




Annual Governance Statement 2023/24, Maldon District Council

Achievements for 2023/24

Over the financial year, the following governance framework improvements have taken place:

- A Local Government Association (LGA) finance peer review was received by full Council in July 2023, and officers and members have since been progressing an associated action plan. [Local Government Association Finance Peer Challenge](#), item 162.  PDF 138 KB [Appendix 1](#), item 162.  PDF 788 KB [Appendix 2](#), item 162.  PDF 360 KB .
- Introduction of an internal service plan SharePoint for service managers, with monthly highlight reporting, and exceptions to these reported to members through the Balance Scorecard Exceptions.
- An increase to resident survey responses for the second year in a row, with 721 (up from 370 and both of which are a representative sample for the District).
- Risk management training rolled out to staff and members through e-learning, following the September 2022 revised Risk Management Policy.
- Development and progress of an internal action plan associated with the Data management and insight strategy approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee in February 2023 [Appendix B.pdf \(maldon.gov.uk\)](#).
- Full member onboarding programme in May/ June 2023 following elections. Additionally, close working with the member training working group to identify follow up sessions and provide these.
- Launch of a member survey alongside the annual staff survey.
- Process improvement greenbelt champion programme established and launched in Feb 2024, to support officers to manage improvement projects and embed continual improvement work.
- Quarterly reporting of delegated decisions since March 2022, at [Delegated decisions | Delegated decisions | Maldon District Council](#).
- Four Members appointed to work with the process improvement team and provide testing feedback and support for new customer processes.
- Member-led improvements to overview and scrutiny process, whereby the full committee now attends working group meetings and these are held monthly to ensure regular and prompt review of scrutiny matters. Workplan items have included Cyber Security, Maldon Citizens Advice and Planning Enforcement.
- A 2% increase from 64% to 66% of staff participation in the annual staff survey.
- Support from the LGA with leadership following the election result of no overall control, and establishment of the Group Leaders forum where strategic discussions can take place.
- Launch of bitesize budget finance sessions – also recorded and available to all members.
- Launch of Project Management Office (PMO) processes like pre-project appraisal including finance staff.
- An updated Whistleblowing policy was accepted by the Strategy and Resources Committee on 9 November 2023 [Appendix 1.pdf \(maldon.gov.uk\)](#).

- **Internal audit summary – supplied by BDO**
- The role of internal audit is to provide an opinion to the Council, through the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee (PGA), on the adequacy and effectiveness of the internal control system to ensure the achievement of the organisation's objectives in the areas reviewed. The annual report from internal audit provides an overall opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's risk management, control and governance processes, within the scope of work undertaken by our firm as outsourced providers of the internal audit service. It also summarises the activities of internal audit for the period. The basis for forming my opinion is as follows:
 - An assessment of the design and operation of the underpinning Assurance Framework and supporting processes.
 - An assessment of the range of individual opinions arising from risk-based audit assignments contained within internal audit risk-based plans that have been reported throughout the year
 - This assessment has taken account of the relative materiality of these areas and management's progress in respect of addressing control weaknesses; and any reliance that is being placed upon third party assurances.
- Overall, we are able to provide moderate assurance that there is a sound system of internal control, designed to meet the Council's objectives and that controls are being applied consistently. In forming our view, we have considered that:
 - In the current year all audits completed provided either Substantial or Moderate assurance in the design of controls (Substantial: 6, Moderate: 4). These figures include 6 from the 23/24 audit plan and 4 from the 22/23 audit plan.
 - In the current year all audits have so far provided either substantial or moderate assurance in the operational effectiveness of controls (Substantial: 3, Moderate: 7).
 - This is an improvement on the prior year, which had one Limited assurance opinion.
 - We have further undertaken two advisory reports for Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and HMRC Employment Status. However, while findings were raised as part these reviews, they are advisory of nature and offer actions to be taken to enhance current controls.
 - There are currently three remaining reviews from the 23/24 audit plan to complete (Fraud, Main Financial Systems and Compliance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Financial Code). While fieldwork is yet to be complete, based on scoping and work completed to date, we do not expect to identify any major issues and it is unlikely that their outcomes will change the overall audit opinion:
- Some areas of weakness have been identified through our reviews, including opportunities for improvement in areas of Licensing, specifically relating to DBS (Disclosure and Baring Service) and Medical checks for licensees. However, the Council is already working to address the issues identified.
- The Council have implemented the majority of audit recommendations from prior years with three recommendations overdue from across 20/21 and 21/22 (this is

based on our last follow up exercise in November 2023). Recommendations outstanding from these years include Knowledge Management with a revised implementation date of 31/03/2024 and Management of Property with revised dates of 31/12/2023 and 31/01/2024. While it is acknowledged that the delay in the implementation of these recommendations were originally impacted by operational staff capacity due to Covid as well as other competing priorities, we would expect these to be completed as soon as possible.

