

# Wirral CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out Wirral Council's Code of Corporate Governance. It has been produced in line with the guidance outlined in the framework document published jointly by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives/Senior Managers (SOLACE) *Framework for Delivering Good Governance in Local Government* and *Application Note to Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: a Framework (2010)*.
- 1.2 Wirral Council ("the Council") is committed to the principles of good corporate governance and demonstrates this commitment through the development, adoption and implementation of this Code. This Code sets out the Corporate Governance arrangements which are currently in place, how the Council will continue to review these arrangements and identify improvements to ensure its effective application in all aspects of the Council's work.
- 1.3 This Council recognises that in order to fulfil its purpose and deliver the intended outcomes for its citizens and service users it needs to have in place comprehensive arrangements for corporate governance and accountability designed to ensure that it operates in an effective, efficient and ethical manner.

## 2. WHAT IS CORPORATE GOVERNANCE?

- 2.1 It is defined within the CIPFA/SOLACE framework document as being:

*...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.*

This means the way in which organisations manage their business, determine strategy and objectives and go about achieving those objectives. This reminds local authorities of their key role in governing and leading communities and that effective local government relies on public confidence in Councillors and officers. Where good corporate governance is in place it underpins credibility and confidence in public services.

- 2.2 The 6 core principles At the heart of the CIPFA/SOLACE governance framework are:

1. focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area;

2. members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles;
3. promoting the values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour;
4. taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk;
5. developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective;

and

6. engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

2.3 CIPFA's *Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Public Service Organisations* seeks to strengthen governance and financial management across the public services. CIPFA's Statement sets out five principles (set out at paragraph 2.4 below) that define the core activities and behaviours that belong to the role of the Chief Finance Officer ('CFO') and the governance requirements needed to support them.

2.4 The CFO in a public services organisation:

1. is a key member of the leadership team, helping it to develop and implement strategy and to resource and deliver the organisation's strategic objectives sustainably and in the public interest;
2. must be actively involved in, and able to bring influence to bear on, all material business decisions to ensure immediate and longer term implications, opportunities and risk are fully considered, and alignment with the organisation's financial strategy; and
3. must lead the promotion and delivery by the whole organisation of good financial management so that public money is safeguarded at all times and used appropriately, economically, efficiently and effectively.

To deliver these responsibilities the CFO:

4. must lead and direct a finance function that is resourced to be fit for purpose; and
5. must be professionally qualified and suitably experienced.

### 3.0 **THE PRINCIPLES OF GOOD CORPORATE GOVERNANCE – IN PRACTICE**

3.1 These core principles (set out at paragraph 2.2 above) and the additional governance requirements from the CFO (set out at paragraph 2.4 above) underpin the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

3.2 Appendix 1 sets out the requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework to which the Council is committed and will use to review its governance arrangements and inform the Annual Governance Statement.

#### 4.0 **ANNUAL REVIEW AND REPORTING**

4.1 Elected Members are collectively responsible for the governance of the Council. The Council by adopting this local code commits itself to continuously improving corporate governance in all of its activities. To ensure it keeps to this on-going commitment, the Corporate Governance Group oversees the Council's systems and processes for their effectiveness in practice, keeps them under review to ensure that they are up-to-date and ensures appropriate reporting. Performance monitoring will take the form of:

- i. an Annual Report;
- ii. production of an Annual Governance Statement as part of the financial reports which will summarise:
  - compliance with the Local Code;
  - how compliance has been monitored;
  - if changes are required; and
  - how changes are to be implemented.

4.2 The Corporate Governance Group consists of:

- Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service)
- Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer)
- Director of Law, HR and Asset Management (Monitoring Officer)
- Deputy Director of Finance
- Chief Internal Auditor; and
- District Auditor.

4.3 A copy of this Code of Corporate Governance will be included as part of the Council's Constitution and made available to the public on the Council's website and the results of the annual review to be published each year.

#### 5.0 **REGULAR REVIEW OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

5.1 The Council recognises that Corporate Governance needs to be embedded in all the services it delivers. Therefore, it has identified all those strategies, policies and procedures which staff and Members need to be aware of and comply with to meet the required standards of corporate governance. A copy of these is attached as Appendix 2. All of these strategies, policies and procedures will be reviewed at least annually as part of the review of this Code.

