

# **Governance Directorate Plan 2024-28**

**Version 1.0 April 2025 – March 2026**

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**Portfolio holders: Cllr John Loudoun Council and Corporate Co-ordination, Cllr Sarah Jackson Communications and Democracy, Cllr Geoff Jung Coast, Country and Environment**

## **Directorate Plan 2024-2028 (Version 1.0 for year 2025-26)**

### **Contents Page**

Section 1	Brief description of (business as usual) service and purpose(s) including directorate structure.
Section 2	Looking forward: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Supporting the Council Plan</li><li>- Directorate Objectives – cross service objectives / projects for 2025-26</li><li>- Service level objectives / projects 2025-26</li></ul>
Section 3	What we will measure in 2025-26: Performance targets

### **Notes for Director and Assistant Director/Service Leads**

#### **When you have completed your Directorate Plan:**

- ✓ Save to Directorate Planning 2024-28 – Version 2025-26 Teams folder. Final versions will be placed on the intranet/internet
- ✓ Link it to your Service Scorecards once in place
- ✓ Communicate it to your staff, and sharing with all staff progress and updates on a quarterly/six monthly basis within the directorate
- ✓ Keep it under review – make it a live document which adds value!
- ✓ Use it to formulate individual objectives

## Section 1 – What we do and who we deliver to

The directorate key aims are to deliver high-quality services to our customers, members, and staff, ensuring excellence and professionalism in every interaction. We are committed to providing a robust governance framework that supports and enhances our operations. By offering exceptional services to our internal stakeholders, we enable all departments to deliver cost-effective, high-quality outcomes. As the silent cog in the machinery, we provide the professional support necessary to empower and enable services to thrive.

The majority of our services are back office and provided to the Council (including members and officers) but some of our services are frontline to the public including electoral services, complaints, licensing and freedom of information/data protection and council committee meetings.

The Governance directorate includes:

Monitoring Officer and Returning Officer, ensures that the local authority operates within the law, oversees ethical standards, and manages code of conduct issues among elected members. The Returning Officer is responsible for the conduct of elections, ensuring they are fair and transparent. They manage all aspects of the electoral process, including nominations, polling stations, vote counting, and declaration of results.

HR, Payroll and Equalities, the HR team manages recruitment, employee relations, performance management, and staff development. Payroll handles the timely and accurate processing of employee salaries, benefits, and deductions. The Equalities team ensures compliance with equality legislation, promotes diversity and inclusion, and addresses any workplace discrimination issues.

PA Support to the SLT, Leader and Chair, personal assistants provide comprehensive administrative support to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), the Council Leader, and the Chair. They manage schedules, arrange meetings, handle correspondence, and ensure smooth communication and workflow within the senior management team.

Legal Services, provide legal advice and support to the council, ensuring that decisions and actions comply with the law. They handle legal disputes, draft and review contracts, and represent the council in legal proceedings. They also advise on planning, property, employment, and commercial matters.

Electoral Services, manage the electoral register and ensure that all eligible residents can vote. They organise local, parliamentary, and European elections, as well as referendums. They also handle postal and proxy voting, voter registration campaigns, and ensure accessibility to the electoral process.

Licensing, issues licenses for activities such as alcohol sales, entertainment, taxi services, and street trading. They ensure that these activities comply with relevant legislation, conduct inspections, and handle complaints. They also work to prevent illegal trading and promote public safety.

Data Protection and Freedom of Information, ensures compliance with data protection laws, safeguarding the personal data held by the council. They handle Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, ensuring that the public has access to information held by the council in accordance with legal requirements.

Corporate Complaints, manages and investigates complaints from the public about council services. They aim to resolve issues efficiently, improve service delivery, and identify areas for improvement. They also ensure that the complaints process is transparent and accessible.

Corporate Performance and Risk, monitors and reports on the council's performance against strategic objectives. They identify and manage risks, ensuring that the council can respond effectively to challenges and opportunities. They also develop performance improvement plans and track progress.

Data and Digital Services, oversee the council's IT infrastructure, data management, and digital transformation initiatives. They ensure that technology supports service delivery, enhance cybersecurity, and promote the use of data for informed decision-making. They also drive innovation through digital solutions.

Communications, manages the council's internal and external communication strategies. They handle media relations, social media, public information campaigns, and crisis communications. They ensure that residents are informed about council services, decisions, and community initiatives.

Democratic Services & Scrutiny and Member Support, supporting the council's democratic processes, including meetings, minutes, and agendas. They ensure that councillors have the resources and information they need to perform their roles. The Scrutiny team examines the council's decisions and policies, ensuring accountability and transparency. They also support councillors in their scrutiny work and engage with the public to ensure their voices are heard.

