

**Annual Governance Statement (2023/24)**

<b>Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law</b>		
<b>How We Meet these Principles</b>	<b>Where You Can See Governance in action (details provided on the NDC website)</b>	<b>Assurance Received and Issues Identified</b>
<p><b>Behaving with integrity</b></p> <p>There are Codes of Conduct for Members (conforming to the LGA guidance) and Staff (Employees Code of Conduct (May 2016).</p> <p>Members Code of Conduct training is carried out by the Monitoring Officer (last done in May and June 2023)</p> <p>In terms of Culture, there has been a sustained approach in the last couple of years to instil a culture of openness and to encourage officers to come forward with issues and concerns.</p> <p>Governance Committee – one of primary responsibility is to consider</p>	<p>Codes of conduct for members are kept up to date and were last reviewed and updated in July 2021. This latest code for Councillors puts increased emphasis on the individual responsibility of members.</p> <p>Member’s Code of Conduct and the Employee’s Code of Conduct are both in Part 5 of the Constitution.</p> <p>The Planning Code of Conduct has also been reviewed and was approved by Annual Council in May 23.</p> <p><a href="#">Terms of reference and minutes of the Governance Committee.</a></p>	<p>A new Code of Conduct for Councillors and Co-opted Members was adopted by Council on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021. Mandatory training for all Members has been provided following the May 2023 District and Parish elections</p> <p>Adherence to legislation (and Council regulations) related to the areas reviewed is confirmed in each internal audit undertaken. The terms of reference of the Governance Committee was updated in March 23 (and adopted by Council in May 2023) to add greater detail regarding the committees Standards function.</p>

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<p>compliance with rules, regulations, propriety etc.</p> <p>Councillors make declarations of interest at all Council meetings attended, which are published with minutes and held on our website.</p> <p>Registers of Member Interests are held. Interests held by staff are completed by them on the Myinsite section. In addition, the statement of accounts includes declarations of related party transactions for each member and senior officers.</p> <p>Gifts &amp; hospitality rules exist for Members and Staff which are available on the internal intranet under the Myinsite section.</p> <p>Our Whistleblowing policy was reviewed in June 2021.</p> <p>We have a clear complaints procedure on our website. Customer Care guidelines are listed on our internal Insite. We have a process to learn from complaints and to</p>	<p>Requirement detailed in the <a href="#">Constitution</a> (as per the Localism Act 2011).</p> <p>Registers of interests are held on the internet. The process has been reviewed prior to the May 2023 District elections for all members to update.</p> <p>Members are required to notify the Corporate and Community Services of any gifts and hospitality received which is then published on the Council's website.</p> <p><a href="#">Complaints procedure</a> on the intranet.</p> <p><a href="#">Customer Charter provided on the NDC website.</a></p>	<p>Gifts &amp; Hospitality and Declarations are audited every few years by Internal Audit. Members register of interests forms were reviewed by Internal Audit as part of the Members Allowances audit in June 22. The audit opinion was reasonable assurance.</p>
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<p>subsequently implement improvements.</p> <p>We take the Health and Safety of our Staff extremely seriously; this is supported by risk assessments (a H&amp;S Committee exists to discuss issues / risks). Updates, guidance and direction have been actively provided to officers</p> <p>We provide new Members with induction training on appointment. We hold corporate inductions for staff on a regular basis.</p> <p>We evaluate the on-going training needs of Members. Member training programme covering wide range of topics, after Elections (2023) and then refresher training 2 years later which the Corporate &amp; Community Services team are working on now.</p> <p>We operate an annual appraisal / check-in scheme for all staff to identify development and skills needs and assess performance. Training needs are identified through this process, which results in identification</p>	<p><a href="#">Health and Safety Policy – Statement, Organisation, Sick management policy.</a></p> <p>New member training programme following the district elections, approved by Full Council in Jan 2023. Councillors will be provided training on health and safety. A guide on Health and Safety, Personal Safety and Lone Working and incident reporting form has also been produced which has been shared with Councillors as part of their welcome pack. The LGA regularly hold webinars for Councillors on Personal Safety,</p>	<p>Internal audit review of Covid-19 Staff Safety provided a Reasonable Assurance (Jan 21). One significant recommendation was for more focus on staff mental health and well-being. This is being actively addressed with the provision of trained mental health advisors and an overarching wellbeing strategy.</p> <p>A survey of training needs of Governance Committee members was undertaken as part of the January 2023 meeting</p> <p>Further mandatory Training for Governance Committee members was provided in May 2023 following the election.</p> <p>A survey which included training needs of Councillors was undertaken in December 2023. Any training needs identified will be incorporated within the refresher training programme.</p>
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<p>of common themes to address through training or education.</p> <p>A Protocol exists in the Constitution which, amongst other things, deals with the relationship between Members and Officers and the access to information</p> <p>A suitably qualified Co-opted Independent Member was appointed to the Governance Committee during 2023/24.</p>	<p>details of which are shared with Councillors.</p> <p>In the <a href="#">Constitution</a></p>	
<p><b>Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values</b></p> <p>Employees Code of Conduct (May 2016)</p> <p>Members' Code of Conduct</p> <p>Protocol on Member/Officer Relations</p> <p>Guidance for Members and staff on hospitality and gifts</p> <p>Planning code of conduct</p> <p>There is a range of key HR polices related to officers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ A Behaviour Framework has been produced through an internal consultative approach, and was</li> </ul>	<p>Code of Conduct – see Part 5 of the Constitution</p> <p>.</p> <p><a href="#">HR policies.</a></p>	<p>A staff Wellbeing Survey was undertaken in 2023, in line with the new staff Wellbeing Strategy and improvement plan. Actions resulting from the surveys will be addressed through the organisational development group</p>

