

Annual Governance Statement

Assurance Review

May/June 2026

Assurance and evidence in support of the Council's annual governance statement

(Assessment Score 1 – 10 where 10 represents best compliance)

Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	Assessment Score – 9
<p>Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrangements to ensure ethical conduct for both members and officers• Arrangements covering the ethical behaviour of external service providers• Arrangements to support whistleblowing• How compliance with laws and regulations and internal policies and procedures is ensured and arrangements to ensure expenditure is lawful• How breaches of ethical arrangements, laws, regulations and procedures are addressed and learning adopted• How all those in governance roles and senior managers demonstrate their leadership of an ethical culture	
<p>Evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Induction for new members and staff. Codes of conduct, PDA's, active Standards Committee, signing debate not hate charter, Support of White Ribbon Campaign• Blaby District Plan (2024-28) defines organisational values, PDA's and staff recruitment have linkages to values. Member development group• Declarations of interest noted, active Standards Committee• Anti-fraud & corruption policy (reviewed Apr 2026), register of interests and annual declaration of related parties. Whistleblowing policy (reviewed Apr 2026), which staff are aware of, and have utilised• Complaints policy is well established and procedures have been reviewed and improved in 2026 with reporting monitored and lessons learned recorded and acted on• Organisational values referred to within the Appraisal process. Recruitment process includes elements of Blaby values as part of assessment. Procurement policy includes ethical element and is a consideration in award of contracts• Key partnerships now have robust mechanisms in place to define role and scope of partners. E.g. Community safety, Light Bulb project, Everyone Active, Building Control Partnerships and governance arrangements have been strengthened• Proper arrangements in place for legal advice and recording of advice, monitoring officer referenced to give advice and ensure Council operates within the law at all times• Job descriptions and roles of statutory officers is well defined and understood by the organisation. Structure of the SLT ensures statutory officers are included in key decision making etc. Provision of proper officer appointments on an interim basis when appropriate E.g. for interim CE position, S151 and MO positions during organisational change. Golden triangle meetings and additional training• Constitution is adhered to and reviewed regularly	
<p>Improvement Actions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Culture audit to be carried out by internal audit• Review information on lessons learnt from new complaints process	

Principle B: Ensuring Openness and Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement

Assessment Score – 9

Requirements

- How the authority ensures that decisions are made in the public interest and the rationale for decisions is recorded
- How the authority achieves expected standards of openness and transparency, including a culture of internal challenge and self-assessment
- The arrangements for consultation and engagement with citizens, service users and stakeholders and how these inform decision-making
- The ways in which the authority communicates with the community and stakeholders

Evidence

- Blaby District Plan
- FOI requests actively responded to
- Online Council Tax information and award-winning website
- Decisions well documented with supporting information and advice included. Informal Cabinet sessions that involve Members in the decision-making process at an early stage. Pre-meeting briefings prior to major decisions being made by Council. E.g. Strategic Sites, Local Plan
- Forward Plan detailing report publication on a timely basis
- Informal and formal consultation carried out in accordance with the consultation strategy, using a variety of means. Consultation used to inform decision making and customer and staff satisfaction surveys carried out regularly. High level of service engagement from service users
- E.g. Bi-annual customer satisfaction survey including budget consultation and priorities within Blaby District Plan. Engagement with public/stakeholders/staff regarding the formation of the Blaby District Plan and proposals for LGR
- Scrutiny of the Budget open to all Members and the public
- Communication Strategy followed (updated April 25). Communication Strategy developed for individual projects if appropriate
- Active engagement with the Youth Council with Councillors taking part in debates with Youth Council – enabling them to understand views of future generations. Utilisation of relationships with academies to understand views of the younger generation, with the Youth Conference providing further engagement
- Improved engagement with Business, through the establishment of the Blaby Business Board

Improvement Actions

- Ensure communication with public and stakeholders is continued as LGR decisions and process are progressed
- Develop a forward plan for the Youth Council to engage on key Council policies
- Continue to expand engagement with the business community, working with the Business Board to develop networks and understand how services and policies can be shaped to improve economic growth for local businesses

