

REPORT TO AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW PANEL

Title: **REVISED 2008/09 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE GOVERNANCE POLICY AND LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

Date: 17 September 2009

Member Reporting: **Councillor D McBride**

Contact Officer(s): **Anthony Kemp, Strategic Director of Resources**
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Wards Affected: **All Wards**

1. SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present a revised 2008/09 Annual Governance Statement. The Statement was originally presented to the Audit and Performance Review Panel on 30 June 2009 and Members made some suggested amendments. These have been taken into account and incorporated into a revised Statement. In addition, at that meeting, the Panel received an updated Corporate Governance Policy and Local Code of Corporate Governance, which are presented again for approval.

1.2 The Headlines of the 2008/09 Annual Governance Statement are:-

- a) The Council has a sound Governance framework and assurance process in place.
- b) The Corporate Strategy is being developed to replace the Borough's Strategic Plan.
- c) There is continued progress in embedding Risk Management into RBWM's operations.
- d) Progress is being made in addressing project management arrangements and the governance of Partnerships.
- e) The introduction of the Balanced Scorecard has helped to improve performance management.
- f) Corporate action has been identified to address certain issues including staff appraisals, Services Benchmarking and managing Value for Money, Health and Safety issues and Business Continuity.
- g) Further action is also needed to strengthen the Balanced Scorecard, Risk Management and major projects reporting.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the Panel recommend the revised 2008/09 Annual Governance Statement for signature by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive. In addition, the Panel is requested to approve the Council's Corporate Governance Policy and Local Code of Corporate Governance.

What will be different for residents as a result of this decision?

Residents will have assurances that the principles of Corporate Governance are incorporated into every dimension of the Council's business providing them with confidence in the decision-making and management processes of the Authority, and in the conduct and professionalism of its members, officers, partners and other agents in delivering services and that work is being undertaken to further enhance those arrangements.

3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 required the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead to conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control and publish a Statement of Internal Control (SIC) up until 31/03/07.
- 3.2 From 1 April 2007, the SIC was replaced by the Annual Governance Statement (AGS). Guidance was issued by the CIPFA Finance Advisory Network in respect to the production of the AGS. In 2007, CIPFA/SOLACE updated previous guidance and issued the publication "*Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*". The CIPFA/SOLACE Framework brought together a number of governance principles and requirements.
- 3.3 The AGS is the formal statement (signed by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive) that recognises, records and publishes the governance arrangements of the Council in line with that Framework. The AGS is much broader than the SIC, although the overall assurance process remains. The AGS must reflect the Council's governance framework.
- 3.4 The AGS should be an open and honest self-assessment of an authority's performance across all of its activities, with a clear statement of the actions being taken or required to address areas of concern. The AGS should include: -
- An acknowledgement of responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of governance (incorporating the system of internal control).
 - A description of the key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the governance arrangements.
 - A brief description of the process that has been applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance arrangements.
 - An outline of actions proposed to deal with significant governance issues.
- 3.5 The intention of the Council is that it will aspire to publish an unqualified AGS following completion of its annual review of Corporate Governance, through having in place sound governance arrangements.

3.6 The Governance Statement and Assurance Gathering process for preparing the document were outlined in the report presented to the Panel on 30 June 2009 and so these have not been re-iterated within this report. The revised 2008/09 Annual Governance Statement is attached at Appendix A to this report and for ease of review, any amendments have been shaded.

3.7 In addition, an updated Corporate Governance Policy and Local Code of Corporate Governance were reported to the 30 June 2009 meeting and these are attached at Appendix B and C respectively. Minor changes were made to the content to take account of the Council's restructure and new reporting groups and also to update the framework for preparing the Annual Governance Statement, following the introduction of the self assessment process that replaced the Corporate Governance and Use of Resources Working Group

4. OPTIONS AVAILABLE AND RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 Options

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
1.	<p>If the Panel agree that the content of the revised 2008/09 AGS is consistent with their view of the Council's system of corporate governance, recommend the Statement for signature by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.</p> <p>Note the revised Corporate Governance Policy and Local Code of Corporate Governance.</p>	<p>Adoption of Option 1 will ensure that the principles of good Corporate Governance are incorporated into every dimension of the Council's business to ensure that stakeholders can have confidence in the decision-making and management processes of the Authority, and in the conduct and professionalism of its members, officers, partners and other agents in delivering services.</p> <p>In addition, it will ensure compliance with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the CIPFA / SOLACE framework "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government". - Regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003, as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006. 	<p>Revenue – officer time</p> <p>Capital - none</p>

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chapter 7 of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK: A Statement of Recommended Practice. 	
2.	<p>Make additional suggestions regarding the content of the revised 2008/09 Annual Governance Statement and updates to the Corporate Governance Policy and Local Code of Corporate Governance.</p>	As above	<p>Revenue – officer time</p> <p>Capital - none</p>
3.	<p>Not approve the process for preparing the 2008/09 Annual Governance Statement or its content.</p> <p>Not approve the proposed revisions to Corporate Governance Policy and Local Code of Corporate Governance following annual review.</p>	<p>Adoption of Option 3 may result in good governance not being operated throughout the Council, which may undermine stakeholders confidence in the decision-making and management processes of the Authority, and in the conduct and professionalism of its members, officers, partners and other agents in delivering services.</p> <p>Compliance with the following will not be demonstrated or achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CIPFA / SOLACE framework “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government” - Regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003, as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006 	<p>Revenue – officer time</p> <p>Capital - none</p>

	Option	Comments	Financial Implications
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chapter 7 of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK: A Statement of Recommended Practice. 	

4.2 Risk Assessment

Risk	Uncontrolled Risk	Controls	Controlled Risk
<p>1. Failure of the Council to have a process in place to meet all core principles of good governance leads to poor performance, poor outcomes for service users / citizens and hence has a specific attributable negative impact on the Council's Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) score.</p>	<p>High</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that the AGS provides the management processes to update, review and react to amendments to Corporate Governance principles as laid out by legislative requirements. - Ensure that an independent Audit Committee (in the form of the Audit & Performance Review Panel) has the skills capable of both considering and challenging the robustness of the Council's governance arrangements. - Ensure that Senior Officers and Senior Members take ownership of AGS. 	<p>Low</p>

<p>2. Failure to consult appropriate officers with correct levels of responsibility in the Assurance Gathering process.</p>	<p>High</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directorate Management Teams to undertake regular self-assessments of their Directorate's governance arrangements and each Strategic Director to sign off an annual Directorate Governance Statement. Content of the self-assessments to be reviewed by Internal Audit. - Regular update reports to the Services Management Team (SMT) summarising progress in achieving the governance framework requirements and identifying any areas needing to be addressed. 	<p>Low</p>
<p>3. Failure to provide a process to produce an Annual Governance Statement in accordance with the CIPFA/SOLACE requirements leads to low CAA score.</p>	<p>High</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update Local Code of Corporate Governance to ensure consistency with core principles of CIPFA / SOLACE Framework guidance. 	<p>Low</p>

4. Failure to gather quality data / information for use in preparing the 2008/09 AGS results in integrity failure, adverse comment from External Audit and wasted resources.	High	- Ensure that Group representatives possess the skills to review and challenge data / information supporting the AGS.	Low
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5. CONSULTATIONS CARRIED OUT

5.1 Consultation on the content of the 2008/09 AGS and its revisions has taken place with the Chief Executive, Chief Executive’s Management Team, Services Management Team and Directorate Management Teams, together with a cross section of officers from across the Council, including the Chair of the Audit and Performance Review Panel and S151 Officer.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The following implications have been addressed where indicated below.

Financial	Legal	Human Rights Act	Planning	Sustainable Development	Diversity & Equality
Y	Y(1)	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A

(1) The preparation and publication of an integrated Annual Governance Statement in accordance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework, subsumes the statutory requirement set out in Regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006 for the production of a Statement on Internal Control. It also meets the requirements of Chapter 7 of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK: A Statement of Recommended Practice.

Background Papers:

CIPFA/SOLACE – “*Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework*”
 Regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006.
 Chapter 7 of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK: A Statement of Recommended Practice

ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD
ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT
2008/09

Scope of Responsibility

1. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (the Council) is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. The Council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvements in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
2. In discharging this overall responsibility, the Council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs, facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.
3. The Council has adopted a Corporate Governance Policy and a Local Code of Corporate Governance, which are consistent with the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework "*Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*". These documents are reviewed and updated, as appropriate, annually. A copy of the Policy and Local Code can be found on our website at [www.rbwm.gov.uk] or by writing to the Town Hall, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, St. Ives Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire. SL6 1RF.
4. This Statement explains how the Council has complied with the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework and it also meets the requirements of Regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003, as amended by the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006 in relation to the publication of an Annual Governance Statement.

