

WESTMORLAND AND FURNESS COUNCIL

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2024/25

2024/25 Annual Governance Statement – Action Plan for 2025/26

The following table highlights significant governance issues as identified by the Council as part of the Action Plan for 2025/26.

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
Principle A – Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respective the rule of law				
A1	Good Governance to be embedded across all Directorates monitored and progress regularly reported and assessed. Development of an assessment tool.	Corporate Management Team	March 2026	<p>We are working hard to embed Good Governance across the Council, work on the assessment tool has not yet started.</p> <p>Actions A4 and A5 have been completed and will be monitored within this overarching good governance action. Action A4 covered internal governance including the escalation to the golden triangle, and A5 covered professional responsibilities and accountability. There have been specific development sessions for the Assistant Directors with CMT to discuss good governance, any issues or concerns, and improvements. These focussed sessions will help the development of an assessment tool.</p> <p>Governance and Culture is a key work stream arising from the Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) action plan this was</p>

Appendix 1

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
				<p>approved by Cabinet in December 2025.</p> <p>This will agree and clarify under the Governance and Culture workstream the Lead CMT officers.</p> <p>Extensive work on Governance has been carried out by the Council and the CPC review and report highlights that the Council has Good Governance in place.</p> <p>Work has been completed regarding A4 and A5 below.</p>
A2	Continue to improve and embed good decision making.	Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer and CMT	March 2026	<p>As above.</p> <p>New Governance pages launched for all staff, inductions slides (x8) and training on Good Governance and Decision making continues and on Report writing and decision making. Training is being delivered for members and officers.</p> <p>Manager’s Essential Suite launched on the Council’s Learning Hub. Accessible to all staff who are leaders and managers providing essential information on how to successful in their role. One aspect of the resource focuses on Governance and how to make decisions (August 2025)</p>
A3	Continue to comply with the Transparency Legislation/ Transparency code.	Corporate Management Team	March 2026	<p>The Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer is carrying out a review across all Directorates of compliance with the Transparency Legislation and code.</p> <p>By February 2026 it is anticipated that we</p>

Appendix 1

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
				will have a clear position.
A4	Respect for the Councils processes and systems of Governance including financial, legal and professional advice is required to be understood and respected by the Corporate Management Team as the Officer Leadership cohort of the Council. In the event of any areas of conflict Escalation Processes will be agreed with the Chief Executive.	Golden Triangle	September 2025 (COMPLETED)	Escalation process is now in place via the Golden Triangle meeting. Culture workstream is developing a Senior Leadership Development Programme which includes this and Statutory Officers are ensuring that this is respected. This will be monitored via A1.
A5	Work will be undertaken on the clarity and improved understanding of professional responsibilities and accountabilities including the separate roles of the three corporate statutory roles and wider CMT colleagues to strengthen the Council's overall governance position.	Golden Triangle	September 2025 (COMPLETED)	The Chief Executive and Director of Resources(s151) and Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer held a session with the Corporate Management Team and Senior Leadership Team to clarify and improve the understanding of respective roles and responsibilities. This will be monitored via A1.
A6	Prioritise the Deprivation of Liberty safeguard assessments	Assistant Director of Quality, Resources, Transformation and Inclusion	March 2026	Two 12-month Best Interest Assessor secondments have been in post since November 2025. Interviews for Best Interest Assessor Coordinator and Best Interest Assessor Signatory roles have taken place, with successful internal candidates appointed. Transfers are pending completion of pre-employment checks.

