



ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2024/25

Working together for a better borough, with people at the heart of everything we do.

Introduction

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Council to prepare and publish a governance statement on an annual basis. The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) describes the Council's governance framework including the systems, processes, culture, and values that are used to direct and control the Council's activities.

The Council's governance framework enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money.

The AGS establishes the Council's commitment to delivering robust governance arrangements and how it has reviewed the effectiveness of those arrangements. The Statement should explain how it has mitigated and intends to mitigate any significant risks or issues and set out the key issues to be addressed over the coming year.

Maintaining a good governance framework that is owned and prioritised across the Council is an essential element in ensuring that public money is properly accounted for, and that business is conducted in accordance with the law and appropriate standards.

Scope of Responsibility

St Helens Borough Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.

St Helens Borough Council acknowledges its responsibility for ensuring the Council has an effective governance framework and has developed a Code of Corporate Governance based on the seven core principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE)'s *'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework – 2016 Edition'*. The Council's Code of Corporate Governance outlines the practices and principles that underpin the Council's governance arrangements.

This statement explains how St Helens Borough Council complies with the Code and meets the requirements of Regulation 6 (1) (a) and (b) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 which requires the Council to publish an AGS. It is the responsibility of all officers of the Council to comply with the approved Code of Corporate Governance Framework.

What is Corporate Governance?

Corporate governance is the system of rules, practices, and processes by which an organisation is directed and controlled.

Corporate governance refers to how the Council governs itself and to what purpose. It defines who has authority and accountability and how decisions are made. In summary, it is a toolkit that enables management and the Cabinet to deal more effectively with the many and varied challenges of running an organisation as diverse as a local authority.

Governance is about how the Council ensures that it does the right things in the right way and in a timely, open, honest, and accountable manner.

What is the AGS?

Each Council is required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 to publish an AGS, as part of the Statement of Financial Accounts. The AGS is the Council's public statement on how it has complied with its own Local Code of Corporate Governance. The AGS explains the processes and procedures that have been in place during the year that have helped the Council perform its functions effectively.

The system of internal control is a significant 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, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives; to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively, and economically.

How has the AGS been compiled?

The Council's local Code of Corporate Governance has been reviewed and updated to reflect current organisational structures and systems. It was reviewed and approved by the Audit and Governance Committee on 11 December 2023 and is scheduled to be reviewed again at its meeting on 23 September 2025. The effectiveness of the Council's arrangements has been assessed based on this Code.

The annual review of the effectiveness of governance is undertaken taking account of the seven core principles in the Code of Corporate Governance, expected and actual assurance mechanisms and actions for improvement.

Appendix 2 summarises how the Council meets those principles.

Governance Group

The Council's Governance Group is established and meets regularly, promoting effective and robust governance and risk management across the Council to demonstrate assurance and compliance. The group is chaired by the Executive Director of Corporate Services, with membership made up of Directors across all departments, the Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, Assistant Director, Legal & Democratic Services, Assistant Director, Policy & Transformation and the Head of Audit and Risk. It reviews key governance items, risk updates, organisational health and performance data including information governance and equalities, key policies and strategies, and decision making.

Directors' Assurance Statements for 2024/25

Directors were asked to provide a Management Agreement Level (i.e., a score ranging from 5 to 1) which demonstrates the level at which compliance with the key controls are felt to be applied within their department. The control areas cover a range of key policies and protocols where compliance is key to demonstrating effective governance, including mandatory training, risk registers,

service planning etc. The score ratings are as follows:

Score Control Rating

- 5 High - Key Controls are applied in a strong and consistent manner and can be evidenced if required.
- 4 Substantial - Key Controls have been applied consistently across the service but cannot be evidenced.
- 3 Moderate - Key Controls have been adequately applied with any weaknesses not considered to have a significant impact.
- 2 Limited - Key Controls have been inconsistently applied across the service and further work is required to mitigate any risks.
- 1 None - Key Controls have not been applied.

N/A Not Applicable - this key control area is not relevant to the service.

Questions were formulated based on the recent LGA guidance [Governance and assurance](#) | [Local Government Association](#), and CIPFA / Solace Good Governance Framework and the following principles:

- A. Integrity and Values
- B. Openness and Engagement
- C. Working Together
- D. Making a Difference
- E. Capability
- F. Managing Risk and Performance
- G. Transparency and Accountability

Directors were asked to acknowledge their responsibility for maintaining and operating their departments in accordance with legislation and the Council's approved policies, procedures, and practices, and to provide details in the "Comments/Exceptions" column if they scored elements as being limited or no assurance. Results from the Directors questionnaires are detailed in **Appendix 1**.

Strategic Planning

The Council articulated its vision in Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030. The Strategy sets out the Council's vision for St Helens Borough, the priorities, and the outcomes the Council will strive to achieve. The Strategy includes six priorities for the Borough as follows:

1. Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life.
2. Promote good health, independence, and care across our communities.
3. Create safe and strong communities and neighbourhoods for all.
4. Support a strong, thriving, inclusive and well-connected local economy.
5. Create green and vibrant places that reflect our heritage and culture.
6. Be a responsible Council.



Each of the above priorities contain several bonds for a better Borough and an outcomes framework that includes measures of success. The priorities of Our Borough Strategy form the basis of the Council's approach to departmental service planning, with each service plan containing a series of actions specified against these.

Decision Making

The Council has adopted and approved its Constitution, which establishes an efficient, transparent, and accountable decision-making structure. Member and Officer roles are clearly defined within the Constitution.

The Council's committee structure is shown in **Appendix 2**. Cabinet is the main decision-making body. Meetings are open to the public except where personal or confidential matters are being discussed. It

comprises the Leader of the Council plus nine other Councillors appointed as portfolio holders. Each Member of Cabinet has a portfolio of responsibility that relates to a service/function of the Council.

There is an effective and well understood scheme of delegation that has been adhered to. These arrangements are clearly established in the Constitution and supporting documents, including financial and contract procedure rules.

The Council has an appointed Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer whose primary function is to ensure that the Council operates in a lawful manner.

The governance framework at St Helens Borough Council has continued to operate and will remain subject to ongoing review to ensure its future operational effectiveness.

Scrutiny

The Council has an Overview and Scrutiny Commission and three Scrutiny Committees: Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee, Children and Young People's Services Scrutiny Committee, and Place Services Scrutiny Committee.

The Commission and the committees examine the decisions, policies and overall performance of the Council and its Cabinet; they can make recommendations for improvement and have the power to 'call in' decisions made by Cabinet before they are implemented.

No call ins were made during the year.

Risk Management

The Council is committed to effective risk management and assurance and understands and manages the risks that could prevent the Council from achieving its vision, ambitions, and priorities.

An effective risk management framework is not all about risk avoidance; it is about giving the confidence to embrace the right opportunities and help support the Council's ambitions and commercial strategy.

