

# DRAFT Annual Governance Statement

**2025/2026**

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## Version control

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<b>Date</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Updated by</b>
<b>27 April 2026</b>	Initial draft for discussion	Kate Spencer
<b>18 May 2026</b>	Draft for consideration by Audit Committee	Kate Spencer

# Executive Summary

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Torbay Council is committed to maintaining the highest standards of governance, underpinned by integrity, transparency and accountability. This Annual Governance Statement sets out how the Council has complied with its updated Code of Corporate Governance and demonstrates our continued focus on delivering effective, lawful and value-for-money services for our communities.

Our governance framework brings together the systems, processes, culture and values that direct and control the organisation, ensuring that we manage risk appropriately while enabling the delivery of our strategic priorities. During 2025/2026, we have strengthened this framework through reviewing our organisational values, continuing to embed our performance and risk management frameworks, and a maintained focus on ethical behaviour and leadership.

We have continued to prioritise openness and engagement, with clear decision-making processes, active overview and scrutiny, and meaningful dialogue with residents, partners and stakeholders. Our Community and Corporate Plan and refreshed Business Plan provide a clear line of sight from long-term ambitions through to service delivery, supported by performance monitoring and transparent reporting.

Our robust financial management and internal control arrangements are supported by effective audit, risk management and counter-fraud frameworks. We have also continued to invest in organisational capacity through our People Strategy, leadership development and workforce planning.

Our annual review confirms that the Council's governance arrangements remain fit for purpose and continue to evolve in line with best practice. While areas for improvement have been identified, including strengthening data-driven decision-making, enhancing fraud risk coverage, and embedding our transparency and assurance frameworks, we are confident that these are being actively addressed.

Anne-Marie Bond  
Chief Executive

Councillor David Thomas  
Leader of the Council

# Scope of responsibility

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Torbay Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards. We also need to make sure that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

We have a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which our functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, we are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of our affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of our functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

Torbay Council has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance which is included in the [Council's Constitution](#).

This Annual Governance Statement explains how we have complied with the Code. The Statement meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2022, in relation to the publication of a statement on internal control.

The Statement takes the principles of our Code of Corporate Governance and describes (as per the guidance issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)):

- Torbay Council's key governance arrangements,
- Our evaluation of the effectiveness of our governance, and
- The progress we have made against previous actions and our plans for further improvement.

# Key governance arrangements

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## The purpose of the governance framework

The Council's governance framework comprises the systems, processes, culture and values, by which the authority is directed and controlled, and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives. It can, therefore, only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Torbay Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

Against each principle of the Code of Corporate Governance, this section describes Torbay Council's governance arrangements.

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

We behave with integrity – putting into practice our organisational values, ensuring members and officers behave in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct, and make sure our officers are supported and protected to speak up if they encounter behaviours which don't match our values.

- The Council's Core Values are well established but were subject to review during 2025/2026 (with further details set out in the next part of this Statement).
- Our Directors Commitments are in place to promote a positive culture across the organisation, which are supplemented by our Internal Engagement Strategy.
- The Council's Constitution includes a Code of Conduct for Members, a Code of Conduct for Employees and a Local Protocol on Member and Officer Relations.
- The Whistleblowing and Acceptable Behaviour policies available to all staff via MyView.

We demonstrate our strong commitment to ethical values. We support the Standards Committee to champion high standards of ethical governance from elected members. We maintain robust policies and procedures so that ethical values are put into practice, including separate Codes of Conduct for members and officers and a Member/Officer Relations Protocol.

We operate ethical procurement policies to ensure that commitment to our values and integrity is delivered by external suppliers delivering services on our behalf.

- The Standards Committee is part of the Council's governance arrangements.
- The Council's Constitution includes a Code of Conduct for Members, a Code of Conduct for Employees and a Local Protocol on Member and Officer Relations.

- The Code of Conduct for Members and Employees includes details around conflicts of interest.
- Procedures are in place for the Assessment and Determination of Allegations of Breaches of the Member's Code of Conduct.
- The Constitution also includes Financial Regulations and Contract Procedures.
- The procurement and management of public contracts for the provision of goods, services, works and concessions is governed by:
  - The Procurement Act 2023 – goods, light touch services (excluding relevant health care services), services, works and services and works concessions where the procurement process commenced on or after 24 February 2025
  - The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 – goods, light touch services, services and works where the procurement process commenced before 24 February 2025 and relevant health care services where the procurement commenced before 1 January 2024
  - The Concessions Contract Regulations 2016 – services and works concessions where the procurement commenced before 24 February 2025
  - The Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 for relevant health care services, including some of the public health services commissioned by the Council, where the procurement process commenced on or after 1 January 2024.

We respect the rule of law, using our legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in the area. We appoint Statutory Officers who have the skills, resources and support necessary to perform effectively in their roles and support them to fulfil their responsibilities within legislative and regulatory requirements.

We make sure that all Members and Officers appointed to undertake roles as Directors on either Company or Charity Boards have access to appropriate guidance and support to ensure that they undertake their duties within the context of the relevant Acts that govern such bodies.

- The Head of the Paid Service is the Chief Executive who is responsible and accountable to the Council for all aspects of operational management.
- The Director of Finance is the Chief Financial Officer who has responsibility for ensuring the Council operates secure and reliable financial and accounting systems.
- The Council's Head of Legal Services is the designated Monitoring Officer. She is responsible for ensuring that agreed procedures and protocols are followed and that all applicable Statutes and Regulations are complied with.
- Standard format reports for decision makers which requires legal implications of decisions to be set out so they can be considered by the decision maker. There is proactive engagement between Legal Services and directorates on high profile/sensitive matters.
- Equality Impact Assessments are completed for forthcoming decisions in order that the impact on vulnerable groups and those with characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010 can be assessed, documented and considered by decision-makers prior to decisions being made.
- Advice and guidance are available to all directorates to ensure procurement is legally compliant.

- Standard Terms and Conditions ensure providers are legally compliant and held to account.
- A draft Local Operating Policy for governance of wholly owned companies has been prepared.

## Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

We ensure openness through developing and clearly communicating the Council's purpose and vision and its intended outcome for citizens and services users.

We are rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listen and act on the outcome of constructive scrutiny.

We take an active and planned approach to dialogue with, and are accountable to, the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery by the Council, in partnership or by commissioning.

