



# How did we do in 2015/16?

Were we well-governed?

Did we perform well?

**SCDC's annual assessment of its  
governance and performance  
during the year  
to 31 March 2016**

# South Cambridgeshire District Council

## (1) INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

1.1 This document is an assessment of our “governance”, but what do we mean by that word? There is no legal definition of “governance”, but we believe it is best summarised as having:

- the right **governance structures** (including constitution, committees, delegated powers, internal management structures and audit arrangements)
- the right **plan of action** (including **vision, aims, approaches and ambitions**); and
- the right **way of operating** (including openly, honestly and efficiently)

So that we deliver:

- the **right services**, to the **right people**, at the **right price** and at the **right time**.

1.2 Further guidance is given by CIPFA (the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy) and SOLACE (the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives) which, in 2007 (updated in 2012), jointly published a “Framework for Delivering Good Governance in Local Government”.

1.3 This guidance sets out six core principles of good governance, which we think are compatible with the summary above. CIPFA/SOLACE lists these core principles as:

1. **Focusing on the purpose of the Council and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area**
2. **Members and Officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles**
3. **Promoting values for the Council and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour**
4. **Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk**
5. **Developing the capacity and capability of Members and Officers to be effective**
6. **Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.**

1.4 The law requires each council to produce an annual statement to provide assurance that it is a well-governed organisation with the right policies and controls in place to ensure excellent public services are delivered and public money is spent wisely. **This is called our ‘Annual Governance Statement’ and includes a ‘review of effectiveness’, where we do a self-assessment of how well all our processes are working to make sure we do things well and in the right way. This report seeks to provide this assurance in respect of South Cambridgeshire District Council.**

1.5 We need to demonstrate that we meet the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 which require the publication of a statement on internal control which shows that we manage risk to a reasonable level. We must also fulfil our duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to continually improve the way we function, having regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

1.6 Governance matters because **good governance produces good results**. Governance can sometimes be difficult to measure; however, the delivery of positive outcomes arising from the implementation of our Corporate Plan (in line with core principle (1) above) is not only the ultimate test of good governance but also an indicator that our underlying culture, values, systems and processes are also sound. This report therefore focuses on how far we achieved the objectives we set ourselves, in terms of positive outcomes for our communities, and how we performed against key performance measures of the effective running of the business.

1.7 Some people will, rightly, question whether it is right that we report on ourselves: surely that gives rise to a conflict of interest? In response, we would say that:

- we are required to do so;
- we have tried to be as objective as possible in summarising our performance against our corporate objectives, linking these wherever possible to demonstrable outcomes and specific performance measures;
- feedback from residents has in many cases contributed to our assessment of how far we have delivered;
- all political groups – those in control of the council and those in opposition or independent – have been given the opportunity to input into this report, challenging its content where appropriate; and
- this report is only part of the overall process, as we are also subject to internal and external audit.

This report is written under the authority of the council's Corporate Governance Committee, who approved it formally on 30 September 2016. It has been signed by the Leader (an elected Councillor) and Chief Executive (an Officer) and published with the final accounts on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2016. It was submitted to our external auditors along with our annual accounts in July 2016 and the auditors considered whether the information submitted met their expectations as part of their annual opinion, also published in September 2016.

## **(2) GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES**

2.1 In the Introduction above, the first thing we said was that we should have the right governance structures in place. This section reviews those structures. We govern ourselves through **Council**, an **Executive Management Team (EMT)**, **Cabinet** and **Committees**, and we have many **policies** in place that govern our activities and which we follow. These are listed in turn below:

## **Council**

2.2 The Council met ten times during 2015/16 – it agreed the Council’s budget and policy framework, primarily consisting of our Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), annual capital and revenue estimates and Council Tax and, at extraordinary meetings, considered the Local Development Plan, the implications of the South Cambridgeshire boundary review and devolution proposals. Of the 57 Councillors, the numbers attending were respectively 47, 48, 45, 41, 41, 51, 44, 48, 51 and 44. All meetings of Council were held in open forum and considered reports and recommendations from Cabinet and other committees. Details of agendas and minutes can be found at [SCDC Council Agendas and Minutes](#).

