

Principles in bold, Sub-principles in bold & italics.	SCORE	Action
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		
Local government organisations are accountable not only for how much they spend, but also for how they use the resources under their stewardship. This includes accountability for outputs, both positive and negative, and for the outcomes they have achieved. In addition, they have an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies. It is essential that, as a whole, they can demonstrate the appropriateness of all their actions and have mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and to respect the rule of law.		
<i>A 1) Behaving with integrity</i>		
<p><i>i) Ensuring Members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for e.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Codes of conduct.</i> • <i>Individual sign off with regard to compliance with codes etc.</i> • <i>Induction for new Members and staff on standard of behaviour expected.</i> • <i>Performance appraisals.</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>A1i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operates Codes of Conduct for Members and Employees, maintaining arrangements for sign from those, awareness of key policies and reporting / investigating any allegations of breaching those Codes. • Complaints concerning employees are dealt with according to the Managing Misconduct Policy, and/ or the Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy (for relevant officers will also potentially involve the Independent Person/ Reserve Independent Person (IPs), Employment Committee and Full Council). 		
<i>Outcomes/ examples:</i>		
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Codes of conduct</i></p> <p>A refreshed LGA Model Code of Conduct was adopted by Full Council in April 2021 and it was resolved that this would take effect from the day after the election poll in 2021 and that training on the new code would be compulsory for all District Councillors.</p> <p>https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=2392&Ver=4</p> <p>The Member Code of Conduct is available on the internet: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-01/Section%2017%20-%20NHDC%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20for%20Councillors.pdf</p> <p>Code of Conduct training was provided to District Members during the 2023/24 year. The training has been refined over a number of years and this year the sessions (remote and in-person) were delivered by the Service Director for Legal and Community, the legal team, the Independent Persons on Standards. The recording was made available online afterwards for</p>		

<p>those unable to attend the sessions. The Standards Matters Reports delivered to Standards Committee note information about Member training.</p> <p>The Council also has a Planning Code of Good Practice. This is set out in Appendix 3 to section 8 [Planning Code of Good Practice] of the Constitution. This was previously reviewed and updated in 2015 and a new Code adopted. Most recently, the Planning Code of Good Practice was reviewed in 2020.</p> <p>The LLG reviewed this Code and following its circulation in 2024, it was considered by the Standards Committee on 27 March 2024 and recommended for adoption (with minor amendments) to Full Council in April 2024, adopted with minor amendments on 18th. Version on internet 18 April 2024 (Appendix 1 to Section 8 of the Constitution): https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-04/Section%208%20-%20Regulatory%20Committees.pdf</p>		
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Individual sign off with regard to compliance with codes</i></p> <p>When new Members are elected they sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office and in doing so agree to abide by the Authority's Code of Conduct. They receive a copy of the Code and various other documents as part of an Induction pack (including the Council's Constitution, officer and Committee structures and other Member information) from Committee and Member Services.</p> <p>The Members should complete their Register of interest form on line within 28 days of election. The Council maintains records of the interests of Members (and Parish Councillors). The Member's interests are published on the individual Councillor's pages as part of the Localism Act 2011 requirements. The Code of Conduct was previously amended to include a new obligation to attend compulsory training and the inclusion of gifts and hospitality and membership, general control or management of an outside body to the councillors' register of interests forms. [Councillors' Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interests]</p>		
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Induction for new Members on standard of behaviour expected.</i></p> <p>Members receive specific training from Planning / Licensing, Legal and the Monitoring regarding roles and responsibilities as a Member. Members are required to agree to abide by the Information Security Policy prior to gaining access to the Council's IT facilities and should undertake certain e-learning training: such as Data Protection and Anti-Bribery.</p> <p>Whilst focused on members of Finance, Audit and Risk Committee (FAR) and Cabinet, all Members were invited to attend training on finance and risk in June 2023.</p> <p>All Members are offered training as and when this arises. During 2023/24, fraud awareness training was provided to NHDC Members prior to a meeting of full council by the Shared Anti-Fraud (SAFs) Manager. Members of the (FAR Committee are asked about their training needs at the start of each year and training is then tailored to this. Fraud awareness training continues to be included in the Member training programme.</p>		

<p>The Council has a Media relations protocol [Media relations protocol (north-herts.gov.uk)] to provide direction and guidance to council staff and Councillors on issues relating to the media as well as to provide the media with an indication of the service they should expect to receive from the Council. Members were most recently offered Media Training in September 2022, provided by PLC Media.</p> <p>In 2021, Member training was provided following the election as part of the new Code of Conduct requirements through an external trainer. This training covered an overview of the Constitution (Procedure & Rules), the Councillor Code of Conduct, the Members Planning Code of Good Practice and the Protocol for Member/ Officer Working arrangements. <i>In 2023/24 Training (both remote and in-person) for Members on the Code of Conduct was delivered in-house by the Service Director for Legal and Community, the legal team, and the Independent Persons on Standards.</i></p>		
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Member complaints handling</i></p> <p><i>During the 2023 calendar year, 11 complaints against Members were received. This reflects a decrease in complaints against Members compared to 2022 when there were 30 complaints against members. For reference there had been 52 complaints in 2021, 6 in 2020 and 18 in 2019. An update on the complaints for 2023 was given to the Standards Committee in a report delivered by the Service Director for Legal and Community in March 2024. It was noted that at the time of the report, 4 complaints had been received so far during 2024. Council is due to be informed of these Member complaints at Annual Council in the Annual Report of the Standards Committee in 2024.</i></p> <p>https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24639/Standards%20Matters%20report%20final.pdf</p> <p>Group Leaders and the Standards Committee Chair are kept informed of Monitoring Officer and standards matters monthly. The Monitoring Officer also holds quarterly meetings with the Independent Person, Reserve Independent Person ('IPs') and the Chair of Committee. They also attend annual training events for Independent Person to share good practice.</p> <p>The Independent Persons (IP)s appointed by Full Council under the Localism Act 2011, have a key role in promoting high standards of conduct by elected and co-opted Members (this Council having 1 main IP and 2 reserves). They assist by acting as advocate and ambassadors in promoting ethical behaviour, attend relevant training where Member conduct is discussed and are involved in dealing with complaints against Councillors. They are involved in reviewing Policy and procedure prior to any revisions being presented to Standards Committee including review of the Planning Code of Good Practice and review/revisions to the Complaints Handling Procedure that were considered by Standards Committee in March 2023 indicating minor changes to the Procedure to cover issues that have arisen since October 2021. Further potential revisions will be considered in the light of the following the publication</p>		

<p>of the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman Code published in February 2024, public comment and general experience on complaints handling during the previous year.</p> <p>Quarterly meetings are held with the Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Standards Committee, and the Independent Person and Reserve Independent Person to discuss general Code issues/practice and any on-going matters.</p> <p>The Councillor Complaints Handling is set out on the Council's website: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/complain-about-councillor-and-the Procedure is available at the bottom of that page on the Council website: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-04/Complaints%20Handling%20Procedure%20final%2022.3.23.pdf</p>		
<p>Employees:</p>		
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> As part of the staff induction, employees are required to read and confirm they understand the Code of Conduct and other key governance related policies before the end of their probationary period, as well as undertake certain e-learning training module by that time (Data Protection Act, Bribery Act).</p> <p>Human Resources have reached the end of a project to review all corporate policies owned by the team, and are due to finish uploading the revised policies to the Hub shortly.</p>		
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Codes of conduct</p> <p>Code of Conduct for staff members is covered in the employee handbook which is available via the staff Hub. https://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/20210804%20Employee%20Handbook%20-%20August%202021%20-%20Amended%20new%20branding.pdf</p> <p>The Code covers governance related issues, such as Conflicts of Interests, Whistleblowing, Gifts & Hospitality, Political Restriction, Member and officer relations, fraud and corruption, bribery, constitution, outside interests, confidentiality, and information security (although the Council also has separate and more detailed Policies and procedures linked to those).</p> <p>The Council has an Employee Conflicts of Interest Policy which was last reviewed in February 2021 (administrative changes made only) and the process for declarations available to all on the Hub, together with a Managing Organisational Conflicts in Council Roles and Duties Guidance approved in September 2015 and reviewed in March 2021.</p> <p>Employee Personal Conflicts of Interest Policy: https://northhertsgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/LegalCommunityIntranet/SitePages/Conflicts-of-Interest.aspx</p> <p>Managing Organisational Conflicts in Council Roles & Duties: https://northhertsgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/LegalCommunityIntranet/SitePages/Conflicts-of-Interest.aspx</p> <p>The Whistleblowing Policy was most recently reviewed in January 2024, and promoted on the Council's internal Hub and via Insight magazine and posters in the Council's offices.</p>		

<p>There is a an overarching Fraud Protection Policy that covers Fraud, corruption, money laundering and bribery. The Fraud Prevention Policy was most recently reviewed, updated, and approved by the FAR committee in March 2022. This included a minor change to reflect that the Shared Anti-Fraud Service took on the Money Laundering Reporting Officer role.</p> <p>Whistleblowing Policy: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-01/Whistleblowing%20Policy%201.24.pdf</p> <p>Fraud Prevention Policy: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-08/Fraud%20Prevention%20Policy%20Mar22.pdf</p> <p>The Whistleblowing Policy and the fraud prevention policy are available to employees through the staff Hub as well as on the council website. Advice is also available on the staff Hub for Managers on handling whistleblowing situations. This document was reviewed in January 2024: https://northhertsgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/LegalCommunityIntranet/SitePages/Whistleblowing%20Policy.aspx</p>		
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Individual sign off regarding compliance with codes</p> <p>Following a review of the Anti-Bribery Policy in 2016, the Council introduced an Annual Declaration letter in May 2016, on the recommendation of SAFS. This was linked to the Regular Performance Review (RPR) and requires employees to confirm in writing that they understand the requirements of the key governance related policies – and to request training or further clarification if they do not. During the first year there was a 75% return rate. To improve this rate, these Declaration letters are now logged in the same way as the RPRs, for return by July each year. A report is compiled at the beginning of August in each financial year. Outstanding letters will be chased. In 2023/24 91.2% of staff returned their letter. This compares to 78% in 2020/21, 98.15% in 2021/22, and 97% in 2022/23.</p>		
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Induction for new Staff on standard of behaviour expected</p> <p>The Council has a Staff Induction Programme. New starters should complete the e-Learning modules covering anti-Bribery and Data Protection and Safeguarding on line training as early as possible and before the end of their probationary period in any event, in the case of Safeguarding within 3 working days.</p> <p>The First Day Welcome was reviewed to ensure that all new starters have the legislative information they need to be able to start working. New starters are required to complete certain e-learning modules within a set period of their start date and managers will check that these are completed within the appropriate time frames (e.g., first day / first week / first month).</p> <p>Employees are expected to complete the e-learning modules and will be sent an annual reminder for the relevant trainings, as is the case with Data Protection. Training is monitored by managers, and HR review the overall completion figures. In 2023/24 HR have been working with the Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS) to increase uptake of fraud awareness training.</p>		

<p>This has involved SAFS attending a Senior Managers Group (SMG) meeting, and a staff briefing to reiterate the importance of completing the training. They have also presented to members at a Council meeting to reiterate the message.</p> <p>Key information for staff on expected behaviour and codes of conduct during employment are made available to all staff through the Employee Handbook (most recently updated April 2023) which is available on the staff Hub. https://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Employee%20Handbook%202023.pdf</p>		
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conflicts of Interest Service Directors/ Managers are obliged to include any details of organisational conflicts in their service plan assurance statement. Employees interests are retained by HR. Senior Management are now also required to declare any related party transactions.</p>		
<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff RPR (appraisals): The appraisal system was reviewed in 2016 and changes implemented that year as a new Regular Performance Review (RPR) system. The RPR is completed annually by staff members, in conjunction with their manager, and aims to improve the performance of individuals and of the organisation as a whole to achieve the Council's priorities. All forms and guidance are available to employees and courses are run for employees on how to conduct the RPRs.</p>		
<p>A1 ii) <i>Ensuring Members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles). This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for e.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicating shared values with Members, staff, the community, and partners 	Substantial	
<p>A1 ii) <i>What NHDC has or does & outcomes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Standards Committee which oversees and promotes high standards of Member conduct. In the 2023-24 year is was composed of 13 Councillors and 2 non-voting co-opted Parish Councillors. The IPs are invited to attend the meetings of the Standards Committee. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chairman of Standards Committee provides an annual report to Full Council. In 2023, this was given at Full Council on 13th July. This is designed to promote shared values with Members, employees, the community, and partners. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22619/ANNUAL%20REPORT%20OF%20THE%20STANDARDS%20COMMITTEE.pdf <p>These arrangements demonstrate Member leadership to the membership, employees, and community and partner organisations.</p> <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p>		

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The composition of the Standards Committee was reviewed, and a decision taken by Full Council on 19th May 2016 to increase the number of elected Councillors. This was to increase the flexibility of the Committee and will also increase understanding and promotion of its work.</p> <p>At the March 2023 Standards Committee meeting, the Standards Matter Report noted that Code of conduct training for Members had been provided last year based on the Local Government Association and would be conducted again for the upcoming year. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s21707/Standards%20Matters%20report%20final.pdf</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All but the most minor amendments to governance related policies are approved by Members. Where these are through delegated Member or officer powers, they are published and notified to Members through the Member information Service (MIS) and on the Council’s website. Service areas are linked to specific Executive Portfolios with the Leader of Council having political oversight for governance related areas, such as the Constitution.</p> <p>Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) Committee, as the (critical friend) Member body reviews several areas, including:</p> <p>The Resolutions Report, The 3Cs Full Year Update Report and half year report, the Annual Safeguarding Report, Integrated Performance Management, the Commercial Update, Crimes and Disorder matters, Annual Report on the Regulation of Investigation Powers Act (RIPA), Performance Indicators and Management Measures.</p> <p>During 2023/2024 year the Committee considered and recommended action on a range of issues. Further information on this can be accessed in Appendix B of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme (March 2022): https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s21672/Resolutions%20Report.pdf</p> <p>Throughout 2023/24 year, the O&S committee received reports and presentations on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3 C’s Full Year Update 2022-23 (20th June 2023)• North Herts Place Narrative (20th June 2023)• Corporate Peer Challenge Report and Action Plan (20th June 2023)• Annual Safeguarding Report 2023 (12th September 2023)• Waste, Recycling, and Street Cleansing Contract Service Design (7th November 2023)• Call to Account on the Harkness Court Refurbishment (7th November 2023)• Draft Sustainability SPD (5th December 2023)• Leisure Management Contract Award (5th December 2023)• Local Plan Review (9th January 2024)• Community Survey Results (9th January 2024)• 2024-2028 Marketing and Communications Strategy (9th January 2024)• Empty Homes Strategy (29th January 2024)		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call to Account – Lord Lister Hotel (29th January 2024) • Council Tax Premiums for Empty and Second Homes (29th January 2024) • Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) Annual Report (29th January 2024) <p>The <u>Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report to Council</u> in July 2023 noted that throughout 2022/23, the O&S Committee considered a total of 54 items at its scheduled meetings. It made 23 recommendations on nine topics to Cabinet and one recommendation to Full Council. At every meeting, the Committee also considered the resolutions previously made and the work programme. No written questions were submitted during 2022/23. The Annual Report for 2023/24 will be due at Council in 2024.</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023/24: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/b11162/OVERVIEW%20AND%20SCRUTINY%20COMMITTEE%20WORK%20PROGRAMME%2020th-Jun-2023%2019.30%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf?T=9</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The shared values and behaviours as noted translate to staff organisational behaviours as noted below:</p> <p>Together – This means we work together and support each other to deliver the best we can</p> <p>Listening – This means we listen to and consider the views of each other, our partners, and our customers</p> <p>Learning – This means we learn from others and are open to change</p> <p>Adaptable – This means we are adaptable in finding solutions for each other, our partners, and our customers</p> <p>Inclusive – This means we are inclusive and value diversity.</p> <p>The North Herts Council Values are intended to define how we work as an organisation and are incorporated into staff Regular Performance Reviews (RPR's). They were adopted by the organisation following detailed consultation with staff and have been streamlined to make them clearer.</p>		
<p>A1 iii) <i>Leading by example and using these standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for e.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Decision making practices</i> • <i>Declarations of interests made at meetings</i> • <i>Conduct at meetings</i> • <i>Shared values guide decision making</i> • <i>Develop and maintain an effective Standards Committee</i> 	Full/	
<p>A1 iii) <i>What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's Constitution includes a scheme of delegation and terms of reference for each of the Council's Committees and decision-making practices are outlined. The Council's Constitution is reviewed annually. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A set report / delegated decision format and guidance on how to complete the report and use of the delegated decision form and process.• Member declarations of interest are a standing item on all agendas and the record of delegated decision template. Minutes show declarations of interest were sought, and declarations made. Records of delegated decisions also record any interests applicable to the Member concerned.• A legal adviser attends all Council, Cabinet, Planning and Licensing Sub-Committee meetings to advise on Code and other issues where this is requested or otherwise considered appropriate. A legal advisor will review delegated decisions prior to these being published.• An effective and pro-active Standards Committee as outlined under A1 ii) above.• The O & S Committee sets an agreed work programme for several Task and Finish Groups and reviews. The O & S Committee can make recommendations to Cabinet which reflect their findings to further inform the decision-making process. The Committee's terms of reference/ remit are set out in section 6 of the Constitution.• Council plan/ service plan/ decision making process provides guiding principles. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i> The Council's Constitution is reviewed annually (and often in-year as any issues arise or are asked to be addressed). A Constitutional Amendment Report went to Full Council on 18th April 2023. Recommendations included revision to arrangements such as Area Committees to Area Forums, to increase flexibility, and public engagement, which was approved.</p> <p>Constitutional amendments were also agreed at the January 2024 meeting of Full Council. These changes related to section 8 Planning Control Committee's Terms of Reference and public engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">☑ A change to the Contract Procurement rules was approved by full Council in January 2023 to ensure the effectiveness of the organisation's internal controls. The review and adoption of the Council's contract procurement processes and Contract Procurement Rules is a key element Council's Procurement Strategy - https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/guidelines-suppliers☑ The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 introduced a requirement to record and make available for inspection/publish Non-Executive decisions under delegated authority (as soon as reasonably practicable) relating to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grant a permission or licence• Affecting the rights of an individual; or• Award a contract or incur expenditure which, in either case, materially affects the Council's financial position.		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And following a High Court¹ ruling, the provisions of the 2014 Regulations are said to apply to planning. Delegated decisions are publicly available and published on the Council’s website: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/decisions <p>Planning Code of Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Most recently, the Planning Code of Good Practice was reviewed in 2020. This review was presented at the January 2020 Full Council Meeting. The amendment made was to ensure good governance within the Council and that the Council’s Planning Code of Good Practice remains fit for purpose and is consistent with best practice. As per A1i. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s9424/Review%20of%20Planning%20Code%20of%20Good%20Practice.pdf 		
<p><i>A1 iv) Demonstrating, communicating, and embedding the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for e.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Anti-fraud and corruption policies are working effectively</i> • <i>Up-to-date register of interests (Members and staff)</i> • <i>Up-to-date register of gifts and Hospitality</i> • <i>Whistleblowing policies are in place and protect individuals raising concerns</i> • <i>Whistleblowing policy has been made available to Members of the public, employees, partners, and contractors</i> • <i>Complaints policy and examples of responding to complaints about behaviour</i> • <i>Changes/improvements as a result of complaints received and acted upon</i> • <i>Members and officers code of conduct refers to a requirement to declare interests</i> • <i>Minutes show declarations of interest were sought, and appropriate declarations made</i> 	Full	
<p><i>A1 iv) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <p>The Fraud Prevention Policy is an overarching policy that covers Fraud, corruption, money laundering and bribery https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/fraud-prevention-policy .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates in a Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS), which has been operational since April 2015. SAFS presents an Anti-Fraud action plan, progress reports and Annual Fraud report to FAR Committee. The Council has a Board and Partner role in the Service. • Fraud alerts are issued by SAFS to appropriate employees and managers as new threats arise and publish a Fraud & Corruption newsletter for employees. • A fraud reporting mechanism is in place on the website (Hotline and email). 		