5.2 The Annual Governance Statement will consider compliance of the Council with the principles of good governance as set out by CIPFA/SOLACE and direct improvements to governance arrangements as necessary.

6. **CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 The 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.



# CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE: APPENDIX 1

## CORPORATE GOVERNANCE SCHEDULE

### PRINCIPLES OF GOOD CORPORATE GOVERNANCE – IN PRACTICE

<b>CORE PRINCIPLE 1:</b>	<b>Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the local community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.</b>
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	<b>Supporting Principles</b>	<b>Wirral MBC commits to</b>	<b>CIPFA/Solace Application Note 2010</b>
1	<i>Exercising strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the authority's purpose and vision and its intended outcomes for citizens and service users.</i>	<p>a. Develop and promote the Council's purpose and vision.</p> <p>b. Review on a regular basis the Council's vision for the local area and its implications for the Council's governance arrangements.</p> <p>c. Ensure that partnerships are underpinned by a common vision of their work that is understood and agreed by all partners.</p> <p>d. Publish an annual report (or similar documents) on a timely basis to communicate the Council's activities and achievements, its financial position and</p>	

		performance.	
2	<i>Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service whether directly, or in partnership, or by commissioning</i>	<p>a. Decide 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.</p> <p>b. Put in place effective arrangements to identify and deal with failure in service delivery.</p>	
3	<i>Ensuring that the authority makes best use of resources and that tax payers and service users receive excellent value for money.</i>	<p>a. Decide how value for money is to be measured and make sure that the authority or partnership has the information needed to review value for money and performance effectively.</p>	<p>Ensure that timely, accurate and impartial financial advice and information is provided to assist in decision making and to ensure that the Council meets its policy and service objectives and provides effective stewardship of public money and value for money in its use.</p> <p>Ensure that the Council maintains a prudent financial framework; keeps its commitments in balance with available resources; monitors income and expenditure levels to ensure that this balance is maintained and takes corrective action when necessary.</p> <p>Ensure compliance with CIPFA's Code on a Prudential Framework for Local Authority Capital Finance and CIPFA's Treasury management Code.</p>

<b>CORE PRINCIPLE 2:</b>	<b>Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles</b>
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	<b>Supporting Principles</b>	<b>Wirral MBC commits to:</b>	<b>CIPFA/Solace Application Note 2010</b>
1	<i>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.</i>	<p>a. Set out a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of the executive and of the executive's member's individually and the Council's approach towards putting this into practice.</p> <p>b. Set out a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of other Council Members, members generally, senior officers and of the leadership team and its members individually.</p>	Ensure that the CFO reports directly to the chief executive and a member of the leadership team with a status at least equivalent to other members. If different organisational arrangements are adopted, explain the reasons publicly, together with how these deliver the same impact.
2	<i>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.</i>	<p>a. Determine a scheme of delegation and reserve powers within the Constitution, including a formal schedule of those matters specifically reserved for collective decision of the Council, taking account of relevant legislation, and ensure that it is monitored and updated when required.</p>	



		<p>b. Make a Chief Executive or equivalent responsible and accountable to the Council for all aspects of operational management.</p>	<p>Ensure that the Council's governance arrangements allow the CFO direct access to the CEO and to other leadership team members.</p>
		<p>c. Develop protocols to ensure that the Leader and Chief Executive (or equivalent) negotiate their respective roles early in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained.</p>	
		<p>d. Make a senior officer (the S151 Officer/CFO) 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>	<p>Appoint a professionally qualified CFO whose core responsibilities include those set out in the Statement on the Role of the CFO in Local Government and ensure that they are properly understood throughout the authority.</p> <p>Ensure that the CFO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Leads the promotion and delivery by the whole organisation of good financial management so that public money is safeguarded at all times and used appropriately, economically, efficiently and effectively.</li> <li>○ Has a line of professional accountability for finance staff through out the organisation</li> </ul>

			<p>Ensure that budget calculations are robust and reserves adequate, in line with CIPFA's guidance.</p> <p>Ensure that appropriate management accounting systems, functions and controls should apply consistently to all activities including partnership arrangements, outsourcing or where the authority is acting in an enabling role.</p>
		e. Make a Senior Officer (usually the monitoring officer) responsible to the Council for ensuring that agreed procedures are followed and that all applicable Statutes and Regulations are complied with.	
3	<i>Ensuring relationships between the authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other</i>	a. Develop protocols to ensure effective communication between Members and Officers in their respective roles.	
		b. Set out the terms and conditions for remuneration of Members and Officers and an effective structure for managing the process, including an effective remuneration panel.	
		c. Ensure that effective mechanisms exist to monitor service delivery.	

