

Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority

Local Code of Corporate Governance



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INTRODUCTION

The Authority has a corporate governance framework in place which is aimed at ensuring that we are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. The corporate governance framework comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values through which we direct and controls our functions, and through which we account to, engage with and, where appropriate lead our communities.

The Authority's corporate governance framework is based upon guidance jointly issued by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and recommended as best practice.

The framework is based upon the following six core principles:

- Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area;
- Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles;
- Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour;
- Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk;
- Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective;
- Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

Each of these six core principles have supporting principles with associated requirements and the following table sets out how the Authority aims to meet these requirements.

Annual Governance Review

The Authority conducts, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of the corporate governance framework including the system of internal control.

A Corporate Governance Steering Group (CGSG) has been established to lead this review. Membership of the CGSG is as follows:

- Deputy Chief Fire Officer
- Finance Manager
- Human Resources Manager

A report on the findings and recommendations arising from the review is presented to the Authority and Governance Committee.

Core 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 - We are active members of community area fora and in addition our Strategic Community Safety Plan 2011 – 2015 sets out explicitly our planned key actions and performance targets for *creating the safest community*.

| Aspects of Corporate Governance to Be Achieved by Authority to Reflect Best Practice | Practical measures the Authority has taken to reflect compliance | Documents/ Processes in Place to Support Compliance |
|---|---|--|
| <p>1. Exercising strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the authority's purpose and vision and its intended outcome for citizens and services users</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further promote our 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 that is understood and agreed by all parties • Publish an annual report on a timely basis to communicate the Authority's activities, achievements, financial position and performance • Evaluate and review partnerships | <p>Strategic Community Safety Plan District/Station Plans Departmental Level 3 plans Integrated Risk Management Plan</p> <p>Annual Corporate Governance Review Audit Commission Reviews Reviews by Other Inspectorates</p> <p>Partnership Agreements Partnerships Procedure</p> <p>Annual Report Annual Statement of Accounts Strategic Community Safety Plan Summary</p> <p>Evaluation Library (intranet)</p> |

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| <p>2. Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service whether directly, or in partnership, or by commissioning</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider 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 • A project evaluation toolkit has been introduced to assess quality of service provision • Effective arrangements to identify and deal with failure in service delivery are in place | <p>Integrated Risk Management Plan 'After the fire' Survey Corporate Consultation Strategy Strategic Community Safety Plan Evaluation of performance against the National Indicator Set</p> <p>Project Evaluation Toolkit and Library</p> <p>Operational Assurance Team Standard Operating Procedures Monitoring Officers</p> |

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| <p>3 Ensuring that the authority makes the best use of resources and that tax payers and service users receive excellent value for money</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value for money is measured and the results considered prior to making decisions. Information needed to review value for money and performance effectively is available to managers and the Authority. The Authority also measures the environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions. | <p>Value for Money Framework Annual Audits Quarterly performance reports Annual Report and statement of accounts Authority Reports SMT Reports Efficiency strategy Environmental Strategy Evaluation Toolkit and Library</p> |

Core Principle 2 - Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles - All Authority members and key officer roles and functions are set out in the Authority's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, there is a protocol on member / employee relations and an agreed set of organisational values underpinning all of the Authority's work.

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| <p>1. 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</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Authority does not require an executive committee however a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of the scrutiny function is set out including its approach towards putting this into practice. A clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of Authority members, members generally and of senior officers is set out. | <p>Standing Orders and Financial Regulations</p> <p>Standing Orders and Financial Regulations Delegation Scheme Codes of Conduct Job Descriptions Role Maps</p> |
| <p>2. 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"> 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 has been agreed and is monitored and updated when required. The Chief Fire Officer is responsible and accountable to the Authority for all aspects of operational management. | <p>Standing Orders and Financial Regulations</p> <p>Delegation Scheme</p> <p>Delegation Scheme Roll Map Job Description Performance Management</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protocols have been developed to ensure that the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer negotiate their respective roles early in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained • A senior officer is 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 | <p>Standing Orders and Financial Regulations Code of Conduct for Members Code of Conduct for Officers Roll Maps Job Descriptions</p> <p>The Finance Officer is the Authority's Section 151 Officer. The Constitution sets out his functions as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring lawfulness and financial prudence of decision making • Administration of financial affairs • Contributing to corporate management • Providing advice • Giving financial information |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A different senior officer is responsible to the Authority for ensuring that agreed procedures are followed and that all applicable statutes, regulations are complied with. | <p>The Deputy Clerk is the Authority's Monitoring Officer. The Constitution sets out functions of Monitoring Officer as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintaining the Constitution Ensuring lawfulness and fairness of decision making Supporting the Standards Committee Receiving reports Conducting investigations Proper officer for access to information Advising whether executive decisions are within the budget and policy framework Providing advice |

