Craven District Council

Local Code of Corporate Governance

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The Process of Governance

Governance comprises the arrangements put in place by the Council to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved.

Governance is about how the Council ensures it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It enables the Council to pursue its vision effectively, whilst ensuring that appropriate mechanisms for control and the management of risk are in place.

To deliver good governance the Council must act in the public interest at all times, in order to achieve positive outcomes for it service users, citizens and other stakeholders.

The overall aims is to ensure that resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities, that there is sound and inclusive decision making the clear accountability for the use of resources to achieve intended outcomes for service users and communities.
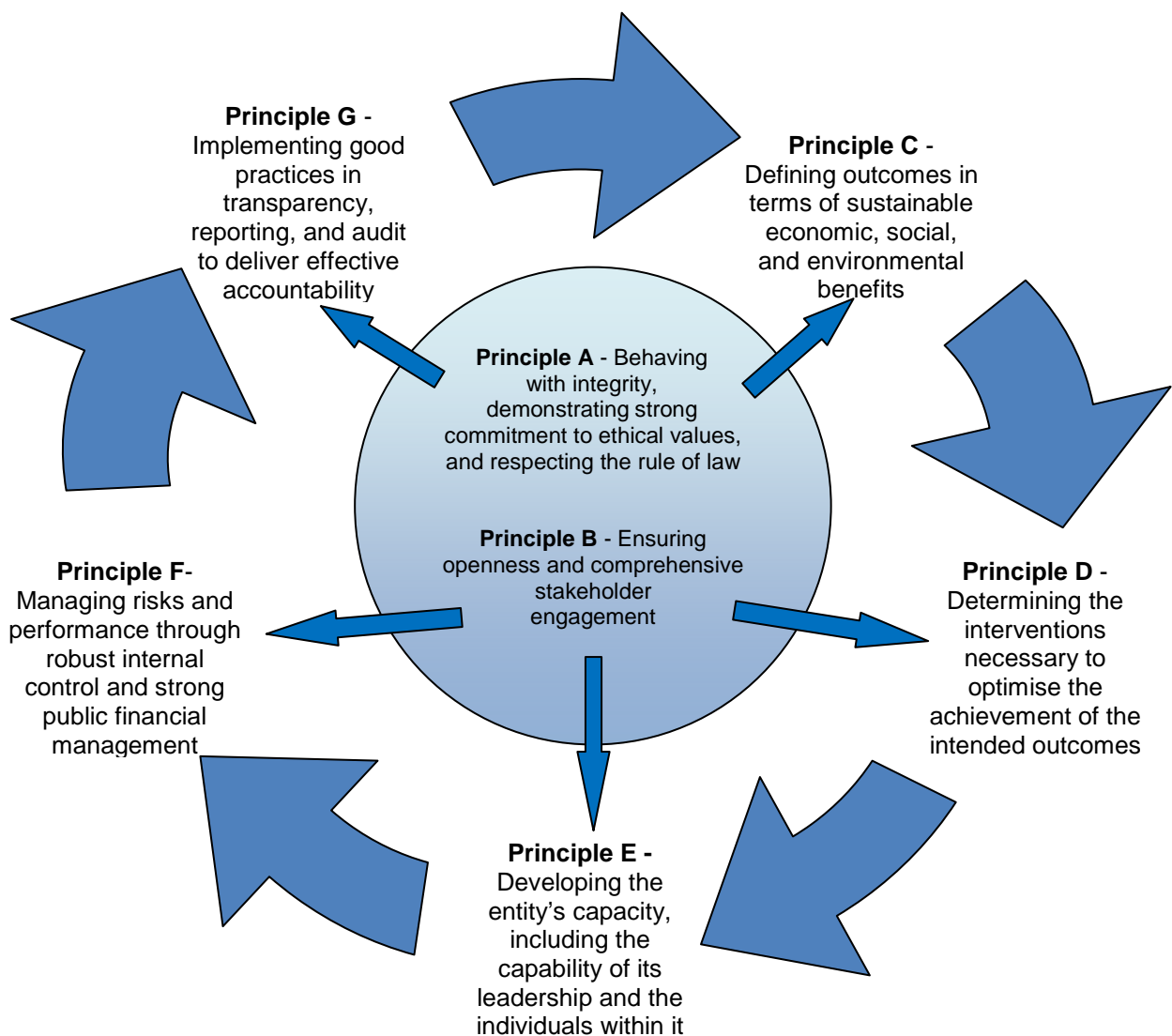
The Local Code of Governance

The Council operates a governance framework which brings together an underlying set of legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes.