- The Council's Community and Corporate Plan was adopted in February 2024. The Plan covers a twenty-year period which will include a formal review after ten years.
- The associated Council Business Plan, which acts as a delivery plan and sets out the actions require to meet the priorities within the Community and Corporate Plan, was approved in June 2024 and is refreshed annually.
- The Council's Constitution sets out the Council's formal governance framework with decisions made in accordance with Access to Information requirements.
- The Council has documented its internal governance structure and framework and has contract management arrangements in place.
- The Forward Plan is published upon receipt of any changes or new entry setting out the Key Decisions which are due to be taken.
- Overview and scrutiny arrangements are in place within the Council's governance arrangements, with the Constitution including the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (and its sub-boards) and the Standing Orders in relation to Overview and Scrutiny.
- The Council has standard formats for reports to decision makers and Records of Decision.
- Meetings of the Council, Cabinet and Planning Committee are livestreamed on YouTube and promoted via social media channels.
- Impact on vulnerable groups and those with characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010 is assessed and documented in Equality Impact Assessments and considered by decision-makers prior to decisions being made.

We engage comprehensively with our institutional stakeholders. We ensure relationships between the Council and its partners are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other. We develop formal and informal partnerships to allow resources to be used more efficiently and for outcomes to be achieved more effectively.

We ensure effective monitoring of the performance and outcomes delivered by our arms-length companies.

- There are a range of partnerships in place:
  - A Section 75 Agreement is in place with the NHS for the delivery of adult social care by the Integrated Care Organisation. However, notice has been served on this contract which will end on 31 March 2027, whereby the Council will take over full management of statutory adult social care services.
  - Torbay and Devon Safeguarding Adults Partnership
  - Torbay Safeguarding Children Partnership which operates in line with the requirements of the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (as updated in 2023 and 2026)
  - The Community Safety Partnership (known as Safer Torbay)
  - Health and Wellbeing Board
  - Torbay Voluntary Sector Network
  - Torbay Place Leadership Board
- Shareholder Panels are in place for SWISCo and TorVista and include elected members and senior officers. Mechanisms are also in place to enable Overview and Scrutiny Board to have oversight of group companies.

We engage with individual citizens and service users effectively. We aim to deliver against our Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy, including maintaining effective and accessible channels for dialogue and a commitment to sharing outcome of consultations and other community engagement mechanisms with the public and other stakeholders.

We proactively engage with Torbay's diverse communities and identify groups to inform the development of our services.

We maintain an effective complaints and compliments framework, so that we can identify where improvements in service delivery are needed and learn effectively from the complains that we have received.

- A Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy is in place with an associated Engagement and Communications Forward Plan.
- The Council publishes a weekly One Torbay e-newsletter together with other subject specific e-newsletters. This is in addition to the news, information and alerts issued via our social media channels or through media releases as appropriate.
- An Inclusion Partnership is in place which brings together VCSE partner organisations from traditionally seldom heard groups to provide critical friend challenge to the Council on proposals including policy and service delivery.
- The Council has a Complaints Procedure in place.

## Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

We define outcomes through maintaining a Community and Corporate Plan and Council Business Plan which sets out the priorities which the Council will focus on to deliver its ambition for Torbay. We put our Community and Corporate Plan at the heart of our budgeting, business planning and

service planning. We maintain a Medium Term Financial Plan which sets out our financial assumptions and provides a set of goals for financial decision making.

- The Council's Community and Corporate Plan was adopted in February 2024. The plan covers a twenty-year period which will include a formal review after ten years.
- The associated Council Business Plan, which acts as a delivery plan and sets out the actions require to meet the priorities within the Community and Corporate Plan, was approved in June 2024.
- The Council Business Plan sets out milestones towards delivery of priority projects and Service Plans prepared for services across all Directorates.
- The Council's Medium Term Resource Plan provides a framework for planning and monitoring our resource requirements.

We deliver sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits. We aim to assess and address the economic, social, equality and environmental implications of our decisions.

We ensure that officers are clear about their role in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty, including our Corporate Equality Objectives into service planning.

We maintain a Council-wide focus on tackling the social determinants of health inequalities.

- Our report template includes sections to assess and consider:
  - Procurement implications, including social value
  - The impacts on the environment
  - Socio-economic impacts (including impacts on child poverty and deprivation)
  - Public health impacts (including the impacts on the general health of the population of Torbay)
- An Inclusive Council training, which sets out our Public Sector Equality Duty, is a mandatory requirement for all staff.
- We publish our Equality Objectives with actions being taken in services to deliver against them included in our service planning.

## Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes

In determining interventions, we aim to make sure there is effective leadership throughout the Council, being clear about executive and non-executive functions, levels of delegation, and the roles and responsibilities of the scrutiny function.

We ensure that decision makers receive accurate, relevant and timely performance information and intelligence to support them with objective and rigorous analysis of options, covering intended outcomes, financial impact and associated risks informing efficient service delivery.

We commit to seeking continuous feedback from residents and those who use our services, both in planning service changes and improvements.

- To provide clarity, the following are included within the Council's Constitution:

- Schedules of Local Choice Functions and Council Functions
- Scheme of Delegation of Executive Functions to the Cabinet, Cabinet Committees and Officers
- Article 5 – Overview and Scrutiny
- Terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Board
- Local Protocol on Relations between Overview & Scrutiny and the Cabinet
- Local Protocol – Good Governance the Torbay Way – Effective Administration and Opposition Leaders’ Agreement and Principles
- Job Descriptions
- Roles and responsibilities of Members and officers (and how they inter-relate) are also made clear during induction programmes.
- A Member Development Programme is in place with the aim of providing a structured approach to member development and supporting them in their roles. This includes more detailed training for Councillors with areas of special responsibility e.g. Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members, Overview and Scrutiny and Chairs of Committees.
- The Overview & Scrutiny Leadership Quarterly meetings include the Leader of the Council, Group Leaders and Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Board and Chair of Audit Committee to enable linkages across Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Committee.
- Our Customer Service Standards set out our commitment to putting the customer at the centre of everything we do. If we do not meet these Standards, we have in place our Complaints Procedure. Further, a Members’ Enquiries system is also available.
- To ensure continuous improvement in significant services, the following programmes are in place:
  - Transformation Programme for Adult Social Care
  - Children’s Services Continuous Improvement Plan
  - Priority Impact Plan for the improvement in services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities
- Draft Local Operating Policy for Governance of Council Wholly Owned Companies in place.