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| <p>3. Ensuring relationships between the authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protocols have been developed to ensure effective communication between members and officers in their respective roles. • A Pay Policy has been agreed which sets out the terms and conditions for remuneration of officers including an effective structure for managing the review process. In addition, Members allowances are reviewed by an effective remuneration panel as appropriate. • Effective mechanisms exist to monitor service delivery. | <p>Monitoring Officer Protocol Member and Employee Codes of Conduct</p> <p>Members Allowances Scheme</p> <p>National Joint Council for Local Government Services National Agreement On Pay And Conditions Of Service Human Resources Committee Pay Policy</p> <p>Performance Management systems Integrated Risk Management Plan District Plans Station Plans Monitoring Officers</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Authority'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 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - there is clarity about the legal status of the partnership - representatives or organisations both understand and make clear to all other partners the extent of their authority to bind their organisation to partner decisions. | <p>Strategic Community Safety Plan Integrated Risk Management Plan Station Plans Communication Strategy Consultation Strategy Value for Money Framework Budget Framework</p> <p>Partnership Agreements</p> <p>Data Sharing Protocols</p> <p>Partnership Procedure</p> |

Core Principle 3: Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour - All Authority Members and staff are required to act in accordance with codes of conduct and high standards are promoted across the Authority and with its partners.

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| <p>1. Ensuring authority members and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Authority leadership sets a tone for the organisation by creating a climate of openness, support and respect • Standards of conduct and personal behaviour expected of members and staff, work between members and staff and between the Authority, its partners and the community are defined and communicated through codes of conduct and protocols • Arrangements are in place to ensure that members and employees of the Authority are not influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest in dealing with different stakeholders. The Authority has in place appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice. | <p>Members' Code of Conduct Employees' Code of Conduct Performance Management Framework</p> <p>Employee Personal Development System Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy Whistle Blowing Policy Protocol on Member / Employee Relations</p> <p>Members' Code of Conduct Employees' Code of Conduct Financial Regulations Standing Orders Declarations of Gifts and Interests</p> |

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| <p>2. Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared values including leadership values both for the Authority and staff reflecting public expectations have been developed. These have been communicated with members, staff, the community and partners. Arrangements are in place to ensure that procedures and operations are designed in conformity with appropriate ethical standards, and monitor their continuing effectiveness in practice. An effective standards committee is in place. | <p>Members' Code of Conduct Employees' Code of Conduct Fire and Rescue Service National Values Vision Leadership and Development Programme</p> <p>Members' Code of Conduct Employees' Code of Conduct Ethical Audit</p> <p>Standing Orders sets out role and functions of Governance Committee Committee Management and Information System</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared values 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, a set of values has been agreed against which decision making and actions can be judged. Such values must be demonstrated by partners' behaviour both individually and collectively | <p>Members' Code of Conduct Employees' Code of Conduct Integrated Personal Development System Ethic Audit Governance Audit</p> <p>Partnership Agreements</p> <p>Partnership Procedure</p> <p>Data sharing protocols</p> |

Core Principle 4: Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk -

The Authority conducts all business in an open and transparent manner, and has formal processes for declaring relationships or interests to ensure that decision-making is transparent and objective. There is a robust system of scrutiny and effective arrangements for managing risks.