The Council's Risk Management Policy was refreshed and approved by Audit and Governance Committee in March 2024.

This outlines the Council's approach to managing risk and opportunity to assist the Council in improving its services, using its resources efficiently and delivering value for money. The Council recognises that effective risk management is an essential element of the governance framework and contributes to a robust internal control environment.

The strategic risk register continues to be reviewed and updated by directorate and departmental management teams and monitored by the Executive Management Board (EMB) and the Governance Group update reports are provided to the Audit and Governance Committee twice a year. The strategic risk register reflects the key challenges to the Council's vision.

Resilience

As a Category 1 responder for major incidents, the council has reviewed and strengthened its arrangements and preparedness to respond effectively.

The Senior Resilience Officer continues to progress through the Council's Resilience Action Plan and work has commenced on phase 2. After finalising the validation stage, the focus has shifted to business continuity management. Business Impact Analysis templates have been issued and are being completed by various services whilst planning is undertaken at the corporate level.

Following flood events in January 2025, the Council's local flood response plan, rest centre plan, and rest centre managers and volunteers list are being reviewed. The review is in consultation with officers at strategic, tactical, and operational levels. Post event training sessions will be designed and delivered by the Senior Resilience Officer. These will be rolled out in 2025 using a phased approach that allows for lessons to be identified, disseminated, and fed back into planning and practice.

In 2024/25 there has been an increased level of engagement with other local partners as part of the Merseyside Resilience Forum (MRF). The recent months have seen extensive collaboration with the telecommunications working group. This has resulted in the installation

of backup radio systems at the Emergency Operations Centre which integrates St Helens Council in the Merseyside resilience communications network.

The council chairs the People and Communities Subgroup for the Merseyside Resilience Forum (MRF) and the Senior Resilience Officer represents the Council at MRF training events, exercises, and is leading a multi-agency review of local authorities' contributions to enhance local resilience in Merseyside. Gold and Silver Command duty officers continue in house training and attend bespoke training through the MRF.

Digital and Information Governance Group

The Digital and Information Governance Group ensures that the Council fulfils its statutory responsibilities in relation to Information Governance to:

- ensure effective information governance controls are in place for managing, safeguarding, and making best use (within legal constraints) of valuable information assets.
- ensure that effective information governance allows the Council to make the best use of its information assets to conduct its functions.
- ensure that the information standards and controls established for the protection, quality, use and disposal of Council information assets are monitored and audited to ensure that information risks are managed and mitigated, proportionate with the level of harm, which could reasonably be caused if information assets were to be compromised.
- ensure that information risks are managed and mitigated, proportionate with the level of harm, which could reasonably be caused if information assets were to be compromised.
- ensure the Council has effective policies, management arrangements covering all aspects of information and digital governance, including any

necessary and proportionate data sharing.

Cyber Security

The Council continues to invest and strengthen its cyber defences and associated ICT resilience. A recertification audit took place in January 2025 – and the Council are certified to the latest version of ISO 27001 (and the existing version of ISO 20000).

The Council are in a Local Government Association pilot group for new Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF). This standard is not just an IT concern; it also examines corporate culture regarding cyber security; protective measures to prevent cyber incidents and the incident response and resilience measures to respond and recover. Documentation has been successfully submitted, and we are "CAF Ready". This means that we are ready to start the formal process of CAF assessment, when the time comes.

Vision for Council culture

Having the right culture in place supports the achievement of the Council's priorities and vision and supports an ethos of compliance and good governance so that colleagues work together for the benefit of the Council. The Council carried out many consultation and engagement sessions with employees to determine and co-design this culture.

Working together, the Council has co-designed and created its vision for workplace culture, values, and behaviours for everyone.



Partnership working

Effective partnership working continues to be increasingly important to the Borough and St Helens Council is committed to meaningful and effective partnership working which will contribute to shared aims of improving the economic and social wellbeing of its communities and supporting the delivery of the priorities and vision as set out in Our Borough Strategy.

The Partnership Governance Framework forms part of the Council's corporate governance framework. It outlines the Council's expected approach to partnership working with the aim of helping to ensure that each partnership demonstrates good governance; defining what is meant by a partnership and outlining the principles and approach that should govern how each partnership should be constructed.

The internal audit plan considers high risk areas to provide assurance that appropriate monitoring and control arrangements are in place, and that partnership arrangements are subject to properly constructed contracts or agreements which are supported by appropriate governance, quality assurance, financial monitoring, and performance management processes.

The Council is one of two equal partners in Parkside Regeneration Limited Liability Partnership (Parkside LLP). Parkside LLP was set up in 2013 with a private sector partner with the aim of regenerating the former Parkside Colliery site. Parkside LLP

is run by a Board comprising of 6 persons of which 3 board members are nominated by the Council. Parkside LLP appoints its own independent auditors to review its annual accounts.

In February 2025, Cabinet endorsed a revised investment strategy for the Parkside Regeneration LLP Joint Venture to utilise a Forward Funding arrangement with an investor to develop Phase 1 units. This included the appointment of joint agents to work on behalf of each partner.

St Helens Cares Partnership is well established and links to the Council and NHS with representation from a variety of partners. The governance structure is included in **Appendix 2**.

Corporate Peer Challenge

St Helens Council welcomed peers from the Local Government Association to undertake a peer challenge review in February 2025. The previous peer review was in 2019 with a re-visit in 2021. The peer challenge report recognised that the council has transformed over the past five years and improved significantly since 2019.

It reflected on a confidence that the council can take the next step in its development, building on the firm foundation in place. The report identified the council has a well-functioning organisation which had robust governance, performance management, financial stewardship, and effective partnerships.

The report recognised that the council was now well positioned to continue to develop its transformation approach further harnessing the potential of its ambitious plans outlined through Inclusive growth Strategy and regeneration programme, ensuring that all future components are knitted together around one core vision and narrative.

The report highlighted that the future direction looked positive and that the Council now needed to concentrate efforts on aligning priorities and plans to ensure that outcomes were truly felt by residents. Some extracts from the CPC are relevant for this assurance statement, as follows.

Governance and culture

- Working relationships between members and officers are good, particularly at cabinet and SLT level
- The core components of good governance and internal control arrangements are in place.
- Delivery strategies, performance reporting and strategic risk register are aligned to the Borough Strategy.
- The Council provides relevant member training and development, including external support.
- We have experienced a positive organisational culture - Staff feel engaged, values have been co-produced and are lived (Culture champions).

Financial planning and management

- The Council has a clear understanding of its financial position and medium-term risks.
- There is regular and effective monitoring of the budget, including reporting to officers and elected members.
- There is a track record of external funding success.
- Council finances are aligned with the Borough Strategy.
- Partners feel engaged in funding allocations and decision making, e.g. health and voluntary sector.
- Good track record of unqualified audit opinions.