The Purpose of the Governance Framework

5. The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.
6. The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to:
 - identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Council's policies, aims and objectives,
 - evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and,
 - manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

7. The governance framework has been in place at the Council for the year ended 31 March 2009 and up to the date of approval of the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the 2008/09 financial year.

Summary

8. There has been an improvement in RBWM's performance in the past 12 months, as formally reported in the Audit Commission's Annual Audit and Inspection Letter, issued in March 2009. The Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) Direction of Travel classification was upgraded to 'Improving Well' (from the previous 'Improving Adequately') and the 3 star authority score was maintained.
9. Governance within RBWM is intrinsically linked to this and specifically, the Audit Commission highlighted the introduction of the Balanced Scorecard helping to improve overall performance management and over 40% of performance indicators being in the top quartile (which is higher than average). In addition, there have been improvements introduced in the approach and focus to providing Value for Money and Project Management arrangements have been strengthened. Management recognises that further action is needed to continue strengthening, enhancing and embedding processes, including the Balanced Scorecard, Risk Management and Major Projects.
10. Areas where the Audit and Inspection Letter identified further action included work to develop a Sustainable Community Strategy, refreshing the Strategic Plan and strengthening data quality (internally and with partners). The key actions detailed in the AGS Action Plan (Appendix A Table 1) incorporate service benchmarking, staff appraisals, Health and Safety issues, governance of partnerships and Business Continuity (together with outstanding governance issues from 20007/08).

The Governance Framework

11. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead's governance framework derives from the six core principles identified in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework "*Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*" published in 2007, as set out below.

Core Principle 1: Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area

12. A clear statement of the Council's purpose and vision and strategic priorities is set out in the existing Community Strategy, Borough Strategic Plan (soon to be the Corporate Strategy) and Medium Term Financial Plan. These documents outline the principal objectives for the Council and represent the key planning documents, from which a number of additional plans are developed in support of them. These include the Directorate and Business / Service Unit Plans, the Asset Management Plan and Capital Programme.

13. **The Corporate Strategy** (replacing the current Borough Strategic Plan) is currently being developed, and will define what difference the council aims to make to residents and how these outcomes will be measured and reported. It will link in with and will reinforce the balanced scorecard, the Sustainable Community Strategy, directorate plans and services plans. A vision, mission and key strategic areas will be identified and clear links to other strategies will be identified. The Corporate Strategy is due to be published in August 2009.
14. **The Community Strategy** (soon to be the Sustainable Community Strategy) is a statutory document which was formally adopted by the council following the implementation of the Sustainable Communities Act 2007. It presents the overarching plan for promoting and improving the well-being of a local area and represents the long-term vision for the council drawing together the economic, environmental and social aspirations, priorities and needs of the local area. Currently, the refresh of the Strategy is being undertaken through consultation with local residents and businesses, together with discussions held with partners, stakeholders and the public. It is anticipated that this will have been completed by late Autumn 2009.
15. **The Medium Term Financial Strategy** outlines the principal objectives for the Council and represents the key finance planning document for the Council, including the capital programme and the level of reserves and balances.
16. The objectives outlined within these strategies and plans are translated into more specific aims and objectives in service delivery plans, which each Council service is required to prepare annually. These also incorporate areas identified under the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).
17. Performance against these objectives is monitored by individual services and is formally reviewed within each Directorate and corporately to ensure that the Council's objectives are being met.
18. During 2008/09, a Balanced Scorecard system was introduced which has enabled services within each directorate to identify and monitor performance measures and targets for each of the following strategic objectives – Residents First, Delivering Together, Value for Money and Equipping Ourselves for the Future. These are reported by Service Heads to the Chief Executive on a monthly basis in order to identify emerging trends or areas requiring attention. The Balanced Scorecard is to be further developed, to establish an effective performance management system and a proposed action plan is in place which will be regularly monitored for progress. The outcome will be a Scorecard which reflects not only Unit performance but themes across RBWM, alongside a performance management process which will identify and implement actions to improve areas of poor performance and ultimately improve residents' experiences when accessing / receiving council services.
19. Regular satisfaction surveys and a formal complaints procedure allow the Council to gauge customer satisfaction with regard to the effectiveness of service delivery and there are set targets for responding to all complaints received, thereby ensuring accountability.

20. In addition, there are numerous partnerships that feed into the Community Partnership within the Windsor and Maidenhead areas. The Partnership comprises membership of a wide range of organisations across the Borough and works to improve the quality of life for people who live, work or visit the area.
21. The Council has a performance management framework with regular reporting to senior management and has implemented a more robust staff appraisal process providing links from the corporate objectives of the Council and Annual Service Delivery Plans.
22. Performance Indicators, set at a national and local level and targets are agreed for the coming year. Performance against targets is monitored on a varying monthly, quarterly or annual basis by managers and Corporate or Senior Management Team and the Audit and Performance Review Panel. In addition, each year, the Audit and Performance Review Panel considers three service area reviews in order that service standards are maintained and corrective action can be taken.

Core Principle 2: Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles

23. The Council has adopted a Constitution, which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the agreed procedures, which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. The Constitution is updated when applicable, to reflect any organisational changes.
24. The main decision-making Committee is the Cabinet, together with other specialist panels including Development Control, Licensing and various others, which are responsible for all matters defined by law and operate within the budget and policy framework approved annually by full Council. The role of the Cabinet is to develop policies and services within the framework of the Corporate Strategy and Community Strategy and other Council policies.
25. Policy and decision-making are facilitated by a clear framework of delegation set out in the Council's Constitution, with clear details of delegated authorities to officers.
26. Council and Cabinet meet in public and there is an agreed Forward Plan that relates to all proposed decisions to be taken by Cabinet in the forthcoming 4 month period. All reports are reviewed for legal and financial implications, together with risk, diversity & equality, sustainable development and planning considerations, prior to being presented to Members of the Council for formal decision-making.
27. Decisions are made by Cabinet, rather than being delegated to individual Cabinet Members and are made in an open Cabinet environment, which enables a control to be maintained over decisions made. The Forward Plan contains details of key decisions to be made by the Cabinet. Members of the public can present petitions and address Cabinet on areas of concern.

28. The Corporate and Senior Management Teams meet weekly and provide the strategic direction of the Council in delivering the requirements of the Members. They also consider other internal control issues, including risk management, performance management, efficiency, value for money and financial management.
29. In addition, there is a budget and policy framework including detailed Finance Rules, which are monitored and reviewed by the Head of Finance and the Monitoring Officer.

Core Principle 3: Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour

30. The behaviour of Officers and Members is regulated through separate Codes of Conduct, which have been formally approved and adopted. The Code of Conduct for Members is supplemented by guidance from the National Standards Board and the Council has established a Standards Committee.
31. In addition to a Code of Conduct outlining behaviour for Officers, the Head of Paid Services, Head of Finance (as Section 151 Officer) and Monitoring Officer have specified roles within the Constitution to ensure reports prepared for Member decision comply with the budget and policy framework and are lawful.
32. Each Member receives copies of the meeting Agendas in advance, as they are required to declare any interests at the outset of the meeting. In addition, Members are encouraged to undertake any training relevant to their area of decision-making.
33. Officers are also required to declare any conflicts of interest that arise as part of their day-to-day duties and procedures are also in place for both officers and Members to declare gifts and hospitality received and offered.
34. Internal and External Audit work together to review and provide annual opinions of the control framework, governance arrangements and the validity of the annual accounts. The Internal Audit Section operates to standards set out in the '*Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK 2006*'.
35. The Council has policies to safeguard both itself and its staff when making decisions. An Anti-Fraud & Anti-Corruption Strategy and Raising Concerns at Work (Whistleblowing) Policy are in place and have been communicated to all staff, partners and contractors. Both Policies provide clear reporting channels and are reviewed on an annual basis.
36. The financial management of the Council is conducted in accordance with the Contract and Finance Rules set out within the Constitution. The Council has designated the Head of Finance as Chief Financial Officer, in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

37. The Medium Term Financial Strategy governs the overall financial arrangements and in determining the revenue and capital financial framework, a number of factors are taken into account including the national context, the distribution of local government funding from central government along with other local and external funding sources.
38. This is supported by budget setting and monitoring arrangements and the detailed Finance Rules. All Directorates are required to monitor their budgets on a monthly basis, in consultation with the Corporate Finance Section and are accountable to Members for their budgets.
39. The Council has strict rules on financial reporting, with revenue expenditure projections monitored and reported to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Capital expenditure is monitored monthly and there is variation reporting as part of the monthly monitoring reports to Cabinet and there is reporting to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The "Prioritisation Model" is used to evaluate all new proposals for capital and revenue projects put forward for incorporation into spending plans. The results of this Model are presented to the Prioritisation Sub-Committee (of Cabinet), which must approve all schemes incorporated into formal spending plans. This effectively ensures a close scrutiny of capital projects by both officers and Members and also ensures that only projects that contribute to corporate objectives are progressed beyond the embryonic stage.
40. A service planning process is in place that feeds into the budget setting system and Service Managers are required to prepare Service Delivery Plans on an annual basis.
41. The Council manages its investments within the guidelines of its Treasury Management Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy, which are approved by Members on an annual basis.

