

BLACKPOOL COUNCIL

CODE OF GOVERNANCE

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Corporate Governance is a term used to describe how organisations direct and control what they do, as well as systems and processes, including culture and values. It provides structure through which strategic objectives are set and performance monitored. In Blackpool, this is led by the Council Plan with its emphasis on working with 'Communities, Economy and Organisational Sustainability'. Blackpool Council also recognises the climate emergency adopting a target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2030. This will involve minimising the impact of all its policies and operations on the environment, removing some emission sources and compensating for others.
- 1.2 This Code of Corporate Governance sets out the principles of good governance and what arrangements it has in place to ensure that the Council conducts its business in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively.
- 1.3 A governance framework brings together an underlying set of legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes and the outline of Blackpool's Governance Framework is appended to this code. The Council is committed to demonstrating that it has the necessary corporate governance arrangements in place to perform effectively. This Code of Corporate Governance is based on best practice guidance set out in Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016 Edition produced by CIPFA and SOLACE (the CIPFA/ SOLACE Governance Framework).

2 GOOD GOVERNANCE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT - The CIPFA/ SOLACE Governance Framework.

- 2.1 To achieve good governance, each local authority should be able to demonstrate that its governance structures comply with the core and subprinciples contained in a recognised Framework. Blackpool Council has chosen to use the CIPFA/ SOLACE Governance Framework. This code reflects the principles set out in this Framework and will be used annually to produce the Annual Governance Statement. It also identifies arrangements for monitoring and the responsibilities in relation to the code.
- 2.2 Applying the Principles of Good Governance at Blackpool Council from the CIPFA/ SOLACE Governance Framework

Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

Councils are accountable for how much they spend and how they use the resources under their stewardship. They have an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to legislation and government policies. It is essential that they can demonstrate the appropriateness of their actions and have the mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce ethical values and respect for the law.

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

Local government is run for the public good. Councils should therefore ensure openness in its activities. Clear, trusted channels of communication, involvement and consultation should be used to engage effectively with all groups of stakeholders, such as individual citizens and service users, as well as key stakeholders. A separate Partnership Governance Framework will assist in achieving this.

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

The long-term nature and impact of many of the Council's responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable. Decisions should further its purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes and remain within the limits of authority and resources. Input from all groups of stakeholders is vital to the success of this process and in balancing not only competing demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available but also the impact of economic regeneration with the climate change agenda.

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Local government achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory, and practical interventions. Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that the Council has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved. It needs robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure that its defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best balance between the various types of resource inputs, while still enabling effective and efficient operations.

Principle E: Developing the organisation's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

Local government needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications and mind set, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve their intended outcomes within specified periods. The Council must ensure that it has both the capacity to fulfil its own mandate and to make certain that there are policies in place to guarantee that its management has the necessary operational capacity. Both individuals and the environment in which the Council operates will change over time, therefore there will be a continuous need to develop its capacity as well as the skills and experience of the Council's leaders both at officer and elected member level.

The Council ensures that the necessary roles and responsibilities are identified and allocated so that it is clear who is accountable for the decisions that are made.

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

The Council needs to ensure that its governance structures that it oversees have implemented and can sustain, an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. Risk management and internal control are important and integral parts of a performance management system and crucial to the achievement of outcomes. Risk should be considered and addressed as part of all decision making activities. A strong system of financial management is essential for the implementation of policies and the achievement of intended outcomes, as it will enforce financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery and accountability.

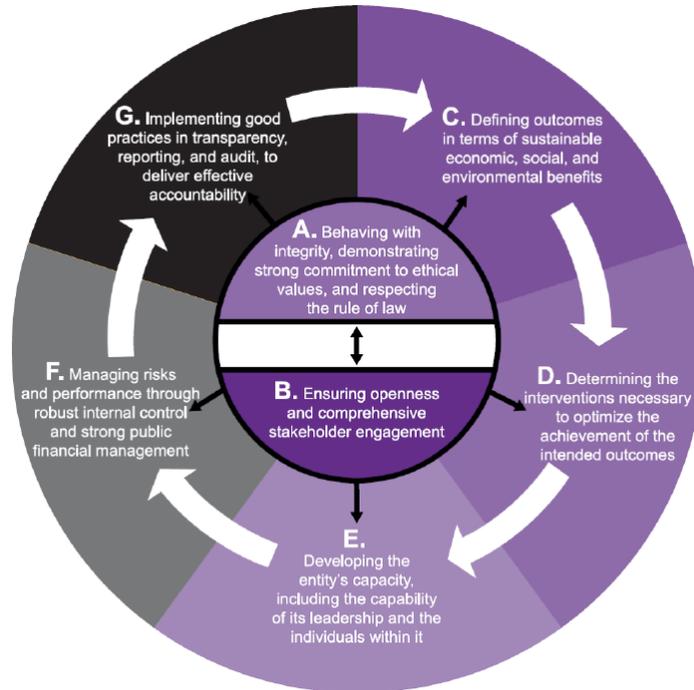
It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny is in place as a key part of accountable decision making, policy making and review. A positive working culture that accepts, promotes and encourages constructive challenge is critical to successful scrutiny and successful delivery.

Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

Accountability is about ensuring that those making decisions and delivering services are answerable for them. Effective accountability is concerned not only with reporting on actions completed, but also ensuring that stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the Council plans and carries out its activities in a

transparent manner. Both internal and external audit contribute to effective accountability.

The diagram below shows how the principles relate to each other.



The CIPFA/ SOLACE Governance Framework states that: “Principles A and B permeate implementation of Principles C to G. The diagram illustrates that good governance is dynamic and that an entity as a whole should be committed to improving governance on a continuing basis through a process of evaluation and review.”

3 MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 3.1 The Council has a number of bodies that are responsible for monitoring and reviewing the various aspects of the Council’s Corporate Governance arrangements and the documents in its Governance Framework.
- 3.2 An Audit Committee is in place which provides a mechanism for effective assurance regarding risk management and the internal control environment. The Audit Committee is a committee of the Council and is responsible for the Council’s arrangements relating to:
 - Monitoring and reviewing the risk, control and governance processes and associated assurance processes to ensure internal control systems are effective and that policies and practices are in compliance with statutory and other regulations and guidance;
 - External audit
 - Internal audit
 - Risk management
 - Reviewing the effectiveness of internal audit.
- 3.3 The Standards Committee has responsibility for promoting high ethical standards across the Council, overview of the Member and Officer Codes and other relevant protocols.

These two committees will keep their obligations regarding their governance arrangements under continual review through:

- Reports prepared by officers with responsibility for aspects of this Code;
- Monitoring best practice in the sector

- Feedback from relevant stakeholders for the committees
- The work on Internal Audit;
- External Audit opinion.

3.4 The Scrutiny Leadership Board is the co-ordinating and overseeing body of the scrutiny process. It has a duty to review of key scrutiny policies and documents including the role descriptions related to scrutiny and relevant protocols which form part of the Constitution.

It also has oversight of key corporate cross-cutting strategies and plans, including the Council Plan and overarching performance against those strategies and plans as well as an overarching role relating to monitoring key performance data of the Council.

It also has a key role in relation to highlighting issues it comes across regarding governance and assurance and includes the Chair of Audit to help develop the relationship between scrutiny and audit.

- 3.5 The Shareholder's Advisory Board has the role to seek assurance from each wholly owned company on behalf of the Council in its role as shareholder, that there are appropriate controls in place for good governance and risk management matters.
- 3.6 The Council ultimately has responsibility for governance and in particular its constitution. Under Article 16, it can also consider other changes to the Constitution, after consideration of the proposals by the Executive.
- 3.7 The officer Good Governance Group is responsible for preparing the Annual Governance Statement and monitoring the resultant action plan and overseeing this Code and its operation.
- 3.8 The Corporate Leadership Team is responsible for overseeing the day to day management of the Council and ensuring good governance practices are in place across directorates.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 Corporate governance and good governance is everyone's responsibility. There is however a number of specific individual responsibilities in relation to the implementation, monitoring and review of the Code and activities associated with the production of the annual governance statement. These are outlined below.
- 4.2 The Chief Executive and the Leader will be responsible for:
- championing and role modelling good governance, in the spirit of this Code.
- 4.3 The Chair of the Audit Committee will be responsible for:
- setting the committee's tone, work style and agenda to enable the committee to operate effectively, seek assurance and to hold those charged with governance to account.
 - being accountable to Council in regard to the work of the committee by way of annually reporting.
- 4.4 The Director of Governance and Partnerships/Monitoring Officer will be responsible for:
- chairing the officer Good Governance Group ;
 - reviewing the operation of the Code and advising on any changes that may be necessary to maintain it and ensure its effectiveness in practice;
 - reviewing and updating the Code of Governance as necessary.