		<p>d. Ensure that the organisation'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</p>	<p>Establish a medium term business and financial planning process to deliver strategic objectives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ A medium term financial strategy to ensure sustainable finances</li> <li>○ A robust annual budget process that ensures financial balance</li> <li>○ A monitoring process that enables this to be delivered</li> </ul> <p>Ensure that these are subject to regular review to confirm the continuing relevance of assumptions used.</p>
		<p>e. When working in partnership ensure that members are clear about their roles and responsibilities both individually and collectively in relation to the partnership and the authority.</p>	
		<p>f. When working in partnership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that there is clarity about the legal status of the partnership</li> <li>• Ensure that representatives or organisations both understand and make clear to all other partners the extent of their authority to bind their organisations to binding decisions.</li> </ul>	

<b>CORE PRINCIPLE 3:</b>	<b>Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.</b>
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	<b>Supporting Principles</b>	<b>Wirral MBC commits to:</b>	<b>CIPFA/Solace Application Note 2010</b>
1	<i>Ensuring authority Members and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance.</i>	a. Ensure that the Council’s leadership sets a tone for the organisation by creating a climate of openness, support and respect. b. Ensure that standards of conduct and personal behaviour expected of members and staff and between the Council, its partners and the community are defined and communicated through codes of conduct and protocols. c. Put in place arrangements 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 processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice.	
2	<i>Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective.</i>	a. Develop and maintain shared values including leadership values for both the organisation and staff reflecting public expectations and communicate these with members, staff, the community and partners. b. Put in place arrangements to ensure that	Ensure that systems and processes for

		<p>systems and processes are designed in conformity with appropriate ethical standards; monitor their continuing effectiveness in practice.</p>	<p>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>
		<p>c. Develop and maintain an effective standards committee.</p>	
		<p>d. Use the organisation's shared values to act as a guide to decision making and as a basis for developing positive and trusting relationships within the Council</p>	
		<p>e. In pursuing the vision of a partnership, agree a set of values against which decision making and actions can be judged. Such values must be demonstrated by partner's behaviour both individually and collectively.</p>	

<b>CORE PRINCIPLE 4:</b>	<b>Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk</b>
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	<b>Supporting Principles</b>	<b>Wirral MBC commits to:</b>	<b>CIPFA/SOLACE Application Note 2010</b>
1	<i>Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny</i>	a. Develop and maintain an effective scrutiny function which encourages constructive challenge and enhances the Council's performance overall	Ensure an effective internal audit function is resourced and maintained.
		b. Develop and maintain open and effective mechanisms for decisions and recording the criteria, rationale and considerations on which decisions are based.	
		c. Put in place arrangements to safeguard members and officers against conflicts of interest and put in place appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice.	
		d. Develop and maintain an effective audit committee (or equivalent), which is independent of the executive and scrutiny functions, or make other appropriate arrangements for the discharge of the functions of such a committee.	Ensure that the authority's governance arrangements allow the CFO direct access to the audit committee and external audit.
		e. Put in place effective, transparent and accessible arrangements are in place for dealing with complaints.	

