

Explanation of the reason for any 'No' responses on Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26:

Annual Governance Statement for the financial year ended 31 March 2026 following findings raised by the Internal Auditor.

The Internal Auditor concluded that the Council's digital and data compliance arrangements did not fully meet proper practices. Specifically, the Council did not have a dedicated Data Protection Policy in place and had not undertaken a formal Data Audit to identify and review the personal data held by the Council, its lawful basis for processing, storage arrangements, retention periods and associated controls.

During the year, the Council was also required to manage a number of governance, information rights and data protection matters simultaneously, including Subject Access Requests, Freedom of Information requests, Monitoring Officer referrals and a reported data protection breach. These matters placed significant demands on officer resources and highlighted the need to strengthen the Council's data governance arrangements.

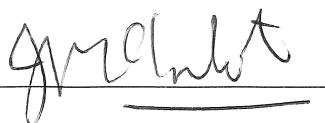
The Internal Auditor reviewed the outcome of an investigation by the Information Commissioner's Office and noted that recommendations had been made to improve the Council's data protection arrangements. The auditor recommended that these actions be implemented and that progress be monitored and recorded by the Council.

As a result of these findings, the Council was unable to confirm that all aspects of Assertion 10 had been fully met during the financial year and therefore appropriately recorded a "No" response.

The Council has accepted the recommendations of the Internal Auditor and will:

- Adopt a dedicated Data Protection Policy based on recognised sector guidance.
- Undertake a formal Data Audit to review all personal data held by the Council.
- Implement and monitor the recommendations arising from the Information Commissioner's Office review.
- Continue to strengthen its governance, information management and data protection arrangements to ensure compliance with statutory requirements and recognised best practice.

The Council remains committed to maintaining high standards of governance, transparency and accountability and will monitor progress against these actions during the current financial year.

Signed: 
Clerk

Date: 22/01/2026