In planning interventions, we aim to plan our activity at a strategic level through our budget and business planning cycle, in consultation with internal and external stakeholders, to ensure services are delivered efficiently and effectively across the organisation. We aim for consistent and effective service planning across the organisation. We establish appropriate performance indicators to measure the performance of services and projects, in order to continually improve effective service delivery arrangements.

- A Policy Framework is in place which ensures effective delivery of the Council’s objectives.
- Each year, each Director prepares a set of Services Plans for their directorate which demonstrate how the Council’s ambition and priorities from the Community and Corporate Plan flow through into the delivery of each service and ultimately into the objectives of each of our members of staff.

- The Council has in place a Performance Management Framework which includes setting annual targets for performance indicators.
- A quarterly corporate performance report is published and considered, with performance celebrated and challenged.
- The Statement of Accounts provides a Narrative Report which explains the Council's achievements against the Community and Corporate Plan over the past year alongside the Council's financial performance.
- Customer Service Standards in place.
- Improvement Plans put in place to respond to external inspections:
  - Children's Services Continuous Improvement Plan.
  - Priority Impact Plan for Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities
  - Safety Value.
- Six monthly reports are considered at Directors' Overview Meeting on those areas of the Council subject to external inspection.
- Asset Management Strategy in place to ensure the effective use of the Council's assets.
- Council Re-design Programme in progress to move towards agreed Target Operating Model.

In optimising our achievement of intended outcomes, we aim to make sure the Council makes best use of resources and that taxpayers and service users receive excellent value for money. We seek to embed social value into procurement and commissioning and integrate monitoring of these objectives with contract and performance management procedures.

- Our Council's Constitution sets out the Financial Regulations and how we comply with all accounting, auditing standards and codes of practice. The Council's Medium Term Resource Plan provides a framework for planning and monitoring our resource requirements.
- The Treasury Management Strategy aims to achieve the optimum performance from the Council's cash flow, debt and investment operations and effectively control the associated risks.
- The Council has in place frameworks to which provide control and oversight of the Council's current and future revenue and capital budgets. The framework in relation to capital budgets/projects also includes the governance arrangements in relation to the Council's Regeneration Partner.
- Counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place including a policy which sets out the Council's commitment and approach to maintaining a strong anti-fraud culture across the authority.

## Principle E: Developing the organisation's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

We are developing the organisation's capacity. We make best use of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meet our responsibility to staff and members, including making sure they have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles.

We are embedding benchmarking within our business and service planning to help allocate resources to meet defined outcomes effectively and efficiently.

- Our People Strategy and associated action plan in place.
- Induction for new members of staff is in place, followed by the availability of a Corporate Training Programme.
- Member Development Programme (including Member Induction Programme) is in place and operational.
- MyView web platform hosts Human Resources policies, whilst the Council's Intranet hosts a range of other policies, procedures and guidance for all staff including:
  - Information Governance
  - Freedom of Information Guidance
  - Community and Corporate Plan
  - Constitution
  - Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy
- As part of the Council Redesign Programme, a programme of Workforce Planning in place.
- Service Plans include a section on benchmarking so that services can identify where improvements need to be made.

We are developing the capability of the organisation's leadership and other individuals. We aim to ensure that a constructive working relationship exists between Council Members and officers and that the responsibilities of Members and officers are understood and carried out to a high standard.

We develop the capability of all members and those officers with governance responsibilities and evaluate their performance, as individuals and as a group. We seek to encourage new talent for membership of the Council so that best use can be made of individual's skills and resources in balancing continuity and renewal.

- The responsibilities of Members and officers, and the standards to which they are expected to carry out those responsibilities, are described in the following sections of the Council's Constitution:
  - Schedules of Local Choice Functions, Council Functions and Circumstances in which Functions are not to be the Responsibility of the Executive
  - Officer Scheme of Delegation
  - Code of Conduct for Members, Code of Conduct for Employees and Local Protocol on Member and Officer Relations
- A Leader Induction Programme is in place as part of Member Development Programme.
- Advice and guidance is sought and utilised from the Local Government Association (LGA).
- Member Development Programme (including Member Induction Programme) is in place and operational. This is kept under regular review via the Leaders' Meeting to inform the development of future Programmes.

- Job Descriptions for specific Member and officer roles and Local Protocols published within the Council's Constitution.
- A specific communications and engagement plan is implemented in the run up to Local Elections to encourage people become councillors.

## Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

We manage risk by making sure we have an effective risk management framework in place.

- The Council has an approved Risk Management Framework.
- There is a Whistleblowing Policy in place.
- A Health and Safety Policy is in place supported by a strategy and management framework.

We manage performance by making sure there is an effective performance management framework in place.

We have good quality information, advice and support to ensure that services are delivered effectively and are what the community wants/needs.

We exercise leadership through a robust scrutiny function, which aims to effectively engage local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive accountable relationships.

- The Council has in place a Performance Management Framework which includes setting annual targets for performance indicators.
- The Council's standard format for reports to decision makers includes the legal and financial implications of the recommendations. Guidance and advice is available for completion of Equality Impact Assessments within those reports and through officer support.
- Overview and scrutiny arrangements are in place within the Council's governance arrangements, with the Constitution including the terms of reference of the Overview and Scrutiny Board (and its sub-boards) and the Standing Orders in relation to Overview and Scrutiny.
- An annual report on the activity of the Overview and Scrutiny function is published.
- Quarterly budget monitoring and performance reports are presented to Senior Leadership Team, Cabinet Members and Overview and Scrutiny Board
- A Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy is in place with an associated Engagement and Communications Forward Plan.

There is robust internal control. We maintain an Audit Committee which oversees the effectiveness of governance and risk management arrangements, internal systems of control, and anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements.

Our internal auditor's findings on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of our governance framework are reported to the Audit Committee, along with their findings in relation to the management and control of risk. The outcomes of the work of the external auditor are also reported to the Audit Committee.

- Audit Committee in place as part of the Council's governance arrangements.
- The Council has in place an Internal Audit Plan which sits alongside its governance framework and our information governance arrangements.
- Achievement against the Internal Audit Plan is reported to the Audit Committee on a twice-yearly basis
- The Annual External Audit Plan is considered by the Audit Committee.
- Achievement against the External Audit Plan is reported to the Audit Committee, together with the Annual External Audit Findings Report and the External Auditor's Annual Report.

