

Introduction

This Annual Governance Statement explains how the London Borough of Bexley (Bexley) has implemented and complies with its Code of Corporate Governance.

Local authorities are accountable to the public and other stakeholders for ensuring they have a sound system of governance. They are required to prepare and publish an annual governance statement (AGS) in accordance with statutory regulations of the appropriate national government. The statement should be consistent with the principles of good governance set out in Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (Governance Framework) (CIPFA and Solace, 2016). The statement includes the result of a review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control and provides assurance on whether the authority's governance arrangements are fit for purpose.

An addendum was released in May 2025 and covers the annual review of governance and the annual governance statement. It is the first update of the guidance since 2016 and replaces chapter 7 of the Framework publication. The 2016 publication and the seven principles of good governance remain unchanged.

The Council is required to review its governance arrangements each year. This is the Annual Governance Statement for 2025/26.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. Overall, the Council has assurance that the governance arrangements in place are fit for purpose and are operating effectively supporting the achievement of Bexley's corporate plan, #MakingBexleyEvenBetter 2022-2026 and its associated outcomes. Whilst there are key areas for enhancement, action plans are in place to address identified gaps to strengthen the governance arrangements.
- 1.2. During the 2025/26 financial year the Council continued to strengthen its governance arrangements. This included the following:
 - The Corporate Leadership Team continued to meet biweekly, is chaired by the Chief Executive, has permanent membership of Directors and select attendees such as the Monitoring Officer. Meetings are used to discuss and make key strategic decisions. All papers due to go to public meetings are reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team beforehand.
 - The Directorate Leadership Team meetings continued to meet biweekly, are chaired by Directors and are attended by their direct reports. Meetings are for information, discussion, steer and approval. Papers are typically sighted by Directorate Leadership Team meetings prior to review by the Corporate Leadership Team.
 - The Future Bexley Board, meet monthly, is chaired by the Chief Executive, and discusses the transformation programmes.
 - The Commissioning Board continued to meet every 6 weeks. The Board is chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by Directors, the Procurement Team, the Deputy Director of Finance & Property and those individuals who are looking to procure contracts. The Board reviews contracts that are due to be procured and confirms the procurement activity to be carried out, for example going out to full tender.

- During the year, the Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Board was formed. The Board meet 6-weekly, is chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by Directors and specific members of the Extended Leadership Team. The Board reviews health, safety and wellbeing concerns at a strategic level as well as reviewing key performance indicators (KPIs) for its buildings and housing properties.
- There was a re-introduction of the Information Governance Board, who meet quarterly and is chaired by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services (SIRO – Senior Responsible Risk Owner). The Director of Adult Social Care & Health (Caldicott Guardian), Monitoring Officer, The Data Protection Officer, SRO for Transformation - Customer Experience and Corporate Core (previously the Interim Deputy Director for HR, Customer Services and Digital), ICT Infrastructure & Security Manager, the Head of Democratic Services & Information Governance and others attend the Board. The Board provides oversight over compliance with legal, regulatory and ethical standards, oversight into relevant policies and procedures, information security risk (including cyber security) as well as records management including retention periods.
- A Ddat Board was established during the year. Chaired by the Chief Executive, attended by key senior officers across the Council. To date the Board has met once. The Board provides strategic leadership, ownership and prioritisation across all data, digital, analytics and technology activity within the Council. It ensures the lawful, ethical, efficient use of the Council's digital, data and technology assets, supporting corporate priorities, best value duties, statutory obligations and organisational transformation.

The Board is the Council's controlling body for all data and data assets, including directorate-owned systems and datasets.

- A delivery framework was developed during the year, which brings together several existing but not fully documented interdependent frameworks that support prioritisation, organisational focus, service delivery and improvement. This includes a new Target Operating Model which includes values and behaviours that sets out how we will work together, a strategic framework determining what we will achieve, alongside frameworks for performance, assurance and accountability. These will be embedded during 2026/27.
- During 2025/26 the Constitution was fully reviewed and was updated to enable further scrutiny by Members. For example, the introduction of a General Purposes and Audit Committee (GPAC) sub-committee covering Health & Safety, Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Planning. The revised Constitution was approved at Council in April 2026 and will be implemented throughout 2026/27.

1.3. The key governance arrangements that the Council will be improving over the next financial year include:

- Continuing to review and improve how we embed and deliver the Transformation Programme and how areas of good practice can be used in other ongoing programmes.
- Continuing our journey to enhance the Council's maturity in relation to Health & Safety and compliance with HSG65.
- Improving the Council's ability to plan for and respond to emergencies in alignment with the Civil Contingencies Act.
- Embedding the newly developed delivery frameworks, for example the Accountability, Assurance and Performance Frameworks. These will help to further instill accountability and transparency within the Council, monitor compliance and best practice and support staff to help the

Council achieve its outcomes in relation to the Corporate Plan of
#MakingBexleyEvenBetter.

- Post the May 2026 elections there will be new Members joining the Council. Work is already underway in developing and ensuring the most effective induction process takes place during their first 100 days in office. This is to help ensure clarity in roles and responsibilities and highlight key themes about the Council. This is also an opportunity to re-set in how Members and Officers work together to foster and continue the good working relationships already in place.



Signed: Paul Thorogood, Chief Executive

30 June 2026



Signed: Cllr David Leaf, Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources & Transformation

