

Medway Council

Annual Governance Statement 2024-25

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1. Scope of responsibility

Medway Council is a unitary local authority in the Southeast of England and is responsible for providing numerous public services to its population. The Council when conducting its business is obligated through law that

- it does so in accordance with the law and proper standards,
- public money is safeguarded,
- public money is
 - properly accounted for
 - used economically, efficiently and effectively.

The Council has a Best Value duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having a regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In May 2024 the government issued Best Value Standards and Intervention: statutory guide for best value authorities, which has been considered in the production of this document.

Additionally, the Council must put in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, effective exercise of its functions and manages risks. In 2016, CIPFA and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) published 'Delivering Good Governance' framework that "defines the principles that should underpin the governance of each local government organisation".

This code was recently updated in May 2025, Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: framework, Addendum, covering the annual governance and annual governance statement, which will be applicable to annual governance statements for 2025/26. The Councils local code of corporate governance based on the original guidance and approved at its meeting on 13 November 2008 will need to be reviewed in light of this recent addendum.

Further, CIPFA has issued a financial management code (2019) and the Local Government Association have produced an Improvement and Assurance Framework for Local Government May 2024. It is regrettable that there are multiple codes/frameworks resulting in a myriad of partially overlapping requirements rather than a joined up approach resulting in single governance assurance framework.

This Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25 has been prepared in line with all of the above frameworks in an attempt to simply reporting but also provide assurance from the widest perspective.

2. The purpose of the governance framework

Corporate governance is overseen by the Audit Committee and each year it receives and reviews this statement, under delegation from the full Council. The operational elements of the Council's governance framework are the responsibility of the Chief Operating Officer (S151 Officer) and the Monitoring Officer within their statutory roles.

The council operates a Leader and Cabinet governance model and thus they too play a critical role in ensuring that decision making and policy setting is undertaken appropriately.

This statement sets out how the Council has complied with the code and how it also meets the requirements of Regulation 6 (1b) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 in relation to the publication of a governance statement.

The governance framework documents the culture, values, systems and processes, by which the authority is directed, controlled, the activities through which it is held accountable, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives, consider its performance and improvement, management of risk and to consider if those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services and their impacts on local residents and businesses.

The councils system of internal control is a significant part of the 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 therefore it can only provide a reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an on-going 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 to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

3. Review of effectiveness of the governance framework

Medway Council has a responsibility to conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. That review is informed by the work of the elected executive and appointed officers who have the responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Internal Audit & Counter Fraud's annual report and comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

In maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance framework, the review has considered the following:

- The corporate and business planning processes of the Council
- The corporate performance management framework and the corporate performance reporting processes of the Council
- Reviews carried out by Internal Audit, External Audit and other review bodies which generate reports commenting on the effectiveness of the systems of internal control employed by the Council

- The consideration of External Audit reports by the Audit Committee
- The opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's overall control environment from the Head of Internal Audit & Counter Fraud

The Council's Corporate Management Team and Head of Internal Audit & Counter Fraud were provided with an opportunity to review and comment on the draft AGS (email August 2025), and assurance sought that key elements of the control framework were in place during the year in their divisions and control weaknesses were identified and addressed.

The following sections of this statement summarise the results of this review; presenting the governance framework that has been in place at Medway Council for the year ended 31 March 2025 and up to the date of approval of this Statement.

Core Principle A	How we have complied in 2024/25
<p>Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.</p>	<p>The roles and responsibilities of elected members, officers and the processes to govern the conduct of the Council's business are set out in the Council's Constitution. The constitution is available on the council's website and as a living document is updated regularly by the Monitoring Officer, supported by a team, inclusive of the schemes of delegations, terms of reference and various procedure rules.</p> <p>The constitution includes summaries of various fora in the Articles, detailed rules governing procedure and conduct of meetings, access to meetings and documents, contracting, procurement, financial matters and minimum standards of behaviour and conduct.</p> <p>A cross-party governance group, with members from all political groups on the council meets regularly to review governance matters and consider revisions.</p> <p>Codes of conduct, based on the Nolan principles for conduct in public life are in place and define the high ethical values and standards of behaviour expected from elected members and officers to make sure that public business is conducted with fairness and integrity. Members are required to review and update (if necessary) their declaration of interests form annually which are published on the council website. The codes require disclosure of relevant interests and abstaining from debate and decision making in defined circumstances, as well as the disclosure of gifts and hospitality. An officer from democratic services is present at all formal meetings to support members with advice on the code of conduct and declaration of interests. A lawyer is present at decision making bodies to assist with this, any legal queries and lawful decision making.</p> <p>A process for receiving complaints of alleged breaches of the code by members is published on the council's website together with the procedure that will be followed for their determination. A screening process has been adopted to facilitate speedier consideration and support decision making by the council's Monitoring Officer, the principal advisor to the Councillor Conduct Committee (standards committee). The council has appointed an Independent Person to support the Monitoring Officer and the work of the Councillor Conduct Committee, which is periodically updated on compliance with the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer and his team are responsible for ensuring that agreed procedures are followed, that decisions are intra vires and that all applicable statutes and regulations are complied with and his team of officers in</p>

