



TRAFFORD COUNCIL

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CODE

June 2013

Trafford Council Corporate Governance Code

1. What do we mean by governance?

Governance is about how local government bodies ensure that they are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

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.

2. Trafford's commitment

Trafford Council, as a public organisation, is committed to ensuring the highest possible standards of governance in order to fulfil its responsibilities:

1. To engage in effective partnerships and provide leadership for and with the community.
2. To ensure the delivery of high quality local services whether directly or in partnership or by commissioning.
3. To perform a stewardship role which protects the interests of local people and makes the best use of resources
4. To develop citizenship and local democracy.

Openness, inclusion, integrity and accountability are fundamental principles by which the Council operates.

3. The Governance Framework

In order to ensure the fulfilment of its commitment the Council operates a governance framework which provides a structure to support the Council's approach to governance.

Trafford Council has based its governance framework on the guidance produced in the publication 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives & Senior Managers (SOLACE). In addition, further related guidance documents issued by CIPFA such as "the Role of the Chief Financial Officer" and the "Role of the Head of Internal Audit" are also applied.

The CIPFA / SOLACE framework sets out 6 core principles for good governance.

- Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on the 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.

Section 7 of the Code sets out in detail how the Authority is committed to meet the requirements of this framework.

4. How we will ensure that we deliver on these principles of good governance

Maintain a local code of corporate governance

In accordance with best practice requirements Trafford Council maintains a local code of corporate governance which sets out the key systems, policies and procedures that comprise the Authority's governance framework. This document will be reviewed and updated regularly as required, and approved by the Corporate Management Team and Accounts and Audit Committee, to reflect any changes in governance arrangements.

Undertake an annual review of governance arrangements

The Audit and Assurance Service is responsible for undertaking an annual review to evaluate the position against the commitments set out in the Council's Corporate Governance Code, the effectiveness of governance arrangements and to ensure continuing compliance with best practice.

Where appropriate, action plans will be produced to ensure any significant weaknesses identified are addressed and there is continuous improvement in the system of corporate governance.

Findings and recommendations from this exercise will be reported via the Corporate Management Team. This will be used to inform the production of the Annual Governance Statement, with significant issues reported publicly through this process.

Report publicly on compliance with governance arrangements in the Annual Governance Statement

The Authority will produce an Annual Governance Statement (AGS) in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011. This will be published and will accompany the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts. It will state what arrangements the Council has in place to ensure the effectiveness of its governance framework and how the Council has followed its stated governance

principles. It will also highlight any areas the Council considers to require significant improvement; and outline the actions planned to address them.

The Accounts and Audit Committee (through an appointed working group) will review the robustness of the AGS. The Chief Executive and the Leader are required to sign off the AGS.

5. Responsibilities

Every Council officer and member has a responsibility to ensure their personal conduct and the organisation's governance arrangements are always of the highest standard possible.

Senior managers have a responsibility for reviewing governance standards in their areas of responsibility and for identifying and implementing any necessary improvement actions. Improvement actions should be reflected in the appropriate business plans.

The Chief Executive and Leader will ensure that an annual review is completed of corporate governance arrangements and give assurances on their adequacy in the published Annual Governance Statement, accompanying the Statement of Accounts.

The Corporate Management Team will ensure that the Corporate Governance Code is reviewed regularly to reflect ongoing developments and planned improvements to the framework; and authorise any amendments. Significant changes will be referred to the Council's Executive for approval.

6. Communication

The Corporate Governance Code and Annual Governance Statement will be reported publicly with a copy available on the Authority's website.