¹ R(Shasha)v. Westminster City Council [2016] EWHC 3283 (Admin) applied most recently in R. (on application of Rogers) v Wycombe DC in December 2017.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAFS/ the Council work on National Fraud Initiatives. • Bribery prevention is part of the Fraud Prevention Policy as outlined above • Policies and procedures for Members and Employees to declare interests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Members are obliged to declare interests under the Code of Conduct to the Monitoring Officer or at relevant meetings. Members are obliged to declare (statutory-defined interests- DPIs) in writing to the Council's Monitoring Officer and for this to be made available on the (Councillors' Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interests) internet page: http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/councillors-mps-and-meps/councillors-code-conduct-and-declaration - Members receive this declaration form as part of their Induction Pack and receive annual reminders from the Monitoring Officer. - The Council has a Councillor Code of Conduct which sets out Member interests, both statutory Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) and those locally agreed "Declarable Interests". The Code set out when and how declarations should be made and is part of the Council's Constitution in section 17 [Constitution]. - The Council also adopted Guidance for Managing Organisational Conflicts (Managing Organisational Conflicts guidance) The Organisational Conflicts Guidance also applies to Members and officers in the roles they undertake that may conflict. Employee organisational conflicts are recorded within the single manager's assurance statement as agreed by the Leadership Team. Any relating to Members will be dealt with by the Monitoring Officer if they arise. - The Council has, as indicated, a standing item on the agenda for Council meetings for the declaration of interests. This is minuted and recorded, with both available on the Council's website. Any such Member interest would be recorded on an individual delegated decision – or appropriate action taken for another Executive Member or Officer to take this if an interest is apparent. These decisions are published on the Council's website and forwarded to Members. - The Council has an Employee Handbook which covers code of conduct and refers to the Conflicts of Interests Policy. Employees are obliged to declare personal conflicts under the Policy to their Appropriate Officer and retained by those Officers. • An Employee Gifts and Hospitality Policy. The Council maintains electronic Registers for Employee Gifts & Hospitality for each directorate and Members' declarations are retained by the Monitoring Officer. • A NHDC Members' Protocol for Gifts and Hospitality in Section 17 of the Constitution. Councillors can update this information on their Register of Interests form. • An Annual Declaration Letter for employees to ensure that they are aware of key governance policies. • A Whistleblowing Policy which enables those working for the council (employees, agency staff and trainees) as well as Members to report wrongdoing or potential wrongdoing. It is available on the internet and Hub. The Council has guidance to Managers on how to handle whistleblowing concerns and leaflets around the Council building, reminding employees what they can do. • A Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy (3 Cs) (2022-25) Details of the 3 C's are reported to the O & S Committee. • Relevant Council officers attend the County wide customer services benchmarking group, which meets quarterly to discuss/ implement shared good practice. 		
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<p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i> <i>Anti-fraud/ Anti-Bribery</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The SAFS Anti-Fraud Action Plan for 2023/24 was approved by the FAR committee on 8th March 2023. The anti-fraud plan for 2023/24 was designed to meet the recommendations of the Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy (FFCL) including activities associated with the five pillars of Governance, Acknowledge, Prevent, Pursue, and Protect. The plan includes objectives, activities, and key performance indicators that support the strategy and meet the best practice guidance / directives from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), the National Audit Office (NAO), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). ☑ NHDC Anti-Fraud Plan 2023/24: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s21631/App%20A.%20NHC%20Anti-Fraud%20Plan%202023-%202024.pdf ☑ Minor amendment was last made to the Employee’s Gifts and Hospitality Policy in 2022. ☑ In IPCO undertook an inspection in 2023 to consider the Council’s arrangement regarding Investigatory Power. This was reported through to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee 29 January 2024 as that Committee is responsible for overseeing the arrangements. https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=3395&Ver=4 The updated Policy is available on the Hub, together with forms and procedures. The Council audits the use quarterly and reports these through to the membership via MIS. ☑ An Anti-Bribery Policy ☑ A standalone Whistleblowing Policy https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/whistleblowing-policy ☑ An overarching Fraud Prevention Policy that covers Fraud, corruption, money laundering and bribery: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/fraud-prevention-policy ☑ An e-learning anti-bribery module for employees and Members was introduced in 2016 following SIAS Ethical Policies Audit. Staff are required to complete an anti-bribery module. <i>As of January 2024, 84% of staff had completed the anti-bribery training, as had 22% of Members.</i> ☑ Code of Conduct training was provided to District Members during the 2023/24 year. The training has been refined over a number of years and this year the sessions (remote and in-person) were delivered by the Service Director for Legal and Community, the legal team, the Independent Persons on Standards. The recording was made available online afterwards for those unable to attend the sessions. ☑ During the 2023/24 year SAFS presented at a Senior Managers Group Meeting and at the March 2024 staff briefing. In addition they presented at a Full Council meeting. These presentations reiterated the importance of completing the anti-fraud training and completion rates will be monitored following these presentations. 		
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<p><i>Employee Conflicts of Interest:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">☑ The Employee Conflicts of Interest Policy was reviewed in 2021 and is on the Hub as is guidance covering organisational conflicts ☑ In addition to conflicts of interest forms, Senior Managers are required to declare any related party transactions. <p><i>Whistleblowing Policy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">☑ The Council reviewed its Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures in January 2024. Employees also must sign off an Annual Declaration letter (introduced in 2016) as part of their RPR to indicate that they are aware and have read this and other Policies. This must be returned to Human Resources with their RPR form. ☑ The Council has a page on its website referring to the Whistleblowing Policy. This highlights the concern and the application of the Policy to services provided by third parties; provided contact details to the Monitoring Officer, Chief Finance Officer and also the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) or SAFS and Public Concern at work – for those who do not wish to contact the internal Council officers or those connected with the Council: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/whistleblowing-policy <p>3 Cs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">☑ The 3 C's (Comments, Compliments, and Complaints) Policy was reviewed and amended in September 2022: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s20068/3Cs%20Report%20-%20Final.pdf☑ The Council summarises these and learning outcomes on Achieve and reports these back to the Leadership team. Overview and Scrutiny Committee also received an information note and 3C's dashboard report.☑ The Comments, Compliments and Complaints Half Year Update Report was presented to Overview and Scrutiny in November 2023. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s23388/3Cs%20half%20year%20information%20note%202324.pdf <p>The summary for the full period of 2022/2023, was presented at the 20th June 2023 Overview and Scrutiny meeting. The summary indicated that the number of complaints received decreased from 423 in 2021/22 to 417 in 2022/23. 232 of these (56%) relate to services delivered by our key contractors – mostly the leisure centres, and waste and recycling. However, 305 (64%) of the 477 compliments received also relate to the same services/contractors. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22280/3Cs%20information%20note%2022-23.pdf</p> <p><i>Member complaints:</i></p> <p>See above. As per A1i) above. During the 2023 calendar year, there was a reduction in member complaints with 11 being received, compared with 30 in 2022. At the time of the Standards Matters Report in March 2024, it was noted that four</p>		
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complaints had so far been received for the 2024 year. Council will be informed of the complaints at Annual Council in the Annual Report of the Standards Committee in 2024.		
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Principles in bold, Sub-principles in bold & italics.	SCORE	Action
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		
<i>2) Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values</i>		
A2 i) <i>Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation’s ethical standards and performance. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for e.g.:</i>	Substantial	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Scrutiny of ethical decision making</i> • <i>Championing ethical compliance at governing body level</i> 		
<p>A2 i) <i>What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has Standards, O & S Committee and Finance Audit & Risk Committees that all play a role in the scrutiny of ethical decision making. • The Standards Committee Chairman provides an annual report to Council on the Standards Committee work and complaints. • The Council’s O & S Committee sets an agreed work programme for several Task and Finish Groups and reviews. These supplement scheduled meetings and ensure further Member scrutiny and analysis of how the Council utilises its resources. The O & S Committee, having reviewed policy recommendations and completed task and finish reviews, can make recommendations to Cabinet which reflect their findings to further inform the decision-making process. • The O & S Committee publishes an Annual report which is presented to Council by the Chair of the Committee. • The FAR Committee is the Council’s Audit Committee. It receives, considers, approves, and makes recommendations on various ethical issues. It receives reports from SIAS, SAFS, external auditors, and internal Council officers. It considers the audit findings and Plans. It receives the quarterly revenue, capital, and treasury management reports, prior to Cabinet. It reviews annual governance arrangements, approves the AGS and monitors actions. • The Constitution, terms of reference of Committees, Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations and processes and guidance detailed under A 1) also underpin the commitment to decision making practices. • The Leadership Team has the responsibility to conduct the annual review of governance arrangements and “score” these against the Local Code of Corporate Governance (which includes the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework principles). This then forms the basis of the AGS presented to the FAR Committee for their consideration and approval. • Finance Audit & Risk Committee presents an annual report on its actions and recommendations and the contribution it has made to the Council’s overall governance. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p>		

<p><i>Scrutiny of ethical decision making</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The O & S Committee has seven scheduled meetings and publishes an annual report. The Committee considers a range of topics including scrutinising key decisions of Cabinet. At the O&S Committee meeting for March 2024, the Committee considered and commented on the Draft Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee 2023/24 prior to consideration by Council. Historically, this was brought to the final Council meeting of the civic year, but as was the case with the previous year, this was not possible given the short period between the two meetings. The report will therefore be presented to Council in the next civic year. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24448/DRAFT%20ANNUAL%20REPORT%20OF%20OVERVIEW%20AND%20SCRUTINY%202023-2024.pdf <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Overview and Scrutiny Committee set a work programme and Forward plan for the civic year 2023/2024 in June 2023: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan of Key Decisions: 20th June 2023: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22324/Forward%20plan%20May%202023.pdf Work Programme: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22379/Appendix%20A%20-%20Work%20Programme%202023-24.pdf <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> As per A1ii, during the civic year, the committee carries out the following actions as contained in the Resolutions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Once actions are completed, they are removed from the document. A full list of the Resolutions throughout the civic year have been included below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> September 2023 Resolutions of the O&S Committee Report: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22951/1.%20Resolutions%20of%20the%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf November 2023 Resolutions of the O&S Committee Report: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s23381/Resolutions%20of%20the%20Overview%20and%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf January 9th 2024 Resolutions of the O&S Committee Report: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s23852/RESOLUTIONS%20OF%20THE%20OVERVIEW%20AND%20SCRUTINY%20COMMITTEE.pdf January 29th 2024 Resolutions of the O&S Committee Report: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24103/RESOLUTIONS%20OF%20THE%20OVERVIEW%20AND%20SCRUTINY%20COMMITTEE.pdf March 12th 2024 Resolutions of the O&S Committee Report: https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24442/RESOLUTIONS%20OF%20THE%20OVERVIEW%20AND%20SCRUTINY%20COMMITTEE.pdf <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The actions included: O&S considering the draft Sustainability SPD in December, prior to referral to Cabinet; a guide on using Ideagan (formerly Pentana) circulated to Members; and referrals to Cabinet on the Council Delivery Plan, Local Plan Review; Marketing and Communications Strategy; and Community Survey Results. 		
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<p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The O&S Committee also received the RIPA annual review (January 29th 2024) see above. and Annual reports. The Annual Review of Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Adults (2022-23) was received in September 2023. </p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Annual Review of Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Adults (2022 – 2023): https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22908/O%20S%20Annual%20safeguarding%20report%202023.pdf </p> <p><i>Championing ethical compliance at governing body level</i></p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This is monitored by the Standards Committee during their Standards Matters reports. </p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Finance, Audit and Risk Committee’s Annual report for 2022-23 was presented to Council in July 2023. This helps to highlight the governance work undertaken and the effectiveness of the Committee. Finance & Audit Risk Committee Annual Report 2022 to 2023: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22667/5.%20REFERRAL%20-%20FAR%20Annual%20Report%202022-23.pdf </p> <p> The Corporate Peer Challenge and Action Plan Report 2023 can be found below. The peer support was focused around the role and performance of the scrutiny panels: Finance, Audit, and Risk; and Overview & Scrutiny. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22328/CORPORATE%20PEER%20CHALLENGE%20REPORT.pdf https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22329/App%20A%20LGA%20CPC%20REport%202023.pdf https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22330/App%20B%20Action%20Plan%20in%20response%20to%20Peer%20Support%20Com mittee%20report.pdf </p> <p>As per the 2022/23 AGS Action Plan, the action plans resulting from the Peer Challenge have been agreed with the relevant committees and are now being taken forwards.</p>		
<p><i>A2 ii) Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation’s culture and operation. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for e.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Provision of ethical awareness training</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>A2 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training is provided to Members on the Code of Conduct post-election as part of their induction. • Specialist training is provided to those who sit on Planning, Licensing and FAR Committees. • Other training is offered to the Membership as and when available, either course-based or via the e-learning. • Training is provided to new employees as part of their induction. They are obliged to read through the IT Security Policy and undertake some ethical awareness compulsory training. • The employee RPR system enables relevant training to be identified. This is supplemented by the Annual Declaration letter which confirms awareness of key policies and request further training. • The Council has a Learning Management System, with e-learning modules which enable employees to manage aspects of their learning and development. This includes folders with Legislative and Policy training. 		(See actions identified for Member learning and development).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMG receives updates and training on ethical awareness-related areas as may be relevant. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The Council’s Member induction procedure includes training on the Councillor Code of Conduct and other relevant Codes, Protocols, Procedures and Regulations (available via the Constitution). <p>As per A1i Member training on the Code of Conduct was provided following the election in 2023 by the Service Director for Legal and Community, the legal team, and the Independent Persons on Standards. Both remote and in-person training sessions were available. A recording of the session was available online afterwards for those unable to attend the sessions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Fraud Awareness Training continues to be included in Member Training, and during 2023/24 SAFS presented on the importance of anti-fraud training at a Full Council meeting. ☑ New starters must complete the employee Annual Declaration form before the end of their probationary period and complete the e-Learning modules covering the Bribery Act and the Data Protection Act as early as possible in their employment and before the end of their probationary period. Managers are responsible for ensuring that new starters undertake these, and the completion of the e-learning modules are monitored with reminders sent. ☑ The e-learning modules sit on the Council’s Learning Management System. This has several ethical modules on legislative and Policy matters, such as Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion; data protection, incorporating GDPR; fraud awareness and prevention; anti-bribery; and safeguarding vulnerable adults and children. 		
<p><i>A2 iii) Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for e.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraisal processes take account of values and ethical behaviour • Staff appointments policy • Procurement policy 	Full	
<p><i>A2 iii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RPR system incorporates a compulsory Annual Declaration letter (see A1 above), confirming understanding of relevant policies, and/ or for employees to identify any training requirements relating to those issues. Any identified gaps are then addressed through an individual's personal development plan. Personal development and delivery against agreed personal objectives are monitored through RPR reviews. • Support professional officers in obtaining their continuous professional development & payment of professional bodies’ fees. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Member development through provision of training and a delegated training budget to each political group on an elected Member pro-rata basis. • The How We Work document outlines the ways in which the Council works post-pandemic. • A vacancy management process which provides a corporate overview of vacancy management and ensures compliance with proper recruitment practices. • A Recruitment and Selection Policy that promotes a fair selection process, to ensure compliance with equality and employment legislation and that the best candidate is offered the job. [Recruitment and Selection Policy]. • Contract Procedure Rules (Section 20 of the Constitution) that underpin the Council's approach to Procurement. Contracts should ensure that suppliers are under a contractual obligation to adhere to the requirements of the Bribery Act 2010 and the Councils' requirements as set out in the Councils' Anti-Bribery Policy. • There are general procurement guides available on the Council's Hub covering Public Procurement Rules and Legislation, Procurement Processes, Contract Management, and the Social Values Act. • Standard Procurement Templates are available covering procurement risk logs, Requests for quotation and Invitations to Tender that include standard wording requiring potential suppliers to confirm that the supplier has adequate anti-bribery procedures in place/ will ensure compliance with the Bribery laws and adhere to the Council's Policy (with a link to the Fraud Prevention Policy). <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The Council's RPR process identifies progress, performance, and skills gaps to enable the individual and the Council to achieve NHDC objectives. This process is to ensure that the individual in post is equipped to carry out their functions with due regard to law, policy, and regulation. A new RPR Policy was approved in 2016. ☑ As of 2020, the Council has not renewed its Investors in People (IIP) accreditation status, however we continue to abide by the principles. ☑ As part of the response to the legal requirement to publish Gender Pay Gap figures, the Inclusion Group have formed a sub-group with the specific purpose of scrutinising the gender pay gap figures and recommending measures for improving the gap to the Leadership Team. The subgroup was first convened in September 2023. The broader Inclusion Group regularly review and discuss Gender Pay Gap information. ☑ As part of the Council's response to the gender pay gap, the recruitment process has been reviewed – from language used in the initial advertisements, to rolling out unconscious bias training for recruiting managers, and greater analysis of the council's work profile. ☑ Gender Pay Gap and Equalities figures are published annually on the Council website: <u>https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-01/Equalities%20Report%202023.pdf</u> 		
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<p>https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/NHC%202022%20Gender%20Pay%20Gap%20Report.pdf</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The 2023 Equalities Report provides information on recruitment, current staff, leavers, training, policies, and the gender pay gap: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-01/Equalities%20Report%202023.pdf ☑ Following consultation with The Inclusion Group, 'Inclusive' was also added as one of our organisation values. The Inclusion Group was formed in 2021. The main purpose of this group is to drive the equality and diversity agenda forward within the organisation. The group aims to gain an understanding of the perspective of all employees, including the experiences of minority, disadvantaged and vulnerable staff within the organisation. The group meets quarterly. Meetings initially focused on each of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act, providing staff an opportunity to discuss their experiences and any issues. The group then considered elements of the LGA's Diverse by Design 15-point framework, including inclusive leadership, flexible working culture, recruitment processes, reward and recognition, and equalities training. The group have now moved on to discussing particular areas of interest or concern as raised by staff members. These have included the experiences of over 50s in the workplace, as well as staff relations and experiences pertaining to particular protected characteristics. Feedback on discussions and suggested actions are provided to the Service Director for Resources to ensure a channel between the Inclusion Group and the Leadership Team, whereby necessary action can be further explored. The group also review the Gender Pay Gap data and have formed a subgroup for the specific purpose of scrutinising the data and proposing measures to the Leadership Team to improve the gap. This subgroup was first convened in September 2023. ☑ ACTION – Develop further actions to improve the gender pay gap (HR Manager, Learning and Development, and the Inclusion Group) ☑ The Council has a comprehensive approach to reviewing its Contract Procedures. It has a Procurement Team and Contracts & Procurement Group (CPG) with relevant service area representation on the CPG. The Procurement Team and a specialist Contracts & Procurement Lawyer lead on any review, with this being considered by the CPG prior to initial consideration by the FAR Committee, and then Full Council. An updated version of the Contract Procedure Rules was approved on 24 November 2016. Amongst other things, this updated Social Value Act 2012 considerations and compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015. Notification of the changes was then circulated to all employees via email, with a dedicated page setting out the changes on the Hub. ☑ The Contract Procurement Rules were most recently updated and approved by full council on 19th January 2023. The amendments were made in consultation with the Councils Contracts and Procurement Group, which is chaired by the Service Director for Resources and attended by the Executive Member for Finance and IT. The following amendments were made: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updates to reflect the Procurement Function moving from Legal to the Resources Directorate - Update to section 3 to add guidance relating to the treatment of below threshold Concession Contracts. 		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clarifying Officer responsibilities with regard to posting award notices and retaining signed contracts on the E-Sourcing system - Adding guidance on TUPE requirements. <p>Further details can be found in the report: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s20810/Annual%20review%20of%20the%20Contract%20Procurement%20Rules.pdf</p> <p>Contract Procurement Rules: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-01/Section%2020%20Contract%20Procurement%20Rules%20approved%20190123formatted.pdf</p> <p>The Contract Procurement Rules are part of the Constitution (under Section 20) and are revised and updated periodically as part of the Council's governance and procurement review processes, contributing to effective organisational internal control. In addition, the review and adoption of the Council's Contract Procurement Rules is a key action in the Council's Procurement Strategy.</p> <p>In 2023 the Council started using the Social Value Portal which provides a mechanism for maximising social value at the tender stage of procurement. The portal will enable us to measure, manage, and report on social value, looking at how the organisation and its suppliers make a difference in communities according to Themes, Outcomes, and Measures (TOMs)</p>		
<p><i>A2 iv) Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with high ethical standards expected by the organisation. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for e.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agreed values in partnership working:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — <i>Statement of business ethics communicates commitment to ethical values to external suppliers</i> — <i>Ethical values feature in contracts with external service providers</i> • <i>Protocols for partnership working</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>A2 iv) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement Guidelines for Suppliers/ Tendering guidance is available on the Council's website, making it clear that contractors must comply with the Contract Procurement Rules and Financial Regulations, and what is expected from them during the process [https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/business/procurement/procurement-guidelines-suppliers; https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/business/procurement/tendering-contracts] • A "Go Local" policy for procurement under £100,000. (This threshold was amended from £50,000 to £100,000 in January 2022.) • The Council references anti-bribery and corruption provisions within standard requests for quotations and Invitations to Tender documents. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract Procurement Rules place requirements on employees to incorporate Anti-Bribery and Social Value provisions (the latter where relevant) as part of the contracts with suppliers. Version 1 of the Contract Management guide has been finalised and placed on the Hub for use by Managers. This is now subject to an annual review in line with the review of the Contract Procurement Rules. The Contract Management guide was most recently reviewed in March 2023 and is available on the Hub. • Standard purchase order terms on the internet, which include audit, anti-bribery, and compliance with equality legislation [https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/business/procurement/standard-terms-and-conditions]. • A Procurement Strategy which sets out key business aims, promoting a sustainable, equitable approach to procurement, that seeks to minimise adverse impacts on the environment, promotes high professional standards and best practice partnering/ collaboration with suppliers. The Procurement Strategy 2023-2024 (originally approved by Cabinet in 2021 and revised by delegated authority in February 2023). This is available on the Hub and on the website: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/guidelines-suppliers. The key focus during this Strategy period will be Leadership, Commercialism, Community and Social Benefit and Reacting to Change. • The report for the Procurement Strategy Report 2021 which was approved by Cabinet: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15162/The%20Councils%20Procurement%20Strategy.pdf • An Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2022-2027 which outlines the Council’s legal duties as well as its broader commitment to EDI. It has four objectives around youth engagement; improving engagement with marginalised, seldom heard, and new communities; improving our understanding of broader EDI issues such as neurodiversity and the intersections between inequalities; and achieving consistency in measuring equality impacts of our decisions and policies. The Strategy was approved in December 2022: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/equality-and-diversity • A Cabinet Sub-Committee, with oversight of Local Authority Trading Company participation, promoting consistency shareholder approach. • A CCTV Joint Committee with remit to agree, for example, strategic, Policy, Code of Practice issues relating to the jointly owned and operated CCTV Control and Monitoring Service [Section 11 of the Constitution]. • Part of the North Herts Community Safety Partnership (CSP) that works together to deliver several projects which support community safety and crime and disorder issues, such as domestic abuse awareness and anti-bullying. The partnership develops an annual plan which addresses their strategic priorities each year (The North Hertfordshire Community Safety Action Plan (NHCSAP) The action plan for the 2023/24 was updated following on from the findings in the strategic assessment, public consultation (including feedback from the police priority setting forums as well as the survey) and current community safety data. This is available on the website: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/community-safety-action-plan • The strategic priorities for 2023-24 were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-Social Behaviour (inc. criminal damage, deliberate fires and environmental crime, vehicle ASB-speeding) - Violence Against Women and Girls (inc. domestic abuse, rape, serious sexual offences, and stalking) 		
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<p style="text-align: center;">- Current and emerging issues: PCC Policy Area: This will include areas such as theft, scams and frauds, Drug crime, cost of living crisis and any emerging issues that arise over the year.</p> <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i> Herts Careline published the results of its 2023 survey in August 2023. Herts Careline community alarm and telecare service has achieved a 99% recommendation from its customers. This was generated from the customer satisfaction survey which gathers the opinions of those using the service. Herts Careline Survey 2022/2023 - Herts Careline Customer Satisfaction Survey Results (care-line.co.uk)</p> <p>The highlights are (change from 2020/21 figures in brackets): 99% feel more reassured having our assistive technology service (+4%) 97% feel confident using their equipment (+5%) 95% say the installation process was 'easy' or 'about right' (+2%) 95% say the advice they receive from call operators is 'excellent' or 'good' (+3%) 93% feel more independent (+1%).</p> <p>Residents can find out how the Herts Careline service can support independence and help manage risks in the home by visiting www.care-line.co.uk or emailing CarelineSupport@north-herts.gov.uk or calling 0300 999 2 999.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Council's expectations in procurement with regards to support for the local community, anti-bribery and corruption, health & safety, equality, adherence to the Living Wage within documentation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> During 2016 the Council also set up a wholly owned Local-Authority Building Control Company, as a key collaborative working initiative: Broste Rivers LA7 Limited with 6 other Hertfordshire local authorities. Arrangements and contracts were reviewed in 2017/18 with a new Commissioning Panel being established to review client-side service provision bi-annually. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In 2019 an 8th Hertfordshire Authority joined the building control partnership and Governance arrangements were reviewed in 2023 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Since 2014, NHDC has provided community grants to fund local community projects. See section B3 Vi) for more information on this. 		
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Principles in bold, Sub-principles in bold & italics.	SCORE	Action
Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		
A3) <i>Respecting the rule of law</i>		