The recommendations arising from the peer challenge have set a positive direction forward for the council in focussing on ensuring that all elements of vision, transformation and financial effectiveness are considered through a single lens.

The Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan outlines the council's response to the recommendations contained within the peer challenge report, seeking to ensure that there is synergy between future planning and aspirations and delivering on the commitments identified. These are reflected in the Annual Governance

Statement – Key Areas for Improvement section below.

This action plan will form part of the council's wider transformation framework and approach. The transformation framework will be supported by a strategic reporting and governance framework through which the recommendations will be viewed. Cabinet members will retain regular oversight within the context of the transformation governance and reporting framework. Councillors from across the Council will have the opportunity track progress through quarterly performance monitoring and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

CQC – Adults Social Care

Independent inspectors from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) have judged Adult Social Care Services at St Helens Borough Council as Good. The report, released in May 2025, focused on the praise from people using the services and those who provide services found that staff were 'compassionate and caring'.

Independent inspectors stated: "People told us the Local Authority understood the care and support needs of the local communities and worked closely with partners to provide services to meet those needs. People said they appreciated the Local Authority's work towards coproduction and improved engagement with communities and people with lived experience."

The report described a clear strategy on integrated Contact Cares services as the focal point for all health and adult social care integration, offering a broad range of services focused on prevention and integrated activity, managed by St Helens Integrated Place and Social Care Directorate in partnership with Mersey and West Lancashire Hospital Trust and Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust.

Inspectors recognised a small number of development areas which the Council will focus on in 2025/26.

St Helens Town Deal

As part of the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) Assurance responsibilities, the

Assurance Team have conducted their annual checks on Town Deal Boards against the criteria outlined associated guidance to ensure that Boards meet the required standards of governance, accountability, and transparency, as specified in the Prospectus. In general, the Towns Fund Prospectus and Simplification Pathfinder Pilot technical guidance mandate that Town Deal Boards ensure the operations of the Town Deal Board are transparent, their membership, governance and decision-making arrangements be publicly accessible. MHCLG checks revealed that St Helens Towns Deal complied with all necessary requirements for 2024/25.








































Inspection of local area SEND arrangements

Work is ongoing to address some of waiting list volume caused by sustained increase in volume of requests for education, health and care (EHC) plans. This includes a co-produced agreement with wider partners as to how assessments will be prioritised during the recovery period. The impact of this has been a sustained improvement in the timeliness and quality of EHCPs with performance returning to just below national average.

A SEND strategy 'Visible, Valued and Included' 2024-2027 has also been co-produced. This has 5 workstreams focused on transition, building an inclusive curriculum, developing communities of support, supporting complex needs and effective and timely assessments. The strategy addresses the key themes raised as part of the council Joint Strategic Needs and Assessment document published in 2024.

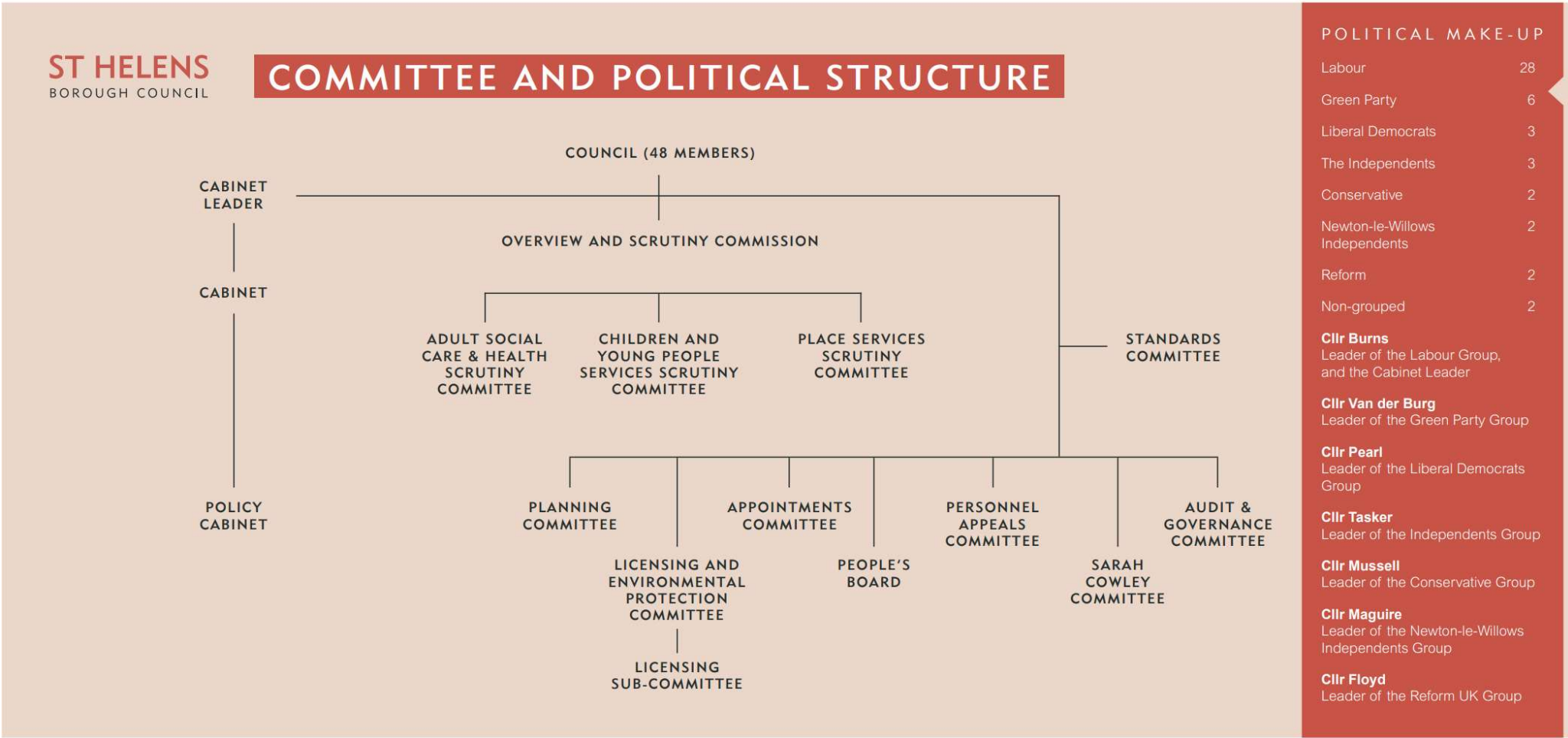
Appendix 4 provides a list of acronyms used within this statement to assist the reader.