We manage our data. We make sure we have effective arrangements in place for the safe collections, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data. We make sure effective arrangements are in place, and that they operate effectively, when sharing data with other bodies. We aim to review and regularly audit the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance management.

- The Head of Information Governance is the Council's Data Protection Officer
- The Director of Corporate Services is the Council's SIRO
- The Director of Adult and Community Services is appointed as the Council's Caldicot Guardian.
- Effective Information Governance arrangements are in place
- Data Quality Policy is approved and in place
- Data Protection and Information Governance training is mandatory for all staff and must be repeated every two years
- All reported Data Breaches are investigated and reported to Heads of Services and the Information Commissioners Office (where necessary)

We have strong financial management. We maintain an approach to financial management that supports both the long term achievement of objectives, and shorter term financial and operational performance, whilst ensuring value for money. We make sure that appropriate and timely advice is given on all financial matters, that the required financial records and account are kept, and we oversee an effective system of internal financial control. We follow CIPFA's Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code of Practice which set of the risk framework through which the Council manages its balance sheet and makes capital investment decisions, and statutory guidance on best value.

- Monthly budget monitoring reports are shared with budget holders and members of the Senior Leadership Team, with high level budget monitoring considered by Directors and members of the Cabinet.
- Quarterly budget monitoring reports are considered by the Senior Leadership Team, the Overview and Scrutiny Board and Council.
- Standard format reports for decision makers which requires financial implications of decisions to be set out so they can be considered by the decision maker. There is proactive engagement between Financial Services and directorates on high profile/sensitive matters.

- A Treasury Management Strategy is in place which covers, amongst other things, the Minimum Revenue Provision policy, Borrowing Strategy, Investment Strategy and reporting arrangements.

## Principle G: Implementing good practice in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

We implement good practice in transparency through committing to publish information including reports, in a timely manner which is accessible to residents and other stakeholders.

We aim to ensure that our website is set out in a clear and easily accessible way, using plain language. We also ensure that our website is compliant with web content accessibility standards.

We follow the Local Government Transparency Code, which includes requirements and recommendations for local authorities to publish certain types of data.

- The Council's Standing Orders in relation to Access to Information describe the specific circumstances in which information can be classed as exempt or confidential.
- We use website analytics and feedback to improve findability and task completion.
- We write in plain English, aiming for a reading age of 9 years, and on our website we follow GOV.UK style guidance for titles, summaries and link text.
- We meet website accessibility requirements by testing against WCAG 2.2 AA and publishing and updating an accessibility statement.
- In accordance with our commitment to provide transparency, on our website we publish:
  - Our Organisational Chart covering each member of staff in the top three levels of the organisation.
  - Details of the number of employees whose remuneration was at least £50,000, including their responsibilities.
  - Our Annual Pay Policy Statement and Gender Pay Gap Report

We implement good practice in reporting. We publish, at least annually, on performance, value for money and stewardship of resources in an understandable way. We publish our Annual Governance Statement which provides evidence of good governance and includes an action plan for improvement. We publish performance information in a consistent and timely way which allows for comparison with other, similar organisations.

- The Statement of Accounts provides a Narrative Report which explains the Council's achievements against the Community and Corporate Plan over the past year alongside the Council's financial performance.
- The draft Annual Governance Statement is prepared and considered by Audit Committee.
- Annual Governance Statement is included within the Statement of Accounts
- A summary of achievements is published each non-election year with the Council Tax invoices

In terms of assurance and effective accountability, we positively engage with external challenge, including from peer authorities, as well as internal and external report and audit, and inspections from regulatory bodies, giving thorough consideration to any arising recommendations.

We make sure that we respond to improvement recommendations made by Internal and External Auditors and other external assessors. We make sure that those recommendations are implemented within due dates.

We follow the prevailing internal audit standards which apply to local government, including a commitment to develop audit plans which are designed to invite comment from management and the Audit Committee.

- LGA Peer Reviews are utilised as a way of providing assurance and seeking to improve practice
- Recommendations from Internal and External Auditors are considered by the appropriate Director(s) and management actions agreed and implemented.
- Directors, Members of the Cabinet and the Audit Committee are invited to contribute to the development of the Internal Audit Plan

# Review of effectiveness

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Torbay Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of managers within the Council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of the Devon Assurance Partnership's annual report and by comments made by the External Auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates. The Annual Governance Statement provides a summary of the reviews which have taken place over the course of the year.

The effectiveness of the governance framework has been evaluated over the course of the year against the seven principles within Torbay Council's Code of Corporate Governance. Details of the evaluation is included in the sections which follow. Whilst some governance issues have been identified (and are detailed below), the Council believes that its arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose, in accordance with the governance framework.

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

An updated set of values for the organisation were agreed in 2025 and announced at the Staff Awards in September 2025. This followed an exercise involving staff in team across the organisation who discussed the existing values with managers and colleagues from HR. Work has continued through 2025/2026 to describe the behaviours we expect to see from staff in demonstrating those values, as members of staff, as managers and as part of the Senior Leadership Team. This wider Behaviour Framework will be launched in Spring 2026. In the meantime, staff are asked to demonstrate how they meet the Council's values at their annual appraisal.

Our Directors' Commitments have been in place since June 2023 and were reviewed during 2025/2026. The Chief Executive holds her Directors to account for the delivery of those commitments both via Directors Overview Meetings and in her one-to-ones. Work is ongoing to ensure that they are embedded within each Directorate.

The Council's induction programme signposts new members of staff to the Code of Conduct for Employees and the Whistleblowing and Acceptable Behaviour policies. Reminders are included at regular intervals on the Staff Newsletter.

The Internal Engagement Strategy has continued to be implemented over the course of the year with weekly Staff Newsletters, fortnightly Managers Briefings and monthly Senior Managers and Managers Forums. Regular Ask Us Anything and All Colleagues Briefings are held. Phase 2 of the Internal Engagement Strategy was approved by the Our People Board in June 2025 with a focus on two way engagement and expanding employee recognition in order to recognise the good things people do every day.

Regular staff check-in surveys are also held to gain formal feedback from across the Council. A new action plan is due to be agreed during 2025 following the completion of the latest check-in survey.

All Members received training on the Code of Conduct within the first weeks following the Local Elections in May 2023 and the new Members Interests Register was completed and published. Members' training needs in this regard is kept under review each year. The agendas for the Leaderships and Quarterly Governance Leaders meetings includes Member behaviour and Good Governance where issues of concern are raised and discussed.

