



Code of Corporate Governance

Version number: 2.~~21~~

Date: November ~~2023~~2024

Version control

No.	Date	Author	Change description	Approved by
1	04/04/2017	Head of Corporate Governance	2017 Version.	Strategy & Resources Committee
2	21/10/2022	Business Assurance Manager	Review and update, including changes to the structure and format of the document.	Audit & Scrutiny Committee (17/11/2022)
2.1	25/09/2023	Business Assurance Manager	Minor updates made, inc. references to the Operating Framework.	Audit & Scrutiny Committee (16/11/2023)
<u>2.2</u>	<u>08/10/2024</u>	<u>Business Assurance Manager</u>	<u>Updated to reflect changes in the governance framework since last year.</u>	Strategic Leadership Team (17/10/2024)
Next review date: November <u>2024/2025</u>				

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Introduction

Corporate governance is a term used to describe the way that organisations direct and control what they do. For local authorities, it includes the systems, policies and processes as well as the cultures and values that underpin a council's arrangements for effective:

- Leadership
- Management
- Performance
- Delivery of positive customer outcomes
- Community engagement
- Stewardship of public money

Epsom and Ewell Borough Council (the council) is responsible for ensuring a sound system of governance: ensuring its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards; that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used; and that it exercises its functions efficiently and effectively. Councillors and officers are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the council's governance and the stewardship of its resources, and for regularly reviewing those arrangements.

The council is committed to demonstrating that it has the necessary corporate governance arrangements in place. It has developed and adopted a local Code of Corporate Governance which brings together in one document, all the governance and accountability arrangements the council currently has in place.

Principles of good corporate governance

This document is based upon the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework: Delivering good governance in local government.¹ The aim of the principles is to help local authorities achieve their intended outcomes, while acting in the public interest at all times. The principles are as follows:

- A.** Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
- B.** Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- C.** Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.
- D.** Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

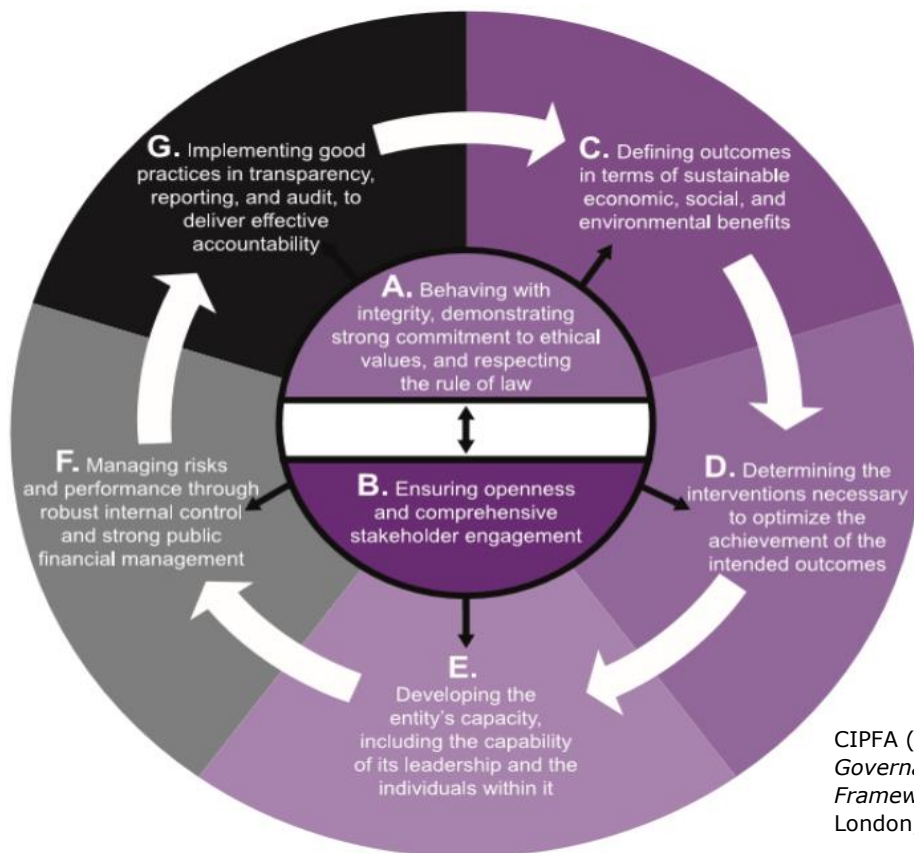
¹ CIPFA (2016) [Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework](#), 2016 Edition. CIPFA: London.

