

**Watford Borough Council
Annual Governance Statement
2019/20
Local Code of
Governance**

What do we mean by Governance?

1. The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014) (the 'International Framework') defines governance as follows:

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

2. The International Framework also states that:

“To deliver good governance in the public sector, both governing bodies and individuals working for public sector entities must try to achieve their entity’s objectives while acting in the public interest at all times. Acting in the public interest implies primary consideration of the benefits for society, which should result in positive outcomes for service users and other stakeholders.”

3. Governance is about how the Council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.
4. Governance comprises the systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and through which it accounts to, engages with and, where appropriate, leads its communities.
5. Good governance leads to:-
 - good management,
 - good performance,
 - good stewardship of public money,
 - good public engagement,
 - good outcomes for citizens and service users.
6. Good governance enables the Council to pursue its vision effectively as well as underpinning that vision with mechanisms for control and management of risk.
7. The Council, along with each and every other local authority, aims to meet the standards of the best and its governance arrangements should not only be sound but also be seen to be sound.

Governance Framework

8. The Council operates through a governance framework which brings together an underlying set of legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes.
9. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE) drew together a Working Group to compile a framework document entitled “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (CIPFA/Solace, 2016) (‘the Framework’)”.
10. This Framework document is intended to be followed as best practice for developing and maintaining a local code of governance and for discharging accountability for the proper conduct of public business, through the publication of an annual governance statement that will make the adopted practice open and explicit.
11. To achieve good governance, each local authority should be able to demonstrate that its governance structures comply with the core and sub-principles contained in this Framework. It should therefore develop and maintain a local code of governance/governance arrangements reflecting the principles set out.
12. It is also crucial that the Framework is applied in a way that demonstrates the spirit and ethos of good governance which cannot be achieved by rules and procedures alone. Shared values that are integrated into the culture of an organisation, and are reflected in behaviour and policy, are hallmarks of good governance.

The Council’s Commitment

13. The Council is committed to the principles of good governance and wishes to confirm its ongoing commitment and intentions through this Local Code of Governance.
14. This Code sets out and describes the Council’s commitment to governance and identifies the arrangements that have been and will continue to be made to ensure its ongoing effective implementation and application in all aspects of the Council’s work.
15. Accordingly, the Council will test its arrangements by:-
 - reviewing its existing governance arrangements against this revised Code,

- maintaining an up-to-date Local Code of Governance including arrangements for ensuring its ongoing application and effectiveness,
- on an annual basis, prepare a governance statement in order to report publicly on the extent to which the Council complies with this code, including how the effectiveness of its governance arrangements have been monitored in the year and on any planned changes in the coming period.

The Principles of Good Governance

16. The core principles and sub-principles of good governance set out below are taken from the International Framework. In turn they have been interpreted for a local government context.

The Seven Core Principles

17. Principles A and B permeate implementation of principles C to G.

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

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, as a whole, 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.

The core principle is supported by three supporting principles:

- a) Behaving with integrity,
- b) Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and
- c) Respecting the rule of law.

B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

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.

The core principle is supported by three supporting principles:

- a) Openness,
- b) Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders, and
- c) Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively.

18. In addition to the overarching requirements for acting in the public interest in principles A and B, achieving good governance also requires a commitment to and effective arrangements for principles C to G.

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

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

The core principle is supported by two supporting principles:

- a) Defining outcomes, and
- b) Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.

D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Local government 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 local government has to 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 frequently to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.

The core principle is supported by three supporting principles:

- a) Determining interventions,
- b) Planning interventions, and
- c) Optimising achievement of intended outcomes.

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

Local government needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications and mindset, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve 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 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 staff members. Leadership in local government is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of backgrounds, reflecting the structure and diversity of communities.

The core principle is supported by two supporting principles:

- a) Developing the entity's capacity
- b) Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals

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

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 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 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 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.

The core principle is supported by five supporting principles:

- a) Managing risk,
- b) Managing performance,
- c) Robust internal control,
- d) Managing data, and
- e) Strong public financial management.