The Chief Financial Officer has direct access to all Members, the Chief Executive and senior officers of the Council. Regular discussions are held with the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance. Members are briefed on key financial matters with revenue and capital monitoring reports being considered on a quarterly basis.

In 2024/2025 there continued to be a reported increase in the number of complaints received by the Monitoring Officer – this trend has continued throughout 2025/2026. Predominantly the complaints received were from councillors against councillors. This reflected some political tensions and resulted in behaviours by some councillors being displayed in a range of meetings and public forums.

The wider impact through unfounded and public criticism of Officers continues to affect staff morale. A number of breaches of the Code of Conduct for Members were found by the Monitoring Officer, in accordance with the Protocol for the Assessment and Determination of Allegations of Breaches of the Code of Conduct for Members. There has been no requirement for complaints to be determined by the Standards Hearing Sub-Committee since February 2025.

The Independent Person's views and opinions have also been sought on relevant matters relating to councillors' conduct as part of the Complaint Process. More recently, a general view and opinion was sought and obtained from the Independent Person of a meeting of the Council and the response advised of the need for prompt intervention and robust chairing to avoid tensions arising and escalating and that, instead of acting as the representatives of Torbay, the tone adopted by most of the Councillors was confrontational and party political.

Following concerns raised, the Monitoring Officer continues to engage informally with councillors to improve relationships, between councillors and affected officers, and to ensure that the high standard reasonably expected of councillors is maintained and the public's confidence in the Council is upheld.

The Standards Committee is in the process of agreeing its annual report, supported by officers. This work is yet to conclude.

Our procurement and contract management policies are reviewed annually as a minimum or when there is a change in legislation or statutory guidance or the need for change is identified as a result of non-compliant spend. For example, Financial Regulations and Contract Procedures were reviewed and updated following the introduction of The Local Government (Exclusion of Non-commercial Considerations) (England) Order 2026.

The effectiveness of procurement arrangements is regularly monitored, including an ongoing audit of all requests to start a procurement submitted where the result is a service led procurement to verify the agreed procurement procedure has been followed and all applicable requirements of Financial Regulations and Contract Procedures complied with. Any issues identified through the audit are raised on a case-by-case basis with the service and relevant Director, action is taken to prevent re-occurrence and quarterly reports detailing all non-compliant spend are shared with Directors

The Council's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system provides a centralised platform for managing customer interactions. Devon Assurance Partnership's review in 2024/25 found that, whilst there was evidence of delivery against most aspects of the contract, there remained areas where delivery was not complete and subject to ongoing discussion with the Supplier. Further details are provided in the Exempt Appendix to this Statement.

All reports are signed off by the relevant Director and the three Statutory Officers (Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer) before being presented to the Cabinet or Council for consideration. Work is continuing on supporting officers across the Council to complete the updated Equality Impact Assessments effectively.

## **Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement**

The Community and Corporate Plan was agreed by the Council in February 2024. The Council's Business Plan, which acts as the delivery plans for the Community and Corporate Plan was agreed by the Cabinet in June 2024.

The Business Plan establishes a clear set of manageable priorities that enable real focus for the organisation. It sets out the actions to be undertaken against each priority within the Community and Corporate Plan. These actions contain milestones against which progress can be measured. A set of performance indicators are included within the Plan which supplement the longer-term performance indicators within the Community and Corporate Plan.

The Business Plan is refreshed on an annual basis with the latest version being approved by the Cabinet in March 2026.

Our Directors were asked to prepare a set of Service Plans which demonstrate how their services are delivering the Council's priorities. These are checked centrally to ensure that there is full coverage of the actions within the Council Business Plan. They are then used to set objectives for staff members through their annual appraisals. Progress is monitored via team meetings and one-to-ones which are held at all levels of the organisation.

The Cabinet's Forward Plan is published when changes or new entries are made throughout the year. This describes how the decision will be made, including how representations can be made to the decision maker. Meetings of the Council, Cabinet and Planning Committee are live streamed.

In relation to adult social care, the Section 75 Executive Group has met regularly to oversee delivery of the adult social care transformation programme. In March 2026, Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust gave formal notice on the Section 75 arrangement for the delivery of adult social care in Torbay. A 12 month notice period applies until 1 April 2027. Robust programme and project arrangements are in place to prepare for this change in service delivery, including work to strengthen adult social care so that it is sustainable, outcomes focused and provides the best possible support.

Torbay Council is a partner in the Torbay and Devon Safeguarding Adults Partnership as a requirement of the Care Act 2014. This Partnership provides strategic leadership for safeguarding adults across Torbay and Devon.

Torbay Safeguarding Children Partnership has been established under Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2018 (now superseded by Working Together 2023) arrangements since September 2020.

The Torbay Place Leadership Board is a partnership of leaders from the private, public and community sectors. It provides Bay-wide place leadership, helps align priorities across Torquay, Paignton and Brixham, and champions the Torbay Story (Torbay's shared narrative). It also helps partners raise shared issues, unblock risks and present a clear Torbay offer to external partners and investors. The Board meets in public, publishes papers in advance, and members declare interests. It provides periodic updates to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Board on progress, successes, risks and next steps.

Torquay Place Leadership Board is the town-wide board for Torquay and acts as the "neighbourhood board" for Pride in Place Phase 1 (Plan for Neighbourhoods, formerly the Long Term Plan for Towns). It has now moved into delivery, with an independent chair and open decision-making. Decisions are supported by a proportionate Delivery Assurance Framework so projects are checked for viability and compliance before funding is released.

Paignton Place Leadership Board is being set up for Pride in Place Phase 2 and will focus on the Blagdon and Blatchcombe area. Recruitment is underway for Board members and an independent chair. Once appointed, the Board will hold its first meetings and run a structured listening exercise with local residents and businesses to shape a 10-year vision and 4-year plan, and then produce the business plan for the first funding period. Key programme deadlines include confirming membership and any boundary changes with MHCLG by 17 July 2026 and submitting the Pride in Place Plan by 28 November 2026.

The annual review report of the Place Leadership Boards is scheduled was considered by Overview and Scrutiny Board on 6 May 2026.

The Council's Regeneration Partnership with Wilmot Dixon and Milligan is managed through monthly Partnership Board and Project Review Meetings, both of which report to the Capital and Growth Board to provide oversight. The Cabinet Capital Projects Working Party provides cross party oversight of capital projects, which includes updates on projects being undertaken by the Regeneration Partners.