## **Cabinet**

2.3 The Cabinet, or Executive, is the Council’s principal decision-making body charged with implementing the budget and policy framework agreed by Council, consisting of elected Councillors, appointed by the Leader of the Council, each with an area of responsibility called a ‘portfolio’. Across the country, councils are allowed to choose between a number of models for their committee structures. We have been using the Cabinet model since 2001, and although the Cabinet can be made up of any political proportion, at the moment all our Cabinet Members come from the majority political party. Cabinet met seven times during 2015/16 – details of agendas and minutes can be found at [SCDC Cabinet agendas and minutes](#)

## **Executive Management Team and structure**

2.4 The management team structure (i.e. employees, who we call ‘Officers’, as opposed to elected Councillors) is available to view here [SCDC About the council](#)

EMT met weekly throughout 2015/16, alternating formal meetings to consider reports on key policy issues and updates on finance, performance, risk and key programme delivery, and informal sessions and Away Days providing space to explore emerging priority issues. During 2015/16 EMT comprised:

- the **Chief Executive** (Jean Hunter), the Head of the Paid Service, is ultimately responsible for the welfare of the Council’s employees. Jean will be leaving the Council in October 2016 after six years’ service. Alex Colyer has been appointed as Jean’s replacement on a temporary basis (*subject to confirmation by Council on 22 September 2016*), with a recruitment process for a permanent replacement to follow.
- the **Chief Financial Officer** (Alex Colyer) is responsible for looking after the financial affairs of the Council and is the designated Chief Finance Officer responsible for the proper administration of the Council’s financial affairs under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Council’s financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA “Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local

Government” (2010). Caroline Ryba (Head of Finance, Policy and Performance), is the Council’s Deputy Chief Finance Officer.

- the **Monitoring Officer** The Monitoring Officer is responsible for ensuring that decisions by the Council are legal, and are made in an open and transparent way. The Monitoring Officer also reviews any reports or complaints about councillor conduct and behaviour. Seven Code of Conduct Complaints were received and dealt with under the Localism Act 2011 during 2015/16 – only one required further action. (this figure doesn’t include complaints received that either didn’t fall under the Code of Conduct or were passed to Parish Councils for them to investigate). Following the launch of a shared Legal Practice in October 2015, Shirley Tracey was appointed Monitoring Officer, replacing Fiona McMillan, and Graham Watts Deputy Monitoring Officer.
- The Directors of Affordable Homes (Stephen Hills), Health and Environmental Services (Mike Hill) and Planning and New Communities (Jo Mills), were responsible for direct service delivery during 2015/16. Stephen Kelly was appointed as Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development with Cambridge City Council; Stephen took up post in June 2016.
- The Head of Human Resources (Susan Gardner Craig) is responsible for organisational development and the council’s policies and procedures relating to its staff

The Council’s three statutory officers (Head of Paid Service, Chief Financial Officer and Monitoring Officer) have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources to perform effectively in their roles and their roles are properly understood within the authority. Alex Colyer will fulfil the Head of Paid Service and Chief Financial Officer roles following his appointment as Interim Chief Executive from October 2016.

### **Corporate Governance Committee**

2.5 This Committee met three times during the year. Its main purposes were:

- reviewing and advising on the effectiveness of governance arrangements including risk management and internal controls
- approving the Statement of Accounts, agreeing the Annual Governance Statement (this document) and confirming the annual Audit Risk Index and Strategic Audit Plan
- commissioning studies as appropriate (including on ‘Value for Money’),
- recommending action to the Council in respect of any issues of major concern arising from audit reports and/or management letters
- monitoring overall efficiency and effectiveness of internal and external audit

- monitoring the use of directed surveillance under the Regulations of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA)
- receiving information from the Chief Finance Officer or Monitoring Officer of any suspected fraud, maladministration or illegality

In order to better reflect its work, this Committee was renamed the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee at the Annual Meeting of Council in May 2016.

