

# Annual Governance Statement

for year ended 31 March 2022



[www.bolsover.gov.uk](http://www.bolsover.gov.uk)

**Bolsover**  
District Council

## Foreword

*“To continue to be a dynamic, self-sufficient and flexible Council that delivers excellent services, whilst adapting to local aspirations and acting as the economic and environmental driver for Bolsover District...”*

**...this is the Council’s Ambition for 2020-2024 and it has been developed as an alternative to a Council Plan as a series of ambitions.**

The Ambition is flexible and adaptable. It has the scope for new projects to be delivered alongside the provision of excellent services, whilst having the preparedness to address uncertainties such as reductions in funding and income we receive, changes in legislation that affect our services or influences that affect our local communities and their way of life.

Bolsover District Council is publicly funded and the projects we implement to help us achieve this ambition must and will be subject to revision, scrutiny and audit as we continue to respond to the changing needs of our District.

This Annual Governance Statement assesses the corporate governance arrangements we had in place during 2021/22 and the changes we continue to make to those arrangements in response to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.



Karen Hanson  
**Executive Director of Resources  
(Head of Paid Service)**



Steve Fritchley  
**Leader**



## What is Corporate Governance?

Corporate governance is the combination of rules, practices and processes by which organisations are directed, regulated and controlled. It is also about culture, values and ethics. It is the way that councillors and employees act.

The Council's corporate governance arrangements aim to ensure that it does the right things at the right time for the right people in a way that is timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable.



## The Annual Governance Statement

Bolsover District Council has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance which is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) - the

'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework' 2016 edition.

This statement explains how the Council has complied with the code for the year ended 31 March 2022 and also how it meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015.

## 1. The Council's Governance Responsibilities

Bolsover District Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and to proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and is 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 and for facilitating the effective exercise of its functions. This includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Council's Governance Code, which was renewed in accordance with the new governance guidance produced by CIPFA and SOLACE, states the importance to the Council of good corporate governance and sets out its commitment to the principles involved. The Code can be obtained from the Monitoring Officer.

### Governance and Partnerships

In addition to giving appropriate consideration to the Council's internal governance arrangements, it needs to be recognised that the Council is working in a number of partnership arrangements.

Since April 2011, the Council has operated a Strategic Alliance with North East Derbyshire District Council, a neighbouring authority.

Joint working takes place across some services including Environmental Health which is a fully shared service hosted by North East Derbyshire District Council.

In addition, we have joint arrangements with Chesterfield Borough Council, Derbyshire Dales District Council, Amber Valley Borough Council and Gedling Borough Council for a range of services.

The Council is a partner of the Derbyshire Building Control Partnership (DBCP) along with six other district councils and Derby City

Council. The DBCP provides building control services across Derbyshire and Staffordshire Moorlands.

Dragonfly Development Ltd is a joint venture company set up by the Council and Robert Woodhead Ltd. It is a company that has been established to take advantage of the wider trading powers provided by the Localism Act 2011. This is an act which enables local authorities to perform functions beyond its traditional activities including open market housing development, however it can only do so through external bodies such as joint venture companies.

We have a Local Strategic Partnership which engages with a range of local partners including NHS bodies. We also actively participate in the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership.

Where the Council has entered into partnership arrangements it seeks to ensure that they are subject to appropriate governance management arrangements.



## 2. The Purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled, together with those activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the local community.

It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate cost effective services.

In order to review the effectiveness of the governance framework, assurances are provided to, and challenged by, the Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee, Scrutiny Committees,

Executive or Council as appropriate.

Some of the key elements of the governance framework are highlighted on the next pages.

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.



**Purpose:** To become a dynamic, self-sufficient and flexible Council that delivers excellent services, whilst adapting to local aspirations and acting as the economic and environmental driver for Bolsover District.

## Governance Code

### Assurance Required on:

- Delivery of Corporate Plan/Council Ambition
- Communication of performance
- Financial management
- Service quality and best use of resources
- Any failures in service delivery addressed effectively
- Councillors and officers working together effectively
- Compliance with laws and regulations, policies and procedures
- High standards of conduct and behaviour
- Informed and transparent decision making
- Management of risk and effective internal controls
- Developing the capacity and capability of members and employees
- Democratic engagement and robust public accountability

### Sources of Assurance:

- Community Strategy
- Planning principles for services
- Constitution
- Strategic Leadership and Senior Management structures
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Financial Procedure Rules
- Contract Procedure Rules
- Procurement Strategy
- Consultation and Engagement Strategy
- Single Equality Scheme
- Organisational Development and Workforce Strategy
- Information Management Strategy
- ICT & Digital Strategy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Risk Management Strategy
- Partnership Working
- Internal & External Audit and inspection
- Counter Fraud Strategy and Policy & Procedures
- Audit and Standards committees
- Codes of Conduct (Employees and Members)

**Sources of Assurance  
(continued)**

- Whistleblowing Policy
- Performance Review and Development
- Complaints system
- Member Development Programme