2	<i>Having good quality information, advice and support to ensure that services are delivered effectively and are what the community wants/needs</i>	a. Ensure that those making decisions whether for the Council or the partnership are provided with information that is fit for the purpose – relevant timely and give clear explanations of technical issues and their implications.	Ensure the provision of clear, well presented, timely, complete and accurate information and reports to budget managers and senior officers on the budgetary and financial performance of the authority.
		b. Ensure that professional advice on matters that have legal or financial implications is available and recorded well in advance of decision making and used appropriately.	
3	<i>Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place</i>	a. Ensure that risk management is embedded into the culture of the Council, with members and managers at all levels recognising that risk management is part of their jobs.	Ensure the authority's arrangements for financial and internal control and for managing risk are addressed in annual governance reports.  Ensure the authority puts in place effective internal financial controls covering codified guidance, budgetary systems, supervision, management review and monitoring, physical safeguards, segregation of duties, accounting procedures, information systems and authorisation and approval process.
		b. Ensure that effective arrangements for whistle-blowing are in place to which staff and all those contracting with the authority have access.	
4	<i>Using their legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in their area</i>	a. Actively recognise the limits of lawful activity placed on them by, for example, the ultra vires doctrine, but also strive to utilise their powers to the full benefit of their communities.	
		b. Recognise the limits of lawful action and	

		<p>observe both the specific requirements of legislation and the general responsibilities placed on councils by public law.</p>	
		<p>c. 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 justice – rationality, legality and natural justice – into their procedures and decision making processes.</p>	



<b>CORE PRINCIPLE 5:</b>	<b>Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective</b>
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	<b>Supporting Principles</b>	<b>Wirral MBC commits to:</b>	<b>CIPFA/SOLACE Application Note 2010</b>
1	<i>Making sure that Members and officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles</i>	<p>a. Provide induction programmes tailored to individual needs and opportunities for members and officers to update their knowledge on a regular basis.</p> <p>b. 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 Council.</p>	<p>Ensure the CFO has the skills, knowledge, experience and resources to perform effectively in both the financial and non financial areas of their role.</p> <p>Review the scope of the CFO's other management responsibilities to ensure financial matters are not compromised.</p> <p>Provide the finance function with the resources, expertise and systems necessary to perform its role effectively.</p>
2	<i>Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance, as individuals and as a group</i>	<p>a. Assess the skills required by members and officers and make a commitment to develop those skills to enable roles to be carried out effectively.</p> <p>b. Develop skills 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>Embed financial competencies in person specifications and appraisals</p> <p>Ensure that councillors' roles and responsibilities for monitoring financial performance/budget management are clear, that they have adequate access to financial training on an ongoing basis to help them discharge their responsibilities.</p>

		c. Ensure that effective arrangements are in place for reviewing the performance of the Executive as a whole and of individual members and agreeing an action plan, which might, for example, aim to address any training or development needs.	
3	<i>Encouraging new talent for membership of the authority so that best use can be made in individuals' skills and resources in balancing continuity and renewal</i>	<p>a. 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.</p> <p>b. Ensure that career structures are in place for members and officers to encourage participation and development.</p>	

<b>CORE PRINCIPLE 6:</b>	<b>Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability</b>
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	<b>Supporting Principles</b>	<b>Wirral MBC commits to:</b>	<b>CIPFA/SOLACE Application Note 2010</b>
1	<i>Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive and accountability relationships</i>	<p>a. Make clear to the Council, all staff and the community to whom they are accountable and for what.</p> <p>b. Consider those institutional stakeholders to whom the Council is accountable and assess the effectiveness of the relationships and any changes required.</p> <p>c. Produce an annual report on the activity of the scrutiny function.</p>	
2	<i>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>a. Ensure clear channels of communication are in place with all sections of the community and other stakeholders including monitoring arrangements and ensure that they operate effectively.</p> <p>b. Ensure that arrangements are in place to enable the Council to engage with all sections of the community effectively. These arrangements should recognise that different sections of the community have different priorities and establish explicit processes for dealing with these competing demands.</p>	

		<p>c. Establish a clear policy on the types of issues it will meaningfully consult on or engage with the public and service users about including a feedback mechanism for those consultees to demonstrate what has changed as a result.</p>	
		<p>d. On an annual basis publish a performance plan giving information on the Council'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>	
		<p>e. Ensure that the Council as a whole is open and accessible to the community, service users and its staff and ensure 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.</p>	
3	<p><i>Making best use of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meet responsibility to staff.</i></p>	<p>a. Develop and maintain a clear policy on how staff and their representatives are consulted and involved in decision making.</p>	