<p>A3 i) <i>Ensuring members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Statutory provisions</i> • <i>Statutory guidance is followed</i> • <i>Constitution</i> 	Substantial	
<p>A3 i) <i>What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Constitution is reviewed annually and approved by Full Council. Necessary amendments may be made year-in (in response to legislative changes), by the Monitoring Officer and must be notified to Members. • The Monitoring Officer’s role is to ensure decisions are taken lawfully, in a fair manner and procedures followed. After consulting the Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer section the Monitoring Officer has a statutory duty/ powers to report any proposal, decision, or omission that they consider would give rise to unlawfulness or any decision or omission that has given rise to maladministration (“Section 5 report”). • The Monitoring Officer is responsible for providing advice on ethics and governance to the Standards Committee and to the members of this Council and Parish Council’s within the District. • Has a Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures in place that encourage reporting of potential wrong doing or illegal activity by employees, agency staff, Members and contractors. • All Committee reports and delegated decision templates have required areas for legal advice (as well as Finance, Social Value Act 2012, Equality Act 2010, and Environmental Implications); part 1 reports are published and available for inspection as per the statutory requirements. • Legal services maintain records of advice provided (according to relevant destruction policy). <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Section 5 or section 114 reports has been issued during 2023/24. The approach of the Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer is to seek to resolve any potential issue in advance, including by ensuring relevant legal, financial and governance advice is included within Committee reports (and delegated decision records), as outlined (which have recently been reviewed and updated), so that use of the report would be as a last resort.</p>		
<p>A3 ii) <i>Creating the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders and members are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Job description/specifications</i> • <i>Compliance with CIPFA’s Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (CIPFA, 2016)</i> • <i>Terms of reference</i> • <i>Committee support</i> 	Substantial	

<p><i>A3 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The Constitution identifies the key District statutory officers (Head of Paid Service – Managing Director, Chief Finance Officer (CFO)– Service Director for Resources, and Monitoring Officer – Service Director for Legal and Community), and other senior officers and Members and sets out their roles. All are part of the Senior Management Team to oversee matters. (Section 12 & 14 of the Constitution). ☑ The CFO has a duty to the Council's taxpayers to ensure that public money is being appropriately spent and managed, and reports directly to the Managing Director. The CFO ensures that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, is responsible for keeping proper financial records and accounts and for maintaining an effective system of internal control. ☑ The CFO is a Member of a specified accountancy body (section 113 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988) and has a duty under section 114 of the 1988 Act to consult with the Head of Paid Service and Monitoring Officer on any unlawful expenditure and/ or an unbalanced Budget, and to report this to all Members. ☑ The Council's financial management arrangements conform to the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016). ☑ Full Council, Cabinet and Committees terms of reference are set out in the Constitution (Sections 4-11): https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/council-constitution. The Constitution reflects the legislative arrangements for defining executive and non-executive functions. ☑ A Legal advisor attends Full Council, Cabinet and regulatory Committees – such as Planning, Licensing and Standards to be on hand to provide advice. ☑ The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) or their Deputy attends Full Council, Cabinet and the Finance Audit and Risk Committee. ☑ Committee Services provide support to the Council, Councillors and the democratic processes of the Council. The team organise the civic calendar of Committee meetings dates, the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions, prepare and despatch agendas and reports in advance of the meetings and take and despatch minutes and decision sheets minutes after the meetings. Delegated decisions are retained by them. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The Council's financial management arrangements are underpinned by a regulatory framework comprising of the Financial Regulations, Contract Procurement Rules, annual audits of key financial systems, audits of other systems undertaken on a risk-based basis and the role of the statutory Section 151 (Chief Finance) officer. ☑ The Financial Regulations were most recently reviewed and approved by Full Council on 9th July 2020 and came into effect on 18th July 2020. Financial Regulations: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/S19_0.pdf ☑ The CIPFA Financial Management Code came into effect in April 2020 and was reviewed by FAR committee in advance of that. 		
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<p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Contract Procurement Rules were referred to Full Council from FAR committee on 7th December 2022. Council approved the updated rules on 19th January 2023. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-01/Section%2020%20Contract%20Procurement%20Rules%20approved%20190123formatted.pdf </p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The FAR Committee meets 6 times per year and provides on-going monitoring and review of financial management. The Committee’s terms of reference/ remit are set out in section 10 of the Constitution. </p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> As per the 2023/2024 Internal Audit Plan Report which was presented at the FAR committee on 16th March 2023; During 2023/24, SIAS audit plans included the following: Corporate audits include: Freedom of Information; Project Management; Ombudsman Complaints; and Emergency Planning Operational audits include: Council Tax Reduction Scheme; Houses in Multiple Occupation; and MSU Transactions Commercial Project Audits include: Churchgate – Project Governance Framework; Churchgate – Landlord Compliance IT Audits include: Software Licensing; Critical Applications; IT Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity </p> <p> North Herts District Council Finance, Audit and Risk Committee Internal Audit Plan 2023/24: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s21560/NHC%20FAR%20Committee%20-%202023-24%20Internal%20Audit%20Plan%20Report%20issued%2021.02.23%20Final.pdf </p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No section 114 1988 Act reports have been issued by the CFO during 2023/24. </p> <p> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A Cumulative Equality impact assessment was undertaken for 2023/24. This report sets out the approach taken to consider the cumulative equality impact based on a number of source documents: those Council and Committee reports that required an equality impact analysis and those council and committee reports that did not require an equality impact analysis but demonstrated mitigating action to avoid treating one aspect of the community more favourably than another. Any potential for compounded impacts were identified in individual impact assessments appended to relevant reports. </p> <p> Cumulative Equality Impact Assessment 2022/23: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-08/Cumulative%20Equality%20Assessment%202022-23.pdf </p>		
<p>A3 iii) <i>Striving to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record of legal advice provided by officers 	Full	
<p>A3 iii) <i>What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Committee reports and delegated decision templates have required areas for legal advice and part 1 reports are published and available for inspection as per the statutory requirements. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal services maintains records of advice (according to relevant destruction policy), as part of an electronic/ hard copy management systems. <p>Outcomes/ examples: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See: A3i) and A3iii) above examples.</p>		
<p><i>A3 iv) Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Monitoring Officer provisions</i> • <i>Record of legal advice provided by officers</i> • <i>Statutory provisions</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a Monitoring Officer appointed by Full Council, with role and remit set out in statute and the Constitution. These are explained under A3i)-ii) above. • The Monitoring Officer has a key reporting role in terms of the Whistleblowing arrangements. • Records of legal advice are retained as A3iii) above. Any potential illegality would be reported to the Monitoring Officer by relevant legal officers reviewing a report or delegated decision. Any issues would, as indicated be resolved in this manner. <p>Outcomes/ examples: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No section 5 Local Government & Housing Act 1998 reports have been issued by the Monitoring Officer during 2023/24.</p>		
<p><i>A3 v) Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Effective anti-fraud and corruption policies and procedures</i> • <i>Local test of assurance (where appropriate)</i> 	Substantial/	
<p><i>A3 v) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the anti-fraud and corruption arrangements set out under A1iv). Assurances are provided by the Council’s internal audit function that is delivered by SIAS and are a significant source of assurance. The PSIAS also requires that the SIAS be subject to an external quality assessment at least once every five years. This should be conducted by a qualified, independent assessor or assessment team from outside the organisation. <p>In the Internal Audit Annual Report presented to FAR committee in June 2023 it was stated that: Based on the results of the 2022/23 PSIAS self-assessment, the Head of Assurance has concluded that SIAS ‘generally conforms’ to the</p>		

<p>PSIAS, including the Definitions of Internal Auditing, the Code of Ethics and the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing. 'Generally conforms' is the highest rating and means that SIAS has a charter, policies, and processes assessed as conformant to the Standards and is consequently effective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Head of SIAS is required to deliver an annual internal audit's opinion and report, covering overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's framework of governance, risk management and control that can be used by the organisation to inform its AGS. • Service Directors/Service Managers are required to prepare and contribute to the single managers' assurance statement as part of their Service Planning, which is used as part of the AGS preparation and review of arrangements. • A Shared Anti Fraud Service (SAFS) has been operational from April 2015, reviews arrangements and presents reports to FAR Committee on types of fraud, outcomes of closed cases and ongoing investigations. SAFS provides benchmarking/ effectiveness assurance. • Has an effective FAR Committee to review arrangements. • Has an active O & S Committee that oversees and makes recommendations on arrangements. • Obtains assurance from the Monitoring Officer and Standards Committee arrangements, with effective Chairman/ IPs practices in place. • Has project governance and follow up provisions in place for lessons to be learnt/ follow up. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ SIAS undertake and present an Annual Assurance Statement, Internal Audit Annual Report. The 2022/23 report went to FAR Committee in June 2023 and gave an Overall Assurance Opinion of 'Reasonable'. The 2023/24 report is due in June 2024. SIAS Annual Report 2022/2023: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22298/NHC%20-%20SIAS%20Annual%20Assurance%20Statement%20and%20Internal%20Audit%20Annual%20Report%202022-23.pdf ☑ Updates on progress against the Audit Plan are presented to FAR Committee. This process allows review of the assurance levels provided by SIAS by Members/ public, actions to be monitored and appropriate amendments to the Plan to be approved. FAR was updated on the 2023/24 audit plan in September 2023, November 2023, January 2024, and March 2024. ☑ As reported in the March 2024 FAR Committee Audit Update Report, by February 2024, 73% of the 2023/24 Audit Plan days had been delivered against a profiled target of 82% and that 50% of audits had been delivered to draft of final report stage against a target of 67%. Internal Audit Progress Report – March 2023: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s21561/NHC%20FAR%20Committee%20-%20SIAS%20Progress%20Report%20issued%2021.02.23%20Final.pdf 		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ SAFS present reports an action plan to FAR Committee. They report the types of fraud, outcomes of closed cases/ ongoing investigations. [See A1 v). ☑ At the September 2023 FAR meeting, the Anti-Fraud Report 2022/23 was presented. The report stated that during 2022/23 there had been 80 allegations of fraud affecting council services. It was reported that this was very similar to previous years since 2019/20. The main type of fraud being reported in the 2022/23 period was related to housing benefit and council tax. North Hertfordshire District Council Anti-Fraud Plan 2024/25 from the March 2024 FAR meeting: https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24474/NHC%20Anti-Fraud%20Plan%202024-25%20-%20Covering%20Report.pdf ☑ Fraud awareness training has been delivered to Council Officers during 2022/23 via e-learning. There was also a Fraud Awareness Update from SAFS to Senior Managers Group in January 2023. SAFS are also due to present at the March 2024 staff briefing on the importance of completing anti-fraud training. They have also presented to Members during the 2023/24 year. SAFS have worked with the National Anti-Fraud Network (NAFN) to roll out further staff training in maximising the use of the fraud/error/debt recovery services provided by NAFN. SAFS have also supported Council officers using the various National Fraud Initiative (NFI) programmes and continue to do so. ☑ Service Directors have agreed a single assurance statement for service delivery for the council. The Service Delivery Plan has individual Service Area Action plans appended to it for each year. These action plans indicate that effective systems are in place within their area, with relevant actions/ mitigation measures identified (The six directorates - Resources Regulatory, Place, Customers Legal & Community and Commercial were all deemed effective). All assurance statements are collated into one document to ensure effective/monitoring systems are in place across the Council. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/service-delivery-plan 		
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Principles in bold, <i>Sub-principles in bold & italics.</i>	SCORE	Action
Principle B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.		
Local government is run for the public good; organisations therefore should ensure openness in their activities. Clear, trusted channels of communication and consultation should be used to engage effectively with all groups of stakeholders, such as individual citizens and service users, as well as institutional stakeholders.		
<i>B 1) Openness</i>	Score	Actions
<i>B1 i) Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i>	Full	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual report • Freedom of Information Act publication scheme • Online council tax information • Authority’s goals and values • Authority website 		
<p><i>B1 i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual reports are presented to various Committees as indicated above, regarding the 3Cs, RIPA, O & S, Standards Committee [see A1ii), A2 i) reports and their relevant links]. • SIAS Annual report through to FAR Committee June 2023 https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22298/NHC%20-%20SIAS%20Annual%20Assurance%20Statement%20and%20Internal%20Audit%20Annual%20Report%202022-23.pdf • A SAFS Annual report. • A FAR Committee Annual Report. • The revised Council Plan (2022-27) with its revised priorities communicates the Council’s vision and ambitions [https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/council-plan The Plan and its objectives have been developed by the Labour/Liberal Democrat joint administration. The priorities proposed by the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council were assessed by Cabinet members and Senior Leadership. The Plan was referred to Council from Cabinet and approved by Council in September 2021. • Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers achievement against the key projects as outlined in the Council Delivery Plan. • The relevant documents are made available on the Council’s website, including the Medium Term Financial Strategy. We [Council Plan page] • The Council Plan is supported by the corporate business planning programme – and the five year Medium Term financial strategy (MTFS) sets out the financial elements of the process and looks to secure the financial elements of the Plan. An Investment Strategy (which includes the Capital Programme and Treasury Management Strategy) is considered by FAR, Cabinet and approved by Full Council, and sets the treasury management and capital programme operations that are associated with the MTFS. It is reviewed each year and monitored quarterly. The Investment Strategy (integrated Capital and Treasury) was presented to FAR on the 31st January 2023. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24164/INVESTMENT%20STRATEGY%20INTEGRATED%20CAPITAL%20AND%20TREASURY.pdf https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24165/FAR%20Appendix%20A-%20Integrated%20Capital%20and%20Treasury%20Strategy.docx.pdf • The Corporate business planning programme would be used to assess identified projects against criteria including the Council’s agreed policy, its priorities, the outcomes of public consultation, demonstration of continuous improvement and changing legislative need. • Performance figures are reviewed by O & S Committee and relevant recommendations made. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Investment Strategy review is undertaken and reported to FAR Committee and Cabinet. The end of year review for the Investment Strategy 2022/22 was reported to Cabinet on 27th June 2023. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22239/INVESTMENT%20STRATEGY%20CAPITAL%20AND%20TREASURY%20END%20OF%20YEAR%20REVIEW%20202223.pdf • A mid-year review of the 2023/24 Investment Strategy was presented at the January 2024 meeting of FAR. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s23762/SECOND%20QUARTER%20INVESTMENT%20STRATEGY%20CAPITAL%20AND%20TREASURY%20REVIEW%20202324.pdf • An annual Report on Risk Management is reported to FAR Committee and Cabinet. Annual report presented to FAR Committee 21st June 2023. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22230/Year%20end%20report%20on%20Risk%20Management%20Governance.pdf • A Risk governance Update report is also reported to FAR twice per year. The latest was at the December 2023. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s23637/Mid%20Year%20update%20on%20Risk%20Management%20Governance.pdf • A report that accompanies the Statement of Accounts, explains any amendments that have been required by the external auditors, and the Letter of Representation [Statement of Accounts 2021-22 audited], including Signed Audit Opinion of the CFO & Chair of FAR Committee enables the external auditors to form an opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view of the Council financial position and of its income and expenditure for the year ended, in accordance with CIPFA LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24 Code of Practice 2023/24 online edition CIPFA . As outlined in the Measures to Address the External Audit Backlog Report presented to FAR committee 13th March 2024, there is a delay in the audit of the Statement of Accounts 2022-23. A back-stop date has been proposed for these to be approved by 30th September 2024. • An Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Report sets out the annual audit position and provides an overall assurance level for the Council. • The revised Council plan and the action plan clearly outlines the councils' high level work programme and priorities for five years, this has the following key aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council Delivery Plan 2023/24 https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-09/Council%20Delivery%20Plan%2023-24.pdf ○ The annual Council Delivery plan, with updates going to Overview & Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis. ○ A service plan for each directorate, reviewed annually (available internally only) ○ Assurance statements are approved by each Service Director upon reviewing the AGS Self Assessment Document. 		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An External Auditors Audit Results report for year end, reported through to September FAR Committee (as above). • Projects are reviewed by O & S Committee/ Task & Finish Groups and recommendations made. • A Freedom of Information (FOI) publication scheme that details information that is routinely made available by the Council and whether there is a charge for this information [information on how to make requests (with an on-line facility), FOI annual request figures, information about FOI/ Environmental Information and Data Protection, Review and complaints procedures [Freedom of Information overview page]. • Open Data is published on this website, and is open to use and re-use, through the terms of the Open Government Licence. This covers: Budgets for the year; contracts register; Constitution; Council meeting dates; agendas and minutes; Councillor allowances; election results; fraud; grants and awards; land and property assets; Organisation structure chart; Parking revenue (on-street and off-street); Pay Policy Statement; Payments to Suppliers; Performance management; Senior employee salaries and job descriptions; Statement of Accounts; Trade Union Facility Time; Waste contracts [Open Data page] • The 'Council Tax Information' webpage provides information on the Council's performance, expenditure and efficiencies. • Business Rates Annual Notification, explanatory notes and background information Business Rates – Annual Notification • Publish Data Sets on NNDR Full list and monthly credit balances [Published Data Sets]. • Annual Monitoring Report, containing indicators and targets across the district to aid with future planning decisions and identification of local priorities [Annual Monitoring Report 2021-22] • A Civil Parking Enforcement Annual Report that details actions and surpluses. Civil Parking Enforcement Annual report 2018-19. Annual reports have been delayed due to the impact of the pandemic, but a report is now being compiled. • An Annual Strategic Action Plan developed by the North Herts Community Safety Partnership (NHCSAP). North Hertfordshire Community Safety Action Plan 2023/24 (NHCSAP) • Air Quality Annual Status Report (Air Quality Annual Status report 2023) <p>• The Council's website complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) AA rating for Local Authorities</p> <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p>The Council Plan and its priorities are reviewed by Cabinet and then by Council (the 2022-27 Plan being approved by Council in September 2021), while O&S review progress achieved against the plan's objectives. The Council Plan for 2022-27 https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/council-plan highlights three strategic priorities and also identifies four key themes of focus:</p> <p>Our three priorities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People first People make North Herts work. We value all our residents, businesses, staff, contractors, councillors, and other partners, and place them at the heart of everything we do. • Sustainability We recognise the challenges our towns and district as a whole face and are committed to delivering services which are relevant and sustainable. In doing so we will place our environmental responsibilities, as well as sound financial planning, at the centre of our policymaking. 		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A brighter future together We are far-sighted and plan for the long term to secure the best outcomes for our people, towns and villages, and the local economy, ensuring North Herts continues to thrive. <p>The Plan also identifies four key themes which we will focus on during the next five years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our environment• Our local economy• Our places• Our services <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Council's Priorities are aligned with the wants of residents. http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/customer-services/publications-and-consultations/district-wide-survey. The District Wide survey shows that 94% of residents are satisfied with North Herts as a place to live compared with 82% nationally. 73% of North Herts' residents are satisfied with the way the Council runs things, against 64% nationally. This survey is completed every two years and therefore next scheduled for 2024.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is the Council's key financial planning document. It considers and encompasses the financial implications of the priorities and actions in the Priorities document and is thus an integral part of the Corporate Business Planning process and is updated at least annually.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> An Annual report is produced by Planning Policy and Projects Group which core indicators for areas such as business development, housing, transport, local services, performance of policies in the adopted Local Plan, employment monitoring. It also looks at any deficiencies in the scope of current monitoring and how it can be improved in future. This report and previous ones are available to residents via the Council's website: [https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-policy/monitoring]</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Council is part of the Herts & Beds Air Pollution Monitoring Network, and took the lead in re-procuring the air quality monitoring, network and website arrangements for 14 authorities in 2016. The Network maintains a website with comprehensive information on the quality of air in the region, and residents can access current pollution levels. Older air quality reports that are specific to NHDC can also be found on the Ricardo (contractor) website. [Air Quality page; Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire air quality current & historic; Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) Reports]</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> North Herts Community Safety Partnership (NHCSP) is a high performing Community Safety Partnership and North Hertfordshire remains a low crime area with one of the lowest crime figures in Hertfordshire. The NHCSP annual Strategic Assessment identifies crime and disorder issues within the district, describes emerging trends and informs the annual revision of the Community Safety Action Plan. The most recent annual countywide strategic assessment indicates that there had been a 10.5% decrease in crime and disorder compared to the previous year with no areas experiencing severe or longstanding crime and disorder problems. As a result of the findings in the strategic assessment, public consultation (including feedback</p>		
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<p>from the police priority setting forums as well as the survey) and current community safety data, the CSP priorities for 2023/24 were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anti-Social Behaviour (inc. criminal damage, deliberate fires and environmental crime, vehicle ASB- speeding): The NHCSP will continue to work together to reduce all elements of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage across the district• Violence Against Women and Girls (including domestic abuse, rape, serious sexual offences and stalking): the NHCSP will work together to prevent, deter and tackle Violence Against Women and Girls in North Herts.• Current and emerging issues (including theft, scams, frauds and protecting vulnerable people). <p>The Review time limit supplements the statutory one for handling requests (20 working days) and during 2023 calendar year the Council only failed to handle 2% of the 719 FOIs/EIRs requests within that period. There were 5 reviews, 0 of which were successful and the information released, 0 which were partially successful, and 5 which were unsuccessful. There was 1 ICO case. The number of FOIs is up from 2022 (653), however the timescales on providing information has improved.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In respect to requests for information under the Data Protection Act - 226 Data Protection cases (including 20 Subject Access Requests) were received in the period 2023 calendar year, of which 98.7% were successfully answered within the 40 calendar day deadline. There was 0 complaints lodged at the ICO.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Marketing and Communications Strategy 2024-2028 was approved at Cabinet 16th January 2024. While communication with residents is vital, marketing is needed to promote and raise awareness of our vision, priorities and themes to ensure the right people get the right message at the right time through their preferred channel of choice. The Strategy highlights four main aims; Inform, Inspire, Involve and Interact alongside the strategic approach of People First, Campaign-led, Cross-channel and Digital First. The main purpose of the 2024 - 2028 Marketing and Communications strategy is to support the delivery of the North Herts Council's 2022 - 2027 Council Plan and bring our vision, strategic priorities, and themes to life. In line with this, there is a focus on building our subscriber base for our communication channel @NorthHerts and building awareness of NH Now through targeted social media activity. We have also enhanced our website offer by introducing a Find My Nearest Facility (Household Waste and Recycling Centre) function. The Hub has seen the addition of a Chatbot to assist with public enquires</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Council's Outlook Magazine is produced and delivered to all households in the area and available on the Council's website [Outlook Magazine]. It contains information about Council's services and events.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>		
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<p><i>B1 ii) Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Record of decision making and supporting materials</i> 	<p>Full</p>	
<p><i>B1 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <p>There is an effective Committee administration process in places so that all Council meeting agendas, reports, minutes available for inspection, and these, together with public meeting recordings available on line (https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-meetings and report deadlines dates are circulated in advance to Members and employees by Committee services. Outlook magazine also publishes details on how to find future meeting dates including councillor surgeries. There is a presumption of openness and transparency, with reports (or confidential parts of reports) only being exempt for the public so long as statutory exemption requirements² apply. Report authors consider such matters with the designed Constitutional “Proper officer”. Meetings are open to the public, as well as streamed live to Youtube and made available on the council’s Youtube channel afterwards - unless an exemption applies (and the press and public only required to leave for so long as such items are considered). There is a Council and Democracy page on the NHDC website, that links to information about the Council, Councillors, MPs, Council meetings, Council departments, Forward Plan of Key Decisions, Petitions, Notices of Part 2 (exempt) decisions that the Council intends to take in the near future, delegated decisions, recordings/ the right to record Council meetings, Notices of Urgent Decisions. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy Public Registers and Delegated Decisions are available on the NHDC website for Environmental Health and Licensing [Public Registers and Delegated Decisions]. Planning applications, and review decisions made in the last 3 years [View Planning Applications] Review Delegated Executive and Non-Executive decisions³ Feb 2024 https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/delegated-decisions-2024 The Constitution also sets out what information is available to the public and how to engage with the Council in Section 3. Has a system to record public meetings, and welcomes the ability of the press and public to record meetings under an adopted Protocol [Protocol for Recording of Council Meetings]. Since the first Covid-19 lockdown, meetings have been held virtually via Zoom, streamed live to YouTube, and remain on the Council’s YouTube channel afterwards, thereby increasing accessibility to members of the public. https://www.youtube.com/c/North-hertsGovUk <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p>		

