

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2024/25

1. SCOPE OF RESPONSIBILITY

- 1.1. Nottinghamshire County Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. Public money must be safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Authority 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. The Localism Act 2011 has, among other things, established a general power of competence for local authorities.
- 1.2. In discharging this overall responsibility, the County Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including the arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3. This statement meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations (England) 2015 in relation to the publication of an Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

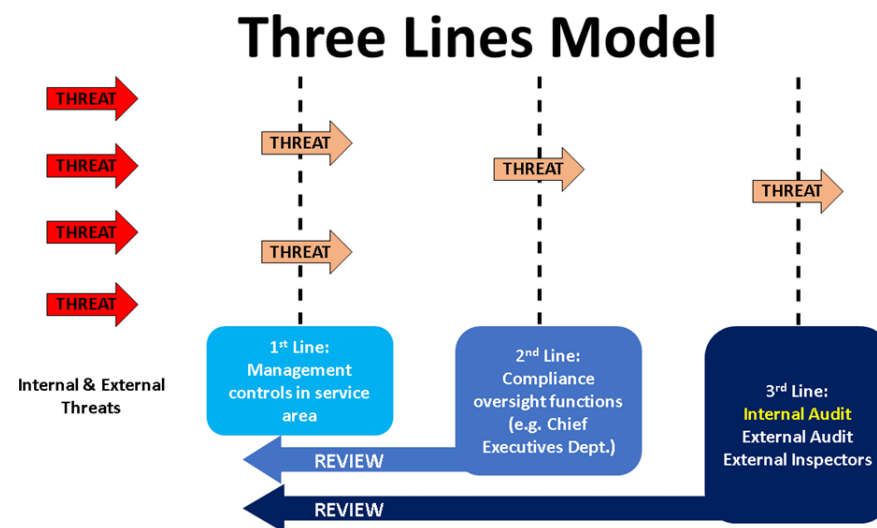
2. THE LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

- 2.1. Nottinghamshire County Council has adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance. The Code is subject to annual review and approval by the Governance and Ethics Committee, and it is published on the Council's [website](#).

- 2.2. The Code is based on the seven core principles of good governance, as recommended in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework for 'Delivering good governance in Local Government' (2016 Edition).

3. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS DURING 2024/25

- 3.1. The Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework. This Statement sets out the outcome of the latest review for the financial year 2024/25. The outcomes are set out in terms of the extent to which the Council has applied in practice the seven core principles of good governance.
- 3.2. During 2024/25 the Council operated a 'Three Lines Model' to deliver assurance about the effectiveness of its governance arrangements, as depicted in the following chart.



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- 3.3. The evidence to assess effectiveness with the Local Code during 2024/25 is drawn from a range of sources across the three lines of defence, as summarised below.

1st Line

- Assurance statements from Executive Directors concerning the application of key governance controls in their areas of service

2nd Line

- In-year governance updates to the Governance & Ethics Committee
- Review of core governance issues dealt with by the Council and its committee structure
- Assurance mapping
- Governance & Ethics Committee's annual report

3rd Line

- Head of Internal Audit's annual report (draft report)
- Reports of External Auditor
- Other external inspections (risk management review, BACS bureau inspection, BSI health & safety accreditation)

- 3.4. The in-year governance update reports to the Corporate Leadership Team and to the Governance & Ethics Committee prompt a review of the significant governance issues facing the Council, along with progress against the AGS Action Plan. In effect, the update reports provide for an in-year refresh of the AGS, to enable it to be used pro-actively throughout the year as part of the Council's governance framework.
- 3.5. Where any issues of concern are highlighted by the review during 2024/25, these issues are noted below in section 4 of the Statement, along with the key actions planned to address them.

Assessment of compliance

- 3.6. The following pages set out a concise assessment of compliance with the Local Code of Corporate Governance.
- 3.7. For each aspect of governance in the Local Code, the assessment is framed in terms of the following:
- The evidence for compliance with the Code in 2024/25
 - Brief details of any improvements and developments during the year
 - Identifying any gaps in compliance or areas in which there are significant challenges.
 - The focus in the year ahead, to address gaps, to meet challenges or to continue with current developments.

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

Assessed assurance level for compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance: **Substantial**

Compliance with the Local Code during 2024/25

The policies, procedures and practices set out in the Local Code of Corporate Governance remained in force during 2024/25. Executive Directors report the following levels of compliance with key Council procedures relevant to this aspect of governance:

Procedure ↓	dept ¹ →	ASC	C&F	Place	Ch. Exec.
Staff code of conduct		Substantial	Substantial	Substantial	Substantial
Scheme delegation		Substantial	Substantial	Substantial	Substantial
Staff register of interests		Reasonable	Substantial	Substantial	Reasonable
Register of gifts and hospitality		Reasonable	Substantial	Substantial	Reasonable

¹ Key to Council departments: ASC – Adult Social Care; C&F = Children & Families; Ch. Exec. – Chief Executive's

Improvements & developments during 2024/25

In May 2022 a Leader and Cabinet model of governance became operational. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) undertook a review of the Council's scrutiny function the recommendations of which were reported to Governance and Ethics Committee on 17 April 2024. The Governance and Ethics Committee approved the recommendations and requested Overview Committee to develop and oversee implementation of an action plan.

Corporate Leadership Team have hosted workforce engagement events between February and April 2024 designed to inform the development of an organisational operating model. Engagement is

helping to identify the key features to define how we work effectively and continue to be a forward looking and resilient council.