30 June 2026

2. Assessment of effectiveness

- 2.1. To determine the Council's effectiveness several factors were considered, assessed and determined. The assessment considered views from first, second and third lines to help ensure an accurate and balanced assessment is made.
- 2.2. **Best value:** Bexley has a legal statutory duty as per the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which the Council's functions are exercised having regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 2.3. During 2025/26 Bexley undertook a Star Chamber service review exercise. Senior staff across the business reviewed their service areas looking for efficiencies, effectiveness (via KPIs), economy and opportunities for growth. The information was included in a service pack and presented to the Leader and relevant Members for comment and challenge. The exercise was to help identify how we can obtain the greatest output from resources and achieve the required outcomes.
- 2.4. During 2025/26 Bexley undertook several initiatives to cover the seven best value themes of: leadership, partnership & community engagement, governance, culture, use of resources, service delivery and continuous improvement. Some examples have been highlighted below:
 - **Leadership:** The Corporate Leadership Team continued to build strong relationships with its Members, helping to ensure the Council is led in a joined up and informed manner. The Corporate Leadership Team with the Extended Leadership Team have undertaken several workshops throughout 2025/26 to identify how they can work seamlessly together to help ensure the most effective leadership model for the Council. A review as to where additional oversight and scrutiny may be beneficial has been embedded as part of regular conversations between the Corporate Leadership Team and the Extended Leadership Team. As a result, the Information Governance Board was re-introduced, the Corporate, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Board was formed, and plans are in place for further scrutiny across Council services during 2026/27. The DDat Board, introduced during 2025/26 provides strategic leadership, ownership and prioritisation across all data, digital, analytics and technology activity within the Council. It ensures the lawful, ethical, efficient use of the Council's digital, data and technology assets, supporting corporate priorities, best value duties, statutory obligations and organisational transformation
 - **Partnership and community engagement:** The SEND Local Area Partnership continues to work collaboratively with residents and groups in the community, being guided by genuine co-production by engaging with Bexley Voice, SENDIASS, Time2Talk and other local organisations. This is alongside the statutory joined up working more broadly between the Education Health and Social Care within the partnership.
 - **Governance:** Bexley has continued to operate with a strong governance structure to ensure appropriate steer, decision making, strategic direction and value. Transparency was increased during 2025/26 in terms of clarity as to what information is going to which core strategic meeting across the Council. This included meetings such as Directorate Leadership Team meetings, Corporate Leadership Team meetings, Key Statutory Officer meetings as well as Committee meetings. This helps to ensure that different teams and officers can feed into reports and that there is sufficient time to make key decisions or re-scope decisions.
 - **Culture:** Bexley has continued to operate and promote a culture of openness and transparency in line with the Nolan principles. During the year 2025/26, a Culture Transformation Programme was set up to develop a high performing workforce that embodies transformation. This includes the development of the Delivery Framework, incorporating a new Target Operating Model, Council Values, and Strategic, performance, assurance and accountability

frameworks to help promote a stronger culture of accountability and continuous improvement. The programme also involved the launch of the Bexley Leadership Academy, a manager 360 tool and bespoke development for Senior Leadership to help build a culture that supports transformation goals. The Culture Programme also improved the Council's culture of openness and transparency through the launch of a new, more comprehensive annual staff survey leading to concrete organisational and departmental action plans which are being implemented in 2026/27.

- **Service delivery & use of resources:** The Council amended its Star Chamber/Service Reviews in the summer of 2025 to help ensure the Council could deliver a balanced budget for 2026/27. Previously, to help ensure a balanced budget, a targeted approach was adopted, which focused on the most volatile demand led services. This review focused primarily on where the process needs to be different moving forward. For the process for 2026/27 all services were included. The new process hoped to be more automated, and this is a continued area of focus for 2027/28.
- The process reviewed spend, growth expectations and saving opportunities to identify where efficiencies could be made. Bexley sought to identify and ensure that statutory and other services can be delivered in the most efficient and effective way possible. The Service Reviews were considered by the Leader and relevant Cabinet Member alongside the Chief Executive, relevant Director and the Director of Finance & Corporate Services.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Bexley has continued to focus on continuous improvement over the past 12 months. Examples of improvements made include:
 - Children's services had a Local Area SEND Ofsted/CQC inspection within the period. The inspection confirmed that the partnership has taken effective action and made reasonable progress in addressing all areas identified in the full SEND Local Area Inspection that took place in December 2023. The implementation of recommendations identified previously demonstrates the Council's commitment to continuous improvement in areas identified for enhancement. These improvements help to offer a better service to our children and young adults in the borough.
 - Improvements to customer experience were made under the Customer Experience Strategy (2024-2028) that was incorporated into the Customer Transformation Programme. These include delivering a contact centre telephony solution tailored to safeguarding services, resulting in a reduction in the number of both overall calls and abandoned calls, with callers routed to the right place first time. A major upgrade to the Council website has been completed, making it simpler for residents to find information and complete tasks online, resulting in fewer calls to the contact centre. Further significant improvements are underway in areas such as waste and highways, and the introduction of AI to the website and contact centre to make it easier for customers to interact with the Council.
 - Bexley introduced a permanent Internal Audit Team who undertake audits across the Council and who follow up on previously provided recommendations to demonstrate where control improvements have been made. This helps to instill continuous improvement on an ongoing basis where there is continuous monitoring and oversight.
 - Frameworks such as the accountability and assurance frameworks have been developed and will be embedded during the 2026/27 financial year to further support continuous improvement in terms of responsibilities and where the Council obtains first, second- and third-line assurance helping to identify where there are any gaps.

Arrangements for the delivery of the principles relating to good governance.

- 2.5. The information provided in this section contains key examples of how Bexley has adhered to the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government during 2025/26. The information is not exhaustive, and more information can be found in the many strategies, plans, policies, and reports to be found on the www.Bexley.gov.uk website.

A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

- 2.6. **Behaving with Integrity:** Integrity, ethics, and legal compliance are central tenets of the ways in which Bexley Council operates and are incorporated into the Constitution and Code of Corporate Governance. The Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made, and the procedures to ensure efficient, transparent, and accountable operations. The Constitution also contains Council and Committee procedure rules, schemes of delegation, contract procedure rules, and financial regulations that define clearly how decisions are taken and where authority lies for decisions. During the year 2025/26, the Constitution was fully reviewed, refreshed and approved in April 2026.
- 2.7. The Council has Codes of Conduct for both Councillors and staff. These codes embed a strong public service ethos and high standards, ensuring that all actions are appropriate and that there are mechanisms in place to enforce adherence to ethical values and respect for the law.
- 2.8. The Bexley Plan 2022-2026 #MakingBexleyEvenBetter sets out the Council's principles which underpin all the Council's work. It aligns with our Target Operating Model (TOM), which provides the high-level design of the Council's operational structures, guidance for prioritised decision-making and areas for focused change. The Plan embeds the Values and Behaviours at the heart of all decision-making and performance.
- 2.9. **Demonstrating Strong Commitment to Ethical Values:** The Council complies with its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, which includes eliminating unlawful discrimination and advancing equality of opportunity between people with protected characteristics and those without.
- 2.10. The Council has a Whistleblowing policy and procedure (last reviewed 2025/26) which encourages staff and other concerned parties to feel confident about reporting instances of suspected unlawful conduct, financial malpractice, or actions that are dangerous to the public or environment. The Whistleblowing policy was promoted as part of the Council's Fraud Awareness week, November 2025.
- 2.11. The Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (2023-2026) underlines Bexley's commitment to making the borough a fairer place by identifying and tackling inequalities in a way that is evidence based, inquisitive and pragmatic.
- 2.12. As part of the development of a new Delivery Framework, the Council has refreshed its organisational values to enable better delivery of organisational priorities. These values will be rolled out in 2026/27 through mechanisms such as the Leadership Academy and performance management processes.
- 2.13. The Modern Slavery and Exploitation Strategy (2023-2028) sets out how the borough will work with partners to recognise and challenge modern slavery in Bexley.
- 2.14. The Members Code of Conduct Committee (scheduled twice per annum where required) promotes the maintenance of high standards of conduct by Members and co-opted Members of the Council and assists them to observe the authority's Code of Conduct.
- 2.15. **Respecting the Rule of Law:** Certain officers, e.g. the Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Finance Officer, have responsibilities in law over and above their obligations to the authority and to individual Councillors, and

Councillors must respect these obligations, must not obstruct officers in the discharge of these responsibilities, and must not victimise officers for discharging these responsibilities.

