

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL CODE OF GOVERNANCE

1. What we mean by Governance

- 1.1 Good governance is about how the Authority 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.
- 1.2 It comprises the systems, processes, culture and values, by which the Authority directs and controls its functions, and through which it accounts to, engages with and, where appropriate, leads the community.
- 1.3 This Local Code of Governance has been developed in accordance with and is consistent with the Framework for Delivering Good Governance in Local Government, published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE).

2. Core Principles of Good Governance

- 2.1 The core governance principles of the Authority are:
 - (a) focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area;
 - (b) Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles;
 - (c) promoting values for the authority and demonstrating good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour;
 - (d) taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and management of risk;
 - (e) developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective; and
 - (f) engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

3. Annual Review and Reporting

- 3.1 Each year the Council will carry out a review of its governance arrangements to ensure compliance with this Code and the delivery of good governance within the local Business Assurance Framework and current good practice. The purpose of the review will be to provide assurance that governance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively, or to identify action that is planned to ensure effective governance in the future.
- 3.2 The outcome of the review will take the form of a Governance Statement prepared on behalf of the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive. It will be submitted to the Audit and Governance Committee for consideration and review.

- 3.3 The preparation and publication of the Governance Statement will meet the statutory requirement of the Accounts and Audit Regulations which requires authorities to conduct a review at least once a year of the effectiveness of its system of internal control, to prepare a Governance Statement in accordance with proper practices, and include the Statement with the Council's Statutory Statement of Accounts.

4. Applying the Core Principles of Good Governance

- 4.1 The six core principles set out at paragraph 2 above are supplemented by a number of supporting principles, which, in turn, have a range of specific requirements that apply across the Authority's business. These are detailed in the following tables, which also describe how the Council is achieving each of the requirements.

Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the local community, and creating and implementing a vision for the local area

Supporting Principles	Specific requirements	How we are achieving this
<p>Exercising strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the Authority's purpose and vision and its intended outcome for citizens and service users.</p>	<p>Develop and promote the Authority's purpose and vision for the District, and review on a regular basis this vision and the implications for its governance arrangements.</p> <p>Ensure that partnerships are underpinned by a common vision of their work that is understood and agreed by all partners.</p> <p>Publish an annual report on a timely basis to communicate the Authority's activities and achievements, its financial position and performance.</p>	<p>Community Strategy, Council Plan, Local Code of Governance</p> <p>Partnership protocols</p> <p>Annual financial statements and Annual Report</p>
<p>Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service whether directly, or in partnership, or by commissioning.</p>	<p>Decide how the quality of service for users is to be measured and make sure that the information needed to review service quality effectively and regularly is available.</p> <p>Put in place effective arrangements to identify and deal with failure in service delivery.</p>	<p>Council Plan, Best Value Performance Plan, Service plans, medium term financial strategy and annual budget. Essex Compact Epping Forest Compact</p> <p>Monitoring of performance indicators, Complaints procedure Partnership protocols</p>
<p>Ensuring that the Authority makes best use of resources and that taxpayers and service users receive excellent value for money.</p>	<p>Decide how value for money is to be measured and make sure that the Authority or partnership has the information needed to review value for money and performance effectively.</p> <p>Measure the environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions.</p>	<p>Value for money strategy Service plans 4 Year Financial Forecast Budget monitoring process</p> <p>Service plans Reference in Committee reports</p>

Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles

Supporting Principles	Specific requirements	How we are achieving this
<p>Ensuring effective leadership throughout the Authority and being clear about executive and non-executive functions, and the role of the scrutiny function.</p>	<p>Set out a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of the executive and of the executive's members individually, and the Authority's approach towards putting this into practice.</p> <p>Set out a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of other Council Members, Members generally and of senior officers.</p>	<p>Council Constitution</p> <p>Member and Officer Protocol</p> <p>Induction programme</p>
<p>Ensuring that a constructive working relationship exists between Council Members and officers and that the responsibilities of Members and officers are carried out to a high standard.</p>	<p>Determine a scheme of delegation and reserve powers within the Constitution, including a formal schedule of those matters specifically reserved for collective decision of the Council, taking account of relevant legislation, and ensure that it is monitored and updated when required.</p> <p>Make a Chief Executive or equivalent responsible and accountable to the Council for all aspects of operational management.</p> <p>Develop protocols to ensure that the Leader and Chief Executive (or equivalents) negotiate their respective roles early in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained.</p> <p>Make a senior officer (the S151 Officer) responsible to the authority for ensuring that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, for keeping proper financial records and accounts, and for maintaining an effective system of internal financial control.</p> <p>Make a senior officer (usually the Monitoring Officer) responsible to the Council for ensuring that agreed procedures are followed and that all applicable Statutes and Regulations are complied with.</p>	<p>Constitution</p> <p>Scheme of delegation, conditions of employment, performance management</p> <p>Member and Officer Protocol</p> <p>Scheme of delegation, conditions of employment, performance management</p> <p>Scheme of delegation, conditions of employment, performance management</p>
<p>Ensuring relationships between the Authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other.</p>	<p>Develop protocols to ensure effective communication between Members and officers in their respective roles. Ensure that effective mechanisms exist to monitor service delivery.</p> <p>Set out the terms and conditions for remuneration of Members and officers and an effective structure for managing the process, including an effective Member Remuneration Panel.</p>	<p>Member and Officer Protocol</p> <p>Guidance to Members and officers on representation on outside bodies</p> <p>As set out in the Terms of Reference for the EFDC Remuneration Panel</p>