	<p>Democratic Services ensure that internal governance procedures are complied with.</p> <p>All reports to decision making forums contain detailed narrative on risk management, climate change, financial and legal implications, the latter two being written by subject matter professionals.</p> <p>Complaints received under the Councils Speak Up, (Whistle blowing policy), are received and reviewed by the Councils S151, Monitoring Officer and Chief Organisational Culture Officer. The outcome of such complaints are reported to the Audit Committee on an annual basis. Additionally, the former regularly review employee complaints (grievances) and any matters at employment tribunals.</p> <p>The Council seeks feedback from the public through consultation exercises, questions to full council, petitions, its complaints and comments procedures and responds to the outcomes, as appropriate. Social media feedback is also reviewed and escalated as appropriate. The Councils corporate management team regularly receive reports on complaints handling and the Monitoring Officer receives communications on and attends meetings to discuss the outcomes of complaints escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.</p> <p>The officers forming the Golden triangle (Head of Paid Service, S151 officer and Monitoring Officer) meet on a monthly basis to discuss governance matters and each meets separately with the Leader of the Council to brief him on their specific responsibilities.</p> <p>The S151 officer has managerial oversight and responsibility for budget setting and monitoring, the latter being undertaken on a monthly basis with formal quarterly reporting to members. He also manages the Head of Internal Audit and Counter Fraud. The Monitoring Officer chairs the councils Procurement Board with representatives from all directorates, where significant procurement exercises are reviewed and approved, contract management reviews considered and challenge provided.</p> <p>All members of the Corporate Management Team are members of the councils Security and Information Governance Group (SIGG), including the councils DPO, SIRO and Caldicott Guardian ensuring that the council has appropriate systems and processes in place for receipt, processing and storage of personal/ sensitive data. The council uses a system of Meta compliance to ensure that all officers undertake DPA training relevant to their roles.</p>
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	<p>The councils Head of Democratic Services is the statutory scrutiny officer and his team support the scrutiny committees to hold the executive and other key stakeholders to account. Each year the committees are supported to establish a task and finish group to undertake more detailed scrutiny of a topic chosen by them.</p>
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Core Principle B	How we have complied in 2024/25
<p>Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.</p>	<p>All meetings of the Council, its committees, the Executive, Overview and Scrutiny committees and reports considered there are produced, circulated and held in public unless there are good reasons for not doing so, primarily relating to material considered to be “exempt” within the meaning of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A. A proportionate approach is adopted to exempt only that information which needs to be kept private with the remainder being considered in open sessions.</p> <p>Meetings of the Council, Cabinet and other committees are now accessible by members of the public through live streaming in addition to attendance in person and post event on media streaming channels.</p> <p>All reports to be considered at Cabinet are circulated to the team of 25 (Cabinet and CMT) who meet on a monthly basis where collaborative input is actively sought in addition to respectful challenge. The constitution details those forums and the mechanisms by which questions/ representations can be made by members of the public/ stakeholders.</p>