The Council has launched engagement sessions on topics including early help and prevention, partnership working, culture, and future ways of working. This approach intends to create and sustain a positive and inclusive culture that reflects collective values and behaviours and enables staff to shape the future of the Council.

Gaps and challenges

Levels of compliance and developments made during 2024/25 combine to provide the basis for reasonable assurance however, the principal challenge lies in capacity to progress the actions and focus areas identified to provide greater assurance. It should be emphasised, however, that the Council maintains a solid governance framework and the identified actions represent opportunities to strengthen the arrangements still further.

Current Key Focus for 2025/26

A key focus will be developing and implementing the action plan following the independent scrutiny review. In preparation for the County elections in May 2025 the member training and induction pack will be reviewed and rolled out to new and returning members after the elections.

Further engagement and development/approval of the future organisational operating model, ensuring ongoing consultation with the workforce, elected members and partners. Work will continue to engage with staff as we shape the future blueprint for the Council.

B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

Assessed assurance level for compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance: Substantial

Compliance with the Local Code during 2024/25

The 'Nottinghamshire Plan' is established in setting out a ten-point plan to deliver a 10-year vision for a healthy, prosperous, and greener future for everyone in Nottinghamshire and progress is reported in the Councils Annual Report.

The Council complied with the requirements of the Transparency Code in 2024/25, and all other requirements of the Local Code for this aspect of governance were maintained during the year.

Improvements & developments during 2024/25

Work continued to ensure strong assurance was in place to track progress and delivery of The Nottinghamshire Plan, and its subsequent Annual Delivery Plan. We published our 2023/24 Annual Report outlining progress made during the previous financial year, with the half year (Q2) update against the current Annual Delivery Plan also being produced - a year-end report is expected later in the year. The Council's new 2025/26 Annual Delivery Plan, setting out the steps we will take for the forthcoming year, was approved by Cabinet on 13th March 2025 and all documents are available via Our progress | The Nottinghamshire Plan.

Building on the 2023 budget survey, the latest 2024 version was open to all Nottinghamshire residents during 30 September 2024 through 10 November 2024. The survey received 3,072 responses, which reflects 1 in every 275 of Nottinghamshire residents having taken part. This response rate is understood to be higher on average when compared with comparable budget consultations across other local authorities. For 2024 there was also a focussed effort to increase the engagement of young people, with 153 young people under 18 completing the survey, compared with 1 in 2023. A further 441 young people also engaged in facilitated sessions led by the Young People's Service to explore the budget, a significant new component

of the Council's annual budget survey. This brings the total number of residents who engaged in the 2024 budget consultation exercise to 3,513, compared with 3,911 in 2023.

A summary of survey responses was considered at Cabinet on 19 December 2024, with this helping feed into the Council's annual budget setting process.

We continue to make good progress with our transformation projects to improve the quality and accessibility of information, advice and guidance to people and communities. We have worked collaboratively with partners to develop a new specification for our Community Directory, with the tender for the system being published in March 2025.

Gaps and challenges

Compliance with the Local Code and the work developed throughout the year provides evidence of substantial assurance. To ensure this level of assurance is maintained the Council continues to strengthen the ways in which we engage residents and support them to access timely information, advice and guidance.

Current Key Focus for 2025/26

Embedding the new framework for content management and providing training to content owners to ensure information available to the public is accessible and up to date.

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

Assessed assurance level for compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance: Reasonable

Compliance with the Local Code during 2024/25

The Council maintained its dual focus during 2024/25 on meeting its short-term priorities, alongside long-term planning through the Nottinghamshire Plan. The Council continued to implement and monitor the achievement of ambitions across the Council to support the Nottinghamshire Plan.

The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) remained in place and was kept under regular review to monitor the financial impact of significant budget pressures for the Council. The Council received a clean external audit opinion from Forvis Mazars, who replaced Grant Thornton for the 2023/24 audit. The Council is one of few who have not experienced any issues relating to the external audit.

Improvements & developments during 2024/25

As outlined in Section B, we have now implemented an Annual Delivery Plan and assurance process across the Council. We have also refreshed our service planning processes, ensuring the 'golden thread' to the Nottinghamshire Plan and Nottinghamshire Way.

During 2024/25, work has continued to implement the Data Strategy, with a baseline assessment being completed by the University of Nottingham. This will inform training and development requirements. There is good engagement across the organisation to support delivery of the ambitions in the Data Strategy, with colleagues across all departments engaged in project work and a Data Steering Group. This work supports other core responsibilities around information governance and is closely linked to the work underway to re-platform the Council's case management system (Mosaic) and procure the business management system.

An Organisational Change Board continued to meet during 2024/25, enabling us to triangulate our learning and improvement actions and integrating consideration performance, finance risk and transformation activity. This is supported by refreshed monitoring arrangements for delivery of MTFS savings and pressure mitigations (coordinated by the Portfolio Office), robust tracking of programme/project delivery and the Corporate Risk Register.

Gaps and challenges

Whilst progress has been made during the year to provide a reasonable assurance level, we are committed to continue improve our integrated assurance as a Council around performance, quality, risk and finance to provide further assurance.

Current Key Focus for 2025/26

Develop options to establish a 'data academy' to provide a graduated training and development offer to improve data skills and literacy across the Council.

Roll out and embedding of the Council's Performance Management Framework, to strengthen our performance culture and create consistent, Council-wide expectations in relation to performance and quality management.