Governance Directorate Structure 2024



*The Director of Governance is also the Council's Returning and Electoral Registration Officer*

## Section 2.1 Supporting the Council Plan

### Theme – Quality Services (QS)

Service / Service lead	Key action	ID	Measure of success	Timeframe
Communications and Engagement	33. Increase engagement and communication with residents, tenants and businesses through a variety of channels with a focus on reaching of all the community including those who are digitally disadvantaged. To coordinate marketing and Engagement exercises across the council to ensure consistent media interactions and consultation exercises take place	QS1	Number of consultations carried out and response rates.	Measure to be reported on quarterly
		QS2	Monitoring profile information of the respondents to our surveys.	Measure to be reported on quarterly
		QS3	Improvement of tenant and resident satisfaction results	Measure to be reported on quarterly
		QS4	Numbers of media interactions.	Measure to be reported on quarterly
		QS5	Numbers of visits to our website (Digital and Data team)	Measure to be reported on quarterly
		QS6	Numbers of subscribers to our digital newsletters	Measure to be reported on quarterly.
Democratic Services	38. Conduct a review of our Constitution to ensure that it is up-to-date and legally robust.	QS14	Constitution Working Group established.	May-24
		QS15	Updated Constitution presented to and approved by Full Council.	May-25

Democratic Services	Provide Democratic Services support to all Council committees, Forums, Working Groups and Panel		Calendar of meetings to support the democratic process.	May-25
Communications and Engagement	39. Implement a customer access strategy to monitor performance, ensure transparency and monitor the performance on key service areas of service delivery.	QS16	Develop corporate performance measures for customer access to key services across all of the different customer access channels.	Mar-25
		QS17	Monitoring of the identified performance measures	Measures to be reported quarterly
Communications and Engagement	40. Ensure collaboration and engagement with Town and Parish Councils for district wide partnerships and services.	QS18	Regular engagement sessions with Town and Parish Councils including the provision of training.	Mar-25
		QS19	Undertake a survey with Town and Parish Council's.	Jan-25
		QS20	Development of Parish Charter agreed through partnership working with parish council's.	May 25
HR	41. Develop the Workforce Strategy to ensure we have the right staff in our services.	QS21	Adoption of the Workforce Strategy and action plan.	Mar-25
		QS22	Monitoring of the workforce strategy action plan and key workforce targets	Progress to be reported annually
Digital and Data Team	42. Support the implementation of the Strata Business plan to facilitate digital and data transformation to improve the efficiency of our services.	QS26	Performance against the Strata Business plan action plan and key performance targets	Progress to be reported quarterly
Information Governance	43. Ensure robust oversight in relation to Information Governance (including Data Protection compliance)		Number of Freedom of Information and Data Protection requests responded to within statutory deadlines	Progress to be reports quarterly

## Section 2.2 Directorate Objectives - cross directorate objectives / projects

Services involved	2.2 Cross Directorate objectives / projects we will deliver in 2024/25 which support the Council Plan Priorities to be monitored within directorates	Financial/ corporate resource	Lead Officers	Due Date
All directorates	1. Development and monitoring of an action plan to support cultural change. Work is likely to include various task and finish groups to progress specific agreed actions such as customer charter, values and behaviours, performance management, learning and development and communication and engagement (including how we progress the 'ambassador' recommendation from the Peer Challenge)	HR ELT/SLT Employee volunteers who wish to be involved in specific task and finish groups Managers	Director of Housing & Health (Director Sponsor)  Corporate Lead – Human Resources	Action Plan agreed by December 24  Progress towards short-term actions achieved by March 2025
All directorates	2. Directors are tasked with reviewing their structures and job roles which may lead to change	HR ELT/SLT Finance	CEO (Sponsor)  Corporate Lead – Human Resources	April 2025
All directorates	3. To inform people strategy development, support cultural and structural change and aid resource maximisation, recruitment, retention and succession planning. Build on first iteration undertaken in 2022	HR Finance ELT/SLT	Corporate Lead – Human Resources	Add timescale once know plans for structural change but ideally, we would want at least some workforce planning undertaken before finalise



				people strategy by end March 25
<b>All directorates</b>	4. Improve knowledge and understanding of process for dealing with unreasonable customer behaviour. Review and update procedure for dealing with unreasonable customer behaviour and combine with guidance for staff on the employee safety database	Managers CSC Complaints Team Health and Safety Team HR	Information Governance Manager	April 2025
<b>All directorates</b>	5. Update corporate publication scheme. Ensure that publication scheme is up to date and compliant with transparency code requirements	Information Asset Owners (ADs)	Information Governance Manager	December 2025 – review progress April 2025
<b>All directorates</b>	6. Corporate Performance Monitoring across the authority to ensure we are learning from previous decisions in a 360 degree approach including the implementation of the new corporate system to evidence KPIs', performance against programmes and projects and corporate risks.	Performance & Risk Team ELT/SLT support All services engagement	Corporate Lead Performance / Management Information officer	April 2025