² Under the Local Government Act 1972 Schedule 12A, and/ or Local Government Act 2000/ The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012/2089

³ Made under The Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014/2095

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See record of decision making action in A1iii) re <i>Shasha</i> decision and post Whistleblowing amendments to template following that investigation A1iv).</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Councillor Surgeries, Area Forums and Environment Panel meetings are held virtually via Zoom to ensure continued openness and engagement with residents. Area Committees have now been changed to Area Forums, held flexibly. The reason for this change was to allow more flexibility in the topics discussed as formal meetings were not the best way to engage with the community. The Area forums would be more people focussed and combined Town Talks. Forums could meet virtually, hybrid and in a set location as agreed. This reduced the number of formal meetings that must be arranged and clerked by the Committee team, by at least 20. The constitutional amendment was agreed at Council on the 18th April 2023. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s21855/Constitutional%20amendment%20report%2018.4.23.pdf Area Forums – Section 9 Constitution</p>		
<p><i>B1 iii) Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Decision making protocols</i> • <i>Report pro-formas</i> • <i>Record of professional advice in reaching decisions</i> • <i>Meeting reports show details of advice given</i> • <i>Discussion between members and officers on the information needs of members to support decision making</i> • <i>Agreement on the information that will be provided and timescales</i> • <i>Calendar of dates for submitting, publishing and distributing timely reports is adhered to</i> 	Full	
<p><i>B1 iii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Constitution set the basis of decision making delegations/ remit for Council, Cabinet, Committee meetings, Member and officer delegations [Council Constitution]. • A calendar of meetings is approved each year at Annual Council in May [Schedule of council meetings 2023/24] • The Forward Plan, with key decisions is updated and placed on the Council’s website [Council and Democracy] • An Annual Report on Key Decisions and cases of special urgency Statement of Community Involvement North Herts Council (north-herts.gov.uk) is provided to Full Council and placed on the Council’s website. • Adopted a standard report, Information note and delegated decision format, with guidance, with the report and delegated decision templates covering: an Executive summary, reasons for the recommendation(s), options considered, consultation, forward plan, background, relevant considerations, legal/ financial/ risk/ equalities/ social value and human resource implications. Report templates and guidance notes can be found on the internal Hub: https://northhertsgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/LegalCommunityIntranet/SitePages/Committee-report-templates.aspx <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p>		

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Report templates and guidance are reviewed regularly and were last reviewed in 2023. All reports have and continue to record professional advice from officers in respect of legal/ financial/ risk/ equalities/ social value and human resource implications. From 2020, report templates were amended to include a mandatory Environmental Implications section to reflect the Council’s objective to Respond to Challenges to the Environment. For those decisions which identify significant environmental impacts in the initial report, it is a requirement to fill out an Environmental Implications Assessment to more fully consider and detail the impacts. Members have been part of the process for deciding what information should be included in reports, and or as appended to such reports/ records, via Overview and Scrutiny. Such information is provided in compliance with statutory requirements for provision of the report, publishing and inspection.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Key Decisions-Annual Report of cases of special urgency informing the Council of any occasions over the past year where the provisions relating to “Special Urgency” had been used in connection with the publication of an intention to make a Key Decision. The report in May 2023 confirmed that in 2022/23 the Special Urgency powers had been used in regard to the Write Off of Rent Arrears, Approving the Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and for addition of complex installations and maintenance to Careline Services. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22002/Leader%20Special%20Urgency%20Report.pdf</p>		
<p><i>B iv) Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions/ courses of action. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Community strategy</i> • <i>Use of consultation feedback</i> • <i>Citizen survey</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>B1 iv) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 5 year Consultation Strategy for 2022-2027 [Consultation Strategy 2022-2027] that sets out the methods that will be used to consult and practical considerations for doing so. This entails various approaches to consultation and availability through the Council’s website. • The Council is in the process of launching engagement pages using digital engagement platform, Civil Space. Pages aim to be created on Climate Change, Environment, and Community Engagement amongst other topics, and will allow the council to engage with residents more informally, as well as create surveys. The Climate Change engagement page, ‘Climate Hive’ was launched in March 2023 as a pilot. The page has over 350 subscribers and has proved successful in engaging residents on topical climate projects, tips and news. The Churchgate regeneration project engagement page ‘Churchgate Conversation’ was launched in November 2023. Work is yet to start on the aspiration of the Community Engagement Page- • Statement of Community Involvement sets out how the Council will involve the community in preparing the Local Plan and in considering planning applications. A review of the statement is undertaken every 5 years, with the most recent review taking place in 2023. Statement of Community Involvement – adopted September 2023: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-10/Statement%20of%20Community%20Involvement%20Adopted%20September%202023.pdf 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A consultation period for the Statement of Community Involvement closed 27th June 2023. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/statement-community-involvement-0 • A District Wide Survey every two years. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/North%20Herts%20Resident%20Tracker%202019%20FINAL%20Report.pdf The most recent report is for the 2022 survey. The results from the 2022 survey are detailed and linked above. • The Communications Manager has published a <u>Communication strategy</u> adopted – 2019-23, (internally, an Action Plan supports this Strategy), and a <u>Social Media Strategy and Policy 2018-21</u>. The newly adopted Marketing and Communications Strategy 2024-2028 is due to be published on the website soon. The Social Media Strategy and Policy is currently being reviewed. • There will be an increased focus on effective consultation between Council and the service users of North Hertfordshire. Methods of engagement will include Citizens Panels, focus groups, e- letter communication, and online surveys. The report and decision record template prompts authors and documents consultation that has taken place and is part of the retained record for examination. • A communications team assists services in undertaking and understanding the value of carrying out consultation in their services. • Staff Consultation Forum and related Terms of Reference. • A Joint Staff Consultative Committee (JSCC) is an informal committee which is attended by representatives of the Staff Consultation Forum and Trade Union. • Use of MS Forms and Zencity for the creation of surveys to consult with residents. • Many services areas carry out their own statutory consultation (eg for Planning; Parking strategy). • Member and officer involvement in outside bodies, with Members nominated to over 40 such bodies in May 2023 Nominations of Representatives to Outside Bodies 2023/24 such as Citizen’s Advice North Herts, North Herts Ethnic Forum, Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, Walsworth Community Centre, Letchworth Sustainability Forum, and Royston First Advisory Council. This assists with community engagement and reviewing use of the resources to see that outcomes are achieved. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22060/Appendix%20A%20-%202023-24%20Outside%20Orgs%20Nominees.pdf <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Local Strategic Partnership has been disbanded because we now engage with various community groups and other bodies via a range of other partnership groups and networks. For example, these include: The Food Provision Network; Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership; The East of England Network; and the Policy and Partnerships Network. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Local Plan Proposed Submission consultation process is a statutory one. As a Local Planning authority, NHDC has to prepare a Local Plan and keep it under review. The Local Plan has to set out the Council’s plans for the area, including allocating sites for development, identifying areas to be protected from development and setting the policies to be used when determining planning applications. Full Council endorsed key elements of the draft plan in July 2016. The final version of the Proposed Submission Local Plan was then approved for public consultation by Cabinet in September 2016 and a 6 week further 		
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<p>public consultation took place between October and December 2016 and received (5675 individual) representation. Information on previous submissions can be found at: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/previous-consultations</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A report to update on Local Plan Implementation was taken to Cabinet on 2nd November 2022. As well as updating on 3, it had the aim of seeking approval to conduct a consultation upon the Inspector’s proposed Further Main Modifications to the Plan and documentation produced under delegated authority. It was resolved that officers be authorised to conduct a consultation on the proposed Further Main Modifications and relevant supporting documents.</p> <p>https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s20541/North%20Hertfordshire%20Local%20Plan%202011-2031.pdf . At cabinet 18th January, a Local Plan Review report was presented https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s23972/Local%20Plan%20Review.pdf.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Joint Staff Consultative Committee (JSCC) is an informal committee which is attended by representatives of the Staff Consultation Forum and Trade Union(s). It does not make decisions, but provides an opportunity for Members to discuss employee relations and Human Resource management issues. It meets 4 times per year as part of the consultation with employees [see Section 10 of the Constitution]. The Staff Consultation Forum meets monthly and during the last year has in-putted into internal staff issues. The minutes from the SCF are taken to JSCC. Draft and finalised minutes are made available on the Council’s Hub.</p>		
<p><i>B 2) Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders</i></p>		
<p><i>B2 i) Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Communication strategy</i> 	<p>Substantial</p>	
<p><i>B2 i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An updated Customer Service Strategy (2021-27) that aims to put people first [Customer Service Strategy page]. • A Marketing and Communications Strategy and action plan [Communications Strategy page] that sets out the approach to communicating with residents, partners and the media. • Communicates the district vision and achievements against its Corporate Objectives in a quarterly publication, ‘Outlook’ that is delivered to residents. • A Consultation Strategy [see above]. The Strategy is currently in the process of being updated to reflect advances in technology and the manner in which consultations are conducted • A Media relations protocol [Media Relations Protocol] to provide direction and guidance to employees and Councillors on issues relating to the media as well as to provide the media with an indication of the service they should expect to receive from the Council. • A Social Media policy [Social media policy] • Guidance to Members for Social Media [Guidance for Social Media]. • Use social media sites and text alerts service to widen the range of communication methods with local residents. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Corporate business planning process that includes an annual timetable of formal consultation events, ensuring our statutory, voluntary, community parish and town council, and business partners have the opportunity to comment on budget proposals (both investments and efficiencies) under consideration. • An effective partnering arrangement for strategic engagement with institutional stakeholders through the North Herts Partnership. • Member and officer involvement in outside bodies, with Members nominated to over 40 such bodies in May 2023 Nominations of Representatives to Outside Bodies 2023/24 such as Citizen’s Advice North Herts, North Herts Ethnic Forum, Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, Walsworth Community Centre, Letchworth Sustainability Forum, and Royston First Advisory Council. This assists with community engagement and reviewing use of the resources to see that outcomes are achieved. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22060/Appendix%20A%20-%202023-24%20Outside%20Orgs%20Nominees.pdf <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council participated in National Customer Service Week in October 2023. It was an opportunity raise awareness of customer service and the vital role it plays, and was accompanied by a programme of activities and drop-in session with the Customer Service Team. <p>Annual reports are provided to the council from the Citizens Advice and Herts Minority Ethnic forum, to demonstrate support of the shared vision (to put people first in order to achieve a brighter future together, as per the Council Plan) (see also A2 iv)/ B1i). The Council have quarterly meetings with NHCVS where we are provided with update reports.</p>		
<p><i>B2 ii) Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database of stakeholders with whom the authority should engage and for what purpose and a record of an assessment of the effectiveness of any changes 	Substantial	
<p><i>B2 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Citizens Panel [see above]. • A Consultation Strategy that sets out the basic approach to consultation and assesses effectiveness from the last strategic period [see above]. • North Hertfordshire forms part of the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to ensure a prosperous economy for the district’s residents and businesses. Officers also attend various cross District equivalents meetings across service areas, for example for Legal, Planning, Corporate Policy and Environmental Services, which aids shared good practice Shared services / partnerships arrangements are explored as and when appropriate to do so. • A report and record of decision format that clearly documents consultation and outcomes as part of the decision making process/ any changes suggested and actioned. • North Hertfordshire is also part of the Herts Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), which looks to work collaboratively to tackle climate change and environmental degradation across Hertfordshire. The group currently works across 		

<p>6 key themes: Water, Biodiversity, Carbon Reduction, Transport, Behaviour Change, and Adaptation. North Herts leads on Biodiversity. The Herts Growth Board is responsible for countywide growth and is made up of leaders and Chief Executives from each council in the county. It has developed its 6 new missions, one of which is Sustainable County. The HCCSP is specifically mentioned within this mission in relation to various action around sustainability, and is given a particular remit around developing a Local Area Energy Plan for Hertfordshire.</p> <p>Database for business rate payers for consultation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Plan consultation list. • Local interest group forum. • Part of Hertfordshire Property Partnership (HPP). • Legal Services are part of “Herts First” Legal Service provision and the Public Law Partnership (PLP). • Legal Services (with other authorities in Hertfordshire) have a protocol in place with Hertfordshire Constabulary for the reporting of alleged offences by Councillors. <p>Outcomes/ examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Hertfordshire LEP has the vision that by 2030, Hertfordshire will be among the UK’s leading economies, helping realising the full economic potential of the assets and opportunities within the ‘Golden Triangle’. This is underpinned by 4 priorities – 1. Maintaining global excellence in science and technology, 2. Harnessing our relationships with London (& elsewhere) 3. Re-invigorating our places for the 21st Century and 4. Foundations for growth. Programmes, events and achievements are documented on the LEP site. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Legal continue to be part of PLP (Public Law Partnership) PLP is an Eastern region legal partnership and membership also provides and internal local authority marketplace and opportunities for benchmarking, shared learning and good practice. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Council is a Member of the HPP (Hertfordshire Property Partnership). 		
<p><i>B2 iii) Ensuring that partnerships are based on:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — <i>trust</i> — <i>a shared commitment to change</i> — <i>a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners and that the added value of partnership working is explicit. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Partnership framework</i> • <i>Partnership protocols</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>B2 iii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See LEPs approach to partnership [B2ii)]. • Working with Town Centres in Partnership to co-ordinate and progress the work in the town and tackle growth and development challenges. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Service Partnerships for Internal Audit, Anti-Fraud and Insurance, which recognise the benefits of partnership working. • A Grants Policy, which sets out the basis of supporting local groups/ partner organisations. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Within North Hertfordshire there are four town centre partnerships for Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston and the Council is a member of each one. The partnerships include members from various organisations; retailers, businesses, public sector organisations, voluntary and community groups, all of whom have an interest in their town centre. The Council supports these partnerships through funding and Member nominations/ participation within the Partnerships [https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/business/economic-development/town-centre-management]. ☑ The Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS) is a partnership of councils and housing providers across Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire with the aim of deterring, preventing, investigating and pursuing fraud for each of its partners providing a robust and resilient service. See above and SAFS Anti-Fraud Plan 2023/24 Anti-Fraud Progress Report 2023/24 https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22833/NHC%20SAFS%20Progress%20Report%20on%20Anti-Fraud%20Plan%202023%202024.pdf ☑ Area Committees were replaced with Area Forums, covering Baldock, Letchworth, Royston, Hitchin and Southern Rural. The change of the Area Committees to informal Area Forums was agreed at Council, 18th April 2023 and also outlined the approval that grant applications will be considered by the District Wide Community Facilities Capital & Revenue Grants Panel. Constitutional amendment report 18.4.23.docx (north-herts.gov.uk) 		
<p><i>B 3) Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users</i></p>		
<p><i>B3 i) Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record of public consultations • Partnership framework 	<p>Substantial</p>	
<p><i>B3 i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council hold records on public consultation for the last 4 years on its website. • It has Strategic Policies in place with stakeholders and partner organisations [see A2 v); B2ii), B2 iii)]. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ In 2021 the Council undertook a review of its Grants Policy. As part of the committed approach to partner organisations, such as Citizens advice and North Herts Centre for Voluntary Services and half yearly reviews undertaken in October / November 2016 it was determined that the Citizens Advice North Herts, North Herts Centre for Voluntary Service and the North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum annual awards move to formal contractual arrangements with Authority for three consecutive years as from 2017/18 https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/Data/Cabinet/201703281930/Agenda/\$att12260.doc.pdf . Following the 		

<p>end of this 3-year contractual arrangement, the Council entered into a further contractual arrangement for three consecutive years (20/21, 21/22, 22/23) with these organisations via delegated decision in 2020. This contract has been renewed for a further 3 year period, covering 2023-2026 (23/24, 24/25, 25/26). https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=2910&Ver=4</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SIAS reviewed the Council's Community Capital Grant procedures and confirmed a Reasonable level of assurance in April 2022.</p>		
<p><i>B3 ii) Ensuring that communication methods are effective and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Communications strategy</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>B3 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has a Marketing and Communications Strategy and Media Relations Protocol [see B2i) above]. • Media training for Executive Members/ Chairmen of Committee. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A review of the Consultation strategy has been undertaken, being reported back to SMT in May 2018. The Council will be considering better use of its Citizen's Panel and best practice. While the strategy's initial timespan was 2016-2020, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic mean that the strategy will be reviewed in 2021/22. The Consultation strategy has been reviewed and the Citizens Panel will continue as set out in the Consultation Strategy 2022-2027. • A revised Marketing and Communications Strategy 2024-2028 has been approved, while the Social Media Strategy adopted in 2018, is currently under review. The Council's Marketing and Communications Strategy for 2024-2028 outlines how we will plan and manage our communications activities over the next five years. While communication with residents is vital, marketing is needed to promote and raise awareness of our vision, priorities and themes to ensure the right people get the right message at the right time through their preferred channel of choice. The Strategy highlights four main aims; Inform, Inspire, Involve and Interact alongside the strategic approach of People First, Campaign-led, Cross-channel and Digital First. The main purpose of the 2024 - 2028 Marketing and Communications strategy is to support the delivery of the North Herts Council's 2022 - 2027 Council Plan and bring our vision, strategic priorities, and themes to life. It sets out our approach to communicating with residents, partners, businesses, with staff and councillors. The Strategy covers the range of communications activities including media relations, external communications, internal communications, website and social media. In addition, 'Consultation' sessions were organised with the Senior Management Group to refresh managers of the principle of the Consultation strategy. • Media training was provided to Councillors in September 2022 by PLC Media. 		
<p><i>B3 iii) Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Communications strategy</i> • <i>Joint strategic needs assessment</i> 	Substantial	