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

Assessed assurance level for compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance: **Substantial**

Compliance with the Local Code during 2024/25

Key aspects of the Local Code remained in place during 2024/25 and stood up well to the continuing financial challenges:

- The financial challenge were constantly assessed and regularly reported, alongside consideration of their impact on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- The Council's business continuity plans for critical services continued to be tested by ongoing demand pressures.
- The Council's Risk, Safety and Emergency Management Board varied the frequency of its meetings throughout the year to respond in an agile way to the fluctuating pattern of emergencies and flooding.

Executive Directors report a reasonable level of compliance, overall, in terms of stakeholder engagement for service change and development:

Procedure ↓	dept ² →	ASC	C&F	Place	Ch. Exec.
Stakeholder engagement for service change		Reasonable	Substantial	Substantial	Substantial

Improvements & developments during 2024/25

A downturn in assurance from the Executive Director – ASC, regarding service change is noted which is due to changes implemented by the Integrated Care Board (ICB). A programme of work has been initiated to address engagement with the ICB and impact on assessment work.

² Key to Council departments: ASC – Adult Social Care; C&F = Children & Families; Ch. Exec. – Chief Executive's

An audit of Joint Funding Social Care and Health is in train.

The department has produced revised guidance to provide clarity on the Council's Care Act duties (Section 22) and NHS responsibilities re. S22 of the Care Act. This is currently under review with Legal Services.

Implementation of the Adult Social Care Redesign and a new operating model for Social Work and Occupational Therapy in June 2025 will mean a consistent model for practice, financial scrutiny and authorisations.

The department has also established a dedicated Continuing Health Care (CHC) Team and workflow for referrals from ICB for Joint Funding arrangements, as well as a training programme for staff regarding CHC and the Care Act (health and social care responsibilities). There is also a new Mental Health Discharge Team to coordinate and arrange hospital discharge for all people ready to leave mental health wards.

During 2024/25, the Council has reviewed the portfolio of transformation and change projects, working to create one organisational change portfolio which captures and monitors all major change activity across the organisation. The content of the portfolio has been reviewed to ensure alignment with national reforms and strategic, financial and other drivers for change to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

Transformation and change initiatives are now more closely aligned with delivery of the Council's budget-setting cycle and MTFS, with projects contributing to mitigation of the Council's financial pressures.

There is a new project management app in place to improve the visibility of activity to deliver change and benefits.

Gaps and challenges

The predominant challenge continues to be financial sustainability in view of significant increases demand and cost for essential services. The nature of central government funding for local government continues to be an obstacle to effective, long-term planning but the assessed funding gap over the life of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy is £18.5m. The current 4-year MTFS incorporates a balanced budget for 2025/26 and modest pressures over the remaining period of the Strategy following a review of pressures and inflation.

It will be essential to continue to deliver Cross-Council transformation programmes to capture the contribution these will make to both reducing existing cost pressures and to avoiding further cost going forward.

Current Key Focus for 2025/26

The programme of work will continue to address engagement with the ICB and impact on assessment work.

To embed the new project management app across the Council, aligning governance, reporting and focussing on benefits realisation.

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

Assessed assurance level for compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance: **Reasonable**

Compliance with the Local Code during 2024/25

The policies, procedures and protocols set out in the Local Code of Corporate Governance remained in force during 2024/25.

Executive Directors report the following levels of compliance with key Council procedures relevant to this aspect of governance:

Procedure ↓	dept ³ →	ASC	C&F	Place	Ch. Exec.
Use of research and benchmarking		Substantial	Reasonable	Substantial	Substantial
Use of partnerships and collaborations		Limited	Substantial	Substantial	Substantial
Protocols in place for partnership		Limited	Substantial	Substantial	Substantial
Compliance with financial regulations		Substantial	Substantial	Substantial	Substantial
Staff induction		Substantial	Substantial	Substantial	Substantial
Regular & effective EDPR's		Reasonable	Reasonable	Reasonable	Reasonable

Improvements & developments during 2024/25

A downturn in assurance from the Executive Director – ASC, regarding partnerships and protocols, are noted due to changes implemented by the ICB. The programme of work within social work teams as set out above has been initiated to address discharge and assessment work.

The Council's People Strategy 2022-2026 was approved by Personnel Committee in January 2022 and featured the development of annual action plans to support delivery of the workforce aspects of the Nottinghamshire Plan.

A resourcing strategy is in place with a comprehensive delivery plan to ensure that the Council has an affordable, sustainable workforce with the knowledge and skills it requires now and for the future. This has resulted in some successful outcomes over the past two years and a reduction in the level of risk as a result.

Workforce planning continues to be rolled out across the Council focusing on a range of tools such as career paths and succession planning. This work is developing across the public sector to ensure a system wide approach. This work compliments several pathways into and through employment such as our wide range of apprenticeship programmes and SEND internships as an example.

Having finished our Leadership Development Programme, we are now developing some capacity for leadership on a system wide basis. We have a very comprehensive learning package to support skills and knowledge development for all staff, ensuring we have both great, and compliant service delivery.

We have developed an extended Occupational Health offer this year to support the wellbeing of our staff. This has included a range of mental health tools such as a mental health OH Nurse, stress toolkit and a range of resilience and mental health awareness tools and training. These are seeing some positive results.

³ Key to Council departments: ASC – Adult Social Care; C&F = Children & Families; Ch. Exec. – Chief Executive's

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

Assessed assurance level for compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance: Reasonable

Our hybrid working strategy and guidance has been reviewed through extensive engagement across the Council including recognised trade unions and has been rolled out to support a flexible responsive approach to service delivery in line with our building rationalisation programme.