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<p>rolled out in July 2021 with five core behaviours, including those relevant to senior management to promote a consistent behaviour approach across the organisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Framework related to management behaviours and how managers are expected to behave (i.e. bullying, harassment, engagement with staff etc).</li> <li>➤ Disciplinary policy and procedure</li> <li>➤ Grievance policy and procedure</li> <li>➤ Family Friendly Policy</li> </ul> <p>Regular Equality and Diversity training as part of continuing development. Councillors are also provided with mandatory Equality and Diversity training following their Election.</p> <p>An Employee Handbook has been produced.</p> <p>A refreshed Equality Strategy (2023-2027) has been approved and published on the website. The new strategy places greater emphasis on</p>	<p>A Health &amp; Wellbeing strategy was introduced in June 2022</p> <p><a href="#">Equality and Diversity Strategy</a></p>	<p>The Internal Audit review of Equality and Diversity in August 2022 had a limited opinion. However, the follow up report in October 2023 had reasonable assurance reflecting the improvements made.</p>
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<p>early consultation and evidenced based equality impact assessments to help inform decision making.</p> <p>We also publish community equality data on our website</p> <p>Adherence to Accessibility requirements are detailed in key documents and the internal intranet – all staff have been invited to participate in Accessibility Training.</p>		<p><a href="#"><u>NDC has claimed top spot as best local authority website for accessibility in the Sitemorse INDEX</u></a></p>
<p><b>Respecting the rule of law and regulatory requirements etc</b></p> <p>The Constitution is under continuous review. Updates were made for the governance arrangements resulting from the change in Heads of Service. These were reviewed by Governance Committee on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2022 and approved by Full Council in July 2022. Ad-hoc changes are incorporated quickly, including at the May 2023 Annual Council where amendments were made to clarify the Head of Planning Housing and Health’s delegated powers.</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Constitution published on intranet.</u></a></p>	<p>Non compliance with statutory provisions are subject to appeals.</p>

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<p>We comply with Statutory Provisions. Good awareness of the significant provisions in the different business areas. The Constitution lists some of those provisions.</p> <p>The section 151 officer and Monitoring Officer have specific duties to ensure the legality of decisions and processes and to investigate any alleged breaches.</p> <p>Statutory Officer meetings are held on a quarterly basis, including Chief Executive, S151 Officer, Monitoring Officer and the Head of Governance</p> <p>Compliance with CIPFA’s Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (CIPFA, 2015).</p> <p>We comply with the Whistleblowing legislation and have a Whistleblowing policy.</p> <p>We have up-to-date anti-fraud and corruption policies and procedures. These were updated, and approved by Governance Committee in June 2021. Work is currently underway to</p>		<p>The Internal Audit Annual Report for 2023/24 states: Overall, the risk of fraud at the Council is considered low. We provided our Annual Counter Fraud Resilience and Assessment Report in February 2024 and assessed that the councils counter fraud resilience continues to improve. We continue work with managers to discuss their fraud risks and assess whether controls are sufficient / effective</p>
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<p>create a fraud risk register to help ensure controls are effective.</p> <p>Compliance with procurement regulations including competing contracts, and publishing list of contracts over £5k via the Contract Register.</p> <p>General legal advice provided for business operations either as a stand-alone piece of advice or specific to a case on which Legal Services are instructed to advise.</p> <p>Role of Monitoring Officer – qualified, experienced individual and team of lawyers and solicitors.</p>	<p><a href="#">Contract Register</a></p>	<p>An internal audit on Procurement in July 2021 gave reasonable assurance. Since the report we have also strengthened compliance to procurement regulations with changes to the constitution.</p>
<p><b>Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement</b></p>		
<p><b>How We Meet these Principles</b></p>	<p><b>Where You Can See Governance in action</b></p>	<p><b>Assurance Received and Issues Identified</b></p>
<p><b>Openness</b></p>		



