Appendix 2

Auditor's Annual Report
Cherwell District Council

For the year ended 31 March 2026

Date: 21 September 2026

Members of the Audit and Governance Committee
Cherwell District Council
39 Castle Quay
Banbury
OX16 5FD

Dear Sirs and Madams

Cherwell District Council – Auditor's Annual Report 2025/26

We are pleased to attach our draft Auditor's Annual Report for the financial year 2025/26. This report summarises our audit conclusions and highlights the key findings arising from our value for money work.

We have initially discussed the contents of our report with management and have incorporated their comments where relevant.

This report is intended to be solely for the information and use of management and those charged with governance of the Council and should not be shared with anyone beyond the Council without our prior approval.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Council's officers for the co-operation and assistance afforded to us during the course of the audit.

Yours faithfully

Bishop Fleming Audit Limited

Bishop Fleming Audit Limited

Contents

1. Introduction

Our Auditor's Annual Report (AAR) summarises the work that we completed for Cherwell District Council (the Council) for the year ended 31 March 2026.

The Council is responsible for:

- keeping proper accounts and proper records in relation to the accounts and for maintaining an appropriate system of internal control;
- the preparation of annual accounts for each financial year. Such accounts must present a true and fair view and comply with the requirements of enactments that apply to them; and
- putting in place appropriate arrangements to secure the economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources and to maintain an effective system of internal control that supports the achievement of its policies, aims and objectives whilst safeguarding and securing value for money from the public funds at its disposal.

The scope of our work is set in accordance with the National Audit Office's (NAO) Code of Audit Practice (the Code) and the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK). Our work is planned to provide a focused and robust audit. We are responsible for and are required to provide an independent opinion as to whether the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council at the year end and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended;
- have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2025/26; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

We are also required to report to the Council by exception the following matters, if:

- the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2025 Edition" published by CIPFA/SOLACE; or
- we issue a report in the public interest under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; or
- we make a written recommendation to the Council under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit.

In addition, we are also responsible for reviewing the Council's arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Code requires us to report on the Council's arrangements under three specified reporting criteria:

- Financial sustainability – how the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;
- Governance – how the Council ensures it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
- 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.

We carried out our work in accordance with our Audit Plan which we issued to the Council in March 2026.

2. Executive summary

Results from the audit of the financial statements

Our audit of the financial statements is currently in progress. We anticipate issuing a qualified opinion. This is due to a lack of sufficient, appropriate evidence over comparative figures, as a result of previous disclaimed opinions, but where the potential effects on the final statements are not deemed to be pervasive. See section 3 for more details.

On finalisation of the external audit, we will also complete the component auditor procedures, in line with the NAO group auditor instructions.

We have issued this report as draft as these procedures have not been finalised. We will issue a final version to confirm when both of these matters have been resolved.

Results on our work on other matters

We completed our review of other matters and have no issues to report. See section 3 for more details.

Results from our work on VFM arrangements

Under the Code, we are required to consider whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Our conclusions are summarised below. See sections 4-8 for more details.

Financial sustainability		We did not identify any significant weaknesses in the Council's arrangements for financial sustainability. We have also not made any recommendations.
Governance		We did not identify any significant weaknesses in the Council's governance arrangements. We have also not made any recommendations.
Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness		We have identified a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements for improving efficiency, economy and effectiveness in respect of the Council's planning function being designated by the Government in respect of major planning applications. A recommendation for improvement has been made.

Key:

	Green - No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and no recommendations made
	Amber - No significant weaknesses in arrangements identified but recommendations made
	Red - Significant weaknesses in arrangements identified and recommendations made

3. Audit of the financial statements

Audit opinion on the financial statements

The scope of our work is set in accordance with the Code and the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) (UK). As stated in section 1 of this report, we are required to provide an independent opinion as to whether the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council at the year end and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended;
- have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2025/26; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Our audit of the financial statements is currently in progress. Subject to the satisfactory finalisation of the work, we anticipate issuing a qualified opinion due to a lack of sufficient, appropriate evidence over comparative figures, as a result of previous disclaimed opinions, but where the potential effects on the final statements are not deemed to be pervasive.

Key issues arising from the accounts audit

A prior period adjustment has been required due to an incorrect consolidation adjustment made in the 2024/25 Consolidated Group Balance Sheet. This resulted in Long Term Investments and Long Term Creditors being overstated by £9,533k.