We work hard to be an inclusive employer and uphold our Public Sector Equality Duty. Amongst a range of work, we are proud to have achieved the Disability Confident Leader for the next three years.

Gaps and challenges

Executive Directors views on the levels of assurance and work undertaken to develop capacity and capability provide a reasonable level of assurance for this year's statement. To strengthen the assurance level that can be provided work will continue to identify and put flexible plans in place to address the key recruitment, retention, resourcing and capacity challenges faced by the Council now and for the foreseeable future.

Current Key Focus for 2025/26

The programme of work within Adult Social will continue to address the challenges identified in relation to changes implemented by the ICB. The implementation of the Adult Social Care Redesign and the new operating model for Community Social Work and Occupational Therapy will form the basis of a refreshed and consistent approach to assessment, practice and financial scrutiny and authorisation.

Further implementation of the resourcing strategy and delivery plan. Some key elements of this will be delivery of an Employee Value Proposition, strengthened communications and engagement, a recognition scheme, embedding of the new Employee Performance

Development Framework (EPDR), and recruitment training for managers. This will be supported by continued and wider roll out of new Workforce Planning tools and embedding this approach within the Service Planning process to identify potential issues at an early stage and work collaboratively to develop and implement solutions across the Council. Managers will be supported to use our career path and succession planning tools.

Work will continue to support the health and wellbeing of our employees through our package of support and use data and insights to ensure the offer is aligned to identified needs.

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

Assessed assurance level for compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance: **Reasonable**

Compliance with the Local Code during 2024/25

All elements of the established framework set out in the Local Code were in place during 2024/25. The continuing demand pressures required flexibly to align with, and support, the delivery of services within corporate budget objectives.

Executive Directors report the following levels of compliance with key Council procedures relevant to this aspect of governance:

Procedure ↓	dept ⁴ →	ASC	C&F	Place	Ch. Exec.
Carrying out risk mitigation actions		Substantial	Substantial	Substantial	Reasonable
Data protection compliance		Substantial	Reasonable	Substantial	Reasonable
Budgetary control		Reasonable	Substantial	Substantial	Substantial
Reliance on Core Business systems		Reasonable	Reasonable	Substantial	Reasonable

¹ Key to Council departments: ASC – Adult Social Care; C&F = Children & Families; Ch. Exec. – Chief Executive's

The Council's assurance mapping process continues to provide assurance for each of the eight dimensions of governance. The current exercise has not identified any significant matters of concern. The Chief Internal Auditor is preparing his annual report, and draft indications are that this is likely to deliver 'Reasonable Assurance' about the Council's arrangements for governance, risk management and control.

Annual Assurance Mapping Report 2024/25

Aspect	Rating	Aspect	Rating
Financial management	Green	People management (environment, capacity, affordability, satisfaction) &	Green
	Green		Green
	Green		Green
	Amber		Amber
Performance management	Amber	Information governance	Amber
Risk management	Green	Transformation	Green
Asset management	Green	Commissioning and procurement	Amber
			Amber

Improvements & developments during 2024/25

The Internal Audit Team continues to provide a 'Continuous Assurance' report to statutory officers to provide assurance over the Council's core systems. The approach has now been developed to include potential fraud indicators. Pro-active work by the Internal Audit Team has continued to ensure that the implementation of Priority 1 recommendations achieves target levels to provide assurance over management implementation.

Oversight of risk management has moved to the Organisational Change Board (OCB), which now ensures Chief Officers routine involvement and a closer integration of risk with performance management and financial planning. A Risk Management Framework is now in place and Corporate and Departmental Risk Registers are well established. A permanent in-house resource has

been appointed to further improve risk management arrangements within the council.

Gaps and challenges

Compliance with the Local Code is good and specific work has been undertaken to develop the internal control environment and risk management framework which provides the basis for the reasonable assurance level.

Current Key Focus for 2025/26

Ensure the momentum generated during 2024/25 continues to drive the integration of Risk Management with other key business processes.

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

Assessed assurance level for compliance with the Code of Corporate Governance: Substantial

Compliance with the Local Code during 2024/25

The evidence collected from the sources of assurance set out above at 3.2 confirmed that the key policies, procedures and practices identified in the Local Code of Corporate Governance remained in force during 2024/25. The requirements of the Transparency Code were complied with during the year.

The Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report confirms the Internal Audit service remained compliant with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards in 2024/25. The service has updated its Quality Assurance and Improvement Plan for the coming year and captured developments required by new Internal Audit Standards.

The Governance and Ethics Committee continued to receive assurance from key reporting sources during the year:

- Internal Audit Progress and Termly Planning
- Reports of Internal Audit and External Audit
- the Committee continued its transparent practice of reviewing all Ombudsman judgments received during the year, including the Ombudsman's annual report.

Improvements & developments during 2024/25

In May 2022 a Leader and Cabinet model of governance became operational. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) undertook a review of the Council's scrutiny function the recommendations of which were reported to Governance and Ethics Committee on 17 April 2024. The Governance and Ethics Committee approved the recommendations and requested Overview Committee to develop and oversee implementation of an action plan.

Gaps and challenges

Compliance to the Local Code through the evidence of established procedures and assurance provided to and by the operation of the Governance & Ethics Committee provides substantial assurance.

Along with many other local authorities, the timeliness of external audit reporting to the Council has continued to be pressured due to national capacity issues in the sector, beyond the control of the Council. Despite these problems, the external auditor's unqualified opinion on the financial statements had been received along with the Annual Audit Report.

