

**Broxbourne
Borough Council**

Annual Governance Statement

for year ended 31 March 2026



**BOROUGH OF
BROXBOURNE**

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Executive Summary and Overall Opinion

This 2025/26 AGS demonstrates that Broxbourne Borough Council has sound governance arrangements, effective internal controls, and a clear plan for continuous improvement. Its governance arrangements have remained fit for purpose during 2025/26.

The Council remains committed to transparency, accountability, and safeguarding public resources while delivering efficient, high-quality services. This is supported by the Chief Internal Auditor's annual opinion, which for 2025/26 concludes the Council has adequate and effective risk management arrangements, governance and control processes.

The Council is well-governed and stable, with no fundamental weaknesses, but faces strategic challenges (notable Local Government Reorganisation) and operational challenges around use of artificial intelligence and resilience within smaller teams. The Council acknowledges these areas for improvement or monitoring and has defined actions to strengthen governance further.

The Council is satisfied that appropriate governance arrangements are in place. The Council proposes over the coming year to continue to review, and where appropriate, improve matters to further enhance the Council's governance arrangements.

Signed



J T Stack
Chief Executive

Date: 3 June 2026

Signed



Cllr C Gander
Leader of the Council

Date: 3 June 2026

Introduction

Broxbourne Borough Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. In addition, the Council has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

The Council has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance which was reviewed in November 2025 and is consistent with the principles of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework. The Council's code is available on its website.

The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) describes the extent to which the Council has, for the year ended 31 March 2026, complied with its corporate code of conduct and the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. It also describes how the effectiveness of the governance arrangements has been monitored and evaluated during the year and sets out any changes planned for 2026/27.

The AGS has been prepared in accordance with guidance produced in 2016 by CIPFA and SOLACE The 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework' and its May 2025 Addendum. It embraces the elements of internal control required by the 'Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom'.

The Purpose of the Governance Framework

The governance framework comprises the processes and protocols by which the Council is directed and controlled and its activities through which it is accountable to, engages with and supports its communities. It assures that in conducting its business, the Council:

- operates in a lawful, open, inclusive and honest manner
- safeguards public money and assets from inappropriate use, or from loss and fraud, and ensures it is properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively
- has effective arrangements for risk management
- secures continuous improvement in the way that it operates
- enables human, financial, environmental and other resources to be managed efficiently and effectively
- properly maintains records and information
- ensures its values and ethical standards are met

The governance framework also includes the Council's two wholly owned subsidiary companies: Badger BC Investments Limited and Broxbourne Environmental Services Trading Limited (BEST).

The Council's Governance Framework

The key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the Council's governance arrangements are summarised below:

Identifying, communicating and reviewing the Council's vision and outcomes

The 2025-29 Corporate Plan sets out the Council's vision which is expressed through three main priorities:

- A thriving economy
- An attractive, safe and sustainable environment
- An effective Council

This is supported by the Corporate Plan Action Plan which states what tasks are to be completed to meet each corporate plan objective and is overseen by the Corporate Management Team (CMT).

Outcomes

Actions for improvement are drawn from a variety of sources including external and internal audit, service reviews, matters arising from performance management monitoring, consultation exercises, key performance indicators and service improvements identified by the Council's complaints procedure. The Council has a performance management framework in place. Quality of service is measured through performance indicators which are reported to Cabinet, Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Management Team (CMT).

Developing, communicating, and embedding codes of conduct defining the standards of behaviour for members and officers

The Council's constitution incorporates a member code of conduct to ensure high standards of conduct. An officer code of conduct is also in place with an established officer declaration of interest process.

All members are required to register financial or other relevant interests, as specified by the code of conduct. Both members and officers must declare any gifts or hospitality in the appropriate registers. Member training of the Code of Conduct took place in September 2024. Training is being arranged for 2026/27.

The constitution includes a protocol for member-officer relations which describes and regulates the way in which members and officers should interact to work effectively together. An anti-fraud and corruption strategy is in place and sets out the responsibilities of the Council, its members and its officers in relation to fraud and corruption. This was last updated and approved by the Audit and Standards Committee in December 2025.

Defining and documenting the roles and responsibilities of members and officers

The Council's constitution is periodically reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose. The constitution sets out how the Council operates. It details how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. The constitution sets out a scheme of delegation which defines:

- items to be dealt with by way of recommendation to the Council
- items to be dealt with under executive powers
- powers delegated to officers in consultation with relevant members
- powers delegated to officers

The constitution also sets out public access to the decision-making process. Small changes were made to the constitution during 2025/26 which related to procedures at Council meetings.

