

Draft Annual Governance Statement

2025/26



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Contents

Foreword	3
Key elements of the Council's Governance Framework 2025/26	4
How we comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Solace Framework	6
Governance Framework for 2025/26	12
Review of effectiveness	13
Follow-up on last year's key areas of focus	15
Governance issues	16

Foreword

This document sets out South Kesteven District Council's Annual Governance Statement for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Good governance helps to ensure that local government bodies are doing the right things in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. This includes complying with legislation, making evidence-based decisions within a clear framework, and displaying a healthy culture, behaviour and values, whilst ensuring transparency, equity and accountability.

The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is a public report by the Council on the extent to which it believes it has complied with its adopted Constitution, relevant legislation, directives and regulations. It also reviews the performance and effectiveness of its governance arrangements during the year, and sets out any planned changes in the coming 12 months following assessment by external bodies including appointed auditors, other regulators and peers. It conforms to the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance and covers all significant corporate systems, processes, and controls across all Council activities.

The Council expects all members, officers, partners and contractors to adhere to the highest standards of service by complying with the, Constitution, Corporate Vision and Values, and Corporate Priorities as well as applicable statutory requirements.

This document is drawn from a number of assurance mechanisms including external audit opinions and reports, the Council's governance and decision-making framework, the work of the Governance and Audit Committee, Scrutiny functions, the work of advisors, regulators and the internal auditors.

The Council's system of internal controls is an important part of the governance framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, priorities, aims and objectives, and therefore provides reasonable but not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal controls is based on an on-going process designed to identify and mitigate risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, priorities, aims and objectives. It also evaluates the likelihood of those risks being realised and their potential impact should they be realised. It seeks to manage identified risks efficiently, effectively and economically. The Strategic Risk Register is reported to the Governance and Audit Committee three times a year.

Alongside the governance framework the Council has a Corporate Plan 2024-27 in place for the purpose of bringing focus and clarity to our vision for South Kesteven to be a "thriving district in which to live, work and visit."

The Council is confident that it has established a robust foundation of good governance arrangements and is committed to its continuous improvement.



Karen Bradford
Chief Executive
South Kesteven
District Council



Cllr Ashley Baxter
Leader of the Council
South Kesteven
District Council

 @southkesteven

 @southkdc

 [linkedin.com/company/south-kesteven-council](https://www.linkedin.com/company/south-kesteven-council)

Key elements of the Council's Governance Framework 2025/26

Full Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Performs the Council's non-executive functions ■ Approves amendments to the Constitution and all associated Procedure Rules, Protocols and Codes ■ Approves Strategies, Policies and Plans which make up the policy framework such as the Corporate Plan and Local Development Plan ■ Approves the Council's budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy, including the setting of Council Tax ■ Holds meetings in public unless exemptions apply. All meetings are broadcast live and decisions are publicly available, as are minutes of each meeting
Cabinet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Takes the majority of the Council's decisions on matters outside of the Council's budget and policy frameworks ■ Sets priorities in line with the Council's vision and recommends budget proposals to underpin delivery ■ Reviews the Council's financial performance, performance of services and risk management ■ Holds meetings in public unless exemptions apply. All meetings are broadcast live and decisions are publicly available, as are minutes of each meeting
Governance and Audit Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reviews and approves Financial Statements on behalf of the Council ■ Reviews Financial Regulations, Contract Procedure Rules, and the Treasury Management Strategy as well as any amendments to the Constitution ■ Reviews and scrutinises governance arrangements, including the Local Code of Corporate Governance, internal audit reports, and management of risk ■ Reviews external audit annual plan, year end opinion and Value for Money assessment ■ Reviews annual reports for Safeguarding, Health & Safety and Business Continuity, and complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman ■ Holds meetings in public unless exemptions apply. All meetings are broadcast live, and decisions are publicly available, as are minutes of each meeting
Overview and Scrutiny Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provides a 'critical friend' challenge to the Cabinet and holds decision-takers to account ■ Makes recommendations to decision-takers as part of pre-decision scrutiny ■ Makes recommendations to decision-takers as part of policy or strategy development ■ Can hold calls for evidence from internal or external stakeholders ■ Holds meetings in public unless exemptions apply. All meetings are broadcast live and decisions are publicly available, as are minutes of each meeting
Standards Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Oversees processes relating to alleged breaches of the Councillor Code of Conduct ■ It (or a sub-committee) acts as a Hearing Review Panel for Councillor Code of Conduct matters which are referred by the Monitoring Officer for formal review ■ Promotes high standards in public office ■ Holds meetings in public unless exemptions apply. All meetings are broadcast live and decisions are publicly available, as are minutes of each meeting