Cost and performance management meetings continue with Devon County Council regarding the county wide Coroners' Service now hosted by the authority. Although a Service Level Agreement (SLA) has yet to be agreed, progress has been positive on taking steps towards an agreed set of outcomes and measurements, while the service provided continues to see improvements. An accompanying improvement plan is intended to sit alongside the SLA to ensure that both cost and performance meet the expectations of all local authorities within the service area.

Across the Council, we have and continue to engage widely and directly with residents. This has been through in-person events, which 40 have been held in various locations across Torbay this year. These engagement events have reached around 2,200 people. The Engagement and Communications team delivered and had strong participation in a range of consultations that have been used to shape recommendations and decision. These consultations this year received around 10,000 responses, a clear increase from the 6,300 last year. The second Residents Satisfaction Survey was also run, securing over 1,500 responses, which exceeded the 2023 return. These results demonstrate our commitment to inclusive engagement and to gathering and sharing meaningful feedback with communities and stakeholders.

The Council continues to deliver against its Public Sector Equality Duty, with a clear commitment to tackling discrimination and harassment, and strengthening community cohesion. Progress has been maintained through focused delivery of the Inclusion Strategy and its associated Equality and Diversity Action Plan alongside continued internal awareness raising of the importance of inclusion.

The Inclusion Partnership explored emerging inclusion issues and provided critical friend challenge to the Council across six meetings. Specifically, the group provided inclusion-focused input into the Local Plan consultation and Council's annual budget setting consultation. The Partnership was strengthened through introducing quarterly dedicated hate crime meetings, recognising the importance of this topic and the need to hear from seldom heard voices.

## **Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits**

The Community and Corporate Plan was agreed by the Council in February 2024. The Council's Business Plan, which acts as the delivery plans for the Community and Corporate Plan was agreed by the Cabinet in June 2024.

The Business Plan establishes a clear set of manageable priorities that enable real focus for the organisation. It sets out the actions to be undertaken against each priority within the Community and Corporate Plan. These actions contain milestones against which progress can be measured. A set of performance indicators are included within the Plan which supplement the longer-term performance indicators within the Community and Corporate Plan.

The Business Plan is refreshed on an annual basis with the latest version being approved by the Cabinet in March 2026.

Our report template has been reviewed and updated during the year to ensure an appropriate focus on social value, the impacts on the environment as well as socio-economic and public health impacts.

## Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes

Regular one-to-one meetings are held between the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council. The Chief Executive also meets regularly with the Leaders of the other Groups on the Council. Her annual appraisal is undertaken by the Group Leaders. The Chief Executive has regular meetings with the LGA Principal Advisor for the South West, with Peer Challenge opportunities being utilised both within the organisation and as peer members.

Regular informal meetings with councillors have been held during the year. The Leaders' Meeting has met on a regular basis to discuss emerging council business and key topics, Member behaviour and standards, and Constitution amendments. Other meetings include Overview and Scrutiny Briefing Meetings and the Cabinet and Shadow Cabinet. The role of this latter meeting was reviewed during the year by Group Leaders and it was determined that it would no longer meet, whilst remaining in the Constitution should future groups wish to use them. Shadow Cabinet Members are invited to the Leaders Meeting for specific issues when required..

Directorate performance against our Customer Service Standards is monitored against targets on a weekly basis. Monthly escalation meetings are held with the Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services to ensure satisfactory performance. This includes outstanding enquiries made by Councillors and Members of Parliament. The Council operates a single stage complaints process which means there are improved timescales for escalation to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. From 1 April 2026, responsibility for handling complaints relating to the adult social care transferred to the Council with a new process established. This process will be kept under review during the course of the year to ensure that it is as efficient and effective as possible.

Customer care and tone of voice training has been delivered for staff across the organisation to ensure that staff are aware of the expectations on them in delivering services.

There are a range of meetings in place to ensure sufficient progress is being made against our improvement plans for adult social care, children's social care and services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). These include:

- For adult social care:
  - Section 75 Executive Group;
  - Adult Social Care Improvement Board; and
  - Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Board.
- For children's social care:
  - Children's Continuous Improvement Board
  - Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board

- For services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)
  - SEND Local Area Improvement Partnership Board
  - Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Board

In line with the Performance Management Policy, Service Plans were prepared across the organisation for 2025/2026 with a new set in place for 2026/2027. Annual targets were set for all performance indicators taking account of historical outturn performance and our performance against our statistical neighbours.

The Council's Medium Term Resource Plan has been reviewed by Directors and members of the Cabinet at regular intervals throughout the year, with formal budget monitoring taking place quarterly by Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Council. The operation of the Treasury Management Strategy and the Council's counter fraud arrangements have been considered regularly by the Audit Committee.

## Principle E: Developing the organisation's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

The Council continues to deliver its Our People Strategy which focusses on empowering, supporting, developing, and engaging our workforce, both now and in the future, to achieve our ambitions for Torbay. Progress against the associated action plan is managed by the Our People Project Board with oversight from the Council Redesign Programme Board.

Leadership and management training continues to be provided that covers a wide range of core management skills development such as managing performance, leading and developing teams, leading change and managing equality, diversity and inclusion. Having rolled out our Managers Framework, this is currently being reviewed within the Our People Project to ensure that it is fit for purpose and proportionate.

A programme of Workforce Planning has been in place over 2025/2026 with the focus now shifting to critical role analysis as the Council readies itself for potential local government reorganisation.

Work continues to embed the use of benchmarking into our service plans and wider decision making. A benchmarking section is included with the service plan templates. Yearly benchmarking reports are prepared and work is underway to automate this using LG Inform and PowerBI.

Following the delivery of the Member Induction Programme in 2023/2024, a Member Development Programme was developed taking account of feedback from Members, the Monitoring Officer, Chief Executive, Head of Governance Support and Democratic Services Team Leader to continue to enhance Members' skills throughout their term of office.

The Programme continued to be delivered throughout 2025/2026 using internal and external development opportunities and is supplemented by all Member Briefings on key issues and one-to-one support as required from the Democratic Services Team Leader.

Members were encouraged to attend free webinars and events run by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, the Local Government Association (LGA) and Planning and Advisory Service (PAS). Scrutiny Members take part in regional networks to share good practice. Members have worked with Peer Members from the LGA to enhance their knowledge and develop their skills.