- undertaking an annual review of the Code, to provide assurance on the extent of compliance with it.

4.5 The Head of Audit and Risk will be responsible for:

- reporting annually to the Audit Committee on audit activities during the year, with particular emphasis on the systems of internal control and the arrangements for corporate governance, providing some of the assurance required in the Annual Governance Statement.

5. THE ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

- 5.1 Each Year the Council will publish an Annual Governance Statement in accordance with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015. This process is managed by the officer based Good Governance Group and will provide an overall assessment of the Council's corporate governance arrangements and an appraisal of the key controls in place to manage the Council's principal governance risks, together with proposed improvements that will be made. An Annual Audit Opinion will seek to determine whether sufficient assurance work was undertaken to provide a reasonable conclusion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the control environment and that the overall control environment at the Council is adequate.
- 5.2 That review will also include input from a selection of elected members from the bodies referred to in section 3 above. The Annual Governance Statement will be published as part of the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts and will be audited by the Council's External Auditors.
- 5.3 Each Year the Audit Committee will approve an action plan of specific corporate governance improvements. The Audit Committee will seek assurance from the Council's Monitoring Officer and Good Governance Group throughout the year that the action plan is on target to be delivered. Corporate governance improvements delivered by the Council will be reported through the Annual Governance Statement process.
- 5.4 Details of the extent to which the Council is complying with the Code will also be included within the Annual Governance Statement.

6. GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

- 6.1 In preparing the Annual Governance Statement and highlighting improvements as part of the action plan, the Audit Committee has used the principles in the CIPFA/ SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework and broken these requirements into 16 thematic strands to form a 'Blackpool Governance Framework'. This Framework is then used to undertake the annual governance review. The Blackpool Governance Framework is shown overleaf along with highlighted areas of supporting evidence.

GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

Thematic strands and supporting evidence

(* this evidence to be reviewed and updated as part of the Annual Governance Statement for 2020/ 2021)

Strand 1

Code of Conduct and Behaviours

- Code of Conduct for Members
- Officer Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Registers of Members Interests

Strand 2

Organisational Culture

- Senior Employees salaries and Pay Policy statement
- Workforce Diversity Report
- Council strategies, policies and plans

Strand 3

Ethical and Responsible Governance

- Climate Change declaration
- Equality objectives
- Equality Policy Framework

Strand 4

Commitment to Openness, Communication and Consultation

- Council agendas and minutes
- Online Council meetings
- Open Government Licence
- Transparency and open data
- Freedom of Information policy/ publication scheme

Strand 5

Developing, Communicating and Translating the Vision

- Council Plan 2019-2024
- Priority 1 – Economic regeneration/ recovery – better Blackpool
- Priority 2 - Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience

Strand 6

Performance Management

- Policy Framework
- Children Services Ofsted Inspection

Strand 7

Roles and Responsibilities

- Responsibilities for Functions – Elected Members and Officers

Strand 8

Decision Making

- Agendas and minutes – Executive, Council and its committees
- Executive and Cabinet Member decisions

Strand 9
Compliance with
Relevant Laws,
Regulations,
Internal Policies
and Procedures

- Corporate Customer Feedback Policy
- Data Protection and GDPR Policy and information

Strand 10
Financial
Management

- Statutory Chief Finance Officer (holding S151 responsibilities)
- Medium Term Financial Sustainability Strategy
- Corporate Scheme of Delegation
- Financial Procedure Rules

Strand 11
Audit
Arrangements

- Internal Audit Charter
- Internal Audit Plan
- Annual Audit Opinion
- Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme

Strand 12
Risk Management

- Risk Management Framework
- Strategic Risk Register
- Business Continuity Framework

Strand 13
Counter Fraud and
Anti-Corruption
Arrangements

- Fraud Prevention Charter
- Anti-Money Laundering Policy
- Covert Surveillance Policy

Strand 14
Scrutiny
Arrangements

- Scrutiny Leadership Board and committees
- Agendas and minutes

Strand 15
Learning and
Development

- Workforce Strategy

Strand 16
Partnerships and
Joint Working

- Shareholder's Advisory Board agenda and minutes
- Town Deal Board
- Better Start
- HeadStart