

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a silver pen, pointing at a bar chart displayed on a tablet screen. The chart features several horizontal bars in shades of olive green and brown, set against a blue grid background. The person is wearing a blue patterned shirt. The text of the report is overlaid on the left side of the image.

East Suffolk Council Auditor's Annual Report

Year ended 31 March 2024

24 April 2025



Audit and Governance Committee
East Suffolk Council
East Suffolk House
Station Road
Melton
Woodbridge
IP12 1RT

24 April 2025

Dear Audit and Governance Committee Members

2023/24 Auditor's Annual Report

We are pleased to attach our Auditor's Annual Report including the commentary on the Value for Money (VFM) arrangements for East Suffolk Council. This report and commentary explains the work we have undertaken during the year and highlights any significant weaknesses identified along with recommendations for improvement. The commentary covers our findings for audit year 2023/24.

This report is intended to draw to the attention of the East Suffolk Council's any relevant issues arising from our work. It is not intended for, and should not be used for, any other purpose.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss the contents of this report with you at the Audit and Governance Committee meeting on 14 July 2025

Yours faithfully

David Riglar

Partner

For and on behalf of Ernst & Young LLP

Encl

Contents

01

Executive Summary



02

Audit of the financial statements



03

Value for Money Commentary



04

Appendices



Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) issued the "Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies". It is available from the PSAA website ([Statement of responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies \(from 2023/24 audits\) - PSAA](#)). The Statement of responsibilities serves as the formal terms of engagement between appointed auditors and audited bodies. It summarises where the different responsibilities of auditors and audited bodies begin and end, and what is to be expected of the audited body in certain areas.

The "Terms of Appointment and further guidance (updated July 2021)" issued by the PSAA sets out additional requirements that auditors must comply with, over and above those set out in the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and in legislation, and covers matters of practice and procedure which are of a recurring nature.

This report is made solely to the Audit & Governance Committee and management of East Suffolk Council in accordance with the statement of responsibilities. Our work has been undertaken so that we might state to Audit & Governance Committee and management of East Suffolk Council those matters we are required to state to them in this report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than Audit & Governance Committee and management of East Suffolk Council for this report or for the opinions we have formed. It should not be provided to any third-party without our prior written consent.



01 Executive Summary



Executive Summary

Purpose

The purpose of the auditor's annual report is to bring together all of the auditor's work over the year and the value for money commentary, including confirmation of the opinion given on the financial statements; and, by exception, reference to any reporting by the auditor using their powers under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. In doing so, we comply with the requirements of the 2024 Code of Audit Practice (the Code) published in November 2024 and the supporting guidance of the National Audit Office (NAO) published within their Auditor Guidance Note 3 (AGN 03). This commentary aims to draw to the attention of the Council and the wider public relevant issues from our work including recommendations arising in the current year and follow-up of recommendations issued previously, along with the auditor's view as to whether they have been implemented satisfactorily.

The 2024 Code paragraph 4.10 has suspended the requirement to issue an auditor's annual report by 30 November. It states that auditors may exercise judgement to determine when to issue their annual report including their commentary on arrangements to secure value for money.

Responsibilities of the appointed auditor

We have undertaken our 2023/24 audit work in accordance with the Audit Plan that we issued on 26 February 2024. We have complied with the NAO's 2024 Code of Audit Practice, other guidance issued by the NAO and International Standards on Auditing (UK).

As auditors we are responsible for:

Expressing an opinion on:

- the 2023/24 financial statements;
- conclusions relation to going concern; and
- the consistency of other information published with the financial statements, including the narrative statement.

Reporting by exception:

- if the annual governance statement does not comply with relevant guidance or is not consistent with our understanding of the Council;
- any significant matters or written recommendations that are in the public interest; and
- if we identify a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Responsibilities of the Council

The Council is responsible for preparing and publishing its financial statements, narrative statement and annual governance statement. It is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Executive Summary (continued)

