LOCAL CODE
OF
CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

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1.   **INTRODUCTION**

1.1   In 2014, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) collaborated to produce The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector. The International Framework defines governance as comprising the arrangements put in place to ensure that intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved.

1.2   The diagram below (table 1) illustrates the core principles of good governance in the public sector and how they relate to each other: Principles A and B permeates implementation of principles C to G. It illustrates that good governance is dynamic, and that an entity should be committed to improving governance on a continuing basis through a process of positive outcomes for service users and other stakeholders.

1.3   In 2016, CIPFA in association with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) took the International Framework's core principles (and sub-principles) and interpreted them for a local government context. It revised and reissued its 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government; Framework' (the Framework).

1.4   The Framework sets the standard for local authority governance in the UK. The purpose of the Framework is to assist authorities individually in reviewing and accounting for their own unique approach, with the overall aim to ensure 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 to achieve desired outcomes for service users and communities

The Framework must be applied to annual governance statements prepared for the financial year 2016-17 onwards.

2.   **OUR APPROACH TO CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

2.1   In Dorset, good governance is about how the Council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way and for the benefit of the residents it serves. Good governance will invariably lead to high standards of management, strong performance, the effective use of resources and good outcomes which in turn will lead to increased trust. Good governance flows from having shared values and culture. It requires having in place a framework of overarching strategic policies and objectives underpinned by robust systems, processes and structures for delivering these.

Table 1:

Achieving the Intended Outcomes
While Acting in the Public Interest at all Times
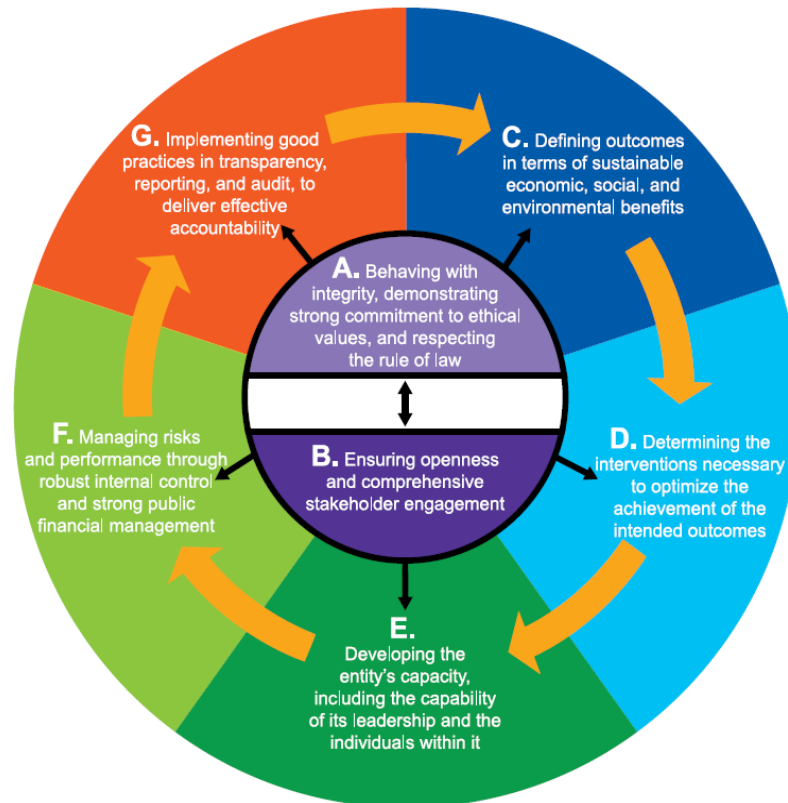
2.2   We recognise that the delivery of our strategic policies and objectives cannot be done in isolation. We need to engage with other statutory bodies and the voluntary and community sector as well as private companies commissioned to deliver services. As such the County Council has an interest in ensuring that these partners have in place good governance arrangements.

2.3   Dorset County Council is committed to the seven core principles of good practice contained in the CIPFA framework and will test its governance arrangements against this framework and report annually. To confirm this, we test our governance arrangements by:

- **Developing and maintaining an up-to-date local code of governance, including arrangements for ensuring ongoing effectiveness**. Our Local Code has been written to reflect the Council's own structure, functions, and the governance arrangements in existence. It's comprised of the policies, procedures, behaviours, actions and values by which the Council is controlled and governed.