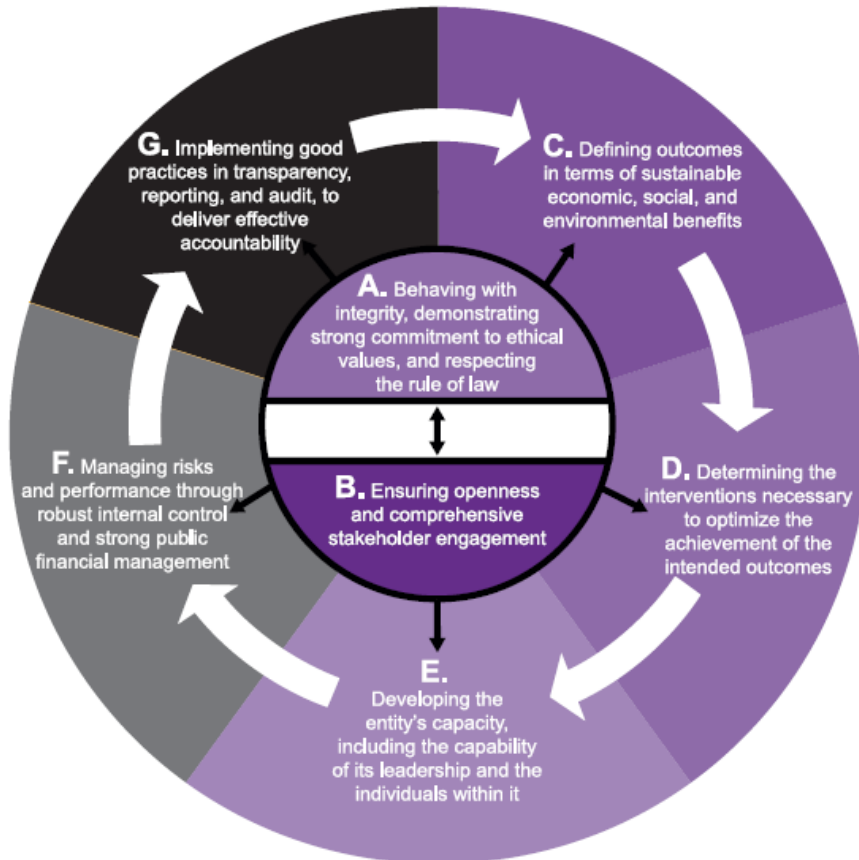
G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

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.

The core principle is supported by three supporting principles:

- a) Implementing good practice in transparency,
- b) Implementing good practices in reporting, and
- c) Assurance and effective accountability.

19. These principles are illustrated in the following diagram: (from CIPFA/SOLACE)



Monitoring and Review

20. The Council will carry out an ongoing review and monitoring of its governance arrangements (see Appendix A) and how these arrangements comply with the Framework document and this Local Code. This review and monitoring will include references to, amongst other things:

- Heads of Service Management Assurance Statements,
- Constitution Review arrangements,
- Ethics arrangements,
- Shared Internal Audit Service's Annual Report,
- Performance management arrangements,
- Risk management arrangements,
- Council's decision making arrangements,
- Freedom of information and data protection arrangements, and
- Council's complaints procedures (3C's).

21. The results of this process will be incorporated into an Annual Governance Statement (AGS), the preparation and publication of which is necessary to meet the statutory requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

22. The purpose of the AGS is to provide an assurance that:

- governance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively
- where the review has revealed gaps, action is planned that will ensure effective governance in future

23. The AGS will be presented to the Council's Audit Committee and then Cabinet.

24. Once approved, the AGS will be signed by the Elected Mayor and the Managing Director and will be published with the Annual Statement of Accounts, prior to being reviewed by the Council's External Auditors.