2023/24 Conclusions


Financial statements	<p>Disclaimed – The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (Statutory Instrument 2024/907) which came into force on 30 September 2024 required any outstanding accountability statements for years ended 31 March 2015 to 31 March 2023 to be approved not later than 13 December 2024 and the accountability statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 to be approved not later than 28 February 2025 ('the backstop date').</p> <p>The audits of the financial statements for the years ended 31 March 2022 and 31 March 2023 for East Suffolk Council were not completed for the reasons set out in our disclaimers of opinion on those financial statements dated 11 December 2024.</p> <p>Due to the disclaimers of opinion on the prior years and the limited time between the backstop dates we did not have the required resources available to complete the detailed audit procedures that would be needed to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence to issue an unmodified audit report on the Council's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2024.</p> <p>In addition, the component auditor to East Suffolk Services Limited has qualified their opinion as the company was unable to estimate the valuation of the defined benefit pension obligation in the balance sheet as at 31 March 2024. A reliable valuation could not be produced by the Scheme actuaries due to insufficient information being available relating to a bulk transfer in of staff on 1 July 2023 from another pension fund.</p> <p>We therefore issued a disclaimed 2023/24 audit opinion on 24 February 2025.</p>
Consistency of the other information published with the financial statements	Financial information in the narrative statement and published with the financial statements was consistent with the audited accounts.
Value for money (VFM)	We had no matters to report by exception on the Council's VFM arrangements. We have included our VFM commentary in Section 03.
Consistency of the annual governance statement	We were satisfied that the annual governance statement was consistent with our understanding of the Council.



Executive Summary (continued)

2023/24 Conclusions

Public interest report and other auditor powers	We had no reason to use our auditor powers.
Whole of Government Accounts	We have not yet concluded the procedures required by the National Audit Office (NAO) on the Whole of Government Accounts submission, as the NAO have not yet confirmed the final reporting position and whether any questions will be raised on individual returns. We cannot issue our Audit Certificate until these procedures are complete.
Certificate	We will issue our certificate on completion of the above requirements in respect of Whole of Government Accounts.



Executive Summary (continued)

Value for Money

Scope

Auditors are required to be satisfied that East Suffolk Council has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We do not issue a 'conclusion' or 'opinion', but where significant weaknesses are identified we will report by exception in the auditor's opinion on the financial statements. In addition, auditor's provide an annual commentary on arrangements published as part of the Auditor's Annual Report.

In undertaking our procedures to understand the body's arrangements against the specified reporting criteria, we identify whether there are risks of significant weakness which require us to complete additional risk-based procedures. AGN 03 sets out considerations for auditors in completing and documenting their work and includes consideration of:

- our cumulative audit knowledge and experience as your auditor;
- reports from internal audit which may provide an indication of arrangements that are not operating effectively;
- our review of Council committee reports;
- meetings with the S151 Officer, Head of Internal Audit, and Monitoring Officer;
- information from external sources; and
- evaluation of associated documentation through our regular engagement with Council management and the finance team.

Executive Summary (continued)

Value for Money (continued)

Reporting

Our commentary for 2023/24 is set in section 03. The commentary on these pages summarises our understanding of the arrangements at the Council based on our evaluation of the evidence obtained in relation to the three reporting criteria (see table below) throughout 2023/24.

Appendix A includes the detailed arrangements and processes underpinning the reporting criteria. These were last reported in our 2022/23 Audit Completion Report and have been updated for 2023/24.

In accordance with the NAO's 2024 Code, we are required to report a commentary against the three specified reporting criteria. The table below sets out the three reporting criteria, whether we identified a risk of significant weakness as part of our planning procedures and whether we have concluded that there is a significant weakness in the body's arrangements.

Reporting Criteria	Risks of significant weaknesses in arrangements identified?	Actual significant weaknesses in arrangements identified?
Financial sustainability: How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services	No significant risks identified	No significant weakness identified
Governance: How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks	No significant risks identified	No significant weakness identified
Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services	No significant risks identified	No significant weakness identified



Executive Summary (continued)

Independence

The FRC Ethical Standard requires that we provide details of all relationships between Ernst & Young (EY) and the Council, and its members and senior management and its affiliates, including all services provided by us and our network to the Council, its members and senior management and its affiliates, and other services provided to other known connected parties that we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on the our integrity or objectivity, including those that could compromise independence and the related safeguards that are in place and why they address the threats.

There are no relationships from 1 April 2023 to the date of this report, which we consider may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence and objectivity.