Statutory Officers Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Monthly meetings of the Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer, and the Monitoring Officer (and deputies) to ensure good administrative, financial, and ethical governance in the exercise of its functions ■ Work collaboratively to achieve high standards of corporate governance and uphold the Seven Principles of Public Life in accordance with the Code of Practice on Good Governance for Local Authority Statutory Officers
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reviews performance management and projects including progress against milestones, resource allocation and risks ■ Completes Annual Assurance Statements and contributes to the effective corporate management and governance of the Council
Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reviews risk registers for strategic, operational and fraud risks. Strategic risks considered by Corporate Management Team and Governance and Audit Committee three times a year
Internal Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In conjunction with Corporate Management Team, sets the Internal Audit Strategy to meet the Council's overall strategic direction and provide assurance on risk management, governance, and internal control arrangements ■ Undertakes annual programme of audits and presents progress reports against the plan ■ Makes recommendations for improvement in systems and controls and value for money ■ Provides the Head of Internal Audit Opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's risk management, control, and governance processes



Council Chamber

How we comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Solace Framework

The Council has approved and adopted a Local Code of Corporate Governance based on the requirements of the CIPFA/Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016. Set out below is how the Council believes it has complied with the seven principles set out in the CIPFA/Solace Framework during 2025/26

Principle A

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

The Council has defined and communicated the standards of conduct and personal behaviour expected of Councillors and Officers through its Councillor Code of Conduct, Officer Code of Conduct and the Member/ Officer Protocol. These are set out in the Council's Constitution.

Councillor Code of Conduct training formed part of the comprehensive induction programme for Councillors following the quadrennial elections in May 2023, with further refresher sessions being held throughout the term of office on an annual basis. New Councillors elected during 2025/2026 have also been offered the training within six months of their election. The Council has agreed that it is mandatory for all Councillors to attend training on the Councillor Code of Conduct every year.

The current procedure for dealing with complaints against Councillors was approved in September 2023 and which largely followed Local Government Association guidance. Any Councillor Code of Conduct complaints submitted are assessed or investigated by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Council's Independent Person(s) in

accordance with the approved procedure. Standards Committee oversees the processes and procedures put in place to deal with Councillor Code of Conduct complaints and promotes high standards of behaviour and conduct in public office. The Monitoring Officer brings an annual report to Standards Committee in relation to the number and type of complaints received in the preceding 12 month period.

The Council has a Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy, and a Whistleblowing Policy which provides protection for individuals to raise concerns in confidence and ensures that any concerns raised are investigated.

The Council's Customer Feedback Process provides members of the public with an avenue to raise concerns or complaints about the Council and/or Officers' performance as well as provide compliments to specific service areas or individual members of staff.

The Governance Framework brings together an underlying set of legislative requirements, good practice principles and management processes. It comprises the systems, processes, culture, and values by which the Council is directed and controlled, and through which it is accountable to, engages with and informs the local community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives.



Council homes start to take shape, Wellington Way, Market Deeping

Whenever the Council makes decisions at its meetings it ensures finance, legal and governance implications are considered. To assist with this, all reports which require a decision to be made include specific sections for comments on any finance, legal and governance implications by suitably qualified Officers. Where report writers have sought or received legal advice from third parties, such as Legal Services Lincolnshire, they are normally referenced within their report.

Principle B

Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

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All Committee meetings are open to the public with agenda papers, reports and decisions being published on the Council's website, except those determined as exempt from publication. Additionally, most of the Council's Committee meetings are broadcast live via its webcasting system.

The Council can exclude the press and public from meetings for reasons set out in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

The Council has robust arrangements in place to deal with residents' complaints, Freedom of Information requests, Subject Access Requests, data breaches and whistleblowing allegations.

The Council's Constitution sets out how the authority engages with stakeholders and partners.