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

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

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

The diagram below illustrates how the seven principles of good governance relate to each other: principles A and B permeate through the implementation of principles C to G. Hence, good governance is dynamic and requires a commitment to continually improve by developing positive outcomes for services users and other stakeholders.



CIPFA (2016) *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016 Edition*. CIPFA: London, p.11.

Putting the principles into practice at the Council

The overarching aim of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework is to support local authorities in taking responsibility for developing an informed approach to governance and achieve the highest standards in a measured and proportionate way. In reviewing and accounting for their own unique approaches in line with the CIPFA/SOLACE framework, local authorities look to ensure that:

- Decision making is inclusive and sound.

- Agreed priorities and policies direct resources, and there is clear accountability for their use.

The council's **constitution** sets out how the council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure transparency and accountability. Some of these processes are required by law, while others have been adopted at the council's discretion. Much of the council's approach to addressing the principles of good governance is contained within it. More specific details of the way that the council applies the principles in practice are set out below.

Monitoring and reporting

Regulation 6 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 and the Accounts and Audit (Coronavirus) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 require an authority to conduct a review at least once in a year of the effectiveness of its systems of internal control and include a statement reporting on the review with any published statement of Accounts. This is known as an Annual Governance Statement.

The council will monitor its governance arrangements for their effectiveness in practice and will review them on a continuing basis to ensure that they are up to date and working effectively. Where monitoring reviews of the corporate governance arrangements have revealed gaps, actions will be planned to enhance the governance arrangements accordingly.

The council will submit an Annual Governance Statement to its Audit and Scrutiny Committee each year for consideration. The Statement will assess how the council have complied with this local code of corporate governance, and detail how governance improvements will be achieved.

Following approval at committee, the Annual Governance Statement is published with the Council's Statement of Accounts, on the council's website. Progress updates on the implementation of actions arising from the annual governance statements are provided to Audit and Scrutiny Committee throughout the year.

Certification

We hereby certify our commitment to this Local Code of Corporate Governance and will ensure that the council continues to review, evaluate and develop its governance arrangements and ensure continuous improvement of its systems.

INSERT

INSERT

**Chair of Strategy and Resources
Committee**

Chief Executive

Date: **INSERT**

Date: **INSERT**

Note: the signed original copy is kept at the council offices.

Applying the principles of good governance

The table below shows examples of documents and practices that the council has in place to ensure effective governance. The information is presented in line with the CIPFA/[SOLACE](#) framework.²

Principle A – Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	
<p>What this means in practice:</p> <p>The council is accountable not only for how much it spends, but also how it uses the resources under its stewardship. This includes accountability for outputs, both positive and negative, and for the outcomes it has achieved. In addition, it has an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies. It is essential that, as a whole, the council can demonstrate the appropriateness of all its actions across all activities and have mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and respect the rule of the law.</p>	
Supporting principles	Examples of the council’s commitment to achieving good governance in practice
Behaving with Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council’s Constitution and Operating Framework contain a code of conduct for councillors, roles and functions of statutory officer and key posts, to ensure the high standards of conduct are maintained. The councillor code of conduct is currently being reviewed by the Standards and Constitution Committee to ensure it is up to date and as effective and user friendly as possible. • In addition, the Operating Framework includes codes for councillor / officer relations, the Monitoring Officer, conduct and practice in licensing procedures and hearings, and practice in respect of planning matters. All are being reviewed as per the point above. • A code of conduct for officers is in place, <u>and is under review at present.</u> • Contract Standing Orders, Procurement Strategy and Financial Regulations in place. <u>The contract standing orders are currently being updated in light of the Procurement Act 2023; the update of the Procurement Strategy will follow this. and up to date.</u> • New ‘People Framework’ for officers being implemented. Part 3/3 is being implemented in late 2022-23 / early 2023-24. • Registers of councillors’ interests are published on the council’s website.