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| 1. Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An effective scrutiny function which encourages constructive challenge and enhances the Authority's performance overall and of any organisation for which it is responsible in in place.• Open and effective mechanisms for documenting evidence for decisions and recording the criteria, rationale and considerations on which decisions are based have been implemented.• Arrangements are in place to safeguard members and employees against conflicts of interest and to ensure that they continue to operate in practice. | A range of scrutiny committees are in place including: Policy and Performance Committee Human Resources Committee Governance Committee Standing Orders and Financial Regulations Committee and Authority Management and Information System Members' Code of Conduct Employees' Code of Conduct Code of Corporate Governance Whistle blowing Protocols Register of Gifts and Interests |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An effective audit committee which is independent is being maintained. Effective transparent and accessible arrangements for dealing with complaints have been implemented. | <p>Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy Governance Committee Independent Chair Independent Member Development for all Members</p> <p>Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure Monitoring Officer role</p> |
| <p>2. 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"> Those making decisions, whether for the Authority or a partnership, are provided with information that is fit for the purpose – relevant, timely and gives clear explanations of technical issues and their implications Professional advice on matters that have legal or financial implications is available and recorded well in advance of decision making and used appropriately. | <p>Member Induction, Learning and Development Programme Standing Orders and Financial Regulations Delegation Scheme Results of consultation exercises Role of Finance Officer and Deputy Clerk</p> |

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| 3. Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Risk management is embedded into the culture of the organisation, with members and managers at all levels recognising that risk management is part of their job • Arrangements are in place for whistle blowing to which staff and all those contracting with the Authority have access | Risk Management Policy Statement and Strategy Risk Management Framework Risk Management Learning and Development for Members and Officers Internal Audit and Risk Management Protocol Standing Orders and Financial Regulations External Audit – Use of Resources Whistle blowing policy and procedures Compliments, comments and Complaints Policy and Procedures |

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| <p>4. Using their legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in their area</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Authority actively recognises the limits of lawful activity placed on it by, for example the ultra vires doctrine but also strives to utilise powers to the full benefit of our communities. • The Authority recognises the limits of lawful action and observes both the specific requirements of legislation and the general responsibilities placed on the Authority by public law. • The Authority observe all specific legislative requirements placed upon it, 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. | <p>Standing Orders and Financial Regulations Monitoring Officer Protocol Audit and Inspection Letter Finance Officer role Deputy Clerk role</p> |

Core Principle 5: Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective -

The Authority recognises the importance of having highly skilled and motivated Members and staff to deliver its priorities and to sustain public confidence in its services. The Authority is committed to the development of Members and staff skills, knowledge and performance through programmes of induction, training and development.

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| <p>1. Making sure that members and officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide induction and training programmes tailored to individual needs and opportunities for members and officers to update their knowledge on a regular basis. • We 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 organization. | <p>Member and Officer Induction Programme Integrated Personal Development System Member Learning and Development Programme Workforce Development Plan Investors in People accreditation Stonewall Workplace Equality Index</p> <p>Delegation Scheme Roles and responsibilities defined Finance Officer and Deputy Clerk advisors to the Authority</p> |
| <p>2. Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance, as individuals and as a group</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills required by members and officers are regularly assessed and the Authority is committed to develop those skills to enable roles to be carried out effectively. | <p>Member and Officer Induction Programme Integrated Personal Development System Member Learning and Development Programme Workforce Development Plan</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">The Authority actively develops skills on a continuing basis to improve performance including the ability to scrutinise and challenge and to recognise when outside expert advice is needed ensuring that effective arrangements are in place for reviewing the performance of the Service as a whole and of individual members and agreeing an action plan which aims to address any training or development needs. | Investors in People Gold award and 'Champion' status Member Learning and Development Programme Leadership Programme Stonewall Workplace Equality Index Working Towards Excellence Equality Framework for Fire and Rescue Services |

Core Principle 6: Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability - The Authority has a consultation framework aimed at ensuring the community is given the opportunity to be involved in, and influence, policy-making, service delivery and evaluation in order to continually improve services.