The Council has a Partnerships Register that confirms the arrangements it has in place with partners and shared working practices.

During 2025/26 several statutory consultations were undertaken which included:

- **Council Tax:** To ascertain if an increase of 2.99% in the Council's element of Council Tax would be supported by residents and businesses within the district

61% supported the proposal to increase the Council's element of Council Tax by 2.99% in 2026/27. 34% did not agree and the remainder chose to answer don't know/not sure

- **Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27:** To establish what stakeholders think of key elements of the scheme proposed for 2026/27

80% thought that the discounts and premiums should continue in 2026/27. Discounts include 100% discount for 1 month, 25% discount for the following 5 months, and 100% charge thereafter. Premiums include 200% premium for property if empty between 2 and 5 years, 300% premium for property empty between 5 and 10 years, and a 400% premium if empty for over ten years

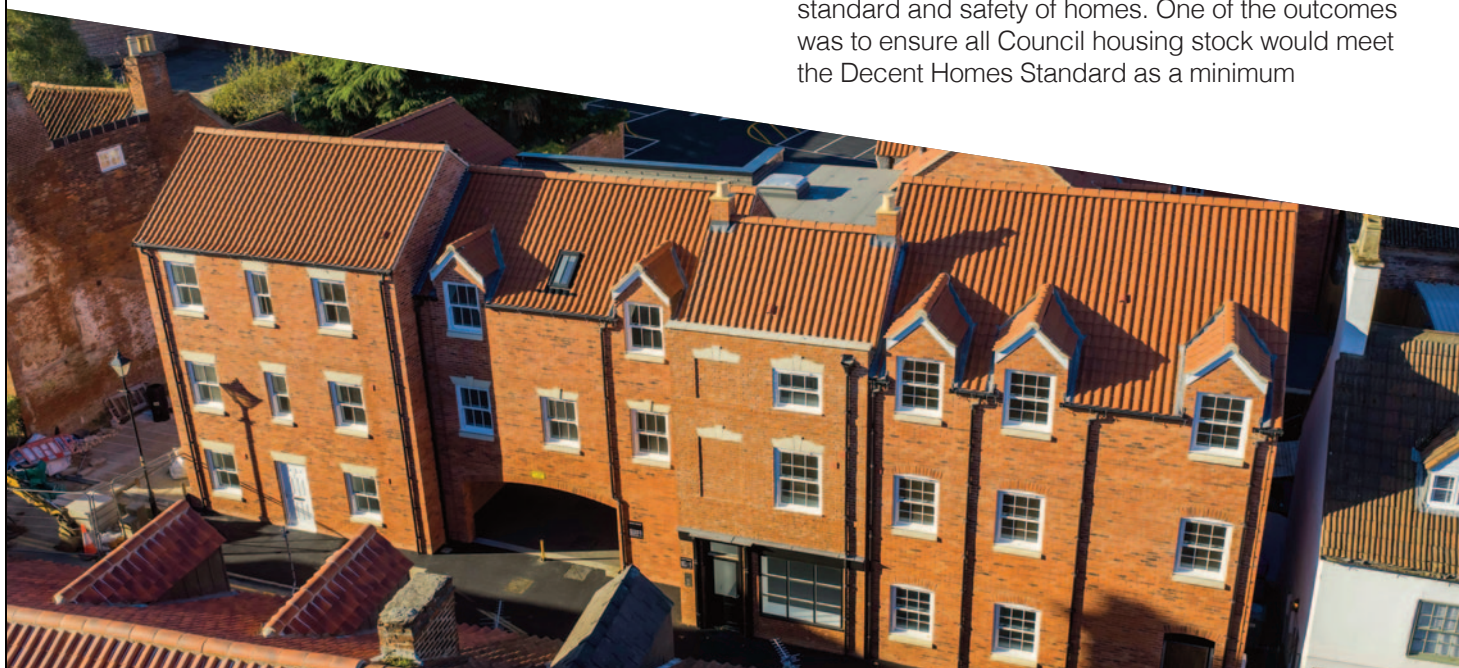
- **Street Trading Policy:** To measure support for potential changes to parameters of Street Trading Licensing Policy

76% said that they thought the policy should continue to include mobile traders.

