

## ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2023/24

### Introduction

Surrey County Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. It needs to ensure that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. To achieve this the council must ensure that it has a governance framework that supports a culture of transparent decision making.

The Accounts and Audit Regulations (2015), as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021, require the council to conduct a review, at least once a year, on the effectiveness of its system of internal control and include an Annual Governance Statement reporting on the review with the Statement of Accounts.

The Annual Governance Statement describes significant organisational and service activities during 2023/24, progress against key issues raised in last year's governance review and identifies key areas of focus for 2024/25 and provides assurance the Council is complying with its Code of Governance and the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government" (2016).

Core Governance Principles:

1	We will focus on <b>our purpose</b> to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes for Surrey and its local communities
2	Members and officers will behave with integrity and demonstrate a strong <b>commitment to ethical values</b>
3	We will ensure <b>openness</b> and effectively engage with our stakeholders
4	We will develop the <b>capacity and capability</b> of members and officers to continue to be effective
5	We will manage <b>risks and performance</b> through robust internal control and strong public financial management
6	We will implement good practice in <b>transparency and reporting</b> to deliver effective accountability

## Organisational Governance

### Organisation Strategy 2023 - 2028

The Council's Organisation Strategy sets out four Strategic Priorities in the context of ongoing significant challenges including the cost-of-living crisis, high inflation, global financial uncertainty, and government policy changes. It also enhances the clarity and centrality of 'No One Left Behind' as the guiding principle in tackling inequality and the existing four priority objectives.



Much of the Council's work is undertaken in partnership. At a strategic level, the governance of this work is dealt with through a number of strategic partnership boards, that bring a range of partner representatives together. These include, for instance, the Health and Wellbeing Board and Integrated Care Partnership, One Surrey Growth Board, and the Greener Futures Board. These are in turn supported by a number of themed and more operationally focused partnership structures, including statutory Adults and Childrens' Safeguarding Boards.

## Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)

During 2023/24, the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) has experienced a number of changes following the previous Chief Executive's departure and some CLT posts are currently filled on an interim basis. An interim Head of Paid Service is in place until the new permanent Chief Executive joins the Council in August 2024. There are currently interim arrangements for the statutory s151 role and the Monitoring Officer roles.

The interim arrangements ensure all key corporate roles in the CLT are covered, whilst the Council undergoes the permanent recruitment for the vacant posts of Executive Director Adults, Wellbeing and Health Partnerships, Executive Director Finance and Corporate Services (Section 151), Executive Director of Customer, Digital and Change and the Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer). The Executive Director of Environment, Infrastructure and Growth will become vacant in July 2024 so the directorate structure will be temporarily changing for 12 months to refocus the department and to ensure interim arrangements are put in place to cover the vast area of Waste, Land and Property, Economy and Growth, Highways, Infrastructure and Planning.

## Executive Director Assurance Statement 2023/2024

This is the first year the council has requested Assurance Statements from the CLT. The statement covers 10 areas of Constitution of the Council and the Scheme of Delegation, Risk Management, Financial Management, Internal Controls, Counter Fraud Arrangements, Major Projects, Performance Management, HR Management, Information Governance and External Audits and Inspection. The statements provided a good level of assurance across all areas and the identified actions will be implemented by the relevant Executive Directors during 2024/25 as part of business as usual. Further guidance and support on the Council approach around the assurance will be developed to strengthen the approach to the statements.

## Financial Management

The Council has worked diligently over recent years to improve its financial resilience, ensuring a stronger financial base from which to deliver services and putting in place robust financial management arrangements. We have reduced our financial risk, delivered service improvement, ambitious capital investment and transformation programmes and built back depleted reserves.

Despite this strong position, the 2023/24 financial year featured some of the most severe pressures faced for many years. In line with the national picture, public services are under significant strain, with ongoing funding uncertainty, further compounded by increased demands for vital services and the highest inflation in four decades. Price and demand pressures specifically in Home to School Travel Assistance, Adults Social Care and Children's Social Care Placements all contributed to a budget overspend being forecast for the majority of the financial year. The use of the council's risk contingency budget early in the financial year reflects this challenging environment.

