

Code of governance



Introduction

Corporate governance is the framework of accountability to users, stakeholders and the wider community, within which organisations take decisions and lead and control their functions, to achieve their objectives. Good corporate governance is about having robust systems and processes, effective leadership and high standards of behaviour, a culture based on openness and honesty and an external focus on the needs of service users and the public.

The Vale of White Horse District Council believes that sound corporate governance is fundamental to good management and good performance. This code of governance sets out the council's view on the principles and objectives that need to be considered and addressed to ensure that councillors, staff and the wider public understand what the council is trying to achieve and the steps they it is taking to maximise the chances of achieving its objectives.

Purpose

This code aims to provide a best practice framework for developing and maintaining a locally accepted code of governance based on the 2007 publication *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*.

Good governance leads to good management, good performance, good stewardship of public money, good public engagement and ultimately, good outcomes for citizens and service users. Good governance will enable the council to pursue its vision effectively as well as underpinning that vision with mechanisms for control and management of risk. The council aims to meet the highest standards of governance through this governance code.

Responsibilities

Responsibility for the governance of the council is as follows: -

who	responsibilities include: -
1. Councillors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- agreeing the council's constitution comprising the key governance documents including the executive arrangements and making major changes to reflect best practice- agreeing the policy framework including the community strategy and other key strategies- agreeing the budget
2. Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- proposing the policy framework and key strategies- proposing the budget- implementing the policy framework and key strategies
3. Chief Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- advises councillors on policy and necessary procedures to drive aims and objectives of the authority.- leads a management team
4. Chief Finance (Section 151) Officer, the Monitoring Officer and Heads of Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- advising the executive and scrutiny committees on legislative, financial and other policy considerations to achieve the aims and objectives of the council- implementing councillors' decisions and for service performance
5. Audit and Governance Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- considering governance matters- making recommendations on governance matters- agreeing the code of governance and the annual governance statement
6. Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- authorised to undertake action agreed by the council to meet the requirements and objective of the governance framework

Processes

1. To develop this local code of governance we have reviewed our existing governance arrangements against the “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government” publication produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) documents.
2. In doing so we have identified our systems, processes and documentation which support compliance. We have identified those responsible for monitoring and reviewing the systems, processes and documentation identified and those responsible for undertaking the actions required and plan accordingly.
3. We will review, develop and maintain our local code of governance regularly to ensure its ongoing application and effectiveness.
4. On an annual basis we will prepare a governance statement in order to report publicly on the extent to which we comply with this code of governance including how we have monitored the effectiveness of the governance arrangements in the year and on any planned changes in the coming year.

Governance

1. Governance is an interrelated system bringing together an underlying set of:
 - legislative requirements,
 - governance principles,
 - management processes.
2. Governance is about doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.
3. It comprises the systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which local government bodies are directed and controlled and through which they account to, engage with and, where appropriate, lead their communities.

Principles and supporting principles of good governance

1. CIPFA/SOLACE have adopted six principles of good governance from *The Good Governance Standard for Public Services* (2004) developed by the Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services with support from the Office for Public Management and CIPFA. These have been adapted for local government purposes.
2. The principles, together with their supporting principles are set out below, each of which in turn translates into a range of specific requirements as set out in the table at the end of this document.

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

- The function of governance is to ensure that authorities, other local government organisations or connected partnerships fulfil their purpose and achieve their intended outcomes for citizens and service users and operate in an effective, efficient, economic and ethical manner. This concept should guide all governance activity.
- Local government bodies need to develop and articulate a clear vision of their purpose and intended outcomes for citizens and service users that is clearly communicated, both within the organisation and to external stakeholders.

Principle 2

Councillors and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles

- The governing body of an organisation has overall responsibility for directing and controlling that organisation. In local government the governing body is the full council or authority.

Principle 3

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

- Good governance flows from a shared ethos or culture, as well as from systems and structures. It cannot be reduced to a set of rules, or achieved fully by compliance with a set of requirements. This spirit or ethos of good governance can be expressed as values and demonstrated as behaviour.
- Good governance builds on the seven principles for the conduct of people in public life that were established by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, known as the Nolan Principles. In England, the Local Government Act 2000 outlined ten principles of conduct – an additional three to those identified by Nolan – for use in local government bodies.
- A hallmark of good governance is the development of shared values, which become part of the organisation's culture, underpinning policy and behaviour throughout the organisation from the governing body to all staff. These are in addition to compliance with legal requirements on, for example, equal opportunities and anti-discrimination.