Core Principle 4: Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk

42. The Council has several Panels, which carry out regulatory or scrutiny functions.
43. Four Overview and Scrutiny Panels are formally responsible for developing and reviewing policy, holding the decision-makers to account and also reviewing the performance of the Council and Executive Committees. In 2009/10 there will be an additional Overview and Scrutiny Panel for Crime and Disorder introduced.
44. The Council's Audit and Performance Review Panel provides the core functions of an Audit Committee, as identified in the CIPFA publication "*Audit Committees – Practical Guidance for Local Authorities*". The Panel has specific responsibility for scrutinising the Statement of Accounts, Risk Management, Internal and External Audit arrangements, Governance arrangements, the Annual Governance Statement and Performance Management. The Panel receives regular update reports in each of these areas.

45. In addition to the above, there are also Regulatory Panels, who are remitted to take certain decisions delegated from the Full Council. In general, these comprise planning and licensing decisions.
46. The Council has developed a Corporate Risk Management Strategy, which has been approved by Cabinet, is updated annually and is designed to identify, prioritise and manage the risks that exist in order to ensure the Council achieves its aims and objectives.
47. The strategic and operational risks that have been identified have been prioritised and a Corporate Risk Register has been developed. The key risks identified and treatment measures have been assigned to a Service Manager, who is responsible for developing Treatment Measures to combat the risk and a Lead Member is assigned to each risk. Strategic and operational risks are subject to a regular review process within Directorate Management Teams.
48. Risks continue to be reviewed to reflect the Council's risk profile and all reports to Cabinet are required to identify 'options' and the risks associated with each proposal. The method of reporting these has been further enhanced during 2008/09. Ensuring that Risk Assessments form part of the Council's 'business as usual' remains a key initiative and all Outcome Improvement Plans are subject to risk assessment. During 2008/09, the Risk Management and Insurance Manager regularly attended Corporate Management Team meetings, whose remit is to assist in further embedding risk management throughout the Council.

Core Principle 5: Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective

49. The Council aims to ensure that it maintains the high standard of its staff and is working towards being re-accredited under the Investors in People Standard. This is a quality framework, which ensures that the Council's employees have the right knowledge, skills and motivation to work effectively. The Council also uses external staff surveys, such as The Times "Best Council to work for" to assist in assessing corporate health.
50. All Council services are delivered by trained and experienced officers. Job Descriptions and Person Specifications have been drawn up for all posts to ensure that the best candidates are appointed into each position.
51. Officers employed by the Council are required to receive an annual appraisal, at which performance is measured against set objectives. Training needs are also identified as part of this process and are addressed via the Human Resources Unit and/or individual services, as appropriate.
52. The Chief Executive, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council hold regular meetings to discuss any emerging issues and there are meetings with Strategic Directors, Head of Policy and Performance and/or Head of Planning and Development, as required. Upon being elected, all Councillors are required to sign a Declaration of Acceptance of Office, in which they formally accept the role of Councillor and indicate their willingness to abide by the Code of

Conduct. This form is countersigned by the Chief Executive. A series of induction sessions, led by the Chief Executive and senior officers are made available to all Councillors in the period after an election. The Chief Executive meets the S151 and Monitoring Officers on a weekly basis.

53. Training is offered to Members throughout their term of office. As well as an initial 'general' induction, training is also offered around their individual portfolios. For example, all members have received training on Risk Management in the past 2 years and during 2008/09, examples include training given on Transforming Social Care, Trading Standards and Community Partnerships.

Core Principle 6: Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability

54. The Council recognises that communication with all stakeholders plays a fundamental role in the successful delivery of high quality, cost effective services.
55. The Council is constantly striving to improve its communications performance, to ensure continuous improvement and to ensure that the authority as a whole is open and accessible to the community, service users and staff. In particular, the Council has:
- sent a quarterly Around the Royal Borough newsletter to all residents in the Borough.
 - invested in new technology to ensure that services are available electronically, e.g. the RBWM website has been enhanced to provide Building Control case information, 'My Alerts' subscription service for planning applications and other map base information, 'real time' bus information service, parking contravention payments and appeals, school admissions and green waste orders and payments.
 - Customer Service Centres in Maidenhead and Windsor that enable queries to be answered and problems solved promptly at the initial point of contact.
56. The Council continues to listen to feedback from the local community. It has a Communications Strategy in place, which has been endorsed by Members and the Strategy has been developed with the input of staff, Members and other key stakeholders.
57. Service user surveys are completed across numerous service provisions, a Viewpoint Panel survey of residents is completed and residents' comments are invited from surveys in the newsletter Around the Royal Borough. There is a sound system for managing complaints and these are reported corporately.
58. All Council meetings are open to the public, except where personal or confidential matters are discussed. All agendas and minutes are placed on-line, along with the Council's policies and strategies. These items are also available by directly contacting the Council, should a stakeholder be unable to

access it electronically. The Council recently began to publish all expenditure over £500 on its website.

59. The Council's programme for securing continuous improvement in its services is set out in the Corporate Strategy, the Forward Plan and the Medium Term Financial Plan. Actions for improvement are drawn from a variety of sources including the CAA, the Council's internal reviews, scrutiny reviews, external inspections across all Directorates, issues arising from performance management, consultation exercises and service improvements identified by the Council's complaints and comments procedure.
60. There is a Community Partnership, which has adopted the Council's Community Strategy, and this sets out the 4 Ambition Groups and their standard outcomes:

Ambition Groups:	Standard Outcomes:
1. Supporting Children and Young People	1. Be Healthy
2. Supporting Adults and Older People	2. Stay safe
3. Safer and Stronger Communities	3. Enjoy and Achieve
4. A Thriving, Cleaner, Greener Borough	4. Make a positive contribution
	5. Economic well being

61. The Community Strategy was created following a significant consultation process with the local communities, ensuring that the views of all areas of the borough were taken into account. The objectives (detailed above) were identified and more specific targets set. Outputs against these objectives are measured and formally reported to stakeholders through the Community Partnership.
62. There are terms of reference set up for key partnerships which ensure that all members of the partnership act lawfully throughout the decision making process. Key partnerships include the Community Safety Partnership, Children & Young People Strategic Partnership, separate Maidenhead and Windsor Town Centre Partnerships, Youth Offending Team, Partnership Boards for Learning Disability, Mental Health, Carers and Older People, the Children's Fund Partnership and 14-19 Strategic Partnership.

Review of Effectiveness

63. The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework, including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the Strategic Directors, Head of Policy and Performance and Head of Planning and Development within the Council (who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment), Directorate Self Assessments against the CIPFA/SOLACE Governance Framework, the Head of Audit and Review's annual and interim reports, together with comments made by the External Auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

64. This Statement outlines the processes that have been applied to maintain and review the effectiveness of the governance framework, in particular, those in relation to:

- The Council
- The Cabinet
- Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer
- Overview and Scrutiny Panels
- Audit and Performance Review Panel
- Corporate and Senior Management Teams
- Directorate Management Teams and Heads of Service
- Performance Management and Development Team
- Internal Audit
- External Audit and Inspection

The Council

65. Full Council met 7 times during 2008/09 and works within the requirements of the Council's Constitution, which sets out the way in which its Committees and Panels and Officers conduct their business and the Scheme of Delegation. At these meetings, they appoint Members to Committees, Panels and Forums, consider and approve recommendations from Cabinet; reports from Overview and Scrutiny Panels and the Standards Committee. They also considered and approved the annual budget.

The Cabinet

66. The Council has one Executive Committee, Cabinet, that approves all policies and reports under each directorate. Most decisions are resolved by Cabinet but there are some policies which do require Council approval.

