

Annual Governance Statement

for year ended 31 March 2025



www.bolsover.gov.uk

Bolsover
District Council

Foreword

“Our vision is to maximise our influence and opportunities within the East Midlands Combined County Authority to drive the continued delivery of excellent services, maximise local aspirations and drive economic prosperity for Bolsover District.”

Bolsover District - The Future 2024-2028 is the Council's new strategic plan. In developing this plan, we have worked with elected members, residents and staff to shape and focus our ambitions for the next four years.

This plan cannot possibly cover every service we provide or every ambition we want to achieve. Instead, it tells you how we will work, what we will focus on and what our priorities are. It responds to the short, medium and longer-term issues. These are challenging times, but by working together we will continue to deliver

and support stronger, healthier and more vibrant towns and communities.

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 2024/2025.



Karen Hanson
Chief Executive Officer
(Head of Paid Service)



Jane Yates
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 2025 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 worked in a number of areas 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 and Derbyshire Dales District 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 development company, wholly owned by Bolsover District Council, as a company limited by shares. Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Ltd. is a management company which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Dragonfly Development Ltd, as a company limited by shares. These two entities form the Dragonfly Group and have been established to take advantage of the wider trading powers provided by the Localism Act 2011.

We have a local partnership (Bolsover Partnership) which engages with a range of local partners. We also actively participate in the D2 Strategic Leadership Board, and are non-constituent members of the East Midlands Mayoral Combined County Authority.

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

appropriate governance management arrangements.

Dragonfly Development Ltd and Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Ltd

Dragonfly Development Ltd (DDL) was formed as a joint venture partnership between the Council and Robert Woodhead Construction Ltd. DDL is a development company that continues to undertake many of the major property schemes on behalf of the Council, including the Council's Bolsover Homes project. In 2022 Robert Woodhead Construction Ltd ceased trading and the Council acquired 100% of DDL's shares.

Shortly after that the Council examined the potential for the vehicle and following a business case it created a second company- Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Ltd (DMBL). This company is a subsidiary of DDL and provides services to the Council such as housing repairs, economic development and estates services.

Both DDL and DMBL are wholly owned by the Council and governance arrangements are set out in the Group Shareholder Agreement. This agreement regulates the activities of both companies and ensures that the

Council retains influence over strategic objectives and significant decisions of DDL. In addition there is a separate service level agreement between the Council and DMBL which sets out the specific services that DMBL will provide back to the Council together with performance targets.

Decisions of DDL and DMBL are made by the respective board of directors. The membership of both boards consists of 5 district councillors and the Chief Executive of the Dragonfly companies. The District Council has established a Shareholder Board consisting of Members and officers whose role is to consider proposals from DDL and DMBL, to review performance and to make recommendations to the Executive or to Full Council. In addition the work of DDL and DMBL is subject to scrutiny and updates are regularly reported to the Council's Local Growth Scrutiny Committee.



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 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.

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.

Performance Management

Performance monitoring is undertaken by the Scrutiny Committees. In addition, Portfolio Holders meet regularly with officers, Assistant Directors, Directors and the Chief Executive 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.

In addition, the Narrative Report which is included within the Council's Statement of Accounts, contains a summary of progress made in the past year against each of the Council's targets which support our priorities.

The Council's Ambition 2020-2024 came to the end of its lifespan in 2024. A new strategic plan, 'Bolsover District - The Future 2024-2028' has been developed. The strategic plan will replace the Ambition, and it outlines the key areas that the Council will focus on over the next four years.

The Council's overall Vision is 'to maximise our influence and opportunities within the East Midlands Combined County Authority to drive the continued delivery of excellent services, maximise local aspirations and drive economic prosperity for Bolsover District'.

The Future sets out four main strategic aims – Customers, Economy, Environment and Housing. Beneath each of these are a number of priorities which will be considered in the delivery of services. A suite of performance indicators supports the Future.

