

1. SECTION 9 – LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

1.1 Principle 1: Focussing on the Council’s Purpose and Community Needs

1.1.1 The Council will exercise strategic leadership by developing a clear vision and purpose, identifying intended outcomes and ensuring that these are clearly communicated to all stakeholders of the organisation, both internal and external. In doing so, the Council will report regularly on its activities and achievements, and its financial position and performance. The Council will publish annually:

- (a) The Corporate Strategy and Annual Report, including externally verified performance information;
- (b) Directorate and Service Plans;
- (c) The Statement of Accounts, incorporating the Annual Governance Statement.

1.1.2 In addition, the Council will keep its corporate strategies, objectives and priorities under constant review, so as to ensure that they remain relevant to the needs and aspirations of the community.

1.1.3 In undertaking all its activities, the Council will aim to deliver high quality services which meet the needs of service users. Delivery may be made directly, in partnership with other organisations or by a commissioning arrangement. Measurement of service quality will also be a key feature of service delivery. In addition, the Council will aim to ensure that tax payers and service users receive excellent value for money, and the Council will therefore continue to review this.

1.1.4 The Council will also seek to address any concerns or failings in service failure by adhering to and promoting its Complaints and Feedback Procedure.

1.2 Principle 2: Having Clear Responsibilities and Arrangements for Accountability

1.2.1 To ensure accountability, the Constitution determines the roles and responsibilities of the Council’s functions.

1.2.2 In particular, the Council’s Constitution:

- (a) clearly defines the statutory roles of Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer;

- (b) sets out a protocol to address the working relationship between the Leader and the Chief Executive which enables each to fulfil their respective roles;
- (c) ensures that a constructive working relationship exists between Members and Officers and that the responsibilities of Members and Officers are carried out to a high standard;
- (d) includes schemes of member and officer delegations;
- (e) includes protocols for partnership working that help to ensure that responsibilities are clearly defined and that relationships work effectively for the benefit of service users;
- (f) requires appropriate governance arrangements for partnerships, which define the legal status of the entity and also the extent to which decisions taken by the partnership will be binding for each organisation;
- (g) will be reviewed annually.

1.3 Principle 3: Good Conduct and Behaviour

1.3.1 The Council will conduct its activities in a manner which promotes high ethical standards and good behaviour and will ensure that its Members and Officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance. The following policies and protocols have been established and will be kept under review to assist the Council in fostering this culture:

- (a) Member Code of Conduct
- (b) Officer Code of Conduct
- (c) Employee Code of Conduct
- (d) Protocol on Officer/Member Relations
- (e) Whistleblowing Policy

1.3.2 The aim is to develop a set of shared values which will underpin an ethos of good governance. This will be further supported by compliance with legalisation and all relevant professional standards.

1.3.3 The Council has also established a Policy, Finance and Development Committee to discharge its responsibilities for promoting and maintaining high standards of Member conduct.

1.3.4 Where the Council works in partnership it will continue to uphold its own ethical standards, as well as acting in accordance with the partnership's shared values and aspirations.

1.4 **Principle 4: Informed, Transparent Decision Making and Managing Risk**

1.4.1 The Council observes this principle through the:

- (a) Establishment of an effective scrutiny function;
- (b) Recording of all decisions taken and the reasons for those decisions;
- (c) Maintenance of registers to record potential conflicts of interest'
- (d) Operation of the Policy, Finance and Development Committee;
- (e) Existence of an effective and transparent complaints and feedback procedure;
- (f) Provision of timely and relevant information to all interested parties;
- (g) Involvement of proper professional legal and/or financial expertise to inform decision-making;
- (h) Existence of an embedded risk management culture;
- (i) Existence of effective whistle blowing procedures;
- (j) Observation of all specific legislative requirements placed upon the Council.

1.4.2 The Council has established a scrutiny framework that will ensure policies and decisions are made which reflect the Council's strategic objectives and priorities. Members will be supported in decision making by ensuring that they are properly informed of all legal and resource considerations.

1.4.3 Risk management processes within the Council will be maintained so as to ensure that the risk and impact of decisions can be fully assessed.

1.5 **Principle 5: Developing Skills and Capacity**

1.5.1 The Council is continually seeking to develop the capacity and capability of both its members and officers in recognition that the people who direct and control the

organisation must have the right skills to do so. This is achieved through a commitment to training and development, as well as recruiting people with the right balance of knowledge and experience.

1.5.2 The Council will achieve this by:

- (a) Operating Member and employee induction programmes and identifying personal development needs;
- (b) Providing career structures to encourage development;
- (c) Investing in Member and Officer training and development;
- (d) Maintaining an effective performance management system;
- (e) Encouraging a wide variety of individuals to participate in the work of the Council.

1.6 **Principle 6: Engaging Stakeholders to Ensure Robust Accountability**

1.6.1 The Council will seek the views of its stakeholders and respond appropriately. The Council will achieve this by:

- (a) publishing an annual Statement of Accounts and Annual Report to inform stakeholders and services users of the previous year's achievements and outcomes;
- (b) producing plans for service delivery within the community;
- (c) clearly identifying its stakeholders, in order to ensure that relationships with these groups continue to be effective;
- (d) maintaining effective and clear channels of communication which reach all groups within the community and other stakeholders as well as offering a range of consultation methods;
- (e) producing an annual report on the performance of the scrutiny function;
- (f) providing a variety of opportunities for the public to engage effectively with the Council including attending meetings;
- (g) ensuring partnership arrangements demonstrate clear, appropriate governance accountabilities;

- (h) presenting itself in an open and accessible manner to ensure that council matters are dealt with transparently, in so far as the need for confidentiality allows;
- (i) developing an internal communication policy which will outline how staff and their representatives are consulted and involved in decision-making.

2. Monitoring, Review and Reporting

- 2.1 The Policy, Finance and Development Committee is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the Council's corporate governance arrangements. The Committee has various powers and responsibilities in relation to audit and governance issues, as detailed in the Constitution.
- 2.2 The Policy, Finance and Development Committee promotes and maintains high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted members of the Council. The Committee also assists Councillors to observe the Members' Code of Conduct and provides advice to the Council on issues relating to Member/Officer relations.
- 2.3 The Council is required to annually review the effectiveness of its system of internal controls. This review will seek to:
 - 2.3.1 Identify principal risks to the achievement of council objectives;
 - 2.3.2 Identify and evaluate key controls to manage principal risks;
 - 2.3.3 Obtain assurances of the effectiveness of key controls;
 - 2.3.4 Evaluate assurances and identify gaps in control/assurances.

3. The Annual Governance Statement

- 3.1 Following the annual review of the Council's governance arrangements and system of internal control, an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) will be published as part of the Council's Statement of Accounts.
- 3.2 Action plans will be drawn up in response to any significant control weakness identified in the AGS. A follow up process will be overseen by the Policy, Finance and Development Committee to ensure continuous improvement of the system of corporate governance.