- 2.16. The Deputy Director, Legal and Democratic Services & Monitoring Officer provides on-going advice in connection with the legal standing of Council business and advice to Councillors on their responsibilities, alongside the maintenance/monitoring of the Constitution. To enable the Monitoring Officer to conduct their statutory role, in accordance with Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Monitoring Officer has access to all reports, attends key officer and committee meetings and can launch investigations in the eventuality of a breach of conduct.
- 2.17. The Constitution defines how the Council has implemented the 'local choice functions' set out in Schedule 2 of the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 which enables several functions to be exercised either by the Executive or reserved to the Council or a non-executive Committee of the Council. Section 1.5 of Part 2 of the Constitution depicts the functions, local choice and decision taker in a table for transparency.
- 2.18. The Scheme of Officer Delegation contained in the Constitution gives the Director of Finance and Corporate Services responsibility for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 2.19. Additionally, Bexley's External Auditors, Section 151 Officer and Head of Assurance have direct access, if necessary, to the Chairman of the General Purposes & Audit Committee.

B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

- 2.20. **Ensuring Openness:** The Council ensures transparency and openness in its decision-making processes by publishing all agendas, papers, minutes and decisions on the Council's website.
- 2.21. The Council has various committee, Board and Panel meetings including: Bexley's Schools Forum, Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Council, Planning Committees and so forth. Meeting agenda packs and minutes are available on the website, are attended by a range of stakeholders and provide transparency.
- 2.22. Councillors and senior officers meet on a regular basis to ensure that both Councillors and senior officers are kept up to date on key activities taking place at Bexley.
- 2.23. Bexley communicates with its Stakeholders through various platforms, including:
 - The Bexley website which provides useful information for residents in a clear and easily accessible way.
 - Information and press releases which are made on the Council's social media channels, through newspapers, through poster campaigns and the Bexley Magazine distributed to residents.
 - Partnership Forums and Groups, Service User Forums and Community Champions.
- 2.24. The Council has an online engagement platform 'Ask Bexley' which allows residents and partners to find and participate in consultation and engagement opportunities. This initiative aims to improve engagement and consultation with residents and communities by bringing a range of opportunities together and making it easier for everyone to get involved. Ask Bexley enables participants to register to receive updates. It also provides the results of the engagement activities so aiding openness and transparency.
- 2.25. **Engaging Comprehensively with Institutional Stakeholders:** The Council works with and engages with a range of organisations to serve and benefit its communities, residents, and businesses. These stakeholders include:
 - Local government organisations including neighbouring councils, the Greater London Authority, Local London, a partnership of nine London boroughs in

north-east and south-east London and London Councils. Membership of Local London and London Councils enables Bexley to play a role in coordinating efforts and addressing common challenges across the city whilst ensuring that the needs of the borough are considered.

- Public service providers, including the NHS organisations, the Metropolitan Police and fire services. The Bexley Wellbeing Partnership for example, brings together 17 local partner organisations with a shared goal of supporting and improving the health, care and wellbeing of local people and communities.
- Businesses and local enterprises that operate in the area. Bexley has a business support programme funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- Voluntary and third sector organisations, and Schools and colleges in the borough. Several activities are held at the Civic centre that are attended by these groups.

- 2.26. The Bexley Economic Growth Strategy was adopted in February 2026. Significant work was undertaken during the autumn term of 2025 in support of the document which is informed by the themes and principles of the Bexley 2050 Vision. This development work involves engaging with key partners and stakeholders that can help shape the borough over the next 15 years.
- 2.27. **Engaging with Individual Citizens and Service Users Effectively:** Individual elected Members (Councillors) engage with residents, businesses, and organisations in their Wards and across the borough in a variety of ways and bring the knowledge, information, and experiences to inform decision-making and overview and scrutiny processes within the Council. Councillors are kept up to date of any incidents that are taking place in their Ward in real time to ensure support is provided where required. This helps to foster good relationships between the Council, Councillors and residents.
- 2.28. Residents and other stakeholders subscribe to receive regular email updates from the Council to stay informed about a range of topics. As mentioned, residents can interact with the Council through social media platforms. Bexley encourages feedback and engagement from the community to improve services and develop strategies that reflect the needs and views of service users.
- 2.29. The Council's Customer Experience Strategy 2024-2028 was approved at Public Cabinet on 16 April 2024 and sets out a commitment to continuously listen to and learn the changing needs of Bexley residents and businesses. This includes working to engage more regularly with and seeking feedback from our customers through stakeholder sessions and an annual customer experience survey.
- 2.30. Most Council and Committee meetings are held in public with agendas and reports available on the Bexley website. Members of the public can ask questions in line with the Constitution and are supported to do so. Exemptions operate in limited circumstances, where consideration of confidential or exempt information means the public are excluded.
- 2.31. Live-streamed and archived webcasts of Council Meetings including Planning Committee Meetings, Public Cabinet Meetings and Overview and Scrutiny.
- 2.32. Councillors provide challenge and scrutiny within Council meetings helping to ensure we do the best for our staff, community and Bexley more widely.
- 2.33. Committee Meeting minutes and papers (covering different areas such as Finance & Corporate Services, Adult Social Care & Health, Children's Services & Education, and Places) are available on the Bexley website.
- 2.34. Ask Bexley is a platform for stakeholders to be actively involved in local decision making through a range of participation and engagement opportunities including surveys, voting, and meetings. The Ask Bexley platform contains easy read surveys and a video introduction in British Sign Language.
- 2.35. The Statement of Community Involvement sets out how residents can become

involved in planning in the London Borough of Bexley, both in deciding planning applications and preparing planning policy documents, including neighborhood plans.

2.36. The www.Bexley.gov.uk website provides information on how citizens can be involved and locate information on:

- Contacting their local councillor
- Overview and Scrutiny Committees
- Petitions and Deputations
- Making a complaint
- Reporting concerns/fraud

Additionally, the Freedom of Information publication scheme ensures key information about how the Council works is accessible to the public.