Appendix 1 – Results of the Directors Governance questionnaire

Governance Principles		1	2	3	4	5
Integrity & Values	4.7					
Openess & Engagement	4.6					
Working Together	4.6					
Making a difference	4.3					
Capability	4.5					
Managing Risk & Performance	4.5					
Transparency & Accountability	4.3					
Overall	4.5					

NOTE - The table above reflects the assurance opinions from eight Directors who completed the survey questionnaire. A link to the Councils key policy documents was provided to Directors, with instructions and a scoring matrix of 5 = High (strong and consistent control application) >> 1 = Low (key controls have not been applied).

Appendix 2 - St Helens Borough Council Governance Structures



NHS
Cheshire and Merseyside

The organizational chart for St Helens Place Partnership Board is structured as follows:

- Governance and Oversight:**
 - C&M Integrated Care Board (ICB)** and **C&M Integrated Care Partnership** (purple boxes) provide oversight.
 - St Helens Place Partnership Board** (orange box) is the central governing body.
 - St Helens People's Board** (orange box) and **St Helens Council Cabinet** (green box) provide input.
 - Provider Organisation/Board** (green boxes) provide input.
 - C&M Provider Collaboratives CMAST & MHLDC** (purple box) provide input.
- Leadership:**
 - NHS Place Director** (dashed purple box) and **Place PIT** (dashed orange box) lead the board.
- Core Groups:**
 - Primary Care Commissioning Committee** (orange box)
 - St Helens Health and Care Provider Alliance** (orange box)
 - Quality & Performance Group** (orange box)
 - Stakeholder Forum** (orange box)
 - Programme Delivery Group** (orange box)
 - System Resources Group** (orange box)
 - Integrated Finance and Resources Committee (Section 75)** (orange box)
- Delivery of Priorities:**
 - Clinical & Care Professionals Group** (green box) and **Primary Care Leadership Group** (grey box) support the Primary Care Commissioning Committee.
 - Programme Delivery Group** oversees:
 - Mental Wellbeing** (blue box)
 - Healthy Weight** (blue box)
 - Resilient Communities** (blue box)
- Enabling Groups:**
 - System Resources Group** oversees:
 - Population Health** (blue box)
 - Digital** (blue box)
 - Workforce** (blue box)
 - Estates** (blue box)
 - Finance** (blue box)
- Localities:**
 - St Helens Health and Care Provider Alliance** oversees:
 - PCN & Care Community** (blue box)
 - PCN & Care Community** (blue box)
 - PCN & Care Community** (blue box)
 - PCN & Care Community** (blue box)

ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL MEMBERS

LEADER

CLLR
ANTHONY BURNS

CABINET

LEADER AND
UP TO 9 MEMBERS

FULL COUNCIL

48
MEMBERS

PARTNERS/STAKEHOLDERS

E.G. VOLUNTARY SECTOR ORGANISATIONS,
OTHER PARTS OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR INVOLVED
IN DELIVERING A SERVICE, PRIVATE SECTOR

THE PUBLIC

ULTIMATE ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE PUBLIC WE SERVE

SERVICE DIRECTORATES

LISA HARRIS -
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
PLACE SERVICES

JAMAILA HUSSAIN -
INTERIM EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR PEOPLE
(ADULT SOCIAL CARE,
CHILDREN & YOUNG
PEOPLE AND
PUBLIC HEALTH)

CATH FOGARTY -
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CORPORATE SERVICES

Directorates are a way of grouping
services together, with a sense of
common purpose providing services
in a way that will make sense to those
who use them. Expectation is that
everyone who works for the Council
will work together to deliver the best
possible services for the people of
St Helens Borough

BOROUGH PRIORITIES

Priority 1 - Ensure children and
young people have a positive
start in life

Priority 2 - Promote good health,
independence and care across
our communities

Priority 3 - Create safe and
strong communities and
neighbourhoods for all

Priority 4 - Support a strong,
thriving, inclusive and well-
connected local economy

Priority 5 - Create green and
vibrant places that reflect our
heritage and culture

Priority 6 - Be a responsible
council

GOLDEN TRIANGLE OF STATUTORY OFFICERS

MARK PALETHORPE -
HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

Designated under section 4 of the Local
Government and Housing Act 1989. Must report
on co-ordination of discharge of local authority's
functions; number, organisation, appointment
and management of authority's staff

JAN BAKEWELL -
MONITORING OFFICER

Designated under section 5
of the Local Government
and Housing Act 1989.
Must report on any illegality
and maladministration

RICHARD GIBSON -
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
SECTION 151 OFFICER

Designated under section 151
of the Local Government
Act 1972 to be responsible for proper
administration of authority's financial
affairs. Must report on any unlawful
expenditure and expenditure in
excess of authority's resources

ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Appendix 3 - Good Governance Framework