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<p>A breakdown on the level of Council Tax Charges, and how we spend the budget is contained on our Website.</p> <p>We now also provide an annual summary report on costs to accompany the statement of accounts</p> <p>The public can ask for general information, or specific advice on planning, or other business operations via north Devon – there is a contacts page on the NDC site.</p> <p>We publish agendas and minutes for all our meetings on our website. Members of the public are encouraged to attend, and also given opportunity to ask questions. Members of the public are also able to attend public Council and Committee meetings. For committee meetings held at Brynsworthy Environmental Centre and Petroc college, members of the public are able to join these virtually. These meetings are recorded and then made available on the Councils YouTube channel</p>	<p><a href="#">See this page for Council Tax charges, and how the budget is spent.</a></p> <p><a href="#">Contact Us page</a></p> <p><a href="#">Browse meetings section</a> Committee meeting dates, agendas and minutes of committee meetings.</p> <p><a href="#">Taking Part in Meetings</a> section on the intranet explaining how public can visit and participate in council meetings.</p> <p>Consultation and Involvement / Communication Strategy - <a href="#">Consultation and Engagement</a></p>	<p>Customer Services centre ensure prompt resolution of queries and questions. Reviewed by DAP in Nov 2022 with a Reasonable Assurance.</p> <p>Notes of our meetings are on the website (with the exception of Part B business and in certain other limited circumstances on an exceptional basis). The meetings can also be viewed afterwards on the YouTube channel: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/@northdevoncouncilmeetings">https://www.youtube.com/@northdevoncouncilmeetings</a></p>
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<p>There is a process in committee meetings to agree which items are Part A and Part B for members to agree.</p> <p>We have an aim to inform, consult and involve everyone in North Devon.</p> <p>Officer decisions taken by council officers, such as urgent decisions and request for waivers are published on the Council’s website – and can be searched.</p> <p>We have a Freedom of Information publication scheme that enables the public to request information from us. These show that requests are largely being dealt with in the 20 working day timescale. We also have a Publication Scheme which contains many council documents.</p> <p>Procurements are competed through Pro Contract to support fair competition. Generally all contracts worth more than £5,000 are shown on our Contracts Register. We also publish details of spend using our Government Procurement Card and a monthly dataset showing spending</p>	<p><a href="#">Officer Decisions</a></p> <p><a href="#">Process to make an FOI request.</a></p> <p><a href="#">Publication Scheme</a></p> <p><a href="#">Procurement approach, also listed in the Constitution.</a></p> <p><a href="#">Contract Register</a></p>	<p><b>ACTION:</b> The council is required to publish many types of data to fully meet the Local Government Transparency Code of 2015. We are aware that we do not currently published all the required data sets under the Code. We will review the Code and identify the additional data needed to go on the website.</p>
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<p>items of £250 or more (personal information is redacted).</p> <p>We have a standard report template for Council papers to support ease of understanding and report writing. All Committee reports will now be produced using Modern Gov.</p> <p>We have a calendar of dates for submitting, publishing and distributing timely Council reports.</p>		
<p><b>Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders</b></p> <p>We actively engage with other local councils. There are regular Chief Exec and Leader meetings with all Devon Councils, Devon Section 151 Officer meetings, similar through the authority with different service groups.</p> <p>We work closely with Torridge District Council, including a North Devon and Torridge Local Plan 2011 - 2031 to guide development, and have joint committees such as Local Planning</p>	<p><a href="#">Local Plan</a>; Joint committees in place:</p> <p>A People and Place project has been established to review the NDC</p>	<p>The Local Plan was subject to a Planning Inspectorate review in 2018 which noted the plan was “sound”.</p>

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<p>with Torridge, Crematorium with Torridge, Building Control with Mid Devon.</p> <p>In October 2019 the Local Government Association undertook a Peer Review. The Peer Review Team revisited in Sept/Oct 2021 in order to refresh the report that was issued. These reports were presented to Full Council in January 2022 before being published.</p> <p>We meet with our local colleges of Further Education and key local employers on specific issues.</p> <p>Engagement with other local councils and other public organisations on Climate Change, including jointly employing a Climate Change Officer with Torridge District Council.</p> <p>A Northern Devon Future’s Board has been created with local partners to look at strategic issues for North Devon.</p> <p>A Business Stakeholder and Consultation event held in February 2024 where the Council shared its financial plans together with partners</p>	<p>and Torridge Local Plan and seek community involvement.</p> <p>Engaging apprentices through local colleges to work in the council.</p> <p>There is a specific section on the NDC Website related to <a href="#">business organisations</a>, and a Local Business Bulletin is produced by the</p>	<p>During 2023/24 we worked with the Devon Audit Partnership to produce a register of key strategic partnerships to better understand who we are working with. Their subsequent audit on partnerships gave reasonable assurance</p>
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<p>offering local businesses a variety of business support opportunities and networking.</p> <p>We hold regular forums with Town and Parish Councils. The Northern Devon Culture Strategy 2022 - 2027 has a wide range of contributors: local cultural and community organisations, venues and practitioners.</p> <p>The North Devon and Torridge Community Safety Partnership (NDC, TDC, DCC, D&amp;C Police, D&amp;S Fire &amp; Rescue Service) works with key stakeholders in terms of anti-social behaviour, crime prevention, quality of life.</p>	<p>Economic Development team providing focused news related to business organisations</p>	<p>The internal audit review of the Community Safety Partnership in January 2024, gave substantial assurance, including engagement, involvement and feedback to the public to increase confidence and reassurance.</p>
<p><b>Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively</b></p> <p>We have a Customer Charter to improve how we interact and resolve queries from members of the public and provide</p> <p>We have launched a new Community Engagement and Consultation Strategy (2024 – 2027) to ensure the</p>	<p><a href="#">Customer Charter</a></p> <p><a href="#">Community Consultations</a></p>	<p>Internal Audits review of the Customer Service Centre in Oct 22 gave reasonable assurance</p>