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

2.37. **Defining Outcomes:** The strategic plan #MakingBexleyEvenBetter sets out the Council's vision for Bexley during the period 2022-2026. Key aspects include:

- **Ambition for our borough:** Our priority is to secure investment in the borough so that current and future generations live in a thriving place.
- **Aspiration for our residents:** Our priority is to support residents to live the best lives possible and to reach their potential.
- **An Efficient and Effective Council:** We are an open, transparent customer-focused organisation. We have strong political leadership and use evidence-led decision making to deliver efficient high-quality services that meet our residents' needs.

The graphic consists of three columns. The top row features three circular icons with corresponding text: a rainbow over hands for 'Priority theme 1: Aspiration for our residents', houses for 'Priority theme 2: Ambition for our Borough', and a person climbing stairs for 'Priority theme 3: An Efficient and Effective Council'. Below these are three vertical panels. The first panel, 'Our principles', lists five points: 'We stand up for Bexley', 'We believe in a fairer Bexley', 'We work in partnership', 'We are committed to early intervention and prevention', and 'We embrace change and innovation. We are driven to make a difference for our residents.' The second panel, 'Our values', lists: 'Open and accessible', 'Innovation', 'Listening and responding', 'Leadership', 'Collaborate', and 'Impact'. The third panel, 'Action Delivery Plan', lists 'Activities' and 'Timescales'.

- 2.38. The Bexley Local Plan, which was formally adopted on April 26, 2023, outlines the planning policies and proposals for new developments covering the entire borough. It is a key document that guides decisions on land use and future developments in Bexley. The Local Plan includes:
- **Housing Provision:** The Local Plan addresses the need for new housing and sets targets for sustainable housing development.
 - **Economy, Retail, and Town Centres:** The Local Plan includes strategies to support the local economy and the development of town centres.
 - **Local Character and Design:** The Local Plan aims to preserve the local character and ensure high-quality design in new developments.
 - **Infrastructure Provision:** The Local Plan is accompanied by an Infrastructure Delivery Plan to support growth and ensure timely delivery of essential services.
 - **Environment:** The Local Plan includes measures to address climate change and promote sustainable development.
- 2.39. The Medium-Term Business Plan for 2025 was presented to and approved by Public Cabinet on 1 April 2025. The Plan introduced a medium-term approach to the business planning process, ensuring a strong strategic approach to identifying our priorities and allocation of resources. Details change throughout the financial year, from changes in key priorities (such as those driven by inspection outcomes) to changing legislative requirements, and therefore, sitting alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), the annual refresh of a five-year lookahead business plan enables the Council to identify risks and issues in advance in order to manage pressures appropriately. In addition, the interrelated, cohesive plan enables Bexley to have a single view across the whole Council. This demonstrates how individual directorate priorities and commitments are part of the whole, how Bexley are operating to deliver these, and moving towards the delivery of an overarching vision for the Council.
- 2.40. To deliver this vision the Council defines specific outcomes, performance indicators and actions and relates these to specific services. Operational and financial performance is reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team and Directorate Leadership Teams and reports are presented quarterly to Public Cabinet.
- 2.41. **Sustainable Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits:** The Council has a wide range of strategies and plans either in place or in development (over 80) and in operation to create stronger, healthier communities, protect Bexley's natural environment, climate and ecology, and drive economic prosperity. Some examples include:
- Economic Growth Strategy
 - Customer Experience Strategy and Digital Strategy
 - SEND/PfA Strategy
 - Learning, Skills and Employment Strategy
 - Towns Centre Strategy
 - Adult Social Care Vision Statement
 - Bexley Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023 to 2028
- 2.42. The Council developed and implemented a Transformation Programme during quarter three 2024/25. The Programme is designed to fundamentally change the way the Council operates, delivers value and change how the Council interacts with its environment. The Transformation Programme involves reshaping the Council's strategy, processes, culture, technology, and structure to achieve significant improvements in performance, resilience, and outcomes for residents and businesses. Bexley intends to address multiple challenges through establishing the

Transformation Programme. These include:

- increasing demand for services both from demographic changes and social need, inflationary pressures, growth requirements from additional regulation and delivery requirements.
- the need for opportunities for greater coherence and efficiency across the Council in service organisation and provision.
- the need for opportunities identified through a comprehensive review of the Council's operations by PWC.
- the opportunity for greater adoption of technology to reduce non-value adding, administrative and repetitive work alongside enhancing the opportunities for service innovation.
- During the period, an experienced Deputy Director of Transformation joined the Council with several new team members to ensure the delivery of the Transformation Programme and a more efficient and effective Council.

D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

- 2.43. Determining Interventions Bexley continues to prioritise and monitor its resources against agreed plans and outcomes, continually assessing value for money on behalf of its residents. During the 2025/26 financial year, service packs were introduced to support this process in identifying: areas of growth, where efficiencies can be made, and to identify opportunities.
- 2.44. Directorate Leadership Teams review management information in relation to their services adjusting for any known variances from the corporate plan or the Medium-Term-Financial Strategy.
- 2.45. The Council plans its activity at strategic, directorate and operational (service plan) levels through the budget and business planning cycle. The budget and business planning cycle considers the Council's statutory duties and the political vision. It also considers the views and activities of our internal and external stakeholders to ensure services are aligned and not duplicated.
- 2.46. Delivery of the strategic plan is supported by service plans, ensuring a 'golden thread'. Regular service level reporting provides management information for review and challenge. Bexley has and continues to develop a data warehouse as it recognises the enormous potential that the better use of our data assets creates for improved decision-making, and the identification of new opportunities and service improvements both in terms of delivery and value for money.
- 2.47. **Optimising Achievement of Intended Outcomes:** An LGA Peer Challenge Review of Finance was undertaken in January 2025. The review was improvement focussed and tailored to meet Bexley's needs. The review was designed to complement and add value to the Council's own performance and improvement focus. The scope of the review comprised financial leadership, financial strategy, planning and forecasting, decision making, financial outcomes and partnership and innovation. The review had a strong focus on Children's Services given the budget pressures and demand challenges in that area. The outcome of the review was presented to the General Purposes and Audit Committee in September. Twelve recommendations were raised as part of the review. Updates have been provided to the Corporate Leadership Team throughout the year to identify progress made. The recommendations have now been broadly implemented. At the end of November 2025 a follow-up visit took place to review progress against the 12 recommendations, the review team did not identify any further recommendations and were satisfied the 12 recommendations had been addressed.

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

- 2.48. **Developing the Organisation's Capacity:** The People Strategy was approved at

Public Cabinet in April 2024. The Strategy sets out a vision and the following six key priorities for the next four years:

- Efficient, innovative and local recruitment
- Recognising Commitment and Excellence
- Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Create a fair and inclusive working environment
- Growing our own workforce of the future
- Working together and communicating better.