67. Cabinet comprises the Leader and 8 Cabinet Members and during 2008/09, they considered and approved: -

- The Medium Term Financial Strategy; the Annual Revenue Budget; regular budget monitoring reports; the Capital Programme, the annual Fees and Charges Report, the Risk Management Strategy and Asset Management Plan.
 - The Community Safety Partnership Plan; the School Travel Strategy, the LAAs submission to GOSE and the Carbon Management Programme Strategy.
 - The initial/original Corporate Governance Policy and Local Code of Corporate Governance.
 - Audit Commission Audit and Inspection Letter 2008.
- Standards Committee and Monitoring Officer**

68. The Standards Committee reviews any complaints regarding Members. Members themselves or a member of the public can report these. During 2008/09, the Committee met biannually.
69. In 2008/09, the Standards Committee has not been required to deal with any complaints that have been made against Members. These would have been referred to them by the Standards Board for England, which ensures that high standards of conduct are maintained.
70. The Senior Solicitor (Education and Legal) is currently designated as Monitoring Officer, under the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, to ensure compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations. After consulting with the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) and the Chief Financial Officer (Head of Finance), the Monitoring Officer will report to the full Council should they consider that any proposal, decision or omission would give rise to unlawfulness or mal-administration.

Overview and Scrutiny Panels

71. The Council has 4 Overview and Scrutiny Panels (Adult Services & Health, Children's' Services & Leisure, Corporate Services and Planning & Environment) and their main role is to scrutinise decisions before they are presented to Cabinet, holding the decision makers to account and being consulted by Cabinet regarding the development of policies. They also have responsibility for reviewing the performance of the Council, its committees and panels and for reviewing specific issues in depth, taking evidence from internal and external sources, before making recommendations to Cabinet.
72. During 2008/09 examples of specific issues reviewed included concessionary fares, community consultation strategy, school funding consultation, cultural heritage strategy and parking strategies. Service Managers are also requested to attend meetings to explain performance within their service.
73. Amendments were made to the titles and remit of the Scrutiny Panels to better reflect the new Council structure and Portfolios of Cabinet Members. Panels were given greater flexibility as to which reports due to be submitted to Cabinet should come forward to the Panels for consideration and the role of the Panels was enhanced following the introduction of the Councillor Call for Action.

Audit and Performance Review Panel

74. Internal and External Audit, as well as the Risk and Insurance Manager and the Head of Policy and Performance report to the Audit and Performance Review Panel, which reviews their effectiveness and is empowered to escalate matters to Cabinet and Full Council. The Panel receives the External Auditor's annual letter, relevant reports and the reports to those charged with governance. It also approves the Council's Annual Internal Audit Plan and receives Interim and Annual Internal Audit progress reports summarising internal audit activity and providing assurances over the Council's internal control and governance framework and on the effectiveness of the Council's system of internal audit. Furthermore, the Panel receives regular reports on risk management, updating

Members on the work undertaken by the Risk Management Team and approving key documents including the Risk Management Strategy and the Corporate Risk Register. This has enabled the Panel to be satisfied that there is continued progress to embed Risk Management throughout the authority and that the Council is making progress to mitigate the key risks. There is reporting of performance statistics to the Panel, based on national and local indicators, and there is close monitoring and scrutiny of overall and variations in performance. In 2008/09, the Panel also undertook three service reviews.

Chief Executive and Services Management Teams

75. Chief Executive and Services Management Teams met weekly during the latter half of 2008/09 and they reviewed reports prior to them being presented to Members, as well as discussing key current issues. Prior to this, the former Strategic and Operational Directors' Groups undertook this function.

Directorate Management Teams and Heads of Service

76. Directorate Management Teams met weekly during 2008/09 and reviewed governance arrangements within their directorates, including business and service planning, financial management, performance management and risk management.
77. The Heads of Service, through their Directorate Management Teams, formally reviewed their governance arrangements against the CIPFA / SOLACE Framework "*Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*", using a self assessment process to identify areas still needing to be addressed. Action Plans have been prepared and the Strategic Directors / Head of Policy and Performance and Head of Planning have signed off annual Directorate Governance Statements confirming that the actions will be implemented within an agreed timeframe. This has also fed into the Balanced Scorecard process and the information from each has informed the content of this Annual Governance Statement.

Policy and Performance Team

78. The Policy and Performance Team continue to oversee the key governance agenda areas including:-
- Development of the Sustainable Community Strategy, Corporate Strategy, and the council's strategy framework including engagement and consultation.
 - Management of the council's communication function.
 - The coordination and monitoring of the Local Area Agreements.
 - Management of the Community Partnership.
 - The coordination and preparation of CAA and other government inspections across the council.
 - Coordination and development of the council's performance management framework, particularly around balanced scorecards.
 - Coordination of the complaints procedure including monitoring performance and training officers.

- Providing Member support and coordinate Member training.
- Coordination of Full Council, Cabinet, Regulatory and Scrutiny Panel meetings.
- Coordination of the Forward Plan of meetings.
- Coordination of the council project management framework.

Internal Audit

79. The role of internal audit is to review the internal control framework that governs the operations of the Council and, in so doing, provide an independent opinion to both management and Members of the authority on the robustness of the Council's internal control and governance environment.
80. The Council maintains an Internal Audit Section, which operates within the standards set out in the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the UK, as required by the Accounts & Audit Regulation 2006. Internal Audit within the Council is an independent appraisal function for the review and evaluation of the Authority's financial, corporate and other systems of control. The Service is delivered by the Audit and Review Unit. It is managed by the Head of Audit and Review, who reports to the Head of Finance and has a reporting line to the Chair of the Audit and Performance Review Panel. There is the facility for reporting to the Chief Executive or Lead Member for Finance directly on any matters of concern, if required.
81. The Internal Audit function formulates a four-year risk based Strategic and Annual Audit Plan, which is approved by the Audit and Performance Review Panel, who also monitor the progress against the Plan. The Audit Plan focuses largely on internal controls and includes an annual audit of Corporate Governance and Risk Management. The Head of Audit and Review produces an annual report at year-end and an interim report at half year for the Audit and Performance Review Panel that highlight activities and any areas of significant concern in respect of internal control.

External Audit and Inspections

82. The External Auditor's review of the Annual Governance Statement will be directed at;
- Considering the completeness of the disclosures in the governance statement and whether it complies with proper practice as specified by CIPFA/SOLACE; and
 - Identifying any inconsistencies between the disclosures and the information that the auditors are aware of from their work on the financial statements, their use of resources assessments and other work.
83. There is no requirement to issue an audit opinion on the governance statement. Where external auditors form the view that the governance statement does not accurately reflect the position of the Council, they should encourage the Council to amend the disclosures accordingly. Where external auditors are unable to secure the necessary amendments, they may wish to consider the addition of

an 'Other Matter' paragraph to the auditors' report after the opinion on the financial statements.

Other Assurance Mechanisms

84. The Audit Commission carried out a Comprehensive Performance Assessment Inspection of the Council during 2008/9. The Council was assessed as "good and improving well", attaining a score of 3 (out of 4). This is an improvement on the 2007 assessment, which judged the Council as 'improving adequately'. Actions to be addressed have been included within an Action Plan and are reviewed by the Corporate Management team (CMT).
85. As part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment framework the Council has been assessed twice under the 'use of resources' category. The outcome of this assessment on both occasions was to award a score of 3 (out of 4). Areas for improvement were again identified within the process and included within the Council's Strategic Improvement Plan.
86. We have been advised on the implications of the results of the self-assessment review of the effectiveness of the governance framework that was completed by the Strategic Directors, Head of Policy and Performance, Head of Planning and Development and the Audit and Performance Review Panel. Together with the work of Internal and External Audit, a plan to address weaknesses and ensure continuous improvement of the system has been put in place.

Significant Governance Issues

87. The significant governance issues identified during 2008/09 as a result of a review of arrangements are set out in an Outcome Improvement Plan (Table 1) attached.
88. The outstanding significant governance issues identified from the 2007/08 review of the Council's governance arrangements are also set out in the Outcome Improvement Plan (Table 1).
89. We propose over the coming year to take steps to address matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified in our review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our next annual review.