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

Behaving with Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Code of Conduct for Elected and Co-Opted Members based on the LGA model Code and Merseyside Code. The Code addresses the Committee on Standards in Public Life best practice recommendations.• Member/Officer Protocol engenders mutual respect and trust.• Register of Interests for Members and Staff.• The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy promotes equality of opportunity across the organisation.• Openness and accountability supported via the Whistleblowing Policy.• Induction programme/checklist for members and staff, including the Nolan Principles.• "Welcome to St Helens" includes a focus on the Code of Conduct and the Nolan Principles.• Leading and Managing Together Programme for senior and middle management to promote positive behaviour.
Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standards Committee with cross party representation and has an appointed Independent Person to assist with Code of Conduct complaints.• Clear protocols exist for partnership working.• Communicating shared values through briefings and engagement sessions.• Register of Interests and the declaration of interests is a formal element of committee meetings.• Complaints Policy and a procedure for addressing complaints received.• Systems and processes built around values, for example Delegated Executive Decisions, Operational Decisions and Cabinet Reports.
Respecting the rule of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Constitution outlines the Council's responsibilities including Cabinet, Committees and Scrutiny.• The Council has appointed to all statutory roles including Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, Director of Children's Services, Director of Adult Social Services and Director of Public Health.• Member Induction programme and regular member training incorporating the Code of Conduct for Elected and Co-opted Members.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption and Anti Money Laundering Policies. • Internal Audit are compliant with the Global Internal Audit Standards. • Audit and Governance Committee oversees compliance with governance, risk, and control environment, with an independent member to add challenge. • Performance Framework provides oversight of organisational compliance against statutory requirements.
PRINCIPLE B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.	
Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings of the engagement process resulted in Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030 which outlines the Borough's vision and priorities supported by a comprehensive strategic framework. • The Council's Constitution provides the framework for the decision-making process and reports to the Council's Committees require documented consideration of a range of issues in support of any recommendations made. • The Council complies with the requirements of the Transparency Code of Practice and has implemented a process of independent assessment of compliance. • Freedom of Information Publication Scheme. • Council meetings are recorded and live streamed.
Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Constitution outlines the decision-making process. Procedures are in place and templates for Council and Committee decisions clarify who is consulted. Records held of all decisions made. • Several strategic and operational partnerships are in place within the Borough and terms of reference are in place for each partnership which set out the expectations and commitments of all partners. • The St Helens People's Board work collaboratively to support the Integrated Care Board and Integrated Care System at Cheshire and Merseyside. • St Helen Cares involves collaboration with over 15 organisations. • Stakeholder mapping exercises conducted as part of a Communications Plan on campaigns.
Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Borough Strategy is being delivered, setting six key priorities, accompanied by relevant branding. • Community Engagement Strategy sets out principles and methodology for undertaking public consultations with stakeholders. • Call in mechanism for scrutinising Member decisions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent communication and engagement campaigns have encouraged, collected, and evaluated stakeholders' views and opinions. Have your say has sought views on the Arts Strategy, travel improvement plans and the budget review.
PRINCIPLE C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social. and environmental benefits.	
Defining outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Borough Strategy 2021-2030 is the key strategic document that defines the authority's vision, objectives, outcomes, and key measures of success. The performance and financial monitoring framework and regular and timely reporting to Cabinet, Council and Scrutiny ensures performance is tracked. The Council set out its 2024/25 Revenue Budget, three-year capital programme and Capital Strategy, the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2024/25 and its Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2023-26. Reporting on the Strategic Risk Register to Executive Management Board and Audit and Governance Committee. Service plans include actions and objectives linked to key outcomes. The Council has a template of factors to be considered when seeking a decision from Members; includes impact analysis, statutory framework, financial implications, options available and risk assessment. Revised and focussed Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) Improvement Plan is reported to the Getting to Outstanding Board. Benefits realisation element included in consideration and monitoring of organisational transformation programmes.
Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Constitution determines how decisions are made, and factors to consider. Decisions are taken with a wide view of the potential implications. The Council includes an equality impact assessment for each key decision. The decision-making process in committee reports requires an assessment of the community impact and includes social value, sustainability, equalities, human rights, customers, and residents. Climate Emergency Declaration and comprehensive Climate Action Plan. The Council has completed business impact analysis forms to identify critical services and has developed business continuity plans for those services. The Council has a Social Value Policy to drive added social value through everything it does, with pilots being delivered in regeneration schemes and highways infrastructure projects, to embed social value across our procurement activity to enable monitoring and reporting by STAR Procurement Shared Service.

PRINCIPLE D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

Determining interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Council has a template of factors which must be considered when seeking a decision from Members.• Decisions on service changes are made with the Budget and Policy Framework of the Council. Those affected by a decision will be subject to formal consultation. The outcome of consultation exercises is made available to stakeholders and decision makers.• Public consultation is undertaken to take account of residents' views when contemplating service changes.
Planning interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adherence to a Corporate Planning Timetable covering forward planning, and budget and performance management and monitoring.• Risk Management Policy is embedded, corporate decision-making templates and business planning prompt the consideration of risk.• The Council has annual directorate, department, and service plans.• Appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) are monitored during the year.• Detailed budget and performance reports presented to Cabinet, Council and Scrutiny quarterly highlighting areas of underperformance and corrective action.• Monthly budget monitoring process for all budget holders supported by Finance staff and attendance at budget monitoring group meetings for each portfolio with relevant finance staff and Directors.
Optimising achievement of intended outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Council sets its 2025/26 Revenue Budget, three-year capital programme and Capital Strategy, the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2025/26 and its Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025-28. This set a balanced budget for 2025/26 and met the budget gap through the implementation of previously agreed savings proposals (following a public budget consultation) that sought to provide financial resilience and allow resourcing for the Council's strategic priorities and the support of transformation and growth. Additional Government funding received through the Local Government Finance Settlement allowed the Council to target additional resources to priority areas.• Cabinet received regular financial and budget reports to inform the Council's financial planning aimed at ensuring the availability of appropriate resources for priority areas and promoting value for money.• Quarterly performance reports during the year have analysed the progress and performance against the Council's priorities.• Governance and oversight of delivery and outcomes of transformation programmes.

PRINCIPLE E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capacity of its leadership and the individuals within it.

Developing the Council's capacity

- The outcome-based Performance Management Framework provides an integrated approach to the measurement of effectiveness.
- The Council's Senior Leadership Team is supported by Directors, Assistant Directors, and Heads of Service, and reconfigured service teams as part of the whole Council restructuring program.
- The Council has a pooled budget (Section 75 Agreement) within Social Care and Health and manages this through a joint commissioning team. It has other joint services with partners.
- The Council actively works across the region to identify opportunities for further collaborative working.
- The Council is part of the STAR Procurement Shared Service with Knowsley, Rochdale, Stockport, Tameside and Trafford Councils.
- The 'My Conversations' – online system is available to record appraisal meetings, time to reflect and plan.

