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LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

SEPTEMBER 2024

St Albans City and District Council

Local Code of Corporate Governance

1. What is Corporate Governance?

- 1.1 The Corporate Governance framework comprises of the systems and processes, culture and values by which an organisation is directed and controlled. For local authorities this includes how a council relates to the community it serves.
- 1.2 Good Corporate Governance requires the Council to be open, transparent, effective, inclusive of all sectors of the community, accountable to the public it serves and to demonstrate integrity.
- 1.3 This Code is a public statement of the ways in which the Council demonstrates good corporate governance.

2. The Principles of Corporate Governance

- 2.1 The Code is based around seven principles which were identified in the April 2016 joint publication by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE). Their published guidance 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' identified the following as the essential criteria for the provision of good governance.
 - A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating a strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law
 - B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
 - C. Defining outcome in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
 - D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
 - 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.

2.2 By aligning to the CIPFA framework the Council ensures that:

- Resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities;
- There is sound and inclusive decision making;
- There is clear accountability for the use of those resources in order to achieve desired outcomes for service users and communities.

2.3 The tables below demonstrate the Council's response to these Core Principles.

3. Reporting and Monitoring Arrangements

3.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require the Council to review at least once a year the effectiveness of its system of internal control and to approve and publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

3.2 This Code facilitates the Council's review of its corporate governance arrangements for the purposes of the AGS. The AGS is reviewed and monitored by the Audit and Governance Committee.

3.3 The Code will be reviewed and, where required, updated annually. The Council (via the Audit and Governance Committee) will discuss any significant revisions to the Code before its approval.

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

	Supporting Principle	The Council does this by:	Evidence of Compliance
1A	Behaving with integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having in place an agreed and periodically reviewed Code of Conduct for councillors and staff, which build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan Principles) and are part of the Constitution • Programme of Councillor training on the Code • Having in place well-structured and transparent decision-making processes and delegation arrangements • Regularly reviewing its policies to ensure that they remain effective and compliant • Having regular meetings between the Senior Leadership Team and the Lead Councillor Team • Service and Scrutiny Committees to ensure coherent political direction • Having an established Values and Behaviours Framework setting Council expectations for how staff conduct their work • Having established Human Resources (HR) procedures for staff and line managers; having regular one to one's, performance conversations and annual reviews for all staff 	<p>The Council Plan Annual Report Constitution Service (and Scrutiny should not be struck through) Committee reports and minutes circulated to staff and available online for the public and staff to view Induction and training programme for Councillors and staff Officer Code of Conduct Councillors' Code of Conduct Contracts Register Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Action Plan Corporate Information Security and Computer Use policies Social Media policy Register of Interests and Register of Gifts and Hospitality for both Councillors and Staff Personnel policies and training programme Investors in People Accreditation Internal Audit plan, annual report and review of effectiveness</p>

	Supporting Principle	The Council does this by:	Evidence of Compliance
1B	Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointing experienced Section 151 / Monitoring Officers with appropriate qualifications and seniority within the Council to promote ethical values • Asking Council to appoint an Audit and Governance Committee, and appointment of an Independent Member onto the Committee as the Chair • Having a Standards Committee that consists of District Councillors and non-voting town/parish councillors who are not also District Councillors • Providing advice on ethical standards to Parish and Town Councils • Having established processes for quickly investigating complaint / ethical standards issues • Having a supported, effective and periodically reviewed whistleblowing policy • Promoting ethical values through open tendering standard contract documentation 	Constitution Constitution Committee Publicly available Standards Committee agenda and minutes Corporate Equalities Scheme Whistleblowing Policy Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders Corporate Complaints procedure Strategy and Resources and other committee reports Procurement Strategy Social media guidance
A3	Respecting the Rule of Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a modern, up to date, Constitution approved by Full Council • Ensuring Councillors and Officers demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations • Creating the conditions that the Statutory Officer, other key post holders, and Councillors, are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements • Ensuring all decision-making reports contain relevant legal constraints • Ensuring decisions are only taken after advice from appropriate officers 	Constitution Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders Policy and committee reports Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Action Plan – including Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing Codes of Conduct Declarations of Pecuniary Interests and Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality for Councillors publicly accessible

	Supporting Principle	The Council does this by:	Evidence of Compliance
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring Section 151 / Monitoring Officers are part of report clearing process • Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively • Dealing with any breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively 	Declarations of Gifts and Hospitality for Officers Annual declaration of interests for Officers Transparency Agenda Statutory Officers Group that meets on a monthly basis

Core Principle B – Councillors and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.