Pro-active work by the Internal Audit Team has continued to see the assurance obtained through the implementation of Priority 1 recommendations maintain target levels and work will continue to ensure this continues to be achieved.

Current Key Focus for 2025/26

Continue to ensure the effective implementation of new Internal Audit Standards and delivery of termly planned activities.

Continue to maintain impetus to drive through agreed actions from internal audit reports in a timely manner.

4. SIGNIFICANT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 4.1. The list of significant governance issues for the Council is refreshed in-year through the Corporate Leadership Team and the Governance & Ethics Committee. The following is the latest update for this Statement.

Issue	Comment
Cabinet/Scrutiny model of corporate governance	
	<p>Following implementation of a revised model of governance in May 2022, the member working group remained in place to deal with any relevant issues and undertook a review of the operation of the new model. The member working group made recommendations to Full Council which were approved at its meeting in July 2023.</p> <p>The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) (an independent centre of expertise in scrutiny matters) was engaged to carry out an independent review engaging with all political groups and officers whose roles involve scrutiny activity to both gather information, feedback initial observations and engage members in improving how scrutiny works at the Council and ensure the approach is member-led.</p> <p>The findings of the review were reported to Governance and Ethics Committee before passing on the responsibility for developing an action plan and monitoring progress to Overview Committee. Work continued around the implementation of the recommendations from the review and was progressed through a member task and finish group which reported back to Overview Committee.</p> <p>The review emphasised the importance of scrutiny being member led and the response to the review has worked to embed this across the scrutiny function.</p>

Issue	Comment
	<p>Officers have continued to develop guidance and offer training to colleagues on the revised governance model to support the delivery of an effective scrutiny function.</p>
Devolution	
	<p>The East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) was formally established in February 2024. The new mayoral combined county authority includes the areas covered by Nottinghamshire County Council, Derbyshire County Council, Derby City Council and Nottingham City Council (the 'Constituent Councils'). The inaugural mayoral election took place on 2 May 2024.</p> <p>The combined authority is now established as an independent institution with responsibility for day to day running of the new organisation and delivery of the programme transferred to EMCCA.</p> <p>Work is continuing on developing plans and policies for EMCCA and facilitating the transfer of powers from constituent councils to EMCCA.</p> <p>The Council is continuing to work with EMCCA at an officer level and through its member representatives on EMCCA's boards, panels and committees, including regarding the development of a proposed inter-authority agreement relating to the transfer of transport powers from the Council to EMCCA.</p> <p>The Council has given its approval to the Combined Authorities (Borrowing) and East Midlands Combined County Authority (Borrowing and Functions) (Amendment) Regulations 2025 and the East Midlands Combined County Authority (Adult Education Functions) Regulations 2025. The new legislation was passed in order to supplement that which initially established EMCCA.</p>

Issue	Comment
Climate change	
	<p>At its Annual General Meeting on 27/5/2021, the Council declared a Climate Emergency and made a commitment to achieving carbon neutrality in all its activities by 2030.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment subsequently received a number of reports on progress including reviewing the Corporate Environment Policy to incorporate the 2030 target, receiving the Councils Greenhouse Gas Reports for 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 & 2023/24 and agreeing numerous projects funded through the Green Investment Fund to support a Carbon Reduction Plan which was approved in February 2023.</p> <p>A review and improvement of the Property building design standards, to align with the Carbon Reduction Plan, are complete. Highways & Transport colleagues continue to look at ways to green the internal and grey fleet.</p> <p>Departmental working groups are established where necessary, and the Employee Green Initiatives Group has been relaunched and supported on an ongoing basis. A Carbon Literacy Training package has been developed and is being offered to all Members and Officers with over 250 staff and members now having been trained, and a complimentary eLearning programme is under development. Work continues to embed climate change impacts within all Council decisions.</p> <p>A Net Zero Framework has now been approved and published setting out how the Council proposes to work with partners and communities to help deliver carbon reductions across the whole of Nottinghamshire using the Councils statutory responsibilities, scale of influence, and purchasing power.</p>

Issue	Comment
	<p>Discussions have been held with our insurers Zurich to ensure the potential impacts of climate change on communities, council services and budgets are effectively captured in future iterations of the County Councils corporate risk register, and to help inform investment and operational priorities.</p>
The transformation agenda	
	<p>There has been significant progress on developing the corporate transformation portfolio to align with the ambitions outlined in the Nottinghamshire Plan and to respond to public service reform (PSR) opportunities.</p> <p>The Council has moved to a whole organisation portfolio approach, seeking to make all change activity connected and visible. Governance has been refreshed to create clear line of sight and accountability for transformation across the organisation, and a new Director for Public Service Reform has been appointed. The organisation has recently implemented a new project management app to enhance visibility and accountability in relation to its portfolio of change activity.</p> <p>The Annual Delivery Plan describes how the Council will work collaboratively, both across the Council and with partners, to continue the development of our cross-cutting transformation programmes. We will also continuously work to improve our services, making the most of the opportunities that digital technologies offer us to. The Annual Delivery Plan and budget process have been aligned, and outputs from this are being used to inform the development of organisational change activity and the subsequent programme of work to ensure the Council's transformation agenda meets the strategic needs of the organisation.</p>

