

Cheltenham Borough Council

Audit, Compliance and Governance Committee

28 January 2026

Annual Governance Statement Action Plan Update

Accountable member:

Councillor Rowena Hay, Leader of the Council

Accountable officer:

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance, Housing and Communities

Ward(s) affected:

All

Key Decision: No

Executive summary:

The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. This includes a statutory duty to prepare an Annual Governance Statement as part of the Statement of Accounts.

The Annual Governance Statement for the period 2024/25 included four areas of focus for the financial year 2025/26. The report provides an update on the progress of those actions.

Recommendations:

That the Audit, Compliance and Governance Committee:

- 1. notes the Annual Governance Statement action plan update**
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1. Implications

1.1 Financial, Property and Asset implications

There are no financial or property implications associated with this report.

A copy of the Annual Governance Statement was published as part of the accounts.

Signed off by: Jon Whitlock, Head of Finance jon.whitlock@cheltenham.gov.uk

1.2 Legal implications

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 6 (1) (a) requires the Council to conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control, and (b) to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

Signed off by: Claire Hughes, Director of Governance, Housing and Communities

1.3 Environmental and climate change implications

There are no environmental or climate change implications arising from this report

Signed off by: Claire Hughes, Director of Governance, Housing and Communities

1.4 Corporate Plan Priorities

This report contributes to the following Corporate Plan Priorities:

- Looking after your money

1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Implications

An equality impact assessment is not required for this report.

1.6 Performance management – monitoring and review

Performance against the actions identified in the Annual Governance Statement is monitored by the Corporate Governance Group and reported to the Audit, Governance and Compliance Committee.

2 Background

2.1 Cheltenham Borough Council is committed to the principles of good corporate governance and confirms its ongoing commitment and intentions through the development, adoption, monitoring and maintenance of its Local Code of Corporate Governance. The Council recognises that achieving high standards of corporate governance encourages stakeholders

to have confidence in us and allows the Council to undertake its community leadership role.

2.2 In preparing the AGS for 2024/25 the following areas were identified as areas of focus for the financial year 2025/56

- Safeguarding
- Partnership Register
- Annual assurance process
- Housing compliance

2.3 The attached action plan provides an update as to the progress against each of those areas of focus.

3 Alternative options considered

3.1 N/A

Report author:

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance, Housing and Communities

Appendices:

- i. Risk Assessment
- ii. Annual Governance Statement action plan update

Background information:

None

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
1.	If the Council fails to monitor completion of the actions identified in the Annual Governance Statement, then it will not be able to assurance itself that robust systems of governance and control are in place.	Claire Hughes	3	2	6	Accept	Provide updates on action plan to Corporate Governance Group and Audit, Governance and Compliance Committee	Claire Hughes	Annually

Appendix 2: Annual Governance Statement Action Plan – update against actions January 2026

No.	Key Area of Focus	Planned Actions	Update as at 01 January 2026
1.	Safeguarding	<p>Implement a new safeguarding policy which incorporates the council's extended role in the delivery of housing services.</p> <p>Roll out safeguarding training to all staff and elected members.</p>	<p>The updated safeguarding policy was approved by cabinet on 18 November 2025: Decision - Updated Safeguarding Policy - Modern Council</p> <p>Safeguarding training is being rolled out across the organisation to both staff and members.</p>
2.	Partnership Register	<p>In response to the Value for Money review completed by external auditors Bishop Fleming create a partnership register which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A central record of Council's partnership activity, including partnership governance arrangements • An assessment of partnership risks and subsequent mitigations through the inclusion of a partnership risk register. • Best practice information for officers in respect of partnership management 	<p>A template form to collect the required data has been created and circulated to relevant officers for completion.</p> <p>All forms are due to be completed by 31 January, following which the partnership register will be compiled and complete.</p>
3.	Commissioned Services Assurance	<p>In response to the Local Partnerships Review consider ways of strengthening the assurance process for commissioned services, including by further development of the annual assurance process and the client management role.</p>	<p>Completed – The annual assurance process has been updated to reflect the feedback from local partnerships.</p>
4.	Housing Compliance	<p>Continue to develop the approach to property compliance reporting including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completing of a data validation exercise • Creating a compliance strategy • Updating compliance policies • Implementing a standardised performance framework 	<p>Completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data validation exercise completed • Compliance strategy completed and approved by cabinet on 15 July 2025: Decision - Compliance Strategy and Policies - Modern Council • Compliance policies updated and approved by cabinet on 15 July 2025: Decision - Compliance Strategy and Policies - Modern Council • Standard performance framework now in place