

LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Policy Statement

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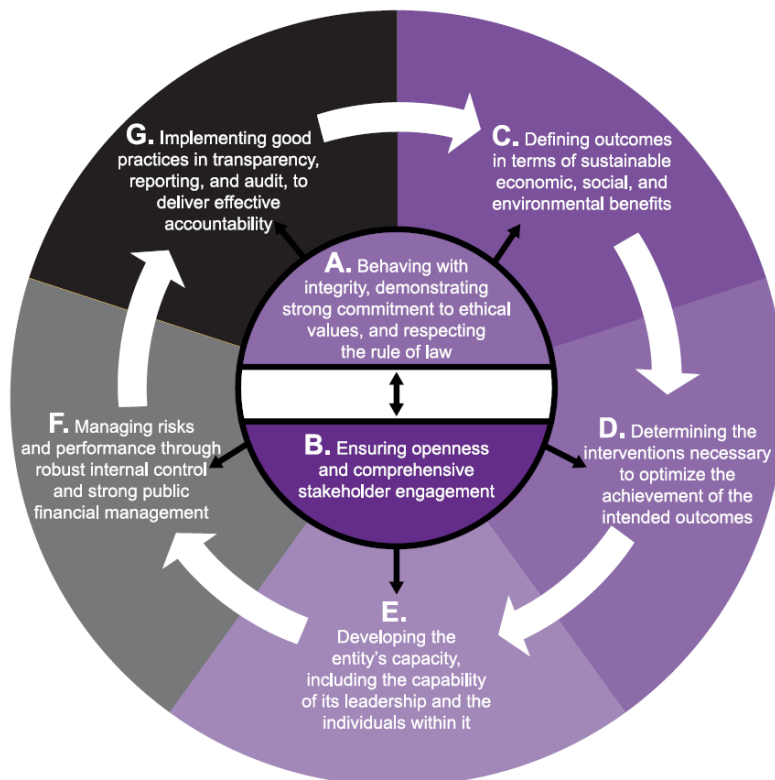
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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL Local Code of Corporate Governance

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2014, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) collaborated to produce The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector. The International Framework defines governance as comprising the arrangements put in place to ensure that intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved. It states that in order to deliver good governance in the public sector, both governing bodies and individuals working for public sector entities must try to achieve their entity's objectives while acting in the public interest at all times.
- 1.2 The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in association with SOLACE have published their Framework entitled 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016'.
- 1.3 The diagram below¹ illustrates the core principles of good governance in the public sector and how they relate to each other: Principles A and B permeates implementation of principles C to G.

Achieving the Intended Outcomes While Acting in the Public Interest at all Times



¹ CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016

- 1.4 In North West Leicestershire, good governance is about how the Council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way and for the benefit of the communities it serves. The starting place for good governance is having shared values and culture and a framework of overarching strategic policies and objectives underpinned by robust systems and processes for delivering these.
- 1.5 By ensuring good governance is in place, the Council will ensure it has high standards of management, strong performance, the effective use of resources and good outcomes which in turn will lead to increased public trust.
- 1.6 The Council is committed to the seven core principles of good practice contained in the CIPFA framework and will test its governance arrangements against this framework and report annually (via its annual assurance review and Annual Governance Statement).

2 SUMMARY OF COMMITMENT

- 2.1 By adopting this Local Code of Corporate Governance, we are responding to the CIPFA/SOLACE Joint Working Group Guidance and Framework entitled 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'.
- 2.2 In doing so we will:
 - Accept the core principles set out in section 3 below as the basis for our Corporate Governance arrangements.
 - Publish an Annual Governance Assurance Statement with the Council's Statement of Accounts.
 - Draw up Action Plans of improvements to our corporate governance arrangements, such plans to be monitored by the Audit and Governance Committee.

3 FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

- 3.1 Set out in this document is the Council's proposed Local Code of Corporate Governance which is based on the seven core principles (as set out in the illustration above) adopted for local government from the report of the Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services.

Principle A - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

The Council is committed to:

Behaving with Integrity

- Ensuring members and officers behave with integrity and lead as a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation.
- Ensuring members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (The Nolan Principles).
- Leading by example and using these standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions.
- Demonstrating, communicating and embedding the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they are operating effectively.

Demonstrating strong commitment and ethical values

- Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance
- Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation's culture and operation
- Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values
- Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with high ethical standards expected by the organisation

Respecting the rule of law

- Ensuring members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations
- Creating the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders and members are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements
- Striving to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders
- Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively
- Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively

Principle B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

The Council is committed to:

Openness

- Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness
- Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided
- Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear
- Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions/ courses of action

Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders

- Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably
- Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively
- Ensuring that partnerships are based on: trust, a shared commitment to change, a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners and that the added value of partnership working is explicit

Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users

- Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes.
- Ensuring that communication methods are effective and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement
- Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs
- Implementing effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how their views have been taken into account
- Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity
- Taking account of the interests of future generations of tax payers and service users

Principle C – Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits

The Council is committed to:

Defining outcomes

- Having a clear vision which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provides the basis for the organisation's overall strategy, planning and other decisions
- Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer
- Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available
- Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes
- Managing service users expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available

Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

- Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision
- Taking a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the organisation's intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints
- Determining the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs
- Ensuring fair access to services

Principle D – Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

The Council is committed to:

Determining interventions

- Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and including the risks associated with those options. Therefore ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided
- Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts

Planning interventions

- Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets
- Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered
- Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks
- Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering outputs can be adapted to changing circumstances
- Establishing appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured
- Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly
- Preparing budgets in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan Informing medium and long term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy

Optimising achievement of intended outcomes

- Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints
- Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term
- Ensuring the medium term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage
- Ensuring the achievement of 'social value' through service planning and commissioning.

Principle E – Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

The Council is committed to:

Developing the entity’s capacity

- Reviewing operations, performance use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness
- Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how the authority’s resources are allocated so that outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently
- Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved
- Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources

Developing the capability of the entity’s leadership and other individuals

- Developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained
- Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body
- Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads the authority in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other’s authority
- Developing the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective shared leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by:
 - ensuring members and staff have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and that ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged
 - ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis
 - ensuring personal, organisational and system-wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and
- Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation
- Taking steps to consider the leadership’s own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections
- Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing

Principle F – Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

The Council is committed to:

Managing risk

- Recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making
- Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively
- Ensuring that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated

Managing performance

- Monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review
- Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook
- Ensuring an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which encourages constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the organisation's performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible (OR, for a committee system)
Encouraging effective and constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives to support balanced and effective decision making
- Providing members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement
- Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (e.g. financial statements)

Robust internal control

- Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving the objectives
- Evaluating and monitoring the authority's risk management and internal control on a regular basis
- Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place
- Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor
- Ensuring an audit committee or equivalent group or function which is independent of the executive and accountable to the governing body: provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment that its recommendations are listened to and acted upon

Managing Data

- Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data
- Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies
- Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring

Strong public financial management

- Ensuring financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance
- Ensuring well-developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls

Principle G – Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

The Council is committed to:

Implementing good practice in transparency

- Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in an understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate
- Striking a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand

Implementing good practice in reporting

- Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and the stewardship of its resources
- Ensuring members and senior management own the results
- Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in the Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (annual governance statement)
- Ensuring that the Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate
- Ensuring the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other similar organisations

Assurance and effective accountability

- Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon
- Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place which provides assurance with regard to governance arrangements and recommendations are acted upon
- Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations
- Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement
- Ensuring that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and that the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met

4 REVISIONS OF THE LOCAL CODE

- 4.1 The contents of this Local Code will be reviewed when necessary usually on an annual basis.

NWLDC
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