<p><i>B3 iii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has a Marketing and Communications Strategy and Media Relations Protocol [see B2i) above]. • Hertfordshire County Council host a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which includes a district breakdown of health, social care needs and areas of inequality joint strategic needs assessment • Streamlined Council Delivery Plan as B1 i). <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> When feedback from the District Wide Survey shows residents do not always feel well informed about how the Council spends its money or about how to get involved in local decision making, the results are used by senior managers to examine any issues and identify where service improvements can be made to address them.</p>		
<p><i>B3 iv) Implementing effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how their views have been taken into account. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Communications strategy</i> 	Moderate	
<p><i>B3 iv) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has a Marketing and Communications Strategy, a Consultation Strategy and Media Relations Protocol (2021) [see B2i) above]. • A Report and record of decision template, which includes a specific section on consultation undertaken/ changes effected as a result. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District wide survey 2022. District wide survey key findings report 2022 https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-08/North%20Herts%20Resident%20Tracker%202022.pdf</p>		
<p><i>B3 v) Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Processes for dealing with competing demands within the community, for example a consultation</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>B3 v) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Citizen panel which is open to all residents that is made up of a cross section of the community in terms of demographic mix of age, gender, education, status and location. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Housing consultation in September 2023 was the most recent time the Citizen Panel was used for the feedback from the Citizen Panel to make amendments to the proposals [see B1 iv)].</p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Waste collection and Street Cleansing Consultation – in summer of 2017 NHDC and East Herts carried out an online consultation, seeking residents’ views on a range of potential contract options for the joint waste and recycling contract (Summary of key findings) (Waste Public Consultation Results) Hertfordshire Waste Partnership. Consultation on new waste contract. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Churchgate consultation. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Plan consultation process balances competition views of those wanting housing and those not wanting housing. Consider and take a balanced view of competition demands. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> We receive regular reports from Zencity which detail the engagement and responses our social media communications are receiving across a range of subjects. 		
<p><i>B3 vi) Taking account of the interests of future generations of tax payers and service users. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports • Joint strategic needs assessment 	Full	
<p><i>B3 vi) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Council has a multi-media approach to contact – online, in person, by phone, by post, with self-service and social media sites (on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram, dedicated e-mail bulletins and digital magazine). The use of social media sites and text alerts are geared towards engagement with younger residents. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assesses needs through evidence-based Strategic needs assessments (used to support the preparation of the Local Plan 2011-2031 https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan/local-plan-examination/examination-library <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Produces a monitoring report for key indicators: business development, housing, transport, local services, performance of policies in the adopted Local Plan, employment monitoring. It also looks at any deficiencies in the scope of current monitoring and how it can be improved in future. This report and previous ones are available to residents via the Council’s website: [https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-policy/monitoring] [See also B1 i) B1 iv)] <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Council engages with different groups through its nominated Members on bodies such as Baldock Youth and Community Association, Royston & District Sports Council and Sport North Herts. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> During 2023/24 the Council has helped fund a number of initiatives aimed at younger residents, including through its Area Forum grant system, with grants awards to the following groups: - . <p style="margin-left: 20px;"> Christchurch. Friends of Brandles Home-start Herts x3 Friends of Whitehill & Highbury Schools Strathmore Fun Club </p>		

<p>Home-start Royston St Pauls Walden Pre School Wymondley Parish Council</p> <p>Community Grants covering Children and Young people made up the largest proportion of grants in the period 2023/24. List of all grants awarded for 2023/24 are available on the website https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/community-grants-awarded</p>		
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Principles in bold, <i>Sub-principles in bold & italics.</i>	SCORE	Action
<p>Principle C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits</p> <p>The long-term nature and impact of many of local government’s responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable. Decisions should further the authority’s purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes, and remain within the limits of authority and resources. Input from all groups of stakeholders, including citizens, service users, and institutional stakeholders, is vital to the success of this process and in balancing competing demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available.</p>		
<p><i>C1) Defining outcomes</i></p>		
<p><i>C1 i) Having a clear vision which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation’s purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provides the basis for the organisation’s overall strategy, planning and other decisions. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Vision used as a basis for corporate and service planning</i> 	Full	
<p><i>C1 i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Council Plan 2022-2027 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Council Objectives and Plan approval process [see A2 i) B1 i)] <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Council Delivery Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Council vision based on joint member and Senior management engagement [see A2 iv) B1 i) B2 i)]. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service planning process. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NHDC Resilience Plan. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employee Regular Performance Review (RPR) process and workforce planning to support the Council to achieve its objectives, improve/ manage performance and individual’s development. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Council’s revised Council Plan 2022-2027 set new strategic priorities of ‘People First, Sustainability, and a Brighter Future Together’. This was developed and reviewed in 2021/22. The proposed Council Plan and objectives were taken to Cabinet on 21st September 2021 and approved by Council on 23rd September 2021. The new Council plan came 		

<p>into effect at the beginning of the next civic year (April 2022.) https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?Id=4287</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The Council plan remains unchanged for 2023/24 ☑ The Council has a Corporate Service Planning process, which supports delivery of the Corporate Plan and in context of the Medium Term Financial strategy. ☑ The Council Delivery Plan which sets out projects., risks and Performance indicators all in one place. This goes to both Overview & Scrutiny and Finance Audit & risk for comment on a quarterly basis. The approved Delivery Plan provides Cabinet with assurances that progress against achievement of the Council plan objectives and will be monitored effectively. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/council-delivery-plan ☑ The plan for a new People Strategy for 2020 – 2026 was postponed due to the impact of the pandemic and as an alternative a People Recovery plan has been developed. This describes how HR processes will adapt because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and how we will support staff through this period of change. People Recovery Plan 2020 - 2022: https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15652/Appendix%20A%20-%20People%20Recovery%20Plan%202020-2022.pdf . Work will commence on a refreshed People plan shortly. ☑ The Emergency plan, continuity plan and supporting documents have been combined into one plan with supporting Response and support plans and documents. GO Cards have been developed as a procedural guide to managing an incident. ☑ In 2023 the Business Continuity/Emergency plans web pages and Business Continuity ‘Service Continuity plans’ were revised and circulated for completion by Service areas. ☑ An initial Corporate Peer review was conducted in January 2020 (https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s10364/Corporate%20Peer%20Challenge%20Report.pdf.) This was reported at and, Action plan, agreed at Cabinet meetings on 24 March 2020 and 23 June 2020. A follow up review was undertaken by a different LGA Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) Team during 2022. As the environment in which local authorities now operate has changed the LGA were requested to provide some targeted peer support for the Overview & Scrutiny and Finance Audi and Risk Committee.–The Corporate Peer Challenge Report & Action Plan was agreed at Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 20th June 2023. https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22328/CORPORATE%20PEER%20CHALLENGE%20REPORT.pdf ☑ The action plan is detailed at Appendix B. https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22330/App%20B%20Action%20Plan%20in%20response%20to%20Peer%20Support%20Committee%20report.pdf ☑ The SIAS review the effectiveness of the FAR Committee for 2023 was not completed, as detailed in the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2022-2023, a similar SIAS review has not taken place for the last two years this report as this has essentially been covered by the Peer Review. A SIAS review will take place in 2024. The NHC Values are intended to define how we work as an organisation. They were adopted by the organisation following detailed consultation with staff and have been streamlined to make them clearer. As an organisation we strive to be: 		
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADAPTABLE: We are adaptable in finding solutions for each other, our partners and our customers • INCLUSIVE: We are inclusive and value diversity • LEARNING: We learn from others and are open to change • LISTENING: We listen to and consider the views of each other, our partners and our customers • TOGETHER: We work together and support each other to deliver the best we can <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RPR system which was audited by SIAS in 2017. The system secured full assurance which demonstrated its organisational purpose in the Corporate priorities process [see A1 i) A2 iii)]. The RPR process includes alignment to the adopted Values and Behaviours as set out in the Council plan . The RPR process is not just a once a year ‘appraisal’ but an opportunity to create a culture of regular discussion, review and feedback which focuses on performance and wellbeing.</p>		
<p><i>C1 ii) Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Community engagement and involvement</i> • <i>Corporate and service plans</i> • <i>Community strategy</i> 	Full	
<p><i>C1 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation processes, Strategies and arrangements as detailed in B above. • Council Objectives, Plan and Service Planning detailed in C1 i) above. • Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy including 4 Objectives to measure our engagement with two key groups (young people and those from ethnic minorities) Joint Staff Consultative Committee (JSCC) and Staff Consultation Forum. • Equalities analysis which records the impact assessment a part of the report and record of decision template, which will assess any impact. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consultation / Communications / Corporate Plan / Local Plan submission examples linked to above.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Council is subject to a Public Sector Equality Duty, which places a responsibility on the Council to consider all individuals when carrying out its day-to-day work (in formulating policy, delivering services and in relation to its own employees). It is a duty of public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people carrying out their activities. This duty is supplemented by a Corporate Equality Strategy to ensure that the Council treats everyone equally. The Council is committed to equality of opportunity in employment and aims to have a workforce that is representative of the community that it serves. The Equality objectives are based around the Corporate Objectives, with all priorities embracing the work that the Council does with our local communities, parishes, town councils and charities.</p>		

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Equality strategy was reviewed and approved by Cabinet on the 13 th December 2022. The renamed Policy – Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy included the following objectives to comply with the requirements of Public Sector Equality Duty for local authorities:			
Objective	Measures		
1. Work with young people through youth engagement to make it easier for them to have their voices heard in local decision-making and democracy.	Engage with 20 youth organisations per year. Schools' visits with Councillors on a termly basis.		
2. Improve our engagement with marginalised, seldom heard, and new communities to make it easier for them to participate in local decision-making and democracy, and to have their views and experiences heard by the Council.	Engage with 40 organisations representing marginalised/new/seldom heard groups per year. Support events which provide a platform for the experiences of marginalised, new, and/or seldom heard communities.		
3. Improve our understanding of broader EDI issues and their impacts, such as neurodiversity and economic disadvantage; as well as the intersections between inequalities, using our Inclusion Group as a channel.	Inclusion Group meeting focused on neurodiversity during 2023/24. Inclusion Group review of topics for consideration during 2023/24.		
4. Achieve consistency in measuring the likely equality impacts of our emerging policies and services.	Development of a Council-wide approach to Equality Impact Assessments during 2023/24.		
Equality and diversity documents - Completed equalities analysis are part of the former report / record of decision template and new report template and are available for inspection/ published together with Council meeting agendas and reports at the Council's offices and on its website https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/council-and-committee-meetings			

<p><i>C1 iii) Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Regular reports on progress</i> 	Full	
<p><i>C1 iii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Leadership Team that reviews priorities, key projects and Performance Indicator reports and Top Risks. • A Performance Management system that includes a corporate Data Quality Policy and uses the Pentana (Risk reporting) System to improve its performance management. • A NHDC Project Management Framework. This includes a Risk Management Framework Strategy and Project Evaluation steps, benefit review plan, project risk logs, lessons learned, end project reports and lessons logs that assist with regular reports, evaluation and delivering the desired outcome. • A Performance and Risk Management Team which oversees the Project Management Framework, and offers support / guidance relating to its application and use. • Ideagen: an integrated suite of corporate performance and risk management software. It is a web-based system, which has positively affected the way NHDC records, monitors and uses performance indicators, improvement actions and risks. All NHDC Councillors and officers have view only access to the system via a guest login. • Reporting performance figures to O & S; Finance, Audit & Risk and Cabinet. • Reporting quarterly budget, capital and treasury management information to FAR Committee and Cabinet. • Reporting Risk Management Information to FAR Committee and Cabinet. • SIAS and SAFS provide updates on progress as against their Audit/ Service Plans to FAR Committee. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i> The Leadership Team receives quarterly performance and risk information prior to these being reported through to the relevant Committees and Cabinet. Any recommendations are then made to Cabinet, in March, prior to the new financial year/ their adoption.</p>		
<p><i>C1 iv) Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Performance trends are established and reported upon</i> • <i>Risk management protocols</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>C1 iv) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Processes for performance management/ reporting as set out above in C1 iii) above. • A Performance and Risk Management Team. • A Risk and Performance Management Group that meets quarterly. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Risk Management Member ‘champion’ (currently the Executive Member for Finance and IT), who is part of the Performance and Risk Management Team. Minutes of the Group meetings are also circulated to all attendees and to Members of FAR and Overview & Scrutiny Committee. • A Risk Management Framework Strategy • A Risk Management Framework Policy and Policy Statement • A Risk Management Toolkit • Ideagen Risk management system. The software for performance/ risk management monitoring. • The FAR Committee has the responsibility to monitor risk and Cabinet for awareness and overall management of risk. • Officers present reports on Risk Management Governance to the FAR committee twice a year, with an year-end report reported to Full Council • Financial Management Code (CIPFA) https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s17150/Appendix%20A%20Assessment%20of%20adherence%20to%20the%20Financial%20Management%20Code.pdf <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Annual Report on Risk Management Governance was presented to the FAR Committee on the 21st June 2023. This report included an update to Annual Risk management, with referral to Full Council, a light touch update of the Risk Management Framework and consideration of training needs for FAR. <p>This continuous updating demonstrates effective development and operation of the risk management system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Financial Management Code was presented to FAR to the December 2019 meeting to provide an assessment of how well the Council performs against the Financial Management Code launched by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and actions that it plans to take. • Corporate Risks have most recently been reviewed in the Risk Management Update, presented to the Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee in June 2023. • The Annual report set out the identified Corporate Risks in relation to the Council Delivery Plan for 2022-23. <p>The top risks were –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Sustainability/Balancing our Budget - 9 • Response to Government Resources- 9 • Churchgate - 9 • Waste Strategy – 9 <p>As outlined at the Annual report on Risk Management Governance, 21 June 2023.</p>		
<p><i>C1 v) Managing service users’ expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>An agreed set of quality standard measures for each service element and included in service plans</i> 	Substantial	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes for dealing with competing demands within the community 		
<p><i>C1 v) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance indicators and targets are set through the Council Plan/ Objectives and Service Planning process [see C1 i) above]. These are approved by Cabinet in the March and incorporated in relevant service plan areas and monitored/ reported as detailed above [see C1 iii)]. The Plan is made available on the Council Plan website page [https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/council-plan] Customer Services Strategy 2021-2027 outlines the aims and actions for customer service within the Council Customer care standards that aims to deliver high responsive, high quality, value for money, customer focussed services [Customer Care Standards page]. A 3 Cs Policy, 2022-2025 and procedure for dealing with comments, compliments and complaints that allow the Council to balance those needs against effective targets and improve service where necessary and/ or possible. Outlook magazine information on service provision and budgets quarterly. This is due to be reviewed in 2022. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In December 2021 Cabinet reviewed the proposal to introduce a integrate Performance Management Framework for 22-23. Cabinet were presented with the Council Delivery Plan for 2023/24 Previously, only Performance Indicators were approved by Cabinet with no clear link to projects being undertaken or the risks being managed within the Service areas. The new approach requires Cabinet approval for the projects, risks, and performance indicators to support the delivery of the Council Plan. The Council Delivery Plan has been compiled by the Leadership Team, in consultation with Executive Members and brings together all the elements of Integrated Performance Management (Projects, Risks and Performance indicators) into one plan. The Projects outlined in the Delivery Plan are detailed in the Council Plan 2022-27, are clearly linked to the Council Plan priorities and themes. The Council will also carry out other projects, that are linked to a statutory duty or support the delivery of Council functions. These other projects have been included if they are significant in terms of impact (e.g., in relation to staff or financial resources), but the focus is on what contributes towards delivering the Council Plan. For longer term projects, milestones will be used to monitor progress achieved during the year. The Risks, are those that could impact on the delivery of the Council Plan or the Projects linked to the Council Plan. They include the level of likelihood and impact, and the mitigations to be put in place to minimise the level or risk. The Performance Indicators will be the means to show us how well we are doing at achieving the priorities within the Council Plan, including measures linked to the projects detailed above. (Public Pack)Agenda Document for Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 15/03/2022 19:30 (north-herts.gov.uk) Council Delivery Plan North Herts Council (north-herts.gov.uk) 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports on the proposed projects Performance Indicators and risks supporting the delivery of the Council plan as monitored throughout 2023-24 - (https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s21587/Council%20Delivery%20Plan%202023-24.pdf) • Cabinet are requested to consider and formally approve the Delivery plan and to be monitored by the Overview & Scrutiny committee on a quarterly basis. Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday, 14th March, 2023, 7.30 pm North Herts Council (north-herts.gov.uk) 		
<p><i>C 2) Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits</i></p>		
<p><i>C 2 i) Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Capital investment is structured to achieve appropriate life spans and adaptability for future use or that resources (eg land) are spent on optimising social, economic and environmental wellbeing:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — <i>Capital programme</i> — <i>Capital investment strategy</i> 	<p>Substantial</p>	
<p><i>C2 i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) looks five years ahead to ensure the Council's commitment to the delivery of its Objectives [https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/council-plan] • Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury) https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s18565/Council%20Appendix%20A-%20Integrated%20Capital%20and%20Treasury%20Strategy.docx.pdf • Regular Treasury Management Reviews presented to Finance, Audit & Risk Committee. An annual Treasury Management review also takes place: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s16537/Appendix%20B%20-%20Treasury%20Management%20Update.pdf • The Finance Audit & Risk Committee and Cabinet reviews the Council's revenue, capital and treasury management activity on a quarterly basis. • All reports and records of decisions record the financial, social value and equality impacts. • The Social Value policy and approach is covered in terms of the impact on procurement and the "Go Local" Policy, detailed in the Contract Procurement Rules • The Contract Procurement rules were reviewed and approved by Full Council in January 2023, see section 20 on this page: • Social Value and Go Local flowchart: These are available on the staff Hub - https://intranet.north-herts.gov.uk/home/doing-business/procurement/procurement-guides <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p>		

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Quarterly reviews processes outlined ensure the Council has sound processes and controls over the Treasury function that minimise risks to the Council.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Council’s key financial systems are subject to an annual review by internal audit. In terms of capital issues (eg land) the SIAS Asset Management / IT Asset Management assessments provided a Moderate/ Substantial assurance respectively. Recommendations for the former will be reported back through the Committee process.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury Strategy) for 202/22/23 was considered by Cabinet on 25th January 2022 and approved by Full Council on 10th February 2022. Reviews take place on a Quarterly basis and are reported to the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee.</p> <p>The Strategy looks to manage investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions and the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks. It ensures the Council’s compliance with CIPFA’s code of practice on Treasury Management, the Local Government Act 2003, statutory guidance from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the CIPFA Prudential Code. As well as determining and managing the Councils risk appetite in respect of investments.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Social Value provisions within the Contract Procurement Rules were most recently updated and approved by Full Council 20th January 2022.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Capital investment in land and buildings, for example for improvement purposes to NH Leisure aim to increase income yield. The Property Acquisition Development Strategy was approved by Cabinet 28th January 2020.</p>		
<p><i>C2 ii) Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the organisation’s intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion between members and officers on the information needs of members to support decision making • Record of decision making and supporting materials 	Substantial	
<p><i>C2 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Committee – Cabinet and / or Full Council decision making process that takes account of risk, makes decision making transparent and allows for issues to be teased out and further information requested prior to a final decision being made. • Where relevant, decision call in by O & S before implementation of Executive Decisions. • 3-5 year Strategies/ Policies (such as the MTFS) that balance risk and opportunity within the political cycle and financial constraints. • Member involvement in reviewing and recommending (and then approving) Report/ Record of Decision templates [see A1 iii) Overview &Scrutiny Task and finish group]. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p>		

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Record of Decision template has also been updated following a whistleblowing report, to include further information/ documents and sign off by a Member when consulted [see A1 iii)].</p>		
<p>C2 iii) <i>Determining the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record of decision making and supporting materials • Protocols for consultation 	Substantial	
<p>C2 iii) <i>What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See C2 ii) above. • As per B1iv) A Consultation Strategy that sets out the methods that will be used to consult and practical considerations for doing so is currently being updated. • As per B1iv) The Council is in the process of launching engagement pages using digital engagement platform, Civil Space. Pages have been created for the Climate Change activity of the council and other related partner organisations North Herts Council: North Herts Climate Hive (civilspace.io), and allows the council to engage with residents more informally, as well as create surveys, produce climate event maps and engagement with the relevant Executive members through a Question and Answer forum. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See C2 ii) and B1 iv) outcome/ examples.</p>		
<p>C2 iv) <i>Ensuring fair access to services. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protocols ensure fair access and statutory guidance is followed 	Full	
<p><i>What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2027 • Annual Cumulative Equality Impact assessment. • Monitor through the 3C's policy and review and update practice. • Customer Service Strategy <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Marketing and Communications Strategy 2024-2028 was approved at Cabinet 16th January 2024. While communication with residents is vital, marketing is needed to promote and raise awareness of our vision, priorities and themes to ensure the right people get the right message at the right time through their preferred channel of choice. The Strategy highlights four main aims; Inform, Inspire, Involve and Interact alongside the strategic approach of People First, Campaign-led, Cross-channel and Digital First. The main purpose of the 2024 - 2028 Marketing and Communications strategy is to support the delivery of the North Herts Council's 2022 - 2027 Council Plan and bring our vision, strategic priorities, and themes to life. In line with this, there is a focus on building our subscriber base for our communication 		

channel @NorthHerts and building awareness of NH Now through targeted social media activity. We have also enhanced our website offer by introducing a Find My Nearest Facility (Household Waste and Recycling Centre) function. The Hub has seen the addition of a Chatbot to assist with public enquiries.		
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Principles in bold, <i>Sub-principles in bold & italics.</i>	SCOR E	Acti on
Principle D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes		
Local government achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory, and practical interventions. Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that local government has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved. They need robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure that their defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best trade-off between the various types of resource inputs while still enabling effective and efficient operations. Decisions made need to be reviewed continually to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.		
<i>D 1) Determining interventions</i>		
<p><i>D1 i) Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and including the risks associated with those options. Therefore ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Discussion between members and officers on the information needs of members to support decision making</i> • <i>Decision making protocols</i> • <i>Option appraisals</i> • <i>Agreement of information that will be provided and timescales</i> 	Substa ntial	
<p><i>D1 i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explored in previous sections: A1 iii): The Council's Constitution includes a scheme of delegation and terms of reference for each of the Council's committees and decision-making practices are outlined. The Council's Constitution is reviewed annually. Guidance on making a delegated decision with template record of decision forms, which includes standard report areas including an 'options' appraisal called "Alternative options considered" and risk analysis. A set report template and guidance on how to complete committee report which includes standard report areas including an 'options' appraisal called "Alternative options considered" and risk analysis [see B1 iii) also]. A legal adviser attends all Council, Cabinet, Planning and Licensing Committee meetings to advise on Code and other issues where this is requested or otherwise considered appropriate. A3 ii) The Committee and Member Services team organise the civic calendar of Committee meetings dates, the Forward Plan of Executive Decisions, notify officers and Members of the deadlines for agenda/ report, prepare and despatch agendas and reports in advance of the meetings. 		