EY Transparency Report 2024

Ernst & Young (EY) has policies and procedures that instil professional values as part of firm culture and ensure that the highest standards of objectivity, independence and integrity are maintained.

Details of the key policies and processes in place within EY for maintaining objectivity and independence can be found in our annual Transparency Report which the firm is required to publish by law. The most recent version of this Report is for the year end 30 June 2024:

[EY UK 2024 Transparency Report | EY - UK](#)



02 Audit of the financial statements

Audit of the financial statements

Key findings

The Statement of Accounts is an important tool for the Council to show how it has used public money and how it can demonstrate its financial management and financial health.

On 24 February 2025, we issued a disclaimed audit opinion on the financial statements. The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2024 (Statutory Instrument 2024/907) which came into force on 30 September 2024 required any outstanding accountability statements for years ended 31 March 2015 to 31 March 2023 to be approved not later than 13 December 2024 and the accountability statements for the year ended 31 March 2024 to be approved not later than 28 February 2025 ('the backstop date').

The audit of the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2023 for East Suffolk Council and Group was not completed for the reasons set out in our disclaimer of opinion on those financial statements dated 11 December 2024. The disclaimer of opinions on the prior years' financial statements (2021/22 and 2022/23) taken together with additional procedures required on the 2023/24 audit as reported in the Audit Results Report, and the limited time between the 2022/23 and 2023/24 backstop dates meant we did not have the time available to complete all the detailed audit procedures that would be needed to obtain sufficient, appropriate audit evidence to issue an unmodified audit report on the Council's 2023/24 financial statements. Appendix A of our Audit Results Report outlines the level of assurance gained and reasons for incomplete assurance across account areas.

We reported our audit scope, risks identified and detailed findings to the 11 February 2025 Audit and Governance Committee meeting in our Audit Results Report and issued an updated Audit Results Report on 24 February 2025. We outline below the key issues identified as part of our audit in relation to the significant risk areas. The findings for each of the account areas are set out in the Audit Results Report in Appendix A. We reported no internal control recommendations and no areas for improvement in the control environment in the Audit Results Report.

Significant risk	Conclusion
Misstatements due to fraud or error – Management override of controls	We have performed procedures over journals including a sample of 40 items. We have not identified any evidence that management has overridden controls in order to prepare fraudulent financial statement balances or postings within the financial statements. Our work identified further required procedures concerning the split of journal entries by source and type, we have been unable to obtain sufficient audit assurance in this area before the back stop date.
Misstatements due to fraud or error – capitalisation of revenue expenditure	We have not been able to obtain assurance over the appropriate recognition of maintenance expenses as capital rather than revenue. We completed our work on the testing of REFCUS and have not identified any issues. In relation to our testing of additions made to property, plant and equipment during the year, we identified significant additional follow up required which there was not sufficient capacity to undertake.



03 Value for Money Commentary

Value for Money Commentary

Financial Sustainability: How the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services

No significant weakness identified

The Council is required to have arrangements in place to ensure proper resource management and the primary responsibility of these arrangements, and reporting on the design and operations of these arrangements via the Annual Governance Statement, rests with management. In accordance with the NAO's Code the focus of our work should be on the arrangements that the Council is expected to have in place during the year end 31 March 2024. Our risk assessment did not identify any risk of significant weakness in arrangements to secure financial sustainability. The Council has adhered to its governance processes for setting a balanced budget and regularly updating its Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The budget and MTFS are underpinned by assumptions that we deemed reasonable and are well supported.

The 2024/25 to 2027/28 Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy was presented to the Cabinet and Council on 2 January and 21 February 2024, respectively. The financial strategy forecasted a total budget gap of £21.3m indicating an increase from the budgeted gap presented in February 2023 of £15.9m through to 2026/27. The financial strategy included uncertainty with local government funding, cost pressures from pay and inflation, and supporting the Council's capital programme. Additional income from business rates and the return on investment income from treasury management activities due to high interest, have been identified to largely offset budget pressures for next year. The Council had balanced the budget for 2024/25, which requires them to use £1.85m of the In-Year Savings Reserve.

