

Documents which support the Constitution Part C

SURREY HEATH BOROUGH COUNCIL

LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Surrey Heath Borough Council is committed to ensuring that its affairs are managed in such a way as to achieve the highest standards of effective corporate governance. To this end, the Council has established structures, procedures and systems of control to achieve and maintain this objective.

The Council commits to the three primary principles of good corporate governance and will continually strive to ensure that they underpin the delivery of services to the public:

- **Openness and Inclusivity** - being open through genuine consultation with stakeholders and providing access to full, accurate and clear information and seeking to ensure that all stakeholders and potential stakeholders have the opportunity to engage effectively with the decision making processes and actions of the Council.
- **Integrity** - being honest, selfless and objective (including both straightforward dealing and completeness) and following high standards of propriety and probity in the stewardship of public funds and management of the Council's affairs.
- **Accountability** - being responsible as Members and officers for decisions and actions, including stewardship of public funds and all aspects of performance, and submitting themselves to appropriate external scrutiny.

The Council recognises that the three principles need to be reflected in the different aspects of service delivery and recognises that they are not mutually exclusive.

Community Focus - In carrying out its general and specific duties and accepting its responsibilities and ability to exert wider influence, the Council commits to:

- work for and with local communities
- exercise leadership in the local communities, where appropriate
- undertake an 'ambassadorial' role to promote the well-being of the Borough
- demonstrate integrity in the Council's dealings in building effective relationships with other public agencies and the private/voluntary sectors
- demonstrate openness in all its business
- demonstrate inclusivity by communicating and engaging with all sections of the community to encourage active participation
- develop and articulate a clear and up to date vision and Corporate Strategy in response to community needs.

Service Delivery Arrangements - The Council commits to ensuring that continuous improvement is sought, agreed policies are implemented and decisions carried out by maintaining arrangements which:

- discharge accountability for service delivery at a local level

- ensure effectiveness through setting targets and measuring performance
- demonstrate integrity in dealings with service users and developing partnerships to ensure the 'right' provision of services locally
- demonstrate openness and inclusivity through consulting with key stakeholders, including service users
- are flexible so that they can be kept up to date and be adapted to accommodate change and meet user wishes.

Structure and Processes – The Council commits to establishing effective political and managerial structures and processes to govern decision making and the exercise of authority. The Council will maintain arrangements to:

- define the roles and responsibilities of Members and officers to ensure accountability, clarity and ordering of the Council's business
- ensure that there is proper scrutiny and review of all aspects of performance and effectiveness
- demonstrate integrity by ensuring a proper balance of power and authority
- document clearly such structures and processes and to ensure that they are
- communicated and understood to demonstrate openness and inclusivity
- ensure such structures and processes are kept up to date and adapted to accommodate change.

Risk Management and Internal Control - The Council commits to establishing and maintaining a systematic strategy, framework and processes for managing risk. Together, these arrangements:

- include making public statements to stakeholders on the authority's risk management strategy, framework and processes to demonstrate accountability
- include mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing effectiveness against agreed standards and targets and the operation of controls in practice
- demonstrate integrity by being based on robust systems for identifying, profiling, controlling and monitoring all significant strategic and operational risks
- display openness and inclusivity by involving all those associated with planning and delivering services, including partners
- include mechanisms to ensure that the risk management and control process is monitored for continuing compliance to ensure that changes in circumstances are accommodated and that it remains up to date.

Standards of Conduct - The openness, integrity and accountability of individuals within the Council form the cornerstone of effective corporate governance. The reputation of the Council depends on the standards of behaviour of everyone in it, whether Members, employees or agents contracted to it. Therefore Members and senior officers will:

- exercise leadership by conducting themselves as role models for others within the authority to follow; define the standards of personal behaviour that are expected from Members and staff and all those involved in service delivery; and put in place arrangements to ensure accountability, through establishing systems for investigating breaches

and disciplinary problems and taking actions where appropriate, including arrangements for redress

- ensure effectiveness in practice through monitoring their compliance
- ensure that objectivity and impartially are maintained in all relationships to demonstrate integrity
- ensure that such standards are documented and clearly understood to display openness and inclusivity and are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are kept up to date.

Monitoring and Maintaining the Code

The Council confirms its ongoing commitment and intentions through the development, adoption, monitoring and maintenance of the Local Code of Corporate Governance. Structures, policies and processes are in place to ensure necessary standards of corporate governance are not only achieved but maintained.

It is recognised that all officers and members are responsible for corporate governance but the responsibility of certain statutory posts are set out separately in the Constitution.

The Chief Executive and Leader will make an annual governance statement giving their position on whether the arrangements are adequate and are operating effectively. This will be prepared at the same time as the financial statement.

The Monitoring Officer will be given responsibility for:

- overseeing the implementation and reviewing and monitoring the operation of the Code on an annual basis
- reporting annually on compliance with the Code and any changes that may be necessary to maintain it and ensure its effectiveness in practice.