### ***Civic Affairs Committee***

2.6 This Committee met five times during the year. Its main purposes were:

- reviewing the Council's Constitution, including proposals for substantive changes for consideration by the Council (excluding those matters which are specifically included within the remit of other bodies on the Council)
- considering changes to electoral arrangements, (including District, ward and parish ward boundaries), and making recommendations to Council
- setting ethical standards (as set out in Article 9.03 of the Council's constitution) and monitoring the Council's Code of Conduct and those of all parish councils in the district

### ***Employment Committee***

2.7 The Employment Committee deals with the appointment of senior management, re-gradings and disciplinary and grievance issues. It met once during the year.

### ***Scrutiny and Overview Committee***

2.8 The Scrutiny and Overview Committee consists of 9 non-Executive members (ie. not members of the Cabinet) whose role is to hold Cabinet decision takers to account, focusing on issues considered as 'internal'.

It monitors the performance of the Leader and Cabinet, scrutinises services and policies throughout the district, whether or not South Cambridgeshire District Council provides them, and makes recommendations for improvement.

During the year, the Committee met five times and scrutinised the:

- Year End Position Statement on Finance and Performance before it was considered by Cabinet;
- Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Corporate Plan, before they were considered by Cabinet and Council;
- Quarterly Position Statement on Finance, Performance and Risk before it was considered by Cabinet;

- Council’s Corporate Plan 2016-2021 before it was considered by Cabinet;
- outcomes of the Corporate Plan and Key Performance Indicators for 2016-17 and recommended their approval to the Leader of the Council;
- performance of the Council’s Planning department
- performance of the Council’s Customer Contact Centre and considered the Contact Centre’s Annual Performance Review;

It:

- received updates on Shared Services and scrutinised the business cases for the Legal, ICT and Building Control Shared Services before their consideration by Cabinet;
- considered an evaluation of the changes to the Waste and Recycling Service;
- considered an update on the Council’s Commercialisation Programme approach to service delivery;
- received the recommendations of a Working Group, set up in July 2014, to review the 2007 Scrutiny Committee recommendations regarding the Orchard Park development, subsequently presented these findings to Cabinet; all recommendations were adopted;

An annual [report](#) the Council’s scrutiny and overview function, consisting of the work of the Partnerships Review Committee and the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, was presented to the Council’s Annual General Meeting on 19 May 2016.

### **2.9 Partnerships Review Committee**

2.9 The Partnerships Review Committee’s remit is externally focused with members scrutinising, challenging and holding decision takers to account on issues relating to the work of those organisations in the council’s area, including formal partnerships.

Its membership consists of 9 non-executive members and it met three times during the year, when it:

- received updates from the Cambridgeshire Constabulary’s Chief Superintendent and Chief Inspector, as well as from representatives from the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Commissioner’s Office;
- received updates from the Managing Director of Stagecoach buses and representatives from Cambridgeshire County Council’s Passenger Transport team, and discussed the provision of bus services and school and community transport in the district;
- considered Cambridgeshire County Council’s Budget Proposals;;
- received updates from Members of the Council appointed to outside bodies.

The Council also has other committees (planning, licensing etc), but as these are not concerned directly with governance arrangements they are not listed here.

### **Policies**

2.10 The table below lists the Council's main documents, policies and procedures which underpin our assurance framework; we refer to and follow these, to make sure we do things consistently and in the right way. All these policies have been approved by your elected Councillors where required and all are available for inspection at the Council's reception as well as via our website

The Council has put procedures in place to ensure informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and management of risk. The Council has a Risk Management Strategy which is reviewed annually by Council alongside a strategic risk register which is reviewed quarterly by senior officers and members. It also has a Code of Conduct for staff incorporated in the Constitution, Capability and Disciplinary Procedures and a Whistleblowing policy.

Compliance with the Council's Anti- Theft, Fraud and Corruption Policy is monitored by the internal auditors in liaison with the council's Fraud Team. The National Fraud Initiative has led to the delivery of investigating fraud becoming part of the Single Fraud Investigations Service within the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). Internal Audit recommended to Corporate Governance Committee in March 2014 that an annual report is produced on fraud and irregularities and the steps taken to mitigate and reduce. This includes review of the appropriate policies to ensure that they remain relevant and raise the awareness and appreciation amongst officers and members.