**Assurances Received:**

- Statement of Accounts
- External Audit and Inspection reporting
- Internal Audit reporting
- Risk and Control Registers and Risk Management Reporting
- Chief Officers' Internal Control Assurances
- Counter Fraud Annual Report
- Scrutiny Reviews
- Reviews commissioned by management
- Annual review of the Constitution
- Peer Reviews
- Ombudsman Reports
- Ongoing review of Corporate Governance and of gaps in assurance
- Quarterly performance reports to Executive

**Opportunities for Improvement:**

- To support residents of the district in response to the current external events including the 'cost of living crisis' and the war in Ukraine.
- To continue to manage the risk of cyber-security attack through the ICT Strategic working group, monitor the increased risks due to new working arrangements including agile working and the external environment.
- Address the recent difficulties in the recruitment to some professional posts, including the areas of legal and audit.
- Monitor the impact of the changes to the Governance Team to ensure continuous improvement.
- Continue to use the Risk Management Group to review the current Risk Strategy, regularly review the Corporate Strategic Risk Register and ensure a corporate grip on all risks identified.

**Annual  
Governance  
Statement**

**Governance Framework**

## The Council Ambition

The Council Ambition 2020-2024 was developed in early 2020. The Ambition replaced the Corporate Plan and outlined the key areas that the Council would focus on over the following four years.

The Council's overall Ambition is 'to become a dynamic, self-sufficient and flexible Council that delivers excellent services, whilst adapting to local aspirations and acting as the economic and environmental driver for Bolsover District.'

The Ambition sets out three strategic themes - Customers, Economy and Environment. Beneath each of these are a number of priorities which will be considered in the delivery of services.

A suite of performance indicators support the Ambition.

In preparation for the next four years the Leader of the Council invited the Local Government Association to undertake a Peer Review during November 2019.

The feedback from the review was considered when developing the new Council Ambition.

## Performance Management

Performance monitoring is undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees. In addition, Portfolio Holders meet regularly with officers, Assistant Directors and Executive Directors to ensure effective performance management across the suite of agreed performance indicators supporting the Ambition. Executive and Council receive an Annual report which identifies key achievements and challenges, celebrates successes and identifies areas of work which require focus over the forthcoming year.

### Social Media

Join the conversation on all aspects of Bolsover District Council services and activities.

The Council provides its customers access to our services and information in the most appropriate Social Media channels and through its own Bolsover TV channel.



## OUR PRIORITIES

### Customers:

- Increasing customer satisfaction with our services
- Improving customer contact and removing barriers to accessing information
- Actively engaging with partners to benefit our customers
- Promoting equality, diversity and supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged people
- Providing good quality council housing where people choose to live
- Improving health, wellbeing and increasing participation in sport and leisure activities