- 2.49. Developing the Organisation's Capacity Over the course of 2025/26, a large number of key deliverables in the People Strategy were completed (many of which were accelerated through the Culture Programme). These included the reinstatement of the STARS Awards recognising high performance and positive behaviours across the Council, the launch of the Bexley Leadership Academy and improvements to our wellbeing support for staff.
- 2.50. Officers and Council Members receive induction training on the work of the Council, key elements of governance including the Constitution and Code of Conduct, and key policies that ensure legal compliance including information governance, health & safety and fraud & bribery.
- 2.51. Additionally, Members receive additional training relevant to specific roles, including dedicated training for Members of the Planning Committee, Licensing Committee and Pensions Committee. Members of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and General Purposes & Audit Committee have attended workshops to share examples of good practice. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen meet regularly to review new guidance and review the success of their approach, to coordinate work between Overview and Scrutiny Committees and to instill a deep understanding of their role and responsibilities.
- 2.52. During 2025/26 for example, Members were invited to awareness sessions regarding counter fraud and the ECCTA 2023 Act (Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023) as well as changes to how internal audit is undertaken following the changes from the Public Sector Internal Auditing Standards to the Global Internal Auditing Standards.
- 2.53. The Council provides a programme of learning and development to officers, managers and Members. This includes a programme of over 190 e-modules across a range of topics for staff, core training in areas such as customer services and complaints as well as profession-specific development. The Council supports a large number of apprenticeships alongside a well-established work experience programme with strong connections to local schools to build a strong pipeline of future talent.
- 2.54. Bexley is committed to promoting the physical and mental health and wellbeing of its workforce. Supporting mental health and wellbeing is one of the Council's six priorities in the People Strategy and over the course of 2025/26 a range of initiatives were implemented with the aim of improving the wellbeing of staff. These included mental health first aid training for staff, awareness raising of our Employee Assistant Programme and financial wellbeing support, and manager training. Wellbeing is also considered as part of the annual appraisal process for staff, the Performance, Wellbeing and Development Scheme.
- 2.55. **Developing the Capability of the Organisation's Leadership and Other Individuals:**

- 2.56. During the 2025/26 financial year, the Corporate Leadership Team and the Extended Leadership Team undertook a bespoke leadership development programme supported by SOLACE to enable them to better lead the Council's transformation agenda.
- 2.57. In addition, as part of the People Strategy the Council's Leadership Academy was introduced for Heads of Service and below. The Leadership Academy includes core training on manager skills, as well as wider leadership behaviours to enable them to: grow, lead and inspire. The Leadership Academy is delivered by the Council's Learning and Enterprise College and is aimed at managers and aspiring managers across the Council.
- 2.58. Additionally, many staff undertake professional training or are members of professional membership organisations and complete continuing professional development. This is being further built as part of the People Strategy and a transformation objective was added to each member of staff's annual appraisal for 2025/26.
- 2.59. The Council has in place a Top Management Review Panel, a committee that carries out the annual performance appraisals in respect of the Chief Executive and other members of the Corporate Leadership Team.

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

- 2.60. **Managing risk:** The Council operates a risk management framework that aids the identification, analysis and mitigation of risks to the Council's strategic objectives, reputation, finances and other assets and compliance with statutory and regulatory obligations. The risk framework uses the three lines model.
- 2.61. The Strategic Risk Register was re-cast in 2025/26 via a facilitated workshop with an external provider. This provided an opportunity to review the way in which risk is managed at the Council with a subsequent Risk Management policy developed and approved by the General Purposes and Audit Committee. The strategic risk register articulates the key risks impacting the Council, informs decision making, and provides assurance on current actions and identifies planned actions to manage key risks.
- 2.62. Directorate and functional risk registers are used to manage risks and will continue to be refined during the 2026/27 financial year to align to the strategic risk register.
- 2.63. The General Purpose and Audit Committee will continue to receive regular risk management update reports for each meeting identifying any key changes since the last. Work continues to develop Bexley's risk management approach to develop a Council-wide risk aware workforce. A risk appetite workshop is expected to take place during 2026/27.
- 2.64. **Managing performance:** The Council has developed a comprehensive suite of key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor service delivery whether services are internal or through external providers. The Integrated Performance report is produced monthly and contains trend analysis both over time and comparing Bexley's performance against national and regional trends. Exceptions, both positive and negative are identified, and the Directorate (service), finance and risk functions provide a narrative response identifying necessary remedial action, potential financial impact and associated risks. The integration and analysis of performance, finance, workforce intelligence and complaints support effective resource allocation, and identifies potential challenges and remedies. The report is provided

to the Corporate Leadership Team each month and to Cabinet each quarter.

- 2.65. The Council's governance structure includes four scrutiny committees which are aligned with the Council's directorates (with the exception of Chief Executives Directorate which is included in the Finance & Corporate Services scrutiny committee). The scrutiny committees have several key powers that enable them to effectively oversee and investigate the Council's work, as well as that of its partners. These include:
- Investigative authority: Scrutiny Committees can investigate local issues and make recommendations to the Cabinet to improve services for residents in the borough.
 - Performance monitoring: Scrutiny Committees are responsible for challenging the performance including that of the Council's partners, including addressing local health service issues and crime and disorder.
 - Specific Remits: Each scrutiny committee has a specific remit, such as adult social care, children's services, finance, corporate services, and places, which includes a wide range of services from public health to economic development. These powers ensure that the scrutiny committees provide thorough oversight and contribute to the continuous improvement of council services and community wellbeing and development.
- 2.66. **Robust internal control:** The Council's control environment comprises detective and preventative controls, Financial Regulations, Contract Procurement Rules and a wider framework of policies and procedures to help ensure the robustness of the control environment. Preventative controls such as segregation of duties helps to prevent fraud and error and detective controls such as the reconfiguration of CCTV cameras around the borough, which can be pulled upon should they be needed by organisations such as the police. The Council's internal audit and other review functions as well as risk management activities also strengthen internal control.
- 2.67. The Council has completed a self-assessment of its compliance with the Local Government Association's Improvement and assurance framework for local government to gain assurance on the performance of its services and of its corporate governance.
- 2.68. **Managing Data:** The processing of personal and sometimes sensitive data is essential to many of the services and functions carried out by local authorities. Bexley complies with data protection legislation, which includes UK General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 to ensure processing is carried out fairly, lawfully and transparently. The Council uses SharePoint for the storing of most of its data. On saving documentation to SharePoint, staff must document whether personal information is retained in the document. If it is, data will be deleted after a set period (1 year), where no personal data is present, data is deleted within 7 years.
- 2.69. The Council regularly reviews its suite of data governance policies and procedures and data processing activities to ensure they remain consistent with the law, and compliant with advice and codes of practice issued by the Information Commissioner's Office. The Information Governance Board was re-introduced during the year to provide strategic oversight of information governance across the Council.
- 2.70. All staff are required to complete mandatory data protection training which is recorded on the learning platform Evolve. Supplementary training is provided to staff who use and control personal and sensitive data. Ensuring up to date training records are in place is part of the Council's annual appraisal process.

