

Norwich City Council

**Code of Corporate
Governance**

July 2022

What is corporate governance?

Corporate governance are the arrangements we put in place to ensure we deliver the things we say we will do. It makes sure we do the right things, in the right ways, in a manner that is open and transparent. It ensures that we remain accountable for the things we do, and people can trust in our integrity. Good corporate governance helps organisations achieve high standards and the Council's financial and non-financial resources are targeted where they are most needed.

What does good governance mean to us?

At Norwich City Council, it's one of our core aims to ensure we are in a good place to serve the People of Norwich. To do this we will:

- Put the Council on a sustainable financial footing and deliver services effectively and efficiently
- Change how we work to serve the city better, building on our Covid-19 response
- Improve the way that residents can access services by embracing new technology and making it easier to do things online, while providing alternatives for those unable to do so
- Be open and transparent, with accessible data and decisions which are subject to public scrutiny
- Value, respect and listen to our employees. Ensure our workforce reflects our communities
- Preserve and strengthen confidence in the Council's governance framework, providing the foundations for a high performing Council that is compliant with its statutory obligations

What is the purpose of this Code of Corporate Governance?

This Code of Corporate Governance is based up on the best practice document produced by CIPFA, *delivering good governance in local government*. It provides a framework for those practices authorities should have in place to ensure sound decisions are made and services are operating effectively. The CIPFA framework is based on 7 principles, which are reflected in our Code below.

As well as providing a framework through which the Council can benchmark its activities, the Code provides the opportunity to reflect and understand where our arrangements can be strengthened. Governance is a continuous learning journey; there will always be opportunities to learn, develop and improve.

The Code in turn provides a framework for our Annual Governance Statement, which reflects the work we have done in the past year to strengthen our governance arrangements, as well as areas we have recognised for further development.

How does this Code relate to the Council's companies?

The Code of Practice sets the framework for the Council to seek assurance over its operations, including its wholly owned companies.

As independent bodies, the Council's two companies, Norwich City Services (NCS) and Norwich Regeneration Limited (NRL) have their own governance arrangements in place.

Between them, the Council and its companies are responsible for ensuring that:

- a) Conflicts of interest between the Council and its companies are identified and managed appropriately;
- b) There is clarity in regard to the responsibilities of the Council and its companies;
- c) Public funds given to the companies by the council are subject to appropriate controls and probity;
- d) Responsibilities of the Council, discharged by the companies, are done so safely
- e) There are appropriate mechanisms to evaluate the performance of the companies in delivering services entrusted to it

What makes up the Code of Corporate Governance

The Code of Corporate Governance is made up of two elements:

- a) The Code itself, which evaluates the Council's corporate governance arrangements against the CIPFA Code of Practice and identifies areas for development
- b) The Council's governance framework, which draws together and maps the boards, policies and practices the Council has in place to deliver corporate governance

The Code of Corporate Governance shall be subject to an annual review process alongside the Council's Annual Governance Statement

Norwich City Council: Code of Corporate Governance

Principle A - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law			
Sub Principles	Demonstrating good governance	How the Council complies	Areas for development
Behaving with integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation Ensuring members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles) Leading by example and using these standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions Demonstrating, communicating and embedding the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council's constitution sets out the rules that the Council, its staff and Councillors follow The constitution includes codes of conduct for both Councillors and staff The Council has adopted procedures for dealing with conduct issues raised in relation to Councillors and there are similarly procedures in relation to issues raised relating to staff The Council has adopted Anti-Fraud and Corruption and Whistleblowing Policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council is undertaking a review of its culture to understand how it can develop to serve the people of Norwich. It is anticipated that action plans will be emerging in the Autumn The Council has a broad scheme of delegation, however this can cause confusion. It is intended to review the Scheme during the coming year to assist officers understand the scope of their responsibility In line with audit recommendations, the Council has been developing its policy register to ensure there is clarity on ownership and timing of policy review The Council will continue to monitor emerging legislation, in particular developing systems to ensure compliance with the Election Act
Demonstrating strong commitment to democratic values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation's culture and operation Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with high ethical standards expected by the organisation 		
Respecting the rule of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations Creating the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders and members are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements Striving to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively 		
Principle B - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement			
Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records of Council meetings including decisions made, as well as decisions made by officers, are available on the Council's website The Council undertakes an open budget consultation, ensuring that all potentially interested parties have the opportunity to provide their views The Council uses a range of platforms to inform and engage with citizens including the quarterly Citizen magazine, website and social media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council is working to improve its compliance with the transparency code, ensuring all required information is available on the Council's website Implementation of the Citizen Participation Strategy The Council is seeking to develop a consultation statement, to provide guidance and (where appropriate) consistency in the way that consultations are approached