7. Trafford Council's Governance Framework

Principle 1 Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on the outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area	
Supporting Principle	How the Council meets the requirements
<p><i>1.1 Exercising strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the authority's purpose and vision and its intended outcome for citizens and service users</i></p>	<p>The Council as the lead partner in the Trafford Partnership has supported the development of the long term vision for Trafford as set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy "Vision 2021: a blueprint". This document describes the key objectives which underpin the work of the partnership.</p> <p>The Council reviews its priorities and implications for its governance arrangements on a regular basis. In response to the Localism Agenda the Council has updated its Vision 2015 aligning it to the changing way services will be delivered in localities and through partnership working. The Council's corporate priorities are reviewed annually and incorporated within the Annual Delivery Plan.</p> <p>The Council publishes details of its strategy, financial position and performance on its website trafford.gov.uk. Information in relation to partnership activity and performance is reported through the Trafford Partnership website traffordpartnership.org.uk</p>

<p><i>1.2 Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service whether directly, in partnership, or by commissioning</i></p>	<p>The Authority has put arrangements in place to measure and review the quality of service for users including mechanisms to identify and deal with failure in service delivery. Robust management information is available to enable monitoring of service quality effectively and regularly.</p> <p>The Council operates a robust and effective Performance Management Framework. The Annual Delivery Plan sets out the key deliverables for the coming year supported by individual Directorate and Service business plans, which connect service objectives and associated actions to the community vision and corporate priorities.</p> <p>The Corporate Management Team and Executive receive regular monitoring and exception reports on the achievement of corporate objectives. In addition, a monthly performance report is issued to Corporate Directors and Executive Portfolio holders containing performance data specific to their remit</p> <p>The Transformation, Performance & Resources Group is responsible for driving the Transformation Programme, and to ensure successful realisation of all savings, the performance of the programme is monitored by the Transformation Board on a monthly basis; this board also receives regular monitoring and exception reports relating to the achievement of project deliverables and benefits.</p> <p>The Council has a strategic approach to Customer Service, to be monitored through the Customer Strategic Delivery Group. The Council has an approved Corporate Complaints Policy and guidance.</p> <p>The Council's Contract Procedure Rules set out the agreed protocols for procurement and tendering for contracts including post contract arrangements.</p>
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<p><i>1.3 Ensuring that the authority makes best use of resources and that tax payers and service users receive excellent value for money.</i></p>	<p>Low Council Tax and Value For Money is one of the Council's Corporate priorities. Trafford was one of the first councils to introduce a Medium Term Financial Plan and Strategy, highlighted by CIPFA as good practice. The Authority consults annually on its budget proposals and these are subject to scrutiny review.</p> <p>The council has implemented a Transformation Programme which is supporting the organisation to review and re-design existing functions and services areas to improve service delivery, achieve savings and establish the infrastructure required to manage the future financial challenges. The Council hosts the AGMA Procurement Hub and has a defined Procurement Strategy.</p> <p>The authority has robust Budgetary Control Procedures in place. Revenue Budget Monitoring reports are reported to the Corporate Management Team and the Executive on a monthly basis to enable monitoring of income and expenditure levels, to ensure that commitments are within available resource levels and corrective action is taken when necessary.</p> <p>The Council's financial framework keeps its commitments in balance with available resources. There are arrangements in place to ensure compliance with CIPFA's Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities and CIPFA's Treasury Management Code. The Council has a clearly defined Capital Programme and Treasury Management Strategy. The capital budget is monitored and reported to the CMT and Executive each quarter.</p>
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Principle 2 Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.	
Supporting Principle	How the Council meets the requirements
<i>2.1 Ensuring effective leadership throughout the authority and being clear about the executive and non executive functions and the roles and responsibilities of the scrutiny function.</i>	<p>The Council has adopted a Constitution which provides a clear statement of how it operates, defining the respective roles and responsibilities of the Executive and non Executive members.</p> <p>Article 15 of this document sets out the protocols and the role of the Monitoring Officer to monitor and review the operation of the constitution. The Council reviews elements of the Constitution each year at its annual meeting.</p>
<i>2.2 Ensuring a constructive working relationship exists between elected members and officers and that the responsibilities of authority members and officers are carried out to a high standard.</i>	<p>Part 3 of the Constitution sets out responsibility for carrying out the Council’s functions, at committee level and delegation to individual executive members. Part 4 sets out the Scheme of Delegation to Officers. The sections on delegated authority are reviewed and approved annually.</p> <p>The Council has appointed a Chief Executive responsible and accountable to the Authority for all aspects of operational management. The functions of the Head of Paid Service, Monitoring Officer and Chief Financial Officer are set out in Article 12 of the Constitution. .</p> <p>The Council has designated the Director of Finance as Chief Finance Officer in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. Periodic assessment is undertaken to ensure compliance with the governance standards as set out in the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (2010).</p> <p>The Council’s Director of Legal & Democratic Services is designated as “Monitoring Officer”. It is the function of the Monitoring Officer to oversee and monitor compliance with legislation and the Council’s established policies and procedures.</p>

2.3 Ensuring relationships between the authority and its partners and the public are clear so that each know what to expect of each other

The Authority has adopted **Member Officer Relations Protocols** which provide guidance to help build good working relations between members and officers.