The Council repaid a £25m PWLB loan in the year that was due to mature in 2071, which meant the Council was given a discount of £14.6m. Under the CIPFA Code, the discount should go to the financing and investment income and then be transferred from the General Fund Balance to the Financial Instruments Adjustment Account, with the discount be amortised by a release to the General Fund over 10 years. The draft financial statements included £13.1m relating to the PWLB discount within income to the Resources Directorate, meaning it was within Cost of Services line in the Consolidated Income and Expenditure Account, with £1.5m having been transferred to earmarked reserves.

Under the CIPFA Code, the discount should go to the financing and investment income and then be transferred from the General Fund Balance to the Financial Instruments Adjustment Account, with the discount be amortised by a release to the General Fund over 10 years. This is a complex accounting matter and has required discussions with the finance team to determine the correct accounting treatment

Other matters

As stated in section 1 of this report, we are also required to report to the Council, by exception, the following matters, if:

- the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016 Edition" published by CIPFA/SOLACE; or
- we issue a report in the public interest under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014; or
- we make a written recommendation to the Council under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we make an application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law under Section 28 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we issue an advisory notice under Section 29 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we make an application for judicial review under Section 31 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit.

We concluded that there were no matters to bring to the Council's attention in respect of these matters.

Audit certificate

At the end of the audit, as auditors, we are required to certify the completion of the audit. The effect of this certificate is to close the audit and marks the point when the auditor's responsibilities in respect of the audit of the period covered by the certificate have been discharged.

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certificate for Cherwell District Council for the year ended 31 March 2026 in accordance with the requirements of Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code until we have confirmation from the NAO that no additional work (beyond submission of the Assurance Statement) will be required in respect of the Whole of Government Accounts exercise.

More detailed findings can be found in our Audit Completion Report which was reported to the Audit and Governance Committee on 30 September 2026.

4. Value for Money

Under the Code, we are required to consider whether the Council has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2026.

The Code requires us to report our commentary on the Council's arrangements under three specified reporting criteria:

- Financial sustainability – how the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;
- Governance – how the Council ensures it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks; and
- 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.

The NAO has issued guidance for auditors to report against each of the three specified reporting criteria. The guidance also includes a number of further areas for review within each criterion for the auditor to assess those arrangements.

Our initial risk assessment did not identify any potential risks of significant weakness.

We asked management to complete an evidenced self-assessment of the Council's arrangements. We then reviewed the evidence provided and carried out follow up work as appropriate to consider whether there were any significant weaknesses in the arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Our commentary on the Council's arrangements in each of these three areas is set out in sections 5, 6 and 7 of this report. Our recommendations for improvement are included in section 8.

5. Financial sustainability

We considered how the Council plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services, including how it:

- ensures that it identifies all the significant financial pressures that are relevant to its short and medium-term plans and builds these into them;
- plans to bridge its funding gaps and identifies achievable savings;
- plans finances to support the sustainable delivery of services in accordance with strategic and statutory priorities;
- 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; and
- identifies and manages risks to financial resilience, e.g. unplanned changes in demand, including challenge of the assumptions underlying its plans.

Overview and 2025/26 outturn

The Council reported a £0.1million surplus on the General Fund in the 2025/26 outturn report presented to the Budget Planning Committee on 30 June 2026. This was after transferring £1.9 million to reserves, indicating that the underlying operating surplus achieved during the year was higher before these reserve movements were made.

Financial planning and monitoring

The Council maintains effective oversight of its financial performance throughout the year with continuous budget monitoring arrangements. Regular reports are presented to the Executive Committee, which provide an update on the projected year end position and provides an opportunity to identify any issues and put measures in place to mitigate them.

The Council actively engages with sector bodies and professional networks to remain informed of emerging developments, regulatory changes, and evolving best practice. This helps ensure that financial planning and decision-making are appropriately informed by the latest guidance and sector-wide insights.

The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), approved alongside the 2026/27 budget on 23 February 2026, forecasts a cumulative funding gap of £3 million over the remaining planning period. While balanced budgets are projected for 2026/27 and 2028/29, funding shortfalls of £2.3 million in 2027/28, £0.5 million in 2029/30, and £0.2 million in 2030/31 have been identified.

The reduction in the projected deficit from the previous MTFS indicates progress in strengthening financial resilience and the Council currently holds sufficient reserves to offset the deficits. However, the Council continues to identify and deliver sustainable savings and income opportunities to address the remaining gaps and support its long-term financial sustainability.

