



Burnley.gov.uk

Annual Governance Statement

2024/25

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INTRODUCTION

1. SCOPE AND RESPONSIBILITY

- 1.1 Burnley 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 and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently, and effectively. Burnley Borough Council has also 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.
- 1.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, Burnley Borough 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.
- 1.3 Burnley Borough Council has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA¹/SOLACE² Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*. A copy of the code is on our website at:

[Part 5.8 Local Code for Corporate Governance 2019 LP251119.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Or can be obtained from:

Legal & Democratic Services
Burnley Borough Council
Town Hall
Manchester Road
Burnley
BB11 9SA.

- 1.4 This statement explains how Burnley Borough Council has complied with the Code and meets the requirements of regulation 6(1)[a] of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, which requires all relevant bodies to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

2 THE PURPOSE OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 The Governance Framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values, by which the authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with, and leads its communities. It enables the council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate services and value for money.

¹ Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy

² Society of Local Authority Chief Executives

- 2.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of Burnley Borough Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood and potential impact of those risks being realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively, and economically.
- 2.3 The Governance Framework has been in place at Burnley Borough Council for the year ended 31st March 2025 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Statement of Accounts.

3. THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The key elements of the Council's governance arrangements are outlined in the Local Code of Corporate Governance. Some of these features of the Governance Framework are explained in the following paragraphs.

- 3.1 The Strategic Plan sets out the contribution we will make to enabling communities in Burnley to thrive now and in the future. The Strategic Plan is linked to the revenue and capital budget, ensuring that the aspirations in the plan are realistic in the context of the funding constraints placed on the Council. The Strategic Plan is reviewed on an annual basis. The review takes account of feedback from surveys conducted with the public in Burnley.
- 3.2 Delivery of the Strategic Plan is supported by Service Plans and individual's Performance Development Reviews. These include competencies, targets and, where appropriate, service standards against which service quality and improvement can be measured. Officers attend staff conferences and participate in job chats amongst other means to keep informed of organisational and service development.
- 3.3 Burnley Borough Council's Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent, and accountable to local people. It establishes the roles and responsibilities for members of the Executive, Regulatory and Standards Committees, together with officer functions. It includes the Scheme of Delegation, Code of Conduct and protocols for member/officer relations. The Constitution is regularly reviewed to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose.
- 3.4 The Constitution also contains procedure rules including Standing Orders for Contracts and Financial Procedure Rules that define how decisions are taken and where authority rests for decision making. The Procurement Strategy is being currently being updated to recognise the introduction of The Procurement Act 2023. The statutory roles of Head of Paid Service, Chief Financial Officer and Monitoring Officer are described together with their contributions to provide robust assurance on governance and that expenditure is

lawful and in line with approved budgets and procedures. The influence and oversight exerted by the Head of Paid Service (the Chief Executive) and the Chief Financial Officer (Director of Resources) is backed by the post-holders' membership of the Management Team.

- 3.5 The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) has responsibility for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs. This includes responsibility for maintaining and reviewing Financial Procedure Rules to ensure they remain fit for purpose and submitting amendments to Full Council for approval. The Chief Financial Officer is also responsible for reporting, where appropriate, breaches of the Rules to the Executive and/or the Full Council. The Chief Financial Officer reports directly to the Chief Operating Officer.
- 3.6 The role of the CFO has been defined by CIPFA in its document titled, 'The Role of the Chief Financial Officer, in Local Government.' The Council's financial management arrangements conform to these governance requirements, and this is explained in the constitution.
- 3.7 The Internal Audit Manager fulfils the role of Head of Internal Audit. This includes championing best practice and assessing adequacy in governance, management, and risk, providing an opinion on these aspects, and leading an effective Internal Audit service.
- 3.8 The Full Council and the Executive are the decision-making bodies of the Council. Regulatory Committees including Development Control and Licensing Committees undertake decisions delegated to it under the Constitution. The Council's Scrutiny Committee works to improve service delivery and to review the Executive decisions. The Audit and Standards Committee oversees the review of the Council's audit and governance arrangements and the production of this statement.
- 3.9 In recognition of the exposure to fraud, the Council has adopted an Anti-Fraud Bribery and Corruption Policy which is part of the Constitution. This is relevant to all members, officers, and its partners. Fraud risks are considered as part of strategic and service risk management. Fraud risk assessments are undertaken and regular internal reporting. The adoption of Civica Purchasing utilising appropriate authorisations for payment of invoices with regular budget monitoring and segregation of duties and responsibilities when dealing with cash within Finance will reduce these risks. Fraud awareness training is made available to further raise awareness of the matter.
- 3.10 To complement the anti-fraud policy, the Council has a complaints procedure and a whistle-blowing policy that is maintained and regularly reviewed, which provide the opportunity for members of the public and staff to raise concerns when they believe that appropriate standards have not been met. The Love Clean Streets app is being used to facilitate public reporting of issues with service delivery for both Greenspaces and Streetscene. The Audit and Standards Committee is responsible for overseeing the investigation of complaints against members and promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct in the authority.

