Woking Borough Council

Local Code of Corporate Governance

Shaping the *future* of our borough

Introduction

Woking Borough Council recognises the need to ensure that its affairs are managed in a way which achieves the highest standards of corporate governance.

This Code sets out for members and officers the main principles of good governance for Woking Borough Council.

What is Corporate Governance?

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

Good governance is how the Council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values by which the Council is directed and controlled. Through effective governance the Council is accountable to, engages with and, where applicable, leads the community.

What is the Purpose of the Code?

This Code is intended to support political and officer leadership with developing and maintaining robust governance across the whole governance system.

The Code is the framework within which the Council is accountable to its users, stakeholders and the wider community. It sets out and describes the way in which the Council carries out its functions through its members and officers, and the procedures and processes through which is undertakes its work, and through which it aims to establish and maintain public confidence.

What is the Code based upon?

It is based on existing good practice within the Council and is consistent with the CIPFA framework for Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (CIPFA/Solace, 2016)
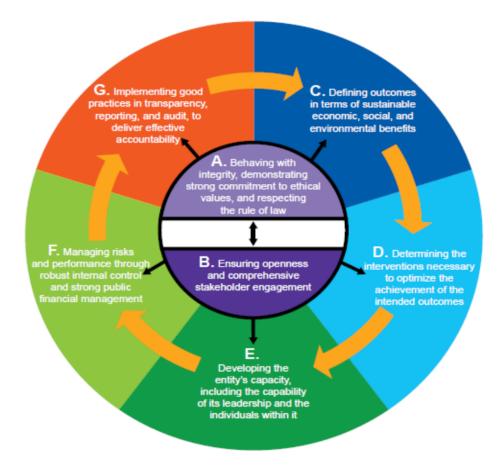
The Council is committed to the principles of good governance, and has adopted the seven core principles of the CIPFA and SOLACE framework as follows:

- Behaving with Integrity
- Ensuring Openness
- Defining Outcomes
- Determining effective interventions
- Developing Capacity
- Managing Risks and Performance
- implementing good practices
- Transparent and Effective Accountability

The diagram below, taken from the International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014) (the 'International Framework'), illustrates how the various principles of good governance in the public sector relate to each other.

Full details of the seven principles with the respective sub-principles, together with the actions and behaviours that can demonstrate compliance is provided in the Council's Annual Governance Statement and accompanying detailed analysis.

How does Woking ensure good governance?

The Council's approach to governance takes account of the environment in which it operates. The Council's aim is to ensure resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and priorities; there is sound and inclusive decision making; and there is clear accountability for the use of those resources in order to achieve desired outcomes for service users and communities.

All Members have an important role to play in representing their constituents, as well as acting together as the Council. Officers serve the Council as a corporate body rather than any political group, combination of groups, or individual member.
Members and Officers should work in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. Members determine the Council's policies and Officers are responsible for implementing decisions taken by the Council, Leader, Executive and / or the appropriate committee as well as taking decisions delegated to them under the Scheme of Delegation. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviews and scrutinises the Council's performance.

In discharging these duties all parties should act in an open, honest and transparent manner.

The Council seeks to ensure the highest standards are met, and governance arrangements are not only sound but are seen to be sound.

Who is accountable for corporate governance?

All members and officers are expected to commit to the Council's principles of good governance; however, there are specific responsibilities for the following individuals and groups:

The Corporate Leadership Team has a collective responsibility for good governance, but this is underpinned by the role of the three statutory officers of the Council:

- Head of Paid Service – Chief Executive
- Monitoring Officer – Director of Legal and Democratic Services
- Section 151 Officer – Finance Director

Chief officers are responsible for the policies and procedures which form part of this Code and that fall within their functional responsibilities. Each chief officer is supported by senior managers who are responsible for ensuring that the relevant policies and procedures are up to date, are being complied with and are effective in achieving good governance.

Most of the arrangements are set out in the Council's constitution and supporting policies and documentation. However, the Council recognises that these arrangements must be kept up-to-date and need to be kept under review to ensure that they remain appropriate and are improved where possible. Without proper monitoring, the effectiveness of the Council's arrangements could be compromised so the Council will ensure that systems are in place to monitor compliance with the agreed processes and procedures including the Annual Governance Statement.

Who has responsibility for maintaining the Code?

To ensure the Code is effectively maintained, we will:

- Update the Code with developments in best practice and leading guidance
- Undertake an annual review of Corporate Governance that incorporates the Annual Governance Statement

The Standards and Audit Committee will have responsibility for providing assurance to Council in respect of:

- The effectiveness of the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements
- The approval of the Annual Governance Statement
- The effectiveness of the Council's financial and non-financial performance