<p>B1 iii) A calendar of meetings is approved each year at Annual Council [Schedule of Council Meetings 23/24]; The Forward Plan, with key decisions is updated and placed on the Council’s website [Council and Democracy];</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Procurement Team monitors the Council’s contract register and renewal timescales to ensure the commissioning cycle is applied and relevant officers renew in time / meet the needs of the Council and try to achieve improved outcomes. 		
<p><i>D1 ii) Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg: Financial strategy</i></p>	Substantial	
<p><i>D1 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes already described in other sections, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> B1 i) The Corporate business planning programme is used to assess identified projects against criteria including the Council’s agreed policy, its priorities, the outcomes of public consultation, demonstration of continuous improvement and changing legislative need. B1 iv), B2 ii), C2 iii) The Consultation Strategy 2022-2027 which was approved at the September 2022 Cabinet meeting. The Digital Strategy 2024-2027 which was approved at the February 2024 Cabinet meeting. C1 iii) Project / performance and risk review process through from Project Boards, Senior Managers and Leadership Team, Committees, Cabinet and/or Council. A NHDC Project Management Framework. C2 i) MTFS; Financial Rules [Section 19 Constitution]. Statement of Account statutory publishing and inspection process that allows the local government electors to inspect object to the local auditor.⁴ <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Those already described associated with B1-C2 above.</p>		
<i>D 2) Planning interventions</i>		
<p><i>D2 i) Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Calendar of dates for developing and submitting plans and reports that are adhered to</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>D2 i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p>		

⁴ Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 process.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes already described in other sections, for example: B1 i) The Corporate business planning programme is used to assess identified projects against criteria including the Council’s agreed policy, its priorities, the outcomes of public consultation, demonstration of continuous improvement and changing legislative need. B1 iv), B2 ii), C2 iii) The Consultation Strategy 2022-2027 sets out the Council’s commitment to involve local people in its most important decisions. The Digital Strategy 2024-2027 sets out how the organisation will transform digitally, including how residents can engage with the council (e.g live chat options, chat bots, and digital services) C1 iii) Project / performance and risk review process through from Project Boards, SMT, Committees, Cabinet and/or Council. A NHDC Project Management Framework, provides a robust process for planning and controlling strategic and operational matters. The Project Management Guidance was updated in 2023. A Statement of Community Involvement – Formally adopted in September 2023 at Cabinet, it sets out how the Council will involve the community in the planning process. The current version reflects that the Local Plan 2011-2031 has now been adopted and sets out how the public can be involved in subsequent elements including Supplementary Planning Document, neighbourhood plans, pre-application masterplans, and the review of the Local Plan. The final version reflects amendments made as a result of a six week public consultation period. Calendar of meetings/ Forward Plan process which indicates when strategic and operations matters will be considered. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examples linked to B1-C1 iii) linked to the above.</p> <p>In the 2022/23 Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Report presented to FAR in June 2023, SIAS concluded that the corporate governance and risk management frameworks substantially comply with the CIPFA/SOLACE best practice guidance on corporate governance. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22298/NHC%20-%20SIAS%20Annual%20Assurance%20Statement%20and%20Internal%20Audit%20Annual%20Report%202022-23.pdf</p>		
<p><i>D2 ii) Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication strategy 	Substantial	
<p><i>D2 ii What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Communications Strategy (2019-2023) [Communications Strategy page] sets out the approach to communicating internal and external stakeholders. The Customer Service Strategy 2021-2027. The Digital Strategy 2023-2027. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working within partner organisations, such as: The Co-operative Councils Innovation Network (CCIN), East of England Local Government Association, East and North Herts NHS Trust – Involvement Committee, Groundwork Hertfordshire East, Herts Leaders’ Group, Hertfordshire Waste Partnership, Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation, London Luton Airport Consultative Committee, The Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), and Hertfordshire Policy and Partnerships Network. Nominations of Representatives to Outside Bodies: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22060/Appendix%20A%20-%202023-24%20Outside%20Orgs%20Nominees.pdf Funding Citizens Advice North Herts, North Herts Centre for Voluntary Service, and the North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum through more formal contractual arrangements for service delivery These contractual arrangements were renewed for a further 3 year period, covering 2023-2026 (23/24, 24/25, 25/26). https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=136&MId=2910&Ver=4 <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See previous examples of internal and external stakeholder participation above. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Community Investment Fund criteria for Capacity Building Activities for Community Groups <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Memorandum of Understanding with North Herts Citizens Advice Bureau, North Herts CVS (Centre for Voluntary Service), and North Herts Minority Ethnic Forum. 		
<p>D2 iii) Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership framework Risk management protocol 	Full	
<p><i>D2 iii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Directors have to identify threats to service delivery/performance in their own work areas, when undertaking projects, letting contracts, formulating or introducing new policies <i>and engaging in partnership working</i>. The Risk Management Group reviewed proposed minor changes to the Risk Management Framework at their November 2022 meeting. Cabinet, at the December 2022 meeting, approved the changes and associated amendments from FAR committee on the review of the Risk Management Framework. Risks are recorded on the Risk Register, and monitored through Ideagen. In June 2023, Cabinet received the year-end update on risk management governance for 2022-23. In January 2024, Cabinet received the mid-year update on risk management governance. See C1 iii): The Council has a Project Management Framework. Contract Procurement Rules include an initial requirement to carry out a new procurement risk assessment with the Risk Manager and post procurement lessons learnt log [see Section 20 Contract Procurement Rules]. Risk Management and control of resources are crucial elements of the Financial Regulations section 19 of the Constitution, to develop, maintain robust management, which are key to delivering services (whether delivered internally externally or in partnership). 		

<p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p>		
<p><i>D2 iv) Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering outputs can be adapted to changing circumstances. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Planning protocols</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>D2 iv) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See D2 i) processes described, which demonstrate the systems in place. • Project management which continues to follow the Prince2 Framework. 		
<p><i>D2 v) Establishing appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>KPIs have been established and approved for each service element and included in the service plan and are reported upon regularly</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>D2 v) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate Performance Indicators are agreed and implemented through the processes described in C1 iii) – iv) and included in service plans. • Shared service indicators, such as for SIAS and SAFS are agreed and included in the service plan approved by FAR Committee. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i> <i>Overview &Scrutiny example A2 i), C1 iii) _ Overview &Scrutiny example A2 i), C1 iii) Performance Management measures for 2023/24 were approved by Cabinet in March 2023.</i></p>		
<p><i>D2 vi) Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reports include detailed performance results and highlight areas where corrective action is necessary</i> 	Full	
<p><i>D2 vi) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Indicator Monitoring Reports include results, reasons and any corrective action. Reports to Leadership Team. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <i>Previously, Performance reports were taken to O & S Committee each quarter (e.g Quarter 1 2021/22 Performance Indicators). Since 2022/23, projects, risks, and performance (PIs) have been amalgamated into a Council Delivery Plan to ensure a more</i></p>		

<p>corporate and integrated approach. This is taken to O&S each quarter. during 2023/24: Q1 Council Delivery Plan Update (September 2023), Q2 Council Delivery Plan Update (January 2024), Quarter 3 Council Delivery Plan Update (March 2024)</p>		
<p><i>D2 vii) Preparing budgets in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that budgets, plans and objectives are aligned 	Full	
<p><i>D2 vii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See B1 i) The Council Plan is supported by the corporate business planning programme – and the five year Medium Term financial strategy (MTFS) sets out the financial elements of the process and looks to secure the financial elements of the Plan. It is reviewed annually / updated and approved by Full Council. • Value for money/ service reviews. • Quarterly Revenue Budget & Capital Programme monitoring, & Treasury Management reports to Finance, Audit & Risk Committee and Cabinet. • SIAS and SAFS progress against Plans reports to Finance, Audit & Risk Committee. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Quarterly monitoring reports indicate if there are any significant variances and whether financial health indicators for 2023/24 and forecasts indicated that they would all match the budgeted levels.</p>		
<p><i>D 2 viii) Informing medium and long term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget guidance and protocols • Medium term financial plan • Corporate plans 	Substantial	
<p><i>D2 viii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MTFS, as indicated, is reviewed annually to set an indicative 5 year financial plan for the longer term strategic vision as well as a detailed one year budget [see B1 i)]. The MTFS and annual budget are prepared in line with the agreed Objectives and Council Plan/ business planning process. • Budget workshops are provided to Political groups in or around November prior to budget setting. • Employee Procedure Guides and Training Manuals on Budgetary matters. • Learning Management System e-learning modules on: Accounting – An introduction; Financial Regulations Workshop; Procurement For Budget Holders; Contract Management Training; and Closure of Accounts; which are accessible to employees and Members. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment Strategy (Integrated Capital and Treasury) https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s21308/INVESTMENT%20STRATEGY%20INTEGRATED%20CAPITAL%20AND%20TREASURY.pdf <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Investment Strategy (Capital Programme and Treasury Strategy) was considered by Finance, Audit, and Risk in January 2023, and approved by Council on 23d February 2023. 		
<i>D3) Optimising achievement of intended outcomes</i>		
<p><i>D3 i) Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Feedback surveys and exit/ decommissioning strategies</i> <i>Changes as a result</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>D3 i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project management lessons log and details of the relevant lessons in Corporate Lessons Learnt Log. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3 C's Policy. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Background information for the budget that informs the budget workshop and monitors these as part of the efficiencies. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The consultation in regard to the revised Green Space Management Strategy 2022-2027 was an example of how the Council balanced service priorities and responded to feedback. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/what-are-your-priorities-green-space-north-herts <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The consultation in regard to Churchgate shopping centre is an example of how the Council is balancing priorities, affordability, and building in resident and community feedback to its project plans. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/churchgate-shopping-centre-regeneration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Housing Strategy Consultation and the Common Housing Allocation Scheme Consultation are other examples of where the Council is balancing priorities, resource constraints, and resident and community feedback. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In 2023 the council launched a one off Community Investment Fund. This was available to community groups/organisations for capacity building activities which ultimately result in something of community value. The total value of the fund was £100,000, with £99,998 being awarded. Applications were opened in the summer of 2023 and closed before Christmas. Applications were assessed in January 2024, with the top scoring applications going to the Grants Panel in February 2024. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-02/12.%20Delegated%20Decision%20-%20Community%20Investment%20Fund%20Delegated%20Decision%20-%20Feb%202024.pdf <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The facilities, operated by Stevenage Leisure Ltd (SLL) under a contract with the Council, were heavily impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. After several years of recovery phase with the Council supporting SLL on an open-book basis, in 2023/24 the leisure centres operated in line with the contract, with SLL paying the full management fee. 		

<p>D3 ii) Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budgeting guidance and protocols 	Full	
<p>D3 ii) What NHDC has or does:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> See D2 viii) above. <p>Outcomes/ examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See D2 viii) above. 		
<p>D3 iii) Ensuring the medium term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial strategy 	Full	
<p>D3 iii) What NHDC has or does:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A MTFS – see B1 i), C2 i), D1ii), D2 vii) above. <p>Outcomes/ examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See MTFS examples B1 i), C2 i), D1ii), D2 vii) above. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Community Investment Fund, launched in 2023, was supported by the reserves fund to support voluntary organisations to do capacity building activities to improve their sustainability and the community value that they provide. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/community-investment-fund <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In 2023/24 the Council received the following from DLUHC: Homelessness Prevention Grant funding, ringfenced as you state, of £563k; Rough Sleeper Initiative funding of £189k to focus on ending rough sleeping; Local Authority Housing Fund award of £247k to resettle Afghan refugees and also ease wider homelessness pressures. 		
<p>D3 iv) Ensuring the achievement of ‘social value’ through service planning and commissioning. The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 states that this is “the additional benefit to the community...over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes”. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service plans demonstrate consideration of ‘social value’ Achievement of ‘social value’ is monitored and reported upon 	Moderate	
<p>D3 iv) What NHDC has or does:</p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Service Plans reflect the need to consider the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, implications of the authority’s investment into local projects (and where relevant in procurement). • The Procurement Strategy was updated in February 2023, becoming the Procurement Strategy 2023-24. As with many Councils over the course of the pandemic, the Council had to be reactive to the unprecedented situation (following the pandemic and preparing for post European Union transition). This shorter-term Strategy for 2023-24 therefore will attempt to put into place some of the Council’s aspirations for the District, as they relate to the Council’s Plan as well as remain reactive to the changing environment. • All reports and records of decisions require consideration of Social Value Act 2012 implications of a decision. Social Value is also covered in the “Go Local” Policy, detailed in the Contract Procurement Rules [Section 20 Contract Procurement Rules]. • Social Value and Go Local guidance is provided for procurement on the Hub. • The Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy (2022-2027) was approved by Cabinet in December 2022. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/policies/equality-and-diversity <p>Outcomes/ examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Council Plan highlights three key priorities of People First, Sustainability, and A Brighter Future Together. Within these priorities, themes include: our services, our places, our environment, and our local economy. The Council aims to become an increasingly innovative and inclusive Council, and to see money reinvested into our local communities. We will continue to engage with residents, community groups, businesses, staff and Councillors to achieve our objectives and to ensure we are as accessible as possible. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service Plans indicates how the service areas link to the Council Plan Priorities. The Service Plan template states the following as guidance to Service Directors and Service Managers: <i>“From January 2013, under Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, local authorities were required to capture the ‘social value’ of their investment into local projects. Two comparative projects may have the same financial value, but it is the value to the local community, community groups or individuals which needs to be captured and reflected more accurately in order to better inform decision making; this should therefore be built into individual service plans, and the individual projects reflected within them. ”</i> (see Council Objectives page – with Service Plans: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/corporate-objectives). <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Corporate Procurement Group will seek to collect information regarding contracts and any inherent social value benefits. They will also seek to identify scope to include social value benefits in future contracts where possible. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See D3 iii 		
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Principles in bold, Sub-principles in bold & italics.	SCORE	Action
Principle E. Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it		
Local government needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications and mind-set, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve their intended outcomes within the specified periods. A local government organisation must ensure that it has both the capacity to fulfil its own mandate and to make certain that there		

<p>are policies in place to guarantee that its management has the operational capacity for the organisation as a whole. Because both individuals and the environment in which an authority operates will change over time, there will be a continuous need to develop its capacity as well as the skills and experience of the leadership of individual staff members. Leadership in local government entities is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of backgrounds, reflecting the structure and diversity of communities.</p>		
<p><i>E1 Developing the entity's capacity</i></p>		
<p><i>E1 i) Reviewing operations, performance use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Regular reviews of activities, outputs and planned outcomes</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>E1 i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of shared Services (SIAS, SAFS, Insurance) with ongoing review programmes. • IT technical systems analysis, for reconciliations and ratification of, for example, data for revenues & benefits. • HPP/ report through Leaders Group and then / Chief Exec -Group. • Asset Management Group and Asset Management Plan. • SIAS Internal Audit Plan 2023/24 presented to FAR committee on 8th March 2023, Appendix B includes dates for audits to be completed in the year https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s21560/NHC%20FAR%20Committee%20-%202023-24%20Internal%20Audit%20Plan%20Report%20issued%201.02.23%20Final.pdf (page 17) <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i> SIAS IT Audits planned for 2023/24: Software Licensing; Critical Applications; IT Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s21560/NHC%20FAR%20Committee%20-%202023-24%20Internal%20Audit%20Plan%20Report%20issued%201.02.23%20Final.pdf</p>		
<p><i>E1 ii) Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how the authority's resources are allocated so that outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Utilisation of research and benchmarking exercise</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>E 1 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Part of the County Benchmarking LG Futures, Membership of LG Inform for comparable data input and analysis; and HR Salary benchmarking and other relevant local government strategies (corporate equality, workplace practices) • Relevant Council officers attend the County wide customer services benchmarking group, which meets quarterly to discuss/ implement shared good practice. • A Member of the Legal PLP and Herts First. • Part of Sport England's National Benchmarking service. 		Non

- Part of East Anglian benchmarking for grounds maintenance.

Outcomes/ examples:

- The Council takes part in the Sport England's Nation Benchmarking Scheme (NBS) which all leisure centres take part in every other year: <https://www.sportengland.org/our-work/partnering-local-government/tools-directory/national-benchmarking-service-nbs/>. The last National Benchmarking Service carried out at the leisure centres was in 2019/20. All North Herts Leisure sites were due to go through the benchmarking in 2023, however due to the required visits and timescales, the changeover of contract from SLL and SLM has resulted in benchmarking being postponed. SLM will arrange for this benchmarking to take place once their contract commences.

Right Directions (in partnership with Leisure-net Solutions) undertake these surveys nationally and the results are sent to the Sport Industry Research Centre (SIRC) at Sheffield Hallam University for analysis and then to NBS. The aim of the NBS is to provide local authorities with rigorous and robust information on the performance of their sports and leisure centres compared with that of equivalent family facilities elsewhere in the country. For each centre, clients of the NBS select an appropriate level of support for their data collection, deliver the required data and receive a facility-specific report on performance relative to national benchmarks.

The management of Leisure facilities in the District is contracted to Stevenage Leisure Limited (SLL), who are contractually obliged to participate in the survey on the Councils behalf. SLL receive the report and then present this to the Partnership Board (which has Council representation in the form of the Executive Member/ Head of Service and relevant managers). This enables SLL/ the Council to identify ways of improving the service in a joint work programme for the following year.

SLL also procure non user / user survey on behalf of the Council on the use of and reasons why people are not using the District facilities: Leisure Net carry out the survey every other year and it gives the Council an indication from local people what their current activity levels are, who they use for their leisure pursuits (the Council or our competitors or no-one), what they would like to see introduced, reasons for using the Council / not using. The Leisure contract with SLL comes to a close on 31st March 2024 and the new 10-year contract with Sport and Leisure Management (SLM) trading under the brand name Everyone Active will commence on the 1st April 2024. SLM will therefore take over the previous contractual activities from SLL including the survey participation. Non-user and user surveys will be conducted annually through Sport England Moving Communities which is separate to the work stated above.

A Full Report is provided that assesses: access, utilisation, finance and customer satisfaction, and is used to improve services.

- PLP benchmarking exercise provides useful information on staffing and an overview on service provision.

<p><i>E 1 iii) Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Effective operation of partnerships which deliver agreed outcomes</i> 	Full	
<p><i>E1 iii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic partnerships are outlined on the council website https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-performance-and-data/policy/strategic-partnership-involvement • Part of the North Herts Wellbeing Partnership. • Part of the North Herts Community Safety Partnership (CSP) that works together to deliver a number of projects which support community safety and crime and disorder issues, such as domestic abuse awareness and anti-bullying. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/community/community-safety/community-safety-partnership-projects. An Annual Strategic Assessment is undertaken by the North Herts Community Safety Partnership (NHCSPP). • North Hertfordshire forms part of the <u>Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership</u> to provide a collaborative approach to a prosperous economy within the District. • Leader’s Group and Chief Executive Group. • Shared services / partnerships arrangements are explored as and when appropriate to do so (and include those already cited of SIAS, SAFS & Insurance). • Part of Herts Infrastructure and Planning Partnership. • CCTV Partnership • Part of the Local-Authority Building Control Company, Broste Rivers LA7 Limited (Holding Company) and series of companies underneath. • Lead authority developing Herts Health Improvement Agency. • Public Law Partnership. • Part of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP). HCCSP is a strategic group that develops joint programmes and county level initiatives to support the achievement of local climate change targets. The HCCSP currently work on the priority areas of Water, Carbon Reduction, Biodiversity, Transport, Behaviour Change, and Climate Adaptation. North Herts Council lead on Biodiversity for the HCCSP. <i>The Herts Growth Board is responsible for countywide growth and is made up of leaders and Chief Executives from each council in the county. It has developed its 6 new missions, one of which is Sustainable County. The HCCSP is specifically mentioned within this mission in relation to various action around sustainability and is given a particular remit around developing a Local Area Energy Plan for Hertfordshire.</i> <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A2 iv) example of the benefits of the award-winning Herts Careline partnership working.</p>		

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> B2 i) example Annual reports are provided to the Council from the Citizens Advice, Herts Minority Ethnic Forum and NHCVS Impact report, to demonstrate support of the shared our vision (<i>'We put people first and deliver sustainable services, to enable a brighter future together'</i>) (see also A2 iv).</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SIAS Annual report.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAFS Annual report.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PLP training/ internal market.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Food Provision services –<i>The Household Support Fund was used for a food education project however the funding will stop at the end of March 2024.</i> We support a Food Provision Network to enable the numerous food provision groups within North Herts to connect and share information. The North Herts Food Provision Network was featured as part of the Co-operative Council's Innovation Network's (CCIN) policy labs, to illustrate co-operative models of food provision. Co-operation at the Grass Roots: North Herts Food Provision Network - Co-operative Councils Innovation Network</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In 2023/24, the Wellbeing team ran community projects in partnership with external organisations in Royston, Letchworth, Hitchin, Baldock and Knebworth. These included food education for young families, creative café's for adults, a district wide food box scheme for families experiencing food poverty, horticultural therapy placement for adults living with mental health conditions, emotional wellbeing support for adults, social events for older people, food education for adults with learning disabilities, physical and mental health courses for men, cooking on a budget courses, music and movement for children and low impact exercise for older adults. Partners included Mind in Mid Herts, Communities 1st, Active in the Community, Growing People, First Garden Cities Homes, Stevenage Leisure Limited, Age UK Herts and Supported Activities.</p>		
<p><i>E1 iv) Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Workforce plan</i> • <i>Organisational development plan</i> 	Full	
<p><i>E1 iv) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People Recovery Plan 2020 - 2022: https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15652/Appendix%20A%20-%20People%20Recovery%20Plan%202020-2022.pdf. <i>Work will commence on a refreshed People plan shortly. See Principle C1 (i).</i> • A Recruitment Process form has replaced the Vacancy Control process Recruitment and Selection (sharepoint.com) [SharePoint Hub link] • Streamlined Service Delivery Planning. • Revised Values and Behaviours 		