The Council is committed to the ongoing development of its staff and members. The Council achieved gold accreditation from Investors in People (IIP), reflecting outstanding practice in a number of key areas. The Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder has agreed a People and Organisation Development Strategy for 2016-2020 which will enable the Council to implement recommendations arising from the last IIP towards seeking Platinum status in 2018; the new strategy includes priorities for Member development, removing the need for a separate Member Development Strategy.

<i>Title</i>	<i>Contact Officer</i>	<i>Last updated</i>
<a href="#">Constitution (including Procurement Strategy, Finance and Contract Regulations and Codes of Conduct)</a>	Graham Watts	May 2016
<a href="#">People and Organisational Development Strategy</a>	Susan Gardner Craig	July 2016

<a href="#">Risk Management Strategy</a>	Suzy Brandes	June 2016
<a href="#">Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy</a>	Mike Hill	September 2013
<a href="#">Whistleblowing Policy</a>	Tom Lewis	September 2013
<a href="#">Corporate Plan</a>	Richard May	February 2016
<a href="#">Business Plans</a>	Richard May	April 2016
<a href="#">Statement of Accounts</a>	Sally Smart	September 2015

### 3. VISION, AIMS, AND OBJECTIVES

3.1 In the introduction to this document, the second thing we said we needed was the right plan of action.

During 2015-2016, the Council's Vision was as follows:

"South Cambridgeshire will continue to be the best place to live, work and study in the country. Our district will demonstrate impressive and sustainable economic growth. Our residents will have a superb quality of life in an exceptionally beautiful, rural and green environment.

3.2 Each year we agree a rolling five-year **Corporate Plan**, showing how we will work towards this Vision. We chose to express this in terms of three strategic aims around the themes of Engagement, Partnerships and Wellbeing, delivered through 12 objectives, believing that a clear, simple, transparent set of statements provides the best way of establishing and then achieving them, and of being able to monitor performance – all of which is good governance.

3.3 The 2015-2020 Corporate Plan had three strategic **aims**:

- A. Engage with residents, parishes and businesses to ensure we deliver first class services and value for money
- B. Work with partners to create opportunities for employment, enterprise, education and world-leading innovation
- C. Ensure that South Cambridgeshire continues to offer an outstanding quality of life for our residents

3.4 For each of these three aims, we set out:

- Four objectives, describing how we will go about achieving those aims
- Specific **actions** take forward during the year towards the delivery of these objectives under each Objective), performance against which is summarised in Appendix 1.

3.5 Councillors agreed a revised Corporate Plan in February 2016, retaining the Council's Vision but expressing current and future priorities in terms of four cross-cutting objectives around Living Well, Homes for our Future, Connected Communities and an Innovative and Dynamic Organisation. The 2016-2021 Corporate Plan is available to view [here](#).

## 4. REPORTING

4.1 In the Introduction, we said that we needed the right way of operating so that, as outputs, we deliver the right services, to the right people, at the right price, and the right time. We also identified strong performance against key corporate aims and indicators as a mark of good governance in itself, as well as a sign that the underlying governance is also working properly. This section reviews how we operated and delivered.

### Regular reporting

4.2 We publish an annual [Statement of Accounts](#) made up of:

- **Statutory accounts:** The format of these is set by accounting regulations, and we recognise that these are hard for many people to understand. To help make them comprehensible, we add an 'explanatory foreword'.
- **Plain English Accounts** - these are intended to be a straightforward and comprehensible version of the statutory accounts.

With respect to the Council's Vision and Objectives mentioned above, we publish:

- **Corporate Plan and in-year three, six, nine-month and year-end progress reports.**

These documents can be found at our [Performance Page](#).

## 5. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

5.1 The Council must review the effectiveness of its governance arrangements annually by considering the work of Members and Officers on the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the head of internal audit's annual report and comments by external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

### Auditing and monitoring

5.2 The Council is subject to the following principal auditing and monitoring processes, which are intended to be objective and (where necessary) critical:

- **Internal audit:** 5.2.1 Since 2013 we have been part of a shared service internal audit arrangement with Cambridge City Council and Peterborough City Council. Internal audit carried out 250 days work during 2015-2016 on a number of specific areas identified in a plan agreed at the start of the year. For each area, we asked them to check our policies and procedures; report on a graded system as to how they think each area is doing; and to make recommendations for changes to our procedures. We then accepted or rejected each of their recommendations. The 2015/16 Internal Audit annual report, sets out details of all the areas they investigated; how many hours they spent doing so; what grading they gave; how many major/minor recommendations they made; and how many of these we accepted, can be found [here](#).