### Economy:

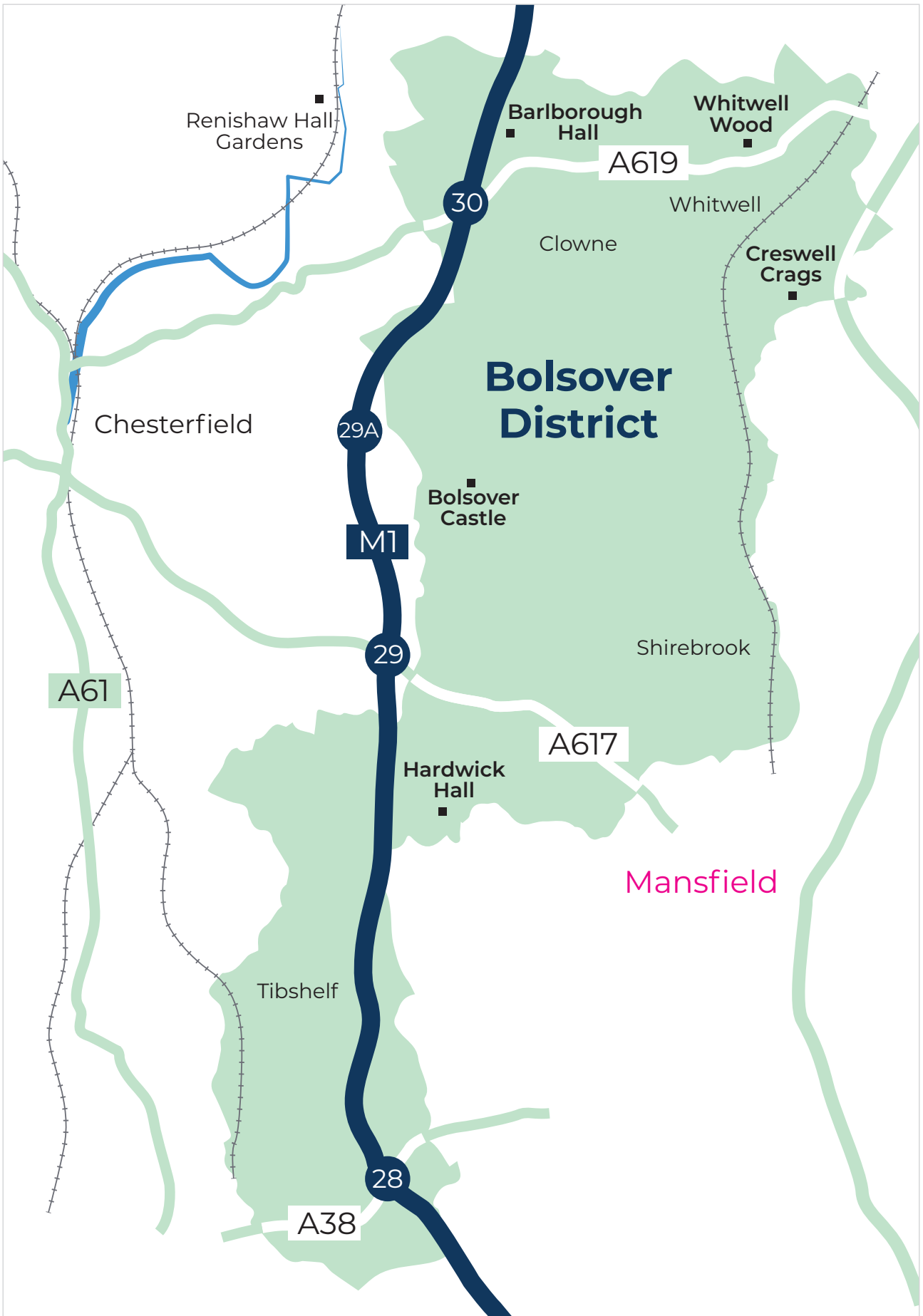
- Working with partners to support enterprise, innovation, jobs and skills
- Unlocking Development Potential: unlocking the capacity of major employment sites
- Enabling Housing Growth: increasing the supply, quality and range of housing to meet the needs of the growing population and support economic growth
- Making the best use of our assets
- Ensuring financial sustainability and increasing revenue streams
- Promoting the District and working with partners to increase tourism



### Environment:

- Reducing our carbon footprint whilst supporting and encouraging residents and businesses to do the same
- Increasing recycling
- Ensuring a high standard of environmental cleanliness, undertaking appropriate enforcement activity where required
- Enhancing biodiversity and developing attractive neighbourhoods that residents feel proud of and take responsibility for
- Working with partners to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour
- Actively engaging with partners to benefit our communities





## Managing Risk and Opportunities

The Council has a Risk Management Strategy and associated framework in place.

The Council has embedded risk management by the establishment of a Risk Management Group, Elected Member led and attended by senior officers, internal audit and health and safety.

The group regularly reviews all risk registers, offering challenge to the assessment process. The group leads on the development and review of all risk related policies, plans and strategies across the Council. These are supported by a Risk Management Strategy which identifies and mitigates the Strategic and Operational risks.

The Risk Management framework includes a quarterly reporting process to Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.

The Council is risk aware rather than risk averse. The extent to which the Council is risk averse, will undoubtedly impact on its potential to progress available opportunities to secure benefits for local residents.

The Risk Management approach, both in the identification of risks and the action taken to address the risks, is flexible and has the ability to respond to change. National policies, service delivery arrangements, national and local circumstances, together with Council priorities have and will continue to change and evolve over time. The Council's Risk Management focus and arrangements are able to adjust in order to ensure that current threats and opportunities are effectively addressed and not stifled

by inappropriate risk management arrangements.

Although the Council can do much to manage the risks it faces, it does need to be recognised that some of the major Strategic Risks are only partially within its direct influence. Key risks included in the Strategic Risk Register at present are:

### **STR1**

The introduction of Government Legislation/Parliamentary uncertainty which has an adverse impact on the Council's budget or ability to carry out its statutory functions, for example the Government White Paper on Levelling Up and the potential impact of devolution.

### **STR2**

Failure to deliver a balanced budget in line with the MTFP, at a time when the Council's reserves are limited to 'adequate' levels.

### **STR3**

The Council is affected by an operational failure which has a major impact upon the provision of services to residents, communities and/or businesses (for example ICT failure, utilities failure or building/depot failure).

### **STR4**

It becomes increasingly difficult to recruit to key posts or to replace key staff who leave (for example Environmental Health Officers qualified lawyers and auditors).



**STR5**

Continued delivery of statutory services alongside the Council's Vision and other initiatives, projects and reforms, potentially overstressing limited resources.

**STR6**

Emergency Planning and Business Continuity arrangements fail to meet required standards.

**STR7**

Lack of appropriate strategic direction.

**STR8**

Failure to meet required standards of governance.

**STR9**

Failure to have in place robust, comprehensive and up to date policies and procedures for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

**STR10**

Failure to address the impact of COVID-19 upon the organisation, local economy and community.