Developing the capability of the Council's leadership and other individuals

- The Constitution clearly defines the statutory roles required including Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer, and Chief Financial Officer (S151).
- The Chief Executive is subject to appraisals by the Leader of the Council and there is a staff performance appraisal process in place for all employees with further statutory supervision for certain employee groups.
- A Members' Induction Programme is in place for newly elected members and a comprehensive Member Training & Development Programme offer is available to members throughout the year.
- Programme of online training for employees.
- Training & Development Plan reflect requirements of a modern councillor including leadership and influencing skills, the ability to scrutinise and challenge; to recognise when outside advice is required, and how to function as an ambassador for the community.
- HR policies support employee wellbeing including attendance, welfare and health initiatives and provision of Occupational Health and Counselling services.
- Mental health first aiders across the organisation. Workplace Health and Well-Being Group in place implementing a range of mental wellbeing initiatives via an action plan.
- Culture Champions in place across the organisation to support physical and mental well-being.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has developed and is deploying new procurement and contract management training to develop individual and organisational capability, to optimise the return on investment from our Third Party Spend. • Ongoing Leading and Management Together programmes for middle and senior managers, bespoke to St Helens.
PRINCIPLE F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.	
Managing risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk Management Policy and Managers Handbook on Intranet. • Strategic, Directorate and Departmental risks recorded in Risk Registers. • Business continuity and resilience arrangements are in place for critical services. • The Audit and Governance Committee has oversight of the Council's effectiveness of governance, control, and risk management. • Comprehensive insurance cover and in house claims handling.
Managing performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Borough Strategy 2030 outlines the Borough's vision and priorities, developed following an extensive consultation and engagement exercise. A performance framework with a suite of performance indicators and targets link to the Strategy's priorities and outcomes. The performance framework and targets are reviewed annually. • Quarterly performance reports are presented to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny, with performance benchmarked against other councils.
Robust internal control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has an effective internal audit team that adheres to Global Standards. • Quality Assurance Improvement Plan, actions owned by Head of Audit & Risk. • Health and safety officers provide advice, inspections and assist with risk assessments. • Health and safety policies are regularly reviewed. • Accident and incident statistics are monitored. • Internal audit recommendations are tracked and evidenced prior to closure. Progress against the audit plan reported quarterly to the Audit and Governance Committee. • Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption and Whistleblowing policies updated and reflect best practice. • Treasury Management risk regularly reported to the Audit and Governance Committee.
Managing data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Information Management Framework provides the overarching policies and governance surrounding the Council's management of information and information systems.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Governance Group membership includes all Council Directors and receives regular dashboard updates. • The Digital and Information Governance Group is focused on information governance improvements, challenges, and risks. • Reported data breaches (including near misses) are investigated with remedial action identified. • Data protection and Cyber Security training are mandatory.
Strong public financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive consideration of risks to the Council's financial resilience and sustainability as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. Reserves Strategy and Budget Risk Assessment. • Strong budget management arrangements in place, including the creation of a Budget Savings Delivery Board and financial monitoring reports submitted on a quarterly basis to Cabinet providing the Council's financial position and forecast outturn position. • Council and Overview and Scrutiny Commission receive financial monitoring reports. • External Audit provide their opinion on the Council's financial statements including this Annual Governance Statement. Also conclude on the Council's arrangements for securing value for money. • The Audit and Governance Committee has oversight of the Chief Financial Officer's (Section 151) effectiveness in ensuring a robust financial control environment is maintained.
PRINCIPLE G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit, to deliver effective accountability.	
Implementing good practices in transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council complies with the requirements of the Transparency Code of Practice and has implemented a process of independent assessment of compliance. • Maintaining compliance by publishing all required information in a timely manner, ensuring it is publicly available and open to challenge. • Procurement information (ITT and Contracts above £5k) is published through the web-based procurement system and are publicly available. • The Audit and Governance Committee has oversight of the Chief Financial Officer's (Section 151) effectiveness in ensuring a robust financial control environment is maintained. Committee has independent member to enhance effectiveness. • Parkside LLP (joint venture partnership with a private sector partner to regenerate the former Parkside Colliery site) is governed by a Board of six people; three are Council nominated.

Implementing good practices in reporting

- The Audit and Governance Committee considers the Statement of Accounts, matters raised by the external auditor, Treasury Management, risk management, internal audit outcomes and the annual fraud report.
- The Council publishes this Annual Governance Statement that outlines how it has monitored its governance environment.
- The published Statement of Financial Accounts summarises the Council's financial performance and demonstrates the Council's stewardship of public money for that year.
- The Narrative Statement within the Statement of Accounts summarises service delivery achievements, performance and key financial information and a more detailed Outturn Financial Monitoring Report and Performance Outturn Report are presented to Cabinet, Council and the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.
- Quarterly Financial and performance reports are presented to Cabinet, Council and the Overview and Scrutiny Commission.

Assurance and effective accountability

- The St Helens People's Board operates in a transparent public arena providing accountability for health and well-being functions.
- Community safety functions transferred from the People's Board with the re-establishment of a stand-alone Community Safety Partnership.
- Committee agendas published on the internet using Modern Gov. and the meetings are webcast.
- The Constitution defines decision making and accountability arrangements.
- The Audit and Governance Committee oversees the effectiveness of risk management, control, and governance arrangements. Committee effectiveness is benchmarked against CIPFA standards.
- Peer reviews and benchmarking within individual services help identify good practice and scope for development.

ASSURANCE

According to Internal Audit's current definitions, a SUBSTANTIAL Assurance rating means that a sound system of governance, risk management and control exists, with internal controls operating effectively and being consistently applied to support the achievement of objectives in the areas audited.

The Audit and Governance Committee has a key role as the "body charged with governance" and its Terms of Reference set out the requirement to gain and monitor the necessary assurances in respect of the Council's control, governance, financial management, and reporting framework.

Sources of Assurance

Various sources of assurance contribute to examining and confirming the Council's compliance with laws, regulations, governance arrangements and that expenditure is in line with Finance Procedure Rules.

The Council's assurance arrangements reflect the Institute of Internal Auditors' Three Lines of Defence Model. A summary of the model shown below. The Head of Audit and Risk considers a wide source of assurance to reach his annual opinion.

Internal Audit

Internal audit work provides an independent source of assurance on the effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk management and internal control environment. The designated Chief Audit Executive is required to provide an annual opinion on the effectiveness of that environment and that opinion is based on the audit work conducted during the year, and other sources of robust assurance.

The overall opinion, as reported in the Annual Internal Audit Report was that of

Substantial Assurance, based on the level of work performed.

Areas of Limited Internal Audit Assurance (excluding schools) in 2024/25.

Highways S38 and S278

In September 2024, a limited assurance report of the management of Highways S38 and S278 was published. The document management and administration within the Highways Service required improvement. Evidence of action taken by the team and key supporting information is not always scanned into case files in a timely manner or are not kept in line with the standardised Model S38 Agreement file structure. The audit also highlighted some inaccuracies in the calculation of bond figures and fees charged. In addition, figures in the Bond Agreement did not always agree with the calculation sheet.