OUR PRIORITIES

Customers

We are committed to:

- Continuous improvement to service delivery through innovation, modernisation and listening to customers.
- Improving the customer experience and removing barriers to accessing information and services.
- Having an agile working, responsive, skilled, and engaged workforce.
- Continuing to work with partners from all sectors, ensuring priorities are aligned to benefit the residents of Bolsover District.
- Promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion, and supporting and involving vulnerable and disadvantaged people.
- Improving health, wellbeing and increasing participation in sport, leisure, and social activities.

Economy

We are committed to:

- Actively working with partners to support enterprise, innovation, jobs, and skills.
- Unlocking regeneration and development potential of long-term vacant land and buildings, and stalled sites and deliver income-generating capital projects.
- Ensuring financial sustainability, increasing revenue streams, achieving best value, and making the best use of our assets.
- Promoting the district and working with partners to increase and support the creative, cultural and tourism sector.
- Maximising our influence and opportunities within the East Midlands Combined County Authority to collectively ensure our citizens have the opportunity to develop key skills and access opportunities to work well, and help create a strong and sustainable local economy.

Environment

We are committed to:

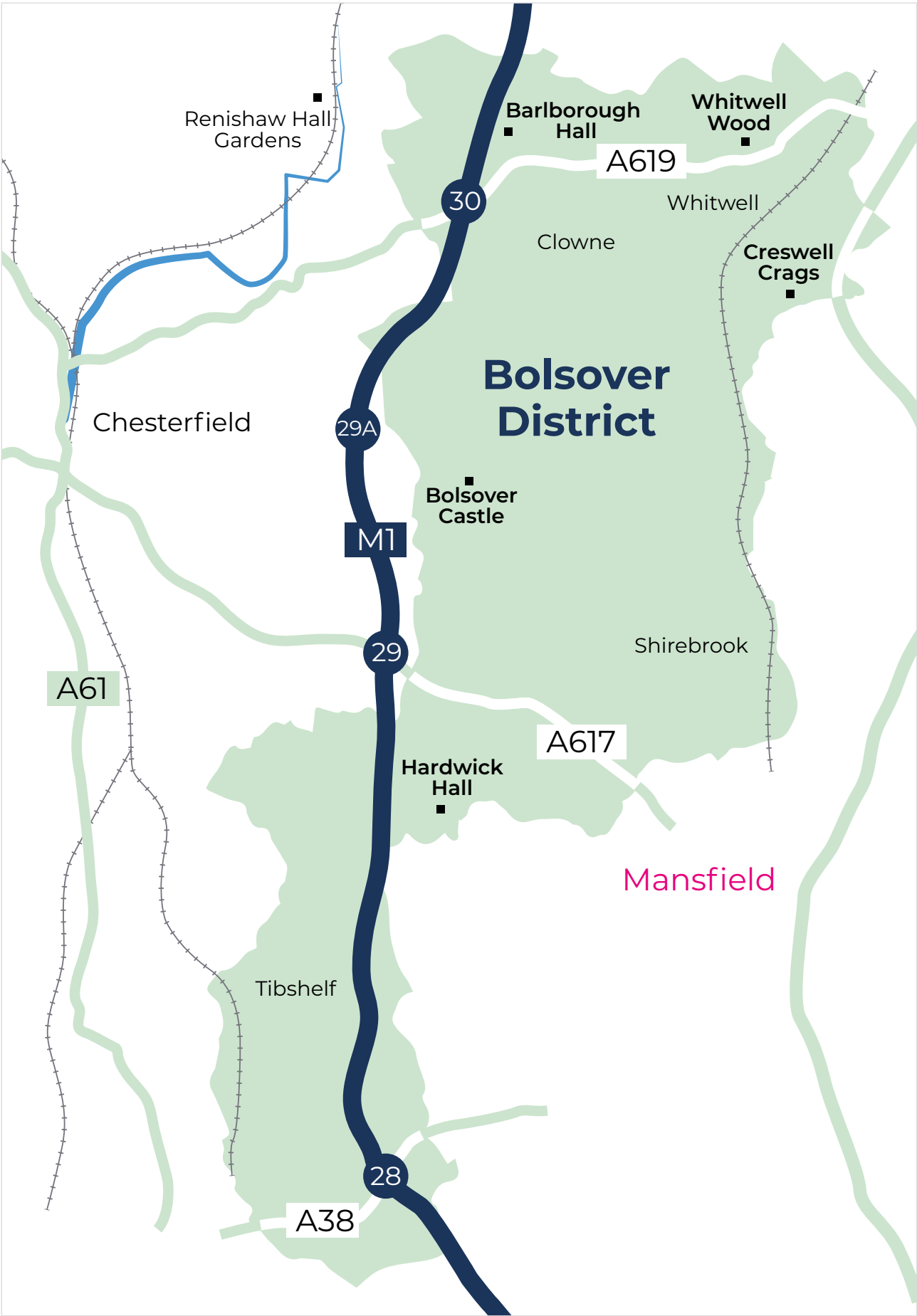
- Maximising our influence and opportunities within the East Midlands Combined County Authority to collectively lead the way in moving from fossil to fusion and play our part in achieving our national ambition to achieve net zero by 2050.
- Reducing our carbon footprint whilst supporting and encouraging residents and businesses to do the same.
- Increasing recycling.
- Enhancing biodiversity across the district.
- Working with stakeholders, regional and local partnerships to deliver shared strategies and priorities that support the local environment.
- Ensuring all areas, neighbourhoods, and streets in the district, irrespective of housing tenure or type, are places where people want to live, feel safe, and are proud to live.