**STR11**

Cyber security attack which severely impacts ICT systems and data. E.g. Ransomware attack rendering access to ICT unavailable for some time.

**STR12**

Significant increases to general cost of living which may impact on Council income including Council Tax, Business Rates and Rent arrears and reduced leisure income.

**STR13**

Homes for Ukraine Scheme including safeguarding, potential homelessness and effective co-ordination of the scheme whilst in its early stages of development.

**STR14**

The impact of Climate Change including: the impact of Government national policy and targets; the impact of statutory requirements to meet targets on the Council's budget; failure to meet the Council's Climate Change targets; responding to environmental changes including severe weather events.

## Decision Making and Responsibilities

The Council consists of 37 elected members, with an Executive of lead members who are supported and held to account by four scrutiny committees.

The Council has a formal Constitution in place which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures for ensuring that the Council is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. It contains the basic rules governing the Council's business, and a section on responsibility for functions, which includes a list of decisions that can be taken by officers. It also contains the rules, protocols and codes of practice under which the Council, its members and officers operate.

In July 2021, the Council approved the disestablishment of its two Joint Strategic Director posts and established another full-time Director post working solely for Bolsover District Council alongside the existing Director of Strategy and Development. The new post, Executive Director of Resources, was also designated the Head of Paid Service. The July report approved that the new Executive Director of Resources and the existing Executive Director of Development, review the rest of the management structure in consultation with all Portfolio Holders. This has been completed.

The Constitution is available on the Council's website and is reviewed annually through Standards Committee and Annual Council.

### Open Decision-making

Meetings of the Council, Executive and the main Committees are open to the public except where exempt or confidential matters are being discussed, and all reports considered and the minutes of decisions taken are, unless confidential, made available on the Council's website.

The Council's Forward Plan contains information about matters that are likely to be the subject of a decision taken by Executive during the forthcoming four months.





The Constitution sets out the functions of key governance officers, including the statutory posts of 'Head of Paid Service' (Executive Director of Resources), 'Monitoring Officer' (Assistant Director of Corporate Governance) and 'Section 151 Officer' (Assistant Director of Finance and Resources) and explains the role of these officers in ensuring that processes are in place for enabling the Council to meet its statutory obligations and also for providing advice to members, officers and committees on staff management, financial, legal and ethical governance issues.

As a result of the Pandemic and temporary Regulations temporarily allowing this, Member meetings were held virtually for the first few months of the municipal year. This worked well and ensured that all meetings could still be viewed by the public. From August onwards, meetings were hybrid in nature allowing Members to decide when they were comfortable to attend in person. By February, meetings had gradually returned to being held in person only. In addition, temporary emergency delegations were extended to ensure that the Council's business could be continued.







## Equality

The Council is committed to delivering equality and improving the quality of life for the people of Bolsover District Council. Our Single Equality Scheme and Equality Policy for service delivery clearly sets out that no person should be treated unfairly and commits the Council to eliminating all forms of discrimination, advancing equality and fostering good relations between all groups in society.

Any new Council policy, proposal or service, or any change to these that affects people must be the subject of an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that equality issues have been consciously considered throughout the decision making processes.

## Financial Management

The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs, as required by Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, and our financial management arrangements are compliant with the governance requirements set out in the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's 'Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government' (2016). The Council's Chief Financial Officer is a full member of the Strategic Leadership Team and is supported by appropriately qualified and experienced staff.

Internal financial control is based on a framework of management information that includes the Financial Regulations, Contract and Procurement Procedure Rules, our accounting procedures and key financial systems. These include established budget planning procedures and quarterly budget reports to Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee and Executive.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy sets out the Council's strategic approach to the management of its finances and outlines some of the financial issues that we will face over the next four years.

Despite our established success in delivering savings, the Council faces the challenge of designing a sustainable budget for the future in the face of continuing changes to our income from Government funding. Since 2011/12, Bolsover District Council has delivered savings of over £5m. We have a good track record of finding

efficiencies and new ways of working but new budget savings are becoming increasingly difficult to identify and deliver now we have reduced service budgets to minimal levels. For this reason it is essential that the Council continues to identify areas where costs can be reduced but more importantly, income can be increased, to close any budget gaps.

A number of areas have already been identified around additional income and included in the Medium Term Financial Plan. Examples relate to potential extra income for Council Tax and business rates from new properties we are constructing; income from a new 3G football pitch; income from a proposed crematorium and income from a new toning suite within our leisure centre.

### The Financial Management Code

CIPFA has developed a Financial Management Code (FM Code) which is designed to support good practice in financial management and to assist local authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability. The FM Code has been introduced because the exceptional financial circumstances faced by local authorities have revealed concerns about fundamental weaknesses in financial management, particularly in relation to a small number of high-profile failures across local government which threaten stakeholder's confidence in the sector as a whole.

Although the FM Code does not have legislative backing, it applies to all local authorities and it must be demonstrated that the requirements of the FM Code are being met.