The Council worked with the Devon Assurance Partnership who provided expert training for Members of the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority (CCA), Devon County Council and Torbay Council with joint training to enhance their knowledge and share experiences in respect of Audit and Scrutiny functions. Experience of the Programme is being used to develop an outline Member Development Induction Programme for 2027 when the next Local Government Elections are scheduled.

Work is now starting to prepare for the induction programme for May 2027, including consideration of how the Council can support to encourage new talent for membership of the Council as well as providing a more relational and person-centred approach.

## **Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management**

The Council continues to embed its Risk Management Policy with risk appetite and tolerance briefings to members and senior officers during 2025/2026. The Audit Committee continue to receive regular reports in relation to the Council's Strategic and Corporate Risk Registers which include the actions being taken to mitigate the Council's risks, in particular those risks which are scoring 16 or above. The increased data around risk tolerances is helping to inform reports around risk which are considered by the Directors Overview Meeting.

Directors and Heads of Service have access to live dashboards through Power BI which show the current position with the Council's Strategic, Corporate and Service Risks, including those which are overdue for review. Heads of Service review their Service Risk Registers as part of their preparation of Service Plans.

Regular articles have been included in Staff News highlighting the whistleblowing arrangements that are in place within the Council. The Monitoring Officer, Chief Finance Officer, Head of Human Resources and the Head of Devon Assurance Partnership (or their representative) meet on a regular basis to consider and recommend action in connection with current governance issues and other matters of concern regarding finance, ethics and probity. The Chief Executive (as Head of Paid Service) is kept informed of matters.

Health and Safety performance and emerging issues are reported to the Council's Senior Leadership Team on a six-monthly basis. The Chief Executive holds health and safety update meetings on a quarterly basis to discuss trends, performance and emerging issues. Additionally, each month Directors discuss health and safety performance within their service areas, challenging outstanding actions and records on the Assure system.

The Corporate Performance Report provides assurance that progress against both the Community and Corporate Plan and the Council Business Plan is on track. The Report is considered by the

Senior Leadership Team, members of the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Board where progress is celebrated and underperformance is challenged.

Work has been underway during 2025/2026 to transfer the performance indicators from the Corporate Performance Report into Power BI. This will enable data to be collected more easily (and in some cases automatically). The first phase of this work will be complete for Quarter 1 of the 2026/2027 financial year, with further work then undertaken to include the indicators from the recently published Local Outcomes Framework.

The Performance Management Policy was agreed in December 2024 and work continues to embed the associated framework across the organisation as the Council focusses on improving performance. In line with the Policy, Service Plans were prepared across the organisation for 2025/2026 with a new set in place for 2026/2027.

An informal governance framework is in place to support our formal governance arrangements, with work planned over the coming year to focus on data driven decision making. This will include the escalation of emerging issues and an updated report format, alongside a wider piece of governance training as part of the Managers Framework.

The Statement of Accounts 2025/2026 are being prepared and will be audited by Grant Thornton. The Council's accounts and the Auditor's annual report are publicly available on our website. Both the internal and external auditors' reports are considered by the Audit Committee together with the associated management responses.

Our Medium Term Resource Plan was formally revised as part of setting the Council's budget in February 2026. The Council's budget was kept under review throughout the year by Directors and Members of the Cabinet with quarterly budget monitoring reports being considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Board.

The Audit Committee considered the Treasury Management mid-year review for 2025/2026 in October 2025, ahead of reviewing the draft Treasury Management Strategy for 2026/2027 in February 2026. The Audit Committee's views were considered by Council ahead of its approval in later in February.

The Capital and Growth Board meets monthly to provide a continual review of the Council's Capital Programme and the risks to delivery and budget. The project management governance which was introduced in 2023/2024 continues to promote greater accountability and transparency for all key projects. The Board also has oversight of the use of Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy monies.

Over the course of the year, bi-monthly meetings of the Investment Management Board were held to provide management oversight of the performance of our investment property portfolio. Revenue income and reserve levels remain robust. The Council's holding of assets is kept under regular view with an initial 'basket' of assets for disposal approved by members within the year.

Devon Assurance Partnership's report on the Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/2025 highlighted that there was a lack of governance around group company loans. During 2025/2026 work has continued to ensure that all documentation in respect of loans is collated. Within their

review of Treasury Management for 2025/26, DAP highlighted that there was no formally documented governance framework or single storage location to support the loan lifecycle of Group Company loans. In response the Council has strengthened its governance and management of historic loans and has simplified the process and reporting of any newly approved Group Company loans.

Regular updates on the Council's counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are presented to Audit Committee. This included consideration of proposed updates to the Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy, as well as the introduction and implementation of an accompanying Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy. The views of the Audit Committee were considered ahead of the Director of Finance approving both the revised Policy and the new Strategy.

Work continues to raise awareness of fraud prevention across the Council with a range of training sessions and courses in place. The Council's anti-fraud arrangements are assessed by the external auditors alongside the Statement of Accounts with a recognition that fraud risk assessments are not completed across the organisation. Services are asked to complete regular fraud risk assessments as part of preparing their Service Plans and whilst a Fraud Risk Register is in place, further work is required to ensure that this is comprehensive.

Devon Assurance Partnership operates in line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. The Internal Audit Plan is agreed annually by the Director of Finance, Directors' Overview Meeting and the Council's Audit Committee. The Council also receives assurance from the NHS Internal Audit Consortium over the controls in operation at Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust. Achievement against the Audit Plan was reported to the Audit Committee on 18 February 2026.

The Audit Committee prepared its second Annual Report which summarised the work of the Committee during 2025/2026 including how it had fulfilled its duty. This report is due to be presented to the Council at its Adjourned Annual Meeting in May 2026.

Mandatory training is undertaken by Councillors every four years and officers annually in relation to information governance and data protection. Regular reminders are issued via the Staff Newsletter on the importance of data protection, the need to report data breaches promptly and the lessons learnt from breaches. The Information Governance Steering Group meets on a quarterly basis to review policy, best practice, organisational change and performance. They also consider and review the risks in relation to cyber security and the Council's wider compliance to Data Protection Legislation.

An AI subgroup has been established under the Information Governance Steering Group and has produced an AI usage policy and guidance for staff. Governance arrangements around the approval of AI tools have been considered and an assessment process put in place to allow risks and mitigations of new AI tools to be identified.