	<p>Unless confidential, decisions made by Council, the Cabinet or other Committees are made in the public domain and records available publicly. All decisions are explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. The impact and consequences of all decisions are clearly set out.</p> <p>Provision for urgent decisions is allowed for in the Constitution. They are kept to a minimum and retrospectively reported to Council to uphold transparency and accountability.</p> <p>The Council seeks community views on a wide range of issues and undertakes regular consultation and engagement with citizens and service users using a variety of engagement methods. Medway Matters, a council newspaper is produced quarterly, the Leader and the Chief Executive hold public engagement events twice a year across the district via Medway Matters live and there is extensive use of social media.</p>
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Core Principle C	How we have complied in 2024/25
<p>Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.</p>	<p>The Council works with its partners to set the vision and priorities for the area. The Council manages a process of bringing together performance data, demographic information and consultation findings to determine key shared priorities.</p> <p>The One Medway Council Plan forms an essential part of the Council's governance framework, setting out the council's priorities and the measures against which success will be judged.</p> <p>A new council plan was adopted by the incoming administration following the all out municipal elections in May 2023. The election resulted in a change of administration and three political groups were formed on the Council. Following by elections held in February 2025 four political groups now operate on the Council. A light refresh of the plan was conducted early this year.</p> <p>There is programmed periodic reporting of progress against the plan, achievement against targets and milestones. The overview and scrutiny committees hold the executive to account in public meetings on their performance levels and proposed remedial plans, if any are required. The Health and Adult Social Care O & S Committee have close working arrangements with the NHS, ICB and acute trust seeking to positively improve health outcomes for our residents.</p> <p>All Cabinet and Council (including matters delegated to committees) decisions are made following consideration of formal reports, which all follow a Council template supported by guidance on its completion.</p> <p>All such reports are checked on behalf of the Chief Operating Officer (S151 Officer) and the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance (the Monitoring Officer) for financial and legal implications.</p> <p>Cabinet reports also include a mandatory paragraph on risks, equalities and climate change implications to enable the Council to consider holistically the implications of its proposed decisions, promote its public sector equality duty and as well as explicit equalities implications to promote fair access to services and take the longer view about the impact of the decision on future generations impacted by climate change.</p> <p>The Council is rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and recorded, with clear recommendations set out in the reports together with reasons for those recommendations.</p>

	<p>All significant procurement exercises seek bidders to advise on what social value input will be provided to improve the medium to long term economic and social wellbeing of our residents and communities, these are assessed using the TOMs framework (Themes Outcomes and Measures). The details of evaluation criteria are shared with potential bidders and the scoring is shared with procurement board allowing for challenge before appointment.</p> <p>The procurement board has forward plan setting the end date of existing arrangements and when consideration of new procurement exercises must be commenced to allow for a more strategic approach across the council and easier identification of linkages and opportunities for collaborations.</p>
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Core Principle D	How we have complied in 2024/25
<p>Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes</p>	<p>Reports presented to decision making forums present options followed by clear objective analysis and a set of recommendations together with reasons for those recommendations. Associated risks and mitigation strategies are also detailed.</p> <p>In determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered the Council is increasingly engaging with internal and external stakeholders. The Council invited CIPFA to undertake a Corporate Governance Review to provide an independent assessment of its use of resources, which found no failings. Where greater levels of efficiencies and or effectiveness can be achieved, this is achieved through partnership working and collaborative use of resources across the voluntary, public and private sectors. Community benefit and added social value is an important and formal consideration in the procurement of goods and services made possible using the national TOMs model.</p> <p>We have enhanced our Procurement Board to conduct post contract/ extension reviews to embedded learning in future exercises and now have a forward plan so that there is greater visibility of upcoming procurements and options for alignment of synergies.</p> <p>The Council fosters effective relationships, collaborative working and contractual arrangements with other public, private, and voluntary organisations in delivering services that meet the needs of the local community as stated in the Council Plan.</p> <p>The budget setting process is extensive utilising economic projections and service led demand analysis to make sure estimates are robust and realistic. Directors are provided with early resource envelopes and work collaboratively with member portfolio holders to assess demand, develop capital and revenue projects and identify areas for savings delivery. Proposals developed are reviewed jointly by the Team of 25 to make they are ambitious but also respectfully challenged.</p> <p>Quarterly reporting on delivery of both qualitative and financial metrics is considered by CMT and at Cabinet in an open and transparent manner.</p> <p>The councils joint venture operations (Medway Norse, Kyndi and MDC) were reviewed and their governance models updated to include independent non-executive directors with the boards reporting to cabinet sub committees.</p>