# **CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE: Appendix 2**

## **Core Policies**

Corporate Plan  
Departmental Plans  
Annual Governance Scheme  
Freedom of Information Publication Scheme  
Budget Variation Reporting Protocol  
Scheme of Delegation  
ICT Security Policy  
Code of Practice for Internet and Email use  
Conflict of Interest  
Gifts and Hospitality  
Corporate Hospitality  
Officer/Member Protocol  
Corporate Risk Register  
Contract Procedure Rules  
Risk Management Strategy  
Member/Officer Code of Conduct  
Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy  
Fraud Investigation Plan  
Equality and Diversity  
Financial Procedure Rules  
Whistleblowing Policy  
Money Laundering Policy  
Business Continuity/Contingency Plan  
Health and Safety Policies  
Media Protocol

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- 1.3 This Council recognises that in order to fulfil its purpose and deliver the intended outcomes for its citizens and service users it needs to have in place comprehensive arrangements for corporate governance and accountability designed to ensure that it operates in an effective, efficient and ethical manner.

## 2. WHAT IS CORPORATE GOVERNANCE?

- 2.2 It is defined within the CIPFA/SOLACE framework document as being:

*...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.*

This means the way in which organisations manage their business, determine strategy and objectives and go about achieving those objectives. This reminds local authorities of their key role in governing and leading communities and that effective local government relies on public confidence in Councillors and officers. Where good corporate governance is in place it underpins credibility and confidence in public services.

- 2.3 There are 6 core principles which underpin a strong governance framework. These are:

- 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 a clearly defined 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 transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk;
- Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective; and
- Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

#### 4.0 THE PRINCIPLES OF GOOD CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

3.1 These core principles underpin the Council’s Code of Corporate Governance.

CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES	SUPPORTING EVIDENCE
<p><b>1. Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.</b></p> <p><i>1.1 Exercising strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the authority’s purpose and vision and its intended outcomes for citizens and service users.</i></p>	<p>1.1 There is a clear statement of the organisation’s purpose in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wirral’s Sustainable Community Strategy;</li> <li>• The Council’s Corporate Plan; and</li> <li>• Wirral’s Story of Place (in the Local Area Agreement, “LAA”).</li> </ul> <p>The Council’s vision is of, “a more prosperous and equal Wirral enabling all communities to thrive and achieve their full potential”. This is also consistent with the partnership vision of the Local Strategic Partnership.</p> <p>Clear delivery arrangements are in place through the corporate plan / departmental plans</p> <p>The Council reviews its plan, priorities and objectives on an annual basis.</p> <p>A partnership register is in place and is subject to review. A partnership toolkit is being developed.</p> <p>The Council has also developed a Community Engagement toolkit with partners.</p>

<p><i>1.2 Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service whether directly, or in partnership, or by commissioning</i></p> <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>1.2 There is a clear focus on outcomes for citizens and users as highlighted in our:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Performance Plan; and</li> <li>• Quarterly Performance Update Report to Chief Officers' Management Team and Cabinet.</li> </ul> <p>We engage with customers through the customer engagement toolkit. We have revised our customer care standards and improved our complaints procedure.</p> <p>1.3 The council works towards improving value for money and submits evidence of success in this area through our:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual efficiency statement;</li> <li>• Publication of annual budget and accounts;</li> <li>• Internal audit reports;</li> <li>• Medium Term Financial Plan;</li> <li>• Use of Resources Action Plan; and</li> <li>• Regular reports to the Council's Cabinet on value for money of services.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2 Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.</b></p> <p><i>2.1 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.</i></p> <p><i>2.2 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.</i></p> <p><i>2.3 Ensuring relationships between the authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other</i></p>	<p>2.1 The council has a protocol for relations between Members and Officers and the council's Constitution sets out clearly the decision making powers of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council,</li> <li>• The Cabinet,</li> <li>• Regulatory Committees; and</li> <li>• Officers.</li> </ul> <p>2.2 The council's Constitution also sets out clearly the process for holding the executive to account through the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. These have recently been strengthened by the addition of a scrutiny toolkit and call in guidelines which have received positive comment from the centre for public scrutiny.</p> <p>2.3 The public ultimately controls the council through the electoral process, but the council consults with the public through the citizen's panel and in accordance with the community engagement toolkit.</p>