- 3.11 The Council has an embedded risk management function. The Risk Management Policy and Strategy are reviewed regularly. The Risk Management Group draws together risk issues from across the authority to ensure that issues and concerns are shared and that a consistent approach is adopted throughout the organisation.
- 3.12 The Data Protection Act 2018 (UK General Data Protection Regulation) came into force in 2018. It is recognised that the data protection requirements present a significant risk to the Council, however controls and measures are in place. While significant, the risk is considered acceptable at this time.
- 3.13 Training needs of members and officers are identified through appraisal and review processes. The Learning & Development Strategy is reviewed regularly. Appropriate training is made available to staff to ensure that individuals can undertake their present role effectively and that they have the opportunity to develop to meet their and the Council's needs. All newly elected members undertake an induction programme so that they can make an effective contribution to the work of the authority. Specific committee training is given to members so that they may discharge their responsibilities more effectively along with general member development training such as on finance and conduct.
- 3.14 The Council is committed to continue to embed best practice within our organisational development and Health and Wellbeing work. The Organisational Development Strategy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy are both reviewed regularly.
- 3.15 The Council is committed to partnership working. The Strategic Partnerships with FCC Environment UK Ltd, Liberata and Burnley Leisure & Culture will ensure that vital services will continue to be delivered in these financially challenging times. There are also Partnerships with UCLAN, Occupational Health (Optima Health), PRS Forum, Burnley Together Health and Wellbeing, Calico, and Housing JV with Barnfield Investments. Streetscene have Service Delivery and statutory arrangements across the activity of the Service Unit. e.g. waste partnership with LCC, DfT, CSP. There are contractual arrangements, e.g. Liberata, Hyndburn BC, Chipside, Aspen Valley, Blink etc.
- 3.16 The Burnley Bondholders work continues to promote Burnley in the region and wider area. Burnley Bondholders is a consortium of businesses in Burnley UK, dedicated to raising the prosperity and profile of the borough. The scheme has been growing for over ten years and is made up of over 200 members.
- 3.17 Barnfield and Burnley (Developments) Limited is a company with directors and ownership shared between the Council and Barnfield Investments Properties Ltd (Joint Venture). The Council is represented by the Council Leader and Director of Economy & Development. The Council has a clause in the members Code of Conduct addressing the expectations of members in this role and this is also addressed in Employee's Code of Conduct.

Community Responses

- 3.18 In July 2019, a Climate Emergency declaration started Burnley Council's journey to net zero. The declaration recognises the part the council has to play in tackling climate change and reducing its fossil fuel emissions. We have set ourselves ambitious targets to reduce our carbon footprint and support the transition to a Net Zero borough by 2050 – an ambitious target that the council and the borough's residents, organisations and businesses all need to achieve together. The Council has a website <https://burnley.gov.uk/net-zero/> detailing all the latest updates, including the Climate Change Strategy, Action Plan and Progress Updates. There is also a quicker snapshot of some of the climate action changes taken place since 2019.
- 3.19 Burnley Council is proud to announce that it has officially achieved Gold Carbon Literate Organisation status, marking a significant milestone in its commitment to tackling climate change and embedding sustainability across all areas of the council. This achievement makes Burnley Council the second local authority in the UK—following Manchester—to reach this prestigious accreditation.
- 3.20 Greenspaces are taking steps to reduce the Carbon footprint; Electrification of transport and machinery, LED lighting and working on plans to decarbonise the crematorium. People & Development have facilitated Hybrid working, supported the Carbon literacy training roll-out across the Council and has been promoted it via the Health and Wellbeing News.
- 3.21 The Council has been responding to the cost-of-living crisis with the ongoing financial support given to local businesses which is helping to support the local economy; however, it is unclear what the impact will be once these support packages end. There have been more projects and initiatives to support residents including the Household Support Fund. Streetscene have provided a rollout of 12-week free bulkies to those in financial hardship and there is continued work with Downtown. HR have provided additional support and information to employees via the Health and Wellbeing news. Housing have restructured the provision of temporary accommodation and strengthened resources in housing standards. There have been more projects, services, grants, communications to support vulnerable residents.
- 3.22 Annual inflation costs have had an impact on service unit budgets and on capital projects. There have also been significant impacts on costs of fuel, machinery, equipment, and vehicles costs for Greenspaces.
- 3.23 The Council has adopted an economic recovery and a community recovery strategy which have been approved by council.
- 3.24 The organisation has maintained hybrid home working arrangements for applicable staff. A Hybrid Working Framework policy is available for employees.
- 3.25 Burnley Borough Council is proud to announce that it has been shortlisted for the highly coveted 'Council of the Year' award at the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards

2025. The nomination recognises the council's dedication to deliver high-quality services and positive change for the local community and businesses. The council will join other leading local authorities in England in competing for the top prize, with shortlisted councils set to present to a panel of judges on 11th June 2025 before the final awards ceremony. This recognition comes after the praiseworthy feedback from the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Review during September 2024, that highlighted the council's many strengths including a clear vision, effective leadership, and a dedicated workforce.

- 3.26 The main areas of the Council's Governance Framework, and key evidence of delivery, are set out next, under the headings of the seven **CIPFA/SOLACE Core Principles of Good Governance**.

BEHAVING WITH INTEGRITY, DEMONSTRATING STRONG COMMITMENT TO ETHICAL VALUES AND RESPECTING THE RULE OF THE LAW.

- Codes of Conduct exist for both officers and members.
- Statutory Officers are in post:
 - the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service,
 - Head of Legal and Democratic Services as the Monitoring Officer
 - the Director of Resources as the Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer).
- The Constitution and Scheme of Delegation define the roles and responsibilities of officers and members and sets out the rules on how the Council conducts its business.
- TEAM values are in place.

ENSURING OPENNESS AND COMPREHENSIVE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT.

- Council meetings are conducted in public; decisions have been properly recorded and are in the public domain.
- Public consultations have been conducted:
 - Selective licensing consultation
 - Residents' satisfaction survey
 - Strategic plan consultation
 - Burnley BID 2 Consultation
 - Electoral cycle consultation
 - Long Term Plans for Towns consultation
 - Public Space Protection Orders for the Town Centre and Parks
 - Towneley Master Plan consultation
 - Council Tax Support Fund and Empty Homes Premiums (in preparation for 2024/25 budget)
 - Budget consultation (in preparation for 2025/26 budget)
 - Joint consultation with LCC on Colne Road Masterplan and Town Centre Public Realm Proposals
 - The Green Spaces Strategy

- Play Strategy
- Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy
- Allotment Strategy
- Playground improvement schemes

Partnership boards for the strategic partners:

- Liberata
- FCC Environment UK Ltd

DEFINING OUTCOMES IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS.

- The Strategic Plan is in place and is underpinned by Service Plans.
- The Climate Change Strategy is in place.
- Balanced Scorecards are used to monitor the achievement of stated outcomes.
- The Council makes best use of resources by always considering options for the way services are delivered.

DETERMINING THE INTERVENTIONS NECESSARY TO OPTIMISE THE ACHIEVEMENT OF INTENDED OUTCOMES.

- Balanced Scorecards exist to monitor progress on intended outcomes.
- Decision makers receive analysis of options to achieve intended outcomes. This includes risk analysis associated with making key decisions.
- The Council is continually reviewing how services are provided.

DEVELOPING THE ENTITY'S CAPACITY, INCLUDING THE CAPABILITY OF ITS LEADERSHIP AND THE INDIVIDUALS WITHIN IT.

- Member training programmes are in place.
- Annual training on the Statement of Accounts and Treasury Management.
- Training sessions for Audit and Standards Committee members recommenced in 2024/25.
- Officer training is identified during Performance Development Reviews which is linked to the Service Plan.
- New officers receive corporate and service unit induction. Training is also provided to new members.
- Arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce.
- There are regular meetings between the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council. Similar meetings take place between Heads of Service and Executive Members.

MANAGING RISKS AND PERFORMANCE THROUGH ROBUST INTERNAL CONTROL AND STRONG FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT.

- There is a risk management framework in place that identifies and reports risk and how it is managed.
- The system on Internal Control is reviewed on an on-going basis by Internal Audit.
- The Director of Resources is responsible for the financial management of the Council and is the Chief Financial Officer (Section 151 Officer).
- Robust budget monitoring arrangements for both capital and revenue with budget reporting to management team and members. Monthly monitoring reports were introduced for 2024/25 which are discussed with Executive Portfolio holders.
- The Council has an appropriate anti-fraud and corruption culture.
- The Council experienced a Distributed Denial of Service (DDOS) attack against its main website which took place in 2024/25. The cybercrime attacker flooded the server with internet traffic to prevent users from accessing connected online services. The Council recovered from this. The Council have achieved the Cyber Essentials Plus certification for 2024/25. The IT Security Policies have been reviewed and there is an additional policy for Generative AI.