Achieving efficiency savings

Detailed monitoring of the Council's savings programme is undertaken throughout the year and reported through the monthly Finance and Performance Monitoring Reports. Savings are tracked against delivery milestones and categorised as delivered, on track, at risk but achievable, deferred, or undeliverable, with the financial impact of each category clearly quantified. Where savings are assessed as undeliverable, the associated shortfall is reflected within the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) as an additional budget pressure and is considered through the Council's budget-setting process.

The Council has a strong track record of delivering savings and efficiencies; however, achievement rates during 2024/25 and 2025/26 were below those seen in previous years. The Council has attributed a significant proportion of the shortfall to the timing of savings associated with a specific contract, with delivery now expected in 2026/27. Appropriate mitigating actions have been implemented to manage the interim financial impact.

2026/27 financial planning

A balanced budget for 2026/27 was formally approved by the Council on 23 February 2026. This budget incorporates planned savings and operational efficiencies totalling £2.3 million.

The Council's financial planning arrangements are integrated with its wider strategic and operational planning framework. The 2026/27 budget and MTFS were developed alongside the Corporate Plan, Annual Delivery Plan, Capital Programme, Treasury Management Strategy and Reserves Strategy, helping to ensure resources are aligned to corporate priorities.

Although the Council does not have a workforce plan in place, it has a robust budget challenge process which involves several teams (including Human Resources) who ensure that staffing implications are taken into account.

The Council undertook a public consultation on its 2026/27 budget proposals, providing residents, businesses and community stakeholders with an opportunity to comment on its financial plans and priorities. Consultation feedback was reported to the Executive on 3 February 2026 and was taken into account as part of the budget-setting process ahead of Full Council approval. This supports transparency and stakeholder engagement in key financial decisions.

Based on the work carried out, we are satisfied that there are no significant weaknesses in the Council's financial sustainability arrangements.

6. Governance

We considered how the Council ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including how it:

- monitors and assesses risk and how it gains assurance over the effective operation of internal controls, including arrangements to prevent and detect fraud;
- approaches and carries out its annual budget setting process;
- 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, including in relation to significant partnerships;
- 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 committee; and
- 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), and for example where it procures or commissions services.

Risk management

The Council's Risk Strategy details the approach to managing and reporting risks across the organisation. The strategy was updated in September 2025 and is scheduled for review in September 2026.

Strategic risks are recorded in a risk register, which is reviewed and updated monthly by senior management, with all risks having been reviewed within the last six months. The register records inherent risk, existing controls and mitigating actions, and assigns responsibility through named lead members, risk owners and risk managers. Risks are also RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rated using a defined scoring methodology that reflects probability of the risk occurring and its potential impact. Oversight is provided through quarterly risk monitoring reports to the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee and Executive Committee.

Internal control

The Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee's role is crucial to how the Council ensures the overall effectiveness of internal controls. The Committee discharges this function appropriately by adhering to its terms of reference and challenging officers in relation to internal and external audit findings (the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee changed to the Audit and Governance Committee with the updated Constitution approved in March 2026).

The Council obtains assurance over the effectiveness of internal controls through its internal audit arrangements. Veritau Public Services Ltd provides the internal audit service, with the 2025/26 internal audit plan approved by the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee. Progress reports were presented during the year, including in November 2025 and March 2026, setting out progress against the plan, the status of ongoing work and findings from completed reviews. Internal Audit reported their completed Head of Internal Audit opinion for 2025/26 to the Audit and Governance Committee meeting on 17 June 2026. This concluded that the cybersecurity, IT asset management and licensing the Council provides reasonable assurance.

During our review of the Internal Audit Reports alongside Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee minutes and supporting documents, we have not identified any significant gaps in the assurance the Council receives over matters in the work programme.

Historic control weaknesses relating to health and safety and the handling of strategic site applications also remain relevant, although management actions are in place and are either complete or ongoing. Aside from these matters, internal audit work completed during 2025/26 has resulted in Substantial or Reasonable Assurance opinions, with no evidence of pervasive control failure or material weaknesses giving rise to significant fraud, financial or service delivery risk.

The Council has arrangements in place to prevent and detect fraud. Its Counter Fraud Strategy is presented annually to the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee and sets out the Council's counter-fraud framework, fraud risk assessment, planned activity and intended deployment of counter-fraud resources. This is supported by an updated counter-fraud policy approved by the Committee and a whistleblowing policy maintained by the Monitoring Officer and subject to periodic Committee review. Taken together, these arrangements provide an established framework for risk management, assurance over internal controls and counter-fraud activity.