Contract standing orders, financial regulations and schemes of delegation

The constitution sets out the scheme of delegation, financial regulations and procurement rules. Training is given to all new staff and periodically to existing staff on the financial regulations and procurement rules and guidelines. Compliance with financial regulations is checked regularly and at key financial audits. Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders were reviewed and updated during 2024/25 and formally approved before being disseminated to staff. A review is planned for 2026/27.

Governance arrangements for partnerships

Partnerships are a key component of service provision. The Council has established its key partnerships and each has a terms of reference and detailed governance arrangements which include decision making processes and dispute resolution procedures. There are service level agreements or contracts in place for shared services and key voluntary sector partners with regular review meetings to monitor performance against the agreements.

Broxbourne Strategic Partnership for Skills is a multi-agency group focused on skills, employment, and training for local residents. The partnership is made up of private, public, and community-based organisations.

The Council works with the Police, Fire and Rescue, Probation and other partners through the Hertfordshire Police and Crime Panel and Broxbourne Community Safety Partnership. The partnership highlights trends, informs priorities and tackles anti-social behaviour, acquisitive crime, serious violence, hate crime and domestic violence.

Key partners meet regularly on the Broxbourne Responsible Authorities Group to strategically review and plan joint action in respect of crime and community safety.

The Broxbourne Community Partnership brings together a wide range of statutory and community partner groups to improve the wellbeing of residents.

The Hertfordshire Growth Board is made up of the County Council, the 10 district and borough councils (including Broxbourne), the NHS Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care System, Police and Crime Commissioner, Homes England and Hertfordshire Futures (previously the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership). It is a county wide initiative to deliver an ambitious growth agenda to support a thriving economy, with affordable housing, a sustainable transport network, schools and healthcare facilities.

The Hertfordshire Growth Board is working closely with the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership, of which Broxbourne is a member, to deliver climate change action, reduce the county's carbon footprint, improve biodiversity and achieve lasting sustainable change.

Managing Risks

The Council's adopted risk management policy applies best practice to the identification, evaluation and control of key areas of risk that could impact on the achievement of the Council's objectives and service priorities. It sets out a framework to ensure that all parties understand their roles and responsibilities. The focus of the Council's risk management policy is to promote risk awareness as opposed to risk aversion. This is to ensure that opportunities are considered and subjected to methodical assessment so that initiatives can be evaluated in the context of the Council's risk appetite.

A strategic level risk register is established to manage those risks which may threaten the Council's ability to achieve its corporate objectives. This register is owned and maintained by CMT and the management of these risks is regularly reported to the Audit and Standards Committee.

Strategic risk management is supported by operational level risk registers, which are owned by each service lead. Agreed actions to manage and reduce risk have been incorporated into the relevant service plans. The Audit and Standards Committee receives a quarterly report on risk management which includes the strategic risk register and a rolling review of each department's risk register.



Reporting Concerns

Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS)

The Council has an anti-fraud and corruption strategy and fraud response plan which are available to staff via the staff hub. The Council is a partner in the Hertfordshire Shared Anti-Fraud Service (SAFS). This service investigates all suspected cases of fraud with the exception of benefit fraud which is referred to the Department for Work and Pensions via the national benefit fraud hotline. SAFS also provides anti-fraud training at both member and officer level.

Complaints

The Council has a corporate complaints procedure, details of which can be found on the website. ([click here](#))

The Audit and Standards Committee considers any complaints made against members of the Council relating to breaches of the code of conduct. During 2025/26 one complaint was made to the Council's Monitoring Officer. The complaint was reviewed by the Independent Person, who found no breach of the Code of Conduct.

Complaints made to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) are monitored by the Chief Executive. Of the 18 complaints to the LGO during 2025/26 the LGO closed 17 after initial enquiry and upheld one (relating to homelessness). Actions to resolve these, as agreed with the LGO, have been taken, and any lessons learnt acted upon.

Whistleblowing The Council has a Whistleblowing Policy which is available on the staff hub. Staff have been reminded of the policy during 2025/26. No whistleblowing allegations were received during the year.