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<p>Council is reaching out to the community, linking closely with our Equality Strategy. This has been launched alongside stakeholder mapping training and a commitment that key projects will have a Community Engagement plan from the outset</p> <p>We have community consultations: most recently on Animal Licensing Policy, Council Tax Reduction Scheme, Revising Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy, and Houses in Multiple Occupation.</p> <p>We have Planning Consultations (in conjunction with Torridge District Council) including the Braunton Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>Facility to raise e-petitions (albeit, the last one raised was in 2017).</p> <p>We publish details of consultations and petitions on our website to get the public's views.</p> <p>E-mail newsletters are provided on what is happening in NDC and area – people can sign up to them.</p>	<p><a href="#">Planning consultations</a></p> <p><a href="#">Petitions</a></p> <p><a href="#">There is a facility to sign up for newsletters</a> with content that can be customised by the individual for their own interest.</p> <p>Digital Strategy for NDC Service 2023-2026 to support the provision of good, digitally enabled services and supporting access to, and use of, digital tools by colleagues and citizens</p> <p>An External Communication Strategy 2023-2026 was approved in May 2023</p>	
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<p>NDC Facebook page and other social media channels:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Instagram (upon which NDC has made 953 posts and has 2,208 followers as of 1 June 2023);</li><li>• Twitter (upon which NDC has 12.2k followers as of 1 June 2023).</li><li>• LinkedIn (upon which NDC has 1,878 followers as of 1 June 2023)</li></ul> <p>We are a signatory to the 'Local Digital Declaration' (via Digital Strategy) meaning we are committed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Designing the services that best meet the needs of our citizens</li><li>• Challenge the technology market evaluating the tools and services we need</li><li>• Protect citizens' privacy and security</li><li>• Deliver best value for money</li></ul>		
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<p>Stakeholder engagement carried out in on proposed new Harbour Revision Order (Ilfracombe) and Harbour Empowerment Order (Lynmouth).</p> <p>Introduced Online accounts for Council Tax / Business Rates and Housing Benefits to enable customer to self-serve</p> <p>New Telephony and Contact Centre which enables us to monitor customer journeys and offer automatic call backs to reduce waiting times on the phone</p> <p>Ongoing service mapping to identify inefficiencies and streamline processes</p>		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing</li><li>• Climate and Environment</li><li>• Pride of Place and Prosperity</li><li>• People Matter</li></ul> <p>The Corporate Plan was revised in 2023, with a clear vision “North Devon will be a sustainable, inclusive community; fostering prosperity and well being for all.”, The Programme Management Office (PMO) will oversee the effective delivery of the programmes designed to deliver the corporate plan.</p> <p>Programmes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Organisational Development</li><li>• Housing &amp; Community Safety</li><li>• Regeneration &amp; Economic Growth</li><li>• Environmental enhancement</li><li>• Customer focussed</li></ul> <p>Members receive quarterly updates on these programmes and progress towards the corporate plan. Performance indicators have also been linked to the corporate plan</p> <p>From 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024, we have signed up to the Devon County Council</p>		<p><b>ACTION: To continue working with Devon County Council on an aligned Procurement Strategy. The draft</b></p>
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<p>procurement support service. DCC will now be providing our procurement advice and training. We are currently working with them to align our procurement strategy</p> <p>We have signed up to the Devon Climate Change Declaration, and appointed an officer shared with Torridge District Council to help us.</p>		<p>strategy is due to go to July’s Strategy &amp; Resources Committee for consideration.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> We will work to become conformant to the new Procurement Act which comes into force from October 2024. The revised procurement rules will provide an opportunity for the council to support priorities related to local procurement, social value and sustainability.</p> <p>Internal audit provided a Reasonable Assurance in July 2022 on Governance of Climate Change.</p>
<p><b>Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits - delivering</b></p> <p>We have a new Corporate plan, with five corporate priorities and a Delivery Plan related to those priorities. Our priorities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial Security</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Climate and Environment</li> <li>• Pride of Place and Prosperity</li> <li>• People Matter</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Corporate Plan</a></p> <p><a href="#">Budgets and Spending information</a> for:</p> <p>Budget Book 2023-24            Budget 2023-24 and Medium Term Financial Strategy            Statement of Accounts</p>	<p><b>ACTION:</b> Consider how to provide more summary information for the public on Council performance, such as an annual performance report for the website (also suggested in the 2021/22 return)</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> Refresh the Asset Management Plan, Commercialisation Strategy and Housing Strategy</p>