Housing

We are committed to:

- Enabling housing growth by increasing the supply, quality, and range of housing to meet the needs of the growing population.
- Building more, good quality, affordable housing, and being a decent landlord.
- Preventing and responding to homelessness through early intervention and personalised solutions.
- Maintaining and improving property and housing management standards and ensuring that standards and living conditions in the district contribute towards better health outcomes for all.
- Maximising our influence and opportunities within the East Midlands Combined County Authority to create affordable, good quality housing options and to retrofit existing homes to be more environmentally sustainable.

To help us continue to be a flexible, adaptable and an efficient organisation we have adopted the following values: We will show respect, honesty, care, and compassion in everything we do. We will challenge ourselves and change for the better. We will be open and transparent. We are proud and passionate about what we do. We will continue to work as a team and with partners to provide quality services.



The diagram features a central 'Governance Code' box with two large red arrows originating from it. One arrow curves upwards and to the right, pointing towards the 'Vision' box. The other arrow curves downwards and to the right, pointing towards the 'Assurance Required on:' and 'Sources of Assurance:' boxes. The 'Vision' box is at the top right, and the two assurance boxes are below it, with the 'Assurance Required on:' box on the left and the 'Sources of Assurance:' box on the right.

Vision: Our vision is to maximise our influence and opportunities within the East Midlands Combined County Authority to drive the continued delivery of excellent services, maximise local aspirations and drive economic prosperity for Bolsover District.

**Governance
Code**

Assurance Required on:

- Delivery of The Future
- 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
- Regulator for Social Housing

Assurances Received:

- External Audit and Inspection reporting
- Internal Audit reporting
- Risk and Control Registers and Risk Management Reporting
- 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
- The Regulator for Social Housing - received a rating of C2

Opportunities for Improvement

- Disclaimer of opinion on the Council's 2023/24 Financial Statements.
- The impact of Local Government Reorganisation on the Council, and the effect on the capacity of senior officers.
- The Council received a limited Audit report for debtors during 2024/25.
- Dragonfly Management received a limited Audit report for non-decent homes reporting during 2024/25.
- The action plan resulting from the external review of Dragonfly companies, commissioned by the Council from Local Partnerships.