The Council has maintained for a number of years the General Fund balance at around 3-5% of its budgeted gross expenditure. As of 1 April 2023, the opening General Fund balance stood at £6m. Further use of General Fund balance will be evaluated against an assessment of risk to ensure financial sustainability for the Council is maintained, whilst supporting the strategic direction and ambitions of the Council. There was no use of the general fund during 2023/24 and no forecast use at this current time over the current Medium Term Financial Strategy. As of 31 March 2024, the total balance on the General Fund Earmarked Reserves stood at £42.18m. This is a decrease of £5.9m on the 31 March 2023 position. This is mainly due to the release of Covid funding held in the Covid reserve at March 2023, in particular relating to Business Rates Reliefs, use of Capital Reserves to fund the capital programme, use of Port Health Reserves to fund the Port Health service and the use of the Transformation and New Homes Bonus reserves. Although the Council therefore has adequate reserves to cover the gap and set a balanced budget in 2024/25, it is important to note that reserves can only be used once, and it is therefore important that the Council continues its scenario assessment of the savings requirement and identification of relevant schemes to achieve the annual savings requirements to minimise the use of reserves.

For 2023/24 the Council's General Fund realised a Surplus year end outturn position of £1.91m, compared to a £2.46m surplus as per the original budget approved in February 2023. This outturn surplus has been transferred to the Business Rate Equalisation Reserve. The 2023/24 HRA outturn reflects a surplus of £0.613m, compared to the original budget deficit of £1.296m, a positive movement of £1.91m. During 2023/24, the Council have continued to revisit and monitor financial plans to ensure they have sufficient resources to deliver services through quarterly budget monitoring reports taken to cabinet meetings. The budget estimates have been produced on a prudent basis, with an emphasis on identifying the existing cost pressures the Council faces and a realistic level of savings and efficiencies. The budget has been constructed so that all known costs are budgeted for, and income budgets are based on realistic projections.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, the Council had proper arrangements in place in 2023/24 to enable it to plan and manage its resources to ensure that it can continue to deliver its services.

Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Governance: How the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks

No significant weakness identified

The Council is required to have arrangements in place to ensure proper resource management and the primary responsibility of these arrangements and reporting on the design and operations of these arrangements via the Annual Governance Statement, rests with management. In Accordance with the NAO's Code the focus of our work should be on the arrangements that the Council is expected to have in place during the year ended 31 March 2024. In 2023/24, we did not identify any risk of significant weakness in arrangements in place to ensure sound governance.

The Council produces Budget Setting Reports and a tenants and Financial Strategy (MTFS) on an annual basis in February, with further quarterly tracking and updates during 2023/24. The budget and MTFS reports are taken to the Cabinet for approval, which ensures that all Members are kept well informed of the process.

The Council's Annual Governance Statement sets out the core governance arrangements for the year. This demonstrates how the Council's code of governance arrangements reflect the principles of good governance. The Head of Internal Audit provided a reasonable assurance opinion for 2023/24 financial years in relation to the framework of governance, risk management and controls at the Council.

The Council maintains a risk register and risk management policy which focuses on strategic, operational and project risks. Risks on the register are reviewed at every Audit and Governance Committee meeting, with elevation to full Council for significant risks or issues identified.

The Council has continued to work with the Regulator of Social Housing throughout 2023/24 to resolve the regulatory noticed previously issued and reported on as a significant weakness in the 2021/22 Completion Report. The Council completed a forensic audit and have reset the rent and service charges of all tenants effective 1 April 2023. The Council estimated the value of refunds owed to tenants and set up a provision in the 2023/24 financial statements. Repayments started in August 2023. The Council have also taken steps to address compliance with safety requirements and have complied with reporting requirements to the Regulator for Social Housing through preparation of its Housing Services Annual Report.

The Council has appropriate governance arrangements in place relating to partnership working and collaboration with other local authorities.

Conclusion:

Based on the work performed, the Council had proper arrangements in place in 2023/24 to ensure that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risk.