Signed:

Ian Trenholm
Chief Executive

Cllr D. Burbage
Leader of the Council

Date:

Date:

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
1	Services will be aware of how their performance compares against other Local Authorities / service providers to inform future service provision.	Benchmarking will be directed through Corporate Performance Management for overall comparison purposes, with Heads of Service implementing the specific improvements identified through their service benchmarking.	PWC "Benchmarking Club" - to present comparative data end of September 2009 and thereafter.	Head of Policy and Performance	March 2010
2	Services will ensure that they provide Value for Money in all their operations.	Within each service, it will be identified how the assessment of Value for Money can be incorporated at the heart of service initiatives as well as in all day to day operations (with reference also to the Lean Systems Thinking Programme) and how this will be measured and monitored by management.	Adult and Community - Ongoing. Considering VfM as part of UNIPART lean system approach to efficiencies. Fundamental Service Review report. Leisure Audit report and Assessment Care Management in Adult Social Care. Each has Programme Board to measure and monitor and reports to DMT.	Strategic Directors / Head of Policy and Performance / Head of Planning and Development	March 2010

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
2 (contd)			<p>Children's Services - Controls to be introduced by December 2009 to monitor the costs of services provided by external School Improvement Partners. Review of Out of Borough placements (residential schools for children) has been completed and will go to Schools Forum in September. 3-year contract for Home to School Transport has been re-tendered, resulting in £200k reduction in cost of contract. Proposals being developed to generate income from schools or other local authorities by selling services. Target for income from traded services with schools set at £30k in Year 1.</p>	Strategic Directors / Head of Policy and Performance / Head of Planning and Development	March 2010
2 (contd)			<p>Environment - The costs of services are measured and monitored at Unit level with a formal review fortnightly at DMT. Term Contracts and Framework Contracts have been established and individual projects are market tested to ensure value for money.</p>	Strategic Directors / Head of Policy and Performance / Head of Planning and Development	March 2010

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
2 (contd)			<p>Planning and Development - New protocol in Planning and Development Unit for Contract Management involving assessing and tracking VfM, in place July 2009 - as part of identified in our Directorate Action Plan. Signed off at PDMT July 2009. This ties in with Corporate Contract management guide of the same month. Internal services tracked for VfM via customer satisfaction returns and income receipts.</p>	Strategic Directors / Head of Policy and Performance / Head of Planning and Development	March 2010
2 (contd)			<p>Policy and Performance - New, more efficient systems for managing performance data are to be introduced. There will be benchmarking of communication services, e.g. production costs of residents' ATRB Magazine. Systems for providing more efficient access to committee reports are being investigated</p>	Strategic Directors / Head of Policy and Performance / Head of Planning and Development	March 2010

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
2 (contd)			Resources - Services have been baseline and benchmarked as part of savings proposals and restructures on target.	Strategic Directors / Head of Policy and Performance / Head of Planning and Development	March 2010
3	Officers will be aware of the Council's overall vision, priorities and values.	Communication of the Council's objectives and vision to all officers will be enhanced.	Work is in progress to produce a new Corporate Plan alongside vision/values. Intent is to produce as an integrated piece of work that is widely recognised by employees.	Chief Executive	March 2010
4	Management and officers will be aware of the role of Statutory Officers and how and when their advice should be sought.	The role of the Council's Statutory Officers and when their advice should be sought by officers or management will be communicated and be more easily accessible.	An item is to be posted on 'Talking Point' setting out the roles of the Statutory Officers: Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer, S151 Officer, Chief Education Officer, Director of Social Services (Adult Services only), Director of Children's Services and other Directors. The new Head of Legal, as Monitoring Officer, will be featured in Chatback.	Statutory Officers	July 2009

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
5	Management and officers will have the knowledge, skills and tools to fulfil their roles.	All staff will undertake an annual appraisal.	Appraisal process documentation is on Hyperwave. Briefing sessions for managers have and are taking place covering appraisal format, objective setting, use of competancies and staff development options. In addition, monthly Directorate reporting on the effectiveness of appraisals will commence in September (as part of Balanced Scorecard feedback) starting with the Resources Directorate.	Head of Human Resources	August 2009

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
6	Management and officers will be aware of the priorities in the performance of their role.	Priorities arising from each officers' appraisal will be documented and monitored.	<p>Adult and Community - Appraisals reflect these priorities - to be further reviewed in December 2009.</p> <p>Children's Services and Environment - All appraisals completed or scheduled. Priorities identified and documented, and monitored via 1:1s.</p> <p>Human Resources - Regular one to one's take place and half yearly review of appraisals.</p> <p>Planning and Development - Appraisal action and training informs one to ones that happen at least on a monthly basis. Review of training opportunities and placing of staff at PDMT via Talking Point. Training tracked via internal spreadsheet and recorded as part of Balanced Scorecard.</p> <p>Policy and Performance - Achieved and on-going.</p> <p>Resources - Completed.</p>	Heads of Service	August 2009

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
7	Completed Equality Impact Assessments will ensure that services have taken into consideration all customers / residents in carrying out their functions and introducing policies.	Equality Impact Assessments will support all Service Plans.	<p>Adult and Community - Housing completed. Libraries, Heritage projects completed. FSR in Adult Social Care - review to be done as part of Project Plan. Adult Social Care - ongoing.</p> <p>Children's Services and Environment Programme in place for Service Equality Impact Assessments. Reps from Children's Services and Environment attended the meeting with Consultants engaged to assess Borough's readiness for Level 2/3, and their recommendations will be built into each Directorates' work programme.</p> <p>Planning and Development - EQIAs in place for overall PDMT Business Plan and some of the individual Service Plans. Held in Hyperwave. Need to conclude all and carry out actions.</p> <p>Policy and Performance - This is part of a wider Equalities Audit being undertaken by North Harbour Consulting - Reporting back September 2009.</p> <p>Resources Completed and will be refreshed as part of Service Plans.</p>	Strategic Directors / Head of Policy and Performance/ Head of Planning and Development	March 2010

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
8	All projects over £15k will have an Equality Impact Assessment, in line with Corporate procedures.	Relevant officers will verify / be reminded that all projects over £15k should have an Equality Impact Assessment.	This is part of a wider Equalities Audit being undertaken by North Harbour Consulting - Reporting back September 2009 and is included as part of a current Internal Audit Review of Project Management.	Head of Policy and Performance	July 2009

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
9	All services will have an up to date Health and Safety Plan.	All services will review their Health and Safety Plan to ensure that it is up to date.	<p>Adult and Community - Reviewing all Plans with Health & Safety officer in September 2009.</p> <p>Children's Services - To reflect the new structure, we will review and update the previous Health and Safety Plans / Risk Assessments for all services within Children's Services by March 2010.</p> <p>Environment - Complete. Planning and Development - Reviewed at PDMT through named officer who reports to H&S Committee. Unit H&S Plan endorsed and monitored by PDMT (Standing Item). Work taking place on Lone Working specific for Unit.</p> <p>Policy and Performance - Arrangements are in place to update risk assessments and these will form the basis for the Health and Safety Plan. Resources - Plans have been reviewed, H&S meeting for Resources set up quarterly to monitor Plan and H&S in Directorate.</p>	Strategic Directors / Head of Policy and Performance / Head of Planning and Development	August 2009

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
10	Health and Safety training requirements will be identified.	All services will review their Health and Safety training requirements on an annual basis.	<p>Adult and Community - Training underway and to be reviewed in September 2009 for the next year.</p> <p>Children's Services - Health and Safety training needs will be identified at DMT in September and arrangements put in place for annual review thereafter.</p> <p>Environment - Complete and ongoing review.</p> <p>Planning and Development - Done through PDMT. Recent review identified need for First Aiders and some additional training in 'on-site' H&S training. This is being implemented over the next 2 months. Training captured as part of overall PDMT training monitoring.</p> <p>Policy and Performance - Reviewed as part of the training requirements in appraisal or part of 1-2-1s.</p> <p>Resources - Part of Appraisals and PDP.</p>	Heads of Service	March 2010

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
11	All services will be supported by a Business Continuity Plan.	Each service will put in place a completed and up to date Business Continuity Plan.	<p>Adult and Community - Each service area has reviewed and updated to take account of Swine Flu.</p> <p>Children's Services - Business Continuity initial screenings completed by 15 teams in connection with pandemic flu. Gap analysis will be prepared re: remaining services for DMT discussion.</p> <p>Environment - Business Continuity Plans reviewed at SMT and DMT in June/July 2009 with corporate and service risks identified and mitigation measures being put in place.</p> <p>Planning and Development - PDMT all trained in and using JCAD to manage risks and ensure service continuity. All units within Directorate now have entries and manage risk and continuity through this mechanism. Building Control identified as critical service and individual BC Plan to ensure that Dangerous Structures can be dealt with.</p> <p>Policy and Performance - Priorities and continuity actions have been</p>	Strategic Directors / Head of Policy and Performance / Head of Planning and Development	October 2009