Demonstrating this compliance with the Code is a collective responsibility of Elected Members, the Section 151 Officer and the Corporate Leadership Team.

As a first step towards ensuring that this Council meets the FM Code, the Council's Internal Audit Consortium carried out an audit during September 2020. The audit concluded that the Council complied with the majority of the FM Code already. Three recommendations were raised as follows:

**Recommendation 1** - Council's Monitoring Officer must ensure the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance is approved by Audit Committee for 2020/21 by 31st March 2021 to ensure that this informs the Annual Governance Statement. (Priority: Low)

This was implemented during 2021/22 when the new Code of Conduct was adopted by Council on 5th July 2021.

**Recommendation 2** - Assistant Director of Finance and Resources (Section 151 Officer) maintains an overview of current benchmarking arrangements and adopts a methodology that can demonstrate the Council's financial resilience has been assessed. (Priority: Low)

To satisfy this recommendation, we subscribed to a benchmarking service for 2021/22. The service used our levels of reserves and balances for 2020/21 and compared us to other Local Authorities using their published accounts information. The resulting comment was that 'Bolsover has a healthy level of reserves and a positive direction of travel.'

When the renewal notice for this benchmarking service arrived the price had increased considerably, and it was felt we would not be getting good value for our money if we had continued the subscription. It has therefore been decided to look for other means by which we could meet this recommendation and part of the FM Code. The CIPFA index of resilience of English Councils is currently being looked at as an alternative, to ensure something is in place for this current year.

**Recommendation 3** - Further review of risk management, by audit, once working arrangements are back to normal following COVID-19 and the implementation of the Risk Management Group. (Priority: Medium)

The audit of risk management is currently ongoing and will be completed before the end of the current year.

During April 2021, a report was presented to the Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee informing members of the FM Code and its requirements and of the internal audit consortium's findings.

It is the opinion of the Section 151 Officer that Bolsover District Council complies with the financial management standards that form the FM Code.



## Procurement of Goods and Services

Strategic procurement is a series of activities and processes that sits at the heart of the Council, providing the framework by which the Council obtains value for money in all of the goods and services that it procures.

The Council's Procurement Strategy was approved during 2021/22 and training sessions were provided to staff throughout the Council.

The strategy outlines how the procurement of goods and services is achieved and describes the Council's

Contract Procurement Rules which form part of the Council's Constitution.



## Managing Information

Information is central to the Council and its decision making processes and it therefore needs to be accurate and accessible to those who need it at the time and place that is required. The Council also recognises that it has a responsibility to safeguard the information it holds and to manage it with care and accountability.

The Council complies with the Transparency Agenda, Freedom of Information obligations and the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation regarding the collection, use and transfer of personal data with an appropriately qualified and experienced Data Protection Officer in post.

To support these high standards of openness and probity the Council has in place an effective complaints policy.

### Freedom of Information

Details of how to access information held by the Council and its Freedom of Information policy are available on the Council's website at [www.bolsover.gov.uk](http://www.bolsover.gov.uk)







## Assurance from Internal and External Audit

The Council's external auditor is Mazars LLP. In accordance with their statutory requirements, their annual audit includes examining and certifying whether the financial statements are 'true and fair', and assessing our arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of resources which also includes financial sustainability and governance. For 2020/21 the External Auditor gave an unqualified audit opinion on both the financial statements and the use of resources.

The Council's Internal Audit function is provided on a consortium basis and includes three other Councils.

The Internal Audit service is a key means of assurance. It is responsible for reviewing the adequacy of the controls throughout all areas of the Council and is compliant with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

The Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee approve the Internal Audit Charter, which sets out the Internal Audit role and its responsibilities and clarifies its independence, and the planned audit coverage.

The Head of Internal Audit Consortium's annual opinion as to the effectiveness of the Council's internal control environment for 2021/22 was:

*"In my opinion reasonable assurance can be provided on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework for governance, risk management and control for the year ended 2021/22.*

*Due to the ongoing impact of COVID-19 in 2021/22, less internal audit work has been completed than usual. Audits have been undertaken in critical areas or high risk areas to ensure the Council's governance remains robust. In my opinion, sufficient work has been completed and assurances ascertained to be able to provide an unlimited opinion on the systems of governance, risk management and control in place.*

*Assurance can never be absolute. In this context 'reasonable assurance' means that arrangements are in place to manage key risks and to meet good governance principles, but there are some areas where improvements are required."*