Value for Money Commentary (continued)

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: How the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services

No significant weakness identified

The Council is required to have arrangements in place to ensure proper resource management and the primary responsibility of these arrangements and reporting on the design and operations of these arrangements via the Annual Governance Statement, rests with management. In Accordance with the NAO's Code the focus of our work should be on the arrangements that the Council is expected to have in place during the year ender 31 March 2024. In 2023/24, we did not identify any risk of significant weakness in arrangements in place to ensure economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

The Council launched its new strategic plan title "Our Direction" in November 2023 which sets the vision priorities, and strategic objectives for the Council from 2024 to 2028. The strategic plan identifies the following priorities:

- Environmental impact – delivering positive climate, nature and environmental impacts through the decisions the Council make and actions to take.
- Sustainable housing – all homes in East Suffolk are safe, suitable and sustainable in communities where residents are proud to live.
- Tackling inequalities – improving quality of life across the district by tackling financial, social and health inequalities.
- Thriving economy – enabling residents to benefit from, and contribute to, a thriving economy.

The Council monitors its performance against the priority areas through the preparation of annual reporting which reflects on key performance indicators to identify direction of travel. Performance reporting is undertaken against the identified strategic priorities and delivery measures, with regular reporting on performance and finances taken to the Cabinet throughout the year to continuously monitor performance and take prompt action as needed.

The Council has a procurement policy and contract procedure rules which govern tendering and contract award. We did not identify any weaknesses in the Council's procurement procedures in 2023/24. Procurement processes are set out in the Constitution. A refresh of Contract Procedure Rules was undertaken in 2024 and refreshed rules were approved by Full Council in July 2024. The Council has completed training sessions for these updates. The Council has also taken steps to increase the resourcing of the Procurement team and each Service team across the Council has a dedicated Procurement Business Partner. Any savings targets or performance benefits expected from the procurement of services is monitored and measured via agreed metrics with suppliers and reported on. The internal audit function performs routine review of procurement and major capital projects. There are also service level agreements for partnership and collaboration working arrangements, and formal protocols for entering into new funding arrangements.

Conclusion: Based on the work performed, the Council had proper arrangements in place in 2023/24 to enable it to use information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers services.



04 Appendices

Appendix A - Summary of arrangements

Financial Sustainability

We set out below the arrangements for the financial sustainability criteria covering the year 2023/24

Reporting criteria considerations	Arrangements in place
How the body ensures that it identifies all the significant financial pressures that are relevant to its short and medium-term plans and builds these into them	The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is refreshed annually and approved by Council. This is based on the latest base budget position and takes into account emerging items across the medium term. The forecast, including identification of emerging pressures and opportunities, is reviewed on a monthly basis through the budget monitoring process. Review of the budget is a quarterly standing item on the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) agenda, with increased reporting during the budget setting process. For the 2025/26 budget setting process there has been earlier engagement with the Administration from the Summer of 2024 to capture high level budget pressures and income and saving opportunities. This takes the form of specific budget sessions with Cabinet and CLT.
How the body plans to bridge its funding gaps and identifies achievable savings	The latest MTFS states the council will set a balanced budget each year that will be constructed to reflect its objectives, priorities and commitments. For the 2025/26 budget setting process there has been earlier engagement with the Administration from the Summer of 2024 to capture high level budget pressures and income and saving opportunities. This takes the form of specific budget sessions with Cabinet and CLT. This will be the format for identifying actions to bridge the budget gaps, through income generation opportunities, maximising funding opportunities and identifying savings. It will also be the mechanism for identifying what may need to be prioritised. The budgeted savings increase from (£300k) in 22/23 to (£2,420k) in 26/27.
How the body plans finances to support the sustainable delivery of services in accordance with strategic and statutory priorities	The finance team work with service areas throughout the year and collate information on financial pressures for consideration in the annual budget and MTFS. Following the launch of the new Strategic Direction in late 2023, the Council has been working to link the Strategic Direction to the budget. This work has developed significantly in 2024/25 in readiness for the 2025/26 budget setting, particularly through specific budget sessions with Cabinet. All relevant reports to Council, Cabinet, and Committees have their financial implications identified and linked to the Strategic Direction.



