

MELTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE:

CIPFA/SOLACE FRAMEWORK

January 2008

FOCUSING ON THE PURPOSE OF THE AUTHORITY AND ON OUTCOMES FOR THE COMMUNITY AND CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING A VISION FOR THE LOCAL AREA

Supporting Principle:

Exercising strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the authority's purpose and vision and its intended outcome for citizens and service users.

- develop and promote the authority's purpose and vision
- review on a regular basis the authority's vision for the local area and its impact on the authority's governance arrangements.
- ensure that partnerships are underpinned by a common vision of their work that is understood and agreed by all parties.
- publish an annual report on a timely basis to communicate the authority's activities and achievements, its financial position and performance

Supporting Principle:

Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service whether directly, or in partnership, or by commissioning.

- decide how the quality of service for users is to be measured and make sure that the information needed to review service quality effectively and regularly is available.
- put in place effective arrangements to identify and deal with failure in service delivery.

Supporting Principle:

Ensuring that the authority makes best use of resources and that tax payers and service users receive excellent value for money.

- decide how value for money is to be measured and make sure that the authority or partnership has the information needed to review value for money and performance effectively. Measure the environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions.

Reference documents

Strong and Prosperous Communities, DCLG (October 2006)

The Politics of Place, The Leadership Centre for Local Government (October 2006)

A Councillor's Guide to Performance Management (second edition), IDeA (June 2006)

A Manager's Guide to Performance Management (second edition), IDeA (June 2006)

MEMBERS AND OFFICERS WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE A COMMON PURPOSE WITH CLEARLY DEFINED FUNCTIONS AND ROLES

Supporting Principle:

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.

- set out a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of the executive and of the executive's members individually and the authority's approach towards putting this into practice
- set out a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of other authority members, members generally and senior officers.

Supporting Principle:

Ensuring that a constructive working relationship exists between authority members and officers and that the responsibilities of members and officers are carried out to a high standard.

- determine a scheme of delegation and reserve powers within the constitution, including a formal schedule of those matters specifically reserved for collective decision of the authority, taking account of relevant legislation, and ensure that it is monitored and updated when required.
- make a chief executive or equivalent responsible and accountable to the authority for all aspects of operational management.
- develop protocols to ensure that the leader and chief executive (or equivalent) negotiate their respective roles early in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained.
- 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 financial 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.

Supporting Principle:

Ensuring relationships between the authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other.

- develop 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, including an effective remuneration panel (if applicable).
- ensure that effective mechanisms exist to monitor service delivery.
- ensure that the organisation's 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 ensure that members are clear about their roles and responsibilities both individually and collectively in relation to the partnership and to the authority.
- when working in partnership:
 - ensure that there is clarity about the legal status of the partnership;
 - ensure that representatives or organisations both understand and make clear to all other partners the extent of their authority to bind their organisation to partner decisions.

Reference documents

Final Report of the SOLACE Commission on Managing in a Political Environment, SOLACE (2005)

Changing Organisational Cultures, Audit Commission (2005)

PROMOTING VALUES FOR THE AUTHORITY AND DEMONSTRATING THE VALUES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE THROUGH UPHOLDING HIGH STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOUR

Supporting Principle:

Ensuring authority Members and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance.

- 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 members 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.
- put in place arrangements to ensure that members and employees of the authority 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.

Supporting Principle:

Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective.

- develop and maintain shared values including leadership values for both the organisation and staff reflecting public expectations and communicate these with members, staff, the community and partners.
- put in place arrangements to ensure that systems and processes are designed in conformity with appropriate ethical standards, and monitor their continuing effectiveness in practice.
- develop and maintain an effective standards committee.
- use the organisation's shared values to act as a guide for decision making and as a basis for developing positive and trusting relationships within the authority.
- in pursuing the vision of a partnership, 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.

Reference documents

Standards of Conduct in English Local Government: The Future, ODPM (2005)

TAKING INFORMED AND TRANSPARENT DECISIONS WHICH ARE SUBJECT TO EFFECTIVE SCRUTINY AND MANAGING RISK

Supporting Principle:

Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny.

- 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 to safeguard members and employees against conflicts of interest and put in place appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice.
- develop and maintain an effective audit committee (or equivalent) which is independent of the executive and scrutiny functions or make other appropriate arrangements for the discharge of the functions of such a committee.
- ensure that effective, transparent and accessible arrangements are in place for dealing with complaints.

Supporting Principle:

Having good-quality information, advice and support to ensure that services are delivered effectively and are what the community wants/needs.

- ensure that those making decisions whether for the authority or the partnership 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 matters that have legal or financial implications is available and recorded well in advance of decision making and used appropriately.

Supporting Principle:

Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place.

- ensure that risk management is embedded into the culture of the authority, with members and managers at all levels recognising that risk management is part of their jobs.
- ensure that arrangements are in place for whistle-blowing to which staff and all those contracting with the authority have access.

Supporting Principle:

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, for example, the ultra vires doctrine but also strive to utilise powers to the full benefit of their communities.
- recognise the limits of lawful action and observe both the specific requirements of legislation and the general responsibilities placed on local authorities by public law.
- 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 good administrative law – rationality, legality and natural justice – into their procedures and decision-making processes.

Reference documents

Worth the Risk: Improving Risk Management in Local Government, Audit Commission (2001)

Risk Management in the Public Services, CIPFA/ALARM (2001)

The Orange Book – Management of Risk Principles and Concepts, HM Treasury (October 2004)

Audit Committees: Practical Guidance for Local Authorities, CIPFA (2005)

The Good Scrutiny Guide: A Pocket Guide for Public Scrutineers, Centre for Public Scrutiny (2006)

Overview and Scrutiny in Local Government: A Handbook for Elected Members, Centre for Public Scrutiny (2006)

A Wider Conversation: Effective Scrutiny of Local Strategic Partnerships, IDeA (February 2007)

DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY OF MEMBERS AND OFFICERS TO BE EFFECTIVE

Supporting Principle:

Making sure that Members and officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles.

- 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.

Supporting Principle:

Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance, as individuals and as a group

- 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 executive as a whole and of individual members and agreeing an action plan which might, for example, aim to address any training or development needs.

Supporting Principle:

Encouraging new talent for membership of the authority so that best use can be made of individuals' skills and resources in balancing continuity and renewal.

- 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.

Reference documents

Frontline Councillor: How Local politicians can Make a Difference to their Communities, IDeA (2007)

ENGAGING WITH LOCAL PEOPLE AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO ENSURE ROBUST PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

Supporting Principle:

Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive accountability relationships.

- make clear to themselves, all staff and the community to whom they are accountable and for what
- consider those institutional stakeholders to whom the authority is accountable and assess the effectiveness of the relationships and any changes required.
- produce an annual report on the activity of the scrutiny function

Supporting Principle:

Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with an accountability to the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly by the authority, in partnership or by commissioning.

- ensure that clear channels of communication are in place 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.
- ensure that arrangements are in place 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 on or engage with the public and service users about including a feedback mechanism for those consultees to demonstrate what has changed as a result.
- 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.

Supporting Principle:

Making best use of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meet responsibility to staff.

- develop and maintain a clear policy on how staff and their representatives are consulted and involved in decision making.

Reference documents

Governing Partnerships: Bridging the Accountability Gap, Audit Commission (2005)

The Good Governance Standard for Public Services, The Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services (2004)