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| <p>1. Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive accountability relationships</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Authority makes clear its role and responsibilities to Members, staff and the community. • Stakeholders to whom we are accountable are considered and the effectiveness of the relationships assessed with appropriate changes made. • An annual report on all activities including scrutiny functions is published. | <p>Strategic Community Safety Plan Integrated Risk Management Plan</p> <p>Local Strategic Partnerships Regular User Surveys Consultation Plan</p> <p>Annual Performance Report Annual Governance Report Freedom of Information Publication Scheme</p> |
| <p>2. Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly by the authority, in partnership or by commissioning</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear channels of communication are in place with all sections of the community and other stakeholders including monitoring arrangements to ensure that they operate effectively. • Meetings are held in public unless there are good reasons for confidentiality. | <p>Communications Strategy Focus Groups 'After the incident' Survey Other user surveys</p> <p>Members of the public may attend all meetings subject to the exceptions set out in the Standing Orders</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements are in place to enable the Authority to engage with all sections of the community effectively. These arrangements recognise that different sections of the community have different priorities and establish explicit processes for dealing with these competing demands. • A clear policy on the types of issues it will meaningfully consult on or engage with the public and service which includes a feedback mechanism for those consultees to demonstrate what has changed as a result has been established. • A performance plan is published on an annual basis 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 | <p>Consultation Strategy Focus Groups Community Safety Advocates 'After the fire' Survey User Surveys Community engagement Plan Freedom of Information Publication Scheme</p> <p>Consultation Policy User Surveys Community Engagement Plan Freedom of Information Publication Scheme</p> <p>Annual report Annual performance report Annual Statement of Accounts Strategic Community Safety Plan Integrated Risk Management Plan</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Authority ensures that it is open and accessible to the community, service users and its staff and 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 • All outwardly facing projects we deliver are evaluated by asking local people and stakeholders | Standing Orders and Financial Regulations Community Fire Stations Partnership Agreements Partnership Procedure Data sharing Agreements and protocols Community engagement plan Performance Plan Freedom of Information Publication Scheme Evaluation Toolkit and Library |
| 3. Making best use of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meet responsibility to staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear policy on how staff and their representatives are consulted and involved in decision making has been implemented • We clearly publish results of consultation and evaluation involving staff | Joint consultative Committee Investors in People Representative Body Protocol Evaluation Library |

Code of Corporate Governance

Glossary of Terms

Authority Risk Management Group

A group of senior officers of the Authority tasked with ensuring that the major strategic risks of the Authority are properly identified, managed and minimised.

Consultation Strategy

A strategy to obtain the views of stakeholders on the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of services and use these results to inform the process of continuous improvement.

Delegation Scheme

An agreed document setting out the various powers delegated by the Authority to appropriate Committees, Members and Officers.

Freedom of Information Publication Scheme

This provides details of the classes of information published by the Authority, how the public can access it and whether a charge is levied for accessing the information. The information will be made available progressively between now and 2005.

Financial Regulations

Rules of procedure governing the way in which management of the Authority's financial affairs will be conducted.

Investors in People

Investors in People is a national award which recognises the commitment of an organisation to developing its people in order to achieve its corporate objectives and to improve performance.

Monitoring Officer

The Monitoring Officer has the responsibility for advising on the legality of the Authority's actions. The Authority has appointed the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, City of Sunderland, as the appropriate officer.

Members Code of Conduct

Agreed Code set out in the Standing Orders governing how Members must conduct themselves whilst carrying out Authority business or acting as a representative of the Authority.

Officers Code of Conduct

Agreed Code detailing the standards of conduct expected of all employees whilst carrying out their work for the Authority.

Race, Gender and Disability Equality Schemes

The document that details the Authority's plans to achieve race, gender and disability equality at work and our commitment to support a diverse workforce serving a diverse community.

Standing Orders

Rules of procedure governing the way in which the Authority operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which must be followed to ensure all our interactions (including procurement) are efficient, transparent and accountable to the community we serve.

Strategic Community Safety Plan

A document setting out in detail for the Authority the plans, policies, resource allocations and performance targets for the next five years, including detailed plans for the forthcoming year, both corporately and on a departmental basis.

Integrated Risk Management Plan

A document identifying the major strategic risks to the Authority.

Governance Committee

A Committee of the Authority set up to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by Members.

Section 151 Responsibilities

Under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, the authority must appoint one of its Officers as responsible for the proper financial administration of its affairs. The Authority has appointed the Finance Officer, City of Sunderland, as the appropriate Officer.

Whistle blowing Policy

A policy adopted by the Authority setting out how employees and the public can report matters of concern to the appropriate Officers within the Authority on a confidential basis.

