Sevenoaks Town Council

STATEMENT ON THE SYSTEM OF INTERNAL CONTROL

Scope of responsibility

The 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. The Council also 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 also responsible for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control which facilitates the effective exercise of the council's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.

Purpose of the system of internal control

The system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level rather than to eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives; it 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 the Council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

The system of internal control has continued to operate at the Council throughout this financial year and accords with proper practice.

The internal control environment

The system of internal control is based on a framework of regular management information, financial regulations, administrative procedures (including segregation of duties), management supervision, and a system of delegation and accountability. Development and maintenance of the system is undertaken by managers within the Council. In particular, the system includes:

- comprehensive budgeting systems;
- setting targets to measure financial and other performance;
- the preparation of regular financial reports which indicate actual expenditure against the forecasts;
- clearly defined capital expenditure guidelines;
- risk appraisal programmes to identify and manage risks and hazards in all the Council's areas of operation; and
- as appropriate, formal project management disciplines.

The council has contracted for the internal audit function to be carried out by Mulberry Local Authority Services Limited. A member of Mulberry's internal audit staff visits the council a minimum of three times a year, and reports prepared by Mulberry are supplied to both the Town Clerk, the Responsible Finance Officer and the Chair of the Finance & Delivery Committee. All reports are presented to the council's Finance & Delivery Committee for comment and approval. Mulberry also provides the Council with advice on risk assessment, statistical analysis and operating standards.

The internal auditor provides the Council with an independent opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control.

Review of effectiveness

The Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control. The review and effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by:

- the work of managers within the council;
- the work of the internal auditor as described above; and
- the external auditors in their annual audit letter and other reports.

In the year to 31st March 2026, no significant weaknesses in the council's systems were identified.

Approval of statement

This statement was approved on 8th June 2026 at a meeting of the Council's Finance & Delivery Committee.

Signed________________________

Councillor Wightman
Chairman Finance & Delivery Committee

Signed________________________

Mrs Georgina Jackson
Responsible Finance Officer