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<p>A new suite of performance indicators have been developed during 22/23 and will help to show delivery against the priorities and plans. This will also aid sharing this information with our stakeholders.</p> <p>We have a Treasury Management function to maximise the return on our capital assets.</p> <p>We have recruited a Climate Change Officer (shared with Torridge District Council).</p> <p>We adopted a Carbon, Environmental and Biodiversity Plan in July 2022 as part of our on-going commitment to reduce our impact on the environment</p> <p>We adopted a Climate Adaption Strategy in March 2024.</p> <p>Electric vehicle charging points have been introduced into some of our car parks. In April 23 we added our first fully electric asset, Eco City Sweeper 2 for keeping our streets clean and tidy. Strategy &amp; Resources Committee in May 2024, approved</p>	<p>Capital Investment Plan Expenditure Data</p>	<p>The Internal Audit report on Climate Change in July 2022 provided a Reasonable Assurance Opinion. The report noted that meeting the Net Emissions target by 2030 would be challenging.</p>
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<p>two further electric vehicles for the Parks Team.</p> <p>A community woodland in Barnstaple has been expanded with the planting of circa 24,000 new trees. Our Yeo Valley Woodland won the community woodland category of the Forestry Commission's Devon Woodland Competition in May 2024.</p>		<p>The 2022/23 Carbon Footprint report went to Strategy and Resources Committee in January 24. There has been a decrease of 649 tCO2e or 16% on our baseline year of 2018/19, largely due to the decarbonisation of the National Grid supply.</p>
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<p><b>Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes</b></p>		
<p><b>How We Meet these Principles</b></p>	<p><b>Where You Can See Governance in action</b></p>	<p><b>Assurance Received and Issues Identified</b></p>
<p><b>Determining interventions</b></p> <p>Our governance is based on committee structure appointed by the council where key decisions are taken. Options are put to appropriate committees for review, discussion and approval – with a favoured officer recommendation for councillors to debate and chose. Decisions are delegated to specific officers as part of the Constitution.</p>	<p><a href="#">How the council operates</a></p> <p>Committee Report Procedure</p>	<p>The process for aligning service budgets, plans and objectives has been reviewed and is more effective</p> <p>Internal Audit progress reports showing areas reviewed, assurance opinion and key actions arising. Recommendations are</p>

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<p>Devon Districts Procurement Strategy identified procurement strategy and priorities to address.</p> <p>Large Procurements subject to consideration of best value for money based on criteria agreed in advance.</p> <p>Regular reports on progress against the Corporate Plan including a set of agreed standard measures to Councillors and staff.</p> <p>All capital programme items are subject to a business case, evaluating the cost of capital financing etc which are scored by a Project Appraisal Group, before progressing for committee approval.</p>		<p>tracked to completion to confirm control weaknesses are resolved.</p> <p>External Auditors report on the Statement of Accounts, including an opinion on Value for Money for the Council.</p>
<p><b>Planning interventions</b></p> <p>The Corporate Plan is carried through into Service Plans which are approved by the Policy and Development Committee. Individual appraisals/check ins then reflect the actions in the Service Plans.</p> <p>Progress towards completing actions is reported each month to the Senior Management Team and quarterly to the Strategy and Resources Committee and Governance Committee, along with</p>	<p>Links to corporate plans, KPIs etc.</p>	