	<p>The council introduced a Financial Improvement and Transformation (FIT) plan to oversee the achievement of financial savings and also the transformation plan, reporting monthly to CMT and quarterly to cabinet.</p> <p>The SIGG receives quarterly reports on FOI and SAR responses rates, broken down by division, with all breaches being reported to the SIRO and agreed remedial actions. The councils Chief Information Officer and Head of Technology are both members of SIGG to ensure that cyber security and AI impacts are considered when assessing risks.</p> <p>Following the changes to public procurement regime relevant officers have been required to undertake online training and our procedures have been revised to take advantage of new opportunities.</p> <p>A programme of training for managers and new staff has been introduced (Complete Medway Manager) which provides an introduction to management at Medway and in the public sector so that new recruits gain basic understanding of decision making / information governance, finance HR processes and others.</p>
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Core Principle E	How we have complied in 2024/25
<p>Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</p>	<p>The new administration elected in May 2023 have settled into their roles and provide strong leadership, working collaboratively with officers across the ranges but particularly CMT, collectively known as the team of 25.</p> <p>Following the by elections in February 2025 there was small reshuffle in the membership of the cabinet and other committees. Members taking on new responsibilities were comprehensively supported.</p> <p>The Chief Executive and his CMT are relatively stable with only 1 change in officers providing stability, capability and capacity in leadership. The corporate management team consisting of the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Executive, • two Directors (one of whom is the Deputy Chief Executive), • Director of Public Health, • Chief Operating Officer (the statutory Section 151 Officer), • Assistant Director Legal and Governance (the statutory Monitoring Officer), • six Assistant Directors • the Chief Organisational Culture Officer and • the Head of Communications and Marketing <p>The corporate management team and members of the cabinet (team of 25) meet regularly to discuss and agree strategic direction and operational matters. Such meetings are conducted away from the public gaze to enable the free and frank exchange of views, appropriate checks and balances on authority, and a meeting of minds to facilitate collective decision making. Such conversations support capacity development and the attainment of new skills and experience. When relevant officers are unable to attend, their substitutes attend and this contributes and a soft induction and development for succession planning.</p> <p>The Chief Executive is responsible and accountable to the Council for all aspects of management including promoting sound governance, providing quality information/support to inform decision making and scrutiny, supporting other statutory officers, and building relationships with all Councillors.</p> <p>There are regular meetings between senior officers and cabinet portfolio holders, committee chairpersons to ensure</p>

	<p>close working and the development of professional relationships.</p> <p>The three statutory officers responsible for corporate governance meet on a monthly basis to share and discuss matters affecting the councils operations and broader strategic issues.</p> <p>The council has introduced a comprehensive induction programme, the complete medway manager, to upskill all new entrants with a basic understanding of working in the public sector and those behaviours and values important to Medway.</p> <p>The council has rolled out its Medpay scheme tackling the councils uncompetitive pay offer, resulting in reductions in turnover and temporary staffing costs. The roles of officers are defined in revised agreed job profiles. All roles have been evaluated using a single model to ensure consistency of approach to rewards and mitigate against potential claims. The new pay structure formalises workforce planning and development, staff performance and progression based on objective, transparent, measurable criteria following independent evaluation.</p> <p>The constitution includes a member officer protocol approved by full Council delineating the separate roles of officers and members and also citing how both need to work together to optimise outcomes for the population.</p> <p>A publicised scheme of delegations sets out those matters on which different member fora have decision making responsibility and further a scheme for officers that sets out those matters upon which they have authority to take decisions is regularly updated.</p>
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Core Principle F	How we have complied in 2024/25
<p>Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</p>	<p>The Council has overall responsibility for directing and controlling the organisation, it has approved a Leader/ Executive model of decision making. The executive or Cabinet is the primary decision-making body, which has appointed three sub committees to manage the three LATCOs.</p> <p>Holding the executive to account is undertaken by four scrutiny committees in addition to reviewing policy decisions before and after implementation, one scrutiny chair has been appointed from the largest opposition political group. Members have the power to “call in “decisions made by the executive for review. Portfolio holders periodically attend scrutiny meetings held in public to be held to account and each such committee is supported by a senior officer.</p> <p>The Council has refreshed its risk management strategy and approach, whose main priorities are the robust systems of identification, evaluation and control of risks which threaten the Council’s ability to meet its objectives to deliver services to the public. The risk strategy was revised (to be implemented for the next year).</p> <p>The Chief Operating Officer (statutory Section 151 officer) is responsible for the proper administration of all aspects of the Council’s financial affairs including ensuring appropriate advice is given to the Council on all financial matters. His remit and span of responsibility also covers services that are responsible for informing the CMT and cabinet of delivery against the</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council plan • FIT plan • Staffing matters • Internal audit and delivery of their recommendations • liaising with our external auditors and ombudsman <p>The Council's system of internal financial control is based on a framework of financial regulations, regular management information, administrative procedures (including segregation of duties), management supervision and a system of delegation and accountability.</p> <p>Following the CIPFA, corporate governance review a couple of years ago, which found no weaknesses, and their support of the Councils application for exceptional financial support, the councils FIT plan has been refreshed and lessons learnt from the first iteration have been adopted.</p>