IMPLEMENTING GOOD PRACTICES IN TRANSPARENCY, REPORTING AND AUDIT TO DELIVER EFFECTIVE ACCOUNTABILITY.

- Information on the decision-making process is readily available to all stakeholders.
- Internal Audit will review the internal control framework on an on-going basis, particularly the key financial systems.
- Internal Audit have provided an objective opinion on the internal control framework that was in place for 2023-24.
- The Review for Internal Audit's compliance with PSIAS (Public Sector Internal Audit Standards) reported compliance for the Internal Audit service.
- External Audit (Forvis Mazars LLP) will review the arrangements that the Council has in place to secure value for money. This will also provide an opinion on the accuracy and completeness of the Statement of Accounts.
- Value for money is assessed once major projects have been delivered. There is an ongoing review against approved business models.
- We have recently undertaken a tender evaluation of our insurance portfolio to obtain best value for money. We also tender for contracts for empty homes renovations and comparison of selective licensing fees.
- In September 2024, the council invited the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge Team to visit our borough as part of our commitment to continued performance development and improvement. The [full report from the LGA](#) has now been received with positive feedback. The council has prepared a response [action plan](#) for implementation in readiness for the Peer Team's return to the council in June 2025.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

4. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS

- 4.1 Burnley Borough Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its Governance Framework, including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Management Team, who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the Head of Internal Audit's annual report and the findings and reports issued by the external auditors.
- 4.2 Burnley Borough Council's Internal Audit section, via specific responsibility assigned to the Head of Internal Audit, is required to provide an annual independent and objective opinion to the Authority on its risk management, governance, and control environment. The Head of Internal Audit's Internal Audit Opinion report for 2023/24 concluded that the Council's internal controls continue to operate effectively. The Internal Audit Opinion report for 2024/25 will be available in June 2025.
- 4.3 The review of compliance with the Governance Framework has involved:
- Directors, Heads of Service and Strategic Officers (Strategic HR Manager and Strategic Health & Safety Advisor) providing signed Assurance Statements to Management Team. These have been supported by a control and risk self-assessment questionnaire and were collated by the Procurement and Information Officer. Management Team considered these statements and the signed Assurance Statement from the Chief Operating Officer.
 - Liberata providing a signed Assurance Statement to the Chief Operating Officer.
 - Executive Members and all chairs of Committees have completed a self-assessment questionnaire and provided a signed Assurance Statement to the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive.
 - The Procurement and Information Officer completing a review of the corporate documents and evidence for the key elements of Governance and Internal Control. The Internal Audit Opinion is included as part of the consideration, as are external audit reports etc.
 - A draft of the Annual Governance Statement is prepared and provided to Management Team. An Annual Governance Statement is then provided to the Chief Executive and Leader to sign. The Financial Management Code is reviewed annually and agreed at Full Council.
- 4.4 Governance arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the Governance Framework. The review process has highlighted no significant issues.

5. FUTURE CHALLENGES

- 5.1 Burnley Borough Council has recognised current and future financial challenges in its strategic risk register and medium-term financial strategy. The risk register is reviewed annually, although the risks during 24/25 have been kept under constant review due to the uncertainties surrounding levels of income, expenditure and external funding (mainly government financial support).
- 5.2 Burnley Borough Council is continuing to deal with and respond to the issues arising from the cost-of-living crisis. This includes involvement with the economic recovery in the local community and dealing with the financial impacts.
- 5.3 Following the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, the Peer Team provided some recommendations to further strengthen the organisation but acknowledged that most of them were already under consideration. These included;
- Refreshing the overarching communication strategy, including promoting the council and its successes.
 - Continued focus on tackling the root causes of deprivation and inequalities, working with system partners to agree on shared outcomes.
 - Enhancing the role of Scrutiny in holding partners to account.
 - Reviewing the Asset Management Strategy.
 - Continuing to embed jointly owned monthly budget monitoring.
 - Considering future service delivery models to ensure organisational resilience and the ability to address future community needs.
 - Championing effective succession planning to embed future workforce resilience.

The full report from the LGA has now been received. The council has prepared a response action plan for implementation in readiness for the Peer Team's return to the council in June 2025.

- 5.4 The authority will continue to meet these challenges as it has done in the past; taking steps to manage this by considering modernisation and rationalisation.

6. ACTION TAKEN TO ADDRESS PREVIOUS ISSUES

- 6.1 No significant issues had been identified on the previous (2023/24) governance statement.

7. CERTIFICATION

- 7.1 The Council has governance procedures that contain comprehensive systems, cultures, and values by which it is controlled, and through which it engages with the community in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

Signed: 

Councillor Afrasiab Anwar
Leader of the Council

Date: 24/02/2026

Signed: 

Lukman Patel
Chief Executive

Date: 24/02/2026