

## **Appendix B - HDC Code of Corporate Governance**

### **HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

Corporate Governance comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values, by which local government bodies are directed and controlled and through which they account to, engage with and where appropriate, lead their communities.

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.

The Council's behaviours and actions that demonstrate good governance are set out in response to the CIPFA core principles.

#### **A: Integrity; Ethical Values: the Rule of Law**

- Member and Officer Codes of Conduct are included in the Constitution setting out the values and behaviours that the Council requires Members and officers to adopt.
- Rules of Procedure govern the expected conduct at meetings of the Council and its committees.
- The Counter-Fraud Strategy & Framework is designed to encourage and promote the prevention and detection of fraud.
- Member and Officer Registers of Interests, Gifts and Hospitality safeguard both Members and officers against conflicts of interest.
- The Whistleblowing Policy ensures anyone with a concern can have confidence that it will be dealt with appropriately.
- All officers have a regular logged conversation with their manager at which behaviours and matters of integrity can be addressed informally.
- The Council's disciplinary process addresses officer breaches of good conduct.
- The Standards Committee considers complaints or allegations made against Councillors, as required by the Localism Act 2011.
- In accordance with 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015' and 'The Care Act 2014', we recognise the need to ensure the welfare of all individuals when they come into contact with services provided by the Council.



#### **B: Openness; engaging with institutional stakeholders; engaging with individual citizens and service users.**

- The Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures and codes of conduct that are followed.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews the Council's decision making processes and monitors the internal and external delivery of services.
- The Audit Committee is independent of Cabinet and Scrutiny functions. It receives reports on the work of External and Internal Audit and Risk Management and reviews serious Governance breaches.
- The Governance Committee reviews and updates the Council's Constitution.
- The Council supports local communities that produce their own Neighbourhood Plans providing a vision for their area.
- The Council engages with the public in a number of public consultations. These are publicised on the Council's website and the feedback informs the Council's decision making process.
- The majority of the Council's meetings are open to the public. The Forward Plan, Agendas, papers and minutes are published on the Council's website.
- The Council recognises that supporting and engaging communities is a shared agenda with many partners including West Sussex County Council, the Police, the Health Service and the community and voluntary sector. Working together we are all committed to ensuring Horsham District remains a great area to live and work.
- Senior management communicates with staff by means of regular cascade meetings organised by the Senior Leadership Team: Director's meetings; Team meetings; All Staff Briefings; the "Council Matters" publication and weekly Leadership Team feedback.
- Consultation takes place with Parish Councils and other Voluntary and Community groups throughout the District to ensure effective provision of community engagement activities.

**C: Defining Outcomes; sustainable, economic, social and environmental benefits.**

- The Council Plan for the period 2023-27 is published on the Council's website identifies key priorities.
- Departmental Service Plans and worklists break down and monitor the objectives of the Council Plan with quarterly reports to Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- The Council ensures objectives are deliverable by producing a Medium Term Financial Strategy and detailed financial budget plans.
- Progress against the Council's aims and objectives is monitored through its performance management framework and reported to management and Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- The Council identifies and manages any corporate and departmental risks to achieving its objectives through its risk management process and issues regular reports to senior management and Audit Committee.
- Value for money is driven through the Council's Corporate Procurement Code.
- Information relating to Council plans and initiatives is published via its website, email updates, social media and the Horsham District news magazine.

**D: Determining and planning interventions; optimising achievement of intended outcomes.**

- The Medium Term Financial Strategy is updated at least twice a year and takes into account changes in the financial outlook. It is used as a basis for the annual budget setting process in which all Heads of Service reconsider their departmental budgets. The Annual Budget and Council Tax rate are approved by full Council before the start of each financial year.
- Progress against the budget and key performance indicators are reviewed and reported quarterly to Overview & Scrutiny.
- The Council continually investigates alternative models of service delivery to improve efficiency whilst meeting the needs of customers.
- The Council is working with Community and Voluntary sector partners to develop projects and deliver efficient and effective services.
- The Council's Technology Strategy was updated during 2020-23 and the Digital Strategy introduced ensure service delivery is supported efficiently and flexibly.
- Benchmarking against others provides information that assists the Council to design services that are fit for purpose by looking at options to improve delivery.

**F: Managing risks; managing performance; robust internal control; managing data; strong public financial management.**

- Decision making protocols are set out in the Council's Constitution.
- Agendas and minutes of Council/Committee meetings are published on the Council's website and include details of decisions taken.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews the Council's decision making processes and monitors the internal and external delivery of services.
- Budget monitoring processes are in place and a summary of the Council's financial position is reported to senior management monthly and to Members quarterly.
- The Council has an established Risk Management Strategy and embedded Risk Management processes. Corporate and Departmental risks are formally reviewed quarterly.
- The Horsham Chief Internal Auditor reports to the Audit Committee. Audit work is planned to ensure there are robust systems of internal control in place to mitigate risks and provide assurance to senior management and Members.
- The Audit Committee meets four times a year to review the effectiveness of the control environment and risk management framework.
- An officer Corporate Governance Group oversees the Council's Governance arrangements.
- A complaints procedure is published on the Council's website. Quarterly monitoring reports are submitted to senior management and Members.
- The Council has policies covering information and data security and guidance is available for all staff on the Council's Intranet.

**E: Developing the capacity of the entity through its leadership and other individuals.**

- The Constitution sets out how the Council operates; how decisions are made and which Codes of Conduct are followed. The roles of Members are clearly set out and a Member/Officer protocol is included.
- A Scheme of Delegation in the Constitution determines the levels at which decisions are taken.
- Detailed regulations in the Constitution (for example Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules) require officer compliance.
- Managers monitor officer performance and development through regular recorded conversations that support workforce planning. The process also identifies an individual's training needs. The Disciplinary and Capability Policies outline the formal processes for managing officer non-compliance.
- The Standards Committee deals with issues relating to Member performance.
- Partnership agreements are in place for each of the Council's strategic partnerships and managers hold regular meetings to monitor the agreements.
- An employee scheme of assistance is available to all employees.
- An induction training programme is in place for both Members and employees.
- Regular Senior Managers' Forums and all Managers' Conferences enable managers to meet to consider current issues affecting the Council and to work together to identify solutions.

**G: Good practice in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.**

- All committee agendas, papers and minutes are available to the public on the Council's website.
- The Council publishes its Audited Annual Accounts and Annual Governance Statement including an action plan for improvement for any areas of concern.
- All external audit reports are published and corrective action is taken to address any issues highlighted as necessary.
- The Council has an effective Internal Audit service which reports to the Audit Committee. Progress to implement agreed actions for improvement in control processes is monitored and reported to Members.
- Delegated partnership arrangements are effectively monitored by senior managers through monthly meetings and Partnership Boards where the Council is a full partner.