	Supporting Principles	The Council does this by:	Evidence of Compliance
B1	Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing effective 'critical friend' challenge through the Council's scrutiny processes • Responding to Freedom of Information (FOI) and Subject Access Requests in accordance with legal provision • Using open data standards in our on-line data sites including spend and contract information • Publishing on-line and properly documenting all decisions taken by the Service Committees • Ensuring that emergency decisions made by the Head of Paid Service follow constitutional arrangements • Webcasting of Council meetings • Maintaining an effective website • Ensuring agendas are publicly available and clear minuting of all meetings in accordance with statutory regulations. • Adhering to the Transparency Agenda 	Corporate and Service Plans Communications protocol Constitution Service Committee reports to Council Customer care standards Website Corporate Equalities Scheme and Equality Impact Assessments St Albans magazine for residents Publication of agendas and minutes of meetings Published Annual Statement of Accounts Medium Term Financial Strategy Published Freedom of Information / Environmental Information scheme Service Committee workplans Staff training Publication Scheme

	Supporting Principles	The Council does this by:	Evidence of Compliance
			Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Challenge Action Plan and Follow Up report
B2	Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing formal partnerships / making arrangements where an effective business case can be demonstrated • Ensuring that partnerships are based on trust; a shared commitment to change; a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners; that the added value of partnership working is explicit • Attending and participating in meetings with other local authorities under 'duty to cooperate' • Engaging with local organisations by Officer attendance / participation • Appointing Councillors to other community organisations that request it. • By monitoring and maintaining an effective record of the partnerships we participate in • By providing effective 'critical friend' challenge through the Council's scrutiny processes 	Partnership strategy and register Various Service Level Agreements (SLAs) Service Committee reports Constitution Board arrangements for key partnerships Active attendance at various Hertfordshire Peer groups including Chief Executive Coordinating Group, Herts Growth Board, Herts S151 Group and Herts Monitoring Officer Group. Strategic Partnership Meetings Participation in Health Care Partnership

	Supporting Principles	The Council does this by:	Evidence of Compliance
B3	Engaging with individual citizens and service users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a consultation policy and plans • Ensuring meaningful consultation takes place during key service changes that involves communities, individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service provision is contributing to the intended outcomes • Ensuring statutory consultation processes are followed and consistently applied • Ensuring that communication methods are effective and that Councillors and Officers are clear about their roles in community engagement • By having clear feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how views have been taken into account. • Using a combination of communication methods to engage with citizens • Having clear compliment and complaint procedures • Ensuring the Council and its Councillors take account of consultation in the context of its decision making and the financial impact on taxpayers 	<p>Magazine for residents Council website with online forms Corporate complaints procedure Residents' surveys Range of consultation outcomes including Local Plan, planning policy, leaseholders and tenant forums Team that provides advice on designing, running and analysing consultations and surveys Constitutional meetings held in public Public questions Complaints and compliments policy</p>

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

	Supporting Principles	The Council does this by:	Evidence of Compliance
C1	Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a Council Plan that has a clear vision of the economic, social and environment of the District, with supporting service plans • Draft Local Plan that supports the Council's vision • Decision making takes account of these effects on its residents 	<p>Council Plan and Service Plans Sustainability Strategy Carbon Management Plan Magazine for residents Tenant and leaseholder forums St Albans Community Safety Partnership</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty by ensuring the Council provides fair access to the services it provides • Full engagement with the St Albans Community Safety Partnership • Managing service users' expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available 	Draft Local Plan 2041 that is going through Regulation 19 pre submission publication
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Core Principle D – Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

	Supporting Principles	The Council does this by:	Evidence of Compliance
D1	Determining interventions Planning interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision making processes that receive objective and rigorous analysis including involvement of the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer • Processes that take account of service users when making decisions • Retaining control over preparation of strategic and operational plans • Developing a corporate approach to project management • Ensure decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and the associated risks • Ensuring best value is achieved no matter how services are delivered • A Council Plan with measurable objectives • Key Performance Indicators that are measurable / SMART and take account of the Council's objectives 	Annual Report Quarterly and annual Finance and Performance Reports Budget setting and approval process Annual Governance Statement Risk registers Council website Council and Service Plans Service Committee agendas, reports and minutes Workforce Plan Procurement Strategy Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement

	Supporting Principles	The Council does this by:	Evidence of Compliance
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A robust budget preparation process that reflects the Council's objectives and the Medium Term Financial Strategy • Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets • Ensure capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly • Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively, including shared risks • Ensuring the achievement of "social value" through service planning and commissioning 	