- 2.71. **Strong Public Financial Management:** The Council's finances are managed in a manner which safeguards public money, promotes value for money and financial stewardship. This approach is used in support of both the Council's long-term strategic objectives, and short and medium term financial and operational plans.
- 2.72. The Chief Finance Officer (Director of Finance & Corporate Services) ensures that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, proper financial records and accounts are kept and oversee an effective system of internal financial control. The Chief Finance Officer ensures well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control including management of financial risks, systems and processes. The Constitution details the financial regulations which underpin the financial arrangements. The Financial Regulations were most recently reviewed and revised during 2025/26 and subsequently approved in April 2026. The Financial Regulations are supplemented by Contract Procedure Rules and the Code of Practice. All existing contracts or new requirements with a value greater than £250,000 pa are required to follow the Tollgate approval process and be authorised by the Commissioning Board before the procurement process can begin.
- 2.73. To further instill transparency and oversight arrangements in the procurement process at a member level, it was approved in April 2026, that any term contracts over £250k per annum will subsequently go to Cabinet for review.
- 2.74. Debt Board that meets monthly to focus on policies, procedures and resources to improve debt recovery and monitoring; improve cash flow; and reduce the level of write-offs and bad debt provision.
- 2.75. The Transformation Board was established in January 2025 as the ultimate decision-making body for the transformation portfolio. Chaired by the Chief Executive, its core focus is to ensure One Council alignment, resolve cross-organisational constraints and provide strategic oversight of the portfolio's health and financial contribution to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Board holds final authority for Detailed Business Cases (DBC's), change control and new investment decisions. The Transformation Board interfaces with the Resources Board - which provides high-level political and financial oversight involving the Leader and statutory officers - by ensuring that transformation-led efficiencies and investment requirements are accurately reflected in the Council's wider financial planning, resource prioritisation, and budget-setting processes.
- 2.76. The Corporate Spend Panel continued to operate throughout 2025/26. The process was enhanced to aid in efficiency and effectiveness. During 2025/26 the process changed so that any spend requests proceed through the directorate in which it is raised, requiring Head of Service, Deputy Director and Director sign off. Automated emails are sent to confirm approval or rejection of spend requests. A purchase order can only be set up where there is evidence of an approved spend request. For the Councils 'non-PO' invoices, those authorizing must confirm the spend request was approved,
- 2.77. The Council maintains clear policies and arrangements in respect of counter fraud and anti-corruption. A revised Anti-Fraud, Anti Money laundering, Anti-Bribery and Anti-Corruption policy was approved by the General Purposes and Audit Committee in 2025/26, with an updated Whistleblowing policy updated on the Council's website in November 2025.
- 2.78. Fraud detection is enhanced through participation in data-matching exercises with the National Fraud Initiative and best practice kept current through Membership to the National Anti-Fraud Network. To further support the robustness of fraud management at the Council, Bexley invested in FraudHub to undertake additional checks which may highlight instances of potential fraud concerns. Regular updates of anti-fraud activities which take place are provided to the General Purposes and Audit Committee. A fraud awareness session was also provided to Councillors in November 2025 as part of fraud awareness week.
- 2.79. The Council's Contract Procedure Rules, procurement to pay processes and contact

management activity are designed to ensure that the Council obtains best value for money.

- 2.80. The Council has an audit committee, the General Purposes and Audit Committee, in line with CIPFA's 'Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police (2018)', which provides an independent and high-level resource to support good governance and strong public financial management. The Committee receives assurance reports regarding risk management, the internal control environment, and counter fraud activity. In October 2025, the General Purposes and Audit Committee received an awareness session regarding the new Global Internal Auditing Standards. This included how Bexley complied with the new standards, any areas of focus and how these differed from the Public Sector Internal Audit standards.
- 2.81. The General Purposes and Audit Committee reviews and ratifies an annual counter fraud work plan developed and maintained in accordance with the Code of Practice on Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption (CIPFA, 2014). The General Purposes and Audit Committee receive an update on the delivery of the annual counter fraud work plan at each of its meetings.

G: Implementing good practice in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability

- 2.82. **Implementing Good Practice in Transparency:** The Council publishes the data required by the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 on the Council's website.
- 2.83. The Council's website is designed to be accessible to as many users as possible. Users of the website can make several adaptations including colours, font size, use speech recognition software and can listen to most of the website using a screen reader. Members of the public can also request a document in an accessible format including braille.
- 2.84. To aid with transparency and accountability to residents, businesses and interested parties, minutes of key meetings, decisions, items of expenditure exceeding £500 (net), and registers of interest are published on the Council's website. Also detail will be any approvals pertaining to BexleyCo Limited's (the Council's wholly owned subsidiary) annual business plan and the sanctioning of restricted financial matters relating to the company e.g., business loans and property and land purchases.
- 2.85. The Council has processes in place to ensure the Council provides clear, accurate and impartial information. The information supports the regular review of the Council's finances, ensuring the Medium-Term Financial Strategy is aligned with strategic objectives and that public money is safeguarded.
- 2.86. The Accountability Framework, delivered in 2025/26 and due to be embedded during 2026/27 clearly sets out accountability levels within the Council in terms of responsible, accountable, consulted and informed. It is anticipated that this Framework will support in clarity of roles and responsibilities, aid in transparency and ensure appropriate accountability.
- 2.87. **Implementing Good Practices in Reporting:** The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (as amended) require Bexley to produce a Statement of Accounts. It is an important public demonstration of the effective stewardship over public money carried out by the Council. Bexley ensures that the plain language 'narrative statement' within the Statement of Accounts is used as an opportunity for the council to put across important messages about its finances and to clarify some of the more technical issues in the accounts.
- 2.88. **Assurance and Effective Accountability:** The General Purposes and Audit Committee monitors the implementation of internal and external audit recommendations. The Council's external auditors, Ernst & Young provide a management letter and report on the Council's performance in implementing recommendations effectively and within agreed timescales.
- 2.89. The Council has adopted the Global Internal Audit Standards from 1 April 2025, which set out the standards for internal audit for the period to 31 March 2026. Elements of compliance include presenting a draft annual internal audit plan and

Audit Charter to the General Purposes and Audit Committee for review, comment and ratification. A comparison against the standards was undertaken by the Head of Assurance when she joined the Council in Q2 of 2025/26. Areas for improvement were discussed with the General Purposes and Audit Committee with actions ongoing to bridge any identified gaps.