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<p>performance indicators. Quarterly reports also go to Full Council so that all Members are aware of the progress.</p> <p>Budgets for different service areas are determined / approved at the start of the year, and outturn is monitored.</p> <p>Calendar of dates for developing and submitting plans and reports for council approval.</p> <p>Schedule for approval of key financial and governance documents such as financial plan.</p> <p>Details of consultations and petitions on our website.</p> <p>A new suite of Key Performance Indicators have been established which can be used to monitor and report performance in all important sectors. A quarterly performance report to members has now been embedded in the committee cycle.</p>	<p>Available in minutes of Council and committee meetings. Members of the public can attend these.</p>	
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<p><b>Optimising achievement of intended outcomes</b></p> <p>A Budget Book, and Medium Term Financial Plan.</p> <p>Financial Strategy is discussed and agreed with Council.</p> <p>Process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term.</p> <p>A Treasury Management Strategy is produced ahead of the start of the year, and a mid-year and Annual Report produced that goes to Strategy and Resources, Policy Development and Full Council.</p> <p>Risk management and performance monitoring are key measures to support interventions.</p> <p>The Governance Committee is supported by independent internal audit assurance reports provided by Internal Audit (DAP), and the External Auditors' annual opinion on the statement of accounts.</p> <p>Governance Committee meetings are held in a public forum.</p>	<p>The Budget Book for 2023-24 and Medium Term Financial Strategy Plans which are reported to Full Council</p> <p>Treasury Management Annual Strategy</p> <p>Strategy and Resource reports</p> <p><a href="#">Annual Report from External Auditors</a></p> <p>Annual Reports from Internal Audit.</p> <p>Individual's audits and updates from Internal Audit to Governance Committee.</p> <p>Agreement of Internal Audit Annual Plan by the Governance Committee.</p>	<p>External audit compliance to the NAO Code of Audit Practice</p> <p>Conformance of Internal Audit to Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.</p>
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<p>The plans of work for both Internal and External Audit are considered and approved by the Committee.</p> <p>The Committee will receive regular update reports from both sets of Auditors and will hold management to account for any correcting action that may be required.</p> <p>A Programme Management Office has been created as part of the new Organisational design for the council. This will support delivery of core priorities and projects.</p>		
<p><b>Principle E: Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</b></p>		
<p><b>How We Meet these Principles</b></p>	<p><b>Where You Can See Governance in action</b></p>	<p><b>Assurance Received and Issues Identified</b></p>
<p><b>Developing the entity’s capacity</b></p> <p>We have undertaken a review of internal Governance to improve the council structure and roles / responsibilities and capacity of senior management. This review has completed, and the new structure and heads of service posts have been in place since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021.</p>		<p>The capacity building at senior management level was supported by the LGA Peer Reviews.</p>

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<p>The following Heads of Service are all in post from 1st September 2021:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Head of Paid Service/Chief Executive</li><li>• Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive</li><li>• Head of Customer Focus</li><li>• Head of Environmental Enhancement</li><li>• Head of Governance</li><li>• Head of Organisational Development</li><li>• Head of Place and Regeneration</li><li>• Head of Planning, Housing and Health (Vacant post)</li><li>• Head of Programme Management and Performance</li></ul> <p>The Constitution – Part 3 Responsibility for Functions, Annexe 2 cover the Officer Delegations to the above officers and also the Monitoring Officer and Harbour Master</p> <p>A range of Key Performance Indicators are held on the use of council facilities including Leisure Centres, Park facilities, refuse collection, car parks. These are</p>		
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<p>subject to management review and subsequent action.</p> <p>Use of NMD Building Control to share activity with Mid Devon.</p> <p>There is a close relationship with Torridge to cooperate i.e. Local Plan.</p> <p>Recruitment of a shared Climate Change Officer in mid-2021.</p> <p>Work has been undertaken to improve Business Continuity Planning, including Single Points of Failure and reliance on core suppliers, Service Resumption Plans etc.</p> <p>Significant investment in IT and remote working (particularly since start of the C-19 pandemic).</p> <p>Structures are in place to seek and encourage public participation (committee meetings, planning applications and public consultations).</p> <p>We introduced a new Information Management Strategy and formed an Information Management Governance Group to support effective management of our information / data. We continue to</p>		<p>DAP audit of Business Continuity in February 2022 gave Reasonable assurance.</p> <p>The Emergency Planning Officer provided a business continuity update to Governance Committee in March 2024.</p> <p>The DAP audit of Information Management in April 2024 provided a Reasonable Opinion.</p>
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**Annual Governance Statement (2023/24)**

<p>work on a Sharepoint Project to better ensure data is accessible and protected.</p>		
<p><b>Developing the capability of the entity’s leadership and other individuals</b></p> <p>We evaluate the on-going training needs of Members. Member training programme covering wide range of topics, after Elections (2023) and then refresher training 2 years later. Members have now completed the training programme for 2023.</p> <p>We provide new Members with induction training on appointment.</p> <p>We provide ongoing management development as well as opportunities for aspiring managers</p> <p>As part of the new management organisation, senior management posts were widely advertised and were subject to a robust interview process against the Council behaviour framework.</p> <p>There are regular “managers forums” and staff briefings to share information,</p>	<p>Constitution</p> <p>New Councillors Induction Programme</p> <p>Member Development Policy</p> <p>Governance Committee recent Annual Review of the Committee’s Effectiveness</p>	<p>The DAP audit of Learning and Development provided a Reasonable Assurance. It noted introduction of the I-Trent module provides a system to monitor and track attendance of training, including mandatory courses.</p>