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
12	Assets will be properly safeguarded.	All services will ensure that assets are recorded and these should be checked on an annual basis.	<p>Adult and Community - Inventories reviewed on annual basis. Next review December 2009. Children's Services - Inventory of assets will be in place by March 2010. Annual review mechanism will be established. Environment - Review underway. Human Resources - Yearly checks on IT equipment undertaken with ICT. Planning and Development - Primary assets are IT and these are managed through IT. Policy and Performance - IT assets only, which should be on ICT asset records. Resources - Primary assets are IT and these are managed through IT.</p>	Heads of Service	March 2010
13	The Balanced Scorecard will reflect Unit performance and themes across RBWM and will help identify actions required in relation to areas of poor performance, to improve council services to residents.	Progress will be monitored in implementing the Action Plan in place to develop the Balanced Scorecard.	Report on BSC development approved by CMT at their meeting on 5th August. Progress ongoing.	Head of Policy and Performance	December 2009

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
14	Major Projects Reports will be accurate, up to date and effective to enable Members and residents to monitor and scrutinise the delivery of RBWM's Major Projects.	The Major Projects Report Action Plan will be implemented and progress monitored at future Overview and Scrutiny Panels.	The 3rd Major Projects Update report was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 11th August 2009. Further improvements to the report structure were identified, and 2 specific projects were scrutinised. Work against the Action Plan continues and will be reviewed at the next Project Managers Network meeting on the 27th August 2009. The next report is due to be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 6th October 2009.	Corporate Policy Officer / ICT / Project Managers	December 2009
15	There will be improved governance arrangements in place with regard to RBWM Audit, Procurement / Contracts and Efficiency.	Establish separate corporate review groups in the form of Audit, Procurement / Contracts and Efficiency Boards.	Terms of Reference prepared for the Boards and first are meetings to be arranged for September 2009.	Strategic Director of Resources	September 2009
OUTSTANDING GOVERNANCE ISSUES FROM 2007/08					
16	There will be a clearer definition of the Council's's vision and purpose (Linked to Members 07- 08 Action Plan - Action 1, 2 and 15).	The Corporate Strategy, which is currently being progressed, will be completed, incorporating explicit links with the Financial Strategy, performance management and other key Council strategies.	Corporate Strategy does exist. Production of Corporate Plan will resolve issues of clarity of vision / purpose.	Chief Executive / Leader	August 2009

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
17	The Council's vision for the local area will be up to date and will be effectively communicated. (Linked to Members 07-08 Action Plan - Action 1, 2 and 15).	The Council's Vision Statement will be revised and linked to the Corporate Strategy, to provide a clearer vision, purpose and direction.	As per 3. and 15.	Chief Executive / Leader	August 2009
18	Governance arrangements within the Council will directly reflect and be guided and influenced by the vision for the local area. (Linked to Members 07- 08 Action Plan - Action 1, 2 and 15).	Once the Council's Vision Statement is revised, governance arrangements will be assessed against this.	Actions at 3,15 and 16 need completion before this can concur.	Chief Executive / CMT	September 2009
19	Effective guidance will be provided for officers in the establishment and management of partnerships.	Recommendations agreed as part of the 2008/09 Internal Audit Review of the Governance of Partnerships constitute an effective protocol and implementation of these will be progressed.	Ongoing	Head of Policy and Performance	August 2009
20	The establishment and management of all Council partnerships will be consistent and delivered to the expected standards.	A Corporate partnerships management service will be set up on Hyperwave providing guidance, risk assessments and other protocols around partnerships, to be used by officers on a self service basis.	Ongoing	Head of Policy and Performance	August 2009

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
21	All relevant parties will be aware of the shared values of the Council, including leadership values, so that they promote effective governance and this can be applied: - in decision making - to develop positive and trusting relationships within the Council. (Linked to Members 07- 08 Action Plan - Action 7 and 15).	The Corporate Strategy, which is currently being progressed, will be completed to establish the vision, strategic themes and shared values.	As per actions 3,15,16 and 17.	Chief Executive / Leader	June 2009
22	A standard set of values will exist for partnerships to judge decision making and actions.	Recommendations agreed as part of the 2008/09 Internal Audit Review of the Governance of Partnerships incorporate partnership values and implementation of these will be progressed.	Ongoing	Head of Policy and Performance	August 2009
23	The public and service users will be aware of which types of issues they will be consulted on. (Linked to Members 07- 08 Action Plan - Action 20).	The Consultation Strategy, which is currently being developed, will establish broad guidelines for consultation exercises to be developed and managed.	Consultation approved by Cabinet in July 2009. Completed.	Chief Executive / CMT	October 2009

RBWM
Annual Governance Statement (AGS)
2008/09 Action Plan

TABLE 1

Action No.	Outcome that will be achieved by all services	Action Required	Progress to 14 August 2009	Responsible Officer	Target Date
24	The Risk Management framework and Corporate Risk Register continue to be embedded as part of the day to day management of RBWM.	a) Continue to develop the content and quality of the Corporate Risk Register. b) Provide on-going training to risk owners and managers so that risk management becomes embedded as 'business as usual' in day to day operations and management. c) Establish Performance Measures for each Service Area Key Risk by use of Balanced Scorecard references and any other useful Performance Indicators. d) Further use of risk management methodology to augment other business processes+D21, e.g. as used for Business Continuity Planning, data integrity management, Transforming Social Care, CDM regulations, etc.	Work ongoing. Particular emphasis has been placed on business continuity in light of current pandemic. Balanced Scorecards are being revised and use of more flexible performance management software is being actively investigated.	Chief Executive / CMT	October 2009



ROYAL BOROUGH OF WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The term Corporate Governance refers to *the system by which the Royal Borough directs and controls its functions and relates to the community it serves*. It is therefore, the totality of the policies, management systems, procedures, and structures that together, determine and control the way in which the Authority manages its business, formulates its strategies and objectives and sets about delivering its services to meet those objectives.
- 1.2 The basic principles of good corporate governance require the Authority to undertake its functions in a way that is completely open and inclusive of all sectors of the community; demonstrates the utmost integrity in all its dealings; and is fully accountable to the public it serves.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1 The policy of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is to incorporate the principles of Corporate Governance into every dimension of its business to ensure that stakeholders can have confidence in the decision-making and management processes of the Authority, and in the conduct and professionalism of its members, officers, partners and other agents in delivering services. To this end, the Authority will report annually on its intentions, performance and financial position, as well as on the arrangements in place to ensure good governance is exercised.

3. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE OBJECTIVES

- 3.1 In order to meet the stated policy, the Corporate Governance objectives of the Authority will be
- i) To work both for and with the community in an open and effective manner, taking account of the views of all of our stakeholders, regularly reporting on our activities, performance and financial position, and maintaining the highest standards of integrity in all our dealings with the community.
 - ii) To ensure that Service Delivery Arrangements secure the continuous improvement of services and that agreed policies, priorities and decisions are implemented on time, in a manner consistent with the needs of users and in the most efficient and effective way.
 - iii) To maintain effective political and managerial structures and processes to govern decision-making, ensure the strategic management of the Authority, clarify member and officer roles and responsibilities and ensure proper scrutiny of all aspects of performance and effectiveness.
 - iv) To exercise the highest standards of care and control over the assets and resources available, ensuring that these are protected from the risk of loss, damage or misuse, are used in the most efficient, effective and economic way and deliver services in a way that represents the best Value for Money achievable.
 - v) To ensure that the highest standards of professionalism and integrity are maintained and that all those associated with the Authority demonstrate leadership and public service commitment in conducting the affairs of the authority in an open and accountable manner.

4. THE LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

- 4.1 In support of these objectives, the Authority has developed a Local Code of Corporate Governance that sets out in more detail, the key elements of the Authority's arrangements for ensuring that its policy objectives are met. The Code sets down a commitment to establish and maintain suitable systems and processes across six core principles of the Authority's business.
- 4.2 The operation of this Code is subject to regular monitoring and review, both internally and by external review agencies, the results of which will be considered by the Authority, and subsequently reported within the annual Statement of Accounts.

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LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

2009/10

Introduction

1. Governance is about how the Council ensures it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It comprises systems, processes, cultures and values by which the Council is directed and controlled and through which it accounts to, engages with and, where appropriate, leads the community.
2. CIPFA/SOLACE produced a new governance framework in 2007. It is an integrated system that brings together an underlying set of legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes. The governance framework produced by CIPFA/SOLACE remains a discretionary code and is offered to local authorities as good practice.
3. This Local Code of Corporate Governance sets out the framework for governance at the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and is based on the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework.

Policy Statement

4. In conducting its business, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead is fully committed to the key principles of good governance, as established by the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life (May 1995).

These key principles are:-

- A clear definition of the body's purpose and desired outcomes;
- Well defined functions and responsibilities;
- An appropriate corporate culture;
- Transparent decision making;
- A strong governance team;
- Real accountability to stakeholders.