68% of respondents would support the introduction of a one-off event consent with one fee being charged to cover all street traders/stall holders selling goods

- **Housing Strategy:** To inform the content and direction of the Council's Housing Strategy

76% agreed with the vision outlined in the strategy with 89% agreeing with the intended outcomes for the priority to continually improve the quality, standard and safety of homes. One of the outcomes was to ensure all Council housing stock would meet the Decent Homes Standard as a minimum



New development of 20 flats, Swinegate, Grantham

- **Housing Asset Management Strategy:** To obtain feedback on the Council's Asset Management Strategy
All respondents supported the priorities identified in the strategy and a third thought the commitments, progress, and actions for each of the priorities had been set out clearly
- **Housing Tenancy Strategy:** To establish what tenants think of the structure and content of the Council's Tenancy Strategy prior to its implementation
85% thought that the information provided about each of the different types of tenancy in the Strategy was clear and easy to understand
- **Housing Tenancy Agreement:** To ascertain what tenants think of proposed changes to the Council's Tenancy Agreement
78% thought the insertion of an extra clause which focused on the tenants' responsibility to keep their home and any communal areas free from fleas, vermin, and other pests was clearly stated

The Council also undertook several discretionary consultations which included:

- **Encouraging biodiversity in South Kesteven:** To measure the extent of support for biodiversity initiatives across South Kesteven, including existing rewilding sites
79% thought it was important to support rewilding and would encourage the Council to do what it can to increase the number of locations set aside for nature

- **Wyndham Park skate park proposal:** To ascertain extent of support for the proposal to install/reinstate a skatepark on foundations that are already in situ
79% supported the proposal to install a skate park in Wyndham Park
- **Age Friendly Communities – Community groups and organisations:** To inform a baseline assessment/undertake mapping of the current position in each of the eight domains identified by the World Health Organisation
51% thought the transport options in South Kesteven varied across the district – some areas good but others in need of considerable improvement. 5% thought they were excellent and required little change. 23% thought they were generally good and some minor changes would make them excellent. 21% thought they were disappointing with extensive changes required
- **Soldiers from the Sky:** To evaluate the success of the Soldiers from the Sky initiative by asking those involved in its creation and delivery
When asked what they had learned from being part of the project, personal development, an increase in knowledge, and how having clear project aims can help to create a significant historical resource were all mentioned
- **Mobility Vehicle Policy:** To collect feedback on proposals from tenants and leaseholders who might be affected by the introduction of the policy
73% supported a proposal to introduce a requirement for tenants to register their scooter with the Council. 70% agreed with the proposal that mobility scooters should only be charged during the day – between the hours of 8am and 8pm



New skate park, Wyndham Park, Grantham

Principles C and D

Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits and determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

LeisureSK Ltd was established in September 2020 and took over the management of the Council's three leisure facilities in Grantham, Bourne and Stamford in January 2021. The Council and LeisureSK Ltd entered a new ten year contract on 1 April 2025 which is based upon agency principles. The leisure contract details the level of service to be provided and includes key performance indicators to measure and monitor performance. Under the terms of the contract, LeisureSK Ltd is responsible for the provision of a high quality, accessible leisure service across the district which is attractive to residents and visitors.

The main aim of the arrangement is to facilitate the improvement of the health and wellbeing of the district through a range of outcomes including increasing levels of physical activity across the district, attracting increasing numbers of users to the leisure facilities, providing a high standard of customer care, and identifying opportunities to engage with residents outside of traditional leisure activities.

There is a Council appointed Board of Directors for LeisureSK Ltd which is responsible for overseeing the strategic direction of the company and its financial and operational performance. Membership of the Board of Directors is complemented by a Non-Executive Director who was recruited in recognition of their significant leisure knowledge and experience.

Council Officers perform the 'client' role ensuring robust contract monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure that LeisureSK Ltd deliver on the contract objectives and key performance indicators.

LeisureSK's Articles of Association provide that the Council as owner of the company has certain powers including the right to ask directors to take, or refrain from taking, any action and the Members Agreement provides that the Council has unrestricted access to any company information or documents it requires.

The performance of LeisureSK Ltd is monitored by the Council's Culture and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee which receives regular presentations and reports on the financial and operational performance of the company.