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<p>training (i.e. Cyber Security) etc and to cascade information down.</p> <p>We take the Health and Safety of our Staff extremely seriously with a H&amp;S committee to discuss any issues or problems and resolve them.</p> <p>Our business areas are encouraging the development of staff, engaging apprentices and offering additional qualifications and secondment opportunities. This is particularly important given challenges in recruiting from outside for some areas.</p> <p>There is a Staff Training Policy. This includes the requirement for Induction training provided to new staff involving a day’s training on policies, procedures, H&amp;S etc.</p> <p>All staff have job descriptions setting out their main duties the personal qualities/skills and attributes required for each post.</p> <p>We operate an check-in scheme for all staff to identify objectives and monitor delivery against them, and identify development and skills needs and assess performance.</p>	<p>Training Policy</p>	
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<p>A Learning and Development Policy was introduced in 2024.</p> <p>We are currently working with Exeter College and Exeter University to consider management and leadership training opportunities</p>		
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<p><b>Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</b></p>		
<p><b>How We Meet these Principles</b></p>	<p><b>Where You Can See Governance in action</b></p>	<p><b>Assurance Received and Issues Identified</b></p>
<p><b>Managing risk</b></p> <p>The council holds a Corporate Risk Register, supported by Service Risk Registers.</p> <p>A new Risk Management Framework has been updated and has been reviewed by CORGI. This will be considered by Governance Committee in June 2023</p> <p>The number of risks held on the Corporate Risk Register have been reduced to provide greater focus. The register itself has been changed to make it easier for Members to see the risk scores and</p>	<p>The performance of Devon Audit Partnership in completing the internal audit plan is monitored through regular Governance Committee updates.</p>	<p>Internal Audits report on Risk Management in March 2023 provided a Reasonable Assurance and commented on the strong risk culture within NDC.</p> <p>The audit programme included review of most of the core financial systems used by the council. These did not identify any significant issue.</p> <p>Devon Audit Partnership undertook several follow up audits on previous</p>

**Annual Governance Statement (2023/24)**

<p>changes. The new Corporate Risk Register was approved by Governance Committee in March 23.</p> <p>Senior Management Team have also approved a new risk escalation process and risk map which helps to visualise service risks across the Council. The risk Map is reviewed by SMT on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>All reports which go to Committee include a risk assessment as part of the required components on our report template.</p> <p>Risks on our risk register are allocated to individual managers who are named on reports.</p> <p>The Governance Committee actively monitors risks and controls at their meetings, with a formal review every year.</p> <p>DAP provides risk based internal audits where it provides assurance of control effectiveness against risks to delivery of business objectives.</p> <p>A counter fraud policy and strategy was agreed in June 2021 by Governance Committee. A new fraud risk register is being developed in conjunction with DAP</p>	<p>Internal audit reports that are significant such as providing a Limited Assurance, are discussed in Governance Committee.</p>	<p>Limited Assurance audits in 2023-24. They were able to uplift the opinions showing that effective action had been taken to address the identified control weaknesses.</p> <p>DAP notes in its annual report there is good focus on Business Continuity and Emergency Planning which helps reduce risk in the event of a significant incident.</p> <p><b>ACTION: complete development of the Fraud Risk Register.</b></p>
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<p><b>Managing performance</b></p> <p>Our Performance has been mapped to the Corporate Plan; all our Aims have performance measures.</p> <p>Benchmarking information is included where available; a Council –wide subscription to LG Inform Plus is improving the use of benchmarking and is regularly promoted by managers at Team meetings.</p> <p>Calendar of dates for submitting, publishing and distributing timely reports that are adhered to.</p> <p>The agendas and minutes of Strategy and Resources committee are published on our websites.</p> <p>Quarterly performance and financial management report taken to members which sets out financial information and also an appendix table of Key performance indicators and performance against service plan actions.</p> <p>New KPI’s have been developed as discussed above.</p>	<p>Committee Report Procedure</p> <p>Meetings, agendas etc</p> <p><a href="#">Strategy and Resources Committee</a> minutes and supporting papers</p>	<p>See the “Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits – delivering” Section: There remains a need to make council performance more visible to the public.</p>
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## Annual Governance Statement (2023/24)