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
				<p>The Lead Best Interest Assessor post is currently open for applications (closing 22 January 2026).</p> <p>Previous recruitment for a 12-month Best Interest Assessor post did not attract applicants; re-advertisement is being considered. If unsuccessful, an Externally Provided Worker Best Interest Assessor may be required.</p>
A7	Consult and propose changes to the Nomination and Appointment of LA Governors for maintained schools.	Assistant Director Education & Inclusion	March 2026	<p>Research has been completed into the different methods of nomination and appointment of LA Governors across the North West. Finalised draft of the consultation document is in place and will be discussed at Directorate leadership meetings before wider consultation in January 2026.</p> <p>Proposals to be considered at Cabinet in March 2026.</p>
Principle B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement				
B1	Develop a register of strategic / key partnerships which includes key information in terms of key objectives, any funding provided to or from the partnership, who attends from the Council, meeting frequency, consideration of any potential financial or other risks for the Council and exit strategy.	Assistant Chief Executive	February 2026	<p>Additional support from the Member Support team has enabled this activity to commence, mapping partnerships and meetings. The remaining work is underway following the start of a new temporary Policy Officer resource in December 2025. It is on track to complete for the revised February date.</p>

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
B2	As a new Council we have identified a need to review existing Company / Partnership and Trust Governance, e.g. Barrow Forward Limited.	CMT (Lead Director) / Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer	November 2025 New target date March 2026	Report being prepared in consultation with CMT and included in the Audit Committee Work Plan for February 2026.
Principle C – Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable, economic, social and environmental benefits				
C1	Continue to develop Strategies, Policies and Procedures for Westmorland and Furness Council to replace those of the previous legacy councils.	Senior Management Team members in their capacity as policy owners	March 2026	Strong progress has been made to harmonise key corporate policies and procedures from 4 legacy versions to a single suite for W&F Council as a Unitary. Examples include all corporate H&S procedures, all ICT Cyber Security and Information Governance policies and a number of HR policies that are not subject to TUPE protection.
C2	Ongoing review of workforce capacity to ensure we have sufficient support (ICT/ Customer and Digital, HR and OD, Commissioning and Procurement and Legal, Communications Services) to help it realise the Council's Change programme alongside business as usual delivery demands.	Assistant Chief Executive on behalf of Corporate Management Team (CMT)	September 2025 (COMPLETED)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A process is in place to review requirements through Programme Brief creation & sign off, Project Initiation Documents & sign off – including ongoing review processes for tracking Change Reserve spend V forecast in line with Quarterly Finance Reporting. Programme Wide risk identified & managed for risk of capacity to deliver change. This is review as required or as a minimum on a monthly basis at CMT and Programme Assurance Board. Change reserve funds have been secured for additional ICT, Digital and HR Resources. Digital resources are a

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
				<p>permanent requirement, so included in Strategic planning cycle for base budget consideration for future years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal resources are under review, inc understanding of base establishment being right sized for Business As Usual. Funds from the change reserve were approved to provide additional capacity to support the Council’s Change Programme in 25/26.
C3	<p>Monitor progress on the delivery of the Procurement Strategy Implementation Plan, implementation of the changes required by the Procurement Act 2023, updating the contracts register and improving the pipeline to support forward planning.</p>	<p>Assistant Director – Commissioning and Procurement</p>	<p>March 2026</p>	<p>Through monthly meetings, the progress of the implementation plans for the Procurement Strategy and changes for the Procurement Act 2023 are monitored and escalated by exception.</p> <p>For the Procurement Strategy – the outstanding work is focused on the development and implementation of robust contract management arrangements. The external review of procurement has now commenced, and the scope includes consideration of contract management arrangements. The report and recommendations are due in Q4 25/26 – currently on target.</p> <p>There is a Contracts Register in place – that is used to develop the pipeline and inform any forward planning. This is managed</p>

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
				<p>through a spreadsheet – and whilst the data is accurate, creating reports and managing the date is very time consuming an inefficient.</p> <p>Following a period of market engagement and research - the Service has identified a cloud based solution which is currently being purchased – the final contract details are being agreed. Mobilisation and implementation will start in Q4 25/26.</p> <p>The Good Governance Group considered the AGS action plan, at the next meeting actions will be reviewed again</p>
C4	Monitor progress on the delivery of the Commissioning Strategy Implementation Plan across different service areas.	Assistant Director – Commissioning and Procurement	March 2026	<p>The outstanding action on the Commissioning Strategy Delivery Plan is the development and inclusion of co-production arrangements in the commissioning cycle.</p> <p>Capacity challenges in the Service have led to the delay of this development. The Service was involved in the Corporate Engagement Toolkit – and now looking to use this as a starting point for this co-production work.</p>