<p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Workforce Planning is a medium Corporate Risk and identifies the risks from the Council’s ability to recruit and retain employees that have the skills and experience needed. The ‘How We Work’ document sets out the ways we work at the council. It is determined by our council priorities and considers factors of: our ability to serve our residents and customers, or environmental impact, the wellbeing of our staff and being able to look after each other, and best ways to learn from each other and teamworking. How We Work document. Guidance is available internally for staff on how this works in practice - Human Resources - New Ways of Working (sharepoint.com) [SharePoint Hub link] A Recruitment Form for managers has replaced the Vacancy Control process Recruitment and Selection (sharepoint.com) [SharePoint Hub link] ☑ Transformation Project. The Council has a digital programme of works as part of a new digital strategy, which seeks to improve services to residents. Using a new digital platform, the project also seeks to enhance Council working and efficiency, as well as accelerating innovation across the organisation. This project is in its infancy, beginning in November 2023 and recently showcased to wider staff in January 2024 at a Staff Briefing. ☑ The Shaping Our Future Programme also contributes towards the development of the organisation. It considers how the Council can change and adapt in order to continue to achieve the Council’s priorities. It includes (but is not limited to) staff and leadership development; work on equality, diversity and inclusion; moving towards a more commercial culture; digital transformation. ☑ Actions arising from the corporate business planning process will feed into personal objectives for individual employees via the RPR and 1:1 meetings system. The clear lines of responsibility, outcomes and target dates will be monitored as part of the Council’s project governance and performance management reporting. ☑ The Values of the organisation were revised in 2022. The new values shape how we aim to act as an organisation. They are: ADAPTABLE: We are adaptable in finding solutions for each other, our partners and our customers INCLUSIVE: We are inclusive and value diversity LEARNING: We learn from others and are open to change LISTENING: We listen to and consider the views of each other, our partners and our customers TOGETHER: We work together and support each other to deliver the best we can 		
<p><i>E2 Developing the capability of the entity’s leadership and other individuals</i></p>		
<p><i>E2 i) Developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job descriptions • Chief executive and leader pairings have considered how best to establish and maintain effective communication 	<p>Substantial</p>	

<p><i>E2 i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description of the Leader and Executive Members in the Council’s Constitution. • Joint Leader’s briefing on human resource issues. • The Leader is part of Herts Leaders Group and East of England Leaders Group. • Weekly Managing Director/ Leader Briefings. • Opposition Member/ shadow briefings by the Chief Executive/ other senior officers. • Political Liaison Board (PLB) meetings. • Bi-monthly Leadership Team meetings and close working relations between Senior Officers and Executive Members. • Robust Recruitment process with an appointment at an appropriate level (Member / Officer). • Corporate Learning and Development <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Council has a number of essential employee Corporate Learning and Development activities, such as: time management, managing conflict, first aid and fire marshal training, succession planning, skills audit, equalities and diversity e-learning, open learning resources and the essential learning programmes for all new employees and managers. These include Customer Service Excellence, corporate induction, dignity at work briefings, preparing for RPR briefings, managing people through difficult situations. Staff Learning and Development sessions have also been instituted on the morning of every first Friday of each month. There are a mixture of themed and non-themed sessions to enable them to be used by teams or individuals to focus on an area of development most helpful for them. Following the RPR, employees can input any learning and development needs (other than essential or service specific learning needs) directly onto the GROW zone Learning Management System (LMS). Essential learning activities are agreed by Leadership Team as essential for all or a particular group of officers. Other types of Professional, Technical, Personal and Managerial Development are organised through the service areas. The Council recognises that Career Development is a lifelong process of managing progression in learning and work. The Council recognises the need for employee development and succession planning and this is monitored through the RPR and 1:1 process.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Recruitment & Selection Policy (SharePoint Hub link) was last reviewed and updated in 2020/21 as part of the policy review process. The person specification is a key document/ part of the process to provide objective criteria that reflects the values required to successfully undertake a particular role.</p>		
<p><i>E2 ii) Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheme of delegation reviewed at least annually in the light of legal and organisational changes • Standing orders and financial regulations which are reviewed on a regular basis 	Substantial	
<p><i>E2 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council’s Constitution includes a scheme of delegation. • The Service Directors/Corporate Managers and other relevant officers which are retained and reviewed of sub-delegations. • The Constitution (which includes Standing orders in the form of Rules) is reviewed annually. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Constitution – see previous sections above. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Financial Regulations see above. 		
<p><i>E2 iii) Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads the authority in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other’s authority. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Clear statement of respective roles and responsibilities and how they will be put into practice</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>E2 iii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Constitution includes a general description of the role of the Leader in Section 5 of the Constitution. The scheme of delegation outlines areas of responsibility and decision making practice under Sections 12 and 14. All employees have a written Job Description. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> As part of the review of section 14 of the Constitution in April 2018, the Executive Member functions were aligned to the Officers’ delegations, making it clearer which Executive Member was responsible for which area [see Section 14 https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/council-constitution] 		
<p><i>E2 iv) Developing the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective shared leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>ensuring members and staff have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and that ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i> • <i>Access to update courses/ information briefings on new legislation</i> • <i>Induction programme</i> • <i>Personal development plans for members and officers</i> 	Substantial	

<p>- <i>ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>for members this may include the ability to:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — <i>scrutinise and challenge</i> — <i>recognise when outside expert advice is required</i> — <i>promote trust</i> — <i>work in partnership</i> — <i>lead the organisation</i> — <i>act as a community leader</i> • <i>Efficient systems and technology used for effective support</i> <p>- <i>ensuring personal, organisational and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Arrangements for succession planning</i> 		
<p><i>E2 iv) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction arrangements for Members and employees (and actions) identified in A1 i). • Training & development identified in A1i); A1v); A2ii); A2 iii) (and actions). • Training & development identified in E above. • Promotes ILM Leadership & Management qualifications. • Investors in People status. • Business planning away days. • Member attendance at conferences, such as Town and Country Planning Association. • Apprenticeships training programme. • <i>Various trainee posts across the council.</i> • <i>Professional and Vocational Study Agreement.</i> • Gender Pay Gap report and Action plan • Joint Staff Consultative Committee (JSCC), comprising elected councillors and staff representatives (including the Trade Unions), is the regular corporate interface with employees on major human resource issues. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ A Councillors’ Learning and Development Protocol is in place and is supported by Member Champions. ☑ Councillors are strongly encouraged to undertake training. An Induction Programme is provided for all new Councillors and other training is available throughout their term of office. The Induction Programme provides further information to new Councillors and further councillor information is available via the website https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/your-councillors . ☑ There are also other learning resources and guidance available to Councillors including through the Local Government Association. The <u>2019/20 LGA Councillors Guide</u> is an online resource, designed as a quick reference guide to provide Councillors with the essential information. https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/11.166%20Councillors%20Guide%202019_08_0.pdf ☑ Gender Pay Gap report and Action plan - Human Resources progress the Action plan to reduce the GPG within NHDC. An annual report is produced and the 2022 report can be accessed here https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/NHC%202022%20Gender%20Pay%20Gap%20Relport.pdf ☑ The Joint Staff Consultative Committee (JCCF), comprising elected councillors and staff representatives (including the Trade Unions), is the regular corporate interface with employees on major human resource issues. 		
<p><i>E 2 v) Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents’ panels • Stakeholder forum terms of reference • Strategic partnership Frameworks 	Substantial	
<p><i>E2 v) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Citizen Panel used for consultation. • Area Forums [Section 9 Constitution] for Baldock, Hitchin, Letchworth, Royston and Southern and Rural meet ordinarily 4 times each per year. • Members hold surgeries. • Statement of Community Involvement. • Consultation Strategy. • The Marketing and Communications Strategy. • Cabinet Panel on the Environment. • Subscription to Civil Space (Zensity Engage), a digital engagement platform, which we seek to use to engage residents on various topics including climate and environment, and other community matters. North Herts Climate Hive, published in March 2023 as a pilot is proving successful. ‘Churchgate Conversation’ for the regeneration was launched in November 2023. Other pages may follow. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p>		•

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Area Forums provide a ‘sounding board’ for community opinion and an opportunity to input to the Council, via a Forum or their Councillors at a local level. In addition to the local community, County Councillors, Parish/Town, Community Councillors and other partners such as the Police, are welcomed to the Forum meetings, and to speak on an item. The aim is for each Area Forum to set a topic or theme for each meeting at the start of the municipal year, with input from the Councillors, communities and partners. Terms of Reference set out in Council Constitution – Section 9</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Marketing and Communication Strategy 2024-2028 reflects the differing methods of communication, notably the growth of digital communication while ensuring marketing meets all the needs of residents. A review of actions arising from the Communications Service action plan is undertaken every year and incorporates any actions from the Marketing and Communication strategy.</p> <p>The Community Consultation Strategy 2022-2027 has been adopted.</p>		
<p><i>E2 vi) Taking steps to consider the leadership’s own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reviewing individual member performance on a regular basis taking account of their attendance and considering any training or development needs</i> • <i>Peer reviews</i> 	Moderate	
<p><i>E2 vi) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member attendance records are maintained by Committee & Member Services. This information is available on our external website https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/mgUserAttendanceSummary.aspx <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Member training falls under the remit of the Democratic Services Manager. Training budgets for Members, for external training, are allotted to group on a pro-rata percentage basis. Member training will be reviewed by SIAS.</p>		
<p><i>E2 vii) Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Training and development plan</i> • <i>Staff development plans linked to appraisals</i> • <i>Implementing appropriate human resource policies and ensuring that they are working effectively</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>E2 vii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and development / induction identified in A1 i); A1v), A2ii); A2 iii); and E2 iv) (and actions). • RPR process. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p>		

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Appraisal system was reviewed in 2016/17 and became the Regular Performance Review (RPR) process. The SIAS assessment took place in August 2017 and SIAS provided full assurance that there are effective controls in operation for those elements of the risk management processes. In its revision of its appraisal process, the Council sought to evidence that it is a modern, forward thinking employer that invests in cost-effective manner to the learning and development of its staff to the benefit of both the Council and the individual. The revised RPR was considered and approved at appropriate levels within the Council with positive engagement from staff during the development phase. This provides assurance that the workforce in general had the opportunity to consider whether management’s proposals were workable and relevant.</p>		
<p><i>E2 viii) Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human resource policies 	Substantial	
<p><i>E2 viii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of Human Resource – owned / related policies that are aimed to maintain health and wellbeing [such as Homeworking Health and Safety; Health and Safety Training; Home working; Handling Difficult Customers; Bullying and Harassment; Lone working; Managing pressure; Mentoring & Coaching; Driving and use of vehicles for work; PPE-personal-protective-equipment; Personal safety; Racial-incident-reporting; RIDDOR-reporting-accidents-injuries-diseases-and-dangerous-occurrences; Smoking and the workplace; Whistleblowing Policy; Working at heights; Working time]. These policies are found on the Hub, but more information about human resource matters can be found publicly in minutes of the Joint Staff Consultation Committee https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=135&Year=0 • An Occupational Health service that can advise on issues such as fitness for work, sickness absence, disability, rehabilitation, ill-health retirement, travel health, health promotion, or indeed any health and work issue. Managers are also invited to refresher courses to raise awareness of the Occupational Health service. • Dedicated staff Wellbeing page for support on a range of topics including fertility, financial wellbeing, bereavement, miscarriage & still birth, separation and support for carers. Wellbeing (sharepoint.com) <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Healthy eating / exercise (Workplace challenges)/ mental health and wellbeing sessions are promoted to the staff during the year. October has been designated Workplace Wellbeing Month for NHDC staff. Mental Health First Aiders are trained to offer support, listen non-judgementally and signpost officers to further information. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spot the Sign suicide awareness course, Safeguarding victims of domestic abuse and modern day slavery training have also been promoted to staff. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Flu vaccination – regular vaccination programmes are organised for staff to benefit from, in partnership with local Pharmacies. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The Social and Wellbeing Group. The group are tasked with organising activities and events for staff to enhance the employee experience and encourage interaction across the council. Activities this year included bake sales, a pantomime trip and a curry night. ☑ The Inclusion Group – This group has the aim of driving forward diversity and inclusion within the council and of understanding the experiences of staff in relation to the protected characteristics outlined under the Equality Act. ☑ Staff Recognition scheme – Celebrating our Values To recognise and celebrate the excellent work of staff from across the organisation, we have introduced a recognition scheme called 'Celebrating our Values.' The aim is to recognise those staff who are embodying the corporate values and behaviours and setting a really positive example. Every six months nominations of staff of those who exemplify one or more of the corporate values and behaviours, (going above and beyond what we would normally expect of staff). ☑ Adoption of a pragmatic approach to staff who were working from home while their children are also at home during the pandemic. ☑ Confidential Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) a free service for all staff (including their partner/spouse and dependent children over 16 still living at home) giving access to around the clock access to confidential, independent, professional information and emotional support and also provides individual counselling for employees and couple and family counselling where there is participation by the employee. Staff can also download the Spectrum.Life app on their smartphone to access all of the North Herts Be-Well features. ☑ GP Helpline service giving staff 24/7 access to a service allowing staff to call a GP who can provide advice, diagnosis and reassurance on a wealth of medical matters, all at a place and time to suit you, no matter how big or small the illness, or how serious the symptoms. 		
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Principles in bold, Sub-principles in bold & italics.	SCORE	Action
Principle F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management		
<p>Local government needs to ensure that the organisations and governance structures that it oversees have implemented, and can sustain, an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. Risk management and internal control are important and integral parts of a performance management system and crucial to the achievement of outcomes. Risk should be considered and addressed as part of all decision-making activities.</p> <p>A strong system of financial management is essential for the implementation of policies and the achievement of intended outcomes, as it will enforce financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery, and accountability. It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny is in place as a key part of accountable decision making, policy making and review. A positive working culture that accepts, promotes, and encourages constructive challenge is critical to successful scrutiny and successful delivery.</p> <p>Importantly, this culture does not happen automatically, it requires repeated public commitment from those in authority.</p>		
<i>F1 Managing risk</i>		

<p><i>F1 i) Recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for e.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk management protocol 	Full	
<p><i>F1 i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Processes for Risk management reporting as set out above in C1 iii). • See C1 iv) Risk Management Team/ Group/ champion/ Risk Management Framework – Strategy; Risk Management Policy Statement; The Ideagen software for performance/ risk management monitoring. • The responsibility for individual risk is identified on Service Plans/ Corporate through Ideagen and monitored through the FAR Committee and Cabinet for awareness/ overall management of risk. • This Risk Management framework indicates that risk management is embedded across all service areas and helps to inform decision making. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See C1 iv) review of Risk Management Policy and Strategy examples. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SIAS review of Risk Management Framework provided a satisfactory level of assurance Annual Assurance Statement for 2022/23: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22298/NHC%20-%20SIAS%20Annual%20Assurance%20Statement%20and%20Internal%20Audit%20Annual%20Report%202022-23.pdf <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Business Continuity/ Disaster Management review by SIAS during 2016/17 provided a Substantial level of assurance. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Disaster Recover review by SIAS during 2020/21 provided a satisfactory level of assurance. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> As per C1 i) the Resilience plan. The Emergency plan, continuity plan and supporting documents have been combined into one plan with supporting Response and support plans and documents. GO Cards have been developed as a procedural guide to managing an incident. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Corporate Risks have most recently been reviewed in the Annual Risk Management Governance update presented to the Finance, Audit and Risk (FAR) Committee 21st June 2023 https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22230/Year%20end%20report%20on%20Risk%20Management%20Governance.pdf <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The report highlighted the most likely risks as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial Sustainability/Blanding our Budget - Response to Government Resources and Waste Strategy - Churchgate 		
<p><i>F1 ii) Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk management strategy/ policy formally approved and adopted and reviewed and updated on a regular basis 	Full	
<p><i>F1 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Risk Management Framework Policy Statement (Part 1), A Risk Management Framework Policy (Part 2), and a Risk Management Framework Strategy. These are available to view on the staff Hub. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The Risk Management Framework is reviewed regularly and most recently in December 2023 at the Finance Audit and Risk Committee. This was approved by Cabinet in January 2023. ☑ Risk management updates are also provided to the Finance Audit and Risk Committee: Annual Report on Risk Management Governance, FAR 21st June 2023: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22230/Year%20end%20report%20on%20Risk%20Management%20Governance.pdf Mid-Year Report on Risk Management Governance, FAR 13th December 2023: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s23637/Mid%20Year%20update%20on%20Risk%20Management%20Governance.pdf 		
<p><i>F1 iii) Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk management protocol 	Full	
<p><i>F1 iii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See F1 i)-ii) above. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ See F1 i)-ii) above. 		
<p><i>F 2 Managing performance</i></p>		
<p><i>F2 i) Monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution, and independent post implementation review. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for e.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance map showing all key activities have performance measures • Benchmarking information • Cost performance (using inputs and outputs) • Calendar of dates for submitting, publishing, and distributing timely reports that are adhered to 	Substantial / Full	
<p><i>F2 i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Performance management measures already described above, notably: C1 i) Corporate Objectives and Plan approval process [see A2 i) B1 i)] Service planning process. Employee Regular Performance Review (RPR) process and workforce planning. This ties together the golden thread of delivery/ measurement process. The Ideagen (Risk Management) System to improve its performance management. • A2i (& examples): Committee / Cabinet involvement Annual Safeguarding Performance and 3 Cs monitoring. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of LG Inform & LG Inform Plus for benchmarking information. B3 vi) monitoring report for key indicators business development, housing, transport, local services, performance of policies in the adopted Local Plan, employment monitoring. It also looks at any deficiencies in the scope of current monitoring and how it can be improved in future. This report and previous ones are available to residents via the Council’s website: [https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-policy/monitoring] [See also B1 i) B1 iv)]. C1 i) Employee Regular Performance Review (RPR) process and workforce planning. • Hertfordshire County-wide customer services benchmarking group for informal benchmarking. • Informal benchmarking with other local authorities via the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) and other networks such as Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Practitioners Network. • Cost performance is measured using LG futures. • Calendar of dates for submitting, publishing, and distributing timely reports previously detailed under A3 ii), B1 iii), C1 i), D2 i). <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See examples linked to the above.</p>		
<p><i>F2 ii) Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation’s financial, social and environmental position and outlook. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion between members and officers on the information needs of members to support decision making • Publication of agendas and minutes of meetings • Agreement on the information that will be needed and timescales 	Full	
<p><i>F2 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Numerous processes have been explained above regarding Reports / Record of decisions, areas covered in the reports as standard for professional advice on financial, social and risk implications of a decision. Involvement of O & S in report review and information required and the implementation of a new format from 2017/18 and further revisions in the 2020 civic year. Publication of agendas/ minutes and timescales also covered above. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See above.</p>		
<p><i>F2 iii) Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which encourages constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the organisation’s performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role and responsibility for scrutiny has been established and is clear 	Substantial	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agenda and minutes of scrutiny meetings</i> • <i>Evidence of improvements as a result of scrutiny</i> • <i>Terms of reference</i> • <i>Training for members</i> • <i>Membership</i> 		
<p><i>F2 iii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has one O & S Committee. Its Terms of Reference and Procedure Rules, call-in and Councillor Call for action [Section 6 Constitution] Task and Finish Groups provide challenge and debate before and during the decision making process. • The Committee has a broad membership of up to 16 Councillors and has 6 scheduled meetings per year. As well as its scheduled meetings, the Committee establishes several task and finish groups each year to look at topics in more depth. Once a review is complete, a report is prepared which is approved by the Committee and is then sent to the Cabinet or other public sector partners for consideration. • Agenda, reports, and minutes with recommendation (and the recording of public meetings) are available either to inspect / or on the Council's website]. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=134 • A running list of recommendations are reported to Committee. Resolution of the O&S Committee 20th June 2023, Resolution of the O&S Committee 12th September 2023, Resolution of the O&S Committee 7th November 2023, Resolution of the O&S Committee 9th January 2023, Resolution of the O&S Committee 29th January 2023. • The Committee keeps performance under review, with updates provided to the Chairman at briefing sessions and quarterly monitoring reports to Committee. • A Committee Work Programme linked to the Forward Plan. • The Committee monitors key projects. • The Committee has a presentation on each Executive Member's service portfolio (at each meeting), which includes performance indicators – targets and outcomes for those services. • The Chairman of Committee presents an annual report to Full Council. The 2022/23 report was presented to Council on 13th July 2023: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22668/Annual%20OS%20Report%20to%20Council%202022-2023%20-%20Council%20Cover%20Report.pdf • The amended Code of Conduct institutes a new obligation for all members to attend compulsory training (as decided by Council, Cabinet or Committee or the Monitoring Officer, Statutory officer, Group Leader or standards sub-committee), in addition to voluntary training opportunities. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examples linked to above areas.</p> <p>The Corporate Peer Challenge Report & Action Plan was agreed at Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 20th June 2023. https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22328/CORPORATE%20PEER%20CHALLENGE%20REPORT.pdf</p>		

<p>The action plan is detailed at Appendix B. https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22330/App%20B%20Action%20Plan%20in%20response%20to%20Peer%20Support%20Committee%20report.pdf</p>		
<p><i>F2 iv) Providing members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Calendar of dates for submitting, publishing and distributing timely reports that are adhered to</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>F2 iv) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Leadership Team/ Member Performance management measures already described above, notably: C1 i) Corporate Objectives and Plan approval process [see A2 i) B1 i)] Service planning process. Employee Regular Performance Review (RPR) process and workforce planning. This ties together the golden thread of delivery/ measurement process. The Ideagen (Risk Management) System to improve its performance management. • See also B1 i), F2 i), ii) & ii) above, <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Examples linked to above areas.</p>		
<p><i>F2 v) Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (eg financial statements). This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Financial standards, guidance</i> • <i>Financial regulations and standing orders</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>F2 v) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per A3 ii) The Council's financial management arrangements are underpinned by a regulatory framework comprising of the Financial Regulations, Contract Procurement Rules (and other measures). • The Finance, Performance and Asset Management team provide guidance to Councillors and employees where necessary. Over the last year, this training has been provided through the Hub via workshops including video workshops or via the e-learning Learning Management System covering a variety of subjects surrounding accounting, financial regulations, procurement and closure of accounts. • SIAS' Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Annual Audit Report 2022/23 was presented at the June 2023 FAR meeting and based on the audit work undertaken during 2022/23. It provided an overall Reasonable Assurance opinion, based on the 19 audits completed. It noted in the report that SIAS has previously provided separate overall assurance opinions on the financial and non-financial systems at the Council. However, with only the Centros Financial System and Revenues Discounts and Exemptions audits fulfilling the criteria of financial systems audits within the 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan, the number of projects was deemed too small to warrant a separate assurance opinion on financial systems. The assurance opinion on those 		

<p>audits conducted during 2022/23 will be due in the Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Annual Audit Report which is brought to FAR in 2024.</p> <p>https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22298/NHC%20-%20SIAS%20Annual%20Assurance%20Statement%20and%20Internal%20Audit%20Annual%20Report%202022-23.pdf</p> <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p>The CIPFA Financial Management Code was acknowledged and reviewed at FAR in January 2020 in advance of coming into effect in April 2020. The report gave a draft assessment of the situation and actions required to comply with the code. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s9595/Financial Management Code.pdf As above, the assurance opinion on those audits conducted during 2022/23 will be due in the Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Annual Audit Report which is brought to FAR in 2024.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The council constitution is regularly reviewed see above.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Section 20: Contract Procurement Rules were last reviewed and approved by Council in January 2023, see above.</p>		
<p>F3 Robust internal control</p>		
<p>F3 i) <i>Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving the objectives). This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk management strategy • Audit plan • Audit reports 	<p>Full</p>	
<p>F3 i) <i>What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Risk Management Strategy, Policy and arrangements are described in various sections, notably: C1 iv). • The SIAS Internal Audit Plan forms part of the Council’s assurance framework. It supports the requirement to produce an audit opinion on the overall internal control environment of the Council, as well as a judgement on the robustness of risk management and governance arrangements, which will be contained in the Head of Internal Audit’s (SIAS) annual report. • As per A3 v) and above, the Head of SIAS (Internal Audit) is required to deliver an annual internal audit’s opinion and report, covering overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation’s framework of governance, risk management and control. This forms one of the key assurances for the AGS. It is presented to the FAR Committee. • SIAS Audit Plan complies with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) which came into effect on 1 April 2013 and revised on 1 April 2017. • Audit Plan and update review reports against the Plan are provided to FAR for approval. • External Auditors provide key timetabling/ stage of audit reports to FAR Committee (Audit Fee Letter, Audit Plan, testing routine procedures, Audit on financial statement and value for money conclusions/ Audit completion certificate and Annual Audit Letter). 		

