

Local Code of Corporate Governance 2023/24 (Amanda Fahey – Assistant Chief Executive / Mario Leo – Corporate Head of Law and Governance)

Synopsis of report:

The Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance ("the Code") is intended to be a living document that is updated periodically to reflect any changes to the Council's governance framework. While the underlying principles of the Code have not changed, the document has been refreshed to ensure it accurately captures the current governance arrangements in place at Runnymede Borough Council alongside an updated format, containing links to underlying documents where practical, making it a more accessible document.

Recommendation(s):

To consider and approve the draft Local Code of Corporate Governance for recommendation to Full Council.

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 In April 2018, the Council adopted a local code of corporate governance (the Code), reflecting guidance contained in the 2016 CIPFA / SOLACE Framework: *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government* and the 2014 CIPFA / IFAC International Framework: *Good Governance in the Public Sector* in order to achieve effective corporate governance¹.
- 1.2 The Code, which is set out in the Council's constitution, is built around seven underlying principles of good governance, and demonstrates how the Council's internal processes and governance framework support the delivery of those principles.
- 1.3 Fundamental to demonstrating good governance is the need to ensure that governance arrangements are up to date and relevant, taking account of the environment in which they operate. The Code should therefore reflect the current strategic documents of the Council, its priorities and the desired outcomes for its communities, with a focus on sustainable economic, societal and environmental outcomes.

2 The Code of Corporate Governance 2023/24

- 2.1 The draft Code of Corporate Governance for 2023/24 is set out at Appendix A.
- 2.2 The Code relates to the governance systems currently in place at the start of the new municipal year 2023/24. It has been updated to reflect strategies and policies introduced since the last refresh of the Code such as the Corporate Business Plan and its five underlying strategies:
 - Climate change
 - Empowering our Communities

¹ CIPFA Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy / SOLACE The Society of Local Government Chief Executives and Senior Managers / IFAC International Federation of Accountants

- Economic Development
- Health and Wellbeing
- Organisational Development

- 2.3 The refreshed Code also incorporates other improvements to the governance system, or updated guidance and regulation affecting the Council, as reflected in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2022/23. Any significant changes noted in the AGS should be incorporated into this underlying framework document, enabling future reviews to be measured against the current system of governance.
- 2.4 Examples included in the AGS 2022/23 are the development of a revised Asset Management Strategy, setting out how the Council manages and maintains its assets and achieves best value from their use, and a new Procurement Strategy including associated policies in respect of Social Value and Sustainable Procurement. These documents should now form part of the underlying governance framework i.e., the Code, as will changes already approved by Full Council as part of the annual review of the Council's Constitution.
- 2.5 Additionally, the format of the Code has been altered slightly to mirror that of the Annual Governance Statement, by including where practical, links to the underlying documents or web pages. This provides supporting information to the reader, without cluttering the main document with so much detail that it obscures the key messages.
- 2.6 The draft Code is to be considered by the Standards and Audit Committee at its meeting on 24th May 2023. Any comments arising from that meeting will be verbally reported to the Corporate Management Committee ahead of its own consideration of the Code.

3 Policy framework implications

- 3.1 The local Code of Corporate Governance supports the policy framework of the Council by bringing together in one document the overarching governance framework of the Council, setting out the Council's commitment to the principles of good governance contained within the Code and the actions and behaviours it expects in the performance of Council duties.
- 3.2 Undertaking a regular review of these governance arrangements ensures that the Code is relevant and up to date and that the Council is holding itself to account against current policies and strategies.

4 Resource implications/Value for Money

- 4.1 While there are no direct financial implications stemming from this report, the local Code of Corporate Governance forms an integral part of the Council's framework of governance and control, influencing the way in which its resources are used to provide desired outcomes for its communities in a sustainable way.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The preparation and publication of a local Code of Corporate Governance is in accordance with guidance set out in Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (CIPFA/SOLACE, 2016) and Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014).

6 Equality Implications

6.1 There are no specific equality implications of this report, other than acknowledgement of the importance of equality matters and how they are addressed as part of the Code.

7 Environmental, Sustainability, Bio-diversity implications

7.1 Again, while there are no specific environmental, sustainability or biodiversity implications contained within this report, the delivery of sustainable outcomes lies at the core of the Council's vision and is a key focus under the Code.

8 Timetable for implementation

8.1 Members are asked to approve the draft Code for recommendation to Corporate Management Committee. Any comments from this Committee will be shared with the Corporate Management Committee before its consideration of the Code. If approved, the Code will then be recommended to Full Council for final adoption in July 2023.

8.2 In order to ensure regular review of the Code moving forward, it is anticipated that the following process will apply in future years:

Timeline for review in 2023/24 for 2024/25 Code

Action:	By whom:	When:
In-year review of Code	Constitution Member Working Party	Aug 2023 – Dec 2024
Consideration of refreshed Code	Standards and Audit Committee	Jan 2024
Consideration of refreshed Code	Corporate Management Committee	Mar 2024
Final adoption of refreshed Code	Full Council	Apr 2024

8.3 This process dovetails with the current practice and timeline for annual review of the Council's Constitution and ensures an up-to-date governance framework is in place at the commencement of each municipal year. This also fits well with the production of the Annual Governance Statement, which in broad terms is a review of how the Council has complied with its code of governance during the past year and is reported to Standards and Audit Committee annually in May, so as to meet regulatory timescales for publication alongside the Council's Statement of Accounts.

9 Conclusions

9.1 The local Code of Corporate Governance sets out the Council's governance framework, its commitment to principles of good governance and the actions and behaviours it expects in the performance of Council duties.

9.2 The draft Code for 2023/24 has been updated to reflect current governance arrangements, while the format has been modified to provide links to underlying documents, where practical, to aid understanding and transparency.

9.3 The Committee is asked to consider the draft Code of Corporate Governance for recommendation to Full Council for adoption.

(To resolve)

Background papers

CIPFA/Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016

CIPFA/IFAC Good Governance in the Public Sector: International Framework 2014