## Section 2.3 Service level objectives / projects

Service	2.1 Service level objectives / projects we will deliver in 2024/25 which support the Council Plan Priorities to be monitored within directorates	Financial/ corporate resource	Lead Officers	Due Date
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Democratic Services & Scrutiny	1. Hold an Annual Council meeting to make appointments to Committees, Outside Bodies, Forums, Working Groups and Panels	Current resource	Corporate Lead - Democratic Services	30 May 2025
Democratic Services & Scrutiny	2. To prepare a timetable of meetings for all council committee meetings for 2025/2026 and publish on the Council's website	Current resource	Corporate Lead - Democratic Services	31 March 2025
Democratic Services & Scrutiny	3. To issue and publish a Notice of Key Decisions to be taken by Cabinet and officers in accordance with the Council's Constitution	Current resource	Corporate Lead - Democratic Services	31 March 2025
Democratic Services & Scrutiny	4. To conduct a Member Skills Audit and Satisfaction survey, including timing of council meetings and produce an action plan on the quality of service provided by Democratic Services for 2024/2025	Current resource Member Development Working Group	Corporate Lead - Democratic Services	30 January 2025
Democratic Services & Scrutiny	5. To deliver the eight recommendations in the Scrutiny Action Plan.	Current resource Councillors	Corporate Lead - Democratic Services	30 May 2025
Democratic Services & Scrutiny	6. To deliver an AV solution in Council Chamber, including hybrid solution for remote participation/voting and live streaming of Teams meetings on YouTube, including testing and training of DSO team to operate hybrid meetings and live streaming of Teams meetings.	Current resource Strata Solutions Ltd, Digital Team, Finance, Democratic Services	Corporate Lead - Democratic Services	30 March 2025

Governance	7. Deliver actions in the Information Governance internal audit action plan	Current resource	Information Governance Manager	Review 30 March 2025
HR	8. iTrent – further embedding of data warehouse to support structure chart development, people data and links with MS365.	Current resource HR, Strata Service Solutions Ltd, Digital Team, Finance	Corporate Lead – Human Resources	30 March 2025
HR	9. Decision and actions regarding iTrent developments – move to Cloud or to People First	Current resource HR, Strata Service Solutions Ltd, Digital Team, Finance	Corporate Lead – Human Resources	To be determined
HR	10. Continue recruitment and grow our own projects – year 3 actions	Current resource	Corporate Lead – Human Resources	December 2025
HR	11. Review of leadership and management development offer – for SLT and all managers (linked to cultural work above) to include development around workforce planning/the mechanics of organisational change and resolution of grievances.	Current resource	Corporate Lead – Human Resources	December 2025
HR	12. EDI Action Plan year 2 actions	Current resource HR, ELT/SLT	Corporate Lead – Human Resources	December 2025
HR	13. Implement revised Out of Hours Policy and arrangements	Current resource HR, ELT/SLT	Corporate Lead – Human Resources	March 2025

HR	14. Implement staff benefit improvements e.g. EV cars, AVC salary sacrifice etc	Current resource HR, Finance	Corporate Lead – Human Resources	June 2025
HR	15. Policy & T&Cs review to align with significant employment law changes proposed by the new government	Current resource	Corporate Lead – Human Resources	December 2025
Performance and Risk Team / all services	16. Implementation of the new corporate performance and risk system across the council services.	Current resource and new Project Officer post	Management Information Officer	Timetable to be agreed with supplier
Digital and Data Team / all services	17. Process map library to map current service delivery provision across all services throughout the council.	Current resource	Process Improvement Analyst	March 2026
Digital and Data Team / all services	18. Delivery of End User Computer – new laptop environment to all laptop users, that doesn't use the Global Desktop.	Current resource Strata	Digital Transformation Projects Officer	March 2026
Digital and Data Team / all services	19. Delivery of SharePoint – new cloud-based file storage and information management system to all staff, based on the LGCS.	Current resource Service resource	Digital Transformation Projects Officer	March 2026
Digital and Data Team / all services	20. Re-structure and optimisation of EDDC website for all service pages and content.	Current resource Service resource	Digital Services Officer	March 2026
Digital and Data Team / HR	21. Re-structure and optimisation of EDDC Intranet for all service pages and content.	Current resource HR	Digital Services Officer	March 2026
Complaints/Housing	22. Work specifically to look at trends and themes arising from housing complaints and support the housing service to ensure compliance with the Housing	Current resources	Corporate Lead - Performance	March 2026

	Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023			
Bereavement Services	23. Introduce a new digital software system to record cemetery inspections and to assist the public to self-search for grave identification via the website.	Current resources	Licensing Manager	April 2025
Bereavement Services	24. To implement an increase in the burial fees and charges.	Current resources	Licensing Manager	April 2025
Licensing	25. To implement a fair, consistent, robust method of calculating fare tariff rates for hackney carriage vehicles.	Current resources	Licensing Manager	April 2025
Licensing	26. Full review of all licensing fees and charges for taxi and private hire, street trading, pavement licensing.	Current resources	Licensing Manager	September 2025
Licensing	27. Implementation of a policy for Pavement Licensing.	Current resources	Licensing Manager	September 2025
Licensing	28. Review and consult of the Statement of Licensing, Licensing Act 2003 Policy in line with the 5-year policy cycle, and to introduce a fee for classifying films.	Current resources	Licensing Manager	January 2026
Licensing	29. Implementation of a revised Street Trading policy and a review of existing fees and charges, to introduce an additional fee for holding a Street Trading Consent.	Current resources	Licensing Manager	September 2025
Legal	30. Provide professional legal support for delivery of the Council's key projects	Current resources	Legal Services Manager	Ongoing

Elections	31. Conduct the County Council elections free from legal challenge	Current resources	Elections Manager	May 2025
Monitoring Officer	32. Introduce Gifts and Hospitality Protocols for Officers and Members	Current resources	Monitoring Officer	April 2025
Monitoring Officer/HR	33. To conduct a review of the processes for the declaration of interests for staff	Current resources	Monitoring Officer Corporate Lead Human Resources	April 2025
Legal	34. To complete a Community Governance Review for Cranbrook	Current resources	Monitoring Officer/Legal Services Manager	April 2026
Comms Team	36. Introduction of Corporate Branding Guidelines	Current resources	Corporate Lead Communications & Engagement	Alison Pickering

### Section 3 – What we will measure in 2025-26: Performance targets

Service	3.1 Service performance indicators  Also include any performance indicators that support the council plan. (Indicators from the plan have been added as a starting point)	Target	How often – monthly, quarterly, bi-annually, annually	Responsible officer
Communications and Engagement	Number of consultations carried out and response rates.	TBA	Quarterly	Corporate Lead Communications & Engagement
Communications and Engagement	Monitoring profile information of the respondents to our surveys.	TBA	Quarterly	Corporate Lead Communications & Engagement
Communications and Engagement	Improvement of tenant and resident satisfaction results	TBA	Quarterly	Corporate Lead Communications & Engagement
Communications and Engagement	Numbers of media interactions.	TBA	Quarterly	Corporate Lead Communications & Engagement
Communications and Engagement	Numbers of visits to our website	TBA	Quarterly	Corporate Lead Communications & Engagement

Communications and Engagement	Numbers of subscribers to our digital newsletters	TBA	Quarterly	Corporate Lead Communications & Engagement
Communications and Engagement	Monitoring of the identified performance measures for the customer access strategy	TBA	TBA	Corporate Lead Communications & Engagement
Information Governance	Number of requests received under FOI/EIR % of FOI/EIR requests responded to within statutory timescales	N/A 95%	Annual Quarterly	Information Governance Manager
Complaints	% of stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days – Housing % of stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days – Non-Housing % of stage 2 complaints responded to within 20 working days – Housing % of stage 2 complaints responded to within 20 working days – Non-Housing	90% 90% 90% 90%	Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly Quarterly	Information Governance Manager
Complaints	Number of formal Stage 1 and 2 complaints received in last 4 quarters and breakdown by Service Area		Quarterly	Information Governance Manager
Complaints	Number of complaints escalated to the Ombudsman		Quarterly	Information Governance Manager
Democratic Services & Scrutiny	Produce 100% agendas within the statutory timescale Issue decision notices within statutory timescale	100% 100%	Quarterly Quarterly	Corporate Lead - Democratic Services



Digital and Data Team	Performance against targets set out in the Strata Business Plan		Quarterly	Housing Performance Lead
HR	Headcount and FTE		Part of Personnel Committee people data reports	Corporate Lead – Human Resources
HR	Turnover			
HR	Vacancy rate			
HR	Sickness absence			
HR	Employee feedback			
HR/Finance	Number and cost of agency workers			
HR	EDI data			