The medium-term financial and economic outlook beyond 2024/25 remains uncertain and the challenges are set to continue, as a national election ushers in a new Government in July 2024. With no clarity on central government funding in the medium term, and changes to the political landscape, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority, in order to ensure the stable provision of services in the medium term.

During 2023/24, in recognition of the financial pressures being experienced and the expectation that these will continue into 2024/25, a number of cost control mechanisms were put in place, including recruitment and procurement controls. Building on the work undertaken as part of the Finance Improvement Programme, a refresh of the Partnership Agreement for Excellent Financial Management was undertaken, in consultation with representatives from across the organisation. The Partnership Agreement sets out the respective roles and responsibilities of the Finance Service and Budget Holders to ensure clear financial management responsibilities and mutual expectations. We continue to be committed to the Finance Academy, developing financial management capabilities for finance business partners, budget holders, councillors and all those engaged in financial activity. Budget Accountability Statements were issued to all Accountable Budget Owners in respect of both capital and revenue budgets.

We have strong governance arrangements in place whereby the financial position, (revenue and capital) including financial risks and associated mitigations are discussed monthly at Departmental Leadership Teams, Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet. Capital has its own robust governance arrangements in place. All capital programmes of work undertaken by the Council form part of one of three Strategic Capital Groups (SCG) which meet on a monthly basis to discuss and approve business cases within their delegation (up to £250k) and project and programme delivery. Programmes outside of SCG delegation (over £250k and up to £1m) are discussed at the Council-wide monthly Capital Programme Panel which contains representation from each SCG and specific project/programme managers to discuss topics of relevance. Business cases over £1m are discussed and agreed by Cabinet.

The Council has a robust financial platform to build on, having taken difficult decisions in the past. Our focus will continue to be on protecting vital services, we need to maintain a persistent focus on both transformation and improved service delivery, with an ongoing need to be forward looking as well as delivering the efficiencies required to achieve a balanced budget position each year. The Council will need to continue to demonstrate a commitment to strong financial management in the years to come to ensure that the Council's finances are an enabler of our mission to ensure 'No One Left Behind.'

## **Transformation**

The Council has been on a transformation journey since 2018, delivering significant financial efficiencies and improving services for residents. Due to the ongoing financial challenges and requirement for change, the Council has recognised a need for a new approach to delivering financial efficiencies and ways of working to support a balanced Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Work to prioritise the key transformation priorities and governance approach was undertaken during the year and five top priority programmes have now been agreed by Cabinet and Corporate Leadership Team (Children's Social Care transformation, Special Education Needs (SEND), Adult Social Care transformation, Customer transformation, Core Function Redesign). Revised transformation governance arrangements have been implemented with a new Strategic Transformation, Improvement and Assurance Board (STIAB) to oversee and assure our key top level transformation programmes, chaired by the Leader, and includes relevant Cabinet Members.

Business cases for the five priority programmes have either been developed or are in development and clearly set out the relevant investment and benefits the programmes will deliver. Savings are monitored through the Medium-Term Financial Strategy budget monitoring process, are tracked monthly and reported to Corporate Leadership Team and STIAB, as well as quarterly to Resources and Performance Select Committee. There continue to be significant risks associated with delivery of the programmes which are regularly monitored and reported through the governance arrangements.

## Workforce

The People Strategy Delivery Plan for 2023 was reviewed quarterly by the People Strategy Performance Board and programmes of work had Senior Sponsors to ensure that work was kept on track and delivered. The People Strategy was audited internally in December 2023 with a Reasonable Assurance opinion confirming there are clear strategic priorities addressing how the Council plans to develop both the capacity and capability of the workforce to achieve its strategic priorities. This is supported by a flexible plan setting out the action the Council will take to ensure the delivery of the strategy, which can be adjusted if required, enabling the Council to react as workforce priorities change. It also found that an appropriate governance structure is in place allowing for effective oversight of the work being conducted to deliver the People Strategy. The Delivery Plan is being refreshed for 2024/25 and will be reviewed and measured by the People Strategy Performance Board bi-monthly.