The **Officer Employment Procedure Rules** set out the terms and conditions for remuneration of employees. A **Pay Policy Statement** has been published which provides transparency regarding the Council's approach to setting pay for its employees.

The Council has agreed a **Members Allowance Scheme** setting out the level of financial allowance that members may receive.

When working in partnership, members are clear about their roles and responsibilities individually and collectively in relation to the partnership and the authority. The Council Leader is the Chair of the **Trafford Partnership Executive** which has defined Terms of Reference in place. A framework for **Accountability, Governance and Performance Management** has been adopted by the Partnership.

In accordance with the requirements of the Health & Social Care Act 2012, a **Health & Wellbeing Board** has been established. Supporting this, the Council has in place a number of strategic partnership arrangements governed through **Section 75 Partnership Agreements**.

Principle 3 Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour	
Supporting Principle	How the Council meets the requirements
<p><i>3.1 Ensuring authority members and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance</i></p>	<p>In accordance with requirements of the Localism Act 2011, the Council has reviewed and adopted its Members Code of Conduct incorporating procedures for notification of disclosable pecuniary interests and hearing procedures. Protocols set out the arrangements for dealing with complaints about the code of conduct for members.</p> <p>All staff are required to abide by an Employee Code of Conduct. It is a requirement for all new employees to read and sign up to this as part of the staff induction procedure. Responsibility for the regulation of employee conduct is set out in the Council's Disciplinary Policy. A range of Human Resource policies in place are designed to help ensure the proper conduct of staff and to ensure the workforce is appropriately skilled to deliver the Council's aims and objectives.</p> <p>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 and put in place appropriate arrangements to ensure they continue to operate in practice.</p> <p>The authority has an Anti Fraud & Corruption Strategy and procedures for the reporting of suspected fraudulent activities.</p> <p>To ensure compliance with Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation, the Council has adopted a policy, procedures and a dedicated Corporate Information Officer to provide support and guidance to employees.</p> <p>Users of the Trafford ICT network are required to sign up to the authority's Acceptable Use Policy to confirm acceptance of agreed responsibilities and standards to prevent misuse of equipment or networks.</p>

<p><i>3.2 Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective.</i></p>	<p>The Council has adopted a set of Corporate Values embedded within its policies, procedures and strategies. The Council’s competency framework outlines the organisation’s values and the behaviours expected of employees when fulfilling their roles.</p> <p>The organisation’s shared values act as a guide for decision making and as a basis for developing positive and trusting relationships within the Authority.</p> <p>The Authority has implemented arrangements to ensure that systems and processes are designed in conformity with appropriate ethical standards, and for monitoring their continuing effectiveness in practice.</p> <p>The Council has adopted a “Local Code of Corporate Governance” in accordance with the CIPFA/SOLACE framework for Corporate Governance. The Council undertakes an annual review of the Code of Corporate Governance and associated arrangements.</p> <p>The Standards Committee, with an independent Chairman, has within its role, the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct of members and the responsibility to oversee the effective operation of the Code of Conduct for Members.</p> <p>The financial management of the Council is conducted in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules incorporated within Part 4 of the Constitution.</p> <p>Systems and processes for financial administration, financial control and protection of the Authority’s resources and assets are designed in conformity with appropriate ethical standards and monitor their continuing effectiveness in practice.</p>
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Principle 4 Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk	
Supporting Principle	How the Council meets the requirements
<p><i>4.1 Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny.</i></p>	<p>The Council has developed detailed procedures for political decision making. There are clear processes for recording and monitoring executive decisions in order to ensure compliance with legislation, internal policies and procedures, and that expenditure is lawful. The Executive has to make decisions in line with the Council’ overall policies and budget. Any decisions to be made outside this framework must be referred to full Council.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Committees provide the scrutiny of decisions made, policy development and implementation and can “call in” decisions made by the Executive, or on their behalf with delegated authority, to challenge whether the decision has been made appropriately and ask the Executive to reconsider it if necessary.</p> <p>The Council has an Internal Audit function which is required to operate to the standards set out in the CIPFA “Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government” (these being replaced by the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards from 2013/14). The Internal Audit function is responsible for monitoring the quality and effectiveness of systems of internal control.</p> <p>The Council has an Accounts and Audit Committee whose terms of reference require it to monitor and evaluate the Council’s corporate governance and internal control arrangements. The Committee operates in accordance with CIPFA guidance for Audit Committees.</p>