	<p>The Council has a proactive, holistic approach to tackling fraud, theft, corruption and crime, as an integral part of protecting public finances, safeguarding assets, and delivering services effectively and sustainably.</p> <p>A Medium Term Financial Strategy and associated risk register, and plans for revenue and capital income and expenditure based on corporate priorities are developed, led by the Cabinet and Corporate Management Team, and presented for approval by Council in February each year.</p> <p>Managers monitor budgets on monthly basis with revenue and capital budget monitoring reports considered by the corporate management team and Cabinet on a quarterly basis for monitoring and control purposes including the annual outturn.</p>
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Core Principle G	How we have complied in 2024/25
Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability	<p>The three statutory officers regularly share and review published best value inspection reports where there are potentially pertinent lessons to be learnt.</p> <p>The council has welcomed a number of external inspections to review our services and support our development, the result of which have been shared publicly.</p> <p>The Head of Internal Audit & Counter Fraud provides an independent and objective annual opinion on the effectiveness of internal control, risk management and governance. This is carried out by an in-house team in conformance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.</p>

	The opinion of the Head of Internal Audit & Counter Fraud over the Council's overall control environment.
	<p>The Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 require local authorities to ensure that they have: a sound system of internal control which— (a) facilitates the effective exercise of its functions and the achievement of its aims and objectives; (b) ensures that the financial and operational management of the authority is effective; and (c) includes effective arrangements for the management of risk.</p> <p>In my capacity as Chief Audit Executive, with responsibility for the provision of internal audit services to the council, I am required to provide the organisation, and the Chief Executive, with a statement as to my opinion of the adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's risk management, internal control, and governance processes. This opinion is intended to support the council's annual governance statement.</p> <p>The overall scope of internal audit work is defined in the Internal Audit Charter and the specific scope of work for the year 2024-25 was detailed in the Internal Audit Plans, which were approved by the Audit Committee. The Plans cannot address all risks across the council, but available resources are focused on the highest areas of risk to the authority and those linked to its corporate objectives. The opinion that follows is based on all work completed since the last annual opinion was delivered, including overrunning reviews from 2023-24 and work outlined in the 2024-25 Plans.</p> <p>The Internal Audit team operates in accordance with the working practices set out in the Internal Audit Manual and</p>