Information Governance has continued to support a range of projects across the Council including the procurement of new services and systems and the development of new processes to ensure compliance and security. Advice and guidance has been provided on the project around Free School Meal eligibility to ensure that data matching can take place in a compliant way, which has

allowed the identification of more children who are eligible for free school meals. Information Governance has been heavily involved in the implementation of the new case management system within Adult Social Care, ensuring that appropriate agreements are in place. This work has established the Council as a Joint Data Controller for adult social care data processed by Torbay and South Devon Foundation Trust. In partnership with colleagues, Information Governance has been identified as an enabler for on this project ensuring that IG issues are worked through to allow the project to move forward at pace.

Data protection impact assessments continue to be reviewed in relation to new processing activities or project to identify data protection or cyber security risks

## **Principle G: Implementing good practice in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability**

The Forward Plan has been published during 2025/2026 when new entries are received or there are changes to entries. The Forward Plan is reviewed by Directors on a regular basis to ensure that it is up to date.

Agendas and reports for meetings of the Council, Cabinet and committees are published five clear working days ahead of the meeting, with minutes and Records of Decisions published after each meeting (as appropriate).

We have introduced a yearly website survey, built service dashboards for reviewing website analytics and implemented Microsoft Clarity to monitor user behaviour. We are now using this information to inform changes to the site and improve findability and task completion.

Our new website content policy sets clear standards for how we handle information on the site. This includes what we publish, how it is written and how it is reviewed and maintained.

We have published guidance for staff who produce documents, to help make all materials accessible by default, and have adapted this for suppliers creating materials on our behalf. We have also secured budget for an external accessibility audit of the main council site, which will identify any further areas for improvement and allow us to develop a roadmap for prioritising these changes.

Over the course of the year, we have undertaken a review of the Local Government Transparency Code to ensure that all aspects are up-to-date and published on our website. This has included updating the information about staff in the top three tiers of the organisation. Outstanding issues will be addressed over the coming year.

The Council considered the Annual Pay Policy on 26 February 2026.

The Statement of Account for 2025/2026 will include a Narrative Report which sets out our achievements against our Community and Corporate Plan and our Council Business Plan. Further, we provided our One Torbay booklet with Council Tax bills in March 2026 which described our achievements over the previous year as well as our plans for the coming year.

The Council's Constitution includes the Code of Corporate Governance with the statutory governance officers meeting on a regular basis to review governance arrangements. The Code

has been updated over the course of the year to reflect the current SOLACE/CIPFA guidance and is due to be considered by the Council at its Adjourned Annual Meeting in May 2026. The Council's Assurance Framework has been documented will be updated to reflect the new Code of Governance once approved.

Our Corporate Performance Reports are published on the Council's website as well as with the agendas for Overview and Scrutiny Board. Work has been underway over the course of the year to transfer the performance indicators within the Corporate Performance Report to Power BI which will enable officers and members to more easily compare Torbay Council's performance with that of other similar authorities.

The Council took part in a Corporate Peer Challenge in April 2024. This forms part of the improvement and assurance framework for local government and are recognised as assisting councils to meet their Best Value duty by having such a review at least every five years. The Council published the report from the Corporate Peer Challenge with the headline being that "the council is in a very different and much better place compared to a few years ago and has a solid foundation". A progress review was undertaken in April 2025 with the action plan from the original challenge having been completed. Throughout the course of the year work has taken place to ensure that delivery continues and an update report was presented to the Audit Committee in October 2025. The improvement actions identified now form "business as usual".

Children's Service publish an annual self-assessment which is used as a basis for our Annual Conversation with Ofsted.

We continue to work with the Department for Education and the Care Quality Commission to improve the services for our children and young people who experience SEND.

The Annual Report of the Overview and Scrutiny Board was considered by the Council on 15 May 2025 and is also published on the Council's website on the Overview and Scrutiny section.

Internal and external audit reports are considered by Directors and Divisional Directors with management action detailed against each recommendation.

## Conclusion

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The Council recognises that strong governance requires continuous improvement. Over the coming year, we will focus on delivering the actions set out in this Statement, including strengthening our use of data to inform decision-making, ensuring comprehensive fraud risk assessment across all services, and enhancing transparency through full compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code.

We will also update and embed our Assurance Framework in line with the revised Code of Corporate Governance, while maintaining close oversight of key service transformations, including adult social care. Developing a more data-driven, insight-led organisation will be a particular priority, alongside continued investment in our people and leadership capability.

By delivering these improvements, we will further strengthen our governance arrangements and ensure that the Council remains resilient, transparent and accountable, continuing to provide effective services and positive outcomes for the communities of Torbay.

## Appendix 1: Action Plan

Agreed Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Keep the operation of the Adult Social Care complaints system under review to ensure it is efficient and effective.	Divisional Director – Corporate Services (Interim)	December 2026
Include the Local Outcomes Framework within the Corporate Performance Indicator Dashboard	Divisional Director – Corporate Services (Interim)	December 2026
Ensure full compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code, including addressing all identified gaps	Divisional Director – Corporate Services (Interim)	December 2026
Conclude contract delivery management actions on the Customer Relationship Management to ensure value for money is delivered against product functionality	Director of Corporate Services	December 2026
Subject to the outcome of Local Government Reorganisation is Devon, deliver a structured programme to improve the Council's use of data in decision-making, including full rollout of Power BI dashboards, data quality improvements and officer training	Divisional Director – Corporate Services (Interim)	March 2027
Embed the Performance Management Framework and Policy across all services, ensuring consistent use of performance data and reporting	Divisional Director – Corporate Services (Interim)	March 2027

Ensure comprehensive coverage and consistency of Fraud Risk Assessments across all services, including completion of a robust and comprehensive Fraud Risk Register	Director of Finance	March 2027
Update the Council's Assurance Framework in line with the updated Code of Corporate Governance and review the Council's Assurance Map	Divisional Director – Corporate Services (Interim)	March 2027
Support and embed the Council's Behaviour Framework and organisational values across all Directorates, including monitoring impact on culture and staff experience	Chief Executive/Divisional Director – Corporate Services (Interim)	March 2027
Oversee and support the transition of Adult Social Care services from the Section 75 arrangement, ensuring strong governance, risk management and programme oversight	Director of Adult and Community Services	March 2027

This document can be made available in other languages and formats.  
For more information please contact [engagement@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:engagement@torbay.gov.uk)

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