<p><i>4.2 Having good quality information, advice and support to ensure that services are delivered effectively and are what the community wants / needs</i></p>	<p>Part 4 of the Constitution sets out the Access to Information Procedure Rules including the rights to attend meetings and access summons, agenda and reports. Where major ‘key’ decisions are to be discussed or made, these are set out in a notice published at least 28 days before a decision is made.</p> <p>Those making decisions, whether for the Authority or in partnership, are provided with information that is fit for purpose –clear, timely, relevant, accurate and complete and gives clear explanations of issues and implications on both a financial and non financial basis.</p> <p>The Authority seeks timely professional advice on matters that have legal or financial implications, which is recorded in advance of decision making and used appropriately.</p>
<p><i>4.3 Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place</i></p>	<p>Risk management is embedded into the culture of the organisation. The Council has a Risk Management Policy Statement, Strategy and protocol for monitoring and reporting risk. These explain the methodology which provides a comprehensive framework for the management of risk throughout the Council.</p> <p>The Council’s Strategic Risk Register sets out the key risks the Council is likely to face in achieving its high level corporate objectives. In accordance with the Council’s Risk Management Policy Statement, the Corporate Management Team (CMT) provides regular quarterly updates on the strategic risk environment and in particular performance in managing the specific risks.</p> <p>The Council has adopted a Confidential Reporting Code and supporting guidance. which sets out the whistle blowing protocols for reporting, responding to and monitoring of issues of concern.</p>

<p><i>4.4 Using their legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in their area</i></p>	<p>The Constitution sets out how the Council will operate to deliver services and perform its functions within the wider legal framework. Part 3 sets out Responsibility for Functions at committee and executive portfolio level. It also sets out the proper officer arrangements for delivering specific legislative requirements.</p> <p>The Authority actively recognises the limits of lawful activity placed on it but also strives to utilise powers to the full benefit of communities. It recognises the limits of lawful action and observes both the specific requirements of legislation and the general responsibilities placed on authorities by public law.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer will, after consulting with the Head of Paid Service and the Chief Finance Officer, report to the full Council or to the Executive, in relation to an Executive function, if she considers that any proposal, decision or omission would give rise to unlawfulness or has given rise to maladministration. Such a report will have the effect of stopping the proposal or decision being implemented until the report has been considered</p> <p>The Director of Finance, as the Council's Chief Finance Officer, has responsibility for the legality of the Council's financial transactions.</p> <p>Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that they establish and maintain effective standards of governance, complying with legislation, the Council's Constitution, Standing Orders and Financial Procedure Rules.</p>
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Principle 5 Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective	
Supporting Principle	How the Council meets the requirements
<p><i>5.1 Making sure that members and officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their role.</i></p>	<p>The Authority provides induction programmes tailored to individual needs and opportunities for members and officers to update their knowledge on a regular basis.</p> <p>Member Induction Training is undertaken each year. Member training needs are regularly reviewed and a Training & Development Plan for Members is in place. The Council has committed to the re-assessment of the North West Level 1 Charter for Elected Member Development.</p> <p>All new employees are required to complete a Corporate Induction Module. The Council has developed Directorate and cross-council Training & Development Plans supported by a suite of e-learning solutions available to meet the organisational skills development needs.</p> <p>The Authority puts arrangements in place to ensure that statutory officers have the skills, resources and support necessary to perform effectively in their roles and that these roles are properly understood throughout the organisation.</p> <p>The ongoing Transformation Programme is also taking into account consideration of training and development needs across the Council and individual service areas for change management and adopts a skills transfer approach to support colleagues to develop project management and business analysis skills.</p>