	<p>work is subject to supervision and quality review. This means we can be satisfied that the team has carried out all internal audit work in line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and in accordance with our Quality Assurance & Improvement Programme.</p> <p>In forming my opinion, I have considered the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The outcomes of work completed by the Internal Audit team since the last annual opinion, • The findings of previous years' internal audit work carried out, • The risk management processes of the council, • The monitoring of progress to implement agreed actions identified in earlier reviews to ensure that control weaknesses identified by the Internal Audit team have been mitigated, • The outcomes of consultancy work completed by the Internal Audit team, and • The outcomes of counter fraud and investigation work completed by the Counter Fraud team. <p>There were no matters identified through the counter fraud work carried out which have a material impact upon the corporate governance, risk, and internal control framework of the council. While placing no specific reliance on sources of external assurance, these have been considered alongside the work completed by the Internal Audit team.</p> <p>The council has a duty to manage its resources in a proper, economic, efficient, and effective manner to achieve its objectives. It applies internal controls to manage risks to an acceptable level as it is not possible to remove risks to achieving these objectives completely. The Internal Audit team can only provide reasonable and not complete assurance of effectiveness. The work completed as part of the Internal Audit Plans for 2024-25, and reviews overrunning from the 2023-24, is summarised in this report, assessing the effectiveness of managing the risks identified by the council, and forms the basis of evidence for my overall opinion.</p>
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	<p>While not all risks have been examined within our work programme, I am satisfied that those not directly examined have a sufficient assurance approach in place to provide reasonable assurance of effective management.</p> <p>While it has been identified that the authority has mainly established adequate internal controls within the areas subject to review since my last opinion was issued in September 2024, there are areas where compliance with existing controls should be enhanced or strengthened or where additional controls should be introduced to reduce the council's exposure to risk. Where such findings have been identified, actions have been agreed by management to improve the controls within the systems and processes they operate. Management have accepted responsibility for the implementation of these actions and follow up arrangements are in place to ensure that appropriate action is taken.</p> <p>The evidence used to draw a reasonable conclusion as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's risk management, internal control, and governance processes, is however based upon a limited scope due to impacts on resourcing limiting the volume of work that the team have been able to complete</p> <p><u>Annual Opinion 2024-25</u></p> <p><u>Corporate Governance</u></p> <p>Corporate Governance is defined as being the structure of rules, practices, and processes.</p> <p>that direct and control the Council. The review of information governance falls within the category, although as this was the only review, we can only place limited assurance in relation to corporate governance, although this is caveated with the fact that been nothing has been identified in the course of work completed, nor has anything been brought to my attention from elsewhere, to suggest any failure in compliance with corporate governance.</p> <p><u>Risk Management</u></p> <p>The council has a risk management strategy that is approved by Cabinet and maintains a corporate risk register that is regularly reviewed. The Corporate Risk Register is populated with risks to the achievement of the Council's corporate</p>
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	<p>objectives, which should be informed by service risk registers, but only limited assurance can be provided that services have appropriate risk registers in place.</p> <p><u>Internal control</u></p> <p>Fieldwork was completed in relation to 19 assurance reviews during 2024-25, only three of which have been finalised with client services, along with a further nine reviews from 2023-24 that were finalised in 2024-25 after the last annual opinion was delivered. Of these finalised reviews, eight resulted in Amber or Green opinions, indicating that all key risks were being managed effectively; however, four reviews resulted in Red opinions indicating that the control process was weak.</p> <p>Where actions for improvement were agreed, these were subject to a follow up process to ensure that they had been implemented appropriately. This follow up process identified that 88% of all actions due to be implemented in 2024-25 (81 of 92 actions) have been completed.</p> <p>Given the results of finalised assurance reviews, we can only place limited assurance on the aspects of the system of internal control tested and in operation during 2024-25.</p> <p><u>Overall Opinion</u></p> <p>It is my opinion that only limited assurance can be provided that Medway Council's framework of governance, risk management, and system of internal control, during the year ended 31 March 2025, contributed to the proper, economic, efficient, and effective use of resources in achieving the council's objectives.</p> <p>James Larkin</p>
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4. Update on actions identified in the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement

The Annual Governance Statement for 2023/4 did not identify any areas for review and possible enhanced arrangements.

5. Proposed enhancements to the Council's governance arrangements

The review of the effectiveness of the Council's governance framework for 2023/24 did not highlight any specific areas of concern. Where internal audit work has indicated additional controls could be in place, officers are focussed on making the necessary changes to do so.

For 2025/26 the CMT team has agreed the introduction of a mandatory register of interests for those officers involved conducting procurement exercises. Further, to support and enhance the culture of strong governance, accountability and responsibility the CMT have also agreed the introduction of governance questionnaire for service managers and above to support the production of the AGS.

The Councils last all out elections were held in 2023 with next ones due in 2027. In light of potential local government reorganisation it is likely that those will be for the shadow authority in preparation for the vesting day. Goodwill, cooperation, collaboration and respectful engagement across the political divides will be key to ongoing positive outcomes for the residents of Medway.

6. Conclusion

Based on the results of the review, reasonable assurance can be placed upon the adequacy and effectiveness of Medway Council's systems of internal control and governance, which this year are supported by the review undertaken by CIPFA. The annual review demonstrates sufficient evidence that the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance is operating effectively and that the Council complies with that Local Code in all significant respects.

Certification by the Leader of the Council

I confirm that the 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement has been considered and approved by Medway Council at the meeting of the Audit Committee on XX September 2025 (minute XXX refers):

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Date: 2025.

Certification by the Chief Executive

I confirm that the 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement has been considered and endorsed by Medway Council's Corporate Management Team:

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Date: 2025