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

	Supporting Principles	The Council does this by:	Evidence of Compliance
E1	<p>Developing the Council's capacity</p> <p>Developing the capability of the Council's leadership and other individuals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors and staff have appropriate induction processes, access to personal development appropriate to their roles • Staff have annual reviews, performance conversations, regular 1:1s and access to arrangements to maintain their health and wellbeing • Statutory Officers having the qualifications, skills, resources and support necessary to perform effectively in their roles • The Leader/ Head of Paid Service / Strategic Directors and their direct reports having clearly defined leadership roles • Having job descriptions with candidate specifications, and using interviews and tests during the recruitment 	<p>Workforce Plan</p> <p>Corporate and Councillor training programme</p> <p>Councillor and Staff training records and development plans</p> <p>Recruitment process</p> <p>Job description and person specifications</p> <p>Continuous Professional Development for professional Officers</p> <p>Annual Learning and Development Plan</p> <p>Investors in People Accreditation</p>

	Supporting Principles	The Council does this by:	Evidence of Compliance
		<p>process to assess the ability of candidates to carry out the duties set out in the job description</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Council's operations, performance and use of its assets are reviewed regularly to ensure their effectiveness • Effective workforce planning to enhance resource allocation so that defined outcomes are achievable • Having clear systems of decision making and publishing effective delegation schemes • Participate in partnerships and shared services where there is a sound business case that it will add value 	<p>Constitution Reports to Senior Leadership Team (SLT) Service Committees</p>

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

	Supporting Principles	The Council does this by:	Evidence of Compliance
F1	<p>Managing risk Managing performance Robust internal control Managing data Strong public financial management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring risk management is an integral part of the Council's activities and decision making • Having robust and integrated risk management arrangements with regular and dynamic consultation of risk by SLT, Assistant Directors and managers • Having clear responsibilities for managing individual risks and a Risk plan that allocates responsibility against each risk • Embedding of scrutiny functions into Service Committees • Councillors receiving regular reports on Service / Council delivery plans • Having Anti- Fraud and Corruption arrangements in place and a Whistleblowing policy 	<p>Constitution Risk Management Strategy Corporate Risk Register Regular risk management reports to Audit and Governance Committee Business Continuity Plans Data Sharing Agreements Internal Audit Plan, annual report and recommendations tracker Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Action Plan Whistleblowing Policy External Audit reports</p>

	Supporting Principles	The Council does this by:	Evidence of Compliance
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having an effective Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing policy in place • Having an effective Internal Audit function to provide independent assurance on governance, risk management and control that takes account of areas of risk including those associated with emergency response and recovery • Having an Audit and Governance Committee that is independent of the Service Committees providing additional assurance within its power to ensure its recommendations are listened to and acted upon • Having effective arrangements in place for the safe management of data particularly Data Sharing with other bodies and a designated Data Protection Officer • Having effective financial management systems that include management of financial risks • Making decisions based on relevant clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the financial, social, environmental, legal position and outlook 	Annual Governance Statement Reports to Council and Service Committees of the Council with implications provided that are clear and measured.

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

	Supporting Principles	The Council does this by:	Evidence of Compliance
G1	<p>Implementing good practice in transparency</p> <p>Implementing good practice in reporting</p> <p>Assurance and effective accountability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a defined process to ensure that reports for the public / stakeholders are fair, balanced and easy to access and understandable for the audience • Reporting regularly on performance, value for money and on the use of resources • Requiring managers to produce annual assurance statements 	<p>Constitution</p> <p>Agenda and minutes of Service Committee meetings</p> <p>Transparency Code</p> <p>Data Sharing Agreements</p> <p>Internal Audit Plan, annual report and recommendations tracker</p>

	<p>Managing data.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that Management and Councillors have clear lines of responsibility for the performance results • Preparing an Annual Governance Statement on the robustness of this framework • Having processes to ensure external / internal audit recommendations are acted upon / responded to by Managers and the Council • Having effective internal audit and audit programs that are accessible for Councillors scrutiny and tracked subsequently • Ensuring that arrangements are in place for confidential reporting or 'whistleblowing' which are published to staff • Service Committees undertaking constructive challenge by embedding the scrutiny functions into the committees • Ensuring that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met 	<p>Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Action Plan Whistleblowing Policy Agenda and minutes of Service Committees Annual work programme of the Service and Scrutiny Committees External Audit reports Annual Governance Statement</p>
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