The Code provides the framework for the Council to achieve its vision and priorities. It sets out:

- the core principles that the Council will adhere to for securing good governance;
- a summary of its arrangements for securing good governance through its Internal Control/Governance Framework; and
- the process for monitoring and maintaining the Code which is part of the Council's policy framework and has been approved by Council.

The Code reflects the seven core principles taken from the I*nternational Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014)* as contained within the *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (*updated April 2016) developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE).

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The Seven Principles of Good Governance

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

The Council is accountable for the use of financial resources directed to it through taxation and other means to provide services for our citizens. We are not only responsible for the achievement of intended outcome but also have responsibility to serve the public interested in adhering to requirements of legislation and government policies.   It is essential that we can demonstrate the appropriateness of our actions and have mechanisms in place that encourage and enforce commitment to ethnical values and compliance with the law.

Supporting Principle - Behaving with integrity

- Ensuring Members and officers behave with integrity and lead 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 the above 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 that they are operating effectively

Supporting Principle - Demonstrating strong commitment to 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 ethical standards expected by the organisation

Supporting Principle - 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

Our arrangements to meet this principle include:

- The Council's Constitution which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made, and the procedures which are followed. These include Standing Orders; Financial Regulations, Committee Membership and Terms of Reference, Scheme of Delegation to Officers, and Member and Employee Codes of Conduct, and the Member/Employee Protocol. These ensure that Officers and Members actively recognise their responsibilities, and are enabled to use their powers to the full benefit of the local community; acting lawfully, openly, and transparently and remain accountable to local people. The Council's Monitoring Officer, oversees the operation of the Constitution in order to ensure that its aims and principles are given full effect.

- Constitution reviewed and adopted annually. Standards Committee actively involved in reviewing the local codes and protocols.

- A set of Core Values guiding and influencing the way the Council and its staff work, and helping to continually improve performance. These values reflect our commitment to act with integrity and honesty, treat everyone with respect and strive for excellence. Our Staff Awards scheme is linked to the Core Values to help embed these values and behaviours into the day to day work of staff.

- Formal Codes and Protocols aimed at ensuring high standards of conduct and personal behaviour, which make up the Council's ethical framework for both Members and employees. These include the Member Code of Conduct and Officer Code of Conduct, and the Member/Employee Protocol. Effective training is provided on these Codes to Members and employees.

- Adoption of the Seven Principles of Public life which will be observed by Members and Officers at all times to ensure they act selflessly and with integrity, are open, honest and accountable and lead by example.

- The Council ensures that professional advice on matters that have legal or financial implications is available and recorded through decision making processes.

- Constitutions, Terms of Reference or Service Level Agreements are in place where appropriate, for partnerships the Council is involved in. These measures ensure that there is clarity over the legal status of powers, and roles and responsibilities in respect of each partnership in which the Council is involved and ensure risks are considered and managed.

- A Standards Committee which takes the lead in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct and ensuring the effectiveness of the ethical framework. The Committee is composed of Craven District Councillors, external independent persons and Parish Council representatives. Their role includes review of the Member/Employee Protocol and Codes of Conduct, monitoring adherence to code and protocols and dealing with complaints relating to breaches of the Member Code. The Committee has a dedicated budget to ensure resources are available to effectively investigate complaints.

- An Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy and an Anti-Money Laundering Policy which addresses relevant legislative requirements and ensures effective arrangements for tackling fraud and corruption, and prevent the use of services for money laundering. These are communicated to employees and Members, and are published on the Council's website, and regular training is delivered.

- Registers of Interest for both Officers and Councillors are maintained by the Council's Monitoring Officer, and Member interests published on the Council's website.

- A Register of Gifts and Hospitality to record receipt of any gift or hospitality worth more than an estimated value of £25 received by Officers and Councillor' is maintained by the Council's Monitoring Officer and published on the Council's website.

Our arrangements to meet this principle include:

- A Whistleblowing Policy to enable employees to raise serious concerns they have about any aspect of service provision of the conduct of officers or Members of the Council or other acting on its behalf.

- An established Complaints, Comments and Compliments procedure, to ensure we resolve complaints promptly and efficiently, and learn from our mistakes. Including those reported to the Local Government Ombudsman.   Separate procedures are in place to deal with complaints about Members.