Annual Governance Statement

Governance Framework

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.

The Risk Management framework includes a quarterly reporting process to Audit Committee.

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.

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 new, or changes to existing government legislation which has an impact on the Council's budget or ability to carry out its statutory functions.

STR2

Failure to deliver a balanced budget in line with the MTFP.

STR3

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

Difficulty recruiting to professional posts (for example Environmental Health Officers, qualified lawyers and auditors).

STR5

Delivery of statutory services alongside the Council's Vision, initiatives, major 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

Impact of pandemic upon the Council, 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, increased rent arrears and reduced leisure income.

STR13

Housing Pressures: Homelessness and pressure on suitable housing provision across the District. Increases in the number of Section 21 Notices being issued by private sector landlords. Housing resettlement programmes.

STR14

The impact of Climate Change.

STR15

Failure of appropriate governance and financial management arrangements in relation to Dragonfly Development Ltd and Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Ltd, wholly owned companies of the Council.

STR16

Risks associated with the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and generative Artificial Intelligence (AI).

STR17

Pleasley Vale Business Park and Outdoor Centre.

STR18

Impact of the English Devolution White Paper on the Council.

STR19

Impact of the new waste collection duties.

STR20

Introduction of the East Midlands County Combined Authority.

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.

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

The Constitution sets out the functions of key governance officers, including the statutory posts of 'Head of Paid Service' (Chief Executive Officer), 'Monitoring Officer' (Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer) and 'Section 151 Officer' (Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer) 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.

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.





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 Finance 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. This document is updated every year before the budget process begins and approved at Council.

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.

Income generation from housing, property, commercial and regeneration activities are the main reasons the Council established its wholly owned companies, Dragonfly Developments Limited and Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Limited, which are predicted to provide the Council with a positive income stream when they are fully established.

The Financial Management Code

CIPFA has developed the 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. Local government finance in the UK is governed by primary legislation, regulation and professional standards as supported by statutory provision. The general financial management of a local authority, however, has not until now been supported by a professional code.

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 Senior 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.

During February 2024, the latest routine audit was carried out. The assurance level achieved was 'Reasonable', which means "the majority of controls are in place and operating effectively, although some control improvements are required. The system should achieve its objectives, risks are generally well managed."

Local Audit Delays

At the Audit Committee on the 12th of March 2024, it was reported about the local audit delays, the consultation on clearing the backlog of audits, and the proposals for the future to ensure the timely audits for the sector. On the 22nd of January 2025, an update to the March report was provided based on the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) document 'The local audit backstop – key questions answered for audit committee members.'

The backstop date for the sign off of 2023/24 financial statements was the 28th of February 2025. The Council's financial statements for 2023/24, included group accounts for the first time. The Council received the Dragonfly audited financial statements from their auditors during February 2025.

The Council's auditors Forvis Mazars, 'were unable to complete the audit procedures necessary to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence on which to base an opinion before the date the Council had to publish the financial statements for 2023/24.' The Council received a disclaimer of opinion on the financial statements for 2023/24 on the 21st of February 2025.

Forvis Mazars now need to rebuild assurance over the Council's group financial statements for 2023/24. It is currently unknown by all parties what this will entail, but it is not expected that it will cause issues for the 2024/25 accounts process by the finance team. In addition, Dragonfly have already appointed a new auditor, and they are already working with them to improve the timeliness of the production of their financial statements, to ensure the 2024/25 deadlines can be met.



Procurement of Goods and Services

The Procurement Act 2023 came into force on 24th February 2025 and is designed to reform public procurement by simplifying processes and improving transparency. It aims to make it easier for small businesses and social enterprises to compete for public contracts and ensures taxpayer money is spent effectively. There are additional requirements on the Council to comply with the new procurement legislation. To meet these challenges the Council has created a Bolsover focussed procurement team and has recruited a new Procurement Manager.