- **Reviewing existing governance arrangements.** 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. This review will include an assessment of the effectiveness of the processes contained within the Local Code. This includes annual assessments such as:

- o   Departments' and corporate reviews of assurance arrangements

- o   Head of Internal Audit Service (HoIAS) Annual Report including an opinion on the risk, governance and control environment and framework

- o   Assurance statements by the Chief Financial Officer, Monitoring Officer and the HoIAS that they are complying with their professional requirements

- o   Annual review of the Constitution

- o   Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Reports

- o   External Audit Annual Letter

- o   The opinions of other review agencies and inspectorates, including governance issues via ad hoc cases / disciplinary issues, police investigations

- **Reporting publicly on compliance with our own code on an annual basis and on how we have monitored the effectiveness of our governance arrangements in the year and on planned changes.** Regulation 6(1)(a) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 requires the Council to conduct a review at least once in a year of the effectiveness of our systems of internal control and include a statement reporting on the review with our published statement of Accounts. This is known as the Annual Governance Statement. The Chief Executive and Leader of the Council certify the Annual Governance Statement to accompany the Annual Accounts which will:

  - assess how the Council has complied with our Local Code

  - provide an opinion on the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements

  - provide details of how continual improvement in the systems of governance will be achieved.

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

Grace Evans – Interim Head of Organisational Development

Rationale: Local government organisations are accountable not only for how much they spend, but also for how they use the resources under their stewardship. This includes accountability for outputs, both positive and negative, and for the outcomes they have achieved. In addition, they have an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies.

It is essential that they can demonstrate the appropriateness of all their actions across all activities and have mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and to respect the rule of law.

Our Commitment (Key Principles)	Examples of the Our commitment to achieving good governance in practice is demonstrated below
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. • Leading by example and using the above standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions. • Demonstrating and 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.	The Council's Constitution contains Codes of Conduct for both Members and Officers to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained. Members (new) receive training on the Code of Conduct. There is a separate Members' Code of Conduct for Planning Matters. Registers of Members' interests and records of gifts and hospitality are published on the Council's website. Members' Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests and Personal Interests that might lead to bias are recorded in minutes of meetings which are available on the Council's website. Minutes show declarations of interest were sought, and appropriate declarations made. The Members' Register of Interests including gifts and hospitality is made available for public inspection and published on the Council's website. The Council support and promotes the maintenance of high standards of conduct by Members and has agreed criteria for assessing complaints against Members, which is published on the Council's website. The Employee's (Officer's) Code of Conduct sets out standards of behavior and conduct that the Council expects of its employees. This includes confidentiality, data protection, freedom of information, and fraud prevention. These areas are subject to mandatory training via e- learning. An employee policy is in place for acceptance of gifts and hospitality. The Monitoring Officer reviews the registers of interests and gifts and hospitality on an annual basis. Regular items appear on the Council's intranet reminding all staff of the Register of Interests, Register of Gifts and Hospitality and the Whistleblowing Procedure and arrangements are in place to enable staff to raise issues of concern and report any wrong doing. The Council has a 'Behaviour in the Workplace' Policy and Procedure. We have arrangements in place to enable staff to raise issues of concern and report wrong doing. 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. A formal complaints policy which is publicly accessible is in place and an annual report on complaints is produced for all areas and is published. The Council has in place an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy Statement and Strategy and has also implemented policies and procedures to mitigate the risks of bribery and corruption and money-laundering to conform with requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice – 'Managing the Risk of Fraud and Corruption' (2014) which are publicised across the organisation. A mandatory Fraud Awareness e-learning module exists to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose. Senior Officers and Elected Members receive regular fraud updates as part of a regular risk management report.

Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values	The Member Code of Conduct includes Principles and rules of behaviour which cover, Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Honesty and Leadership. Members, in signing the Code, agree to comply with these principles. Employees Code of Conduct and Part 5B of the Constitution refers to the key principles in public life and standards. The promotion of high standards of conduct is one of the key areas of responsibility for the Audit and Governance Committee. The Council's Constitution sets out delegations of the executive, committees and senior officers, and the decision-making process to be applied. It also emphasises that the Council will act within the law.
• 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 service on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with ethical standards expected by the organisation.	When procuring goods or services, the Council uses a selection questionnaire which includes questions on a potential supplier's ethical behaviour. A Whistleblowing policy/procedure is published on the Council's website for suppliers and is also included in the Conditions of Contract. The Council also subscribers on a voluntary basis to Public Concern at Work which is the lead organisation for whistleblowing issues.
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, and can 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.	The Council's Political Structure and Roles are available on the Council's website and includes membership details and functions of all major committees as well as roles and responsibilities of Cabinet and other members. The Council has agreed a Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy (including Anti-Money Laundering, Anti-Bribery, and Whistleblowing Policies). The Officer Code of Conduct requires Officers to have due regard the Policy when procuring goods and services. Appropriate Officers monitor reports to ensure propriety of decision making and that legal advice is included where necessary and appropriate. All members and Chief Officers are required to complete the 'Related Party Disclosure Form'. The Council maintains records of legal advice provided by officers to ensure it respects the rule of law.