	<p>that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions/ courses of action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council has developed the Get Talking Norwich platform to aid citizen participation in consultations, provide a platform for updates and seek feedback from users. The Council maintains a database of users who wish to be engaged in consultations on specific topics In relation to local planning, the Council participates in the Greater Norwich Growth Board, which supports the delivery of local planning in the Greater Norwich area through engagement with key public sector partners and the Local Enterprise Partnership. The Statement of Community Involvement explains how the Council will engage with the community in its future planning for the area. The Council encourages democratic engagement in its committees and decision making meetings, and has introduced livestreaming to support further engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council is reviewing its complaints policies and monitoring systems for complaints
Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively Ensuring that partnerships are based on: - trust - a shared commitment to change - a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners - and that the added value of partnership working is explicit 		
Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes Ensuring that communication methods are effective and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how their views have been taken into account • Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity • Taking account of the interests of future generations of tax payers and service users 		
Principle C - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits			
Defining outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a clear vision which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provides the basis for the organisation's overall strategy, planning and other decisions • Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer • Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available • Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes • Managing service users expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has an agreed corporate plan which sets out its vision for the City and includes clear actions and performance indicators for how its vision will be delivered • The corporate plan takes into account the views and considerations of Norwich 2040 vision, a steering group involving a range of stakeholders to look at the longer term view of the City • The Council has a range of agreed strategies and policies that support delivery of the corporate plan including the Covid-19 blueprint, Economic Strategy and Environmental Strategy • The Council's quarterly assurance reports detail how the Council is performing against its financial and non-financial targets, including an assessment of its risks to achieving outcomes • The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy is subject to regular review and consideration to understand the Council's future resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over the next year, the Council intends to review both its environmental strategy and agree a biodiversity strategy • The Council will review the emerging recommendations of both the Good Economy Commission and the Climate Commission and understand where and how these should be implemented
Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision • Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the 		

	<p>organisation's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determining the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs • Ensuring fair access to services, taking full account of the access needs of disabled and vulnerable people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has established processes for undertaking and considering the outcomes of equality impacts when making decisions and receives an annual equality statement to evaluate its impact in improving equality 	
Principle D – Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes			
Determining Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and including the risks associated with those options. Therefore ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided • Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions are subject to a robust review process prior to determination in line with the Council's scheme of delegation • The Council uses set templates for report writing and decision making, which require authors to consider a range of factors including financial, legal, social and equality impacts when making decisions and feedback from consultation undertaken. • The Council has agreed corporate timetables for the reporting of performance and establishing the budget. These are widely communicated to staff • The Council has developed an internal transformation programme Future Shape Norwich. This is overseen by a corporate board. All programmed work is supported by business cases and associated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council is intending to review its policies relating to oversight and enforcement activity during the year, including CCTV, Corporate Enforcement and Regulation of Investigatory Powers. This will include developing action plans to implement policies as necessary. • The Council will be undertaking a review of its performance measures during the year to evaluate whether these are effective in enabling measurement of performance • The Council will be delivering the Future Shape Norwich transformation programme. This cuts across a range of service areas to support the Council in being more financially sustainable and improving
Planning Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets • Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks • Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering outputs can be adapted to changing circumstances • Establishing appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured • Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly • Preparing budgets in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan • Informing medium and long term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy 	<p>action plans are subject to ongoing monitoring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The corporate plan is used to inform Directorate Planning, with each directorate having its own plan they are expected to deliver. The Directorate Plan is channeled into individual performance targets. • In addition to its corporate leadership team, the Council has developed corporate boards to support delivery of corporate aims, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Resources and Performance Board, to support development of corporate planning, deep-dive on performance and support areas which have additional performance improvement needs ○ Health and Safety Compliance Board, to support improvement in the Council's processes for monitoring health and safety in its physical assets ○ Asset and Investment Board, to support development and delivery of the asset management framework ○ Customer, Innovation and Digital Board, to support delivery of programmes that improve customer experience 	<p>customer experience. Work will be overseen by the programme board.</p>
<p>Optimising Achievement of Intended Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints • Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term • Ensuring the medium term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring the achievement of 'social value' through service planning and commissioning. The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 states that this is "the additional benefit to the community...over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes" 		
Principle E – Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it			
Developing the entity's capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing operations, performance use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how the authority's resources are allocated so that outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the Council's ability to be flexible with its resources, re-allocating based on skillsets. Similar practices operate in areas such as the annual elections, where teams across the Council come together to deliver a defined project. The Council has staff performance management framework to provide a formal evaluation of performance on a 6-monthly basis, supplemented by regular 1-1 meetings. The Constitution clearly establishes roles and responsibilities for members and levels of decision making responsibilities The Council develops a member development programme on an annual basis and actively promotes national and regional development opportunities to Councillors The Council has an e-learning system and a range of corporate development activities available to staff. The Council aims to attract staff from a diverse range of backgrounds. This is subject to monitoring and reporting, as well as learning to understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council is seeking to develop a formal workforce strategy, to develop a clearer framework for its long term resource planning The Council is undertaking a review of its culture to understand how it can develop to serve the people of Norwich. It is anticipated that action plans will be emerging in the Autumn The Council will be undertaking a staff survey during the year, to understand how we can improve the experience of staff within the Council. An action plan will be developed emerging from the survey The Council has been undertaking a service review process to evaluate the level of resources allocated to service areas. Each review is subject to a robust consultation process. The process is expected to conclude by the autumn of 2022. The Council has been undertaking a senior leadership
Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads the authority in implementing strategy and managing the 		