5. The CIPFA/SOLACE framework for good governance adapts these core principles for the local authority context. As the CIPFA/SOLACE framework represents good practice, this Local Code of Corporate Governance is underpinned by the six core principles.

The Six Core Principles of Good Governance

6. The six core principles of good governance as recognised by the CIPFA/SOLACE framework that will be adopted by the Council are as follows:-

Core Principles of Good Governance	
1.	Focussing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community including citizens and service users and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.
2.	Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.
3.	Promoting the values of the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.

4.	Taking informed and transparent decisions that are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk.
5.	Developing the capacity and capability of members to be effective and ensuring that officers – including statutory officers – also have the capability and capacity to deliver effectively.
6.	Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust local public accountability.

Applying the Principles of Good Governance

7. To achieve good governance, the Council will seek to apply each of the six core principles, along with their supporting principles. Details of how this will be achieved are provided at **Appendix B(i) (Framework) and Appendix B(ii) (Principles of Good Governance)**.

Review the Council's Corporate Governance Arrangements

8. The Council takes its Corporate Governance arrangements seriously and, as a result, has put in place a rigorous process of reviewing the arrangements on a regular basis. The process of review is set out below:-

Directorate Management Teams and Heads of Service

9. Directorate Management Teams meet regularly and review governance arrangements within their directorates, including business and service planning, financial management, performance management and risk management.
10. The Heads of Service, through their Directorate Management Teams, formally review their governance arrangements against the CIPFA / SOLACE Framework "*Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*", using a self assessment process to identify areas needing to be addressed. Action Plans have been prepared and each Director is required to sign off an annual Directorate Governance Statement confirming that the actions will be implemented within an agreed timeframe. This also feeds into the Balanced Scorecard process and the information from both informs the content of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

Chief Executive's Management Team

11. The Chief Executive's Management Team (CMT) comprises the Chief Executive, Strategic Directors for all Services and Head of Policy and Performance and Head of Planning and Development. From a governance perspective, the role of the CMT is to review the Council's governance arrangements prior to them being reported to the Audit and Performance Review Panel.

Services Management Team

12. The Services Management Team comprises a number of representative Heads of Service from across the Council. SMT receive a quarterly report from the Head of Audit

and Review summarising the progress made by Directorate Management Teams on implementing actions from the governance self assessments.

The Audit and Performance Review Panel

13. The Audit and Performance Review Panel will review half yearly, the effectiveness of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and will, where necessary, make recommendations to the Council and Cabinet on any issues arising. The Audit and Performance Review Panel has the responsibility to:-

- review the annual report on corporate governance through the Annual Governance Statement and recommend to the Leader and Chief Executive for approval and publication with the annual Statement of Accounts.
- oversee a comprehensive, inclusive and risk management approach to the Annual Governance Statement process,
- monitor the effective development and operation of Corporate Governance in the Council,
- support the assurance in the Annual Governance Statement and;
- oversee the governance process to ensure that strategic risks are being reviewed at CMT and across each Directorate.

Cabinet

14. Cabinet has overall responsibility, and will be the main Member review, for the Council's governance arrangements. However, Cabinet has delegated authority to the Audit and Performance Review Panel to approve the Annual Governance Statement and annual revisions to the Council's Corporate Governance Policy and Local Code of Corporate Governance.

The Council

15. The Full Council has a responsibility to act upon the recommendations made by the Audit and Performance Review Panel, via the Cabinet, in relation to the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance. This will be subject to any such recommendations being made by Cabinet.

The Annual Governance Statement (AGS)

16. The preparation and publication of an integrated Annual Governance Statement, in accordance with the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework, subsumes the statutory requirement set out in Regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations (Amendment)(England) 2006 for the production of a Statement on Internal Control.

17. To comply with this requirement, the Council will produce an Annual Governance Statement in accordance with guidance provided by CIPFA/SOLACE. The process that the Council will apply in gathering the evidence necessary to produce the Annual Governance Statement as illustrated in Appendix A.

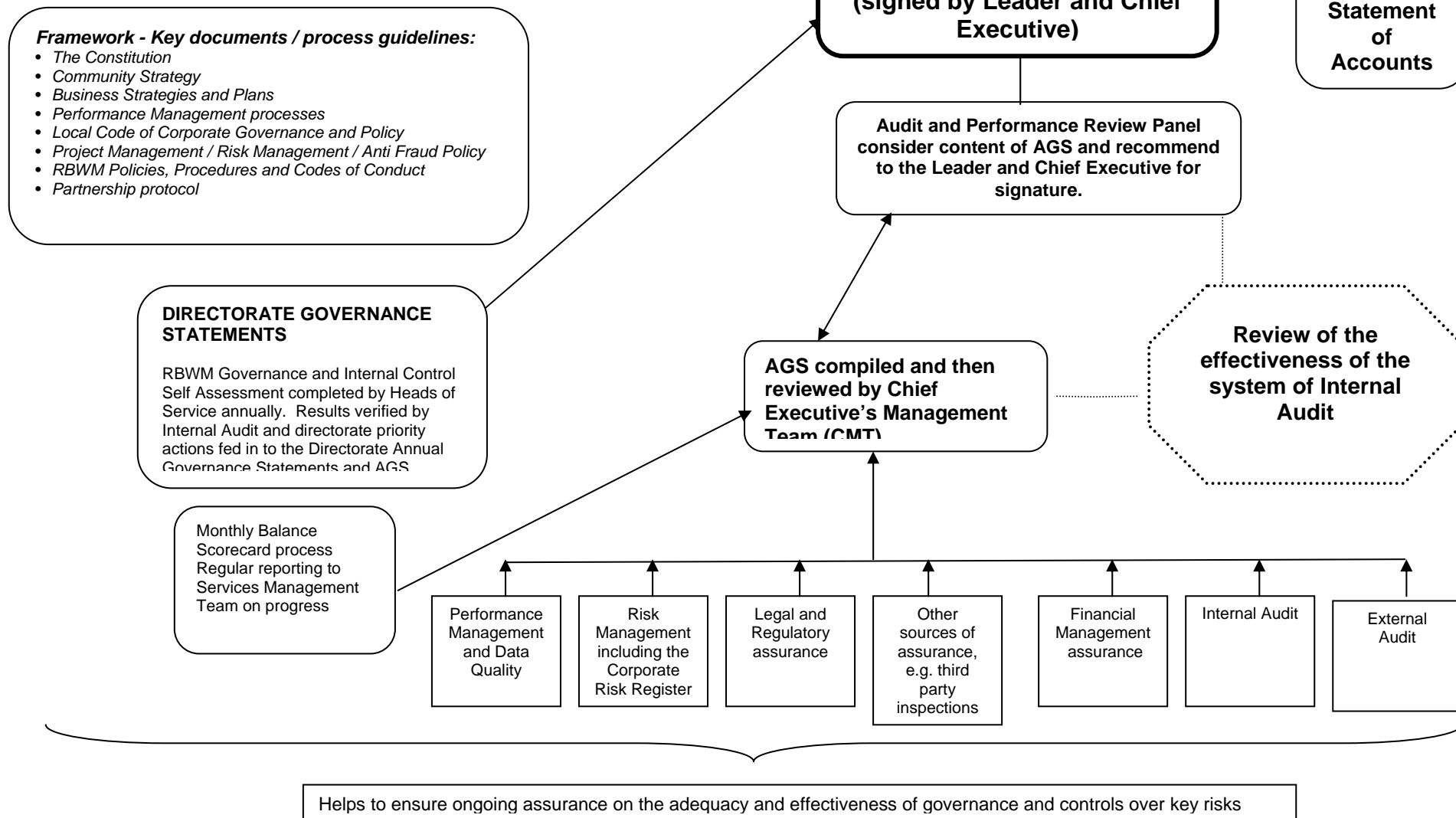
18. The Annual Governance Statement, a formal document setting out how the Council will comply with governance arrangements, is signed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

19.It is envisaged that Audit and Performance Review Panel will approve the Annual Governance Statement during June of each year and the Statement will be published with the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts.

20.This Local Code will be reviewed at least annually as part of the Annual Governance Statement process.