Issue	Comment
	The Transformation and Change group, continue to work closely with projects leads and subject matter experts in departments to support delivery of transformation programmes, monitoring, and reporting of our change, and working with senior responsible and accountable officers to track delivery.
Financial resilience and sustainability	
	The recent national election and continued economic uncertainty and specific increases in external costs for essential services, as well as demand for these services, continues to impact on the Council through additional budget pressure bids. The importance of effective management of the most volatile elements of the annual budget is heightened and remains a key area of focus. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) continues to be updated and reported regularly. Maintaining the flow of transparent, financial data for Councillors remains a key priority.
	Cabinet approved the Budget proposals for 2025/26 on 6 February 2025 which were debated at Full Council on the 27 February 2025. This set out the 4-year MTFS funding gap of £18.5m, with a balanced budget in 2025/26. This followed a review of pressures and inflation together with mitigations and efficiencies. The report set out the assumptions underlying the MTFS and followed public consultation and review by Overview Committee through the year. The level of contingency and reserves were agreed in light of a full review of the risks inherent within the MTFS.
	Cabinet is due to receive the Management Accounts report for 2024/25 on 17 July. That report states “Portfolio budgets are showing a net overspend of £23.8m or 3.2% of net Portfolio budgets. This compares to a Period 11 forecast overspend of £21.4m as a result of some further adverse movements within Portfolios. The net budget overspend of £1.0m (0.2% of net

Issue	Comment
	Annual budget) will result in a commensurate call on the General Fund balance.
People Strategy and the Nottinghamshire Way	
	Resourcing remains a core focus for the Council, although the urgency of this has decreased in many service areas and work rolled out over the past 24 months has seen very positive results. There is a strategy and delivery plan in place which is producing positive outcomes in a range of areas. Cross-Council engagement work has taken place across the Council at all levels and across all departments to input into a range of work streams to deliver the People Strategy, including early development of the future operating model. A communication and engagement plan is being co-developed with staff to improve our services and ways of working. We are working closely with the Building and Office Rationalisation Programme and the revised approach to hybrid working and smarter ways of working has been rolled out successfully. As part of the People Strategy there are six core areas of work that are being delivered on. Our aim is to ensure that we have a skilled, motivated, cost effective, resilient, sustainable workforce. To support this, we are developing workforce plans with service areas to ensure succession plans, career paths and skills pathways are in place. We are continuously reviewing and updating our interventions and support linked to staff health and wellbeing. We have made a range of improvements to our wellbeing offer over the past year and it is a well-regarded service. Feedback about our wellbeing provision is strong and absence figures have reduced significantly over the past 2 years. Staff development is at the core of ensuring we have a skilled workforce, and we have rolled out a new learning platform to ensure courses are available to all staff, alongside a range of skills and employment pathways supporting staff development as

Issue	Comment
	well as pathways into the Council to create new opportunities for those furthest from employment.
Adult Social Care reforms	
	<p>In January 2025, the UK government announced significant reforms to adult social care aimed at improving service delivery and supporting the workforce. A key initiative is to create a national care service. An independent commission chaired by Baroness Casey will inform this work. It is expected to report its interim findings in 2026 and final conclusions in 2028.</p> <p>This linked with the NHS Long Term Plan currently in development will have significant impacts on how social care operates. The outlined aims for the NHS Long Term Plan are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift from Hospital to Community Care • Integration of Health and Social Care Services • Emphasis on Preventive Care • Digital Transformation of Services <p>In March 2025 the proposal to abolish NHS England and integrate its functions with the Department of Health and Social Care was announced with a view to streamlining management and reducing bureaucracy within the NHS, potentially impacting the delivery and coordination of social care services.</p> <p>The government had previously proposed introducing a cap on personal care costs, initially set at £86,000, to prevent individuals from facing unlimited care expenses. However, this measure has been postponed multiple times and, as of July 2024, was cancelled entirely.</p> <p>In November 2024, the UK government introduced the Mental Health Bill, aiming to reform the Mental Health Act of 1983. These</p>

Issue	Comment
	reforms are designed to enhance patient rights, reduce compulsory treatment, and address disparities in mental health care.
	<p>Key reforms proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced Patient Autonomy: The bill proposes giving patients greater control over their treatment, including more frequent clinical reviews to ensure appropriateness and relevance. • Limitation of Detention: It aims to restrict the use of detention under the Mental Health Act, particularly for individuals with autism and learning disabilities, ensuring that such measures are used only when absolutely necessary. • Community Treatment Orders (CTOs): The reforms seek to update and limit the use of CTOs, ensuring they are applied only when appropriate and proportionate, thereby reducing unnecessary coercion in community settings. • Involvement of Family and Friends: The bill emphasises the importance of involving patients' families and friends in care decisions, aiming to improve support systems and ensure that patients' interests are protected throughout their treatment journey. • Addressing Racial Disparities: Recognising the disproportionate impact of current mental health laws on Black individuals, the reforms aim to tackle racial

Issue	Comment
	<p>discrimination within the mental health system, promoting equality and fairness in treatment.</p> <p>These legislative changes are significant, and successful implementation requires adequate funding and resources. Ensuring sufficient community mental health services and support systems is crucial to prevent potential negative outcomes, such as individuals being detained in police or prison cells due to a lack of appropriate care facilities.</p> <p>It is anticipated that the bill will receive Royal Assent by summer 2025.</p> <p>Care Quality Commission (CQC)</p> <p>The CQC's assurance and inspection processes continue to evolve, with ongoing implementation across local authorities. As of March 2025, the Council had not yet received notification of the CQC plan to inspect the Adult Social Care and Health Department. Internal work continues to ensure all relevant information required by the CQC is available and planned quality improvement work also continues to take place, to ensure we are able to respond positively when we are contacted by the CQC.</p> <p>The department is also actively engaging with the LGA & regional peers who have experienced the new single assessment framework. This engagement aims to share insights and best practices, enhancing readiness for future inspections and continuous improvement in care quality.</p> <p>The DHSC Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF) to support innovation in Adult Social Care launched in December 2023 and is a 2-year</p>