H: Results of the external assurance providers and internal audit annual opinion.

2.90. Examples of external assurance gained during 2025/26 have come from the following:

- Ofsted/CQC SEND Local Area re- inspection were satisfied that areas requiring improvement have been made by the local area including Children's Services.
- The Safety Valve Programme, which ended on 31 March 2026, was delivered and in delivering this the Council was under continuous external DfE and internal Overview and Scrutiny monitoring.
- A CQC inspection for Adults took place in Q3 of the year. The results were still outstanding at the time of drafting this report.
- Health and Safety Executive – Two improvement notices were issued at the start of 2025/26 in relation to Asbestos management in buildings and in relation to the Council's museum collections. As a result, the Council has put in several measures to manage Health and Safety across the Council.

2.91. **Internal Audit Opinion:** At the time of drafting the Annual Governance Statement, the annual opinion for internal audit is still in development. It is anticipated that the level of assurance will be borderline between Limited and Reasonable Assurance. It should be noted that the 2025/26 internal audit plan contained 34 general internal audits and 4 school audits. This is an increase in internal audits from previous years.

2.92. **Overall agreement of the Annual Governance Statement:** The overall opinion for the Annual Governance Statement and our assessment of the effectiveness of the governance arrangements in place has been agreed in consultation with several key stakeholders across the Council. This includes: the Leader of the Council, The Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and Corporate Services (s151 officer), The Monitoring Officer, Deputy Director of Finance and Property (Dep s151 officer), Deputy Director of HR, Business Support and Digital, Head of Assurance and input from various other individuals from across the Council.

2.93. Throughout the year, the effectiveness of governance arrangements is monitored and evaluated, Activity includes:

- Internal meetings: Corporate Leadership Team, Directorate Leadership Team and various other Board meetings as noted in section 1.2 of this report, which lessons learnt being readily considered and implemented.
- External meetings: Several external public meetings take place with Members where arrangements are endorsed, challenged and monitored. A full list of these committees and meetings can be found on the London Borough of Bexley webpage, include up to date terms of references, agendas and minutes as well as recordings of meetings. Examples of meetings include: Public Cabinet, General Purpose and Audit Committee and Overview and Scrutiny meetings.
- External visits from inspectors and regulators including Ofsted and the Health and Safety Executive.
- Third line capability, a newly established permanent Internal Audit Team reviewing internal controls and governance arrangements across the Council, providing proportionate recommendations where there are identified areas of weakness.

3. How we have improved our governance arrangements in 2025/26

3.1. During 2025/26 the Council has had a strong focus on continuing to improve and build on areas where we have identified areas for improvement. Details can be found in Appendix I of the areas for improvement identified in previous years and the progress made in addressing those areas for enhancement. Examples include the following:

- Introduction of a Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Board to have strategic oversight covering strategic health, safety and wellbeing matters.
- The re-introduction of the Information Governance Board to provide oversight and monitor compliance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR.
- STAR chamber and service pack reviews to provide oversight over key financial commitments and to identify savings and opportunities.
- The ongoing review of the Target Operating Model for the directorates and the Council as a whole.
- The Introduction of the Future Bexley Board to keep abreast of key programmes and delivery across the Council.
- The introduction of a DDaT Board.
- The development of the Accountability and Assurance frameworks to be implemented during 2026/27.
- The complete review of the Constitution to be implemented and embedded during 2026/27.

4. Where our governance needs to improve

4.1. Appendix I details any areas from previous years that still require further refinement.

4.2. Appendix II details areas identified during 2025/26 that require improvement during 2026/27. These include:

- The Council's arrangements for emergencies in the borough, identified via an external review. An action plan is in development and will be implemented during 2026/27.
- Better oversight and improved governance arrangements in relation to Health & Safety is required. This was Identified via an inspection from the Health and Safety Executive. As a result of the inspection, a Health, Safety and Wellbeing Board was established, and an improvement plan for health & safety has been agreed and is fully underway.
- Clarity over accountability was identified internally as an area for development and because of this and other work in transit, an accountability framework has been developed and will be implemented during 2026/27.
- The Constitution had not been reviewed for several years. An internal decision was made to completely review and rewrite the Constitution to align to current working practices and to make easier to understand. The Constitution was approved in April 2026 and will be implemented during 2026/27.

5. Forward look on governance

5.1. The Council continues to look for where governance arrangements can be enhanced to ensure transparency and accountability. These areas have been highlighted in Appendix II. In addition, the Delivery Framework which was ratified by Cabinet in April 2026 will further support a robust governance structure.

APPENDIX 1 – Governance Issues

SECTION A – Governance Issues and Challenges in 2025/26 and Prior Years

Previous Annual Governance Statements have provided areas for improvement. Where these were carried over from previous year's the Council has provided an assessment of the progress made against these during the 2025/26 year below. Some of these are now closed, and some will be carried over for further embedding in 2026/27.

Issue to be Addressed	Health & Safety of Council Properties
Responsible Officer	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Details	This issue highlights a potential risk of non-compliance with Health & Safety regulations within properties owned and leased by the Council and the compliance management arrangements that ensure all properties are safe for residents, tenants, visitors and staff. The Council receives external accreditation through ISO45001 which is reviewed every six months, and this has and continues to be maintained. Good progress has been made since 2021/22 however further work needs to take place to give the level of internal assurance required at a more detailed and operational level.
Planned Action 2025/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the 2025/26 element of the Asset Management Strategy. • Use the Major Projects team to strengthen building based health and safety compliance. • Set up a new Corporate Health & Safety Board from June 2025. The Chief Executive will be the chairman and representation by all Directorates will be at the Director or Deputy Director level. The Board will oversee policy development and compliance, audits for health and safety and compliance.
End of year review 2025/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset management strategy comment • Building based compliance – • A Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Board was put in place during the 2025/26 financial year, with meetings taking place approximately every 6 weeks. The Board is chaired by the Chief Executive, attended by all Directors, relevant Deputy Directors and the Head of Assurance. • The Council received two notices from the Health and Safety Executive during the 2025/26 year regarding the management of asbestos. The findings in the notices have been addressed, and the Council has been proactively providing the HSE with regular updates on progress. • Other key changes have taken place, including the appointment of a full-time Interim Head of Health and Safety to help move the Council into a mature Health and Safety fora as well as a strong focus on the optimum reporting arrangements and key performance indicators to be measured, monitored and reported on.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Council is working towards compliance with HSG65.
Planned action 2026/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to implement a health and safety aware culture across the council.• Document the training needs for all staff across the Council.• Continue on the Council's journey to be compliant with HSG65.• Continue to implement the corporate landlord model.• Further enhance compliance reporting in 2026/27.