Budget setting and budgetary control

Budgets are developed through the identification of significant service pressures, anticipated changes in funding and projected expenditure requirements. In developing the budget, the Council uses the most likely scenario as the primary planning assumption, while also considering alternative contingency options where identified savings are insufficient to close the budget gap. These are presented to the Executive at business planning meetings, providing an opportunity for review and challenge prior to formal proposals being developed.

Proposed savings and budget changes are subject to public consultation, the results of which shape budget deliberations. The Budget Planning Committee reviews and provides feedback on the draft budget proposals before the Executive submits the final budget to Full Council for approval. Following approval, budget holders formally confirm their acceptance of, and accountability for, the budgets they are responsible for, supporting clear ownership and financial control.

In-year budgetary control is supported through regular budget monitoring arrangements. Monthly monitoring reports are produced, with budget holders responsible for reviewing performance and identifying mitigating actions where variances arise. Reporting includes both financial and relevant non-financial information, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of performance and supporting informed decision-making.

These arrangements demonstrate that the Council has established processes to support effective budget setting, ongoing monitoring, and the use of timely and relevant information, with clear mechanisms in place to identify and address variances where required.

Decision making

The Council has established structured arrangements to ensure that decisions are informed by appropriate evidence and subject to effective challenge and transparency. Reports are prepared by the relevant directorates with subject matter expertise and are subject to review by Finance, Legal, Risk and Sustainability teams prior to consideration by members. Reports are required to set out alternative options and the rationale for recommended courses of action, supporting informed and balanced decision making. In addition, expert external advice is sought where decisions are complex or unusual, such as in relation to major property transactions, further strengthening the evidence base for decisions.

The Council has further strengthened independent challenge through its Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee arrangements. The appointment of independent members with relevant professional expertise enhances the committee's ability to provide effective scrutiny. In addition, mandatory training is required for committee members, ensuring that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

Ensuring appropriate standards

We have been informed that there have been no instances of significant non-compliance within the year. Throughout our review, we have not identified anything that has contradicted this.

Key governance policies, including the Code of Conduct, Anti Money Laundering Policy and Disciplinary Policy, set out expected standards, reporting requirements and the consequences of non-compliance. These are supported by mandatory training for staff on areas such as compliance, fraud prevention, anti-bribery and GDPR, helping to ensure awareness and consistent application of requirements across the organisation.

Arrangements are in place to identify and respond to non-compliance. Any breaches of laws or regulations are reported to the appropriate statutory officers and addressed in line with established disciplinary procedures, demonstrating that processes exist to take corrective action where required.

The Council has also implemented clear frameworks to manage conflicts of interest and standards of behaviour. The Code of Conduct includes provisions on gifts and hospitality, outlining acceptable practices and the process to follow where there is uncertainty or where inappropriate items have been received. In addition, members and senior officers are required to complete annual declarations of interests, which are recorded on a register, with further declarations made and minuted at committee meetings where relevant.

We are satisfied that the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to monitor compliance with legislation and regulatory requirements.

*Based on the work carried out, we have not identified any significant weaknesses in the **Council's** governance arrangements.*

7. Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness

We considered how the Council uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services, including:

- how financial and performance information has been used to assess performance to identify areas for improvement;
- how the Council evaluates the services it provides to assess performance and identify areas for improvement;
- how the Council ensures it delivers its role within significant partnerships and engages with stakeholders it has identified, in order to assess whether it is meeting its objectives; and
- where the Council commissions or procures services, how it assesses whether it is realising the expected benefits.

Assessing performance and evaluating service delivery

The Council uses a structured performance management framework to monitor financial and service performance and identify areas for improvement. The quarterly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report combines financial and non-financial information, including key performance indicators and benchmarking against prior year results and external comparators. This enables the Council to assess trends, understand the drivers of performance, and identify areas where improvement is required.

Performance is further informed through engagement with external data sources and peer comparisons, including the use of regional and national benchmarking tools, as well as collaboration with neighbouring authorities to assess relative performance and share best practice.

The Council also draws on findings from regulators, external audit and specialist reviews to inform service improvements. Where recommendations are made, these are considered and used to drive changes to service delivery, demonstrating a feedback loop between performance assessment and improvement actions.

In addition, Internal Audit work identifies control weaknesses and areas for improvement, which are formally tracked with assigned priority ratings and target completion dates, supporting ongoing monitoring and accountability for implementation.