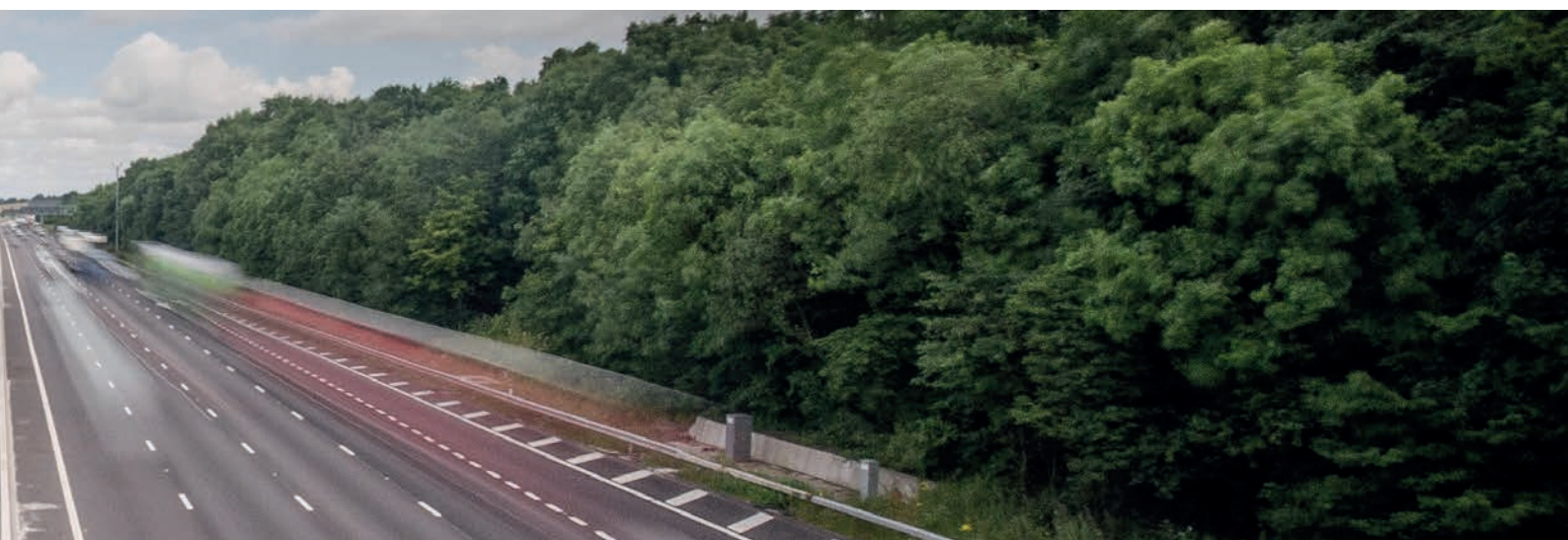
The **Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee** provides independent assurance of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Council's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment. The Committee also oversees the Council's corporate governance arrangements. It is a statutory requirement and consists of eight Councillors appointed annually on a politically balanced basis by the Council and one co-opted member appointed by the Council.

**Its main functions include:**

- Agreeing the Annual Governance Statement and the Annual Statement of Accounts.
- Overseeing Internal Audit's independence, objectivity, performance and professionalism and supporting the effectiveness of Internal Audit.

- Considering the effectiveness of Risk Management, including the risks of bribery, fraud and corruption.
- Considering the reports of External Auditors and Inspectors.
- Ensuring effective scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategies and associated policies.
- Receiving the Executive's budget proposals and scrutinise them in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution.
- Receiving a quarterly update on performance against relevant Corporate Plan targets from Portfolio Holders.

The Committee's effectiveness is reviewed on an annual basis utilising CIPFA's self-assessment of good practice, specifically aimed at Audit Committees.



## Conduct

The Council's Members' Code of Conduct and Employee code of conduct sets out the standards of conduct and behaviour that are required by all Councillors and staff respectively. The Council is legally required to have a Code of Conduct for Councillors by virtue of the Localism Act 2011. The Members' code including its compliance is managed by the Council's Monitoring Officer whereas employee conduct is managed by the Human Resources Team.

In 2021 the Local Government Association (LGA) produced a model Code of Conduct following recommendation from the Committee for Standards in Public Life. The draft code was considered by the Council's Standards Committee on 5th July 2021 and recommended to the Council to adopt a new code based on the LGA model. At the meeting of the Council on 21st July 2021, the Council resolved to adopt the new Code of Conduct for Councillors as recommended by the Standards Committee.

Key elements of the code require members to register relevant interests and to declare them at times when the Council, its committees or Executive, are making decisions. The

code also sets out the standard of behaviour expected which follows the Seven Principles of Public Life also known as the Nolan Principles. These are selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. The code also provides guidance on predisposition and predetermination when it comes to decision making.

Training on the new code of conduct has been provided to Members by the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officers.

In addition to the Code of Conduct members are subject to codes and protocols as set out in Part 5 of the Council's Constitution, namely:

- Social Media Guidance for Councillors;
- Gifts & Hospitality Guidance;
- Protocol on Member/Officer Relations
- Planning Protocol
- Member's Roles & Responsibilities

Training on all codes and protocols will be provided to returning and new members following the 2023 local elections.





## Whistleblowing

People who work for or with the Council are often the first to realise that there may be something wrong within the Council. However, they may feel unable to express their concerns for various reasons, including the fear of victimisation.

