

HENLEY ON THAMES TOWN COUNCIL LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE 2014

This Code was adopted by the Council at its meeting held on 29th July 2014

1. Definition of Corporate Governance

The Council defines corporate governance as the system by which the Council directs and controls its functions and the way it relates to its community.

The system referred to above includes the policies, procedures, legislation and structures which together control the way the Council manages its business.

This Code of Corporate Governance complies with the requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' and reflects the Council's own structure, functions, size and governance arrangements in existence.

2. Principles of Corporate Governance

In all its work the Council has regard to the four key principles of good corporate governance.

Accountability – is the process by which Councillors and staff are held responsible for their decisions and actions regarding the Council's work. To be effective all parties must have a clear understanding of their responsibilities, and have clearly defined roles within the Council's structure.

Integrity – means honesty, selflessness and objectivity, and high standards of propriety and probity in the stewardship of public funds and the management of the Council's affairs. It is dependent on the personal standards and professionalism of Councillors and staff.

Openness – ensures that stakeholders can have confidence in the decision making and management processes of the Council. Being open in the disclosure of information leads to the effective scrutiny of the Council functions.

Inclusiveness – means that all stakeholders have the opportunity to engage effectively in the decision making processes and actions of the Council.

3. The Governance Framework

The Council will ensure that it has arrangements in place to ensure that the six principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework are met. These principles are shown in further detail on the remaining pages as follows:

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Local Authorities have a duty to promote or improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of their areas. Meeting the six principals will ensure that these duties are fulfilled and that the Council will continuously monitor and improve the services it delivers. The Council will review the wider needs and aspiration of the community as determined consultations and surveys within its managed capacity and resources in a fair, consistent and non-discriminatory manner.

4. Conclusion

Henley on Thames Town Council is fully committed to the principles of Corporate Governance, and through the measures outlined within this Code will ensure that adequate arrangements are made with regard to its continued implementation, monitoring and review.

Principle 1 Community Focus

Focussing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area

Requirement in Framework	Evidence
a) Exercising strategic leadership by developing and communicating the authority's purpose and vision and its intended outcome for citizens and service users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Mayor / Town Clerk • Annual Town Meeting (ATM) • Annual Report of the Council at the ATM • Annual Budget Plan – principles and priorities • Treasury Management Review
b) Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service whether directly or in partnership, or by commissioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress reports for all Standing Committees / Council • Public Participation at all meetings of the Council and its Committees • Service user participation on working groups eg Allotments / Wildlife Group / Outdoor Sports Centre Users • Complaints procedure
c) Ensuring that the authority makes best use of resources and that tax payers and service users receive excellent value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of all payments to Finance, Strategy & Management Committee • Seeking three quotations for high value expenditure • Regular review of contracts • Financial Planning & Scrutiny Working Group • Annual Budgeting process • Responding positively to internal and external auditors' recommendations and reviews. • Benchmarking prices • Use of external professional advice for valuations • Use of external professional legal advice • Participation in purchasing consortium • Use of sponsorship for Town projects • Bid for grant funding where available

Principle 2 Working together – internal

Members and officers working together to achieve a common purposes with clearly defined functions and roles

Requirement in Framework	Evidence
<p>a) Ensuring effective leadership throughout the authority and being clear about executive and non executive functions and the roles of the scrutiny function</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committees commission projects and reviews. • Officers prepare reports to Committees with clear recommendations for action. • Detailed reviews are usually undertaken in working groups which report findings back to Committee for recommendation to Council. • Full Council is the executive decision making body. • All staff have formal job descriptions and there is a clear organisational structure showing staff reporting lines.
<p>b) 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has an open policy for the majority of meetings and staff are encouraged to put forward ideas and participate in working groups. • All staff have performance appraisals. Weekly staff meetings are held which include feedback through the Town Clerk on Committee and Council meetings through the cycle. • Monthly management meetings between senior staff will continue to be held. • The Mayor and Town Clerk have regular scheduled meetings to ensure an ongoing dialogue between staff and Councillors. • The Town Clerk also has monthly meetings with Committee Chairs. • The Town Clerk is responsible for all day to day operational matters including the wellbeing of staff.
<p>c) Ensuring relationships between the authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of each other</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy for members allowance • Development of clear policies / management plans regarding community use of Council assets, awarding of grants to partner organisations. • Use of formal / legal agreements / protocols with partner organisation in relation to land / service agreements • Information on website • Information sent with Council Tax • Henley Information Centre – staffed information service • Key partners invited to regular presentations at Committee eg police • Appointment of Town Centre Manager co-funded by District Council and The Henley Partnership.