Appendix 1

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
				Even with the capacity challenges – the Service is still on target to complete the work needed by the deadline (March 2026).
C5	<p>Improvements to procurement and contract arrangements</p> <p>Ensure the Council complies with its own contract procurement rules relating to the use of waivers</p> <p>Have sufficient capacity and capability in its procurement and contract management function to support model of procurement and contract management agreed.</p> <p>Implement a system to monitor real time contract performance of its key contracts</p> <p>Include cost and performance validation in the monitoring of contracts, including Sproc.net</p>	Assistant Director – Commissioning and Procurement	March 2026	<p>The Review of Procurement that is currently underway is considering the structure and the capacity of the Procurement team to ensure it is fit for purpose and has the capacity and capability for delivering the procurement model.</p> <p>The final report and recommendations from the Review are due in Q4 25/26 – and therefore on target to be completed before the deadline.</p> <p>This review and the mobilisation of the cloud based solution which is currently being purchased is needed to facilitate the monitoring of contracts including cost and performance validation – and is on target for the deadline.</p>
C6	Develop a Consultation and Engagement Strategy to provide valuable advice and guidance to ensure that high quality co-ordinated approach is taken to consultation.	Director of Thriving Communities (Senior Manager - Communications & Assistant Director Safe and Strong Communities)	September 2025 now moved to October 2025 now moved to December 2025 (COMPLETED)	This strategy was approved at Cabinet in December. The date was moved back following Cabinet Briefing for more engagement to take place to ensure it is as robust as possible.

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
C7	Put in place a contract with Barrow Forward Ltd, monitor operational performance of Barrow Forward Limited to ensure it meets business plan objectives, secure appropriate back office support and reduce the financial subsidy.	Assistant Director Community Infrastructure	December 2025 In Progress	An independent governance and financial review was undertaken in Nov 25 with a report and clear recommendations taken to a closed meeting of the Barrow Forward board in Dec 25. The recommendations have been endorsed by the board of directors. The board will meet on the 6 th February to adopt both the Service Level Agreement and agree the budget for 2026/27.
Principle D – Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes				
D1	Support all directorates to develop service plans	Assistant Chief Executive on behalf of Corporate Management Team	September 2025 now December 2025 for draft plans (COMPLETED)	Pleased to report that draft directorate service plans for 26/27 have been received for all directorates – this didn't happen last year. Aim is to finalise all the service plans by the end of March.
D2	Improvement of Performance management by: Identifying what benchmarking of services the Council currently uses, what regional, national, and statistical neighbours comparators are used and what needs to be developed to support our approach to demonstrating value of money. Address data quality and data governance issues. Develop and integrated approach to performance, finance and risk reporting	Assistant Chief Executive	June 2025 (revised to January 2026) (COMPLETED)	The deadline was extended to create the capacity in the Data and Insight team to undertake the work. Performance Management development is in progress as part of the Data Strategy: Financial benchmarking tool and benchmarking information are on the Data and Insight portal. New CMT and DMT dashboards to contain performance, finance and risk reporting, alongside other key metrics for organisational health are in progress.