Compliance with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures

Ensuring compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations involves a range of measures which includes:

- the notification of changes in the law, regulations and practice to services
- increasing awareness, understanding and training carried out by officers and external experts
- the drawing up and circulation of guidance and advice on key procedures, policies and practices
- the proactive monitoring of compliance by relevant key officers including the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer

The Council is required to have the following statutory officer positions within its structure as detailed in the Council's Constitution:

- the Head of Paid Service which is discharged by the Chief Executive. The role is central to all that the Council does.
- Monitoring Officer, who is also the Corporate Support Services Manager. This role ensures compliance with policies, procedures, laws and regulations. The Monitoring Officer will report to the Council if they consider any proposed action, decision or omission would give rise to unlawfulness or maladministration. All reports for member decision are required to include the legal implications of the decision, which are reviewed by the Shared Corporate Legal Services Manager
- Section 151 Officer has responsibility for the financial management of the Council and is discharged by the Deputy Chief Executive. The Section 151 Officer has a legal responsibility to issue formal reports if they have particular concerns about the financial arrangements or situation of the Council. All reports for member decision are required to include the financial implications of the decision, which are reviewed by the Deputy Chief Executive.

Equalities

The Council is committed to improving equality and the quality of life for all residents of the Borough of Broxbourne. The Council has a Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Scheme and an Action Plan to support this commitment. An Equality Impact Assessment is carried out on any proposal for a new or amended Council policy or service that may affect staff or the public, to ensure equality issues have been considered.

Strategic Partnerships

Good governance is key in order to deliver the Council's corporate priorities, especially around regeneration. There are a number of strategic partnerships in place to help achieve this. Notable examples include working with Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to deliver the £400M mixed use scheme at Brookfield Riverside and the adjacent Brookfield Garden Village. Recently using the £14.3M of Levelling Up Funds for the regeneration of Waltham Cross town centre and the building of a new data centre by Google adjacent to the Council owned Theobalds Enterprise Centre.

A number of shared roles with East Herts District Council, for example legal and Human Resources, are taking place as part of Local Government Reorganisation.

Internal and External Audit: Both functions support the Council's assurance framework.

Internal Audit – has a risk-based approach to Audit Planning, emphasising the need for sound control, governance and risk management arrangements. Internal Audit is a shared service with Epping Forest, Harlow and St Albans City and District Councils; hosted by Broxbourne Borough Council.

External Audit - The Audit and Standards Committee receives reports from the External Auditors including the annual Audit Results Report and other reports in relation to financial and other aspects of the Council's governance. At its 23 February 2026 meeting the Committee approved the audited Statement of Accounts for 2024/25, taking into consideration KPMG's Audit Results report. As in recent years external audit gave a disclaimed audit opinion on the basis that they were unable to obtain sufficient audit evidence due to the timeframes imposed under backstop arrangements (and is not unique to Broxbourne). There is a plan in place with KPMG on how assurances can be built over the next few years.

Significant Governance Issues

This final part of the AGS outlines the actions taken, or proposed, to deal with identified significant governance issues or risks. During the year the Corporate Governance Group met on a regular basis to monitor and review the corporate governance framework and to consider specific governance issues as they arose. The group comprises the Deputy Section 151 Officer (who is the Chairman), the Shared Corporate Legal Services Manager, the Chief Internal Auditor and the Treasury, Insurance and Risk Manager.

The Corporate Governance Group has strengthened the Council's governance processes and has ensured that all issues raised in the previous AGS are being addressed as detailed in table one below.

The Corporate Governance Group has undertaken an assessment of the arrangements for governance during 2025/26, including a review of the assurance checklists and statements submitted by managers. It has concluded that arrangements are fit for purpose and working effectively, and this has been endorsed by CMT. As a result of this assessment, a small number of governance issues have been identified for monitoring purposes, or strengthening or amending current arrangements, as detailed in table two. Table one sets out progress against the action plan from the 2024/25 AGS.