Principle 4

Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk

- Decision making within a good governance framework is complex and challenging. It must further the organisation's purpose and strategic direction and be robust in the medium and longer terms. To make such decisions, councillors must be well informed.
- Councillors making decisions need the support of appropriate systems, to help to ensure that decisions are implemented and that resources are used legally and efficiently.
- Risk management is important to the successful delivery of public services. An effective risk management system identifies and assesses risks, decides on appropriate responses and then provides assurance that the chosen responses are effective.

Principle 5

Developing the capacity and capability of councillors and officers to be effective

- Effective local government relies on public confidence in councillors, whether elected or appointed and in officers. Good governance strengthens credibility and confidence in our public services.
- Authorities need people with the right skills to direct and control them effectively. Governance roles and responsibilities are challenging and demanding and councillors need the right skills for their roles. In addition, governance is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of knowledge and experience.
- Good governance means drawing on the largest possible pool of potential councillors to recruit people with the necessary skills. Encouraging a wide range of people to stand for election or apply for appointed positions will develop a councillorship that has a greater range of experience and knowledge. It will also help to increase the diversity of councillors in terms of age, ethnic background, social class, life experiences, gender and disability. This concept should be borne in mind when councillors are appointed to the boards of other public service organisations.

Principle 6

Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability

- Local government is accountable in a number of ways. Elected councillors are democratically accountable to their local area and this gives a clear leadership role in building sustainable communities. All councillors must account to their communities for the decisions they have taken and the rationale behind those decisions.
- All authorities are subject to external review through the external audit of their financial statements. They are required to publish their financial statements and are encouraged to prepare an annual report. Many are subject to national standards and target. Their budgets are effectively subject to significant influence and overview by government, which has powers to intervene. Both councillors and officers are subject to codes of conduct. Additionally, where maladministration may have occurred, an aggrieved person may appeal either through their local councillor directly to the ombudsman.

Each of the above principles translates into supporting principles and aims for the council. These are shown in the table below.

	Supporting Principle	Vale of White Horse District Council aims to: -
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		
1.	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.
2.	Exercising strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the authority's purpose and vision and its intended outcome for citizens and service users	Review on a regular basis the authority's vision for the local area and its implications for the authority's governance arrangements
3.	Exercising strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the authority's purpose and vision and its intended outcome for citizens and service users	Ensure that partnerships are underpinned by a common vision of their work that is understood and agreed by all partners
4.	Exercising strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the authority's purpose and vision and its intended outcome for citizens and service users	Publish an annual report on a timely basis to communicate the authority's activities and achievements, its financial position and performance
5.	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
6.	Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service whether directly, or in partnership, or by commissioning	Put in place effective arrangements to identify and deal with failure in service delivery

	Supporting Principle	Vale of White Horse District Council aims to: -
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		
7.	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

	Supporting Principle	Vale of White Horse District Council aims to: -
Principle 2 Councillors and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles		
8.	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 councillors individually and the authority's approach towards putting this into practice
9.	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 other authority councillors, councillors generally and of senior officers
10.	Ensuring that a constructive working relationship exists between authority councillors and officers and that the responsibilities of councillors and	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

	Supporting Principle	Vale of White Horse District Council aims to: -
Principle 2 Councillors and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles		
	officers are carried out to a high standard	legislation, and ensure that it is monitored and updated when required
11.	Ensuring that a constructive working relationship exists between authority councillors and officers and that the responsibilities of councillors and officers are carried out to a high standard	Make a chief executive or equivalent responsible and accountable to the authority for all aspects of operational management
12.	Ensuring that a constructive working relationship exists between authority councillors and officers and that the responsibilities of councillors and officers are carried out to a high standard	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.
13.	Ensuring that a constructive working relationship exists between authority councillors and officers and that the responsibilities of councillors and officers are carried out to a high standard	Make a senior officer (the Section 151 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
14.	Ensuring that a constructive working relationship exists between authority councillors and officers and that the responsibilities of councillors and officers are carried out to a high standard	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
15.	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 councillors and officers in their respective roles

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Principle 2 Councillors and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles		
16.	Ensuring relationships between the authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other	Set out the terms and conditions for remuneration of councillors and officers and an effective structure for managing the process, including an effective remuneration panel (if applicable)
17.	Ensuring relationships between the authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other	Ensure that effective mechanisms exist to monitor service delivery
18.	Ensuring relationships between the authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other	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
19.	Ensuring relationships between the authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other	When working in partnership, ensure that councillors are clear about their roles and responsibilities both individually and collectively in relation to the partnership and to the authority
20.	Ensuring relationships between the authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other	When working in partnership: Ensure that there is clarity about the legal status of the partnership Ensure that representatives of organisations both understand and make clear to all other partners the extent of their authority to bind their organisation to partner decisions