Principle E

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

The Council has an adopted People Strategy 2025-2028 which focuses on six strategic priority areas:

- Workforce Planning – ensuring a resilient, agile workforce with the right skills and capacity to meet future service demands
- Learning and Development – equipping colleagues and leaders with the skills, confidence and adaptability needed to deliver priorities and lead through change
- Employee Experience – creating a positive, inclusive environment where people feel valued, supported and empowered
- Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging – fostering a workplace where diversity is celebrated, equity is embedded and all colleagues feel a genuine sense of belonging
- Wellbeing – embedding a holistic and preventative approach to physical and mental wellbeing across the organisation
- Reward and Recognition – ensuring fair, transparent and meaningful recognition of contribution and performance

The Council recognises that a capable, engaged and resilient workforce is critical to achieving its strategic objectives and delivering high quality services for residents, particularly in the context of ongoing sector pressures and forthcoming local government reorganisation.

Implementation of the People Strategy is supported by clear performance indicators, ongoing staff engagement and regular reporting to the Employment Committee, ensuring progress is monitored and the approach remains responsive to emerging workforce and organisational needs.

The Council also places strong emphasis on governance and clarity of decision making. A robust Scheme of Delegation is in place, setting out how decisions are taken at both Member and officer level. The Council has effective arrangements for the discharge of the statutory roles of Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer, and continues to operate in line with the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government.

Principle F

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

The Council has effective risk management which is embedded across all areas of the business.

The authority recognises that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making.

The Council's Risk Management Framework sets out its approach to identifying and controlling risks. Risk registers are maintained at strategic and service area level. Strategic risks are reviewed regularly by the Corporate Management Team and reported to the Governance and Audit Committee three times a year.

During 2025/26 the Council held several facilitated strategic risk workshops with the Corporate Management Team to review and develop the Council's strategic risks including the development of an Emerging Risk Radar.

As part of the Council's project methodology the Corporate Management Team receives a regular projects report outlining progress and any issues.

The Council's Counter Fraud, Bribery, and Corruption Strategy, structured on the CIPFA Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption, sets out the importance of achieving intended outcomes, whilst acting in the public interest, and being seen to do so.

Underpinning the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-27 and priorities is the ethos of an effective Council. This includes effective financial management to achieve efficiencies and savings in the short and medium terms.

Strategic Risks 2025/26

1. Successful/serious cyber security attack on the Council
2. Health, Safety, Wellbeing, and Safeguarding failures by the Council
3. Unable to maintain financial sustainability (general fund)
4. Unable to maintain and build sufficient staffing capacity and capability
5. Unable to meet requirements of new regulations and legislation affecting the Council
6. Societal, demographic and cultural changes impacting on communities within the district
7. Major Governance failure
8. Significant fraud/theft successfully committed against the Council
9. Increasing pressure on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) viability due to the challenges of providing and maintaining quality social housing provision within the district.
10. The implications and general uncertainty of Local Government Reorganisation on the Council
11. Not leveraging the opportunities of Devolution



SKDC Stand at the Skills Summit Fair 2025

Principle G

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

The Council is open and accessible to the community, service users and employees. It is committed to openness and transparency in all that it does, and this is underpinned by the Corporate Plan. The Council aims to ensure that clear channels of communication are in place with all sections of the local community and other stakeholders, and it monitors these to ensure that they are operating effectively.

Every effort is made to ensure that information is concise and easy to understand. In accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code the Council publishes how it spends its money, how it uses its assets, how it makes decisions and has regard to issues important to local people.

The Council has a comprehensive consultation process for published reports which ensures senior management, and relevant Councillors, own the contents. The Council is committed to publishing information on its performance in a timely manner and reports performance against strategic, operational and financial targets on a regular basis to committees.

The Council's internal auditors, BDO LLP, report directly to the Governance and Audit Committee on all aspects of its work. The Committee has the opportunity to suggest items for the annual internal audit plan and monitors completion of the plan, including the implementation of management actions arising from the audits.

The Council welcomes peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and it participates in national benchmarking exercises to obtain comparative data on performance.



SKDC's new Operations Depot commenced operation in December 2025

Governance Framework for 2025/26

The Governance Framework shown below has been in place throughout the financial year which ended on 31 March 2026 and continues to be in place up to the date of the approval of the Statement of Accounts.