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Jennifer Lowis - Communication and Engagement Manager Corporate Development and Lee Gallagher – Democratic Services Manager

Rationale: Local government 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.

Our Commitment (Key Principles)	Examples of the Our commitment to achieving good governance in practice is demonstrated below
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.	Adoption of a clear and consistent reporting format in relation to committee reports. Agendas, reports (and minutes) are also published on the council's website in advance. Meetings are open to the public except in relation to exempt items. A 'forward plan' of items is in place and dates for submitting, publishing and distributing timely reports are set and adhered to. Records of decisions and supporting materials are available in the Decisions Enquiry System which can be found on the Council's website. Regular meetings are held with relevant Lead Members to brief them on developments in their service area and of issues of concern. Detailed outcomes focused reports showing progress against the Corporate Plan and Outcomes Framework is published and scrutinised. The Scrutiny Committees submit annual reports to the Council on the work undertaken. Reports to and decisions taken by the Council, Cabinet, Scrutiny Bodies and Regulatory Board are available on the Council's website. The Council uses social media to reach a growing number of residents and stakeholders. It also publishes a council newsletter and has an active website. Freedom of Information practices are in place to publish responses to requests. Important data is published in accordance with the Local Government Transparency Code (2015), as are our performance reports and findings. Local Government Transparency Code 2015 is issued to meet the Government's desire to place more power into citizens' hands to increase democratic accountability and make it easier for local people to contribute to the local decision-making process and help shape public services. Transparency is the foundation of local accountability and the key that gives people the tools and information they need to enable them to play a bigger role in society. The availability of data can also open new markets for local business, the voluntary and community sectors and social enterprises to run services or manage public assets. The Council has guidance available for applicants wishing to make use of the Community Right to Challenge to express an interest in running local authority services.
Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders and Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users • Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that the outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably.	Several partnerships have been identified and are supported to ensure that outcomes are achieved efficiently and effectively. A variety of arrangements are in place to engage with and involve other stakeholders including the business sector, health agencies, the police, district councils, rural communities and voluntary and community sector. Engaging with customers before planning and commissioning services is encouraged by the Council's Communications team. In respect of consultation and engagement, we have in place support on these matters across the Council. A wide range of techniques are used for dialogue with the community including consultation exercises, community-based surveys, customer service feedback arrangements and individual service user groups.

- 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 i) trust; ii) a shared commitment to change; iii) a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners; and that the added value of partnership working is explicit.
- 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 about 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 to demonstrate how views have been considered. 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.

Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EHRIA) practices enable the Council to meet its statutory obligations, aid the Council in understanding issues of interest to the public and help the Council to shape service delivery. The Council supports an Equalities Challenge Group to enable engagement with and challenge from a wide range of communities to inform service reviews.

Regular media and web monitoring is in place to pick up informal feedback. The Council has adopted a clear framework for residents, service users and staff about public consultations. We have in house expertise in communication, engagement, research and survey design, equalities issues and legal issues, provides support and guidance and co-ordinates resources to ensure robust public consultations.

Results of major consultations are published in bespoke reports, which are available via the Council's website.

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefit

Jennifer Lowis – Communication and Engagement Manager, David Bonner – Intelligence, insights and Performance Manager and Matthew Piles, Service Director Environment, Infrastructure and Economy

Rationale: The long-term nature and impact of many of organisation's responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable. Decisions should further the authority'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.

