plan objectives have slipped but are expected to completed by the end of 2025 [Service Delivery Plan].</li> </ol>
D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Following Full Council's consideration of our <a href="#">strategic priorities</a> in May 2025, a resourcing and project plan will be put in place to determine what is needed to progress the priorities and assess their achievability, including the appointment of a new project management officer.</li> <li>2. We've incorporated Local Government Reorganisation implications into our committee report template.</li> <li>3.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bi-weekly stand-up meetings will be held with budget Policy Chairs from Sept 25 to appraise of status, progress and barriers to delivery of all priorities.</li> <li>2. Standing agenda items will be included on all monthly Policy Chairs meetings to discuss the progress of key strategic priorities in their areas.</li> </ol>
E. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We've completed all appointments to our Strategic Leadership Team.</li> <li>2. We've partnered with a data specialist organisation to create additional information governance capacity.</li> <li>3. We recruited to our key People and Organisational Development team posts.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We're behind our target for long-term sickness and working on more guidance and training for managers to help address this [Corporate Performance Report].</li> <li>2. We're delivering training to staff – through Digital Champions – to help accelerate our organisational capacity related to using new software and digital processes [Service Delivery Plan].</li> </ol>




		4. We will be rolling out a development programme for the Corporate Leadership Team in 25/26.	
F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We set a balanced budget for 2025/26.</li> <li>2. Treasury Management income has continued to exceed our targets for this year.</li> <li>3. The Risk Management Strategy was reviewed and updated in November 2024.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. There are 2 red / high risks on our Corporate Risk Register and 5 on our committee risk registers. For the most recent updates on these risks please see our <a href="#">Quarter 4 Corporate Performance Report</a> [Corporate Performance Report].</li> </ol>
G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Internal and External Audit, and budget monitoring reports, have reported to Audit and Scrutiny Committee throughout the year.</li> <li>2. The Internal Audit Plan for 2025-26 was agreed by Audit &amp; Scrutiny Committee. This has been set as two 6-month plans to allow for greater flexibility in the plan, enabling it to respond to changing priorities.</li> <li>3. We published an updated <a href="#">guide for suppliers</a> on how to do business with us.</li> <li>4. We've updated our Whistleblowing policy.</li> </ol>	<p>We acknowledge that External Auditors have raised concern around governance and transparency at the council. In particular they have stated that there was “a significant weakness in the Authority’s governance arrangements”, specifically referring to the way in which the constitution was updated. It is important to note that this concern is related to the timing, openness and the way the constitution was updated but not an overall concern on the governance and transparency of the whole council and how it operates.</p> <p>We believe the change in s151 officers during the period contributed to this oversight and our new, permanent s151 officer has arranged regular meetings with external auditors, GT, to ensure they are fully informed of all ongoing matters that might impact upon the financial affairs of the council.</p> <p>We also welcome the review of external auditors of exempt items to obtain assurance of its use and report back to Audit and Scrutiny Committee as part of their Value for Money review.</p>

## Seven Best Value Themes<sup>7</sup>

Best Value theme	Overall assessment	What's working well	Where we can improve
1. Continuous improvement		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CIPFA principles of good governance feature in this Statement, and we've related the latest update to this guidance.</li> <li>2. Governance improvement actions are included in the final section of this Statement.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) has led us to refocus on new Corporate Priorities which have superseded some of the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan and this limits our ability to achieve value for money through continuous improvement projects. However, we remain committed to delivering essential service delivery improvements and upgrades.</li> <li>2. We have not arranged our councillor workshops on risk appetite, and given our risk management framework is robust and LGR has increased councillor workloads, we will abandon this action [Internal Audit Progress Reports].</li> <li>3. LGR and the cancellation our move to East Street led to slippage in the delivery of our ICT Strategy [Service Delivery Plan].</li> </ol>
2. Leadership		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We have agreed our strategic priorities for the next two years (i.e. to LGR expected vesting day).</li> <li>2. Our financial accounts audits are up to date.</li> <li>3. All statutory officer posts are filled with permanent appointments.</li> <li>4. Performance and risk management has been regularly reviewed by the corporate</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We are exploring how we contend with LGR in the context of officer development, retention and recruitment, which will be challenging [Section 4].</li> <li>2. We will enhance management capability through a new development programme [Section 4].</li> </ol>

<sup>7</sup> HM Government (2024) Best value standards and intervention: a statutory guide for best value authorities, Dept. for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities. Online available: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/best-value-standards-and-intervention-a-statutory-guide-for-best-value-authorities/best-value-standards-and-intervention-a-statutory-guide-for-best-value-authorities#best-value-powers> [last accessed 31/05/24].