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 current 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

Assurance from Internal and External Audit

The Council's external auditor is Forvis Mazars. 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. As discussed in the 'Local Audit Delays' section, the External Auditor gave a disclaimer of opinion on the Council's 2023/24 financial statements that for the first time included group accounts.

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 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 2024/25 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 2024/25.

Reasonable assurance can also be provided for Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Ltd. The governance arrangements between the Council and the companies have not been assessed by internal audit during the year as the Council has commissioned an independent review by Local Partnerships, commencing in April 2025.

For Dragonfly Development Ltd, the Council is placing reliance on the assurance received from the company's external auditors.

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 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 six 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.

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

The **Finance and Corporate Overview Scrutiny Committee** is one of four Scrutiny Committees run by the Council.

Generally, their role is to review and/or scrutinise decisions made or actions taken in connection with the discharge of any of the Council's functions.

The Finance and Corporate Overview Scrutiny specifically:

- Ensures effective scrutiny of the Treasury Management Strategies and associated policies.
- Receives the Executive's budget proposals and scrutinises them in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules in the Council's Constitution.
- Receives a quarterly update on performance against relevant Corporate Plan targets from Portfolio Holders.



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. This Council adopted the new Code of Conduct for Councillors during 2021/22.

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.

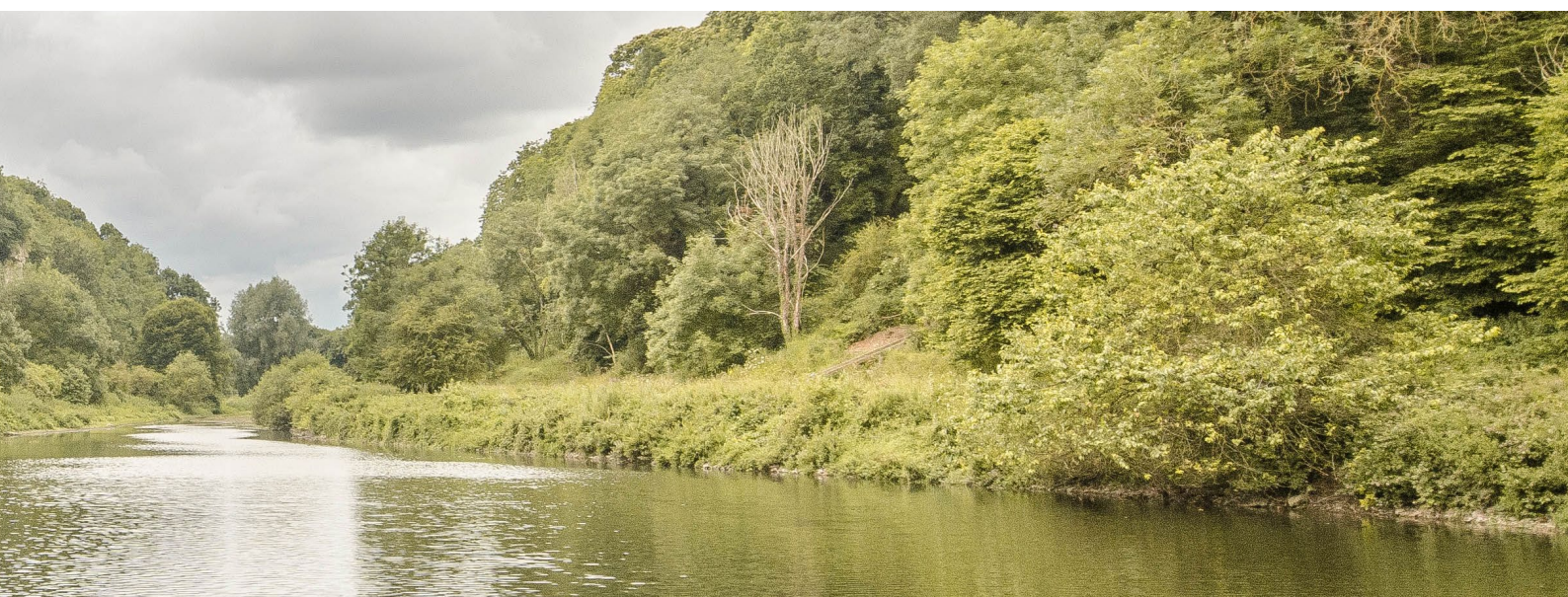
Training on the new code of conduct has been provided to Members by the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer.