Our Commitment (Key Principles)	Examples of the Our commitment to achieving good governance in practice is demonstrated below
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 about determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available	The Council's overall vision is reflected in the Council's Corporate Plan (to 2019). We also have in place the outcomes framework that incorporates the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Commissioning Strategy, Communities Strategy and Transformation Programme. The Strategies set out defined outcomes with supporting performance metrics. Performance and progress against the outcomes are regularly reported to the councils Overview and Scrutiny Committees for monitoring and to allow for challenge. The Council communicates with and takes account of feedback to review outcomes, so they reflect progress and wider changes. A variety of engagement, consultation and communication channels are in place to ensure that service users are aware of the financial and policy context and to help manage expectations.
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 about 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, to ensure appropriate trade-offs. Ensuring fair access to services.	Investment in Land and Buildings is set out in the Corporate Asset Management Plan. Investment in infrastructure is included in the Infrastructure Plan and the Local Transport Plan, which provides the long - term strategy within which the Council manages and maintains its transport network. Environment and Equalities Strategies are in place as well as an Enabling Growth Plan which sets out how the Council will support growth of the environment and economy. All the Council's plans seek to ensure an effective balance of economic, social and environmental benefits. Equality and Human Rights impact assessments and monitoring is in place to ensure an overview of fair access to services. The Council has agreed a Consultation and Engagement Strategy and all reports to member bodies must reflect the outcome of any consultation undertaken.

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

David Bonner – Intelligence, insights and Performance Manager and Jim Mcmanus – Chief Accountant

Rationale: The organisation achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory, and practical interventions. Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that the organisation must make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved.

They need robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure that their 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 continually to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.

Our Commitment (Key Principles)	Examples of the Our commitment to achieving good governance in practice is demonstrated below
Determining and Planning 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 to prioritise competing demands with limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts. • 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 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. Inform medium and long-term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy.	A robust medium-term financial planning and service planning process is in place. Well-established governance of decision-making is in place for making service decisions through the committee process, Directorate Management Teams, Project Boards and the Council's Transformation and decisions are made based on an evidence and business case basis using defined tools and templates. A new Strategic Commissioning and contracting approach is being embedded into the organisation including commissioning strategies and a clear commissioning cycle involving service review, evidence and consultation. The range of decision-making information provided per option includes service user, staff and other stakeholder impacts, completion of Equality Assessments, consultation output and analysis of resource implications. A new Business Intelligence Service is in place to provide insight, data analysis, forecasting and modelling support. We recognised using business intelligence the need to align our priorities and goals with future outcomes and financial targets. We also acknowledge that care is needed in setting and applying individual and team performance targets. We look to ensure that targets are: • allocated appropriately across directorates, teams and individuals; • based on robust data analysis that takes into consideration more than just previous performance; • reviewed and monitored on a regular basis; There is recognition that over a period, poor quality target setting may adversely affect the performance of individuals and the organisation. There are feedback and complaints mechanisms/reports in place to allow quality issues to be identified.

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, considering 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 for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage.
- Ensuring the achievement of 'social value' through service planning and commissioning.

The Council has a good record of developing and delivering outcomes as well as managing within agreed budget parameters.

The Council's performance management processes ensure comparative benchmarking of outcomes against similar areas to feed into service planning and budgeting.

The Council's Contract Procedure Rules requires that when procuring a service due regard is paid as to how the contract will improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of Leicestershire as required by the Public Service (Social Value) Act 2012. Achievement of social value is monitored regularly.

Financial monitoring reports are presented to the Cabinet and Audit and Governance Committee at regular intervals to ensure a clear focus is maintained on the financial position to allow for any necessary adjustments to be discussed and agreed.

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

Sheralyn Towner – HR Specialist Lead and Lee Gallagher – Democratic Services Manager

Rationale: Local government 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 their intended outcomes within the specified periods.

A local government organisation 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. Because both individuals and the environment in which an authority operates will change over time, there will be a continuous need to develop its capacity as well as the skills and experience of the leadership of individual staff members. Leadership in local government entities is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of backgrounds, reflecting the structure and diversity of communities.

Our Commitment (Key Principles)	Examples of the Our commitment to achieving good governance in practice is demonstrated below
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 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.	The Council's People Strategy and Delivery Plan is in place. Regular Employee Survey helps identify staff and manager capacity and support needs. The Council monitors a variety of metrics including staff caseloads and customer activity to ensure that it has enough capacity in place at the right time. Support arrangements are in place to allow deployment of interim capacity where required.
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 in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained. • Publishing a statement that specifies the type of decisions that are delegated and those that are reserve 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 service and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and balance for each other's authority.	The Council provides learning and development opportunities to elected councillors in accordance with its agreed Member Learning and Development Strategy. Compulsory training is provided to relevant members on Planning and Regulatory Matters and on Pensions. Regular briefings are provided to members on the key issues and challenges facing the Council. Council Learning and Development plans are informed by the MTFS; Strategic Vision; Departmental key aims; service plans; and individual Performance and Development Reviews (PDR). Induction training is provided for all new staff appropriate to their role and responsibilities, with access to on-going Learning and Development activities to enhance skills. An established competency framework is in place that yields behaviours to support the direction of the Authority, with all middle and senior managers completing a 'Leading for High Performance' programme. There is a corporate Performance and Development Review (PDR) system in place to appraise the performance of all staff and a Learning Management System has been implemented.