		leadership team, policy committee Chairs, and Audit and Scrutiny Committee.	
3. Governance		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Internal Audit assessed overall governance at the council to be “reasonable”.</li> <li>2. We have a risk-based internal audit plan, with regular progress reports brought to Audit and Scrutiny Committee.</li> <li>3. Performance and risk information is regularly reported to the Corporate Leadership Team and councillors.</li> <li>4. Key HR policies updated.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We received a ‘No Assurance’ for Environmental Health – Food Hygiene. The majority of the management actions created to address the observations in this audit have been completed. However one, related to recruitment of an additional Environmental Health Officer is overdue. Yet despite pro-active recruitment campaigns, no suitably qualified candidates applied for the vacancy, which is associated with a national shortage of Environmental Health Practitioners and LGR headwinds. The position is filled by agency at present. The other outstanding action was not due until after the time of writing of this report – it is currently on-track [Internal Audit Progress Reports].</li> <li>2. Internal Audit raised that while the number of overdue management actions has been higher, they are concerned about the time taken to complete actions and the number of revised target dates that are being set. Hence we will continue to encourage Heads of Service to carefully consider the original target dates they set in related to other (forthcoming) priorities [Internal Audit Progress Reports].</li> <li>3. We are reviewing our cyber security response plans to see if added value can be achieved through the consolidation of existing plans [Section 4].</li> </ol>
4. Culture		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We continue to launch new staff intranet sites, which now includes “Community” channels.</li> <li>2. We have a new staff recognition scheme in place.</li> <li>3. Staff turnover is on target.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. We are exploring how we contend with LGR in the context of officer development, retention and recruitment, which will be challenging [Corporate Performance Report].</li> </ol>




		<p>4. We have implemented Team Charters showing how our teams 'operate' and their values.</p>	
5. Use of resources		<p>1. Our new strategic priorities include objectives related to moving from the old part of the Town Hall to the new, completing an Asset review, a new car park strategy, and review of the future of our museum.</p> <p>2. We are proactive with our treasury management investment, which provides a return that is above target.</p> <p>3. We received an unqualified (i.e. favourable) opinion on 26 February 2025 regarding our 2023/24 Statement of Accounts.</p>	<p>1. Temporary accommodation costs continue to place a significant strain on our finances [Corporate Performance Report].</p> <p>2. We are looking at how we can increase our resilience with regard to our staff resources in the Place Development team [Section 4].</p> <p>3. We're developing a more suitable My Performance Conversation process for our manual workforce [Section 4].</p>
6. Service delivery		<p>1. Service plans, including service risks and performance indicators are in place for 2025/26.</p> <p>2. We submitted our Local Plan for Inspection on time.</p> <p>3. We have updated our procurement documents to align with the implementation of the new Procurement Act.</p> <p>4. Our service delivery key performance indicators have largely all been on track across the year.</p>	<p>1. We are struggling to recruit permanent officers to the Environmental Health team [Internal Audit Progress Reports, Corporate Performance Report].</p> <p>2. We still use several manual processes in the Place Development team are exploring ways to automate these [Section 4]</p>
7. Partnerships and community engagement		<p>1. We have worked effectively with a local partners on delivering government grants and supporting refugee schemes and homelessness prevention over the year.</p>	<p>1. We are close to completing a new Borough Profile, which should be available in the summer of 2025/26 [Service Delivery Plan].</p> <p>2. We are developing a new governance framework that will capture all our partnerships and clearly outline their benefits. This will be completed by the end of September 2025 [Audit Action Tracker].</p>



## 4. Action Plan



### 2023-24 Annual Governance Statement Action Plan

The table below contains the latest updates on last year's action plan. Any actions marked as complete will now be deactivated, and any in progress or delayed will continue to be tracked through to completion.

Issues Identified	Original Due Date	Due Date	Commentary	RAG Status	RAG Status	Latest Update
Enhance the resilience of the People & Organisational Development Service by recruiting vacant posts and continuing with multi-role training for new team members	31-Mar-2024	30-Sep-2024	HR Advisor left in December leaving one vacant post. Decision to recruit an HR Administrator and delete an HR Officer post to better meet the needs of the service. All HR posts filled in April 2025 giving capacity for team to progress policy and project work.		Completed	02-May-2025
Review and enhance recruitment and retention policies and procedures for key roles across the council	31-Mar-2024	30-Sep-2025	A new HR Administrator joined on 1st April 2025. The team is now at full capacity which will enable time to focus on this project. Recruitment and retention will be a key strand of HR in light of Local Government Reorganisation. The Council is working with our partners in the Districts & Boroughs on a joint approach where possible.  This action will be CARRIED FORWARD.		On track	03-Jul-2025
Review and update IT policies as necessary	31-Mar-2024	31-Dec-2025	Additional elements being considered for inclusion in policies including the secured use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Policy		On track	04-Jul-2025