	<p>The council also consults with the public through the residents' survey, area forums and other engagement mechanisms in accordance with the community engagement toolkit.</p> <p>The Council is the Accountable Body for the LAA. There are terms of reference in place. The Council is currently reviewing the governance arrangements for the LAA.</p> <p>The Council's constitution sets out the statutory roles of the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.</p> <p>The Council has a partnership register which is reviewed regularly. This records the terms of reference for the partnership which set out the respective roles and responsibilities. A partnership toolkit is being developed.</p>
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<p><b>3 Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.</b></p> <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><i>3.2 Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective.</i></p>	<p>3.1 The council has a code of conduct for members and conduct is monitored by the Standards Committee. In addition the council has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Equalities Policy;</li> <li>• A Code of Conduct for staff;</li> <li>• Declarations of interest of members and for staff;</li> <li>• Register of Gifts and Hospitality for members and for staff;</li> <li>• Financial Regulations;</li> <li>• A whistleblowing policy;</li> <li>• Members' Training Programme;</li> <li>• Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations; and</li> <li>• Freedom of Information Procedures</li> </ul> <p>3.2 The Council's Corporate Plan and vision has been communicated to staff and stakeholders.</p> <p>The Council's vision and objectives are linked in to the service planning process, other plans and policies and decision making. They are also contained within the Sustainable Community Strategy and the LAA. There are clear links to the priorities and objectives of partners. These are communicated to staff and partners through a variety of delivery arrangements.</p> <p>The Council's Standards Committee operates effectively. It has developed a Protocol for local assessment.</p>
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<p><b>4 Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk</b></p> <p><i>4.1 Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny</i></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><i>4.3 Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place.</i></p> <p><i>4.4 Using their legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in their area</i></p>	<p>4.1 The council's Constitution sets out the clearly the decision-making powers of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council;</li> <li>• The Cabinet;</li> <li>• Regulatory Committees; and</li> <li>• Officers</li> </ul> <p>Scrutiny feedback is taken into account in decision-making.</p> <p>4.2 The council's Data Quality Policy sets the rules and standards for ensuring that high quality information is consistently achieved. Our performance management framework underpins this policy in ensuring that high standards are also achieved in the provision of advice and support. The council's Financial Regulations support the provision of high quality financial advice.</p> <p>4.3 The council effectively controls risk through its:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk Management Strategy;</li> <li>• Corporate and Departmental Risk Registers;</li> <li>• Consideration of risk in all Cabinet reports;</li> <li>• The Audit and Risk Management Committee; and</li> <li>• Annual Governance Statement</li> </ul> <p>4.4 Legal issues are considered in respect of all reports to the Cabinet, Council and other Committees. There is a protocol in place that ensures the Head of Legal and Member Services is consulted on all reports.</p>
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<p><b>5 Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective</b></p> <p><i>5.1 Making sure that Members and officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles</i></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><i>5.3 Encouraging new talent for membership of the authority so that best use can be made in individuals' skills and resources in balancing continuity and renewal.</i></p>	<p>5.1 The council has an annual training programme for members approved by the Members' Training Steering Group and holds regular training sessions for members on a variety of topics, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service specific training;</li> <li>• Induction training for all new members; and</li> <li>• Finance and Audit and Risk Management Committee training.</li> </ul> <p>Members have also received performance management and Equalities and Diversity training.</p> <p>The council has an extensive training programme for council officers including a leadership development course delivered in partnership with Chester University.</p> <p>5.2 The council examines the capability of its people with governance responsibilities through Key Issues Exchange and the performance management framework and identifies any training gaps. The relevant training programmes are updated accordingly.</p> <p>Attached to this Code of Corporate Governance is a list of those policies and procedures which form the core documents with which officers must familiarise themselves upon induction. They will be regularly reviewed and updated and all officers will be required to be aware of all changes on at least an annual basis.</p> <p>5.3 The Council engages with all parts of the community, through its community engagement toolkit, work with the voluntary sector, the Older People's Parliament and the Youth Parliament</p>
<p><b>6 Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability</b></p>	