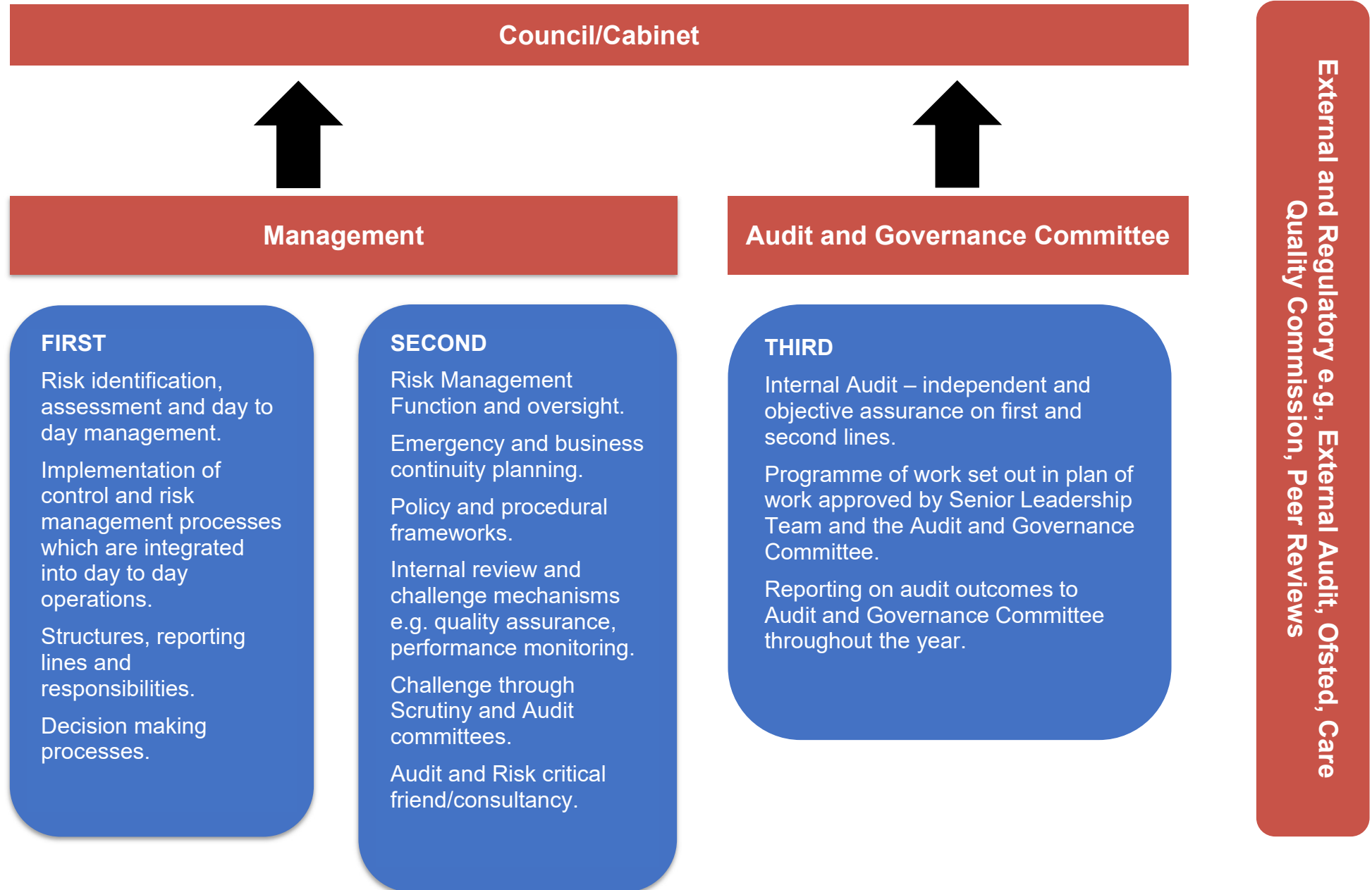
Agency and Consultancy Spend

The objective of this audit was to gain assurance that spend is controlled and approval is sought by assessing the design and effectiveness of controls that have been established to govern the risks associated with Agency and Consultancy Spend. Testing identified that policy documents and guidelines needed to be updated and appropriately cross-referenced to ensure consistency and clarity. In addition, there was some discrepancy across directorates about the use of operational decisions for agreeing the use of agency and consultancy resources. Where operational decisions are applicable, these should be recorded via proposal on the operational decisions system. It should also be made clear whether exemptions or exclusions to the decision-making process will continue to apply for any temporary placements agreed previously.

Assurance opinions for 2024/25



THREE LINES OF DEFENCE MODEL – ST HELENS BOROUGH COUNCIL



What we said we would do in 2024/25

Area for Development	Owner	Progress
<p>Director Assurance Statements highlighted the need in some areas for compliance in departments with key governance metrics and internal controls.</p> <p>As part of the review of the AGS 2024/25, all Directors were invited to complete an assurance questionnaire with ratings in relation to compliance in their department with key governance metrics and internal controls.</p>	Director of Legal & Governance	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>A DMT agenda template will be issued including standing organisational health items for discussion quarterly to ensure compliance with key governance metrics to be monitored by managers i.e., mandatory training, service plans, risk registers, outstanding audit recommendations and My Conversations (appraisals). Extensive management data is available in the Council's Organisational Health Dashboard on the intranet.</p> <p>Individual Service Action Plans established to ensure compliance in areas where isolated weaknesses have been highlighted.</p>
<p>Promote new Contract Procedure Rules adopted at July 2024 Council along with financial approval levels for new Unit 4 financial system to aid understanding.</p> <p>New Contract Procedure Rules to align with STAR Procurement Shared Service were adopted by the Council on 17 July 2024.</p>	Director of Finance	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Ensure communication from STAR Procurement Shared Service is promoted via updates at manager forums (e.g. DMTs and Wider Leadership Community) and staff communications in 'All About Us'.</p> <p>Revised Contract Procedure Rules to include the changes arising from the new Procurement Act adopted by Annual Council in May 2025.</p>
<p>Monitor and report exceptions/waivers to Contract Procedure Rules for oversight by regular reports to the Audit & Governance Committee to allow for monitoring of performance.</p> <p>Improvement recommendation 6 in the Council's external auditor's annual report 2022/23 published in March 2024.</p>	Director of Finance	<p>COMPLETE</p> <p>Data to be reported to the Audit & Governance Committee commencing from September 2024 to increase assurance over the Council's compliance with procurement regulations and its contract procedure rules.</p> <p>Also reported via the Governance Group.</p>

Area for Development	Owner	Progress
All budget savings identified within the Medium-Term Forecast are deliverable and processes in place to deliver and monitor savings in line with expectations.	Director of Finance	COMPLETE Supplement the existing arrangements for monitoring and reporting and provide greater integration with the service delivery / non-financial performance of individual Directorates, through the establishment of a Budget and Performance Monitoring Board chaired by the Chief Executive.

Key areas of risk and governance for 2025/26

The Council has continued to monitor its strategic risks throughout the year and the strategic risk register has been reviewed and updated to ensure that it has captured those areas most likely to have a damaging impact on the Council's priorities. Having analysed the strategic risk register, the areas outlined in the table below have been identified as having the broadest impact on the Authority and its success at delivering its vision and priorities as outlined in Our Borough Strategy.

We have also cross referenced this year's governance statement with the results from the Corporate Peer Challenge and outlined the recommendations from this external peer review that, when implemented, will serve to strengthen the Council's corporate governance framework.

Please note that for each of the areas below, there is a detailed risk profile that includes more information regarding the specific actions to be taken including action owners and target dates. The information included in the 'Comments or Summary of Action Required' is therefore an overview of the action to be taken.