The Council has a Whistleblowing Policy that advises staff and others

who work for the Council how to raise concerns about activities in the workplace. The Whistleblowing policy is reviewed annually by the Standards Committee who also consider any entries on the whistleblowing register for the preceding 12 months. Full details are provided on the Council's website at [www.bolsover.gov.uk](http://www.bolsover.gov.uk)

## Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption

We recognise that as well as causing financial loss, fraud and corruption also detrimentally impact service provision and morale, and undermine confidence in the Council's governance and that of public bodies generally.

There is little evidence that the incidence of fraud is currently a major issue for the Council, but the risk is increasing nationally. The Council's

policy on Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption is in the final stages of being reviewed and updated. A fraud awareness training session was provided for all elected members during March 2020.

Our website tells you how you can report suspected fraud against the Council.





### 3. Significant Governance Issues

The progress made during 2021/22 on the significant issues identified in our 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement is shown below:

| Issue identified  | Commentary  |
|---|---|
| <p>1. Address the impact of Covid-19 upon the Council, local economy and community using the Council's recovery action plan.</p>  | <p>The Council has used the financial support received from the Government to help alleviate the impact of Covid-19 upon the Council, local economy and community wherever possible. We worked with Public Health and partners to ensure effective and robust delivery of Covid measures. Administered grants effectively and timely to ensure business support and recovery. Implemented a new Agile Working Policy and administered the £150 Council Tax Energy Rebate scheme.</p>  |
| <p>2. To put in place arrangements to manage the increased risk of cyber-security attack which severely impacts ICT systems and data in light of new working arrangements including agile working.</p>  | <p>The threat of a cyber-security attack was added to the Council's strategic risk register to raise the profile of the issue. An external check by government took place to test the effectiveness of our IT security. In addition a restructure of staff has taken place and investment provided to ensure resilience by the implementation of additional security measures. Information has been provided by the IT department to staff and members to raise awareness and mystery shopper type activities have taken place as part of training for members. This issue will be included again on the Annual Governance Statement for 2022/23 as it is felt the issue still remains.</p> |
| <p>3. Regular monitoring of the new 'in-house' recycling collections service.</p>   | <p>Financial and performance information was monitored throughout the year and reports were provided on a quarterly basis for officers' and members' information.</p>   |
| <p>4. Ensuring The Council is prepared and informed about the much delayed outcome of the Government's reviews on Local Government finances including the Fair Funding Review, the future of New Homes Bonus and Business Rates Retention Reform.</p> | <p>Quarterly budget monitoring reports, the medium term financial plan report and the Medium Term Financial Strategy, all provided updated information on the Government reviews for members throughout the year.</p> <p>Presentations were given at both Executive and Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee during the year for Members and at Senior Leadership Team meetings for the management team.</p>   |

**Based on our review of the governance framework, the following significant issues will be addressed in 2022/23:**

| Issue identified   | Commentary |
|--|------------|
| <b>1.</b> To support residents of the district in response to the current external events including the 'cost of living crisis' and the war in Ukraine.  |            |
| <b>2.</b> To continue to manage the risk of cyber-security attack through the ICT Strategic working group, monitor the increased risks due to new working arrangements including agile working and the external environment. |            |
| <b>3.</b> Address the recent difficulties in the recruitment to some professional posts, including the areas of legal and audit.   |            |
| <b>4.</b> Monitor the impact of the changes to the Governance Team to ensure continuous improvement.   |            |
| <b>5.</b> Continue to use the Risk Management Group to review the current Risk Strategy, regularly review the Corporate Strategic Risk Register and ensure a corporate grip on all risks identified.                         |            |

These issues will be supported by a detailed action plan, progress on which will be monitored during 2022/23 and reported to senior management and to the Audit and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee.

No other major changes to the Council's governance framework are planned for 2022/23, but we will continue to review and adapt it so that it continues to support the Council in meeting its challenges and in fulfilling its purpose, and ensure that the framework remains proportionate to the risks that are faced.

## Coronavirus Pandemic

The 2021/22 financial year has been a year of gradually returning to business as usual wherever possible.

Our leisure centre facilities and customer contact centres opened whenever restrictions allowed and have been open continuously since July. Equipment was removed to allow social distancing in the leisure centre and screens were installed in all areas where contact was unavoidable, such as reception and payment counters. Where it has been appropriate, these measures have now been reduced.