In 2023/24 there was a key focus on under-represented groups within the workforce and three major reviews were undertaken by external experts with regards to the lived experience of colleagues from the LGBTQ+ community, disabled colleagues, and minority ethnic group colleagues. These reviews have been assessed by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board Members and an action plan has been created to ensure the working environment and experience of colleagues within these specific groupings is improved and equitable to those across the organisation.

The Employee Pulse Survey showed us that the majority (85%), of the workforce are proud to work for Surrey and are trusted to perform their roles effectively. The majority of people know how to report bullying, harassment or discrimination and have regular open conversations with their line manager. A 'You Said...We Did' Forum was established to review the results and discuss areas for improvement, which are overseen by the People Strategy Performance Board for consideration and approval.

The emphasis on quarterly Performance Conversations was endorsed by the Chief Executive in November 2023, with the roll out across the organisation of a new approach throughout the 24/25 financial year, which includes a final performance rating to reflect the individual's annual performance. This new approach will be supported by cross-organisational training for 1,700 line managers to ensure the performance of their teams is maximised.

The Council has introduced recruitment controls to minimise the number of roles that are advertised unnecessarily and to encourage teams to look at different ways of covering the work that is needed. The recruitment controls are not applied to public-facing roles. In addition, a Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme (MARS), has been applied to some services as part of a range of options for those who are seeking to leave the Council. A blanket approach has not been applied, but the option for some to apply via a business case will be considered in those services where significant function re-design is taking place.

### Digital Business and Insights (DB&I) Programme and MySurrey

The DBI Programme went live on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023 to deliver the MySurrey ERP system, integrating Finance, Procurement and HR. All elements expected to go-live (corporate and schools) did, as planned on 6<sup>th</sup> June. The Programme was governed by a Programme Board chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Resources with representation from senior officers across all Directorates, our Technology Partners and programme representatives until its closure on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023. Closure was decided by the Board against a set of exit criteria; a process established to enter or exit each critical stage of the process. During this period a Sponsors Group was also part of the governance with representation from the Council and the Technology Partners where issues and blockages were escalated. Given the scale and complexity of a Council the size of Surrey, there were some issues upon go-live as expected, especially around payroll and pensions. Given their criticality, a rapid response team was pulled together to stabilise the programme from October 2023 for a period of about three months and then moved into a transition period to the end of the financial year. The

stabilisation period was governed by a Transition to Business As Usual Steering Group chaired by the Director of Finance, Corporate and Commercial and Chief Digital & Information Officer deputising. As at the start of 2024/25 there are still a pipeline of technical fixes outstanding which are impacting on a several areas within the system, including payroll and pensions services affecting Council employees and external customers. These are being prioritised for completion with oversight by the MySurrey Board.

### **SCC company governance**

The Council has four wholly owned LATCOs; Hendeca Group Ltd, Surrey Choices Ltd, Halsey Garton Residential Ltd and Halsey Garton Property Ltd. Oversight of these companies is provided through the officer-led Shareholder and Investment Panel (SHIP) and Member-led Strategic Investment Board (SIB) (Cabinet Sub Committee). The SIB is responsible for appointing and removing directors, approving annual business plans, and also reviewing the overall performance of the trading companies, including their financial performance. The SIB also provides an annual mid-year report to Cabinet.

The Select Committee Resources and Performance committee has recently reviewed the areas of risk, returns to the council, and any changes in strategy. Risk within the largest investment (Halsey Garton Property Ltd), has been a particular focus, in light of a volatile commercial property market and macro-economic factors. As a contingency in the event of an adverse event impacting the Company's ability to service all its debt to the Council, a Revolving Investment and Infrastructure Fund is already in place to mitigate any resulting revenue impact, with an amount of £11.1m.