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

Assessment Score – 9

Requirements

- How the authority establishes its vision, target outcomes, and associated long-term plans to deliver sustainable outcomes
- Its decision-making arrangements and how it ensures consideration and demonstration of value for money and best value
- Arrangements to achieve fair access to services
- The authority's strategic approach to commissioning across the entity and its partnerships and collaborations

Evidence

- Blaby District Plan defines the vision for the Council, including values and priorities. Developed with SLT and SM's for staff to feed into the priorities and plans along with consultation with residents. Plan and priorities are agreed by Council with an Annual Action Plan defined each year
- Monitoring and reporting of progress of initiatives with regular updates to members regarding the financial landscape
- The adoption and resourcing of Project Management across the Council now helps to ensure delivery of outcomes with monitoring of progress of projects being done through programme board. Ability for Members to view iPlan system recording progress on key projects and KPI's
- Key partnerships have robust mechanisms in place to define role and scope of partners. E.g. Community safety, Light Bulb project and Building Control. Review partnerships and if not working re-evaluate i.e. ICT
- Budget survey and consultation with customers to help set priorities. Service plans developed with key performance indicators developed and proactive at communicating with customers re changes to service
- Capital programme aligned to corporate priorities and expanded to be 5 year plan. Use of assets considered to achieve the best return/outcomes for residents. E.g. Decisions made regarding strategic sites to consider their potential future use to provide housing tenure needed to help address the housing needs
- MTFs information giving an up to date long term view. Member briefings to support and inform members before significant decisions are made. Budget Briefing included potential financial impact & risks that the Fair Funding Review and Business Rate Review pose for the Council
- Statement of Community Involvement for planning
- Community network meetings with Voluntary and Community Sector
- Partnership working: Lightbulb, Building Control, Community Safety Partnership, Local Land Charges, Chief Housing Officers Group and Blaby Health & Wellbeing Partnership
- Economic Development Framework investment

Improvement Actions

- Ensure that benefits of partnership working arrangements are retained within LGR proposals
- Enhancing the new officer and member governance arrangements for Climate Action priorities
- Prepare the new Blaby District Health and Well Being Partnership plan, working with partners to scope and shape outcomes and delivery plan
- Continue to expand engagement with the business community, working with the Business Board to develop networks and understand how services and policies can be shaped to improve economic growth for local businesses
- Consider taking actions in support of the policy Paper Protecting What Matter: Towards a more confident, cohesive and resilient UK

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

Assessment Score – 9

Requirements

- The arrangements for medium and short-term service planning, supported by projects and programmes, to ensure alignment to the vision and objectives
- How budgets and resource strategies align to the delivery of objectives
- How the authority uses self-assessment and continuous improvement to achieve value for money
- The authority's performance management arrangements to ensure continued alignment to its objectives
- Arrangements for the achievement of social value in commissioning, procurement and contracting

Evidence

- Budgets aligned to plans to deliver the corporate priorities identified in the Blaby District Plan. Service Planning now aligned with Budget Planning process to ensure resources are in place
- Six monthly Performance report presented to Council
- All reports detail options considered and risks associated with decisions
- MTFS, information provided with budget setting information and Commercial Strategy and action plan developed. Plans to close financial gap worked on with SLT and Cabinet members
- Budgets owned by services with well defined budget guidance and support.
- KPI's reported in I-Plan, new reporting tool for KPI's developed in I-Plan, rolled out to organisation in April 23 and continually being refined
- Risk registers kept as part of the project management structure and are kept for major partnership arrangements such as Lightbulb.
- Self-Assessment against Best Value Guidance
- Feedback from External auditors Azets on Best Value – no concerns
- Social value considered when procuring services and within decisions

Improvement Actions

- Align performance measures specifically with the corporate action plan actions
- Progress Action Plan arising from Best Value Self-assessment