Issue	Comment
	<p>programme of work and the £943,000 awarded jointly with Nottingham City Council is progressing in three areas of focus.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To expand the use of Technology Enabled Care (TEC) the ARF funding has been used in the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To fund a joint post that will work across both Councils to provide tools and training for staff to provide them with the skills to support people and carers to make better use of the technology they already have in their own homes. ➤ To fund a series of pilots to trial new technology with a view to expanding the range of technology being deployed. ➤ To provide additional temporary capacity within the County Council's Technology Enabled Care (TEC) team to support the expansion in use of TEC – in support of the ambitions within the TEC strategy agreed by Cabinet in March 2024. • Expanding the Shared Lives service for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, to increase respite placements for informal carers, caring for young adults with learning disabilities, mental health needs and other disabilities the funding has been used to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop a shared lives carer recruitment system. ➤ Develop and implement a joint marketing and recruitment campaign to increase the number of carers. ➤ Fund some additional project management. • Creating a digital directory for community assets, including events, support groups, activities and organisations, which can be used by the whole system within Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. The ARF funding has been used to:

Issue	Comment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fund a post to work across the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire system to develop closer working ties between the development of the directory and the Community and Voluntary sector and other key stakeholders within the system. ➤ To provide additional project management capacity.
Demand for care and support	
<p>The Council and external care market continues to be impacted by high demand for Adult Social Care support, but much of our market is stable and sufficient.</p> <p>The Council continues to see an increase in the complexity of support needs for adults requiring social care leading to increased levels of longer-term services and additional support required for unpaid carers. Demand for adult social care is forecasted to continue to increase driven by preventable disability and chronic disease, in addition to an ageing population.</p> <p>This increase in complexity coupled with the demand in the care market can be seen in the increasing costs of care. The cost of care for new people entering the care and support system or people who have needed reprovion due to market failure and closures is significantly higher than previous years. This on average is 18% higher for people of working age and 13% for older adults.</p> <p>The Council continues to see some people waiting for care and support and other interventions, which can present a risk to the individuals concerned and impacts on wider Council services such as in enquiries and complaints.</p>	

Issue	Comment
	<p>To manage these risks the Council has participated in ADASS East Midlands Improving Adult Care Together (IMPACT) Waiting Lists project with people with lived experience and partners. 'Waiting well' packs and guidance for people and staff that have been developed as a result of this work will be launched in April 2025.</p> <p>The corporate Vital Signs dashboard, includes data on people waiting which provides an overview of the level of risk associated with our Care Act duties and is reviewed and monitored through our Performance Board and wider corporate Organisational Change Board</p> <p>Demand for Mental Health Support</p> <p>Rates of mental illness in England had been steadily rising over a number of years. COVID-19 has accelerated this trend, driving an increase in the number of people who are in contact with secondary mental health services. Mental health services in England received a record 5 million referrals during 2023 (up 33% from 2019), with the number of people in contact with mental health services continuing to rise.</p> <p>The rate of incoming mental health referrals in Nottinghamshire remains steady and although 2024/25 figures project a slight decrease on last year, demand remains higher than in previous years with 2023/24 seeing a 24% increase in Mental Health Act assessments.</p> <p>The new requirements of the Mental Health Bill will require the swift and possibly immediate discharge of people with learning disabilities and autism from unnecessary detentions, which will put even greater pressure on already limited system resources to facilitate safe discharges from Mental Health hospitals.</p>

Issue	Comment
	<p>To meet the increase in demand and in preparation for the new Mental Health Bill coming into law the department is developing a Mental Health Discharge hub as part of its new operating model.</p> <p>All the risks identified are set out in comprehensive directorate and departmental risk register.</p> <p>The council is also looking to use funding from the Department of Health and Social Care to improve processes and develop a self-serve assessment functionality for people to use on our website, which will hopefully reduce waiting times further.</p> <p>DHSC have recently announced an initial national definition for people waiting which has been long awaited and will eventually (once refined and agreed) allow the department to compare “people waiting” with other Local Authorities.</p> <p>In light of the progress the department has made since the last report in reducing delayed discharges, the DHSC Discharge Support and Oversight Group (DSOG) has agreed to stop formal engagement with the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care System, however they will continue to monitor performance.</p> <p>All the risks identified are set out in comprehensive directorate and departmental risk register.</p>
	Children’s Social Care Reform
	<p>Following the general election, the government published its policy statement in November 2024 ‘Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive’, setting out the government's commitment to whole system reform of the children’s social care system. This is underpinned by the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill being progressed through parliament and roll-out of the Families First Partnership Programme which supports local authorities to meet the ambitions of reform.</p>


Issue	Comment
	<p>Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive sets out four key principles for reform which feed into the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wherever possible children should remain with their families and be safely prevented from entering care. • Support children to live with kinship or foster carers rather than residential care. • Fix the broken care market via a range of measures to improve competition, regulation and commissioning. • A focus on key enablers including better data and information sharing, spreading evidence-based programmes and the workforce. <p>The roll-out of the Families First Partnership Programme is aimed at supporting these reforms by setting out expectations at a local authority level for family help and child protection to be delivered as a single integrated system that supports the wellbeing of, and protects all children from significant harm, inside and outside of the home.</p> <p>Over the next twelve months, Children and Family Services will work with partners to design the transformation programme aimed at meeting reform. This will include continuing the development of locally integrated services and teams such as Family Hubs and Family Support and Safeguarding Teams, as well delivery of our redesigned Needs Led Front door.</p>
	Experiences and outcomes of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
	<p>In January 2023, the Nottinghamshire local area partnership was the first local area in the country to be inspected under the Ofsted/CQC inspection framework exploring the experiences and</p>