The Halsey Garton Property Ltd exit strategy (should the Government legislate to prevent Council's holding commercial investments) was also reviewed. The committee was advised that legislative changes in recent years have been aimed at restricting new investment for commercial gain and it is thought unlikely by our advisors that Government would take legislative steps that impact existing investments. The Council ensures it is not overly reliant on investment income and that its overall debt level, including investments, is affordable.

Halsey Garton Property Ltd and Halsey Garton Residential Ltd both underwent major strategic reviews that were presented to the Strategic Investment Board during the year. Two further subsidiaries, Surrey Choices Ltd and Hendeca Group Ltd, either underwent or commenced financial sustainability reviews to test their viability in the medium term, with results also having been or to be provided to the Strategic Investment Board.

The Council also has minority shareholding in the companies of TRICS Consortium Ltd and UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc and during the 2024/2025 financial year the Council will undertake a review of the governance in terms of oversight companies and report to SIB.

## **Service-specific governance considerations**

### **Children's Services**

Improvement work across children's services has continued at pace. The number of children subject to a statutory plan has decreased in 2023/24 in line with expectations around a more consistent application of the Family Safeguarding practice model. Frontline practice has continued to improve in many areas, and we have made a fundamental shift in approach to early support and prevention, establishing our 'continuum of support'

model to ensure that children and families receive the right support, at the right time by the right service. The children's social care transformation programme has delivered its full financial benefits in the 2023/24 financial year. Ofsted registrations were received for two of three new purpose-built children's homes, which will ensure that more of Surrey's children are placed closer to home. The property market has remained challenging, both in terms of supply and the length of the purchasing process, which has subsequently impacted timescales and milestones for the delivery of some capital projects.

Work to recruit and retain staff in areas of skills shortage has accelerated, with a number of new initiatives implemented including targeted market supplements and 'grow our own' workforce approaches, which have helped to reduce voluntary turnover. However, social work recruitment remained a national and local challenge and continued to impact our target of 80% permanent social worker workforce, which we have not been able to meet.

The report letter following a focussed visit by Ofsted in April 2024, in relation to our Child in Need and Child Protection work, was generally positive. Following its publication on 17 May, the service is incorporating the two recommendations into our ongoing improvement programme.

### **Special Educational Needs (SEND)**

The 2023 Local Area SEND Inspection found that the local area partnership's arrangements "lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)" and made four recommendations for areas for improvement. Since the inspection, work has continued to deliver these and our already planned improvements, including creating more state-maintained specialist places; decreasing reliance on costly independent sector provision; promoting greater inclusion of children and young people (CYP) in mainstream settings; establishing an early identification and support offer; and enhancing relationships to reduce overall demand for statutory support whilst improving the timeliness of education, health and care plans (EHCPs) and reviews. A total of 43 capital projects have now been delivered, providing 920 additional specialist places increasing the state-maintained specialist education estate by 28%. Concurrently, the EHCP accelerated recovery plan has been successfully implemented, with work on track to achieve at least 58% EHCP timeliness by the end of May 2024. The discovery phase of the end-to-end review of the 20 week statutory EHCP process has been completed and the service is working closely with partners to implement findings. This includes work to improve the consistency and coordination of services, increase staff capacity across AN&D services, improve supervision and development of staff, and strengthen communications and engagement with families.

Delivery of the Safety Valve agreement has remained on track, with further work on cost containment mapping a priority. Ongoing construction market volatility also remains a key risk for the programme.

### **Home to School Travel Assistance**

Significant transformation and improvement activity has been delivered in the home to school transport service in 2023/24. In the last 12 months, 97% of applications were processed within the 20 working day target. Service efficiency savings have been made this year of approximately £3m. The savings have been realised through the extension of Personal Travel Budgets, a review of safe routes, cost recoupment, and re-optimisation of routes. Other key service developments include: a strengthened appeals function that ensures stringent application of policy, implementation of a robust communication strategy with families and providers, and technological developments undertaken with the Council's robotics team to automate laborious back-office processes. Despite these improvements, expenditure has been significantly affected by inflationary pressures in the market and by growth in demand for services. Applications for home to school travel assistance were 17% higher in

January 2024 than at the same point in 2023. In the light of these ongoing challenges the service will implement an oversight board in 2024/25 to assure members that all possible efficiencies are being made.