- Processes to ensure compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations. The Chief Executive is the Council's Head of Paid Service; the Strategic Manager - Financial Services is the Council's Chief Financial Officer (s151 officer). The Solicitor to the Council is the Monitoring Officer. This officer has a statutory responsibility to ensure the legality of transactions, activities and arrangements that the Council enters into.

- All reports presented to Committee for decision making require the legal, financial, risk management, equality and staffing implications to be explicitly detailed. The council's Head of Paid Service, Chief Financial Officer, and Monitoring Officer/Deputy Monitoring Officer consider these reports, along with their implications. Each officer also provided on-going advice in connection with both the financial and legal standing of council business, including monthly reviews of the council's expenditure against budget.

- Monitoring Officer or Deputy Monitoring Officer attend all appropriate meetings of Committees to provide additional steer and advice to Members as required, on matters of conduct and decision-making.

Principle B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

The Council operates for the public good and recognises the need for openness about our activities and the importance of clear channels of communication, consultation and active engagement with stakeholders.

Supporting Principle - 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

Supporting Principle - Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders

- Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders (such as commercial partners and suppliers as well as other public or third sector organisations) 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

Supporting Principle - Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively

- Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve communities, 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 views have been taken into account

- Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity

- Taking account of the impact of decisions on future generations of tax payers and service users

Our arrangements to meet this principle include:

- Publication of our Constitution to ensure communities, individual citizens, service users and other stakeholder and are clear to whom and for what the Council is accountable.

- Timely publication of Agenda and reports presented at the Council's Committees.

- A commitment to publishing all committee agenda items under "part 1" unless there is a need to preserve confidentiality where it is proper and appropriate to do so.

- Enabling public access at all meetings of the Council, its Committees and Sub-Committees, except when we have to discuss information in closed session to avoid the disclosure of exempt information.

- Processes for ensuring that decisions taken at meetings of formal Committees are fully and accurately documented. These include the publication of formal minutes to our website along with audio recordings

- A Call-In Procedure which provides a mechanism for Members to directly challenge decisions made by the Policy Committee.

- Working effectively with a range of partners through formal and informal partnerships to enable intended outcomes to be achieved more effectively and ensure efficient use of resources.

- Adoption of the North Yorkshire Joint Principles for Engaging Communities which sets out our commitment to and principles for engaging with all sections of the community effectively.

- Established mechanisms for engagement including:
  - a Residents Feedback Panel
  - publishing an electronic Community Newsletter
  - a programme of consultation including an annual Budget Consultation exercise
  - use of social media
  - publishing the result of consultation exercises to our website
  - staff surveys

- Engaging with a number of stakeholder groups established for specific projects for example the Friends of Aireville Park, Skipton Town Hall steering group and teams involving various local agencies to develop and deliver village action plans for Crosshills, Ingleton and Settle

- Engaging and consulting with a range of institutional and other stakeholders on policy changes where we have a legislative requirement to do so.

- Clear and established channels of communication with the Parishes through the Parish Liaison Group

- A Select (Scrutiny) Committee which engages with the public and stakeholders when undertaking Select (Scrutiny) Reviews of services, through various means which may include surveys, press releases and invitations to meetings.

- Member engagement with communities through the Ward Member Grant Scheme, attendance at Parish Meetings, and nominations to sit on a range of outside bodies to enable effective engagement with the bodies and groups they represent.

- An established Complaints, Comments and Compliments procedure, which enables feedback from service users.

- An Employers Consultative Working Group as a formal means of engagement with employees and trade unions on matters of significance.

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

The long-term nature and impact of many responsibilities within local government, require the Council to define and plan its intended outcomes. It is essential that decisions contribute to our intended outcomes for the benefit of service users and citizens. We must balance competing demands when determining priorities and ensure we remain within the limits of available resources.

Supporting Principle - 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 provide 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

Supporting Principle - Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

- Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies and plans 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

Our arrangements to meet this principle include:

- Setting out the Council's Vision key priorities for improved outcomes for citizens in our Council Plan. The Council Plan is published as a three year rolling document. A review of the Plan, including the Council's vision, mission and priorities is carried out on an annual basis through the strategic planning process. This process is informed by community and Member consultation, reflecting political and community objectives, and acts as the basis for setting the Council's priorities.

- The Council, in their role as the supreme body of Members has overall responsibility for the Council's policy and budget framework, which includes adoption of, and any fundamental changes to, the Council's Constitution.