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
				<p>This is on track for January, subject to continuous improvement beyond that point.</p> <p>Addressing data quality and governance issue is a long term and ongoing focus of the Data & Insight Strategy. Current activity is delivery new Data Governance and Data Management Frameworks to provide the policy and process guardrails to allow future improvements in data governance and quality.</p>
D3	The Council will ensure its new People Plan is fully costed to build assumptions into the MTFP to reflect future skills requirements.	Assistant Director – OD / HR Assistant Director of Finance	September 2025 (COMPLETED) Priority Projects Funded	<p>All People Plan related actions or activities outside of the core budget are identified in quarterly budget monitoring or the annual strategic planning budget setting proposals.</p> <p>The OD Team uses a ‘One Plan’ approach to work closely with directorates and services through OD Business Partners. The ‘One Plan’ was concluded in October 2025 and reviewed by CMT to align training needs against the Learning and Development Budget.</p> <p>Additional funding to support the delivery of the Council priority change programme such as the Cultural Review Programme and Senior Leadership Development Programme was approved in July 2025 via the Change Reserve.</p>

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
D4	Publish social value key performance indicators for 2024/25.	Assistant Director – Commissioning and Procurement	June 2025 Then August 2025 (COMPLETED)	Draft will be available end of August 2025. The draft report is now ready.
Principle E – Developing the entity’s capacity and capability including the capacity of its leadership and the individuals within it				
E1	<p>The Council needs to enhance capacity to deliver its capital programme in future years.</p> <p>Responding effectively to the findings of the Annual Audit Report highlights the need to strengthen senior capacity within the team. The scale and complexity of the Capital Programme now require an additional senior manager to support its continued effective development, delivery, and governance.</p> <p>The scale and complexity of the programme has increased substantially, placing sustained pressure on the existing team. While this is being carefully managed, current resourcing levels limit the ability to maintain momentum and respond effectively to emerging priorities.</p> <p>Filling existing vacancies within the Capital Programme remains challenging due to strong competition from large local employers, who are often able to offer more attractive commercial terms. This has significantly limited the success of traditional recruitment methods. In response, a specialist construction agency agreement is being developed with HAYS to support the recruitment of key roles. However, this approach carries higher associated costs, which may impact the overall capital available</p>	Assistant Director - Corporate Assets, Fleet & Capital Programme	March 2026 (COMPLETED)	<p>Additional Capital Programme Grade 19 Role to be developed and recruited to in Q2.</p> <p>Additional Portfolio Manager Grade 18 role to be developed with focus on Team Barrow.</p> <p>Resolve T&C’s issues with Legal Services to onboard Hays additional capacity.</p> <p>CONCLUDED</p>

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
	<p>for scheme delivery. It also introduces the potential for variations in remuneration, which will need to be managed carefully to support team cohesion.</p> <p>Notwithstanding the prevalence of agency support, the current and proposed resource levels are unlikely to be sufficient to accommodate further programme expansion beyond the 2025–2030 Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), including new schemes and strategic programmes or elements thereof such as Team Barrow—necessitating organisational leadership support to grow the team and safeguard the Capital Programme’s success in delivery.</p>			
E3	The Council should operate the internal financial controls and month-end and close-down procedures as designed, to prevent, detect and correct misstatements or omissions in the financial records.	Assistant Director of Finance	<p>April 2025</p> <p>Accounts to be published by 30 June 2025</p> <p>(COMPLETED)</p>	Accounts were published on 30 June 2025, and all bank reconciliations and closedown procedures were completed.
<p>Principle F – Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</p>				
F1	Embed the new Scrutiny Executive protocol and Scrutiny development plan and ensure scrutiny makes the most impact and fulfils its ‘critical friend’ role.	Assistant Chief Executive on behalf of Cabinet, All Scrutiny Chairs and Members, CMT, SLT, Officers	<p>March 2026</p> <p>On Track</p>	One additional scrutiny officer has been appointed to increase capacity and support implementation of the improvement plan. The appointment of a replacement scrutiny officer has been refused by the Spending Control Panel. This will need engagement with both Cabinet and Scrutiny Members as it was agreed that two additional posts were