### **Adult Social Care**

There have been significant changes with the creation of a new directorate Adults, Wellbeing and Health Partnerships (AWHP), which has brought Adult Social Care, Public Health, Transformation and Health Integration, and some Community functions for example our Local Area Coordination. Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulation of Local Authorities Care Act responsibilities has now been introduced nationally, and Surrey County Council is now in the process of assessment, with this to be completed during the next 4 months.

In Surrey, like other areas, the complexity of need and demand for adult social care continues, and to respond effectively and support continuous improvement, the adult social care leadership structure has been refreshed, alongside refreshing governance arrangements. This has driven a restructure of adult social care leadership which was implemented on 1 May 2024. This includes additional capacity to support transformation, together with capacity and capability to deliver on the directorate's strategic ambitions, and increased capacity and focus on safeguarding adults and quality assurance.

### **Surrey Fire and Rescue Service**

In Spring of 2023, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) undertook a third full inspection of Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), and in September 2023, we received our inspection report. One Cause of Concern (CoC) regarding the effectiveness of the Risk-Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) was highlighted. Following significant efforts to address this concern, with a comprehensive review and update of our RBIP in line with the National Fire Chief Council's methodology, the CoC was discharged in April 2024.

The inspection report also identified 24 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) and the service has developed an Inspection Improvement Plan (IIP) to address each recommendation. The IIP is updated on a quarterly basis and shared with the Service Leadership Team (SLT), the Cabinet Portfolio Holder and the HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead. Progress against the IIP is reported via the Transformation Programme Board. The IIP is also scrutinised by the Communities, Highways and Environment Select Committee twice a year, along with the performance of the service against its key performance indicators.

### **River Thames Scheme**

The River Thames Scheme (RTS) is an integrated scheme which delivers both blue and green infrastructure, with each element supporting the other, to deliver this important scheme. A river channel will be built in two sections in Spelthorne and Runnymede with access to open green spaces and connections with wildlife. In addition, it will support a more sustainable travel network and a network of high-quality habitat to achieve biodiversity net gain.

RTS governance arrangements are formalised on the basis that both the Environment Agency (EA) and Surrey County Council (SCC) are joint clients for the scheme and are secured by a bespoke Collaboration Agreement 1 (CA1) between the EA and SCC, which outlines responsibilities for funding and delivering the scheme. The CA principles were approved by SCC Cabinet in 2021 to establish governance and decision making on RTS and terms for investment.

The key principles of the governance are:

- A scheme of delegation, with Project Sponsors empowered to act on behalf of their respective organisations.

- A Strategic Delivery Board (SDB) to enable joint decision making by the EA and SCC. Membership consists of SCC officers and EA equivalents including the Executive Director of Environment, Infrastructure and Growth, Director of Infrastructure and Major Projects, Director of Environment.
- Delegation from the SDB to the project team via Senior Client representatives and Senior Users to a Project Director to enable the project to deliver in an agile and efficient way.
- A single integrated delivery team and scheme Project Management Office (PMO) on behalf of both the EA and SCC.

As well as the above, there is a staged approach to delivery, with clear Gateways to control delivery, regular briefings with SCC lead Councillors, along with scheduled meetings with district and borough partners, and reports to Cabinet when an appropriate decision is required from Members. Our partners (amongst others) include; Runnymede Borough Council, Spelthorne Borough Council and Thames Water.

## **Governance Systems Assurance**

### **Corporate governance systems**

The annual review of corporate governance policies and process was carried out by the Council's Governance Panel, and Internal Audit completed a review of corporate governance. Both reviews concluded that governance systems are in place with many being updated and communicated throughout the year. The reviews recommended that further work could improve awareness and signposting of key governance systems, including through induction, to aid understanding and embedding across the organisation. Consequently, a review of Corporate and Directorate Induction Arrangements has been included within the Annual Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25.