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 was provided to returning and new members following the 2023 local elections.

Mid-term training is to be provided during 2025/26.



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

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 was approved by Executive at its meeting on 3rd October 2022. Training on Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption and Anti-Money Laundering was provided for returning and new members following the 2023 local elections.

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



3. Significant Governance Issues

The progress made during 2024/25 on the significant issues identified in our 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement is shown below:

	Issue identified	Commentary
1.	To further develop arrangements with the Dragonfly companies, including client and management arrangements for the Council.	A full independent review of the companies including governance arrangements was commissioned by the Council in September 2024. This commenced in March 2025 and an action plan will be produced as part of the review.
2.	To develop the Council's role in the new East Midlands Mayoral Combined County Authority.	Following changes to some roles and responsibilities of staff, a new devolution team has been created within the Council. Working closely with the Economic Growth team, this team work closely with the East Midlands Mayoral Combined County Authority on funding opportunities and inward investment. The Leader of the Council and other Members attend various sub-committees with the new Authority.
3.	To address any gaps in Member training/ knowledge.	Appropriate training has been provided including, planning, licensing and equalities.
4.	Potential significant cost increases in insurance premiums and/ or excess levels, for Pleasley Vale business units when the insurance renewal is carried out in October 2024.	A Pleasley Vale Insurance Reserve was established in October 2024 to cover costs incurred which would normally have been settled by the insurance company. This decision was taken as a result of not being able to obtain flood or storm damage cover from any insurance company. The value of the reserve is £1m. It is hoped the work being undertaken by the Council to mitigate flood damage in the future, will mean flood cover can be obtained at the next renewal.

Based on our review of the governance framework, the following significant issues will be addressed in 2025/26:

	Issue identified	Commentary
1.	Disclaimer of opinion on the Council's 2023/24 Financial Statements.	
2.	The impact of Local Government Reorganisation on the Council, and the effect on the capacity of senior officers.	
3.	The Council received a limited Audit report for debtors during 2024/25.	
4.	Dragonfly Management received a limited Audit report for non-decent homes reporting during 2024/25.	
5.	The action plan resulting from the external review of Dragonfly companies, commissioned by the Council from Local Partnerships.	

These issues will be supported by a detailed action plan, progress on which will be monitored during 2025/26 and reported to senior management and to the Audit Committee.

No other major changes to the Council's governance framework are planned for 2025/26, 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.

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: _____

Chief Executive Officer (Head of Paid Service)

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Leader

Equalities Statement

Bolsover District Council is committed to equalities as an employer and when delivering the services it provides to all sections of the community. The Council believes that no person should be treated unfairly and is committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination, advancing equality and fostering good relations between all groups in society.

Access for All statement

You can request this document or information in another format such as large print or language or contact us by:

- **Phone** – 01246 242424
- **Email** – enquiries@bolsover.gov.uk
- **BSL Video Call** – a three way video call with us and a BSL interpreter. It is free to call Bolsover District Council with Sign Solutions, you just need wifi or mobile data to make the video call, or call into one of our Contact Centres.
- **Call with Relay UK** via textphone or app on 0800 500 888 – a free phone service provided by BT for anyone who has difficulty hearing or speaking. It's a way to have a real time conversation with us by text.
- **Visiting one of our offices** at Clowne, Bolsover, Shirebrook and South Normanton.