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
				<p>required to effectively deliver the Council's Scrutiny Function.</p> <p>Work is progressing to embed the scrutiny executive protocol and deliver the scrutiny development plan. This will continue through 26/27.</p>
F2	<p>Improve risk management arrangements as outlined in the Grant Thornton Annual Audit and VFM report for 2023/24. This would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formatting the risk registers including the Strategic Risk Register (SRR) and Directorate Risk Register (DRR) to include risk proximity and separating out risk, cause and impact. • Improving the work on risk appetite by assigning risk types and agreeing appetites for each and translating these into the risk registers. • Integrating corporate risks, their references and their scores into all report writing for committee papers giving members risk assurance and helping them to understand the impact of their decision making on risk and include risk considerations in committee paper sign-off. • Adopting the CIPFA 2014 code of practice on managing the risk of fraud and corruption and integrate fraud and anti-corruption risks as part of risk management improvement 	<p>Assistant Director of Finance Senior Risk Officer (SRO)</p>	<p>September 2025</p> <p>-Meeting with Directorate Support Manager's re Directorate Risk Register's 17.06.25</p> <p>Q1 Strategic Risk Register to be developed by 01.08.25</p> <p>-Meeting re committee papers June 25.</p> <p>- Risk Appetite session scheduled with CMT on 4 Feb 2026</p>	<p>A Risk Appetite workshop was delivered to CMT on 4th Feb 2026. A Risk Appetite Statement will be developed and included into the Risk Management Framework.</p> <p>The Risk Appetite statement will also inform a refreshed Risk Assessment Criteria to be adopted from Q1 2026/27.</p> <p>The revised Risk Management Framework will be presented for review by CMT in February 2026 and will also include proposals on risk proximity. To be adopted from Q1 2026/27.</p> <p>Work has also taken place alongside the Legal Team to ensure the consideration and assessment of risks and risk mitigation is included in committee papers. The committee paper template and guidance have been amended accordingly.</p> <p>All risk register formatting changes to the Strategic Risk Register, Directorate Risk Register's, Pension Risk Register and Budget Risk Register to be adopted from Q1 2026/27.</p>

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring risks identified in the annual budget report are sufficiently detailed with mitigation and are consistent with the Strategic Risk Register revised format Ensuring the pension risk register includes assurances target dates and dates last updated. 			<p>Westmorland & Furness Council currently adopts the CIPFA Code of Practice – <i>Managing the risk of fraud and corruption 2014</i> recommendation that “there is a report to the governing body at least annually on performance against the counter fraud strategy and the effectiveness of the strategy from the lead person(s) designated in the strategy. Audit Committee received the last annual Fraud Report in Sept 2025.</p> <p>A Policy Framework is in place for this area of risk, as well as a counter fraud strategy informed by an annual fraud risk assessment ensuring we target resources in areas of highest risk. Any potential fraud risks identified are audited to ensure adequate risk controls are in place to manage or mitigate these risks.</p> <p>Actions included in the Risk Management Improvement Plan are reported to Cabinet quarterly.</p> <p>Senior Risk Officer is in the process of mapping risk assurance of the Strategic Risks to the outcomes of the Internal Audit findings.</p>
F3	Improve controls relating to the main accounting systems to ensure that all bank reconciliations should be completed, balanced, undertaken on a timely basis and subject to independent review.	Assistant Director of Finance	30 June 2025 (COMPLETED)	All bank reconciliations are completed, balanced and signed off on a timely basis.