Issues Identified	Original Due Date	Due Date	Commentary	RAG Status	RAG Status	Latest Update
			work is being scheduled to align with several high priority IT procurements that are currently underway,  This action will be CARRIED FORWARD.			
IT AGS action	31-Mar-2024	31-Dec-2025	Update relates to IT security so cannot be disclosed. Members are requested to contact the report author outside of the committee meeting if they would like the update.  This action will be CARRIED FORWARD.	●	On track	03-Jul-2025
Document management Software - to procure new software to enhance the revenues and benefits service	31-Dec-2024	31-Dec-2024	This item has been completed.  The new system has now gone live in Revenues and Benefits. Just a couple of additional modules waiting to go live.	●	Completed	11-Feb-2025
Biodiversity Net Gain - implement the Biodiversity Net Gain policy requirements	31-Jul-2024	31-Jul-2024	Concern at national level regarding the number of applications which are able to opt out and avoid BNG has meant most authorities have received very few schemes meeting the requirement. Therefore, the impact of BNG has been very limited to date, and we haven't had to introduce any specific measures to deal with it. As such, this no longer	●	Completed	04-Jul-2025

Issues Identified	Original Due Date	Due Date	Commentary	RAG Status	RAG Status	Latest Update
			represents a significant governance issue that the council can action. Consequently, we have closed the action and will instead include it as a risk on our risk register.			
Public Protection Inspections -review resourcing in statutory Environmental Health services, including discretionary activities	31-Mar-2025	31-Mar-2025	This item has been completed.	●	Completed	11-Feb-2025
Audit and Scrutiny Committee-review the Audit and Scrutiny Committee's Terms of Reference	31-Mar-2025	28-Feb-2026	Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) has led us to refocus on new Corporate Priorities which have superseded some of the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan, which this action formed a part of. Therefore, this action has been superseded by the council's new Strategic Priorities and will be marked complete for this reason.	●	Completed	03-Jul-2025
Corporate Plan - produce a long-term corporate plan	31-Mar-2025	31-Mar-2025	Strategic Priorities for 25-27 approved at Full Council 6/5/25 - these will supersede old 4 year plan and proposed new 5 year plan.	●	Completed	08-May-2025
Develop a corporate record of the Council's resident engagement activities	31-Mar-2025	31-Mar-2025	This action has been completed.  A report was submitted to the Community and Wellbeing Community in October	●	Completed	11-Feb-2025

Issues Identified	Original Due Date	Due Date	Commentary	RAG Status	RAG Status	Latest Update
			<p>2024. Areas where there is a need for further activity would be around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• engagement with young people</li> <li>• engagement with advisory groups</li> <li>• ensuring that where E&amp;E are attending events our presence is clearer e.g. with a stand</li> <li>• identify a mechanism to get more feedback from councillors.</li> </ul> <p>This is going to be added into BAU activities going forward.</p>			
Data Protection Officer - source additional Data Protection Officer capacity	31-Oct-2024	31-Oct-2024	<p>This item has been completed.</p> <p>The new DPO service is underway with the first meetings having taken place and full on boarding completed.</p>		Completed	24-Jan-2025
Councillor Training - review and enhance the councillor training and development programme	31-Mar-2025	31-Oct-2025	<p>At the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting on 23 July 2024, the following action and timescale were agreed:</p> <p>11.2 Arrange a training for members and officers on committee system governance to understand the role of committees in proper scrutiny of policy. Chief Executive to ask CFGS to run this in Oct 2025.</p> <p>This action will be CARRIED FORWARD.</p>		On track	03-Jul-2025

## 2024-25 Additions to the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan

Issues identified	Action to be taken	Due date
Management capability	Enhance management capability to lead through change, by delivering a new development programme.	31 March 2026
Open, transparent and timely discussions with key stakeholders	There will be more regular open, transparent and timely discussions with external auditors, internal auditors and members on key decisions affecting council affairs and sharing documents and information in a timely manner. Regular meetings have already been scheduled with external auditors to address weaknesses raised around the way the constitution was updated. Member communications will be reviewed, and training needs assessed.	31 March 2026
Review our cyber security response plans	Review to see if added value can be achieved through consolidation of existing plans.	31 December 2025
Staff resourcing across all teams	Review level of resilience of staff resourcing.	31 December 2025
Manual processes in Place team	Replace manual processes in the Place Development team with automation.	31 March 2026
Appeals related to the Local Plan	Review appeals related to the Local Plan to ensure they do not relate to the governance of the Plan.	30 September 2025
Corporate priorities	In light of LGR, management will consider having a focussed set of corporate priorities for the coming year / 2 years.	31 October 2025
Performance appraisals of the manual workforce	Develop a suitable My Performance Conversation process for our manual workforce.	31 December 2025

## 5. Executive Confirmation

The Chair of Strategy and Resources Committee and Chief Executive both recognise the importance of good governance and sound financial management. They pledge their commitment to address the matters highlighted in this AGS, and to further enhance our governance arrangements to enable delivery of our strategic priorities. Further, they confirm they have been advised of the implications of the governance review by senior management. In addition, they are assured that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee are satisfied that the steps outlined in this document will ensure that our governance arrangements remain fit for the future.

Signed on behalf of Epsom & Ewell Borough Council:<sup>8</sup>

*SIGNED*

**Chair of Strategy & Resources  
Committee**

Date: 02/10/2025

*SIGNED*

**Chief Executive**

Date: 01/10/2025

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<sup>8</sup> The hand-signed copy is stored in the Town Hall.