<p><i>5.2 Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance as individuals and as a group</i></p>	<p>The Authority assesses the skills required by members and officers and makes the commitment to develop these skills to enable roles to be carried out effectively. Skills are developed on a continuing basis to improve performance, including the ability to scrutinise and challenge and to recognise when outside expert advice is needed.</p> <p>There is a behavioural based competency framework and staff appraisal process in place which supports the cascade of corporate objectives and values through to individual employee targets. All staff are required to complete a Personal Development Review annually.</p> <p>Members are requested to complete a Personal Development Review which is used to inform the development of their training plan.</p> <p>The Council has taken a strategic approach to Absence Management. Ongoing performance is monitored as part of the Authority's Annual Delivery Plan.</p>
<p><i>5.3 Encouraging new talent for membership of the authority so that best use can be made of the individuals skills and resources in balancing continuity and renewal</i></p>	<p>The Council has a Leadership Development Programme aimed at developing and nurturing leadership talent within the organisation.</p> <p>The Council operates an Internal Apprenticeship Scheme providing training and mentoring opportunities for Trafford residents.</p> <p>There are effective arrangements 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 including recruitment of a number of Community Ambassadors with a role in identifying and prioritising local needs and representing residents on Locality Boards.</p>

Principle 6	
Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability	
Supporting Principle	How the Council meets the requirements
<i>6.1 Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships and developing constructive accountability relationships</i>	<p>The Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. The public have a number of rights in their dealings with the Council. These are set out in more detail in Article 3.</p> <p>The Council has implemented detailed guidance and procedures for staff to ensure that an Equality Impact Assessment is undertaken in relation to all proposed changes in policy, strategy, functions and internal structures.</p> <p>Scrutiny Function – See supporting principle 4.1</p>
<i>6.2 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.</i>	<p>The Authority as a whole is open and accessible to the community, service users and its staff and has made a commitment to openness and transparency in all its dealings, subject only to those specific circumstances where it is proper and appropriate to do so.</p> <p>Council decisions are based on public consultation including annual review of the budget proposals. Meetings where key decisions are made and scrutinised are open to the public except where exempt information is disclosed.</p> <p>There are clear channels of communication in place with all sections of the community and other stakeholders e.g. : through the Council website, social media channels and publications distributed to each household in the borough. The Council has a corporate Communications, Publications and Marketing function in place to oversee internal and external communication and ensure these arrangements are operating effectively.</p> <p>The Council’s Neighbourhood Forums provide a public forum to discuss local issues and understand how the Council is working to tackle them.</p> <p>The Council is the lead organisation of the Trafford Partnership, which provides a key role engaging with residents and the community to ensure that priorities and actions at strategic level reflect the needs of local people. . The structure of the partnership is designed to enable</p>

	<p>effective engagement with residents and the community The 3rd Sector Strategy 2011-14 sets out how the Council and its partners support the sector through capacity building and funding support.</p> <p>The Council is compliant with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requirements and has a Publication Scheme in place. In accordance with the government's Open Data requirements details of all invoice payments to suppliers, senior officer salaries and details of members' expense claims are published online.</p> <p>The InfoTrafford website provides free public access to view statistical data about the borough with the aim to provide a tool for community empowerment, decision making and policy development.</p>
<p><i>6.3 Making best use of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meet responsibilities to staff.</i></p>	<p>The Council has in place Joint Consultative Committee arrangements to establish a regular method of consultation between the Council and the Trade Unions enabling input into human resource issues including proposed organisational and policy changes.</p> <p>The Council operates an Employment Committee responsible for determining collective and corporate terms and conditions of employment and approving any changes in human resources policies.</p> <p>The Authority has produced a toolkit for employees and managers in Managing Organisational Change, which provides guidance for restructuring and review in accordance with statutory requirements and current best practice.</p> <p>There are a range of consultation mechanism in place for Council employees including an online forum, network events, focus group and surveys.</p>