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
F4	Improve internal control relating to the accounts receivable system to ensure that income is posted on a timely basis and supports effective debt recovery.	Assistant Director of Finance	September 2025 Revised Target Date To Be Confirmed	<p>Focussed resources for Accounts Receivable debt recovery are being identified. The debt recovery process is operating, and focussed resources will ensure that it is effective.</p> <p>The Purchase 2 Pay (P2P) service, which includes Accounts Receivable, was disaggregated with effect from 1st April 2025. However, the team transferred with several key vacancies including the Operational Lead and Team Leaders. Recruitment to Accounts Receivable vacancies is ongoing, with a round of interviews taking place in the week commencing 20 October 2025; however, statements are being sent out to customers. Active pursuit of debt is still to be established but will commence once resources are fully in place.</p>
F5	Develop an Internal Audit Manual for the Westmorland and Furness Council Internal Audit Service.	Group Audit Manager (Head of Internal Audit)	September 2025 Revised target date December 2025	<p>The new Internal Audit Manual has been developed, based around the new Global Internal Audit Standards (GIAS). Although, the final review of the updated audit manual was delayed due to work on 'Team Barrow', a fraud investigation, long-term sickness on the team and the need to recruit temporary support, it was completed in February 2026. It is recognised that the new audit manual will need to be updated as required as we continue to refine our ways of working to meet the new GIAS.</p>

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
F6	Monitor progress on delivering the roadmap set out in the Data & Intelligence Strategy.	Assistant Chief Executive	March 2026 for current programme	<p>Data and Insight Priority Programme was signed off at Design Assurance Group and CMT in July 25.</p> <p>The 5 workstreams are all in progress and the first programme board took place in October.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Governance will deliver agreed outputs by March 26. • Technical Data Framework will not be delivered in 25/26. Discussion ongoing with ICT to agree delivery timeline in 26/27. • Performance Management Framework – revised dates agreed for this through Programme Board, now 26/27 deliverable. • Data Skills and Workforce Framework – Stakeholder engagement and data capability mapping is in progress but subject to further engagement with HR/OD. • Communications & Culture – low level comms programme has begun, with aim to raise profile of data generally across W&F. Programme will expand as other workstreams progress.
F7	Undertake the additional work required to improve the Council Information Asset Register and Information Records Management.	SIRO, Chief Legal and Monitoring Officer, Data Protection Officer Members and Officers	March 2026	Report presented to the SIRO Group chaired by the Director Enabler Services. Recruitment commenced summer 2025, however market did not result in an

Appendix 1

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
		Assistant Chief Executive and All Assistant Directors		appointable candidate at first round. The post was re-advertised and an officer in post from October 2025 with focus on Information Asset Register overseen by the statutory Data Protection Officer.
F8	Undertaking a self-assessment against the CIPFA Financial Management Code and develop an action plan to address and improve areas identified.	Assistant Director of Finance	September 2025 (COMPLETED)	Completed in September 2025 with report to Audit Committee 3 November 2025
F9	Use the transformation programme (priority programme) to develop and achieve sustainable savings	Assistant Chief Executive on behalf of Corporate Management Team	25/26 for MTFP	<p>25/26 Priority programme has limited savings identified – only 2 programmes have savings (Adults & - Children’s) which have been identified as 25/26 savings in the 25/26 MTFP. Waste has identified savings from 26/27 onwards.</p> <p>Due to financial pressures dedicated time has been allocated to identify proposals for income generation, savings and efficiencies. This will be aligned to strategic planning and financial planning processes to support a balanced budget. Work is in progress to develop proposals to best utilise available resources to support priorities.</p> <p>Transformation Programme development is underway, looking at a multiyear programme. Operating Model implementation roadmap will be the core focus & has resulted in the update to due date.</p> <p>25/26 for MTFP Savings identified as</p>

Appendix 1

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
				<p>priority programme deliverables. Owners specifically aligned to Priority Programme Sponsors & SROs</p> <p>-Costed Operating Model Blueprints drafted July 26. (dependent on incoming CEX to determine approach)</p> <p>The 3 Year Transformation Plan is being developed in line with financial budget savings. Design of the Transformation Programmes / Portfolios is strongly in line with Operating Model design & implementation. Plan to be approved in March Cabinet. Overall approach and methodology drafted within initial introduction to the concept and approach at SLT on 14th January.</p> <p>A report is going to Cabinet on 17 March on the transformation programme.</p>
<p>Principle G – Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit, to deliver effective accountability</p>				
G1	Further work is required to further strengthen the availability and timeliness of publishing contracts and spend data on the Council website.	AD – Commissioning and Procurement AD Customer & Digital	30 September 2025 Now 31 December 2025	<p>Ongoing – to ensure compliance with the requirements of PA23</p> <p>Web Team actions complete where data provided.</p> <p>The Council publishes the transparency notices required as part of Procurement Act 2023 – this was a requirement from day one of the legislation changes.</p> <p>The Service is compliant with this element</p>