Appendix A - Summary of arrangements

Financial Sustainability (continued)

We set out below the arrangements for the financial sustainability criteria covering the year 2023/24

Reporting criteria considerations	Arrangements in place
How the body ensures that its financial plan is consistent with other plans such as workforce, capital, investment, and other operational planning which may include working with other local public bodies as part of a wider system	The MTFS is complied in conjunction with the capital programme and the Strategic Direction. The finance team work with service areas throughout the year and collate information on financial pressures for consideration in the annual budget and MTFS. All relevant reports to Council, Cabinet, and Committees have their financial and resource implications identified and linked to the Strategic Direction. The CLT agenda has quarterly standing items for finance, governance and performance. There is also a Strategic Property Group which meets to discuss capital projects.
How the body identifies and manages risks to financial resilience, e.g. unplanned changes in demand, including challenge of the assumptions underlying its plans	The Budget report to Full Council identifies risk, their impact, probability and mitigating action. The budget to Full Council in February also includes the CFO's report. This report includes a financial risk assessment of key areas and a sensitivity analysis of budget assumptions. CLT reviews the corporate risk register quarterly which includes identifying new or emerging risks. Any financial implications would be considered.

Appendix A - Summary of arrangements

Governance

We set out below the arrangements for the governance criteria covering the year 2023/24.

Reporting criteria considerations	Arrangements in place
How the body monitors and assesses risk and how the body gains assurance over the effective operation of internal controls, including arrangements to prevent and detect fraud	The Budget report to Full Council identifies risk, their impact, probability and mitigating action. The budget to Full Council in February also includes the CFO's report. This report includes a financial risk assessment of key areas and a sensitivity analysis of budget assumptions. CLT reviews the corporate risk register quarterly which includes identifying new or emerging risks. Any financial implications would be considered. The Council has an internal audit function which carries out annual reviews of key control areas and focuses on specific areas where assurance has been requested by CLT members or identified by internal audit risk assessment procedures.
How the body approaches and carries out its annual budget setting process	The Finance team works with service areas throughout the year. This information is collated and incorporated into the MTFS. A draft MTFS is reported to Cabinet in November. Following the reporting of the draft MTFS, the Budget Report for the following financial year is reported to Cabinet and Scrutiny (January/February) and then Full Council in February. Review of the budget is a quarterly standing item on the CLT agenda, with increased reporting during the budget setting process. For the 2025/26 budget setting process there has been earlier engagement from the Summer of 2024 to capture high level budget pressures and income and saving opportunities. This takes the form of specific budget sessions with Cabinet and CLT. The Finance team have run training sessions with Overview and Scrutiny Committee, covering outturn position, mid-year performance and the updated draft MTFS.
How the body ensures effective processes and systems are in place to ensure budgetary control; to communicate relevant, accurate and timely management information (including non-financial information where appropriate); supports its statutory financial reporting requirements; and ensures corrective action is taken where needed	Financial Procedure Rules are set out in the Constitution. Service area financial management reports are available on the Council's intranet which are updated daily. The Finance team have in place a detailed year end closedown plan for the year end closure of the Accounts. Year end timetables are communicated to the CLT and relevant Officers of the Council. Review of the budget is a quarterly standing item on the CLT agenda, with increased reporting during the budget setting process.

Appendix A - Summary of arrangements

Governance (continued)

We set out below the arrangements for the governance criteria covering the year 2023/24.

Reporting criteria considerations	Arrangements in place
How the body ensures it makes properly informed decisions, supported by appropriate evidence and allowing for challenge and transparency. This includes arrangements for effective challenge from those charged with governance/Audit and Governance Committee	The CLT agenda considers the forward plan for Cabinet and Council on a monthly basis. All reports to Cabinet and Full Council need to be commented on by the S151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer before they can be published. Golden Triangle meetings are held quarterly with the Chief Executive, the Monitoring Officer and the S151 Officer. Internal Audit reports to the Audit and Governance Committee and the Committee has the opportunity to call forward service areas for challenge, for example, on outstanding recommendations. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee also identifies an annual programme of work for areas of the Council it wishes to review.
How the body monitors and ensures appropriate standards, such as meeting legislative/regulatory requirements and standards in terms of officer or member behaviour (such as gifts and hospitality or declarations/conflicts of interests)	Protocols and Codes of Conduct are regularly reviewed. Training about ethical standards is provided to Councillors at time of election, as part of induction programme, with follow up training as required, either as part of a regular update, or specifically following a complaint. Councillor declarations of interest had been completed by new councillors and are updated annually. Regular reminders about standards are issued to staff within bulletins and team meetings. Declarations of interests, gifts and hospitality are made and monitored by the Audit and Governance Committees.