² The table below contains content modified from: CIPFA (2016) *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework*, 2016 Edition. CIPFA: London.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors’ declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests and other disclosable interests are recorded in the minutes of committee meetings. • The council’s has Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy & Fraud Response Plan and associated policies which seek to prevent fraud and corruption, are in place. An annual fraud report is submitted to Audit & Scrutiny Committee (from 2022-2023 onwards) and fraud e-learning is also mandatory for all new starters. • A Whistleblowing Policy is in place to enable staff to raise issues of concern and report wrongdoing. • Standard decision-making reporting format is in place to ensure that all those responsible for taking decisions have the necessary information on which to do so. Key decisions are supported by various different assessments e.g. finance, legal, equalities, climate change etc. depending on the decision. • The procedure to make complaints to the council or local government and social care ombudsman is provided on the council’s website. • A customer charter is published on the council’s website, detailing the standards of service customers can expect from the council. • Induction programmes in place for new staff and councillors.
<p>Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values</p>	<p>In addition to the relevant points above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors’ code of conduct includes specific reference to upholding the “General principles of councillor conduct”, and a direct reference is made to the nine principles of public life, which are based on the Committee on Standards in Public Life’s seven principles of conduct. • Terms of reference in place for all committees and working groups. • Internal and External audit reports are discussed in committee meetings and published publicly. • Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework 2021-2024 adopted and annual report on equality, diversity and inclusion submitted to Audit & Scrutiny Committee (from 2022-2023 onwards). • Publication of an Annual Governance Statement. • Public petition scheme included in the Operating Framework. • The council participates in its local community safety partnership.
<p>Respecting the rule of the law</p>	<p>In addition to the relevant points above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statutory Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer both work with councillors and officers to ensure that the law is adhered to, and a balanced budget is achieved.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal and External auditors provide independent and objective reviews of the council’s systems of internal control, governance and finances. • The council’s political structure and roles are available on the council’s website and includes membership details and functions of all major committees. • Transparency page on the council’s website publishes key documents and council information, including how freedom of information requests can be submitted. • All committee decisions made by the council are published on the council’s website, and meeting agendas are published publicly ahead of each committee meeting. • Data Protection Policy requires applicable data breaches to be reported to the Information Commissioner’s Office. • Health and safety processes, policies and procedures have senior management oversight.
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Principle B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

What this means in practice:

The council is run for the public good, organisations therefore should ensure openness in their activities. Clear, trusted channels of communication and consultation should be used to engage effectively with all groups of stakeholders, such as individual citizens, and service users, as well as institutional stakeholders.