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

Assessment Score – 8*

Requirements

- Member and officer protocols and clarity over roles and responsibilities, including schemes of delegation
- Application of the Code of Practice on Good Governance for Local Authority Statutory Officers
- How financial management roles align with:
 - – CIPFA Financial Management Code (FM Code)
 - – CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2015),
- The arrangements in place for the discharge of the monitoring officer function
- The arrangements in place for the discharge of the head of paid service function
- Induction and development programmes to meet the needs of members and senior officers in relation to their strategic roles
- Workforce planning and organisational development
- Arrangements for learning and development, and health and wellbeing

Evidence

- Code of conduct for members
- Roles and responsibilities set out in the Constitution.
- Formal scheme of delegation
- Three Statutory officers meet regularly monthly to discuss governance
- Induction for new members and staff. Codes of conduct, PDA's,
- FM code assessment carried out and compliance continues.
- CFO arrangements conform to requirements of CIPFA Statement
- MO arrangements in place
- Head of Paid Service arrangements in place
- Member Development Group in place to ensure gaps in Member training understood and closed
- Programme of learning for managers in progress and being procured
- Members now have access to Skillgate learning platform
- EMC elected member development charter held
- Wellbeing provisions for staff and members

Improvement Actions

- Procurement and delivery of Management Training to staff
- Ensure officer compliance with skillgate mandatory training
- Monitor Member use of skillgate
- Plan for retention of staff during LGR process

*When considering the scoring SLT assessed Principle E as a 8 for 2025/26 but recognised that this may reduce to a 7 in the coming year.

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

Assessment Score – 9

Requirements

- Risk management policy, strategy and arrangements for review
- How financial management arrangements align with the Financial Management Code
- Internal control arrangements including:
 - Cyber, AI and information security arrangements
 - Information governance
 - Asset management
 - Procurement and contract management
- Assurance frameworks across the three lines. The framework should set out how the leadership team obtains its assurance, including from management, risk and compliance arrangements, and internal audit
- Internal audit arrangements in conformance with the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK public sector (GIAS and the Application Note) and the CIPFA Code of Practice on the Governance of Internal Audit
- Arrangements for formal overview and scrutiny (as applicable)
- Facilitation of internal and external challenge
- Undertaking the core functions of an audit committee, as identified in Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police (CIPFA, 2022)
- Counter fraud and anti-corruption developed and maintained in accordance with the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (CIPFA, 2014)

Evidence

- Corporate Risk Management system in place with regular monitoring of corporate risks. Lower level risk management system reviewed and implemented to make risk monitoring more effective
- Risk Management Strategy in place
- FM Code complied with
- Scrutiny role established with working groups
- Internal Audit arrangement compliant and internal audit actively engaged in service improvement
- Audit and Governance Committee compliance with CIPFA Guidance
- Audit Committee Training
- Cyber security managed activities
- AI policy and procedures and controlled tools
- Welland procurement service
- Information Governance assigned roles in
- Peer review
- Best Value self-assessment
- Self-assessment against reasonable prevention of fraud
- Introduction of Microsoft Power Platform Centre of Excellence for Digital Tool and AI monitoring and governance

Improvement Actions

- Progress Action Plan arising from Best Value Self-assessment
- Progress Actions from self-assessment against reasonable prevention of fraud
- Closely monitor use of AI as it is utilised more widely across the organisation
- Review Risk Management Strategy

Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability**Assessment Score - 9****Requirements**

- Arrangements for the timely response and support to the work of external audit, internal audit and other inspection or regulatory action
- Approach to welcoming external challenge and implementing recommendations
- How learning and improvement are actioned
- How transparency and accountability are maintained across collaborations and arm's length bodies, such as trading companies and joint ventures
- Accountability to the public and stakeholders is supported by clear assurance and ensures core areas are covered to enable better accountability in practice.

Evidence

- Response to recommendations from internal and external audit timely.
- External inspections or regulatory requirements responded to Internal audit independence
- Annual financial statements and reports to Audit & Governance Committee
- Peer Reviews
- Self- assessments
- Strong partnership working with governance arrangements in place
- Scrutiny process

Improvement Actions

- Support external auditors to build-back assurance following disclaimed Statutory Accounts
- Undertake a peer review of the new Housing Stock Management processes and procedures to identify improvement opportunities and then produce a plan to implement the agreed improvements. The Peer review will be undertaken by East Midlands Housing