Issue	Comment
outcomes of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).	<p>The inspection report, published in May 2023, concluded with the narrative judgement that “there are widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, which the local area partnership must address urgently.” Priority areas for improvement were identified in the following two areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leaders, NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board and education, health, and care providers should cooperate to urgently identify, assess and provide for the needs of children and young people with SEND. This includes assessment of needs, timely issuing of EHC plans and holistic oversight of these plans through annual reviews. ○ Leaders, including commissioners and providers, should act urgently to identify and address the delays and gaps in access to some health services, particularly speech and language therapy, neurodevelopmental pathways and equipment services. They should also ensure that they use available performance data to identify where gaps exist and whether actions taken to address these are effective. <p>In response to the inspection findings, the Partnership developed a joint SEND Priority Action Plan and established a SEND Improvement Programme, which continues to be monitored routinely through SEND partnership governance forums, to assess progress made to date against priority activity. SEND</p>


Issue	Comment
governance arrangements were refreshed during 2023 and early 2024 to include:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an independently chaired SEND Partnership Improvement Board (this is time-limited in line with the SEND Improvement Programme) - a SEND Executive Leadership Group - a SEND Partnership Assurance and Improvement Group (PAIG) - a SEND Steering Group (this is time-limited in line with the SEND Improvement Programme) <p>Progress is additionally scrutinised as a standing item at Children and Families Select Committee and ICB’s Quality & People Committee, as well as through regular monitoring from the Department for Education and NHS England. A monitoring inspection is expected in the summer of 2025, a full, local area reinspection of SEND provision is due in 2026.</p> <p>Improvements made to date include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New EHC plans issued in timescale during the calendar year has improved significantly in 2024 compared with 2023, up from 28.01% (207 new EHCPs) between January and December 2023 to 35.0% (456 new EHCPs) between January and December 2024. By comparison, Nottinghamshire issued just 4.5% (30 EHCPs) of new EHCPs within 20 weeks during 2022. - Our statutory SEND services have issued an additional 564 EHCPs (76.32% increase) in 2024 compared to 2023. - There has been a reduction in the average wait times for the Neurodevelopmental Support Team (NST), from 68 weeks in December 2023 to 55 weeks in December 2024.

5. ACTION PLAN

- 5.1. The Governance Action Plan is refreshed in-year and reported to the Governance & Ethics Committee. The latest update of the Plan is set out below.

Planned Action	Officer responsible	Target date for completion	Progress status
1. Data quality in Mosaic: greater priority given to addressing issues highlighted by routine reporting.	Executive Director – Adults Social Care and Health	Sept 2025	 In progress
<p>The department's approach to data quality continues to align to the requirements set out in Care Data Matters: a roadmap for better data for adult social care which was first published by the DHSC in February 2023 and last updated in December 2023.</p> <p>This mandatory quarterly submission of our Client Level Data (CLD) for social care activity and support is now in the CLD dashboard. Between 1st July 2023 and 31st June 2024 there was an improvement in the data quality position moving from 89.56% to 91.76% compliance. Further improvements have been and continue to be actioned and by the end of December 2024 this had improved to 94.59%.</p>			

Planned Action	Officer responsible	Target date for completion	Progress status
<p>Since last reporting the risk level has remained at High. Work continues to improve the data skills of our workforce and develop a departmental digital and data strategy which will support future CLD submissions and the department's ability to measure the impact of strength-based working and the outcomes for people across different services.</p> <p>As part of the department's readiness for CQC inspection, work continues to focus on the department's evidence library, which will be used when the department is notified of a CQC inspection.</p>			
2. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities: addressing improvement areas highlighted by the Ofsted/CQC inspection.	Executive Director – Children and Families	August 2025	 In progress
<p>The department continues to work with partners to respond to the Ofsted/CQC inspection findings published in June 2023. This work ensures that urgent and focussed activity leads to improvement in children's experiences and outcomes, with clear evidence of impact. The local area partnership has a priority action plan in place, which responds to the inspection findings; this is tracked through an independently chaired Improvement Board.</p> <p>Progress is additionally scrutinised as a standing item at Children and Families Select Committee and through monitoring from the Department for Education and NHS England.</p>			

Planned Action	Officer responsible	Target date for completion	Progress status
3. Children's Social Care Reform: addressing changes required following reform guidance and roll-out of the Families First Partnership Programme.	Executive Director – Children and Families	March 2028	 In progress
Over the first half of 2025/26, the department will work with partners to design the transformation programme enabled by the roll-out of the Families First Partnership Programme. Under government guidance, the Programme is intended to extend over three years to deliver an integrated family help and child protection system at local levels.			

APPROVAL OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Council has adopted a robust approach to addressing these financial, demographic, technological and legislative challenges.

The Governance and Ethics Committee reviewed the local code of corporate governance and this statement at their meeting on 23 July 2025. We are aware of the steps that are being and will be taken to address the above significant

governance issues, and we are satisfied that these are appropriate. We will monitor their implementation during the course of 2025/26 and beyond.

Signed.....

LEADER

Signed.....

CHIEF EXECUTIVE