The Head of Internal Audit provided a reasonable assurance that the systems in place at South Cambridgeshire District Council were appropriate and met with expectations, making a number of observations regarding potentially significant governance issues requiring attention during 2016/17. These are set out below, with management responses, lead officer and timescales also identified:

Observation	Management Response	Lead Officer(s)	Timescale
1. 3C shared services was set up in October 2016. The Council should review the effectiveness of its governance arrangements and outcomes achieved in relation to these in order to establish whether or not value for money is being achieved and the original expectations met.	Scrutiny and Overview Committee will consider 3C Shared Services performance at its meeting in November 2016	Alex Colyer Brian O'Sullivan	March 2017
2. Ensure the replacement Financial Management System is delivered to timescale and meets expectations of all Councils. This will include appropriate testing prior to the system going live and being rolled out across partners.	Project plan in place to deliver to timescale, scope, cost and quality	Caroline Ryba	As set in project plan
3. Following the departure of a number of senior officers, review the effectiveness of continuity planning/handover arrangements within directorates.	This issue will be addressed through the Organisational Development Strategy agreed by the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder in July 2016. In addition, the Council manages a strategic risk around recruitment and retention	Susan Gardner Craig	As set out in Organisational Development Strategy and Strategic Risk register
4. Assess the possible impacts of changes imposed by government upon the viability of the business model for Ermine Street Housing	Ermine Street Housing has business plans and risk registers in place to be able regularly to assess and react to potential impacts. A company board including newly appointed independents is being recruited to and will oversee the risk register once fully formed.	Alex Colyer Stephen Hills	December 2016
5. In light of a number of services being shared between authorities, there is an opportunity to rationalise policies and procedures. Initial areas to focus on relate to HR and Risk Management.	We have identified a number of possible opportunities to align policies and procedures more closely, whilst work to align risk management processes with the City is underway through the adoption of the '4 Risk' module.	Phil Bird Brian O'Sullivan Caroline Ryba	March 2017
6. Ensure the effectiveness of internal controls for group entities, in light of the Group relationship with South Cambs Ltd (trading as Ermine Street Housing) and SCDC's significant	The following controls are in place and planned: - Internal audit periodic reviews of company to provide assurance on reliability of processes and procedures	Alex Colyer Stephen Hills	Ongoing

activities with the company.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- External audit of company audit, independent of SCDC accounts</li> <li>- Submission of company business plan to Cabinet</li> <li>- SCDC Chief Finance Officer (Executive Director) is company Board Member</li> <li>- Recruitment of Non-Executive Directors to company board (see 4 above)</li> </ul>		
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The Council's assurance arrangements conform with the governance requirements of CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit in Local Government (2010)

**External audit:** 5.2.2 Ernst and Young was the external auditor of the Council. It performed work on the accounts and other documents and processes; checked that we are delivering good value for money; and provided an audit opinion at the end of that work. In 2015-16 it gave the Council an "[awaiting opinion]" on the council's financial statements.

The full report is available here: *Insert link once received*

**Other external assurance sources:** 5.2.3 During 2015-2016 the Council achieved Gold Standard accreditation against the Investors in People (IIP) standard, demonstrating outstanding practice in a number of areas, in compliance with Core Principle (5), Developing the capacity and capability of Members and Officers to be effective

**Peer Review:** 5.2.4 The Council has commissioned a Peer Review Challenge by the Local Government Association (LGA) to take place in November 2016. Peer Review is a free and voluntary assessment of the extent to which the Council is meeting the challenges facing it in terms of community leadership, place-shaping and running an effective business. The core components of each review will provide insights into the effectiveness of a number of aspects of the Council's governance, particularly in respect of financial planning, organisational capacity, political and managerial leadership. The Review Team's report and recommendations will be used as the basis for an action plan to shape future business planning.