<p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24 was presented by SIAS to the meeting of the FAR committee on 8th March 2023. The plan complies with the UK PSIAS, including the assessment of the risk maturity of the Council. SIAS then determines the extent to which information contained in the Council’s risk registers informs the identification of potential audit areas, with regular updates provided. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s21560/NHC%20FAR%20Committee%20-%202023-24%20Internal%20Audit%20Plan%20Report%20issued%2021.02.23%20Final.pdf</p> <p>SIAS Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/23 presented to FAR Committee June 2023. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22298/NHC%20-%20SIAS%20Annual%20Assurance%20Statement%20and%20Internal%20Audit%20Annual%20Report%202022-23.pdf</p> <p>Recommendations are detailed in the June 2023 SIAS report to FAR committee see above.</p> <p>The top risks for the Council, were reported to FAR Committee in June 2023 (Annual Report on Risk Management Governance, 21 June 2023).</p>		
<p><i>F3 ii) Evaluating and monitoring the authority’s risk management and internal control on a regular basis). This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk management strategy/ policy has been formally approved and adopted and is reviewed and updated on a regular basis 	Full	
<p><i>F3 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Risk Management Strategy, Policy and arrangements are described in various sections, notably: C1 iv). <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See previous examples/ outcome related to the above.</p>		
<p><i>F3 iii) Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place). This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for e.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (CIPFA, 2014) 	Full	
<p><i>F3 iii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per A1 v) The Council has an overarching Fraud Prevention Policy and this includes the Anti-Money Laundering Policy, Anti-Bribery, Employee Personal Conflicts of Interest, Benefits Anti-Fraud. The Whistleblowing Policies and Fraud Plans all available on the internet: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/fraud-prevention-policy and https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/whistleblowing-policy • The Council participates in a Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS) and they present an Anti-Fraud plan and progress reports to FAR Committee. The Council has a Board and Partner role in the Service. • The Anti-Fraud action plan sets out to comply with the five key principles of the Code of practice on managing the risk of fraud and corruption. 		

<p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ As per A1i, The Fraud Prevention Policy was most recently reviewed, updated, and approved by the FAR committee in March 2022. This included a minor change to reflect that the Shared Anti-Fraud Service has taken on the Money Laundering Reporting Officer role. Fraud Prevention Policy: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/fraud-prevention-policy . ☑ The SAFS North Hertfordshire District Council Anti-Fraud Plan 2023/24 was approved by FAR in March 2023. This plan was designed to meet the recommendations of the Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy (FFCL) by adopting the five ‘pillars of Protect, Govern, Acknowledge, Prevent and Pursue. https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s21630/SAFS%20FARC%20Report%20March%202023.pdf ☑ We have adopted the FFCL checklist as a ‘To-do’ list and we will use this to track responsibility for each action/objective and then identify how the Council is doing in that area, rating each and providing evidence to support this. In future years we will use this framework to review the Councils performance adding/editing actions/objectives as they arise or become relevant to the Council. 		
<p><i>F3 iv) Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor). This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual governance statement • Effective internal audit service is resourced and maintained 	Full	
<p><i>F3 iv) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Leadership Team are responsible for overseeing the preparation and content of the AGS. • The Council has a local Code of Corporate Governance that it reviews annually. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-data-and-performance/policies/corporate-governance • As per A3 v) Internal Audit arrangements are provided through SIAS. They provide an Audit Plan for approval, prior to the new financial year; progress reports against the Plan and an Annual Assurance • The Head of SIAS is required to deliver an annual internal audit’s opinion and report, covering overall adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation’s framework of governance, risk management and control that can be used by the organisation to inform its AGS. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ There is a legal requirement on the Council to review/ prepare and adopt an AGS, prior to approval of the Statement of Accounts. The Leadership Team are responsible for leading/ overseeing the preparation of this AGS review and document prior to presentation to FAR Committee (for its consideration and approval). FAR reviews the draft plan at one meeting and then the final one prior to approving the AGS. 		

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> It is recommended practice for the Council to develop and maintained an up-to-date Local Code of Governance based on the up to date CIPFA/ SOLACE framework principles. FAR Committee considered and approved at its March 2023 meeting and the assessment of these principles will be as against this. This is based on the (2016) CIPFA/ SOLACE Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016 Edition principles. This remains the basis for an assessment of governance arrangements for the 2020/21 period. The only amendment is to the first overarching Council objective (It now reads: 'We will put people first and deliver sustainable services, to enable a brighter future together'.) at Section 4 of Appendix A.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal Audit Progress Report March 2024: The Internal Audit Progress report from 13th March 2024 set out performance figures in the table at paragraph 2.12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 73% of planned days had been delivered (186/255) (annual target 95%) • 50% of planned projects had been completed (12/24) (annual target 90%) <p>https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24484/NHC%20FAR%20Committee%20-%20SIAS%20Progress%20Report%20issued%2028.02.24.pdf</p>		
<p><i>F3 v) Ensuring an audit committee or equivalent group or function which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body:</i> — provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment — that its recommendations are listened to and acted upon. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit committee complies with best practice. See <i>Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (CIPFA, 2013)</i> • Terms of reference • Membership • Training 	Substantial	
<p><i>F3 v) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FAR is the main governance Committee. The terms of reference of the Committee are set out in Section 10 of the Constitution. The Committee will, when relevant, make recommendations to the Executive, on Executive functions. No Executive Member is a Member of the Committee. • The Committee provides an Annual report to Full Council. • SIAS undertake a review of the effectiveness of the FAR Committee. • The Membership is offered relevant training. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p>		

<p>☑ The SIAS review the effectiveness of the FAR Committee for 2023 was not completed, as detailed in the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2022-2023, a similar SIAS review has not taken place for the last two years this report as this has essentially been covered by the Peer Review.</p>		
<p><i>F4 Managing data</i></p>		
<p><i>F4 i) Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for e.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Data management framework and procedures</i> • <i>Designated data protection officer</i> • <i>Data protection policies and procedures</i> 	<p>Moderate</p>	
<p><i>F4 i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has an Email Encryption system "Clearswift". • Certain Service areas have their external emails encrypted by default (Housing, Revenues and Benefits, Systems Technical (Revenues and Benefits), Cashiers and Careline). All others are prompted for encryption of outgoing mail. Employees/ Members are instructed to encrypt an email if sending private, sensitive or confidential information to an external email address. • The Council has a designated data protection (DPA) officer – the Revenues Manager and Data Controller is the Service Director - Customers DPA - website Contacts information]. • The Council has DPA policies & procedures [DPA Statement page; Subject Access Request Form; CCTV Footage Requests; Data Protection Act 1998 - Fair Processing Notice]. • The Council has a Data Sharing Protocol which provides a framework for the Partner Organisations for the regulation working practices between Partner Organisations and is in accordance with the ICO's data sharing code of practice (which includes a pro-forma Data Sharing Agreement/ deletion certificate). • The Council has a Privacy Impact assessment (PIA scope and full screening) documents process. These assess impacts on privacy in accordance with the ICO PIA Code of recommended practice. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i> The Council reviewed the DPA complaints procedure during 2016/17 [Access to Information - Review & DPA Complaints Procedure], and sets out the process of making a complaint in the way that a subject access request has been handled. The Council's retention schedule was last updated in 2023. [Retention Schedule]. See B1</p>		

<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Councils are not currently legally obliged to undertake a DPIA for a new project, although it is recommended by the ICO under their Employers Code and the DPIA Code of practice (and will come into force as part of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements in 2018).</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DPs for 2023 (calendar year) DPs total for the year: 226 Percentage responded to within the legislative timescale: 98.7%, with 1.3% of the total missing the deadline. Number of Subject Access Requests (SARs) received: 13. ICO complaints: 0.</p>		
<p><i>F4 ii) Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data sharing agreement • Data sharing register <p><i>Data processing agreements</i></p>	Substantial	
<p><i>F4 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See F4 i) The Council has a Data Sharing Protocol (which includes a pro-forma Data Sharing Agreement). • A data sharing register is retained by the Freedom of Information (DPA) team. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p>		
<p><i>F4 iii) Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data quality procedures and reports • Data validation procedures 	Substantial	
<p><i>F4 iii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideagen provides a significant checking procedure for data, with this entered and checked by one officer and checked by another from the Performance team. These are used for projects and KPIs. <p>Outcomes/ examples: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ideagen KPIs.</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>F 5) Strong public financial management</i> 		
<p><i>F5 i) Ensuring financial management supports both long-term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for e.g.:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Financial management supports the delivery of services and transformational change as well as securing good stewardship</i> 	Full	
<p><i>F5 i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See A3 ii) & F2v. The Council’s financial management arrangements conform to the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2016) and the CIPFA Financial Management Code. • Key financial Systems are audited by SIAS annually. <p>Outcomes/ examples: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A 3 ii) SIAS audits.</p>		
<p><i>F5 ii) Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Budget monitoring reports</i> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Full	
<p><i>F5 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See C1 iii), D2 vii) Quarterly budget monitoring of budget, capital and treasury management information to FAR Committee and Cabinet. • The most recent of these was presented at the FAR committee in March 2024: Second Quarter Revenue Budget Monitoring 2023/24 - https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24508/THIRD%20QUARTER%20REVENUE%20BUDGET%20MONITORING%20202324.pdf • Second Quarter Investment Strategy (Capital and Treasury) Review 2023/24: https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s24457/THIRD%20QUARTER%20INVESTMENT%20STRATEGY%20CAPITAL%20AND%20TREASURY%20REVIEW%20202324.pdf <p>Outcomes/ examples: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See linked outcomes/ examples.</p>		

Principles in bold, Sub-principles in bold & italics.	SCORE	Action
Principle G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability		

<p>Accountability is about ensuring that those making decisions and delivering services are answerable for them. Effective accountability is concerned not only with reporting on actions completed, but also ensuring that stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the organisation plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner. Both external and internal audit contribute to effective accountability.</p>		
<p><i>G1) Implementing good practice in transparency</i></p>		
<p><i>G1 i) Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in an understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Annual report 	<p>Substantial</p>	
<p><i>G1 i) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Identity Guidelines which highlights the use ‘plain English’ [Corporate Identity Guidelines]. • North Herts Council Website, with clear information and plain language: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/ • A web page Review Check list: https://northhertsgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/PlaceIntranet/SitePages/Web-page-review-checklist.aspx • ‘Outlook’ – Annual Residents Report each Winter and Summer (biannual). • Marketing and Communication Strategy – Communications will be honest, accurate, transparent and accessible. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/NHDC%20Communications%20strategy%202019-2023.pdf (new strategy yet to be added to webpage) • Media Relations Protocol https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/council-and-democracy/news-and-publications/media-relations-protocol <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff have access to a web style guide which sets out how content on the website should be written to ensure the needs of website users are met. This is available on the staff Hub: https://northhertsgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/PlaceIntranet/SitePages/Web-style-guide.aspx <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Staff are advised to review web pages every three months to ensure that information is current and accurate. A web page review checklist is available to staff on the Hub: https://northhertsgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/PlaceIntranet/SitePages/Web-page-review-checklist.aspx <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Writing an Accessible Document in Word Guidance is published for staff on the Hub to ensure that our website and all PDFs uploaded to it comply with WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standards. https://northhertsgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/PlaceIntranet/SitePages/Images-and-tables-on-web-pages.aspx 		

<p><i>G1 ii) Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand.</i></p>	<p>Substantial</p>	
<p><i>G1 ii)What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference is made to Principle B and Council’s approach to openness and transparency arrangements. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See linked outcomes/ examples.</p>		
<p><i>G2 Implementing good practices in reporting</i></p>		
<p><i>G2 i) Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and the stewardship of its resources. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Formal annual report which includes key points raised by external scrutineers and service users’ feedback on service delivery</i> • <i>Annual financial statements</i> 	<p>Substantial</p>	
<p><i>What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Auditors Ernst &Young that provide key timetabling/ stage of audit reports to FAR Committee (Audit Fee Letter, Audit Plan, testing routine procedures, Audit on financial statement and value for money conclusions/ Audit completion certificate and Annual Audit Letter). • SIAS undertake and present an Annual Assurance Statement, (Head of) Internal Audit Annual Report on the work undertaken on assurance and other projects. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <p>Ernst & Young presented an Audit Plan Report to FAR Committee in March 2022. The Plan set out the proposed audit approach and scope for the 2021/22 audit, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the National Audit Office’s new 2020 Code of Audit Practice, the auditing standards and other professional requirements. As outlined in the Measures to Address the External Audit Backlog Report presented to FAR committee 13th March 2024, there is a delay in the delivery of external audit. A back-stop date has been proposed for these to be approved by 30th September 2024.</p> <p>Ernst & Young presented the Provisional Audit Results Report for the year ending 31st March 2022 at the FAR committee in March 2023. By March 2023, the audit’s of the Council’s financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2022 were substantially completed. The main pending area is valuation of the pension fund liability, where Ernst & Young had not</p>		

<p>yet received the report from the Pension Fund auditors and hence have not concluded work in this. This meant that the Final Audit Results Report has not yet been published.</p> <p>Subject to satisfactory completion of the outstanding items, Ernst and Young expect to issue an unqualified opinion on the Council’s financial statements. As the audit is ongoing and many areas are subject to Manager and Partner review, further amendments and issues may arise. Whilst the above opinion is provisional, the audit is therefore not formally concluded and necessary work must be completed in order for an audit certificate to be issued.</p>		
<p><i>G2 ii) Ensuring members and senior management own the results. This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Appropriate approvals</i> 	Substantial	
<p><i>G2 ii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions and officers are identified in the AGS to ensure ownership and accountability. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The Annual Governance statement 2022/23 https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-09/AGS%20202223.pdf 		
<p><i>G2 iii) Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in the Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (annual governance statement). This according to CIPFA/SOLACE is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Annual governance statement</i> 	Full	
<p><i>G2 iii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As per F3 v) The Leadership Team is responsible for leading/ overseeing the preparation of this AGS review and document prior to presentation to FAR Committee (for its consideration and approval). FAR reviews the draft plan at one meeting and then the final one prior to approving the AGS. • The Council also has an updated Local Code of Corporate Governance which includes the updated CIPFA/ SOLACE Framework principles 2016. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The AGS is available on the Council’s website: https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/corporate-governance ☑ The 2022/23 AGS was reviewed in draft in June 2023 and approved in September 2023. 		

<p>G2 iv) Ensuring that the Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual governance statement 	Substantial	
<p>G2 iv) What NHDC has or does:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The draft AGS will be shared with SIAS/ SAFS and the external auditors for comment, prior to finalising. <p>Outcomes/ examples:</p>		
<p>G2 v) Ensuring the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other similar organisations. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Format follows best practice 	Full	
<p>G2 v) What NHDC has or does:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CFO follows: the CIPFA Code of practice on local authority accounting in the United Kingdom 2023/24 ; and the CIPFA Statement on the role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government 2016 by ensuring that the financial statements are prepared on a timely basis, meet legislative requirements, financial reporting standards and professional standards as reflected in CIPFA’s Code of Practice. • External auditors, who review the financial statements are currently appointed through Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd, and on terms ‘Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies’ (available via http://www.psa.co.uk/) and ‘Terms of Appointment’ from 1 April 2018. The latter set out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and statute. <p>Outcomes/ examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The NHDC Annual Audit Letter was presented at the FAR committee in January 2021 by Ernst & Young. The document set out the output of the Council’s most recent financial statement: ‘On 30 November 2020 we issued an unqualified opinion giving a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council as at 31 March 2020 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended. We did include a paragraph emphasising the material uncertainty in relation to the valuation of the Council’s property assets (including investment property) as a result of Covid-19. This was not a qualification or modification to the audit opinion.’ https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s15147/Annual%20Audit%20Letter%2020192020.pdf <p>The Audit letter for the most recent civic year has not yet been presented.</p>		

<p>The appointment of External Auditors for 2023/4 to 2027/8 was made at the <u>Council meeting on Thursday 20 January</u>. It was resolved that the Council opts-in to the appointing person arrangements made by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) for the appointment of external auditors, for a period of 5 years from the 2023/24 audit.</p> <p>Ernst & Young presented the <u>Provisional Audit Results Report</u> for the year ending 31st March 2022 at the FAR committee in March 2023. By March 2023, the audit's of the Council's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2022 were substantially completed https://srvmodgov01.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s21629/Audit%20Results%20Report%20-%20Ernst%20and%20Young.pdf</p> <p>The provisional audit states that they expect to provide an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements.</p> <p><u>Most recent Audit Results Report for year ending 31st March 2022 was presented to FAR Committee on the 13th September 2023.</u> <u>Final Audit Results Report Year Ending 2022.</u></p>		
<p>G 3) Assurance and effective accountability</p>		
<p>G3 i) Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations have informed positive improvement • Compliance with CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit (2010) 	<p>Substantial</p>	
<p>G3 i) What NHDC has or does:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> As per G2 i) External Auditors present an Audit Update Report to FAR Committee. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SIAS and SAFS provide Plans and updates to Committee as against those plans. AGS Actions are reported to Committee. Recommendations are reported on and corrective action which results in positive improvements. <p>Outcomes/ examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See outcomes /examples previously outlined for SIAS/ SAFS. 		
<p>G3 ii) Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place which provides assurance with regard to governance arrangements and recommendations are acted upon. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards 	<p>Substantial</p>	
<p>G3 ii) What NHDC has or does:</p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SIAS have direct access to Members for the purposes of their reviews. • SIAS report compliance with PSIAS. <p>SIAS Audit Charter since 2013. An update to the Charter was brought to the Committee in June 2015 with an assessment of SIAS’s conformance against the PSIAS standards presented to FAR Committee in September 2016. The Audit Charter forms part of the Head of Assurance Opinion report (brought to the first committee of each civic year) and is reviewed annually and updated as appropriate.</p> <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audit charter for 2023/24 was presented at FAR committee on 21st June 2023 for approval (Appendix D of Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Report). The charter review in May 2023 did not result in any fundamental changes from the 2022/23 version. • Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Report 2022/2023: In the <u>Annual Assurance Statement and Internal Audit Report</u> presented at the June 2023 FAR committee, SIAS had provided an overall opinion of ‘Reasonable Assurance’ in respect to the Council’s financial and non-financial systems. <p>https://democracy.north-herts.gov.uk/documents/s22298/NHC%20-%20SIAS%20Annual%20Assurance%20Statement%20and%20Internal%20Audit%20Annual%20Report%202022-23.pdf</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The outcome of our self-assessment against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards for 2022/23 year was assessed as generally conforms, which was the highest category. • Completion of; Climate Change Audit, Covid Response Audit and Capital Grants Audit. 		
<p><i>G 3 iii) Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations have informed positive improvement 	Substantial	
<p><i>G3 iii) What NHDC has or does:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates in benchmarking exercises. • Is part of Shared service arrangements, which effectively benchmark the Council against participating authorities for Internal Audit, Anti-Fraud and Insurance. • Public Service Network accreditation. <p><i>Outcomes/ examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Various examples of the Council participating in external formal and informal comparative reviews, being willing and embracing the process to improve services- A2 iv) Herts Careline’s high performance in its annual customer survey; Informal benchmarking amongst district Council’s and with SIAS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sport England’s Nation for leisure services - The last National Benchmarking Service carried out at the leisure centres was in 2019/20. All North Herts Leisure sites were due to go through the benchmarking in 2023, however due to the 		

<p>required visits and timescales, the changeover of contract from SLL and SLM has resulted in benchmarking being postponed. SLM will arrange for this benchmarking to take place once their contract commences.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The DWP also provide ongoing monitoring in respect of the Council's benefits service.</p>		
<p>G3 iv) Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual governance statement 	Full	
<p>G3 iv) What NHDC has or does:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk management arrangements apply to partnership projects and to procurement (see, for example C1 iii), D2 iii, for project management/ risk and procurement). Risk Management is reviewed by SIAS, and is one of the key parts of the assurance provided for the AGS. <p>Outcomes/ examples:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See previous outcomes/ examples linked to the above.</p>		
<p>G3 v) Ensuring that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and that the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met. This according to CIPFA/Solace is demonstrated by, for eg:</p> <p>Community strategy</p>	Substantial	
<p>G3 v) What NHDC has or does:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Plan Statement of Community Involvement Council Delivery Plan highlights what we will do with the wider community and partnerships. <p>Outcomes/ examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Herts Council Plan commits the Council to put people first and deliver sustainable services, to enable a brighter future together. The Council's priority of putting people first ensures that residents, businesses, staff, contractors, councillors and other partners will be placed at the heart of everything we do. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/council-plan The Council Delivery Plan sets out the key projects that we will be looking to carry out during the year to support the delivery of the Council Plan. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/council-delivery-plan North Herts Council's Statement of Community Involvement sets out how we will involve the community in preparing the Local Plan and in considering planning applications. https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/statement-community-involvement-sci 		