Appendix A - Summary of arrangements

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

We set out below the arrangements for improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness criteria covering the year 2023/24

Reporting criteria considerations	Arrangements in place
How financial and performance information has been used to assess performance to identify areas for improvement	Quarterly budget monitoring reports to CLT and to Cabinet report actual performance against budget. There is also the Performance Dashboard which reports KPI's for each theme of the Strategic Plan, which is still under development in some areas.
How the body evaluates the services it provides to assess performance and identify areas for improvement	Quarterly budget monitoring reports to CLT and to Cabinet report actual performance against budget. There is also the Performance Dashboard which reports KPI's for each theme of the Strategic Plan, which is still under development in some areas.
How the body ensures it delivers its role within significant partnerships, engages with stakeholders it has identified, monitors performance against expectations, and ensures action is taken where necessary to improve	<p>The Council works in partnership wherever possible to gain synergies of working together with other organisations and local authorities.</p> <p>Leisure Arrangements - With regards to the Leisure contract, monthly meetings are held between each Operator and the Council looking at financial performance, repairs & maintenance, health & safety etc, and Quarterly Partnership Board Meetings are held with relevant Officers, Members and Managers. Monthly Performance Data is collected, including financial performance, utilities usage, accident reporting etc.</p> <p>Revenues & Benefits Partnership (Anglia Revenue Partnership) - The Chief Financial Officer attends monthly Overview & Improvement Board meetings which consider performance of ARP and strategic matters.</p> <p>East Suffolk Services Limited (ESSL) - The shareholder reference groups considers key operational matters for ESSL, e.g. Business Plan and quarterly updates. There is a Strategic Operation & Performance Group which looks at the strategic direction of ESSL, providing a forum for both ESC and ESSL to understand progress and support any future planning. This group meets bi-monthly. The Operation & Performance Group considers real-time operational performance, covering immediate day-to-day issues that are relevant to both parties. This group meets monthly.</p>



Appendix A - Summary of arrangements

Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness (continued)

We set out below the arrangements for improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness criteria covering the yea 2023/24.

Reporting criteria considerations	Arrangements in place
How the body ensures that commissioning and procuring services is done in accordance with relevant legislation, professional standards and internal policies, and how the body assesses whether it is realising the expected benefits	The Council's procurement processes are set out in the Constitution. A refresh of Contract Procedure Rules was undertaking in earlier 2024 and refreshed rules were approved by Full Council in July 2024. Training sessions have also been rolled out. Following this review of the Contract Procedure Rules a new internal process has been introduced for exemption requests to centralise record keeping and to standard records, and new internal guidance has been produced by the Procurement Team. The resourcing of the Procurement team has been increased. Each Service team across the Council has a dedicated Procurement Business Partner. In 2024/25 a new Procurement Strategy has been developed and the Procurement team have scheduled training sessions for the new Procurement Act.

EY | Building a better working world

EY exists to build a better working world, helping to create long-term value for clients, people and society and build trust in the capital markets.

Enabled by data and technology, diverse EY teams in over 150 countries provide trust through assurance and help clients grow, transform and operate.

Working across assurance, consulting, law, strategy, tax and transactions, EY teams ask better questions to find new answers for the complex issues facing our world today.

EY refers to the global organization, and may refer to one or more, of the member firms of Ernst & Young Global Limited, each of which is a separate legal entity. Ernst & Young Global Limited, a UK company limited by guarantee, does not provide services to clients. Information about how EY collects and uses personal data and a description of the rights individuals have under data protection legislation are available via ey.com/privacy. EY member firms do not practice law where prohibited by local laws. For more information about our organization, please visit ey.com.

Ernst & Young LLP

The UK firm Ernst & Young LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England and Wales with registered number OC300001 and is a member firm of Ernst & Young Global Limited.

Ernst & Young LLP, 1 More London Place, London, SE1 2AF.

© 2025 Ernst & Young LLP. Published in the UK.
All Rights Reserved.

UKC-024050 (UK) 07/22. Creative UK.

ED None

Information in this publication is intended to provide only a general outline of the subjects covered. It should neither be regarded as comprehensive nor sufficient for making decisions, nor should it be used in place of professional advice. Ernst & Young LLP accepts no responsibility for any loss arising from any action taken or not taken by anyone using this material.

ey.com/uk