- The Policy Committee which is responsible for exercising the Council's powers within the budget and policy framework in the non-regulatory areas of its functions. It is also charged with making recommendations to the Council on the budget and framework and any plans, policies or strategies that have a significant corporate impact.

- Service Plans produced on an annual basis setting out the key goals, actions and targets for the year, for each service area. The Plans incorporate improvement actions and performance indicators, including those relating to the delivery of the Council Plan.

- A range of other supporting strategies and plans are in place to support specific areas of service delivery. These include the Housing and Homelessness Strategy, Parking Strategy and Asset Management Plan. These plans contribute to the achievement of the Council's vision and priorities for its communities.

- Sound financial plans designed to deliver the Council's priorities which incorporate:

  - a Long Term Financial Strategy highlighting key financial risks and pressures developed on a ten year rolling basis. This is supported by a Three year Medium Term Financial Plan which includes detailed revenue budgets;

  - a Capital Strategy which incorporates a rolling programme of capital investment and details capital budgets aligned to the Long and Medium Term Financial Strategies and achievement of the Council's priorities;

  - treasury management policies which set out the Council's approach to borrowing and investing financial resources to aid achievement of its priorities and service delivery

- A formal system of Risk Management to ensure that the council's assets are adequately protected and losses resulting from hazards, and claims against the council are mitigated through the effective use of risk control measures

- A Customer Access & Digital Strategy which sets out the Council's intent for customer access and digital engagement to enhance the customer experience and improve access to services.

- Arrangements embedded in service delivery for ensuring we meet our commitment and legal requirements regards equality and diversity. These include:

  - equality and diversity objectives which set out our commitment which is supported by an action plan outlining a range of measures we will take;

  - appointment of Member champion roles for equalities, older people, children and younger people, and dementia;

  - a commitment to upholding the Armed Forces Covenant to support members of the armed forces and their families in their local community;

  - establishing a Health and Well-Being Forum to further work on inequalities in communities related to health and well-being;

Our arrangements to meet this principle include:

- equality analysis of new policies, strategies, procedure or function to ensure their introduction does not result in a less favourable outcome on any group within the community, or unlawful discrimination. The results of equality analysis are included within Policy Committee Reports;

- processes for equalities monitoring to ensure we are meeting our commitments and producing an annual Equalities Report published to our website;

- recruitment and selection procedures based on recognised good practice that aims to secure applicants for employment from all sections of the community, and provide a framework for the recruitment and selection of employees which reflects fairness, equity and best practice; and

- recognition as a Positive About Disabled People Employer.

- External accreditations across services to demonstrate and improve the quality of the customer experience for service users. These include Customer Service Excellence, Museum and Libraries Archive Accreditation, and Visit England Quality Assured Visitor Attraction accreditation for Craven Museum & Gallery, and a bronze award for homeless services through The National Practitioner Support Service's Gold Standard Challenge.

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

The Council achieves its intended outcomes through a mixture of legal, regulatory and practical measures. Robust decision-making and review mechanisms are important to ensure the Council implements the right mix of these measures, and appropriately allocates resources to the achievement of our intended outcomes.

Supporting Principle - Determining interventions

- Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and associated risks. 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

Supporting Principle - 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 goods and services 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 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

Supporting Principle - 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

Our arrangements to meet this principle include:

- A strategic planning process to ensure the Council's vision, strategic plans, priorities and targets are developed through robust mechanisms, and in consultation with the local community and other key stakeholders.

- Detailed options appraisals and business cases are developed and considered in respects of projects requiring revenue or capital growth bid funding.

- Lead Members for specific Council Priorities including a Lead Member for Financial Sustainability. Reports to Policy Committee are presented and introduced by the appropriate Lead Member improve ownership in the decision making process.

- In order to ensure those making decisions are provided with information that is fit for purpose, relevant, timely and gives clear explanations of technical issues and their implications, the Council uses a standards report format in reports presented to its Committees. The reports include financial, legal, risk management and equality implications, as well as relevance to Council Priorities.