Assurances required

- Delivery of Council's aims and objectives
- Services deliver value for money
- Engagement with stakeholders and public accountability
- Budget and financial management
- Roles and responsibilities of Members and Officers
- Standards of conduct and behaviour
- Compliance with laws, regulations, internal policies, and procedures
- Management of risk
- Effectiveness of internal controls

Sources of assurance

- Constitution, Scheme of Delegation, Financial Regulations, Contract Procedure Rules and specific Rules of Procedure for the Council's bodies
- Council, Cabinet and Committees including Governance and Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Committees
- Statutory Officers Group
- Corporate Information Governance Group
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer quarterly meetings with External Audit
- Human resources policies and procedures
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Counter fraud procedures
- Risk management and internal control frameworks
- Performance management framework
- Partnership governance arrangements
- Codes of Conduct
- Corporate Management Team
- Annual Assurance Statements
- Customer complaints and compliments system
- Freedom of Information system

Assurances received

- Statement of Accounts
- External audit reports
- Internal audit reports
- Risk management reports
- Counter fraud reports
- Independent and external sources
- Local Government Ombudsman reports
- Reviews by Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Governance and Audit Committee
- Member/officer working groups
- Customer feedback eg complaints
- Freedom of Information requests
- Data Subject Access Requests
- Whistleblowing reports
- Health and Safety Executive inspections

Review of effectiveness

Internal audit

The Council's internal auditors, BDO LLP, were required to provide an opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's risk management, control, and governance processes.

Eleven assurance and two follow up reviews were undertaken during 2025/26, with the eleven assurance reviews resulting in the following assurance levels:

Audit	Design Opinion	Effectiveness Opinion
Accounts Payable	Moderate	Substantial
Building Control	Substantial	Moderate
Climate Plan	Substantial	Moderate
IT Strategy	Substantial	Moderate
Main Financial Systems	Moderate	Substantial
Market Services	Substantial	Moderate
Payroll	Moderate	Substantial
Performance Management	Substantial	Moderate
Stock Control (new Operations Depot)	Limited	Limited
Treasury Management	Moderate	Substantial
Voids Management	Moderate	Moderate

For the twelve months ended 31 March 2026, based on the work undertaken, the BDO LLP Head of Internal Audit opinion was:



Generally satisfactory with improvements in some areas.

Overall, the controls in the areas we examined were found to be suitably designed and operating effectively to achieve the specific risk management, control and governance arrangements and value for money. However, there are some areas where weaknesses and/or non-compliance were identified and, therefore, may put the achievement of objectives at risk. No audits received no assurance ratings although we would draw attention to the Stock Management review which was the only limited assurance audit this year. This was a known area of concern and action has been taken to improve controls in this area.

In other areas, we provided Substantial assurance over the design and/or effectiveness of controls. This demonstrates strength in key processes and compliance with these controls.

We have continued to experience strong levels of engagement from management and more broadly across the Council with internal audit, with the Council demonstrating a positive culture for improvement in controls. This was noted throughout the year on individual assignments and more generally, particularly during the audit planning phase where we engaged with Senior Leadership Team Members and Assistant Directors to prepare our risk-based internal audit plan.

External audit

The Council's external auditors, KPMG LLP, are required to consider whether the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 complies with Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016 published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Solace).

Under the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), external audit are required to consider whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources.

External audit are required to report their commentary on the Council's arrangements under specified criteria. External audit have reported on the Council's arrangements for 2025/26 and have concluded the following in respect of Value for Money:

Conclusion text to follow

Management assurance is a key assurance mechanism on which the Council seeks to obtain visibility over. The Council recognise that management may not be able to provide a positive assurance in all cases and would prefer a conclusion to be reached that is objective and honest with a view to then addressing any areas of concern in the future as may be required.

Senior Team were asked to agree, or otherwise, to various statements based on their knowledge and understanding across seven core areas of assurance:

- Probity and Regulatory
- Procurement
- Governance
- Human Resources
- Health and Safety
- IT and Data Management
- Business Continuity

The overall assurance level revealed that managers 'Fully Agreed' with 87% of the statements on assurance with the remainder being 10% 'Partially Agreed'; 1% 'Not Agreed' and 2% 'Don't Know'.

