Do The Right Thing

The Code of Corporate Governance for Warwickshire County Council

1. What is 'governance'?

1.1 Governance is about how the County Council ensures it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, at the right time. It is made up of all the systems, processes, culture and behaviours which direct and control the way in which we work and through which we account to, engage with and lead our communities.

1.2 This Code of Corporate Governance applies to the Council's elected members and officers. This Code and an 'At A Glance Guide' is accessible on the Council's intranet and internet.

2. Why we do it?

2.1 The way in which Warwickshire County Council is 'governed', affects our output and performance. Good governance ensures our resources are directed in accordance with our priorities and that we make the best use of those resources. It determines our ability to achieve our vision through sustainable economic, social and environmental outcomes for our customers and communities.

2.3 Good governance is about delivering on our promise to make a real and lasting difference to the wellbeing of people living and working in Warwickshire and it is about doing that in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

3. Our Behaviours

3.1 We are committed to the following behaviours, which underpin all our work;

We will:

Do what we say

Help people and communities find their own solutions

Move with purpose and energy

Build strong working relationships

Focus on solutions

Be the best we can be

4.   How we do it and do it right?

4.1   OUTCOMES

We will;
- Lead the way through the development, promotion and regular review of our purpose and vision in the One Organisational Plan and ensure it is communicated to and understood by all our partners

- Be clear about our priorities, objectives and targets and the sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits we are seeking for our customers and communities.

- *Manage customer expectations effectively having regard to our priorities and the need to make best use of resources.*

- Establish and maintain sound systems for the regular assessment, reporting and communication of the Council's activities, achievements, financial position and performance *which allows comparison with other organisations.*

- Ensure that we and the partnerships in which we are involved make the best use of our resources to ensure that communities and customers receive value for money.

- Respond positively to the findings and recommendations of external auditors and statutory inspectors regarding our performance and strive to implement any agreed actions

4.2   ACTIONS

We will;
- Consult with the local community and key stakeholders when developing our vision and strategic plans to optimise the potential to achieve our outcomes.

- *Ensure we have effective mechanisms to gather and consider feedback from customers and communities when making decisions about our priorities and service changes.*

- *Ensure that our medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints to ensure we have capacity to deliver on our priorities in a sustainable way.*

- *Ensure that our planning and delivery mechanisms are flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances.*

- Ensure we make a commitment to openness and transparency in all our dealings, including partnerships, subject only to the need to preserve confidentiality where proper and appropriate to do so.

- Ensure that members are clear about their roles and responsibilities both individually and collectively and that when working in partnership they are clear about the extent of their authority to bind the Council to partner decisions

4.3 BEHAVIOURS

We will;

- Ensure that members and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and creates a climate of openness, support and respect

- Establish and maintain formal codes of conduct defining expected standards of *behaviour* for members, staff, agents and partners

- Use the Council's *behaviours* to act as a guide for decision-making and as a basis for developing positive and trusting relationships both within and outside the Council.

- Ensure that the Council's *behaviours* reflect public expectations, and are communicated to members, staff, the community and partners.

- Agree a set of *behaviours* against which decision-making and actions can be judged when working in partnership

- Regularly review our arrangements to ensure that we are not influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest in dealing with different stakeholders and that our procedures and operations conform to appropriate ethical standards.

- Actively seek to deter and prevent fraud and corruption and ensure that where an irregularity is suspected it will be thoroughly investigated and *that recommendations for corrective action are acted upon.*

- *Ensure that the Chief Executive or equivalent is made responsible for all aspects of the operational management of the Council*

- *Ensure that we appoint a Chief Finance Officer who is responsible 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*

- *Ensure that we appoint a Monitoring Officer who is responsible for ensuring that the Council follows agreed procedures and complies with all applicable statutes, regulations and other relevant statements of good practice*

4.4 CONTROLS

We will;

- Ensure members receive appropriate professional advice and *robust information* when making decisions

- *Maintain an effective Performance Management system* which identifies and evaluates all significant risks and ensures that members and managers at all levels recognise that risk management is part of their jobs

- *Ensure we have safe and effective information management systems for the collection, storage, use and sharing of data.*

- *Ensure our financial systems support both long-term achievement of outcomes as well as short term financial and operational performance*

- Maintain an effective scrutiny function which encourages constructive challenge and enhances the Council's performance overall and engages local people and key stakeholders, in holding the Council and its partnerships to account

- Maintain open and effective mechanisms for documenting evidence for decisions and recording the criteria, rationale and considerations on which decisions are based

- Maintain an effective audit and standards committee that is independent of the executive and scrutiny functions *and internal audit service with direct access to members*

- Ensure that effective, transparent and accessible arrangements are in place for dealing with complaints including arrangements for whistle-blowing.

- Set out the terms and conditions for remuneration for members and officers and maintain an effective structure for managing the process

4.5 CAPACITY

We will;

- *Ensure we have an effective organisational development and workforce strategy that is reviewed regularly to ensure we have the operational capacity to deliver on our priorities*

- *Establish and maintain clearly documented protocols governing relationships and effective communication between members and officers*

- *Clearly define the roles and responsibilities for the executive and for other members and senior officers. Regularly review maintain and update our scheme of delegated powers*

- Provide induction and training programmes tailored to individual needs with opportunities for members and officers to update their knowledge on a regular basis

- Assess *and regularly review* the skills required by members and officers to perform effectively in their roles and make a commitment to develop those skills

- 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 Council

- Ensure that career structures are in place for members and officers to encourage participation and development

4.6 ACCOUNTABILITY

We will;

- Ensure that arrangements are in place to engage effectively with all sections of the community which include regular monitoring to ensure that they operate effectively.

- Establish a clear policy on the types of issues the Council will consult on or engage with the public and customers about, including establishing a feedback mechanism

- Ensure that all staff and the community are aware of who the Council is accountable to and for what

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

- *Ensure that published reports have sufficient information to be transparent, are written in an understandable style and are easy to access.*

- *Ensure we implement good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.*

Allocation of Responsibilities

The Council has put in place the following arrangements to review the effectiveness of the Code of Corporate Governance.

A   The Council;

- is responsible for approving key corporate governance documents and policies such as the Council's Constitution and its Standing Orders;
- appoints an Audit and Standards Committee which includes independent members;
- considers the Council's annual governance statement which is based on assurance statements from Heads of Service;
- receives annual reports on the effectiveness and impact of scrutiny.

B   The Audit and Standards Committee;

- has an independent Chair;
- is responsible for maintaining and promoting high standards of conduct and for compliance issues
- has a terms of reference which include responsibility for monitoring the operation of Codes of Conduct, assessing the effectiveness of the Council's control environment, risk management and corporate governance arrangements
- receives regular reports on assurance work including an annual report giving an overall opinion on control environment.

C   The Leader and Cabinet;

- have collective responsibilities for corporate governance and law and probity
- appoint executive portfolio holder with a governance brief
- monitors progress against the action plan through the Council's performance management arrangements;
- approve amendments to the Code of corporate governance.

D   Overview and Scrutiny Committees;

- report annually to full Council on the effectiveness of scrutiny;

- monitors the performance of the Council to identify areas for improvement
- publish the outcomes of their reviews.

E   Internal Audit;

- undertakes risk based reviews of internal control procedures across all Groups and across all functions of the Council;
- gives opinions on the standards of internal control as part of the review process;
- reports on the standards of the Council's internal control arrangements to the Audit and Standards Committee;
- has a Chief Risk and Assurance Manager who undertakes an annual review of the effectiveness of internal control.