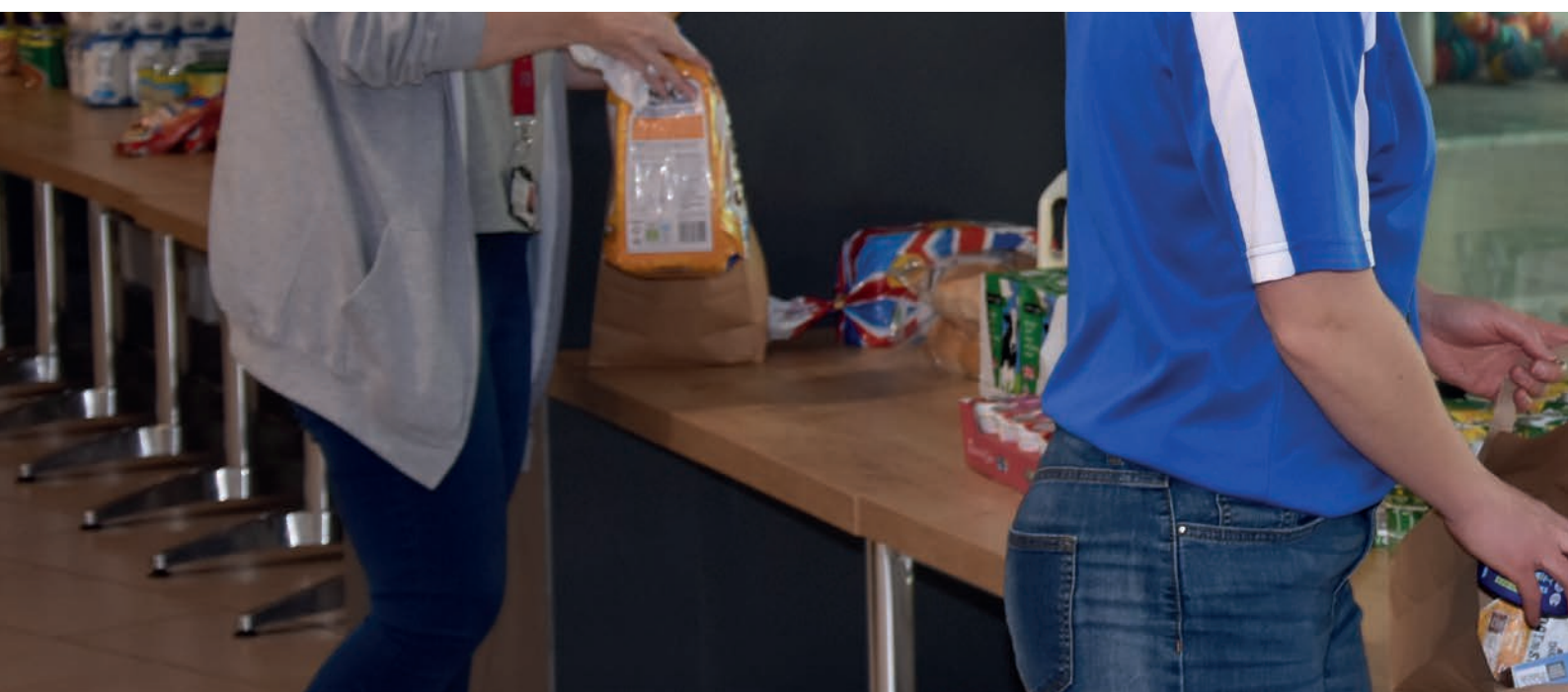
Council property lettings were suspended and visits to resident's homes for anything other than emergency repairs were suspended at certain times in line with government guidelines, to protect the resident and our workforce. These services are now fully operational.

The Council's environmental health service has been heavily involved in carrying out compliance and enforcement activities related to Covid-19 to protect the public as the country and economy started to re-open.

Debt recovery across the Council was suspended during the national lockdowns and until after the customer contact centres re-opened to ensure every opportunity was given to customers to pay their outstanding commitments, before any reminder letters were issued. Debt recovery is now once again being undertaken.

Our revenues and benefits section, economic development team and partnership team were all heavily involved in processing and making payments under the myriad of government financial support schemes introduced for individuals and businesses. Council Tax and Business Rates relief were also administered by the revenues and benefits section.

The table below shows the main sources of financial support the Council received from the Government to support business, individuals and the Council's own additional cost pressures and losses in income due to the pandemic.





|  | Amount available to spend in 2021/22                         | Amount paid at 31/3/22       |
|--|--|------------------------------|
| Business support grant funding from Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS)                 | £8.334m for businesses (including £3.995m b/f from 2020/21)  | £5.510m in grants            |
| Test and trace support payment scheme funding from the Department of Health and Social Care                        | £0.268m for individuals (including £0.097m b/f from 2020/21) | £0.202m in payments          |
| Emergency funding to cover the Council's extra costs from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities | £0.497m  | Not applicable               |
| Compensation for the Council's losses for Sales, Fees and Charges  | £0.195m  | Not applicable               |
| Covid-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) (BDC only share)  | £0.595m for businesses                                       | £0.595m relief against bills |

Throughout the year staff continued to work from home in some office based services and hybrid council meetings were held. These had a combination

of remote and socially distanced attendees and were delivered via Zoom.



## 4. Opinion

The Council is satisfied that appropriate governance arrangements are in place and are fit for purpose.

We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the significant governance issues set out above to ensure that our governance arrangements remain robust.

We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Executive Director of Resources (Head of Paid Service)**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Leader**