**Benchmarking Housing Performance:** 5.2.5 The council's housing service has a number of external methods of scrutinising its performance. The Affordable Homes service submits its key financial and performance data to Housemark, a national benchmarking service, which allows the Council to compare its performance with other landlords across the country. In line

with the Homes & Communities Agency regulatory framework for housing organisations, the council has established an independent tenant lead scrutiny body that will undertake scrutiny reviews of the housing management service.

**Major Opposition Leader's annual report:** 5.2.6 Another 'critical friend' of the Council is the Leader of the largest opposition political party. For SCDC in 2015/16, when the majority of Councillors were Conservative, the Major Opposition Leader was Cllr Bridget Smith, leading the Liberal Democrat Group. The Major Opposition Group Leader's Annual statement for 2015-16, can be found here:

[Major Opposition Group Leader's Annual Statement](#)

There were also seven members of the Independent Group and one Labour councillor and one non-group councillor.

### **Analysis performed for this Governance statement**

5.3 In drawing up this governance statement we have reviewed the 12 objectives in the Corporate Plan from a governance and performance basis, as set out in Appendix 1. For each action, the table:

- lists the action
- asks 'how did we do?'
- asks 'what's still left to do?'
- shows how that action relates to CIPFA/SOLACE's six core principles of good governance listed on page 2 of Appendix 1.

5.4 We believe that a study of the table in Appendix 1 shows that our results and performance were good, when measured against the visions, aims, approaches and actions that we set ourselves, and (on the basis of the 'work backwards' approach discussed above) we take that as a sign that our governance was also good.

## 6. OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

6.1 Last year, a number of opportunities for improving controls and procedures were identified by Internal Audit as “meriting attention” and which have been accepted by the Council’s management. These are set out in the following table, along with details of actions undertaken to address each.

Recommendations for 2015/16	Progress
<p>Ensure that working arrangements with external partners are regularly reviewed in order to demonstrate effective management, in particular the arrangements for the responsive repairs contract</p>	<p>In general regular review is an important part of all external partnership arrangements. Regarding the responsive repairs contract in particular, an action plan was agreed in response to the Internal Audit report and a follow-up audit undertaken planned for later this year to ensure all necessary actions have been carried out.</p>
<p>Ensure there are avenues available to enable robust challenge to be made to the ongoing development of shared services in order to protect the interests of SCDC stakeholders</p>	<p>Governance arrangements setting out member, lead officer and scrutiny involvement in the process were agreed by Cabinet in July 2015, following consideration by The Corporate Governance Committee. A Joint Group has been formally established to provide strategic direction and leadership and consider proposals for future shared services. The Group’s Terms of Reference were endorsed by the Scrutiny and Overview Committee. Scrutiny and Overview Committee will consider a report on Shared Services Performance at its meeting in November 2016.</p>
<p>Ensure adequate consideration is given to the long term implications of the Great Cambridge City Deal and other large scale projects and that robust scrutiny of the City Deal by SCDC takes place.</p>	<p>The City Deal Executive Board has taken steps to awarding a contract for a payment by results mechanism where Greater Cambridge is rewarded for prioritising and investing in project that deliver the greatest economic benefit over 15 years. The Audit and Corporate Governance Committee needs to provide a scrutiny of the governance arrangements in relation to the setting up of a Combined Authority, in accordance with its previous commitment to do so as part of the last AGS.</p>

6.2 We consider that the Council’s governance arrangements are fit for purpose in accordance with the governance framework.

*We, the Leader and Chief Executive, undertake over the coming year to continue to monitor our governance arrangements to ensure they remain fit for purpose. We are satisfied that they were effective in 2015/16, and will reflect and report on their operation and effectiveness as part of our next annual review.*

**Signed.....**

**Jean Hunter**

**Chief Executive**

**Signed.....**

**Peter Topping**

**Leader of the Council**

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The Council’s Corporate Governance Committee is responsible for ensuring that the Council complies with its own governance code, including monitoring the effectiveness of the governance framework and ensuring plans are put in place to address any weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system. The Committee believes that it has discharged that responsibility, and that this report is evidence of that. We recognise that there will always be room for improvement (which will need to be balanced by the costs associated with that, and whether the ‘law of diminishing returns’ applies), but on balance we are delighted to report that **we believe that, during 2015/16, the council was well-governed, and performed well.**