The Council's Risk Management Strategy has been reviewed during the year and was approved by the Audit and Governance Committee in September 2023. The Corporate Risk Register is reviewed monthly by the Corporate Leadership Team and quarterly by Cabinet. There is also a 6-monthly review of the risk management arrangements by the Audit and Governance Committee.

The council's External Auditor's report on value for money published in January 2024, which looked at the year 2022/23, reported improvements have been made in the areas of Children's services, Pensions Administration and risk management. Further recommendations were made to continue to embed good governance and monitor progress in Children's Services.

The Council's financial management arrangements during 2023/24 fully complied with CIPFA's Statement on "The Role of the Chief Finance Officer" (CIPFA, 2010). The Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Resources (s151) met his financial responsibilities during the year and ensured financial management arrangements were in place. Up until March 2024 he reported directly to the Chief Executive and had regular contact with the Leader and key Members, Monitoring Officer, Chief Internal Auditor and other Executive Directors. From March 2024, the Director of Finance – Corporate and Commercial became interim s151 officer and reports directly to the Interim Chief Executive.

An assessment of compliance with the CIPFA Financial Management Code was undertaken during the year. The review concluded that the Council demonstrated overall compliance with the standards, but evidence could be strengthened in some areas including capital training and guidance. There are also several areas where, as a result of the focus on financial management capabilities over the last few years, the Council's arrangements exceed the expected standards.

The Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) have recently consulted on a new set of statutory guidance 'Best Value Standards and Intervention.' These have been developed to provide greater clarity to the local government sector on how to fulfil the Best Value Duty, by describing what constitutes best value, the standards expected and the models of intervention available to the Secretary of State in the event of a failure to uphold these standards. The guidance sets out seven best value themes, including characteristics of



a well-functioning local authority and indicators used to identify challenges that could indicate potential failure. Pending publication of the final guidance, an initial self-assessment of the principles was undertaken which provided assurance.

The Chief Internal Auditor has provided Reasonable Assurance that the council has in place an adequate and effective framework of governance, risk management and internal control for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. Overall, whilst the majority of audit opinions issued in the year were generally positive, internal audit activity identified a number of significant areas where the operation of internal controls has not been fully effective, as reflected by the eight partial assurance opinions issues in the year (excluding schools audits). In addition, a further four audits of partial assurance were in draft report stage at the year-end, and two audits with fieldwork largely completed also likely to be of partial assurance. Again, some of these reviews fell into areas of significance in terms of financial materiality to the Council, or in areas of significant service delivery. No minimal assurance audits were issued in the past year and all audits of partial assurance will be subject to follow-up audits in 2024/25 to ensure the expected improvements have occurred.

The Council's governance arrangements for 2023/24 are regarded as fit for purpose and are in accordance with the governance framework shown in Annex A. The Council is committed to maintaining these arrangements and ensuring that the improvements required are prioritised and sufficiently resourced. The action plans below show progress on the improvement areas identified last year and the areas for improvement this year.

#### 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement Action Plan – Follow Up

Issue identified during 2022/23	Action taken during 2023/24
<p><b>DB&amp;I programme - MySurrey</b></p> <p>To ensure MySurrey is implemented effectively and embedded during 2023/24</p>	<p>DB&amp;I go-live on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023 against established set of exit criteria as agreed by the Board</p> <p>Closure of the DB&amp;I programme at the Board on 15<sup>th</sup> December, against an established set of exit criteria as agreed by the Board</p> <p>Rapid Response team established in October 2023 for a period of c3 months to stabilise the programme (especially in the areas of payroll and pensions) and move towards Transition to BAU</p> <p>Established Transition to BAU Steering Group to govern the transition of activity to functional areas</p> <p>Established a Client Engagement &amp; Development Function to manage change programmes to optimise the system and manage contracts and client relationships on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024</p>
<p><b>Special Educational Needs</b></p>	<p>Continued to deliver special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) areas for improvement.</p> <p>Delivered 43 capital projects, providing 920 additional specialist places.</p> <p>Implemented the education, health and care plans (EHCP) accelerated recovery plan.</p> <p>Delivery of the Safety Valve agreement has remained on track.</p>
<p><b>Home to School Travel Assistance</b></p>	<p>Service efficiency savings have been made this year and 97% of applications were processed within the 20 working day target.</p> <p>The appeals function has been strengthened.</p>