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
				<p>(completed)</p> <p>There are further transparency requirements because of the legislation changes which are currently being implemented, around spend data for new contracts. Once completed then this report will be updated to reflect the position. Due by 31 December 2025.</p>
Ongoing impact of Local Government Reorganisation				
LGR1	The Council needs to prioritise the harmonisation of the legacy financial systems.	Assistant Director of Finance Assistant Director of ICT	March 2026 for legacy ledgers	<p>The Financial Systems Programme Board has begun the controlled retirement of the use of legacy ledgers. There are dependencies identified that are being monitored, and solutions to maintain the completeness of the ledger (E5) are being developed ahead of retiring any of the legacy ledgers.</p> <p>The planned retirement is still scheduled for 31 March 2026 however.</p>
LGR2	<p>Update the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Management Plan to address the end of the national Delivering Better Value programme to address the cumulative deficit at 31 March 2025 and in-year pressures on the high needs block in 2024/25 and projected to continue.</p> <p>Monitor the delivery of the Council’s Dedicated Schools Grant management Plan in terms of controlling the High Needs Block.</p>	Director of Children’s Services	December 2025	<p>Q4 final report for Delivering Better Value was submitted to the DFE in April 2025. The DSG management plan and mitigations are currently being revised and will include updated projections. A full day workshop is scheduled and methodology has been agreed.</p> <p>Sufficiency milestones have been met with additional Resource Provision and SEMH</p>

Appendix 1

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
				places coming on line in September 2025. However continuing increase complexity of need and increase in funding to our Special schools has increased spend.
LGR3	There appears to be a trend for overall schools balances to be in deficit going from a net surplus in 2023/24 to a net deficit in 2024/2025. Implement appropriate controls and monitoring arrangements to have oversight and support school actions to address school deficits	Director of Children’s Services	December 2025	<p>At the 31 March 2025 the cumulative schools balances moved from a surplus to a deficit of £2.136m. The forecast for 31 March 2026 projects an increase in the deficit during 2025/26 of £2.163m, bringing the cumulative deficit to £4.299m. There is a risk that this deficit continues to grow, and this is recognised in the Strategic Risk Register. There are actions and recovery plans in place, but there are also systemic issues that may prevent the Council’s actions from actually reducing the deficit, however all efforts continue to bring the schools overall into balance, and ideally into surplus to eliminate the cumulative deficit.</p> <p>23 finance review meetings to support schools in deficit were held in Spring 2025 and more planned in Autumn 2025. We have scheduled follow up meetings with all schools with a deficit balance. These will be held in Autumn.</p> <p>Follow up finance review meetings have been scheduled for September 2025 following up the meetings with all schools</p>

Appendix 1

Ref	Action Required	Responsible Officer	Target Date	Update
				<p>with a deficit balance.</p> <p>All schools have received a letter on receipt of their budget either accepting or asking for the recovery plan to be reworked. We are on track with the revision of the deficit schools budget policy in the LA Scheme for Financing Schools to take the draft to the next Schools Forum in November 2025 to ensure that the policy can be applied for the May 2026 budget submissions from schools.</p> <p>31 finance review meetings to support schools in deficit were held in September 2025.</p> <p>Revision of the deficit schools budget policy in the LA Scheme for Financing Schools was taken to Schools Forum in November 2025 to ensure that the policy can be applied for the May 2026 budget submissions from schools.</p>