Principle 3 Standards of conduct and behaviour

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

Requirement in Framework	Evidence
<p>a) Ensuring authority members and officers exercise leadership in ways that exemplify high standards for conduct and effective governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Councillors have signed the Code of Conduct. • Professionally qualified Town Clerk able to give advice on matters relating to Code of Conduct. • Council, Standing and Sub Committee meetings are attended by a professional paid member of staff. • Every agenda has an item for Councillors to declare their interests. • Staff are expected to similarly declare an interest in matters personally or prejudicially affecting them. • There is a complaints handling guidance document available for download on the website. • There is a whistleblowing policy on the website.
<p>b) Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Clerk advises Councillors at all meetings to enable effective decision making. • Staff and Councillors working jointly on projects through working groups.

Principle 4 Internal control, decision making and managing risk

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

Requirement in Framework	Evidence
<p>a) Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited delegation so that majority of decisions are taken by Full Council which includes opportunity for public question time. • No confidential minutes of Council, Committee, Sub Committee meetings. • Council maintains a whistle-blowing policy, and has an established Complaints procedure. • Council embraces ethos of Freedom of Information Act in allowing access to its records.
<p>b) Having good quality information, advice and support to ensure that services are delivered effectively and are what the community wants / needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors are representatives on a number of community bodies. • Standing agenda item at Full Council for reports from community (outside) bodies. • A Committee Administrator and the Town Clerk attend meetings of the Full Council. • The Town Clerk also attends meetings of committees and many sub-committees.
<p>c) Ensuring that effective risk management system is in place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff undertaken health and safety training. • Health and safety policy, including requirements for risk assessments revised 2011. • A Strategic Risk Assessment is completed annually. Latest Assessment approved at Full Council on 1st April 2014.
<p>d) Using their legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in their area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual budget provision made for s137 activities. • Third party legal advice used as appropriate. • Court action to protect Council assets. • Membership of NALC, OALC and SLCC.
<p>e) Ensuring that financial statements are accurate and that internal control processes are effective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unaudited Financial Statements prepared from monthly figures approved at Council meetings. • Annual Return completed including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) Section 1 - Accounting Statement. ii) Section 2 - Annual Governance Statement acknowledging responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control iii) Section 3 – External Auditor Certificate indicating that an audit of the Annual Return and supporting information has been completed iv) Section 4 – Annual Internal Audit Report confirming that a selective assessment of compliance with relevant procedures and controls has been carried out.

Principle 5 Capacity and Capability

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

Requirement in Framework	Evidence
<p>a) Making sure members and officers have the skills, knowledge, and experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member and staff training budget. • A training & development plan is in place. • Training actively promoted. • Invitations to key speakers at Council meetings eg Head of Planning for planning update. • Circulation of wider regional and national issues through newsletter so Councillors aware of decision making context
<p>b) Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance as individuals and a group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual appraisal including identifying training needs. • Committee Administrators are encouraged to take Working with your Council course. • Staff meetings and occasional Committee Administrator only meetings to review Standing Orders, conduct at meetings. Team approach to Committee Administrators managing Committees – primary and secondary responsibilities. • New staff recruited with full job description and person specification.
<p>c) 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</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual rotation of Mayor • All Councillors eligible to participate in Committees • All Chairman / Vice Chairman of Committees reviewed annually; active management of Vice Chairman role for training purposes.

Principle 6 Public Accountability

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

Requirement in Framework	Evidence
Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive accountability relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public participation at all meetings of the Council and its committees • Majority of decision making held in public • No confidential Council / Committee minutes • Public / stakeholder invited on working parties. Public consultation events when appropriate • Press attendance at meetings • Annual Town Meeting • Informative and user friendly website to publish and share relevant information with the community, including full meeting agendas with associated reports, and minutes of all Committees and Full Council.
Take an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly or by the authority, in partnership or by commissioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public participation at all meetings of the Council and its committees • Majority of decision making held in public • No confidential Council / Committee minutes • Public / stakeholder invited on working parties. Public consultation events when appropriate
Making best use of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meet responsibility to staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff entitled to attend Council and Committee meetings. Staff participation in working groups. Face to face contact with Councillors / Mayor
Making available to the public annual audited financial statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of the latest audited financial statements kept on website • Announcement made in local press when latest financial statements are available • Members of the public can obtain copies of financial statements from Council offices