	<p>delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other's authority Developing the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective shared leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ensuring members and staff have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and that ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged - ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis - ensuring personal, organisational and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external – - identifying and developing talent within the Council's workforce - developing succession planning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation • Taking steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections 	<p>how the Council can be more effective in recruiting candidates.</p>	<p>development programme that will conclude in 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has been reviewing its wellbeing programme for staff and will be agreeing and implementing a new staff wellbeing strategy which has been developed by staff.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs • Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing 		
Principle F – Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management			
Managing Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making • Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively • Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has developed quarterly assurance reports which integrate financial and non-financial performance, audit outcomes and risks to give a holistic view of organisational performance. • The Council has an agreed corporate risk strategy. Risks are communicated through the corporate and directorate level risk register. Each are reviewed on a quarterly basis at a Directorate and then corporate level. • Risk assessment is a required part of business planning and decision making and incorporated into templates. • The Council has business continuity plans in place which are subject to periodic testing, including in respect of specific risks. This is supported by a steering group who oversee developments in business continuity and ensure they are reflected in corporate planning. Following business continuity events, review sessions are held to understand how improvements to processes can be made. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Audit Committee has identified that it would benefit from the appointment of an independent person, in line with good practice. It is intended to recruit to this post • The Council is reviewing its policies and processes in relation to health and safety; this will be subject to an action plan • The Council has been strengthening its controls in relation to contract management. This work will be continuing into 2022/23 • The Council has been reviewing the operation of its regulatory services following a peer review. This work will continue into 2022/23 • The Council will be implementing a new Enterprise Resource Planning system, replacing its existing finance and HR system. Through this process the Council will be monitoring risks and ensuring effective internal control systems are developed
Managing Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review • Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation’s financial, social and environmental position and outlook • Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which encourages constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the organisation’s performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible (OR, for a committee system: Encouraging effective and constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives to support balanced and effective decision making) 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement • Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (e.g. financial statements) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has undertaken a review of its project management documentation to ensure consistency and standardization of approach, risk management and reporting • The Council has transferred its internal audit service to the Eastern Internal Audit Services, to help provide long term resilience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council will be implementing a new master data management system. This will support the Council in ensuring the consistency and accuracy of its data
Robust Internal Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving the objectives • Evaluating and monitoring the authority's risk management and internal control on a regular basis • Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place • Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor • Ensuring an audit committee or equivalent group or function which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment - that its recommendations are listened to and acted upon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's Internal Audit Service reports the outcome of its work to Corporate Leadership and Audit Committee. The Internal Audit Service is monitored to ensure compliance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards • The Council's Scrutiny Committee establishes its own work programme annually and receives training on its role. It can elect to pre-scrutinise policies and documents, and has the right to call-in cabinet decisions. The Scrutiny Committee examines the Council's budget, corporate plan and its company business plans as a matter of course. • The Council's Audit Committee oversees financial governance. It receives risk reports; reports from internal and external auditors and the accounts. It undertakes an annual self-assessment exercise. 	
Managing Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data • Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has a range of processes in place to ensure the safe storage of data. Data sharing is subject to sharing agreements and impact assessments undertaken where data use changes. 	

	sharing data with other bodies Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Corporate Leadership Team receives quarterly reports on compliance with information governance standards 	
Strong public financial management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council has secured its compliance with the PSN information security standards. 	
Principle G – Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to effective accountability			
Implementing good practice in transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in an understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council has established report templates which are subject to robust review before publication The Council is required to produce the annual statement of accounts and annual governance statement. The statement of accounts and annual governance statements sits alongside the quarterly assurance reports, which enable members and senior management to take a robust evaluation of corporate performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a formal action plan to incorporate the items contained within this Code We will be reviewing how we can better use technology during committee meetings, including promoting the use of electronic access to committee papers
Implementing good practice in reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and the stewardship of its resources Ensuring members and senior management own the results Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in the Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (annual governance statement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This framework is subject to consideration by the Audit Committee, with the Annual Governance Statement serving as an annual demonstration of the Council's commitment to good governance The Council has undertaken significant work to strengthen its oversight of its wholly owned companies. This includes the 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that the Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate • Ensuring the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other similar organisations 	<p>introduction of shareholder panels, which meet quarterly to evaluate how the companies are performing against their own performance targets and business plans. Business plans are subject to annual approval by the Cabinet (including pre-scrutiny).</p>	
Assurance and Effective Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon • Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place which provides assurance with regard to governance arrangements and recommendations are acted upon • Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations • Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement • Ensuring that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and that the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's internal audit arrangements are outlined above. Internal Audit have direct reporting access to the Audit Committee. • The Council welcomes peer challenge and, for example, has utilised peer support in regards its regulatory service. The Council also supports the use of external expertise where necessary to supplement insight and experience, as well as joining local and national networks to gain understanding of best practice. • The Council has undertaken work to strengthen its contract management arrangements, which has been reflected above • 	

Norwich City Council Governance Framework