<p><i>6.1 Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive and accountability relationships</i></p>	<p>6.1 The council is clear that ultimately it is accountable to the citizens of Wirral. The Council's community engagement toolkit outlines the means by which local stakeholders will be engaged and how constructive, challenging relationships will be built. The Council is engaging widely with the public in consultation on the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Strategic Asset Review.</p>
<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>	<p>6.2 Building on our community engagement toolkit the council seeks to engage with citizens in a number of ways including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Citizen's Panel,</li> <li>• Area Forums,</li> <li>• Older People's Parliament;</li> <li>• The Youth Parliament; and</li> <li>• The Council's website.</li> </ul> <p>The council engages with other key stakeholders through, amongst other methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Wirral Local Strategic Partnership</li> <li>• The LAA Programme Board;</li> <li>• The Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership;</li> <li>• The Children and Young People Strategic Partnership Board;</li> <li>• The Strategic Housing Partnership</li> </ul> <p>The council welcomes complaints, whether through the internal complaints system or via the Ombudsman, and seeks to learn from them.</p>
<p><i>6.3 Making best use of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meet responsibility to staff.</i></p>	<p>6.3 The council has Investors' in People accreditation for the whole council and actively engages with its staff through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chief Executive's Roadshows;</li> <li>• One Council;</li> <li>• Team briefings;</li> <li>• The Joint Staff Consultative Committee</li> </ul> <p>The Council produces an annual report on scrutiny.</p> <p>The Council reports regularly on its performance including an annual performance report.</p>

	The Council is committed to openness and transparency in its decision making.
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#### 4.0 **ANNUAL REVIEW AND REPORTING**

4.1 The Council by adopting this local code, commits itself to continuously improving corporate governance in all of its activities. To ensure it keeps to this on-going commitment, the Corporate Governance Group will monitor the Council's systems and processes for their effectiveness in practice, and keep them under review to ensure that they are up-to-date. Performance monitoring will take the form of:

- i. an Annual Report;
- iii. production of an Annual Governance Statement as part of the financial reports which will summarise:
  - compliance with the Local Code;
  - how compliance has been monitored;
  - if changes are required; and
  - how changes are to be implemented.

4.2 A copy of the Annual Governance Statement is attached at Appendix 1.

4.3 The Corporate Governance Group has been assigned responsibility for Corporate Governance, reporting, as appropriate to the Cabinet and the Audit and Risk Management Committee. The Corporate Governance Group consists of:

- the Chief Executive, as Head of Paid Service;
- the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services;
- the Director of Finance, as section 151 officer;
- the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management, as the Monitoring Officer;
- the Chief Internal Auditor; and
- the Audit Commission, Audit Manager.

4.4 A copy of this Code of Corporate Governance will be included as part of the Council's constitution and made available to the public on the Authority's website and the results of the annual review to be published each year.

#### 5.0 **REGULAR REVIEW OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

5.1 The Council recognises that Corporate Governance needs to be embedded in all the services it delivers. Therefore, it has identified all those policies and procedures which staff and members need to be aware of and comply with to meet the required standards of corporate governance. A copy of these is attached as Appendix 2. All of these policies will be reviewed at least annually as part of the review of this Code.

#### 6. **CONCLUSION**

6.2 The 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.

# **CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

## **CORE STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

Access to Information Procedure Rules  
Annual Governance Scheme  
Bribery Policy  
Budget and Policy Framework  
Budget Variation Reporting Protocol  
Business Continuity/Contingency Plan  
Corporate Plan  
Corporate Risk Register  
Corporate Procurement Strategy  
Contract Procedure Rules  
Consultation and Negotiation Policy  
Conflict of Interests  
Corporate Hospitality  
Code of Practice for Internet and Email use  
Departmental Plans  
Disciplinary Policy  
Executive Procedure Rules  
Equality and Cohesion Policy  
Financial Procedure Rules  
Fraud Investigation Plan  
Freedom of Information Publication Scheme  
Gifts and Hospitality  
Grievance and Harassment and Bullying Policy  
Health and Safety Policies  
ICT Security Policy  
Media Protocol  
Member/Officer Code of Conduct  
Member Allowances Scheme  
Money Laundering Policy  
Officer/Member Protocol  
Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules  
Protocol on Member/Officer relations  
Risk Management Strategy  
Scheme of Delegation to Members  
Scheme of Delegation to Officers  
Sustainable Community Strategy  
Whistleblowing Policy