Table One: Progress on significant governance issues or risks identified in the 2024/25 AGS

Objective identified in the 2024/25 AGS	Action taken in 2025/26
Local Government Reorganisation Central Government has requested proposals from all local authorities in the country for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Resources will need to be deployed to work with other Hertfordshire councils to prepare the submission to government. At the same time the Council will need to continue to deliver its services to residents and businesses of Broxbourne.	Cabinet expressed its support for a four unitary model at its meeting on 18 November 2026. All 11 District and County Councils in Hertfordshire submitted a joint proposal to the Government on Friday 28 November 2025 which included options for either a two three or four unitary model. The final decision will be made by the Government and is expected summer 2026. The transition planning phase is now being considered and each service is deliberating its role in this. This will include programme governance and service and enabler workstreams. Staff continue to be updated on progress with LGR and risks associated with LGR continue to be considered.
Common themes from the Service Assurance Statements were:	
Make better use of data and using data to aid better decision making. Make better use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) As identified in last year's AGS action plan and this years' service assurance statements the Council could do more to improve its use of data in decision making. This includes the use of AI and to use AI to help improve/streamline Council services.	The Council has produced an AI policy and guidance and mandatory training for all staff is in progress. This provides a safe framework for staff making use of AI tools whilst being aware of the risks and opportunities associated with the use of AI. The Council will continue to identify opportunities to train and upskill staff to provide them with the knowledge and confidence to leverage the capabilities of technology to deliver services. A collaborative apprenticeship programme between Broxbourne Council and the provider organisation Multiverse has commenced with thirteen members of staff across three different Multiverse apprenticeship schemes. The schemes will assist the Council in better understanding and utilising its data as well as strengthening the use of data to support key decision making.
Staff Declarations of Interest and Gifts and Hospitality A process to ensure all staff complete a declaration of interest form was introduced in 2023/24,	Completed: Human Resources, who administer these processes, has reviewed current arrangements to ensure all staff are aware of, and are periodically reminded of the processes and the need to conform. Managers complete

Objective identified in the 2024/25 AGS	Action taken in 2025/26
alongside a process to ensure staff declare any gifts and hospitality offered or taken by them. Service assurance statements identified a need to better embed processes.	annual forms with staff at their 'objective setting meeting' confirming that declarations of interest have been reviewed and are up to date.
Resilience for smaller teams Lack of emergency cover and succession planning was raised as a concern for some very small teams.	This is being picked up as part of workforce planning and the LGR workstream. Where this has become an issue, the Council has engaged with agencies to fulfil short term needs alongside a recruitment campaign.

In preparing this statement and reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements the following areas have been identified for improvement or for closer monitoring. These are set out in table two below together with steps to be taken to address them.

Table Two: Areas for improvement or monitoring for 2026/27

Objective	Action to be taken in 2026/27
Local Government Reorganisation LGR represents a significant strategic uncertainty for Broxbourne, requiring additional resources, careful risk management, and strengthened governance arrangements to maintain service delivery and organisational stability.	Service managers are already considering LGR and possible impact on service provision. Their completed 'Service End-Well and Handover' packs are being considered by CMT to help identify key pinch points and risks. For example, the packs are being used to identify the high-risk contracts and develop an action plan/roadmap for renewals. Work continues in earnest at the county level with Broxbourne staff assigned to each work stream, which is being overseen by the Chief Executive Co-ordinating Group (CECG). A formal transition plan will be developed once the Government has announced their Minded to Decision for Hertfordshire. Action owner: Chief Executive Target Completion Date: 1 April 2028 (vesting day for the new unitary)
Common themes from the Service Assurance Statements	
Artificial Intelligence (AI) The Council has taken a cautious approach to the use of Artificial	The Council will further strengthen its approach by defining approved AI use cases and risk classifications, implementing controls around the use of sensitive data and requiring appropriate

Objective	Action to be taken in 2026/27
Intelligence. Staff awareness of the AI Policy is high and training is in place, but actual use of AI across services remains limited. This reduces immediate risk, but the Council recognises that AI presents emerging challenges around data protection, accuracy and governance. Controls are in place to ensure AI is used safely and only to support, not replace, professional judgement.	governance, including Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) where applicable. Mechanisms will be introduced to monitor and audit AI usage, alongside ensuring transparency, accountability and human oversight of outputs. Consideration will also be given to the development of staff capability to support responsible adoption. Action owner: Resources Service Director and the Digital Services Manager Target Completion Date: 31 March 2027
The Council continues to face challenges relating to team resilience, particularly in service areas with small teams or specialist roles. Several services report single points of failure, limited capacity to provide cover, and gaps in succession planning. While managers have put local mitigations in place, such as cross-training, handover notes and use of external support, these issues present an ongoing governance risk, especially during the transition to the new authority.	Strengthening resilience and succession planning will remain a priority to ensure continuity of service and effective internal control. Action owner: Resources Service Director and the Assistant Director – Resources Target Completion Date: 31 March 2027