<p><b>Robust internal control</b></p> <p>Detailed Council Regulations provide guidance and direction on council operations.</p> <p>A larger senior management team has helped the control framework.</p> <p>We have worked with our internal auditors to produce an Assurance Map which highlights strengths and weaknesses to support action prioritisation.</p> <p>We have updated our anti-fraud and corruption Policy and Strategy. A Fraud Working group has been set up to create a fraud risk register</p> <p>A partnership of Devon public sector organisations provide the internal audit service, and complies with the Public Sector Internal Audit Services. An audit programme is delivered each year based on a plan approved by the Governance committee.</p> <p>Our Governance Committee attend training offered internally and externally, including training provided by the S151 officer.</p>		<p>Our external auditors provided an Unqualified opinion on the Councils financial statements for 2022-23.</p> <p>Assurance has been provided through internal audit assignment reports, AC progress reports and Annual report.</p> <p>Overall – for the 2023-24 audit year, DAP provided an overall ‘Reasonable Assurance’ - generally sound systems of governance, risk management and control in place across the organisation.</p> <p>In 2022/23 the external auditors, Grant Thornton, completed their value for money review and again concluded that we have proper arrangements to secure economic, efficient and effective use of our resources. In connection to their governance review they made no recommendations for improvement.</p>
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<p><b>Managing data</b></p> <p>We have Data Protection and Information Security Policies in place. This includes a Data Protection Policy, which describes how we handle use and protect personal data.</p> <p>We have mandatory Data Protection and Information Security training for all staff and Members.</p> <p>We have a process to make information available if subject to freedom of information requests and data subject requests.</p> <p>We have a project to introduce Sharepoint into the council which will improve how we manage and store information.</p>	<p><a href="#">Policies on NDC website, other policies are on our internal intranet.</a></p> <p><a href="#">Process to make an FOI request</a></p> <p><a href="#">Process to make a data subject request</a></p>	<p>The Internal Audit follow up report on Information Governance in April 2024 provided Reasonable assurance (previously limited assurance in April 23)</p> <p>The Internal Audit follow up report on Cyber Security in March 24 provided Reasonable assurance (previously limited assurance in April 23)</p> <p>A cyber security audit was undertaken in February 2022 on Malware and Ransomware, where Reasonable Assurance was given, and an additional audit on Firewalls in February 2022, where Reasonable Assurance was given</p> <p>There is a Service Plan action to improve the document retention on the Civica Financials core system</p>
<p><b>Strong Public Financial Management</b></p> <p>We publish a Budget Book for each year which includes the Revenue Budget,</p>	<p><a href="#">Budgets and Spending information</a> for: Budget Book 2023-24</p>	<p>Our External auditors completed a risk based review of the Council's value for money arrangements. In 2022/23 they concluded that NDC had proper</p>

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<p>Capital Programme and Medium Terms Financial Strategy.</p> <p>Our annual Medium Term Financial Strategy covers the next five years.</p> <p>We produced a 10 year Capital Strategy</p> <p>We have undertaken a compliance assessment against the new Financial Management Code as required by CIPFA. This was supported by Internal and External auditors.</p>	<p>Budget 2023-24 and Medium Term Financial Strategy</p> <p>Statement of Accounts</p> <p>Capital Investment Plan</p> <p>Expenditure Data</p>	<p>arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.</p> <p>Our internal audits also provided Substantial Assurance for the Capital Programme, and Creditors, and a Reasonable Assurance for Payroll, Main Accounting System, and Debtors.</p>
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**Annual Governance Statement (2023/24)**

<b>Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability</b>		
<b>How We Meet these Principles</b>	<b>Where You Can See Governance in action</b>	<b>Assurance Received and Issues Identified</b>
<p><b>Implementing good practice in transparency</b></p> <p>We publish our Statement of Accounts on our website.</p> <p>Annual Governance Statement produced, and signed by Chief Executive and Leader of the Council. AGS is discussed by Governance Committee and endorsed by Council.</p> <p>Quarterly performance and financial management report taken to members which sets out financial information and also an appendix table of Key performance indicators and performance against service plan actions.</p>	<p><a href="#">Annual Audit Letter</a></p> <p><a href="#">Annual Governance Statement.</a></p>	
<p><b>Implementing good practices in reporting</b></p>		

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<p>We publish our Annual Governance Statement (which includes a list of issues of concern) on our website. The AGS issues highlighted are reported to governance committee as part of the Audit recommendation tracker report of Pentana information, with progress notes</p> <p>We report on our performance quarterly to Strategy and Resources, Policy Development, and Full Council on our performance.</p>	<p><a href="#">Annual Governance Statement</a></p>	
<p><b>Assurance and effective accountability</b></p> <p>We provide the notice of appointment of External Auditor onto our external website – Grant Thornton from 2018 to 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bishop Fleming 2024</li> </ul> <p>External audits are undertaken every year, and the results are published on our internet.</p> <p>External audit recommendations are progressed to completion. These are checked by EA in the next audit cycle.</p>	<p><a href="#">Audits, Inspections and Assessments</a> – containing the notice of appointment, annual audit letter</p> <p><a href="#">Annual Audit Letter</a></p>	

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<p>DAP has completed our annual self-assessment against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.</p> <p>Peer reviews have been undertaken. The last one was held in Sept/Oct 2021.</p>		<p>LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Refresh 2021: Feedback report</p> <p><i>'We saw so many green shoots of optimism across the organisation with the majority of our original recommendations in respect of organisational leadership and capacity progresses with impressive impetus and success. Putting time and energy into nurturing this early progress will provide an enviable springboard for future improvement'</i></p>
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