In June 2026 the Government designated Cherwell District Council, as the local planning authority, in respect of applications for planning permissions for major developments. This which means that applicants for major developments can opt to have their application determined by the Planning Inspectorate rather than by the Council. This was a result of the number of successful appeals against decisions made by the Council on major developments in the two years to March 2025 exceeding the 10% threshold set by the Government. By the end of December 2025, there had been 13 successful appeals on 116 major developments (11.2%). The Council had also exceeded the 10% threshold in the previous monitoring period to March 2024 but had been successful in appealing against designation by arguing exceptional circumstances, due to one appeal case pushing them slightly over the threshold to 10.43%. We have concluded that this this is a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements.

The Council is monitoring its planning performance on a rolling monthly basis and is working with the Local Government Association's Planning Advisory Service to develop an action plan to have the designation removed.

Partnership working

The Council has robust governance structures to ensure effective oversight and management of its principal partnership initiatives. The Bicester Garden Town project is a significant collaborative involving Oxfordshire County Council, Homes England, developers, and a range of other stakeholders. This partnership is delivering the development of the Garden Town area.

An Officer Programme Board (OPB) meets monthly to maintain consistent strategic direction. The Board includes officers from Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council who work together to manage the progress of the project.

The Strategic Oversight Partnership (SOP) provides a further layer of governance and scrutiny. The SOP includes elected members from Cherwell District Council, Bicester Town Council, and Oxford County Council, as well as representatives from stakeholder organisations such as Homes England and the Oxford Local Enterprise Partnership. These arrangements collectively demonstrate the Council's commitment to closely monitoring and managing its partnership work.

The Council also participates in the Oxfordshire Migration Partnership (OMP), which operates within a clearly defined governance framework comprising strategic, tactical and operational groups, supported by a Programme Management Team. The OMP Delivery Plan for 2025–27 sets out clear objectives and monitoring arrangements. Progress is reported through the partnership governance structure and into relevant Council forums, ensuring that Cherwell District Council retains oversight to ensure that the partnership is achieving its objectives.

The Council also oversees subsidiary companies, namely Graven Hill Village Holdings Ltd and Crown House Banbury Ltd, each of which maintains its own associated subsidiaries. These companies are required to report on a quarterly basis to the Shareholder Committee. Through these regular reports, members of the Committee are kept informed about the performance of the companies, specifically regarding their progress against the objectives set out in their respective business plans. This process ensures transparency and alignment with the Council's strategic aims.

Commissioning and procuring services

The Council's Procurement Strategy was updated in March 2026, with updated Contract Procedure rules approved in April 2026. Oversight of procurement activities is jointly managed by the Council's legal services and procurement teams. This collaborative approach ensures that all procurement exercises adhere strictly to the relevant laws and established procedures. Officers undertaking procurement activities have access to a dedicated SharePoint site, which serves as a central repository for comprehensive guidance, procedures, and templates. This resource is utilised across the Council to support consistent and compliant procurement practices.

There have been no identified instances, nor have any been reported, of the Council failing to conduct a fair procurement exercise in relation to significant contracts.

The Council has robust arrangements in place for monitoring the performance of its service providers, taking prompt action to resolve any issues as they arise. This is demonstrated by the leisure centre operating contract. Performance monitoring for this contract includes monthly reporting, with regular meetings between the Council and the service provider. These meetings involve the review of key performance indicators, including participation levels and customer feedback. They also include discussion of any construction-and defect issues and opportunities for contract savings. This process ensures that the service provided meets the required standards and that any areas of concern are addressed proactively.

Based on the work carried out, we have identified a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements for improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness in *respect of the Planning function being designated by the Government.*

We have made recommendations for improvement at section 8.

8. Recommendations

KEY:

Red - Recommendations that refer to issues that have resulted in a significant weakness in the Council's arrangements.

Amber - Recommendations that should improve the arrangements in place at the Council but are not as a result of identifying a significant weakness.

Current Year Issues

Planning function designation	
The Government has been designated the Council's planning function in respect of applications for planning permissions for major developments. This was a result of the number of successful appeals against decisions made by the Council on major developments in the two years to March 2025 exceeding the 10% threshold set by the Government.	<u>Recommendation</u> The Council must develop an action plan for removing the designation, working with the LGA's Panning Advisory Service. <u>Management comment</u> The Council has developed a draft action plan and has engaged with MHCLG and the Planning Advisory Service to help inform its content and approach. This has been reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team and will be presented to the Executive for feedback over the coming months. In the interim, work is gathering pace on delivery of the Plan which is being overseen and monitored by the established internal project management governance process.

Prior Year Issues

No prior year issues were identified.

Bishop Fleming

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