June 2020

Core Principles	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	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
Evidence of Good Governance	<p>Constitution</p> <p>Financial Procedure Rules</p> <p>Contract Procedure Rules</p> <p>Responsibility for Executive functions (delegation)</p> <p>Responsibility for Council functions (delegation)</p> <p>Councillor Code of Conduct</p> <p>Employee Code of Conduct</p> <p>Annual Governance Statement</p> <p>Members Remuneration Scheme</p> <p>Contract Management Toolkit</p>	<p>Constitution</p> <p>Local Strategic Partnership – One Watford</p> <p>Service Level and Partnership Agreements</p> <p>Transparency and Open Data</p> <p>Freedom of Information Act 2000</p> <p>Freedom of Information Publication Scheme</p> <p>Watford Observer</p> <p>Community Survey</p> <p>Communications and Engagement Plan</p> <p>In Touch</p> <p>Ask the MD</p>	<p>Corporate Plan (2019/20)</p> <p>Community Safety Plan</p> <p>Watford 2020</p> <p>Local Development Plan</p> <p>Watford Parking Strategy</p> <p>Gambling Policy</p> <p>Economic Development Strategy</p> <p>Homelessness Review</p> <p>Housing Strategy</p>	<p>Constitution</p> <p>Corporate Plan (2019/20)</p> <p>Medium Term Financial Plan</p> <p>Service Plans</p> <p>Committee Meetings, Agendas and Minutes</p> <p>Budget Consultation / Panel</p> <p>Local Strategic Partnership – One Watford</p> <p>Communications and Engagement Plan</p> <p>Strategic Leadership Team</p> <p>Operational Leadership Team</p>	<p>Workforce Plan</p> <p>Performance Development Review (appraisals)</p> <p>Job / Person Specifications</p> <p>Performance Management Framework</p> <p>Employee Health and wellbeing Strategy</p> <p>Health and Safety Group</p> <p>Safeguarding Policy</p> <p>Members and Staff Induction Programme</p> <p>Sickness Absence Policy</p> <p>HR Policies</p>	<p>Medium Term Financial Plan</p> <p>Treasury Management Strategy</p> <p>Budget Panel</p> <p>Audited Annual Statement of Accounts</p> <p>Revenue and Capital Budgets</p> <p>Risk Management Strategy</p> <p>Corporate and Service Risk Registers</p> <p>Annual Management Assurance Statements</p> <p>Annual Governance Statement</p>	<p>Facility for Council to receive petitions</p> <p>Residents / business owners submit relevant questions in writing for consideration and response at Council meetings</p> <p>Freedom of Information Publication Scheme</p> <p>Forward Plan</p> <p>Committee Meetings, Agendas and Minutes</p> <p>Local Government Transparency Code – Transparency and Open Data</p>

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Evidence of Good Governance	Project Management Toolkit Whistleblowing Policy Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Policy Bribery Policy RIPA Policy Equality Impact Assessments Bullying and Harassment Policy Register of Members' Interests Notification of Gifts & Hospitality (members) Audit Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task Groups and Member Panels	Contracts Register Customer Feedback / Complaints Process Citizens Panel Website Intranet	Waste Management & Recycling Policy Strategic Leadership Team and Operational Leadership Team Cabinet	Cabinet Council Annual Council		Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) Annual Audit Plan Report SIAS Progress Reports Head of Assurance Opinion and SIAS Annual Report External Auditors External Audit Annual Audit Letter Committee Meetings, Agendas and Minutes Data sharing protocols Budget Monitoring Finance Digest	Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) Head of Assurance Opinion and SIAS Annual Report Annual Fraud Report Treasury Management Reports

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Evidence of Good Governance	<p>Ombudsman Reports</p> <p>Protocol on Member Officer Relations</p> <p>Standards Committee</p> <p>Fraud Service</p> <p>Strategic Leadership Team including amongst others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Managing Director (Head of Paid Service) - Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) - Group Head of Democracy and Governance (Monitoring Officer) <p>Data Protection Policy</p> <p>Annual Fraud Report</p> <p>Customer Feedback / Complaints Process</p>					<p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Audit Committee</p> <p>Financial Procedure Rules</p> <p>Contract Procedure Rules</p>	