Supporting principles	Examples of the council’s commitment to achieving good governance in practice
Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of a clear and consistent reporting format in relation to committee reports. • Agendas, reports (and minutes) are published on the council’s website in advance. Meetings are open to the public except in relation to exempt items. • Transparency page on the council’s website provides a range of information that is freely available to the public under its publication scheme, including staff pay and procurement card spends. • Regular budget monitoring reports are submitted to Audit & Scrutiny Committee. • The council’s Four Year Plan illustrates where the council is directing its resources: preparing a new 5 year corporate plan is underway. • Regular meetings are held with committee Chairs to discuss developments in their service area and of issues of concern, which is supplemented by regular all member briefings on areas of interest to elected councillors. • Corporate performance reports taken quarterly to Audit and Scrutiny Committee, and published on the council’s website.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process in place to respond to freedom of information requests, which is also published on the council's website. • Scheme of Delegation in place in the Constitution.
<p>Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders.</p>	<p>In addition to the relevant points above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of priority partnerships have been identified and are supported to ensure that outcomes are achieved efficiently and effectively, such as the Community Safety Partnership and the local Business Improvement District. • The council's 2023-2024 Annual Governance Statement includes an action to "Develop a corporate record of the Council's resident engagement activities." Annual Plan includes engagement activities. A report was taken to Community and Wellbeing Committee in June 2023, with a follow-up scheduled for early 2024. • The council's Procurement Strategy makes provision for engagement with a breadth of suppliers and ensures that they are chosen according to the council's requirements and deliver value to residents. A Procurement Board is also in place. Ensure rRegular performance / contract management / partnership meetings are scheduled with key partners. • The council plays a significant part in the management of multi-agency arrangements for planning, responding to, and recovery from emergency and major incidents. The coordination of such actions takes place through the Local Resilience Partnership which is a statutory body established under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Membership is drawn from a range of statutory partners including all local authorities across Surrey.
<p>We will engage stakeholders effectively, including citizens and service users.</p>	<p>In addition to the relevant points above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with customers before planning and commissioning services is encouraged by the council. For example, new engagement approaches were used for consultation on the Epsom masterplan. • Social media platforms utilised to engage and communicate with stakeholders. • Contact Centre in place to triage resident and other customer enquiries (phone, reception and online) and complaints. • Communications Plan in production. Communication Strategy was approved by Strategy & Resources Committee in January 2024 and adopted. • Staff surveys issued on key topics are being reviewed. • A report detailing how we engage with residents was taken to the Community and Wellbeing Committee in October 2024

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

What this means in practice:

The long-term nature and impact of many of the Council's responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable. Decisions should further the Council's purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes, and remain within the limits of authority and resources. Input from all groups of stakeholders, including citizens, service users and institutional stakeholders, is vital to the success of this process and in balancing competing demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available.

Supporting principles	Examples of the council's commitment to achieving good governance in practice
Defining outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council's overall vision is reflected in the Four Year Plan; a new 5 year corporate plan is currently being prepared. Supporting the main corporate plan are ,which sets out priority outcome themes, and is supported by individual annual plans, a the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, and underpinned by a service delivery plans. • Several corporate strategies and frameworks are in place that cover specific policy areas, such as climate change, homelessness, culture and equalities. The council is also consolidating its strategies' separate action plans within its annual plans to aid effectiveness. • Progress on the annual plans is reported regularly to Audit & Scrutiny Committee. • A Corporate performance report, and actions produced to address observations raised in Internal and External Audit reports. • Project management arrangements are in place. • A Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan is in place. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Productivity Plan was submitted to the Government's Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	<p>In addition to the relevant points above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change strategy and equality framework are in place. • Environment and Sustainability Officer in post. • Climate change and equalities implications are included in the standard committee report template. • Social value included in the council's Procurement Strategy; this will be updated following the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023 (currently expected in February 2025). • Grant funding secured for community enhancements awarded and allocated.

- Health and wellbeing neighbourhood Board in place, and there is an action to “ Draft and agree a revised Health & Wellbeing Strategy and deliver the 2024-2025 objectives” in the Annual Plan 2024-25, and equalities objectives included in the 2022-2023 Annual Plan.
- Updated Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Protocol in place.

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

What this means in practice:

The Council achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory, and practical interventions (courses of action). Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that the Council has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved. It needs to ensure that it's defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best trade-off between the various types of resource inputs while still enabling effective and efficient operations. Decisions made need to be reviewed frequently to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.

Supporting principles

Examples of the council's commitment to achieving good governance in practice

Determining and planning interventions

- Corporate planning process in place, including vision **Future 40** and Four Year Plan (development of a new corporate plan is underway).
- Robust budget planning and monitoring in place, including Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- A Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan is in place.
- The Annual Plan 2024-25 includes the action: “Deliver a plan in conjunction with Budget Policy Chairs and Vice Chairs that will have a multi-year programme of prioritised service reviews as part of the budget making process in successive years with the aim of delivering sustainable budgets through the MTFS 2024-28. Consider opportunities for collaborative work with other organisations.”
- Governance of decision making in place, such as: policy committees, Strategic **Management Leadership** Team, Corporate **Management Leadership** Team, divisional team meetings, project boards.
- Committee reports include objective and rigorous analysis of options in reports, indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and associated risks.
- Corporate strategies in place such as for procurement, homelessness, climate change, equalities and counter fraud.
- Decisions for committee are presented **eding** in a standard format, which ensures that proper professional advice on matters that have legal or financial implications is available, recorded and used appropriately.
- Audit reports and the production of the Annual Governance Statement are used to form governance improvement actions.
- Project boards and Project and Programme Management Toolkit in place.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put in place effective arrangements to deal with a failure in service delivery and explore options for improving service delivery and outcomes for our residents. • Emergency and business continuity plans in place. • Through the council's enforcement functions we take action to ensure compliance with regulations.
Optimise achievement of intended outcomes	<p>In addition to the relevant points above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial reporting processes which include budget setting processes and budget monitoring are clearly defined to highlight budget pressures where intervention may be required. • 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. • The annual budget is prepared for scrutiny and approval by councillors and published in line with agreed priorities and the medium term financial strategy. • Risk Management Strategy <u>(reviewed annually)</u> updated this year, and all corporate risk registers <u>(reviewed quarterly)</u> in place are being reviewed. • Corporate performance reports published regularly. • Scheme of Delegation in place. • A Whistleblowing Policy which details key officers and processes is in place.
<p>Principle E - Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</p> <p>What this means in practice:</p> <p>The Council needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications and mind-set, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve intended outcomes within the specified periods. It must ensure that it has both the capacity to fulfil its own mandate and to make certain that there are policies in place to guarantee that its management has the operational capacity for the organisation as a whole. Because both individuals and the environment in which an organisation operates will change over time, there will be a continuous need to develop its capacity as well as the skills and experience of individual Officers. Leadership is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of backgrounds, reflecting the structure and diversity of communities.</p>	
Supporting principles	Examples of the council's commitment to achieving good governance in practice
Developing the entity's capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key councillor and officer roles and responsibilities are set out in the Constitution and Operating Framework.

- The Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan includes the action: “As part of the Workforce Transformation project, focus on creating officer capacity through new ways of working and ensuring leadership roles at all levels are operating in the optimal way. Continue to explore succession planning and development opportunities for all staff. Link these actions to the Corporate Transformation Programme”.
- Councillor / officer relations protocol is in place to ensure effective communication.
- Management meetings are in place, and can be used by service managers to escalate issues.
- Corporate planning aligned with financial planning.
- Support arrangements are in place to allow deployment of interim capacity where required.
- Employee Assistance Programme, mental health first aiders, and occupational health services support for staff health and wellbeing.
- Roles of councillors and officers are set out in the Council's constitution , Operating Framework, and in officer job descriptions.
- Annual pay policy statement.
- Members' Allowance Scheme is in place.
- Scheme of Delegation is available in the Constitution.
- Corporate performance report taken to Audit and Scrutiny Committee.
- Regular service performance and county benchmarking in place.
- Internal Audit in place as a third line of defence regarding officer skills and training.
- ~~The Corporate Project Board oversees corporate projects.~~
- Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as business process reviews.
- Corporate management structure available to all staff and published in the Constitution.
- Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved, such as with Building Control.
- ICT Strategy in ~~production~~ place.
- Succession planning is considered for key roles.
- The My Performance Conversation framework is used to discuss performance with officers and take action where performance is not meeting expectations.
- Pay benchmarking and job evaluation is undertaken.

<p>We will develop the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals.</p>	<p>In addition to the relevant points above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillor induction programme and additional training provided, such as for planning and finance. • Training available to staff and included within the My Performance Conversations framework. • Statutory officers in posts. • Project Management Group (community of practice) in place.
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Principle F - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

What this means in practice:

The Council needs to ensure that the organisations and governance structures that it oversees have implemented, and can sustain, an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. Risk management and internal control are important integral parts of a performance management system and are crucial to the achievement of outcomes. Risk should be considered and addressed as part of all decision making activities. A strong system of financial management is essential for the achievement of policies and the achievement of intended outcomes, as it will enforce financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery and accountability. It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny are in place as a key part of accountable decision making, policy making and review. A positive working culture that accepts, promotes and encourages constructive challenge is critical to successful scrutiny and successful service delivery. Importantly, this culture does not happen automatically, it requires repeated public commitment from those in authority.

Supporting principles	Examples of the council's commitment to achieving good governance in practice
<p>Managing risks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit and Scrutiny Committee has overall responsibility for the council's governance and risk management arrangements, and relevant reports are reviewed by the committee through the year, such as those listed below. • Corporate performance reports taken to Audit and Scrutiny Committee regularly. • Risk Management Strategy and Guidance in place and training workshops undertaken. • Multi-level risks registers are used, i.e. for corporate, committee and service-level risk management. • Internal Audit reports and an annual audit plan are reviewed and approved by Audit and Scrutiny Committee. • External Audit reports are taken to Audit and Scrutiny Committee. • Procurement Strategy and Contract Standing Orders are in place. <u>Both documents are being updated as part of implementation of the Procurement Act 2023 (expected February 2025). A Procurement Board is also in place.</u> • <u>Business Assurance Team ensure consistency and challenge to corporate performance process.</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior management leadership team meetings in place. • Policy committee meetings held, which enable risk discussions within each committee's remit. • Risk assessments are included in committee reports. • Corporate Health and Safety Officer in post. • A corporate health and safety group is operational and meets quarterly. • Data Protection Officer in postresource in place. • Mandatory e-learning on a variety of topics is in place for new starters. • Councillor induction programme and training workshops in place. • Monitoring Officer in post. • Divisional Assurance Statements are signed by Heads of Service each year. • An corporate fraud report is taken to Audit and Scrutiny Committee annually.
We will manage performance.	<p>In addition to the relevant points above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Delivery Plan agreed each year and overseen by senior management. • The Corporate Project Board and Project Management Group provide forums to discuss project performance. • Business Assurance team oversee corporate performance management. • Quarterly Business Performance Packs produced for Policy Committees and A&S • The Annual Governance Statement considers performance related to the council's governance.
We will have robust internal control.	<p>In addition to the relevant points above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chief Internal Auditor produces an Annual Report and Opinion on the council's governance and systems of internal control. • Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy is in place and an annual corporate fraud report is taken to Audit and Scrutiny Committee.
We will manage data.	<p>In addition to the relevant points above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Protection Policy is in place. • ICT Acceptable Use Policy in place. • Process for reporting and recording data breaches is available to council staff and councillors.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records of the council's data processing activities are being reviewed and updated. • Data protection clauses are included in contracts. • Mandatory data protection e-learning in place for new starters. • Password policy in place. • ICT penetration testing takes place. • <u>Information sharing agreements are used where required.</u> • Information Management Governance Group in place.
We will implement strong public financial management.	<p>In addition to the relevant points above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial regulations are available in the Constitution and regular budget reporting and monitoring takes place. • Medium Term Financial Strategy adopted. • Section 151 Officer in post. • Financial audits are regularly scheduled within every annual audit plan. • Star chambers take place to review potential savings opportunities.
<p>Principle G - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability</p> <p>What this means in practice:</p> <p>Accountability is about ensuring that those making decisions and delivering services are answerable for them. Effective accountability is concerned not only with reporting on actions completed, but also ensuring that stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the organisation plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner. Both external and internal audit contribute to effective accountability.</p>	
Supporting principles	Examples of the council's commitment to achieving good governance in practice
Implementing good practice in transparency and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agendas, reports and minutes are published on the council's website. • Committee reports adopt a standard template and utilise bespoke software to enable effective feedback from key stakeholders and to be published on time. • Committee meetings are webcast live.






	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency page on the council's website includes procurement card and supplier spend details, staff pay details, how freedom of information requests can be made and so forth. • Annual Pay Policy Statement and Gender Pay Gap report published on the council's website. • Audit and Scrutiny Committee in place, and reports are published publicly. • The Constitution and Operating Framework are available on the council's website. • ICT monitor and publish website accessibility to staff. • E-Hub A new intranet is in place which enables departments to publish information relevant to other teams internally. • Corporate Performance Report published publicly and reviewed by Audit & Scrutiny Committee. • External and internal audit reports are published publicly and reviewed by Audit & Scrutiny Committee. • There is an Internal Audit Charter which sets out the purpose, authority and responsibility for the internal audit function and clearly defines councillors' and officers' roles, responsibilities and relationship. • Budget reports and Medium Term Financial Strategy published publicly and reviewed by multiple committees. • Member News used to disseminate key information / briefings to elected councillors. • Whistleblowing Policy in place. • Corporate and committee risk registers published within the Corporate Performance Report.
Assurance and effective accountability	<p>In addition to the relevant points above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External Audit provides an annual opinion on the Council's financial statements and value for money arrangements. • To mitigate any potential risks observed by Internal Audit, improvement actions are formulated by senior officers - which include a priority rating and date for completion - and are signed off by the Chief Internal Auditor. These are tracked through to completion via regular Internal Audit progress reports, which are brought to Audit and Scrutiny Committee. • Progress with the Internal Audit annual plan culminates in the Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Report and Opinion, which provides assurance on the council's overall governance arrangements and systems of internal control. • The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is prepared in accordance with CIPFA guidance. The AGS sets out the council's governance framework and the results of the annual review of the effectiveness of the council's arrangements. The AGS includes areas for improvement, which are tracked within the Corporate Performance Report. • Procurement strategy, contract standing orders and partnership contracts, memorandums and agreements are used for each formal partnership.

Responsibilities

Good corporate governance is everyone's responsibility. There are however several specific responsibilities in relation to the implementation, monitoring and review of the council's governance practices and the production of the Annual Governance Statement, as outlined below:

The council and its committees	The council's political structure is based on the committee system. The Constitution shows how the council makes decisions and how they are delegated to policy, regulatory and sub-committees, and to officers. The full council agrees the budget and major plans. Elected councillors and the chairs of committees should champion and be role models for good governance, in the spirit of this Code.
Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive)	The Chief Executive (as Head of Paid Service) is responsible for coordinating the different functions of the Council, staff appointment, organisation, and management. They also have responsibility for championing and role modelling good governance, in the spirit of this Code.
Monitoring Officer	Ensures that decisions taken comply with all necessary statutory requirements and are lawful. Ensures decisions are taken in accordance with the Council's budget and policy framework. Provides advice and scope of powers and authority to take decisions as well as support councillors with their code of conduct.
Section 151 Officer	Leading the promotion and delivery by the whole organisation of good financial management so that public money is safeguarded at all times and used appropriately, economically, efficiently and effectively.
Internal Audit function (Southern Internal Audit Partnership)	Provides independent and objective assurance and an annual opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's governance, risk management and control framework. Delivers an annual programme of risk-based audit activity, and reports to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on audit activities during the year.

Governance structure

<p>The Council</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consists of <u>35</u> elected councillors. • Approves the Constitution and Operating Framework. • Appoints committees and sub-committees. • Sets council tax. • Set budget framework
<p>Policy Committees</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main decision-making function of the council. • Comprises five committees who have responsibilities for particular areas. • Subject to political oversight of the council. • Membership is politically balanced.
<p>Audit & Scrutiny Committee</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides assurance to the council on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance arrangements, risk management framework and internal control environment. • Approves the Local Code of Governance, Annual Governance Statement and the Statement of Accounts. • Review and scrutinise decisions and performance of the council and audit arrangements.
<p>Other regulatory committees</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensing: deals with all aspects of local licensing for which the council is responsible. • Planning: makes decisions on certain planning applications and deals with other development control issues such as enforcement. • Standards and Constitution Committee: promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors and co-opted councillors, and maintaining oversight of the Constitution and Operating Framework.
<p><u>Corporate Strategic Management Leadership Team</u></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implements the policy and budgetary framework set by the council, and provides advice to policy committees and the council on the development of future policy and budgetary issues. • Oversees the delivery of the council's corporate strategies, statutory and discretionary services, and implementation of policy. • Responsible for developing, maintaining and implementing the council's governance, risk, performance and control framework. • Contribute to the effective corporate management and governance of the council.

Governance Assurance Channels