- Sound financial plans designed to deliver the Council's priorities which incorporate:

  - a Long Term Financial Strategy highlighting key financial risks and pressures on a ten year rolling basis. This is supported by a Three year Medium Term Financial Plan which includes detailed revenue budgets;

  - a Capital Strategy which incorporates a rolling programme of capital investment and details capital budgets aligned to the Long and Medium Term Financial Strategies and achievement of the Council's priorities;

  - treasury management policies which set out the Council's approach to borrowing and investing financial resources to aid achievement of its priorities and service delivery

- Arrangements for monitoring achievement of the Council Plan, Annual Service Plans, Budgets and Performance Indicators which include Monitoring Reports & Quarterly Performance clinics (including Value For Money (VFM)) Clinics which combine budget and performance monitoring and reports to the Council's Leadership Team and Policy and Audit Committees.

- A formal system of Risk Management to ensure that the council's assets are adequately protected and losses resulting from hazards, and claims against the council are mitigated through the effective use of risk control measures.

- Contingency arrangements to ensure the continuation of services in the event of major incidents including a business continuity, disaster recovery and emergency plan.

- Having in place an effective procurement arrangements that secure value for money and consider the contribution the Council can make to the achievement of added value to the community (social value) and procuring goods and services

- Requirements in respects of quotations and tenders as set out in the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, to ensure best value is achieved in the procurement of goods and services and ensure the Council meets requirements of Public Procurement Regulations.

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

The Council needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills and mind-set if it is to operate efficiently and effectively and achieved its intended outcomes in a timely manner. We need to ensure that we are best placed to meet our obligations and respond to changes in demands placed upon us.

Supporting Principle - Developing the entity's capacity

- Reviewing operations, performance and 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 resources are allocated so that defined 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

Supporting Principle - 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 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 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 external

- 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 well-being of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental well-being

Our arrangements to meet this principle include:

- A Value for Money Framework detailing the Council's principles and actions for securing value for money in the services it delivers. This includes arrangements for benchmarking and reviews of service to ensure they remain fit for purpose and responsive to needs.

- Working collaboratively with organisations across the region and developing a number of formal partnerships to deliver services and improved outcomes for local communities.

- A People Strategy which provides a framework to ensure the Council has the skilled, committed and high performing workforce needed to the deliver the Council's vision. The strategy has a number of themes which include leadership and capacity; as part of this we are investing in an Exceptional Leadership training programme for a number of staff.

- Clear statements of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Council's Committees and Senior Officers as set out in Committee Membership and Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation of the Constitution. This includes protocols which set out the roles and responsibilities of the three statutory officers:

  - a designated Head of Paid Services (the Chief Executive), responsible and accountable to the Authority for all aspects of operational management, in accordance with Section 4 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

  - a designated Section 151 Officer (the Strategic Manager – Financial Services), responsible to the Authority for ensuring that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, for keeping proper financial records and accounts, and for maintaining an effective system of internal financial control, in accordance with Section 112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

  - a designated Monitoring Officer (the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer), responsible to the Authority for ensuring that agreed procedures are followed and that all applicable statutes, regulations and other relevant statements of good practice are complied with, in accordance with Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

- A Member/Employee Protocol to ensure effective communication between Council Members and officers in their respective roles.

- Regular meetings held between the senior officers that form the Corporate Leadership Team, and the Council Leader and other Lead Members that make up the Council's Leadership Team.

- Job evaluation processes, job descriptions/person specifications and recruitment and selection processes for all Officer roles to ensure roles meet required needs and persons appointed possess the required qualifications and skill set to perform roles effectively.

- Induction training provided to all new Members and officers.

- A Performance Development Review (PDR) system to manage the performance of officers, which links performance to service and Council priorities and objectives.

- A Training and Development Plan which is revised annually to ensure training is delivered to meet the needs highlighted via the Performance Development Review process.

- Member Training is provided to meet the needs of all Members.

- The Council continues to develop its Apprenticeship Scheme and is proud of its successes in providing permanent career progression for a number of apprentices to Council roles.

- Various partnerships are in place with local schools, colleges and voluntary organisations to provide opportunities for work experience to individuals from all sections of the community.

- Investors in People (IiP) accredited status.

- Arrangements for protecting the health and well-being of the Council's workforce including health and safety policies, and risk assessments and an Employee Wellbeing Group charged with delivering a programme of activity to improve health and well-being.

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

The Council needs to ensure that it has an effective performance management system that facilities effective and efficient delivery of planned services. Risk management , internal control and strong systems of financial management are essential for the implementation of policies and achievement of our intended outcomes.