	Supporting Principle	Vale of White Horse District Council aims to: -
Principle 3 Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour		
21.	Ensuring authority councillors 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
22.	Ensuring authority councillors and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance	Ensure that standards of conduct and personal behaviour expected of councillors and staff, of work between councillors and staff and between the authority, its partners and the community are defined and communicated through codes of conduct and protocols
23.	Ensuring authority councillors and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance	Put in place arrangements to ensure that councillors 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
24.	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 councillors, staff, the community and partners
25.	Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective	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
26.	Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective	Develop and maintain an effective standards committee

	Supporting Principle	Vale of White Horse District Council aims to: -
Principle 3 Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour		
27.	Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective	Use the organisation's values to act as a guide for decision making and as a basis for developing positive and trusting relationships within the authority
28.	Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective	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.
29.	Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective	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.

	Supporting Principle	Vale of White Horse District Council aims to: -
Principle 4 Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk		
30.	Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny	Develop and maintain open and effective mechanisms for documenting evidence for decisions and recording the criteria, rationale and considerations on which decisions are based
31.	Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny	Put in place arrangements to safeguard councillors and employees against conflicts of interest and put in place appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice
32.	Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny	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
33.	Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny	Ensure that effective, transparent and accessible arrangements are in place for dealing with complaints
34.	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 purpose – relevant, timely and gives clear explanations of technical issues and their implications
35	Having good quality information, advice and support to ensure that services are delivered effectively and are what the community wants/needs	Ensure that proper 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	Vale of White Horse District Council aims to: -
Principle 4 Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk		
36.	Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place	Ensure that risk management is embedded into the culture of the authority, with councillors and managers at all levels recognising that risk management is part of their jobs
37.	Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place	Ensure that effective arrangements for whistle-blowing are in place to which officers, staff and all those contracting with or appointed by the authority have access
38.	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 their powers to the full benefit of their communities
39.	Using their legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in their area	Recognise the limits of lawful action and observe both the specific requirements of legislation and the general responsibilities placed on authorities by public law
40.	Using their legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in their area	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

	Supporting Principle	Vale of White Horse District Council aims to: -
Principle 5 Developing the capacity and capability of councillors and officers to be effective		
41.	Making sure that councillors 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 councillors and officers to update their knowledge on a regular basis
42.	Making sure that councillors and officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles	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
43.	Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance as individuals and as a group	Assess the skills required by councillors and officers and make a commitment to develop those skills to enable roles to be carried out effectively
44.	Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance as individuals and as a group	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
45.	Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance as individuals and as a group	Ensure that effective arrangements are in place for reviewing the performance of the executive as a whole and of individual councillors and agreeing an action plan which might, for example, aim to address any training or development needs
46.	Encouraging new talent for councillorship 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

	Supporting Principle	Vale of White Horse District Council aims to: -
Principle 5 Developing the capacity and capability of councillors and officers to be effective		
47.	Encouraging new talent for councillorship of the authority so that best use can be made of individuals' skills and resources in balancing continuity and renewal	Ensure that career structures are in place for councillors and officers to encourage participation and development

	Supporting Principle	Vale of White Horse District Council aims to: -
Principle 6 Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability		
48.	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
49.	Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive accountability relationships	Consider those institutional stakeholders to whom the authority is accountable and assess the effectiveness of the relationships and any changes required
50.	Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including	Produce an annual report on the activity of the scrutiny function

	Supporting Principle	Vale of White Horse District Council aims to: -
<p>Principle 6</p> <p>Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability</p>		
	<p>partnerships, and develops constructive accountability relationships</p>	
51.	<p>Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly by authority, in partnership or by commissioning</p>	<p>Ensure 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</p>
52.	<p>Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly by authority, in partnership or by commissioning</p>	<p>Hold meetings in public unless there are good reasons for confidentiality</p>
53.	<p>Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly by authority, in partnership or by commissioning</p>	<p>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</p>
54.	<p>Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly by authority, in partnership or by commissioning</p>	<p>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</p>

	Supporting Principle	Vale of White Horse District Council aims to: -
Principle 6 Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability		
55.	Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly by authority, in partnership or by commissioning	On an annual basis, publish a Corporate 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
56.	Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly by authority, in partnership or by commissioning	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
57.	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