Issue to be Addressed	Setting a Balanced Budget for 2025/26
Responsible Officer	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget, Capital Management Strategy, Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Programme for 2025/26 • The Director of Finance and Corporate Services will monitor and report to Members regularly on the in-year budget monitoring position and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy through Public Cabinet, Scrutiny and wider briefings • Budget Managers will manage their budgets within agreed parameters and put in place recovery plan where this cannot be achieved. • Modelling, stress testing and analysis of inflationary pressures to understand the impact of inflation, demand for services, income and expenditure on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. • There is significant uncertainty to the future of local government funding. The Council are expecting from the government in 2025/26 the business rates review, a multi-year settlement and a fair funding review. The impact of which is unknown, and timescales are unclear which presents a risk to the Council.
Planned Action 2025/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to review the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 to 2028/29. • Continue to lobby the government for the best detail for Bexley and to maximise funding opportunities.
End of year review 2025/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A balanced budget has been set for 2026/27. Several financial intervention activities were undertaken to ensure the most efficient and effective use of resources. One example includes the introduction of service packs. This item is now closed, however, the Council is continuing to find various pressures in terms of demand for its services.

Issue to be Addressed	Impact of the Transformation Programme on the Council
Responsible Officer	Chief Executive
Details	<p>The Transformation initiative and programmes will play a key part in the Council's best value duty under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999, particularly in the areas of finance, service delivery, governance and culture. The duty requires a best value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the ways its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Bexley's Transformation programme is designed to address multiple challenges, improve efficiency and achieve long-term savings as well as bringing about a change in organisational culture.</p> <p>Delivery of the Transformation programme will incur costs and will necessitate the use of existing staff and resources at a time when finances are stretched. Bexley is committed to delivering the Transformation programme in order to achieve its long-term strategic aims and to improve its long-term financial stability.</p>
Planned Action 2025/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a paper in July 2025 to Public Cabinet, setting out the Council's approach to Transformation and follow this with quarterly updates. • Continue with a Transformation Board for 2025/26 onwards to oversee development of the programme and the business cases and their delivery. Report by exception to the Resources Board. • Ensure the impact of the Transformation Programme is included in the Medium-Term Financial Strategy at the correct time to show the anticipated financial benefit. • Ensure resources and capacity is made available to support the delivery of the programme and ensure benefits and impact are monitored. • Continue to review the Transformation Programme and new ways of working to ensure the programme continues to align to the Council's governance arrangements or the governance arrangements are updated as necessary and there is clear and transparent decision making.

<p>End of year review 2025/26</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council maintained a transparent reporting cycle, starting with the initial endorsement of the transformation approach in July 2025. This was followed by detailed position updates to the Public Cabinet in November 2025 and January 2026. • The Future Bexley Board meets monthly to provide strategic direction and approve business cases. By November 2025, four of five Outline Business Cases (OBCs) for the core programmes were approved, with the final Commercialisation OBC scheduled. • The Portfolio has successfully moved from planning to delivery. A total of £3.630m in validated savings has been confirmed for the 2026/27 financial year and is included in the MTFS. • The Council transitioned from a front-loaded, one-off investment model in 2025/26 to a permanent, internal transformation team starting in 2026/27. This ensures the Council has the in-house expertise to sustain and grow savings without relying on external consultants. Following an in-house recruitment campaign that attracted over 300 applications, more than 50% of the permanent recruits are Bexley residents, ensuring local expertise drives Council change. • To improve efficiency, the Children’s Services programme was reframed as Whole Life Transformation. This change integrates Adult Social Care and Health workstreams to create an integrated approach for supporting vulnerable residents.
<p>Planned action for 2026/27</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide comprehensive position updates to Public Cabinet in July 2026, November 2026 and February 2027 to ensure transparent tracking of transformation progress and decision-making. • Ensure the rigorous delivery and tracking of the £3.630m in validated Phase 1 savings to meet the Council’s firm commitments for the 2026/27 financial year. • Initiate the validation and delivery of Phase 2 opportunities, targeting an additional 27m in aspirational savings to support the projected £18.554m cumulated net benefit by 2029/30. • Draft and public a comprehensive Future Bexley Strategy to formally frame the Council’s long-term transformation ambition and the strategic integrated delivery model. • Implement a robust portfolio assurance framework via an Internal Audit Advisory Review to ensure strong grip, pace and due diligence throughout the programme lifecycle. • Scale the Whole Life Transformation programme by fully embedding the integrated Adult Social Care and Health workstreams to maximise service efficiency across the life course of vulnerable residents.

SECTION B – Governance Issues and Challenges for 2026/27

The 2025/26 AGS has identified two governance challenges for 2026/27 where improvements in Bexley governance arrangements would enable the Council to best meet those challenges.

Issue to be Addressed	Improving Governance arrangements over emergency planning
Responsible Officer	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• External consultants (Numid) were commissioned by Bexley to undertake a review of the Council’s arrangements in place for emergency planning and resilience. It was identified that there were several areas where improvements are required to ensure compliance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 should there be an emergency; alignment to the Resilience Standards for London (RSL) were also considered.• Initial action has been taken to improve governance arrangements; this includes the development of a GPAC sub-committee where emergency and business continuity planning arrangements and activities will be discussed. The sub-committee as per the approved Constitution, will take place twice per annum.
Planned Action 2026/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review and begin to implement the recommendations from the external review proportionately.• Implement a regular cycle of assurance activity to improve the robustness of the service and arrangements in place. Report on proportionate findings to the most appropriate group (DLT/CLT/GPAC sub-committee)• Implement an appropriate governance and working structure to ensure the Council is prepared for and can effectively respond to and recover from a major emergency, ensuring individuals are competent to undertake their roles both strategically and operationally.

Issue to be Addressed	Improving the maturity and compliance of Health and Safety across the Council against HSG65.
Responsible Officer	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Health and Safety Executive issued two notices to the Council in relation to Health and Safety, specifically in relation to Asbestos management during 2025/26. • The two notices were addressed once formally received. • This was an opportunity for the Council to review how Health and Safety is managed at Bexley and as a result measures have been put in place to enhance governance around health and safety and more generally. For example, the introduction of a Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Board, chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by senior staff. • An interim and very experienced Head of Health & Safety has been introduced to lead on the Health and Safety development programme. • An action plan has been developed to help ensure full and proportionate compliance against HSG65. Progress against the plan is monitored via the Corporate, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Board.
Planned Action 2026/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to hold regular Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing meetings for senior members of the Council. • The revised Constitution, approved in April 2026, now sets out a sub-committee of the General Purposes and Audit Committee, which will be a forum, held twice per annum to present health and safety matters to Councillors and an opportunity for them to ask related questions. • Continue to implement the areas for improvement in the action plan.