Promoting values for the Authority and demonstrating good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour

Supporting principles	Specific requirements	How we are achieving this
<p>Ensuring Council Members and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance.</p>	<p>Ensure that the Council's leadership sets a tone for the organisation by creating a climate of openness, support and respect.</p> <p>Ensure that standards of conduct and personal behaviour expected of Members and officers, of work between Members and officers and between the Authority, its partners and the community are defined and communicated through codes of conduct and protocols.</p> <p>Put in place arrangements to ensure that Members and employees of the Council are not influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest in dealing with different stakeholders, and put in place appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice.</p>	<p>Member and Officer Protocol</p> <p>Members' and officers' Codes of Conduct, performance appraisal, Complaints procedure</p> <p>Codes of Conduct, Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders</p>
<p>Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective.</p>	<p>Develop and maintain shared values including leadership values for both the Authority and staff reflecting public expectations, and communicate these with Members, officers, the community and partners.</p> <p>Put in place arrangements to ensure that systems and processes are designed in conformity with appropriate ethical standards, and monitor their continuing effectiveness in practice.</p> <p>Develop and maintain an effective Standards Committee.</p> <p>Use the Authority's shared values to act as a guide for decision-making and as a basis for developing positive and trusting relationships within the Council.</p> <p>In pursuing the vision of a partnership, agree a set of values against which decision-making and actions can be judged, as demonstrated by partners' behaviour both individually and collectively.</p>	<p>Member and officer Codes of Conduct Customer Charter Partnership protocols</p> <p>Member and officer Codes of Conduct</p> <p>As set out in the Terms of Reference for the EFDC Standards Committee</p> <p>Established decision-making and reporting processes The Council's Vision and Values Statement</p> <p>The existing protocol on working with outside bodies is being extended into a more strategic partnership document</p>

Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and management of risk

Supporting principles	Specific requirements	How we are achieving this
<p>Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny.</p>	<p>Develop and maintain an effective scrutiny function which encourages constructive challenge and enhances the Authority's performance overall and that of any organisation for which it is responsible.</p> <p>Develop and maintain open and effective mechanisms for documenting evidence for decisions and recording the criteria, rationale and considerations on which decisions are based.</p> <p>Put in place arrangements to safeguard Members and officers against conflicts of interest and put in place appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice.</p> <p>Develop and maintain an effective Audit Committee, which is independent of the executive and scrutiny functions, or make other appropriate arrangements for the discharge of the functions of such a Committee.</p> <p>Ensure that effective, transparent and accessible arrangements are in place for dealing with complaints.</p>	<p>Terms of Reference for Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Standing Panels; annual scrutiny review process</p> <p>Established procedures for publishing and publicising decisions by the Council, Committees and Panels, and Portfolio Holders; webcasting of meetings</p> <p>Member and officer Codes of Conduct</p> <p>Terms of reference and membership of the Audit and Governance Committee supported by the officer Corporate Governance Group</p> <p>Compliments and Complaints procedure supported by a dedicated officer, publication of statistics</p>
<p>Having good quality information, advice and support to ensure that services are delivered effectively and are what the community wants/needs.</p>	<p>Ensure that those making decisions, whether for the Authority or the partnership, are provided with information that is fit for the purpose, relevant and timely, and gives clear explanations of technical issues and their implications.</p> <p>Ensure that proper professional advice on matters that have legal or financial implications is available and recorded well in advance of decision making, and used appropriately.</p>	<p>Member induction and training Data Quality Strategy</p> <p>Key reports are subject to review by relevant officers or Corporate Executive Forum</p> <p>Appropriate reference in reports and in the record of decision making</p>

Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and management of risk

Supporting principles	Specific requirements	How we are achieving this
<p>Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place.</p>	<p>Ensure that risk management is embedded into the culture of the Authority, with Members and officers at all levels recognising that risk management is part of their role.</p> <p>Ensure that effective arrangements for whistle blowing are in place to which officers and all those contracting with or appointed by the Council have access.</p>	<p>Constitution Corporate Risk Management Strategy Service Business Plans</p> <p>Anti-fraud and corruption policy</p>
<p>Using the Authority's legal powers to the full benefit of the residents and communities in the District.</p>	<p>Actively recognise the limits of lawful activity placed on the Authority by, for example, the ultra vires doctrine, but also strive to utilise the Authority's powers to the full benefit of the residents of the District.</p> <p>Recognise the limits of lawful action and observe both the specific requirements of legislation and the general responsibilities placed on the Council by public law.</p> <p>Observe all specific legislative requirements placed upon the Council, as well as the requirements of general law and, in particular, integrate the key principles of good administrative law (rationality, legality and natural justice) into the Council's procedures and decision making processes.</p>	<p>Constitution Monitoring Officer role Application of statutory provisions</p> <p>As above</p> <p>As above</p>

Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective

Supporting principles	Specific requirements	How we are achieving this
<p>Making sure that Members and officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles.</p>	<p>Provide induction and training programmes tailored to individual needs and opportunities for Members and officers to update their knowledge on a regular basis.</p> <p>Ensure that the Statutory Officers have the skills, resources and support necessary to perform effectively in their roles and that these roles are properly understood throughout the Authority.</p>	<p>Induction and training programmes for Members and officers, Leadership and Management Development Programmes</p> <p>Constitution Personal specifications Induction and training programmes</p>
<p>Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance, as individuals and as a group.</p>	<p>Assess the skills required by Members and officers and develop those skills to enable roles to be carried out effectively.</p> <p>Develop skills on a continuing basis to improve performance, including the ability to scrutinise and challenge and to recognise when outside expert advice is needed.</p> <p>Ensure that effective arrangements are in place for reviewing the performance of the executive as a whole and of individual Members, and agreeing an action plan to address any training or development needs.</p>	<p>Member training programme Officer Learning and Development Plan Officer appraisals (PDRs)</p> <p>As included above</p> <p>Member training programme</p>
<p>Encouraging new talent for membership of the Council so that best use can be made of individuals' skills and resources in balancing continuity and renewal.</p>	<p>Ensure that effective arrangements are in place designed to encourage individuals from all sections of the community to engage with, contribute to and participate in the work of the Council.</p> <p>Ensure that career structures are in place for Members and officers to encourage participation and development.</p>	<p>Establishment of Youth Council Representation of independent people and interest groups on Committees, Panels and Action Groups</p> <p>Consultation strategy Website; Webcasting of meetings</p> <p>Training programmes, Succession planning, Leadership and Management Development Programmes</p>

Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability

Supporting principles	Specific requirements	How we are achieving this
<p>Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive accountability relationships.</p>	<p>Make clear to the Council and its staff the ways in which the Council is accountable to residents, communities and other stakeholders.</p> <p>Consider those institutional stakeholders to whom the Council is accountable and assess the effectiveness of the relationships and any changes required.</p> <p>Produce an annual report on the activity of the scrutiny function.</p>	<p>Community Strategy, Customer Charter Council Plan Best Value Performance Plan Service Plans Key Performance Indicators Officer appraisals (PDRs)</p> <p>Communication and Consultation Strategies Local Strategic Partnership Partnership protocols</p> <p>Annual report of Scrutiny</p>
<p>Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly by the Council, in partnership or by commissioning.</p>	<p>Ensure that clear channels of communication are in place with all sections of the community and other stakeholders, and put in place monitoring arrangements and ensure that they operate effectively. Furthermore, to hold meetings in public unless there are good reasons for confidentiality.</p> <p>Ensure that arrangements are in place to enable the Council to engage with all sections of the community effectively, recognise that different sections of the community have different priorities, and establish explicit processes for dealing with these competing demands.</p> <p>Establish a clear policy on the types of issues the Council will meaningfully consult on, and engage with the public and service users about including a feedback mechanism for those consultees to demonstrate what has changed as a result.</p>	<p>Communication strategy is in development Consultation strategy Webcasting of meetings</p> <p>Race Equality Scheme Gender Equality Scheme Disability Equality Scheme Corporate Equalities Action Plan</p> <p>Youth Council Consultation strategy Partnership policy is in development</p>

Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability

Supporting principles	Specific requirements	How we are achieving this
Continued..	<p>On an annual basis, publish a performance plan giving information on the Authority, strategy, plans and financial statements as well as information about its outcomes, achievements and the satisfaction of service users in the previous period.</p> <p>Ensure that the Council, its officers and partner representatives are open and accessible to the community and service users. Furthermore, to ensure that the Council has made a commitment to openness and transparency in all its dealings, including partnerships, subject only to the need to preserve confidentiality in those specific circumstances where it is proper and appropriate to do so.</p>	<p>Council Plan Best Value Performance Plan Service Plans Annual Report</p> <p>Constitution Council Plan Communication strategy Race, Gender and Disability Equality Schemes Freedom of Information Act arrangements</p>
Making best use of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meeting their responsibilities to staff.	Develop and maintain a clear policy on how staff and their representatives are consulted and involved in decision making.	<p>Constitution Joint Consultative arrangements Learning and Development Programmes EFDC Training and Development Policy HR Policies Investors in People process</p>