- Overall, while there remain some minor gaps and risks, our work has concluded that the Council has generally been able to maintain reasonable controls and have sought to utilise internal audit in areas such as Compliance with the CIPFA Financial Code (not originally in the plan but identified as an area in need of review) which highlights willingness to adjust and ensure key risk areas are reviewed and learning from events enabled. Good practice was identified in areas such as the review of Sickness and Absence and Climate Change and Sustainability. However, as noted in previous years, there remains delays to the implementation of some older recommendations which continues to require improvement.

- **Action plan: What we will do more of in 2024/2025:**

In compiling the annual governance statement, we have identified areas for further improvement over the next financial year.

The delivery of the action plan below will be tracked at our Performance, Governance and Audit committee:

NB Asterix denotes rolled over actions from 2023/24 annual governance statement

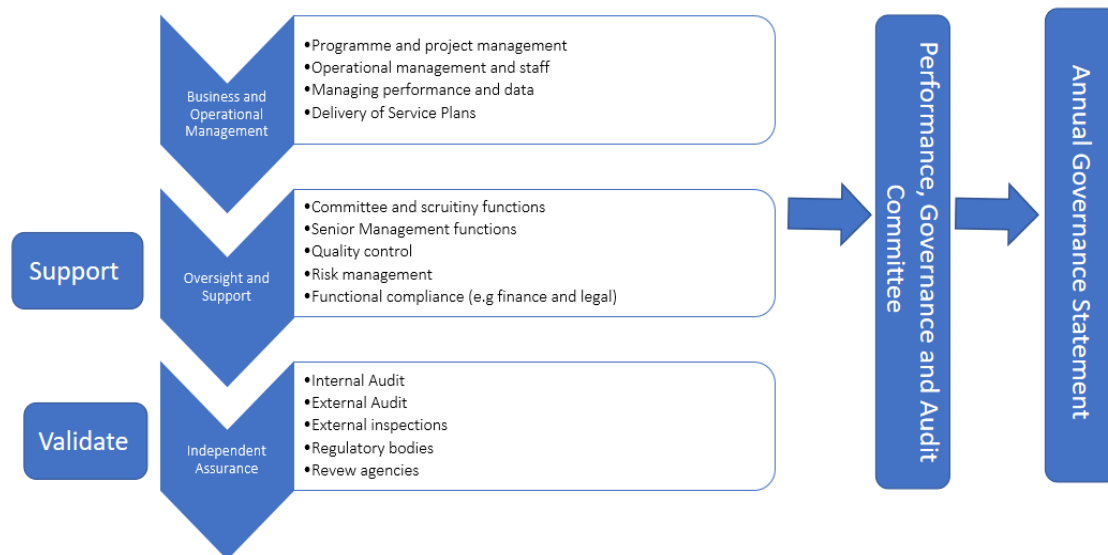
Action	Officer initial	
Build on member induction process and training plan in collaboration with the member training and development working group	CH	
Draw out and link all of our policies and their objectives through a review of the Local Development Plan (eg Corporate Plan, Climate Change) *	MW	
Build engagement and information sharing with Parish Councils as part of the Local Development Plan review work through the new Parish and Town Council Engagement Forum*	MW	CHANGE OF NAME?

Action	Officer initial	
Review governance housekeeping matters through the Performance, Governance and Audit working group	PD	
Include e-learning to balance scorecard reporting, so that completions for staff and members is clear, particularly around governance areas such as risk management.	CH/ EH	
Comms and roll out of whistleblowing policy and procedure	AC	
Delivery of finance peer review actions (tracked through xxxx)	NL/CH ??	

Summary: How our governance arrangements at Maldon District Council underpin delivery of the Corporate plan and Outcomes.

Background information

Our arrangements for Governance support



At Maldon District Council, our Governance arrangements are underpinned by a mix of business and operational management, oversight and support activities and independent assurance. The activity is fed into the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee and then into full Council.

An analysis of this work and the plan for the following year is what forms the Annual Governance Statement.

Progress made on last Annual Governance Statement (AGS) actions -

In the 22/23 AGS, although no significant issues were identified, we developed an action plan based on best practice for Governance arrangements. These actions have been tracked and reported to the Performance, Governance and Audit committee [Annual Governance Statement Actions Update.pdf \(maldon.gov.uk\)](#).

Some of these actions are captured in the action table above as they continue to be relevant.

CIPFA / SOLACE 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government framework - 2016 Edition' good practice guidance, highlights seven key areas for good corporate governance, as shown in the diagram below:



Additionally, the financial management code highlights a governance best practice that 'The leadership team demonstrates in its actions and behaviours responsibility for governance and internal control' (Financial Management code Standard C). In this annual governance statement, we will also comment on the Councils arrangements for this practice.

This year, the following activity has taken place within the Governance Framework:

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

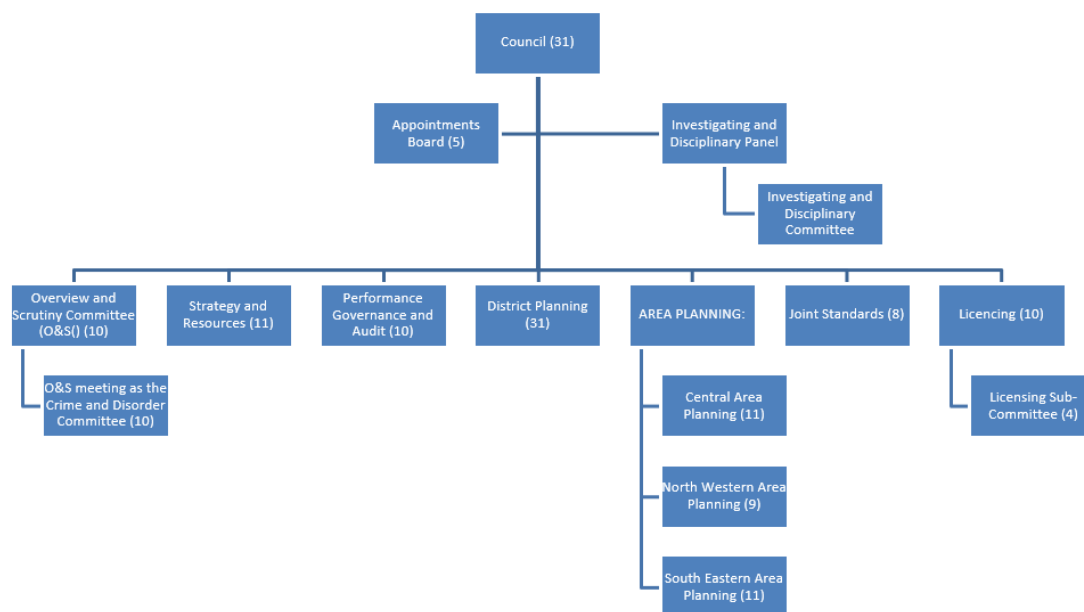
A committee structure as set out below has been in place in 2023/24.

Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny committee is separate from the programme committees to encourage robust scrutiny and separation. All Members are able to submit suggestions for scrutiny items. A Working group of the committee considers these in detail and recommends back to the committee suggested workplan items and courses for scrutiny suggestions. In 2023/24 members increased participation of this working group to all committee members and have scheduled regular monthly meetings to ensure scrutiny work is efficient and robust.

There were three direct member forms referral received, and five items that rolled over, t The annual report of Overview and Scrutiny activity will provide further detail on this.

[On 8 September 2022 a paper to the Council, reviewing the role of Corporate Governance Working Group and overlap with Performance, governance and audit committee was considered PGA Committee and Corporate Governance Working Group \(CGWG\).pdf \(maldon.gov.uk\)](#) Members confirmed removal of the working group with responsibility for Constitutional review and governance sitting with Performance, Governance and Audit committee. A working group of five members of PGA was established in March 2023 to complete detailed review work. In June 2024 this working group was appointed as part of the annual reset of committees and has sat during the year to consider the finance peer review recommendations that impacted on governance.

1. **MALDON DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE STRUCTURE**



Our committee structure has a joint standards committee.

For 22/23 there were 6 complaints against District Members and on each the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent person decided to take no further action

For 23/24 there are 3 complaints so far with one being no further action and 2 being still under consideration

Committee meetings continued to run with a live YouTube stream, in 23/24. All previous and live streams can be viewed at [Maldon District Council – YouTube](#)

Across all committees, the live stream averaged around 90 views, with the public also able to view from the chamber should they wish.

The Council has a [Whistle Blowing Policy](#), which was refreshed and accepted by the Strategy and Resources Committee in November 2023. It sets out the arrangements for employees to disclose allegations of malpractice internally, in relation to staff, Members, contractors, suppliers or consultants in the course of their work for the Council, without fear of victimisation, discrimination or disadvantage.

We launched an Annual Staff survey in December 2019, and ran this for the fifth time in November 2023, with a response rate of 66%, this is an increase of 2% on the previous year. The survey gave some honest areas of staff feedback for management to address and allows the organisation to review areas of improvement or reduction in satisfaction between years. An action plan has been put together internally to address key areas of concern, and an action plan group with leadership team members is in place to drive this forward.

The Council has adopted a number of codes and protocols which set out the parameters for the way in which it operates, in particular a Member/Officer Relations Protocol intended to clarify roles and promote effective communication. This was recirculated to staff and Members in 21/22, to follow up on Joint Standards complaints. Additionally, a training session of 'working with elected members' was delivered to key staff involved in committees and member working groups in November 2022 by the monitoring officer and Programmes, performance and governance manager. A digital version of this training is also available as a follow up to staff. As part of the May 2023 all member Onboarding process, we included digital copies of these codes in the induction pack and covered them as part of the member onboarding day.

The Council's Financial Regulations provide the framework for managing the Council's financial affairs. They identify the financial responsibilities of the Council, the Committees, and key officers. The Section 151 Officer (S151) (under the Local Government Act 1972) is responsible for ensuring that sound financial management systems are maintained, and expenditure is lawful and appropriate, and this appointment is normally held by the Director of Resources. A temporary arrangement has been in place since May 2023 following the departure of the Director of Resources, with an interim Chief Financial Officer (S151) in post, pending Council agreement on a permanent Corporate Leadership Team structure.

The Council's constitutional arrangements include a Code of Conduct for elected Members based on the Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles). The LGA model code of conduct was adopted by Maldon District Council (MDC) in June 2022.

Officers are subject to a Code of Conduct, the policy for which was adopted with effect from 18 November 2013 and last revised in April 2018.

Registers of gifts and hospitality are maintained for both Members and Officers. A statutory register of interests is maintained for Members, and the staff Code of Conduct requires staff to disclose interests. Periodic reminders are issued about the need to avoid potential conflicts of interest and protocols for the acceptance of gifts and hospitality.

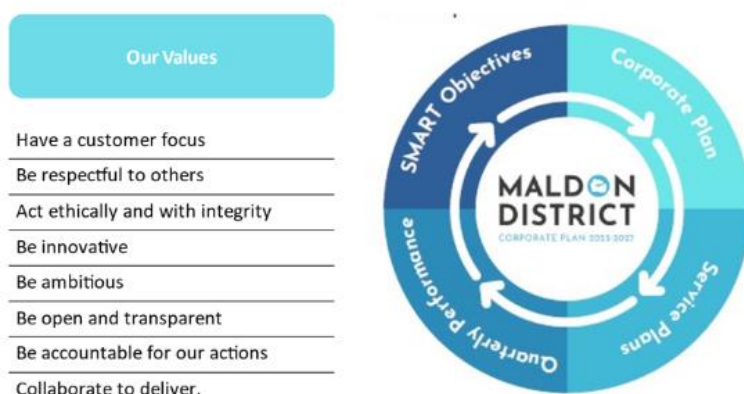
The Council has a series of approved policies and strategies relating to good governance, including, for example, the Code of Corporate Governance, anti-fraud and corruption,

whistle-blowing, data quality, Freedom of Information, and corporate equality policies, all of which are accessible via the Council's SharePoint system.

BDO LLP under their remit of Internal Auditors consider fraud as part of their audit workplan. This ensures we conform to the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (CIPFA 2014). In 2023/24, following an audit recommendation, we have added consideration of how a report may impact on fraud risk to our committee report template.

Our Values are shared with staff as a way we will work to deliver the Corporate Plan (revised 23-27) These are also reflected in each individual staff member's own work objectives.

To deliver the Corporate Plan 2023-2027, we promise we will



B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

We ran the annual residents survey in October, which was available online, and promoted through communications. Specific questions in the survey are used to measure the delivery of the corporate plan outcomes. A key concern in 21/22 was the low response rate to this survey, In 22/23 we received what is considered a representative sample for a self-selecting survey, with 370 responses. In 2023/24 we far surpassed this with 721 responses.

We additionally ran the annual staff survey which gives internal stakeholder feedback, and saw a 2% increase in response rate, to 66% of staff.

Public are invited to speak at committee meetings, and with meetings held remotely we have also introduced provision for live public participation which has largely been taken up in Planning Committees.

We have an internal audit plan, which reviews our controls and risk and provides opportunity for improvements to be identified and addressed. In 2023/24 six internal audits and two advisory reports have so far been completed in the areas of:

HMRC Employment Status (Advisory)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Advisory)

Sickness and Absence Management

Management of s106 Funds

Licensing

Climate Change and Sustainability

Housing Benefit

Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation

Reviews are ongoing for Fraud, CIPFA Financial Management Code and Main Financial Systems.

The Council engages with the appropriate equality groups in order to ensure that it meets its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The Council produces Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) in line with legislation. In March 2022, Key officers were given refresher training around EQIA documentation, and all staff were given Equality Diversity and Inclusion training as part of our central HR policy.

In March 2022, a web area was developed to publish delegated decisions by officers and improve visibility both internally and externally for this area. There is an internal mechanism for officers to record decisions that are made and this area to be updated quarterly by the Programmes, Performance and Governance Team. The link to access this is www.maldon.gov.uk/decisions

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

We continue our quarterly corporate performance reporting which is reported to the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee and that measures the delivery of the outcomes in the corporate plan.

A revised Corporate Plan was adopted by Council in February 2023 and can be accessed at [Corporate Plan 2023-2027 | Maldon District Council](#)

There are six Corporate Priorities which are:

- Supporting our communities
- Enhancing and connecting our place
- Helping the economy to thrive
- Smarter finances
- A greener future
- Provide good quality services

Corporate performance reporting has been revised in 23/24 to align to the priorities, and developed with Performance, Governance and Audit committee member feedback. The latest quarterly performance can be seen at <https://democracy.maldon.gov.uk/documents/s33927/Appendix%201.pdf> The Corporate Plan details the vision, goals, and objectives that guide the direction, work and achievements

of the authority. It is the Council's core internal strategic planning document, from which supporting strategies can be developed and published, including the Medium Term Financial Strategy, ICT Strategy and Workforce Development Plan, all of which underpin the Council's ambition to transform the way it delivers its services in the future.

The committee report template has been updated in 23/24, to ensure that we reflect on the impact to our corporate priorities in each report.

At an operational level, each service produces a service plan. These are not submitted to Committee but facilitate effective performance and risk management within the Directorates including the setting of individual staff objectives and completion of performance reviews. An update to the service plan process in 23/24 means that these plans are all now stored within a central internal SharePoint system, and actions have monthly owner updates, and the service manager provides a monthly highlight report with exceptions for our Corporate Leadership Team, as a way to manage service plan performance issues dynamically. Exceptions to delivery are reported to the Performance Governance and Audit committee through the Balance Scorecard exceptions report.

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

In 2023/24, the LGA completed a finance peer review. Findings were reported to members and an associated action plan accepted which has been prioritised and moved forwards in 23/24. In January the LGA peer review team re-visited and noted progress and suggested additional actions for improvement. This work will continue into 24/25.

The Performance, Governance and Audit Committee is provided with a quarterly performance report for delivery of the Corporate priorities. They are invited to challenge and focus delivery of these.

The Corporate Leadership Team are committed to regular review and updating of the Corporate Risk Register to identify areas of risk to service delivery, and Risk Reporting is also quarterly reviewed and challenged by the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee.

In 2019/20, we established a PMO in the Council restructure, to standardise project reporting and support good quality project delivery. We have a monthly Extended Leadership Team (ELT) project board and monthly Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) steering board (which reviews project sign off and closure). There is monthly oversight and reporting of projects, and where appropriate, risks and issues can either be addressed or escalated further to Members as part of wider Risk and performance reporting. In 23/24 further developments have been made to our PMO processes and the support available to project managers, as part of our continual improvement programme. The process improvement team also produce monthly performance reporting to show the areas that have been supported, and improvements in efficiency and customer experience. As part of this, a review of the customer feedback on our online forms which receive low satisfaction ratings is used to drive further improvement work and ideas.

In June 2021, an ICT strategy for 21-25 was adopted [Decision - ICT Strategy 2021 - 2026 :: Maldon District Council](#), this also drives a vision for our technology and processes for the next five years. In 23/24 work has been taking place to profile our IT systems and their plan

for long term usage, support and data management. This will help inform a revision for the IT strategy due for revision in 24/25.

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

In 2020/21, we put in place a new process for linking the Corporate Plan objectives, through to delivery right down to the individual staff. Now that the Corporate Plan has been refreshed, the diagram below shows how this then links down to team service plans, and individual staff objectives. In January 2023, a refreshed service plan template was issued to the management team to reflect Corporate changes, as previously set out in section C.

In 23/24, we started monthly highlight reporting processes, where the Assistant Directors are now responsible for delivery of a monthly tracker report and reporting highlights and lowlights to the Corporate Leadership Team. Exceptions to these are reported to Performance, Governance and Audit committee through the Balance Score Card exceptions.



To underpin objectives, and support staff and members in delivery of their role, we have also developed and delivered:

- Key strategies to define delivery that have been adopted in 22/23 including a data and insight strategy, a procurement strategy, an asset management strategy, business continuity strategy and a comms, marketing and engagement plan
- A full member onboarding programme following elections of our 31 members in May 2023.
- Member Chair and Vice Chair training following our Annual meeting in May 2022
- Regular briefings for members, topics of which were covered in 22/23 were: budget, commercial projects, 5 year Housing Land Supply, Local Development Plan Review and Levelling up
- Structure review of the Service Delivery directorate, and establishment of Assistant Director roles across the whole organisation, who are responsible for delivery of governance controls in their areas.

- LGA support and development work with elected members, following the 'no overall control' result of the election. Extended Leadership Team development sessions, to focus on areas of organisational development. Corporate Plan and Service Plan training sessions for the leadership team, to support them establishing service plans and staff SMART objectives accordingly. Lean Six Sigma (process improvement) training for staff Project Management Office support for project managers and the senior leadership team, including measuring project performance and outcome delivery.
- Key process support documents on our internal Freshservice system that define process steps and act as training and handover guides.

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

Maldon District Council has a drive to be more performance-led. This year we have continued to develop our monthly internal Balance Scorecard report for Senior Management review and scrutiny, and redesigned Corporate performance reports based on Member feedback, latest system developments and the revised 2023/27 Corporate Plan.

From January 2021, a six monthly report of operational exceptions from the Balance Scorecard have been reported to Performance, Governance and Audit committee. In 22/23 we built on this in terms of the data included, and inclusion of 'emerging/ possible issues' section. Additionally, we have also developed tailored reporting for specific services to increase data-driven decision making in the organisation. To embed this further in the organisation, the data and insight strategy was adopted in 2023, and an action plan to deliver this has been established and progressed in 2023/24. This includes actions such as:

- A review of our IT systems and reporting capability
- Close work with IT and development of revised IT strategy due in 2024
- Development of PMO and using business improvement resource to support quantifying project delivery outcomes.
- Building resource within our mapping (GIS system) to improve data access and automate processes (e.g. enforcement data access)
- Case studies and training sessions available for staff and members to improve understanding around data driven decisions.

This year we have worked to the Risk Management Policy that was adopted in September 2022.

A link to recorded risk training is provided for new staff onboarding and the Programmes, Performance and Governance team support staff with specific risk management queries and support. The team have also rolled out all staff and member e-learning and in 2024/25 we will be reporting and monitoring completion as part of our e-learning developments.

A Quarterly Corporate Risk register review goes to Performance, Governance and Audit committee.

Risks are a regular item of discussion in the monthly Extended Leadership Team meetings and Service Management Meetings.

Risks to the Council's financial position could potentially arise from a number of factors including unplanned budget overspends, lower than expected investment income, contractual / legislative failure, a shortfall in forecast business rates growth or challenge and emergency events. Historically, the Council's outturn has been within budget; however, robust budget management, monitoring and reporting will be a key discipline for all budget managers and ensuring that savings and income assumed included within the budget are achieved, will remain an essential focus.

The level of risk posed by contractual or legislative failure and emergency events is difficult to predict, but General Balances are held to mitigate against this possibility. In addition financial bonds / Parent Company Guarantees are being built into large contracts where appropriate.

It is important to recognise that under the Business Rates Retention Scheme, there is a considerable degree of uncertainty in the forecast for business rates growth as much of it depends on external factors including the impact of successful appeals. The Council's own economic development policies can have an impact on business rates growth and therefore it is important that the planning services, economic development services and the business rates service have a co-ordinated approach to inward investment policies.

The current cost of living crisis could affect households' and businesses' ability to pay Council Tax and National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) respectively. This places a risk on local taxation collection rates.

Major contracts such as Waste and Leisure are also impacted by the wider economic climate. The Leisure contract currently only generates a fraction of income for the Council than it did pre-pandemic but is currently out for tender so there remains uncertainty around future returns pending appointment of a new contractor. The new Waste contract begins in February 2024, and will need to bed in. Waste contract income is driven by recycling tonnage and prices, which are volatile; therefore income assumed in the MTFs for this contract is based on best known estimates.

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

There were a number of deferrals in Council and committee decision making in 23/24 and this was particularly high volume following the May 2023 election and outcome of no overall control politically. The original agenda for Statutory annual Council was dealt with across three meetings following the deferrals. There have also been a number of decision making papers deferred several times at full Council meetings.

The Local Government Association (LGA) have been facilitating and supporting key members and officers to support committee-based decision making in the circumstances of no overall control, as this has proved a governance challenge for Maldon in 23/24. We will continue to build on this in 24/25, as Maldon has a four year election cycle.

All committee meetings are open for the public to attend. In 22/23 we also continued to live stream all committee meetings via Youtube [Maldon District Council - YouTube](#) Since late 2021, we have been able to accept attendance via MS Teams and have been running hybrid meetings to support preferences of those involved. We updated to our Constitutional and procedural documents have been made to allow for these arrangements.

We publish our delegated decisions, which are updated quarterly at www.maldon.gov.uk/decisions

This year we ran a full cycle of quarterly performance reporting to align it to the corporate outcomes defined in the Corporate Plan.

Members are invited to review the performance information and challenge where they feel delivery of the Corporate Plan outcomes is at risk. The internal process around producing this performance documentation also allows greater visibility for the senior managers around how staff are progressing agreed action plans.

An internal audit plan is defined according to areas of Corporate Risk. We have a quarterly update of internal audit progress, including audit actions due with officers, and this is reported to the Performance, Governance and Audit Committee.

‘The leadership team demonstrates in its actions and behaviours responsibility for governance and internal control’ (Financial Management code Standard C)

The CIPFA financial management code also highlights this point in addition to compliance with the 2016 delivering good governance in local government as set out above

CIPFA believes that the strength of financial management within an organisation can be assessed by a hierarchy of three ‘financial management (FM) styles’:

- delivering accountability
- supporting performance
- enabling transformation.

Maldon has been working against this principle in the following ways

Delivering accountability	Supporting performance	Enabling transformation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The introduction of assistant director posts in 23/24, with clear areas of accountability linked to these • Leadership development of key members and officers • Full member onboarding and training programme including specific Chairperson sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service plan templates and monthly highlight/exceptions reporting mechanism • Quarterly performance reporting against corporate plan delivery • Monthly operational performance reporting through balance scorecard and six monthly exceptions reports for committee • Running an annual resident survey and using analysis to inform Corporate plan delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent process improvement resource to support improvement project delivery • Quarterly improvement reports to track progress • Robust project management office approach to support project delivery • Learning from best practice and adopting recommendations in internal audit and peer review work

CONCLUSION

The Council is satisfied that appropriate governance arrangements have been maintained in 2023/24. These have been successfully adapted and reviewed as a response to changes in circumstance and wider governance arrangements. We have also continued to build on good practice around governance in the 24/25 year.

The Council, recognises however that these arrangements are designed only to manage risk down to a reasonable level and cannot provide absolute assurance that the Council will successfully deliver all of its policies, aims and objectives, and we will continually monitor and refresh performance and risk reporting throughout the year to address issues that arise.

We remain committed to maintaining and where possible improving these arrangements, by:

- Addressing issues identified by Internal Audit and our 23/24 Finance peer review.
- Focussing on key risks and areas for improvement.
- Continuing regular, open and transparent engagement with local people.
- Training and enabling our staff and Members to work within good governance frameworks.