Themes for improvement were identified for Governance, Health and Safety, and Business Continuity.

The responses were reported to Statutory Officers Group for review. Actions arising from the completion of the Assurance Statement have been captured and will be monitored during 2026/27.

Governance and Audit Committee

Governance and Audit Committee is well established with its terms of reference complying fully with CIPFA guidance.

During 2025/26, Governance and Audit Committee agreed the extension of the term of the Co-opted Independent Member to further strengthen the governance and maturity of the Committee.

The key areas covered by the Governance and Audit Committee's terms of reference are:

- accounts and financial reporting
- financial regulations
- treasury management
- internal and external audit activity
- risk management
- governance
- counter fraud and bribery
- contract procedure rules
- regulatory framework
- the ombudsman process

In addition, Governance and Audit Committee receive annual reports on:

- Health & Safety and Business Continuity
- Safeguarding

Assurance Statement 2025/26

Officers of the Senior Team produced an Annual Assurance Statement for 2025/26 which assessed the effectiveness of the key control environment within their areas of responsibility.

Follow-up on last year's key areas of focus

Last year's Annual Governance Statement identified nine areas of focus, and the table below sets out the action taken to address those areas:

Key area of focus identified for 2025/26	Action taken
Recruitment of a new Director of Law & Governance	Director of Law & Governance commenced employment on 26 January 2026
Appointment of an interim Data Protection Officer	Interim Data Protection Officer was appointed until the new Director of Law & Governance arrived in position and assumed the role. Arrangement currently continuing
Onboarding of new Director of Law & Governance, Data Protection Officer, and Deputy Monitoring Officer	Onboarding achieved
Ensure Freedom of Information and Subject Access Request processes are reviewed and established	New reporting processes established. Report to Statutory Officers Group. Monitoring ongoing.
Review Local Government Reorganisation governance challenges	The Council submitted a proposal for LGR to MHCLG in March 2025. A formal response to the MHCLG Consultation was provided in November 2025. '7 Work Streams' are ongoing as part of the 'no regrets' work phase.
Review of the Constitution to ensure Member Code of Conduct is up to date and relevant	The new Monitoring Officer will be conducting a substantial review with input from Standards Committee, Governance and Audit Committee, Cabinet, and Officers in the first half of the 2026/2027 period
Review of the Officer Code of Conduct	Undertaken by the Head of HR and will be reported to Employment Committee in 2026
New governance structure to be developed for LeisureSK Ltd based on the agency principles	Stakeholder Group established and meeting on a quarterly basis
Ensure compliance with the delivery of the 2025/26 UKSPF requirements	The scheme has been extended to September 2026. Currently the Council's allocation has been fully committed and is being closely monitored. The overall programme is being managed by the Deputy S151 Officer and Assistant Director of Development & Growth

Governance issues

Key area of focus for 2026/27	Action owner	Deadline
Substantial review of the Constitution, including provisions relating to change in planning laws	Monitoring Officer	September 2026
Review of the Councillor Code of Conduct and surrounding processes and procedures	Monitoring Officer	October 2026
Review of the Council's procedures relating to Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests	Data Protection Officer	March 2027
Local Government Reorganisation delivery team to be established. Decision on LGR structure expected in July 2026	Statutory Officers	March 2027
Lincolnshire Chief Executives and Leaders to develop a constituted structure for a new Joint Committee for LGR	Chief Executive	March 2027
Undertaking governance work associated with LGR, including changes to SKDC's governance practices and contributing to the governance arrangements of any successor authority	Monitoring Officer	March 2027
Preparation for elections to take place in May 2027 (District or new Shadow Authority)	Chief Executive and Returning Officer	March 2027
Implement new structure for the Council's legal team including recruitment of a new Democratic Services Manager	Director of Law & Governance	March 2027
Housing Regulator judgment expected by July 2026. Improvement Plan to be developed based on findings	Director of Housing & Projects	March 2027
Housing Revenue Account financials sustainability review and 30 year business plan	Deputy Chief Executive & Section 151 Officer	September 2026

Contact Details

**Alternative formats are available on request:
audio, large print and Braille**

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