Issue identified during 2022/23	Action taken during 2023/24
	A robust communication strategy with families and providers has been implemented. Technological developments undertaken to automate back-office processes.
<b>Subject Access Requests</b> Improved SARs performance against statutory targets	Following implementation of the actions set out performance has risen and continues to be monitored. The Office of the Information Commissioner (ICO), confirmed in October 2023 that they were satisfied by the steps taken by the Council and no longer required regular progress updates.
<b>Planning Committee procedures</b> To implement improvements recommended by the Planning Advisory Service.	At its meeting on 27 September 2023, the Planning & Regulatory Committee approved the proposed changes recommended by the Planning Advisory Service, which Council approved on 10 October 2023. The changes are now embedded, and the Planning Committee is operating effectively.
<b>Adult Social Care</b>	Creation of a new directorate Adults, Wellbeing and Health Partnerships (AWHP). The adult social care leadership structure has been refreshed, alongside refreshing governance arrangements and a restructure of adult social care leadership which was implemented on 1 May 2024.

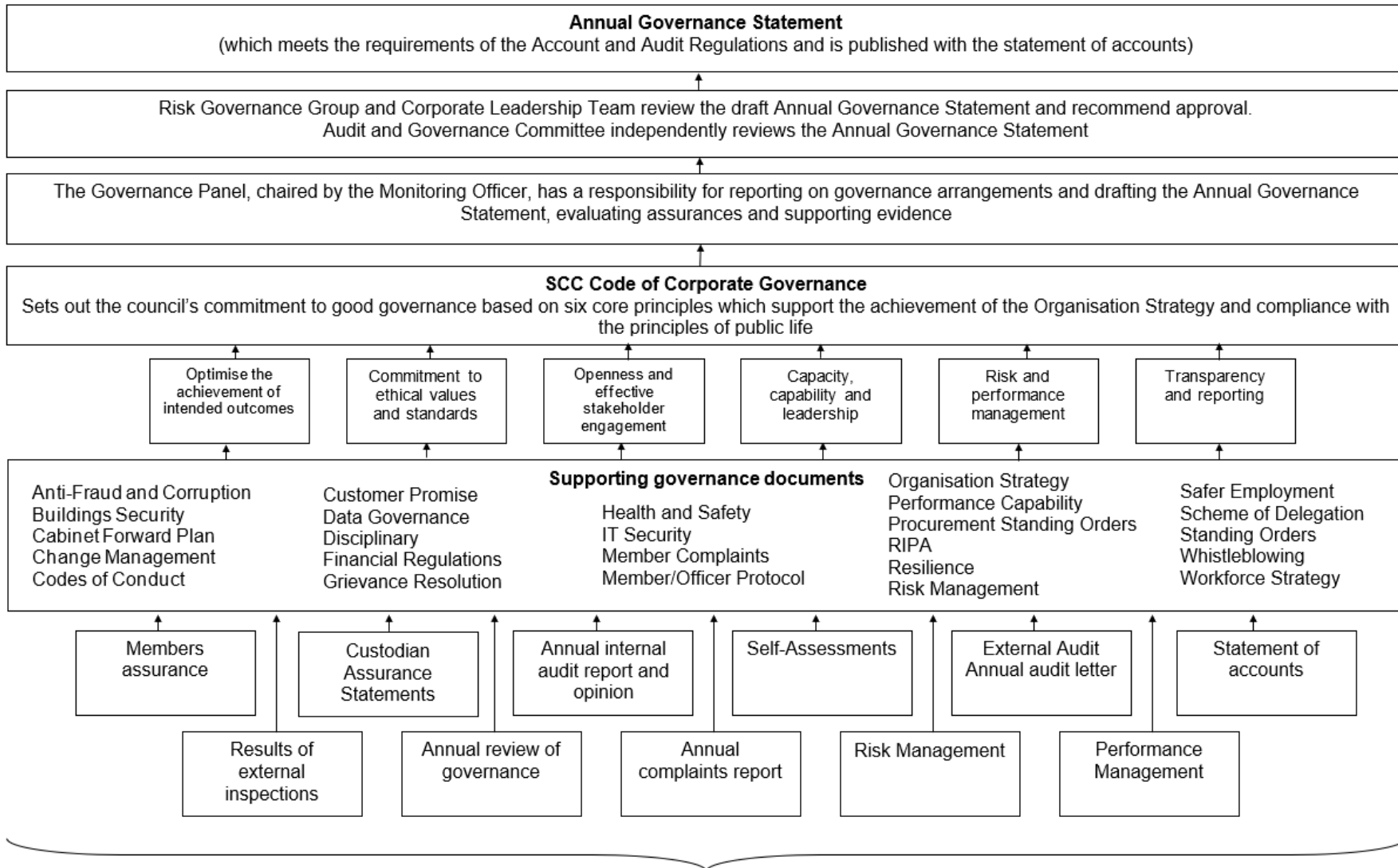
### 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement Action Plan