Supporting Principle - 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

Supporting Principle - 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 provides 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
- 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)

Supporting Principle - Robust internal control

- Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives
- Evaluating and monitoring 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/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

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

Supporting Principle - 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

Supporting Principle - 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

Our arrangements to meet this principle include:

- A formal system of Risk Management to ensure that: the council's assets are adequately protected and losses resulting from hazards and claims against the council are mitigated through the effective use of risk control measures. Corporate arrangements are overseen by the Strategic Manager Finance (Section 151 Officer). The system of risk management includes the maintenance of corporate and service risk registers. The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are responsible for keeping arrangements for both risk registers under review. The Register is used to monitor risks and identify appropriate action plans to mitigate risks. These risk management arrangements and the Corporate Risk Register containing the Council's key strategic risks are monitored by CLT and the Audit & Governance Committee.

- A Performance Management Framework sets out the formal arrangements for effective performance management, and is used to monitor and report progress against the Council Plan, Annual Service Plans, Budgets and Performance Indicators.

- The Council's Select (Scrutiny) Committee provides constructive challenge in relation to the Council's services and those of other agencies, holding the decision-makers to account, primarily through the call-in procedure, and contributing to policy development and review. A work programme is formulated on an annual basis which complements the aims and objectives of the Council's Priorities in the Council Plan. Issues that arise during the year can also be referred to the Committee. Different methods may be used to involve the public and stakeholders in Select (Scrutiny) Reviews, including surveys, press releases and invitations to meetings.

- A Value for Money Framework detailing the Council's principles and actions for securing value for money in the services it delivers. This includes arrangements for benchmarking and reviews of service to ensure they remain fit for purpose and responsive to needs.

- An effective internal audit function with direct access to members; charged with the delivery of an annual risk based internal audit plan, to provide assurance with regard to governance and internal control arrangements and ensure that recommendations are acted upon.

- An effective Audit and Governance Committee that is independent of the Policy and Select (scrutiny) functions. The Committee's remit includes review of internal and external audit activities, the control environment, risk management and the review and approval of the Council's annual Statement of Accounts. The Audit Committee receives updates on progress against internal audit recommendations arising from internal audit report and effectively challenges progress made.

- An Information Security Policy which sets out the minimum measures we will apply across services in order to effectively protect information and meet legislative requirements including those under the Data Protection Act.

- A sound system of financial management through the Long Term Financial Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan which includes budgets that are soundly based and are designed to deliver the Council's priorities, and an integrated approach to budget and performance monitoring and management of associated risks through that considers.

- Effective internal control arrangements to ensure sound financial management systems and processes.

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

The Council accountable to its communities, citizens, service users and other stakeholders for its decision making and delivery of services. We must ensure that we deliver services in a transparent manner and stakeholders are able to understand and effectively hold the Council to account.

Supporting Principle - Implementing good practice in transparency

- Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and 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

Supporting Principle - Implementing good practices in reporting

- Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and stewardship of resources to stakeholders in a timely and understandable way
- Ensuring members and senior management own the results reported
- Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in this Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment, including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (the annual governance statement)
- Ensuring that this 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

Supporting Principle - 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, providing assurance with regard to governance arrangements and that 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 the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met

Our arrangements to meet this principle include:

- Complying with the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code with respects to publishing data.

- A Publication Scheme which sets out the information that the Council publishes.

- Procedures and processes for securing data quality as set out in our Performance Management Framework which incorporates our Data Quality Strategy.

- Complying with provisions under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000, and related legislation, and having in place a Publication Scheme for publishing Council information.

- Publishing an Annual Report to communicate our achievements and performance to stakeholders.

- Arrangements for monitoring achievement of the Council Plan, Annual Service Plans, Budgets and Performance Indicators which include Monitoring Reports & Quarterly Performance clinics (including Value For Money (VFM) Clinics) which combine budget and performance monitoring and reports to the Council's Leadership Team and Policy and Audit Committees.

- Undertaking and annual review of our governance arrangements to assess compliance with and producing an Annual Governance Statement which sets out how we have complied with the Local Code of Governance and identifies are areas for improvement.

- Publishing the Annual Statement of Accounts.

- An effective internal audit function which complies with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and has direct access to members; charged with the delivery of an annual risk based internal audit plan, to provide assurance with regard to governance and internal control arrangements and ensure that recommendations are acted upon.

- An effective external audit function provided by Mazars. Whilst external auditors are not required to form an opinion on the effectiveness of the Council's risk and control procedures, their work does give a degree of assurance. The Council has a proactive relationship with Mazars and holds regular meetings to cover corporate matters and accounting and internal audit matters, in order to strengthen its governance arrangements. Conclusions and significant issues arising in 2016/17 are included in their report to those charged with governance.

- An effective Audit and Governance Committee that is independent of the Policy and Select (scrutiny) functions. The Audit and Governance Committee acts as the Council's responsible body charged with governance. In doing so it provides independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment, approves the Final Statement of Accounts, and receives reports from External and Internal Audit. A non-voting independent member has been appointed to assist the Committee in 2015, this appointment is currently in place to May 2020.

- Active participation with the Peer Review process offered by the Local Government Association

- Implementing effective governance arrangements and establish clear lines of accountability when working in partnership.

Summary of the Council's Governance Framework

Annual Governance Statement
Published annually with the Statement of Accounts signed off by the Chair of Audit & Governance Committee and Chief Executive. Subject to independent review by Audit & Governance Committee Members through examination of draft & recommendation for approval

Annual Review of Governance
Review undertaken by the Corporate Governance Working Group consisting of the Council's Leadership Team (CLT) and representatives of the service managers that form the Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

Processes	Key Strategies, Policies and Codes
- External Audit Annual Audit and Inspection Plan - Internal Audit Plan - Monitoring Officer - monitoring of compliance with Constitution, standards and legislation - Business Continuity/Risk Management Processes /Risk Registers - Strategic Planning/Budget Setting Processes - Quarterly Budget and Performance Monitoring Processes - Health and Safety Risk Assessments - Job evaluation process /Recruitment and Selection Processes - Induction processes - Register of Interests - Staff Surveys - Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure - Consultation Processes	- Local Code of Governance - Council Constitution including: Scheme of Delegation; Financial Procedure Rules; Standing Orders; Member & Officer Codes of Conduct; and Committee Terms of Reference - Council Plan / Service Improvement Plans - Long /Medium Term Financial Strategy (LTFS/MTFS) - Capital Strategy - Treasury Management Strategy - Annual Budget - Value for Money Framework - Performance Management Framework & Data Quality Strategy - Annual Statement of Accounts - Annual Report - Risk Management Strategy - Business Continuity /Disaster Recovery/Emergency Plans - Health and Safety Policies - Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy - Whistleblowing Policy - Procurement Regulations/ Procurement Strategy - Asset Management Plan - Information Security Policy - Publication Scheme (Freedom of Information) - Workforce Strategy/ Annual Training Plan - Equalities & Diversity Objectives - Customer Access & Digital Strategy
Functions /Roles and Responsibilities	**Opinions**
- Audit and Governance Committee - Policy Committee - Select (Scrutiny) Committee - Standards Committee - Head of Paid Services - Section 151 Officer - Monitoring Officer - Internal Audit - External Audit - Employee Consultative Committee - Local Government Ombudsman	- Internal Audit opinion expressed in periodic and annual reports to Audit and Governance Committee - External Audit - Local Government Ombudsman report - Fraud reports and investigations - Investors in People (IiP) Accreditation Report

Implementing the Code

- Members and senior officers are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of the Council's affairs and the stewardship of the resources at its disposal.

- The Council has delegated responsibility for governance to the Audit and Governance. An annual work programme is agreed that ensure it receives sufficient and appropriate information to enable it to discharge this duty and ultimately recommend adoption of the Annual Governance Statement.

- The Council's Section 151 Officer has been given the responsibility for overseeing the implementation and monitoring of the Code.

- The Council's key governance and business planning processes are also subject to audit on a risk basis. This work forms part of the evidence in support of Internal Audit's annual opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's systems of internal control.

Annual Review and Reporting

- The Council will carry out an annual review of their governance arrangements to ensure they are operating effectively and remain compliant the Local Code.

- This task is managed by the Corporate Leadership Team, which comprises the Chief Executive, Director of Services, and Strategic Manager Financial Services (Section 151 Officer).

- The Annual Governance Statement reports on the outcome of this review.

- The Annual Governance Statement is presented to the Audit and Governance Committee with the Financial Statements for approval. The Chief Executive and Chair of Audit and Governance Committee sign it off prior to the opinion being given on the Financial Statements giving their position on whether the corporate governance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively.

- This approach to reporting should ensure that the principles of corporate governance are embedded in the culture of the Council and are transparent to stakeholders

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If you would like this information in a way which is better for you, please telephone 01756 700600.

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PLATINUM ACCREDITED EMPLOYER

INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

disability confident
EMPLOYER

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE
CSE