.../Appendix B(i)

**Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT (AGS) FRAMEWORK – 2008/09**



Applying the Principles of Good Governance

To achieve and maintain good governance, the Council will seek to apply each of the six core principles above, along with their supporting principles, in the following way, representing recommended best practice:

1. Focussing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community including citizens and service users and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.	
Supporting Principles	The Council will:-
Exercising strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the authority's purpose and vision and its intended outcome for citizens and service users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make a clear statement of the authority's purpose and vision and use it as a basis for corporate and service planning and shaping the community strategy and local area agreements. • publish an annual report on a timely basis to communicate the authority's activities and achievements, its financial position and performance.
Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service, whether directly or in partnership or by commissioning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decide how the quality of service for users is to be measured and ensure that the information needed to review service quality effectively and regularly is available. • when working in partnership, ensure that there is a common vision underpinning the work of the partnership that is understood and agreed by all partners. The vision should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. supported by clear and measurable objectives with targets and indicators; b. the drivers for deciding what services will be either provided or commissioned by the partnership and will be quality and cost. • put in place effective arrangements to deal with a failure in service delivery.
Ensuring that the authority makes best use of resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decide how value for money is to be measured and ensure that it has the information needed to review value for money and performance effectively.

2. Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles	
Supporting Principles	The Council will:-
<p>Ensuring effective leadership throughout the authority and being clear about executive and non executive functions and of the roles and responsibilities of the scrutiny function.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Council's executive committees and the members individually and the authority's approach towards putting this into practice. • set out a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Council's other committees and members and senior officers. • ensure that effective mechanisms exist to monitor service delivery. • ensure that effective management arrangements are in place at the top of the organisation.
<p>Ensuring that a constructive working relationship exists between authority members and officers and is carried out to a high standard.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • determine and maintain under annual review a Scheme of Delegation and reserve powers within the constitution including a formal schedule of those matters specifically reserves for collective decision of the authority, taking account of relevant legislation, and ensure that it is monitored and updated when required. • determine that the Chief Executive is responsible and accountable to the Council for all aspects of operational management. • develop protocols to ensure effective communication between members and officers in their respective roles. • develop protocols to ensure that the leader and chief executive negotiate their respective roles early in their relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained. • set out the terms and conditions for remuneration of members and officers and an effective structure for managing the process including an effective remuneration panel. • 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 records and accounts and for maintaining an effective system of internal financial control. • make a senior officer (usually the monitoring officer) responsible to the authority for ensuring that agreed procedures are followed and that all applicable statutes and regulations are complied with.

2. Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles	
Supporting Principles	The Council will:-
<p>Ensuring relationships between the authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop and maintain protocols to ensure effective communication between members and officers in their respective roles. • set out the terms and conditions for remuneration of members and officers and an effective structure for managing the process. • ensure that effective mechanisms exist to monitor service delivery. • ensure that its vision, strategic plans, priorities and targets are developed through robust mechanisms, and in consultation with the local community and other key stakeholders, and that they are clearly articulated and disseminated. • when working in partnership: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. ensure that there is clarity about the legal status of the partnership b. ensure that the roles and responsibilities of the partners are agreed so that there is effective leadership and accountability c. ensure that representatives or organisations make clear to all other partners the extent of their authority to bind their organisations to partner decisions.

3. Promoting the values of the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.	
Supporting Principles	The Council will:-
Ensuring authority Members and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that the authority’s leadership sets a tone for the organisation by creating a climate of openness, support and respect. • ensure that standards of conduct and personal behaviour expected of member and staff, of work between members and staff and between the authority, its partners and the community are defined and communicated through codes of conduct and protocols. • develop and adopt formal codes of conduct defining standards of personal behaviour. • put in place arrangements to ensure that members and staff 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.
Ensuring organisational values that are put into practice and are effective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop and maintain shared values including leadership values both for the Council and its staff reflecting public expectations about the conduct and behaviour of individuals and groups within and associated with the Council. • put in place arrangements to ensure that procedures and operations are designed in conformity with appropriate ethical standards, and to monitor their continuing compliance in practice. • develop and maintain an effective standards committee. • use the Council’s shared values to act as a guide for decision making and as a basis for developing positive and trusting relationships within the Council. • in pursuing partnerships, agree a set of values against which decision making and actions can be judged. Such values must be demonstrated by partners’ behaviour both individually and collectively.

4. Taking informed and transparent decisions that are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk.	
Supporting Principles	The Council will:-
<p>Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • develop and maintain open and effective mechanisms for documenting evidence for decisions and recording the criteria, rationale and considerations on which decisions are based. • put in place arrangements so that conflicts of interest on behalf of members and employees can be avoided and put in place appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice. • put in place arrangements for whistle-blowing to which staff and all those contracting with the authority have access. • put in place effective transparent and accessible arrangements for dealing with complaints. • 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 these functions. • develop and maintain an effective standards committee which lies at the heart of decision making and awareness raising on standards issues.
<p>Having good quality information, advice and support to ensure that services are delivered effectively and are what the community wants / needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that those making decisions are provided with information that is fit for the purpose – relevant, timely and gives clear explanations of technical issues and their implications. • ensure that professional advice on legal and financial matters is available and recorded well in advance of decision making and used appropriately when decisions have significant legal or financial implications.

4. Taking informed and transparent decisions that are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk	
Supporting Principles	The Council will:-
<p>Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that risk management is embedded into the culture of the Council, with members and managers at all levels recognising that risk management is part of their job. • ensure that effective arrangements for whistle-blowing are in place to which officers, staff and all those contracting with or appointed by the Council have access. • using their legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in their area. • actively recognise the limits of lawful activity placed on them by the ultra vires doctrine but also strive to utilise their powers to the full benefit of their communities. • observe all specific legislative requirements placed upon them, as well as the requirements of general law, and in particular to integrate the key principles of administrative law – rationality, legality and natural justice into their procedures and decision making. • when working in partnership, put in place protocols for working together which include a shared understanding of respective roles and responsibilities of each organisation. • when working in partnership, ensure that there are robust procedures for scrutinising decisions and behaviour and that these decisions and behaviour are compliant with any local authority rules/codes or comply with any rules/codes developed for the purpose of the partnership. • when working in partnership, ensure that partnership papers are easily accessible and meetings are held in public unless there are good reasons for confidentiality. <p>The partners must ensure that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the partnership receives good quality advice and support and information about the views of citizens and stakeholders, so that robust and well reasoned decisions are made. b. risk is managed at a corporate and operational level.

5. Developing the capacity and capability of members to be effective and ensuring that officers – including statutory officers – also have the capability and capacity to deliver effectively.

Supporting Principles	The Council will:-
<p>Making sure that Members and Officers have the skills, knowledge and resources they need to perform well in their roles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide induction programmes tailored to individual needs and opportunities for Members and Officers to update their knowledge on a regular basis. • 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>Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance as individuals and as a group.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assess the skills required by members and officers and make a commitment to develop those skills to enable roles to be carried out effectively. • 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. • ensure that effective arrangements are in place for reviewing the performance of the Cabinet as a whole and of individual Members and agreeing an action plan which might, for example, aim to address any training or development needs.
<p>Encouraging new talent for membership of the authority so that best use can be made of individual skills and resources in balancing continuity and renewal.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 authority. • ensure that career structures are in place for Members and Officers to encourage participation and development.

6. Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.	
Supporting Principles	The Council will:-
Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships and develop constructive accountability relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make clear to themselves, all staff and the community, to whom they are accountable and for what. • consider those institutional stakeholders to whom they are accountable and assess the effectiveness of the relationships and any changes required. • Produce an annual report on the activity of the scrutiny function.
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 authority, in partnership or by commissioning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish clear channels of communication with all sections of the community and other stakeholders and put in place monitoring arrangements to ensure that they operate effectively. • hold meetings in public unless there are good reasons for confidentiality. • put in place arrangements to enable the authority to engage with all sections of the community effectively. These arrangements should recognise that different sections of the community have different priorities and establish explicit processes for dealing with these competing demands. • establish a clear policy on the types of issues they will meaningfully consult or engage with the public and service users including a feedback mechanism for those consulted. • on an annual basis, publish a performance plan giving information on the authority's vision, strategy, plans and financial statements as well as information about its outcomes, achievements and the satisfaction of service users in the previous period. • ensure that the authority as a whole is open and accessible to the community, service users and its staff and ensure that it 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. • put in place effective systems to protect the rights of staff. Ensure that policies for whistle-blowing are accessible to staff and those contracting with the authority, and arrangements for the support of whistle blowers are in place.

6. Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability	
Supporting Principles	The Council will:-
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> when working in partnership, ensure that engagement and consultation undertaken by the partnership is planned with regard to methodology, target audience and required outcomes. Existing mechanisms and groups should be used where appropriate. In the work cycle of the partnership it must be clear and demonstrable to the public what has happened to any feedback and what has changed as a result.
Making the best use of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meet responsibility to staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop and maintain a clear policy on how staff and their representatives are consulted and involved in decision making.

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