Issue identified during 2023/24	Action to be taken during 2024/25
<b>Childrens Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pursue the DfE-sponsored Family Justice 'Trailblazer' programme, to reduce time taken in family court proceedings.</li> <li>• Deliver a new Adolescent Service, providing wrap around and 'Edge of Care' services to support children to live at home wherever safe and appropriate.</li> <li>• Embed a new Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS), providing intensive support for families in Surrey where there are interconnecting needs affecting the whole family.</li> <li>• Implement Foster Carers' Charter and launch a new foster care portal to enable communication between the council and its Foster Carers. Engage in the DfE-sponsored, South East Regional Foster Care Recruitment Programme.</li> <li>• Continue work to expand the in-house children's residential estate.</li> <li>• Continue work to strengthen our partnership front-door, to improve coordination and information sharing between agencies.</li> <li>• Develop an Early Help service specifically for Children with Disabilities.</li> <li>• Improve the quality of letters before proceedings and the quality and consistency of direct work with children.</li> </ul>
<b>Special Educational Needs</b> To improve SEND service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the implementation of findings from the End to End review.</li> <li>• Continue to deliver the accelerated EHCP recovery plan.</li> <li>• Deliver planned capital projects and a refreshed capital programme scope and financial proposals to Cabinet in June.</li> <li>• With sponsors, review and implement an updated All Age Autism Strategy.</li> </ul>

Issue identified during 2023/24	Action to be taken during 2024/25
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver an impact and outcomes evaluation framework, to be agreed with families and children and young people.</li> <li>• Embed a new Executive Leadership Group to provide assurance to the AND Partnership Board.</li> <li>• Launch a Continuum Of Provision (COP) Programme to provide a focus for a more inclusive system in Surrey.</li> </ul>
<b>Home to School Travel Assistance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement an oversight board to provide members with assurance and oversight of the continuing delivery of efficiencies.</li> </ul>
<b>Adult Social Care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that within available resource continuing to improve the delivery of our Care Act Duties and outcomes for Surrey people.</li> <li>• Refocusing our workforce strategy and implementation plans to include our responsibilities for the wider sector adult social care workforce.</li> <li>• Responding to areas that might arise following completion of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance process.</li> <li>• Continuing to work with our health partners, and people who use services, and informal carers.</li> </ul>
<b>MySurrey</b>	<p>Ensure effective transition of activities to all functional areas and close down of Transition to BAU Steering Group by end of May 2024.</p> <p>Complete procurement and implementation of a Managed Services support model to deal with technical fixes .</p>

Tim Oliver  
 Leader of the Council  
 July 2024

Michael Coughlin  
 Head of Paid Service  
 July 2024



All these sources and others provide assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of our controls over key risks