- 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 and changing risks by ensuring officers and members 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 and resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they can 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 responsive to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections.
- Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of learning and development needs. Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing.

The Council encourages and supports a diverse workforce and variety of workplace support groups, such that it has been recognised as a sector leader by Stonewall.

The Council's Equalities Board actively monitors and supports a diverse workforce and recruitment processes have been strengthened to ensure fair representation of different groups.

The Council has run a range of support programmes to ensure effective representation of women in senior management.

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

David Bonner – Insight, Intelligence and Performance Manager, Marc Eyre – Risk, Emergency Planning and Resilience Manager

Rationale: Local government 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 and integral parts of a performance management system and 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 implementation 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 is 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 delivery. Importantly, this culture does not happen automatically, it requires repeated public commitment from those in authority.

Our Commitment (Key Principles)	Examples of the Our commitment to achieving good governance in practice is demonstrated below
Managing Risks • 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.	The Council has a Risk Management Strategy with regular updates and reporting which is reviewed annually. Regular progress reports are provided, Business Continuity and other related matters. All committees actively engage and conducts detailed scrutiny of the Corporate Risk Register and emerging risks. Presentations on specific risks are provided. Departmental Management Teams take full ownership of risks within their area and agree mitigating actions with regular monitoring and reporting processes in place.
Managing Performance	The Council has corporate performance management and reporting processes in place with quarterly monitoring by Overview and Scrutiny Committees. A regular programme of reporting on progress against outcomes, metrics and trend including benchmarking is in place. Regular meetings between Chief Officers and their Lead members focus on key developments and risks going forward.
Robust in Internal Control	The adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's internal control environment is tested throughout the year through the approval and implementation of a risk based Internal Audit Annual Plan and by operational audits. The Council participates in a range of external audits, inspections and accreditations to ensure it remains accountable for the quality of services its delivers as well to support continuous improvement of services. An annual report is produced by Internal Audit which provides an opinion on the council's risk, governance and control environment, and a self-assessment of its arrangements against the public sector internal audit standards and CIPFA's guide to the role of the Head of Internal Audit. There is an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy. The Annual Governance Statement (AGS) is subject to review by the Audit and Governance Committee.
Managing Data	The Council has a Corporate Data Protection Policy and well-established risk assessment processes. Mandatory training for managers has been implemented on data protection and information management. A partnership information sharing protocol, and information sharing agreements are put in place where required. Policies that govern the use of data, and corporate data standards are in place. A variety of groups and monitoring are in place to ensure effective information management practice.

Strong Public Financial Management	Financial procedures are documented in the [Financial](#) Regulations. Monthly budget monitoring reports on the [MTFS](#) (capital and revenue) are provided to senior management and committees. Reports provide an overall update, reasons for significant variances, actions being taken and any ongoing impact. The Councils accounts show a strong track record of operating within its resources while allocating investment towards priority areas.

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

David Bonner – Insight Intelligence and Performance Manager and Marc Eyre – Risk, Emergency planning and Resilience Manager

Rationale: 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.

Our Commitment (Key Principles)	Examples of the Our commitment to achieving good governance in practice is demonstrated below
Implementing good practices in transparency and reporting; Assurance and effective accountability - 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. Report at least annually on performance, value for money and the stewardship of its 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 quarterly and an 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.	Agendas, reports and minutes are published on the council's website. Committee reports, and debates are made available online to the public. Regular press releases and briefings with good press coverage. Council newsletter produced for all residents. The Annual Financial Statements are compiled, published to timetable and included on the council's website. The Annual Government Statement (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. An audit function is resourced and maintained through the South West Audit Partnership. The partnership has direct access to members and provides assurance on governance arrangements via an annual report containing an opinion on the council's internal control arrangements. There is compliance with CIPFA Statements on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer and the Role of the Head of Audit. The Audit Service abides with the principles of the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, but some development is required before full conformance can be claimed. External Audit provides an annual opinion on the Council's financial statements and arrangements. The Council engages in peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations.