Governance Directorate Plan 2024-28

Version 2.0 April 2026 – March 2028

Director: Melanie Wellman Director of Governance

Portfolio holders: Cllr John Loudoun Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder Council, Corporate and External Engagement, Cllr Sarah Jackson Communications and Democracy, Cllr Nick Hookway Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism and Cllr Richard Jefferies Portfolio Holder Environment – Nature and Climate

Directorate Plan 2024-2028 (Version 2.0 for year 2026-27)

Contents Page

Notes for Director and Assistant Director/Service Leads

When you have completed your Directorate Plan:

- ✓ Save to Directorate Planning 2024-28 – Version 2026-27 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) however 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.

The HR team manages recruitment, employee relations, performance management, and staff development. Alongside this, they are responsible for ensuring compliance with equality legislation, promotes diversity and inclusion, and addresses any workplace discrimination issues.

Legal Services, provide legal advice and support to the council, ensuring that decisions and actions comply with the law. They provide legal support to the council's committees. They carry out the council's property transactions, deal with housing matters including gaining possession, advising on ASB matters, they handle legal disputes, review governance, contracts, and represent the council in legal proceedings. They also advise on planning, property, housing, licensing, environmental health and commercial matters.

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

The Procurement function is in the process of being set up and will provide support and advice to Council officers in relation to procurements, monitor spend across the organisation to ensure that contracts are in place and being managed, provide regular reporting to members on waivers of standing orders and provide training to officers and members in relation to procurement.

Data Protection and Freedom of Information, ensures compliance with privacy legislation, safeguarding the personal data held by the council as well as responding to individuals rights requests. Freedom of Information (FOI) requests are dealt with in line with legislation, ensuring that the public has access to information held by the council in accordance with legal requirements, as well as being published under the Publication Scheme.

Corporate Complaints, manages, investigates and responds to complaints from the public about council services. This can only happen with the collaboration and support of all other areas of the Council who hold the information. 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.

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.

Communications, Culture and Marketing

Communications, manages the council's internal and external communication strategies. They handle media relations, campaigns, social media, public information campaigns, and crisis communications. They ensure that residents, members, staff and stakeholders are informed about council services, decisions, and community initiatives.
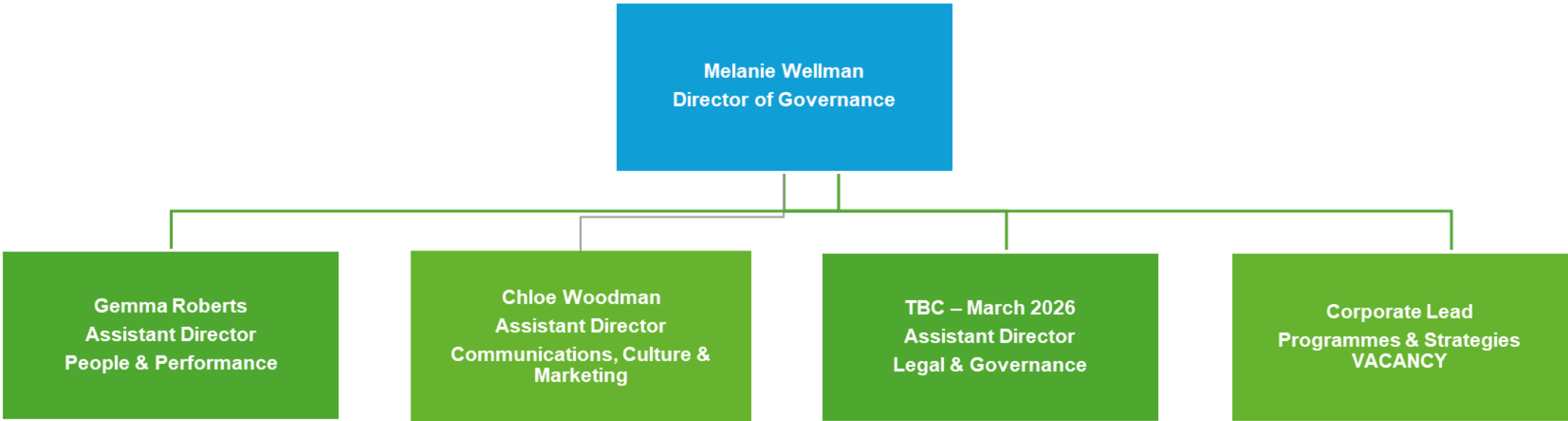
The Culture team delivers the Culture Strategy in support of community wellbeing and other council priorities such as the Climate Strategy, for example. As well as community arts and engagement programmes and artist development, they are responsible for the day to day running and commercial success of the Thelma Hulbert Gallery and Manor Pavillion Theatre.

The Events team Co-ordinate the delivery of safe events on EDDC land, around 200 each year (mainly 3rd party event organisers) across the Council. Including successful facilitation of flagship events including Sidmouth Jazz and Folk Festivals and weddings at Connaught Gardens.

Programmes and Strategies

This team will be responsible for providing oversight of corporate programmes and projects including the creation of a Programme Board. The Corporate Lead post that will oversee this is still being recruited to. Once the manager is in place they will also take on responsibility for economic development and climate change. At that stage the objectives for these areas will transfer over from the Place and Housing and Health Directorates.

Governance Directorate Structure 2026

Melanie Wellman
Director of Governance

Gemma Roberts
Assistant Director
People & Performance

Chloe Woodman
Assistant Director
Communications, Culture &
Marketing

TBC – March 2026
Assistant Director
Legal & Governance

Corporate Lead
Programmes & Strategies
VACANCY

Section 2.1 Supporting the Council Plan

Theme – Quality Services (QS)

Action ID	Key action	ID	Measure of success	Timeframe
CPA 33.	33. Increase engagement and communication with residents, tenants and businesses through a variety of channels with a focus on reaching all of the community including those who are digitally disadvantaged. To co-ordinate 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	Measure to be reported on quarterly

		QS6	Numbers of subscribers to our digital newsletters	Measure to be reported on quarterly.
CPA 38.	38. Conduct a review of our Constitution to ensure that it is up-to-date and legally robust.	QS14	Constitution Working Group established.	Continuing to review elements of the Constitution.
		QS15	Updated Constitution presented to and approved by Full Council.	September and December 2025 Further work to be undertaken in 2026 ready for Annual Council in May 2026.

CPA 40.	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.	01/10/2026
		QS19	Undertake a survey with Town and Parish Council's.	Conducted Q3 2025
		QS20	Development of Parish Charter agreed through partnership working with parish council's.	Ongoing. Results of survey currently being

				evaluated. Deadline for completion Q2 2026
CPA 41.	41 Develop the People Strategy and embed across the organisation	QS21	Adoption of the People Strategy and action plan.	Complete
		QS22	Monitor progress against the people strategy action plan	Progress to be reported annually
CPA 43.	43. 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	
CPA 45.	45. Ensure robust oversight in relation to Information Governance (including Data Protection compliance).	QS29	Creation of Information Governance Board.	Completed
		QS30	Annual report on the work of the Board presented to Audit and Governance Committee.	
		QS31	Agreed performance indicators for data protection	

Section 2.2 Directorate Objectives - cross directorate objectives / projects

Services involved	2.2 Cross Directorate objectives / projects we will deliver in 2026-27 which support the Council Plan Priorities to be monitored within directorates	Financial/ corporate resource	Lead Officers	Due Date
All	1. Support implementation of Council's key projects including LATCO, Leisure Review	HR, Legal, Digital, Comms, Data Protection, Democratic Services, programme management	Assistant Director People and Performance Assistant Director Legal and Governance Assistant Director Comms Culture and Marketing Corporate Lead, Programmes and Strategies	Various
Objectives from 2025/26 for review and continued inclusion in 2026/27				
All directorates	2. Monitoring of agreed action plan aligned to People Strategy.	HR ELT/SLT Cross organisation involvement of a variety of employee to deliver outcomes	Assistant Director – People & Performance	Ongoing – 2026 - 2028
All directorates		HR		Ongoing

Service		Financial/ corporate resource	Lead Officers	Due Date
	3. All job descriptions to be reviewed as part of annual PER process in preparation for LGR	All service engagement		
All directorates	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 2026
All directorates	5. Introduce consistent Performance Framework, including implementation of a new performance system to monitor KPI's and progress, alongside corporate risk.	Performance ELT/SLT support All services engagement	Performance Service Manager	System implementation by 1st April 2026 Performance Framework – Q1 - 2026

Section 2.3 Service level objectives / projects

Service	2.1 Service level objectives / projects we will deliver in 2026-27 which support the Council Plan Priorities to be monitored within directorates	Financial/ corporate resource	Lead Officers	Due Date

Democratic Services & Scrutiny	1. Hold an Annual Council meeting each year to make appointments to Committees, Outside Bodies, Forums, Working Groups and Panels	Current resource	Democratic Services Manager	30 May 2026 and 2027
Democratic Services & Scrutiny	2. To prepare a timetable of meetings for all council committee meetings for 2026/2027 and 2027/28 and publish on the Council's website	Current resource	Democratic Services Manager	31 March 2026/27
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	Democratic Services Manager	31 March 2026/27
Democratic Services and Scrutiny	4. To roll out the new report template	Current resource	Democratic Services Manager	28 February 2026
Democratic Services and Scrutiny	5. Deliver a comprehensive Member induction programme within 4 weeks of the election, with 100% of new Members attending at least one induction session.	Current resource	Democratic Services Manager	30 June 2027
People and Performance and Democratic Services and Scrutiny	6. Lead the delivery of a political awareness programme for staff with 75% of attendees reporting increased confidence in navigating Member relationships.	Current Resource	Democratic Services Manager/AD People and Performance/AD Comms,	31 March 2026
Democratic Services and Scrutiny	7. Achieve a minimum satisfaction score of 85% from new Members in post-induction feedback surveys.	Current Resource	Democratic Services Manager	30 July 2027

Legal and Governance	8. Promote adherence to the Member/Officer Protocol through training and support to officers and members	Current Resource	Director of Governance/Assistant Director)Legal and Governance)	Annually
Democratic Services & Scrutiny	9. 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	Democratic Services Manager	30 March 2026
Governance	10. Deliver actions in the Information Governance internal audit action plan	Current resource	Information Governance Manager	30 June 2026
HR	11. People Data – create PowerBI dashboard to support accessible people data to inform decision making and understanding.	Current resource HR, Strata Service Solutions Ltd, Digital Team, Finance	Assistant Director – People & Performance	30 March 2026
HR	12. Development of Managers Hub and associated development offer, include aspiring managers.	Current resource	Assistant Director – People & Performance	Phase 1 – Q1 2026 – Followed by ongoing development
All	13. Transition to Local Government Reorganisation	Current resource	Assistant Director People and Performance Assistant Director Legal and Governance	Ongoing

			Assistant Director Comms Culture and Marketing Corporate Lead, Programmes and Strategies	
All	14. Transformation of service in preparation for Local Government Reorganisation	Current Resource	Assistant Director People and Performance Assistant Director Legal and Governance Assistant Director Comms Culture and Marketing Corporate Lead, Programmes and Strategies	Ongoing
Performance and Risk Team / all services	15. Implementation of the new corporate performance and risk system across the council services.	Current resource	Management Information Officer	Timetable to be agreed with supplier
Digital Team / all services	16. 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 Team	17. Launch of Council-wide Digital Strategy	Current resource	Assistant Director – People & Performance	April 2026
Elections	18. Conduct elections and by-elections free from legal challenge	Current resources	Electoral Services Manager	2026/2027
Elections	19. Review and refresh procedures and processes applicable to running elections	Current resources	Assistant Director (Legal and Governance)/ Elections Manager	March 2026
Elections	20. Complete all statutory elections planning milestones on schedule, as verified by the Electoral Commission checklist.	Current Resources	Assistant Director (Legal and Governance)/ Elections Manager	Ongoing
Elections	21. Conduct a post-election review with key stakeholders to identify lessons learnt and areas for improvement within 1 month of each election	Current Resources	Elections Manager/Assistant Director (Legal and Governance)	As required
Monitoring Officer/HR	22. To conduct a review of the processes for the declaration of interests for staff	Current resources	Monitoring Officer Assistant Director People and Performance	April 2026

Legal	23. To complete a Community Governance Review for Cranbrook	Current resources	Monitoring Officer/ Assistant Director (Legal and Governance)	September 2027
Legal	24. Review of Legal resources to ensure fit for purpose	Current resources	Assistant Director (Legal and Governance)	March 2026
Procurement	25. Review of Contract Standing Orders	Current Resources	Assistant Director (Legal and Governance)	March 2026
Procurement	26. Implementation of Contract Management Audit actions	New Procurement Manager	Procurement Manager	September 2026
Procurement	27. Appointment of Procurement Manager	Current Resources	Assistant Director (Legal and Governance)	April 2026
Procurement	28. Deliver procurement compliance training to procuring officers and assess understanding	New Procurement Manager	Procurement Manager	September 2026
Programmes and Strategies	29. Develop of Project and Programme Management Strategy	Resource currently being secured	Corporate Lead (Programmes and Strategies)	31 April 2026

Programmes and Strategies	30. Implement a standardised project monitoring framework across all directorates by Q1 2026.	Resource currently being secured	Corporate Lead (Programmes and Strategies)	31 March 2026
Programmes and Strategies	31. Ensure 100% of active projects are registered and tracked using the agreed framework	Resource currently being secured	Corporate Lead (Programmes and Strategies)	31 March 2026
Programmes and Strategies	32. Deliver quarterly performance reports to SLT demonstrating project delivery status, risks and outcomes.	Resource currently being secured	Corporate Lead (Programmes and Strategies)	Quarterly
Programmes and Strategies	33. Conduct quarterly risk reviews for all major projects	Resource currently being secured	Corporate Lead (Programmes and Strategies)	Quarterly
Programmes and Strategies	34. Ensure all projects have up-to-date risk registers and mitigation plans	Resource currently being secured	Corporate Lead (Programmes and Strategies)	Ongoing
Programmes and Strategies	35. Report significant risks and financial variances on projects to ELT and Cabinet	Resource currently being secured	Corporate Lead (Programmes and Strategies)	Ongoing

Communications, Culture and Marketing	36. Finalise Team structure across Communications, Culture and Marketing, appoint permanent staff and integrate teams.	Current resource	Assistant Director - Communications, Culture & Marketing	Mar-26
Culture (Venues) & Events	37. Review of income generation opportunities to define targets and objectives.	Current resource	Venue Managers, Senior Events Officer & AD	Annually
Communications	38. Investigate implementation of media monitoring platform to enable better social listening and horizon scanning to ensure East Devon is part of local and national news agenda.	Saving from migration away from current platform	Assistant Director - Communications, Culture & Marketing	Dec-26
Communications	39. Set Communication priorities for each service/directorate from Directorate plans and implement communications plans for each to set an annual forward plan.	Current resource	Assistant Director - Communications, Culture & Marketing	Comms plans established by start of FY annually
Communications	40. Continue to improve communications visibility with senior staff and members. Shift Communications operating model from reactive to proactive with strategic implementation of content and channels.	Current resource	Assistant Director - Communications, Culture & Marketing	Ongoing
Culture	41. Deliver the Culture Strategy 2022-31 and action plan to improve access to cultural events for our residents.	Being reviewed	Assistant Director - Communications, Culture & Marketing	Progress to be reported quarterly
Tourism	42. Support the implementation of the Tourism Strategy to ensure development of high quality, inclusive, and sustainable culture and tourism offers.	Current resource	Culture Producer	Progress to be reported annually

Culture	43. Delivery of Arts Council England - Create our Space project. Working with young people, delivery workshops, schools workshops, events and attending festivals.	Current resource	THG Manager	April 2025 – March 2026
Culture	44. Continue to bid for available from Arts Council England and other funding bodies to support the Climate Emergency, growing engagement (including the Youth Network), emerging artists and EDI.	External funding dependent on successful bids	THG Manager & Cultural Producer	Continuous
Culture (THG)	45. Carbon literacy training for the team and the continued Climate Conversation programming and focus on the climate emergency through programming, interpretation and building management. Extend to Theatre team.	Current resource for THG	THG Manager & Theatre Manager	Ongoing
Events	46. Undertake review of fees and charging structure for Events with income generation objective	Current resource	AD & Senior Events Officer	Apr-26
Events	47. Create and implement an Events Strategy for the authority - including integration with Culture team to define culturally significant / community driven events.	Current resource	AD & Senior Events Officer	Apr-26
Events	48. Ensure that all events are compliant with upcoming change in Legislation "Martyn's Law" and that all agreements / contracts are reflective of this.	Current resource	Senior Events Officer	2027

Section 3 – What we will measure in 2026-27 **: 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	1. Number of consultations carried out and response rates.	TBA	Quarterly	Corporate Lead Communications & Engagement
Communications and Engagement	2. Monitoring profile information of the respondents to our surveys.	TBA	Quarterly	Corporate Lead Communications & Engagement
Communications and Engagement	3. Improvement of tenant and resident satisfaction results	TBA	Quarterly	Corporate Lead Communications & Engagement
Communications and Engagement	4. Numbers of media interactions.	TBA	Quarterly	Corporate Lead Communications & Engagement
Communications and Engagement	5. Numbers of visits to our website	TBA	Quarterly	Corporate Lead Communications & Engagement

Communications and Engagement	6. Numbers of subscribers to our digital newsletters	TBA	Quarterly	Corporate Lead Communications & Engagement
Communications and Engagement	7. Monitoring of the identified performance measures for the customer access strategy	TBA	TBA	Corporate Lead Communications & Engagement
Information Governance	8. 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	9. % 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	10. Number of formal Stage 1 and 2 complaints received in last 4 quarters and breakdown by Service Area		Quarterly	Information Governance Manager
Complaints	11. Number of complaints escalated to the Ombudsman		Quarterly	Information Governance Manager

Democratic Services & Scrutiny	12. Produce 100% agendas within the statutory timescale 13. Issue decision notices within statutory timescale	100% 100%	Quarterly Quarterly	Democratic Services Manager
Digital and Data Team	14. Performance against targets set out in the Strata Business Plan		Quarterly	Housing Performance Lead
HR	15. Headcount and FTE		Part of Personnel Committee people data reports	Corporate Lead – Human Resources
HR	16. Turnover			
HR	17. Vacancy rate			
HR	18. Sickness absence			
HR	19. Employee feedback			
HR/Finance	20. Number and cost of agency workers			
HR	21. EDI data			

Section 4 – What we will stop doing or reduce to enable us to carry out the above objectives/projects

Service	Corporate Priority Objectives/Projects	Description of Impact
HR	1. Review of Terms and Conditions – Employment Contract	Limited
All	2. Support to projects not already identified	Prioritisation will need to take place as the Governance Service is already at or beyond capacity