Key Area of Risk or Governance	Owner	Comments or Summary of Action Required
There are ten recommendations from the Corporate Peer Challenge CPC in the CPS Action Plan. Those relating to governance are:	CEX	This action plan will form part of the council's wider transformation framework and approach. The transformation framework will be supported by a strategic reporting and governance framework through which the recommendations will be viewed. Cabinet members will retain regular oversight within the context of the transformation governance and reporting framework. Councillors from

Key Area of Risk or Governance	Owner	Comments or Summary of Action Required
<p>Recommendation 4: Ensure a continued focus and rigour on financial planning and management.</p> <p>Recommendation 5: Reduce the reliance on an annual call on reserves to balance the budget, and plan to rebuild reserves in the future.</p> <p>Recommendation 6: Children's services remain a financially challenging area, and the Council needs to stay focussed on continuous improvement to manage demand and reduce cost.</p> <p>Recommendation 7: Maintain a laser focus on existing regeneration plans ensuring there is capacity, phasing and funding.</p>		<p>across the Council will have the opportunity to track progress through quarterly performance monitoring and Overview and Scrutiny Committees.</p> <p>Cabinet approved the Action Plan at its meeting on 23 April 2025. A Progress Review will be completed by December 2025 and the report will be published by February 2026.</p>
<p>External Audit Recommendations</p> <p>The Council has accepted and is tracking the implementation of recommendations made by the External Auditor from its Annual Audit Report 2024/25. These cover the following areas:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts Register • Achievement of Savings Plans 		<p>The Commissioning Review Board was established as part of the Council's Strategic Change and Transformation Board. A key Workstream for this Board was to review the existing Contracts Register and to work with Services and STAR to create a complete Contracts Register with Forward Plan to allow Contracts to be identified, procurement and managed effectively.</p> <p>Savings Plans are managed via the Budget and Performance Board and reported on a quarterly basis to Cabinet and Council. Detailed Minutes and Actions highlight the need for delivery of all savings or alternative</p>

Key Area of Risk or Governance	Owner	Comments or Summary of Action Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) including future demand forecasts for Children's Services. 		<p>mitigation. Any permanent changes to be approved as part of the FMR process via Cabinet and then to Full Council.</p> <p>The Council's approved MTFS in March 2025 included an updated Sensitivity and Risk Analysis Section which considered and reviewed the risks highlighted.</p>
<p>Budget Restrictions and Management of Pressures</p> <p>Strategic risk reference SR02</p> <p>The Council continues to face a challenging financial position after more than a decade of austerity and cuts in government support, with the ongoing legacy of the global pandemic, increasing demand for services, the extreme and volatile inflationary and wider economic environment, and the continuing uncertainty surrounding the local government funding position. During the year, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2024-27 was approved and provides an overarching framework for how future decisions on resource allocation and budgeting will be made.</p> <p>The key financial pressures will be the demand for social care, homelessness, and other services; cost pressures on pay, prices and energy; the ongoing impact of the cost-of-living crisis and local economic recovery from the pandemic; and the costs / losses associated in driving forward strategic improvements and reductions in income sources.</p>	Executive Director of Corporate Services	<p>With the inception of the new Labour Government in July 2024 and the announcement of the October 2024 Budget Statement followed by the Finance Settlement in December 2024, there is a change in the strategic financial direction. The Government has recognised the considerable financial pressure within the local authority system and has injected funds into the key areas for pressure such as children services, SEND, adult social care and homelessness. Whilst this doesn't remove all the pressures, and the Council has much more to do, particularly delivering existing savings plans and tackling areas of high spend, it is a positive first step.</p> <p>Government has recognised the need to ensure that funds are allocated to authorities using need and deprivation as a key driver, which will hopefully provide a greater share of funding to St Helens and reduce the risk moving forward. Put alongside the Devolution White Paper, continued work with the combined authority, multi-year settlements and the fair funding / business rates review, there is now a clearer pathway ahead towards financial stability. There is regular reporting to EMB and Cabinet as well as a Budget and Performance Monitoring Board, chaired by the Chief Executive to review savings delivery and in-year financial pressures. Reserve levels, whilst not large, are sufficient for the immediate future. Reserves remain at a reasonable level but can only last for the medium term if action is not taken to manage spend within</p>

Key Area of Risk or Governance	Owner	Comments or Summary of Action Required
		budget. Given that the Finance Settlement is positive overall and additional funding is being made available the Likelihood of this Risk has lessened.
Regeneration Delivery Strategic risk reference SR04 <p>Several factors are considered and being managed through Place Directorate Risk Register - these include increasing construction costs, loss of grant funding stream(s), failure of key partner(s) and retention / recruitment of the necessary skills and capability to deliver regeneration - especially via the Capital Programme.</p>	Executive Director of Place Services	Improved engagement with external partners and agencies (e.g. LCRCA and Government departments) to identify opportunities and make the case for investment in St Helens. Utilisation of Tax Increment Financing initiatives associated with Freeport and Investment Zones. Due diligence and continuous performance monitoring, with financial health checks on strategic partners, coupled with strong communication and open dialogue. Inflation costs are factored into business cases and additional funding sources identified where needed. Re-phasing is undertaken if needed. Renegotiate grant funding conditions where applicable to reduce scope / outcomes. Inflationary pressures should ease into 2025 and beyond.
Exposure to external Cyber Attack – Strategic risk reference SR05 <p>The impact of a cyber-incident on the Council's systems could have a fundamental impact upon the Council's ability to deliver its services especially as the new ways of working place increased reliance on digital technology and the availability of IT systems. Such attacks have affected other local authorities,</p>	Director of Policy & Transformation	Cyber counter measures are being continually reviewed and enhanced, this will be achieved through a strengthened internal Cyber Security team, and in partnership with our external partner Communicate. The Council undertake audits on a rolling basis using an external auditor to assure our Information Security and Service Management approaches. Plans are adjusted as we move to total cloud migration, removal of data centres, and access to services that do not require the data centres to service that requirement.

Key Area of Risk or Governance	Owner	Comments or Summary of Action Required
<p>causing significant financial and operational disruption.</p> <p>The Council is alert to these threats and its IT arrangements are subject to numerous external assessments to confirm the adequacy of controls. Cyber resilience will remain an area for vigilance and further action where proportionate and cost effective.</p>		

Statement of Assurance

We are satisfied that this Annual Governance Statement provides an accurate assessment of our governance structure during the year and identifies the significant issues facing the Authority in the coming year. A commitment is made for those areas identified for improvement to be progressed within the timeframes stated.

Leader of the Council Signed: Date: Name (Print): Councillor Anthony Burns	Chief Executive Signed: Date: Name (Print): Mark Palethorpe
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Appendix 4 – Acronyms / Terms used

CIPFA	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
SOLACE	The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (Solace Group) Ltd
AGS	Annual Governance Statement
GOVERNANCE	Corporate Governance is the term used to describe the system by which Local Authorities direct and control their functions and relate to their communities
LLP	Limited Liability Partnership
LGA	Local Government Association
PSIAS	Public Sector Internal Audit Standards
GIAS	Global Internal Audit Standards
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
ITT	Invitation to Tender (procurement route)
GOSS system	Brand name for Council's digital contact records management system
DED	Delegated Executive Decision
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
Ofsted / ILACs	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. Inspecting local authority children's services - Ofsted's framework and guidance for inspecting local authority services for children
ISO 27001	ISO/IEC 27001 is an international standard to manage information security
ECF	English Cities Fund St Helens Town Centre