Local Code of Governance

Day/Month/2025

INTRODUCTION

This is West Lindsey District Council's Local Code of Governance. It sets out the Council's governance framework, taking into account the seven Principles of Good Governance (CIPFA/SOLACE 2016) and illustrating how the Council meets each one.

Good governance is about ensuring the Council is doing the right things, in the right way for the communities it serves, in a timely, open honest and accountable manner. The Council is committed to upholding the highest possible standards of good governance, as it believes this will then lead to high standards of performance, management, effective use of resources, increased public involvement, good outcomes and increased trust in the Council.

WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?

Governance describes how organisations direct and control what they do. This includes the systems, processes, culture and values through which the Council operates. Governance means carrying out our activities in accordance with the law and proper standards, and ensuring the public money is well used and properly accounted for.

Good governance flows from systems and structures, shared values, and culture and behaviours. This document details how the Council meets its commitment to good corporate governance.

This is important because public service relies on high standards of probity. Improper behaviour affects confidence in the services the Council provides, increases risk of successful legal challenge, and can damage the Council's reputation.

This Code of Governance is developed in accordance with, and is consistent with the "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government" (CIPFA/SOLACE 2016) framework, and is based on best guidance as set out by CIPFA and SOLACE.

This Code of Governance has been developed from CIPFA's seven principles of good governance in local government. These principles are:

A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law
B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
C. Delivering outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes
E. Developing the Council's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management,
G. Implementing good practice in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability

Full details of the seven principles, together with the actions and behaviours that can demonstrate compliance is provided in this document.

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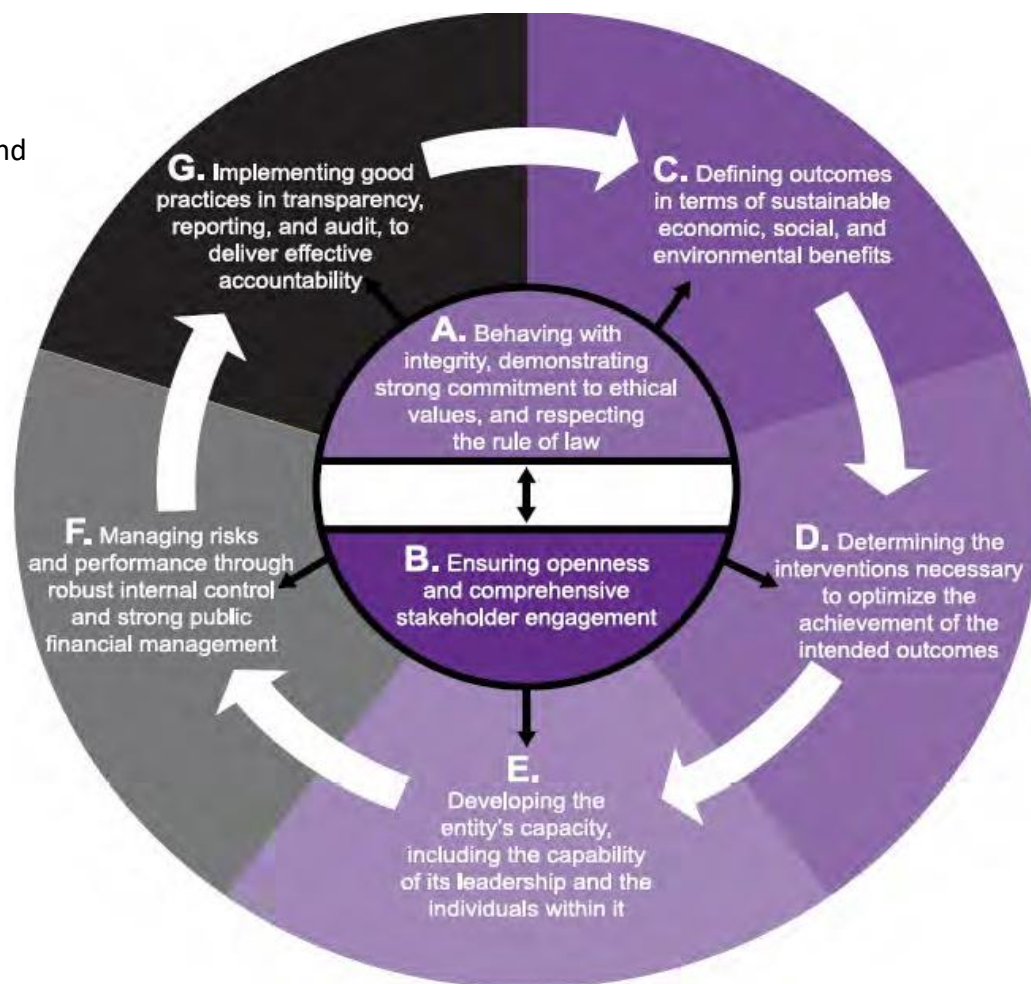
PRINCIPLE A – Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law	
Actions and behaviours that demonstrate this:	**What we have in place**
Behaving with Integrity: • Ensuring members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture whereby acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the organisation • Ensuring members take the lead in establishing specific standard operating principles or values for the organisation and its staff and that they are communicated and understood. These should build on the seven principles of public life. • Leading by example and using the standard operating principles or values as a framework for decision making and other actions. • Demonstrating, communicating and embedding the standard operating principles or values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively. Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values • Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance • Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the organisation's culture and operation. • Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values • Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with the ethical standards expected by the organisation. Respecting the Rule of Law • Ensuring members and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to the rule of law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations • Creating the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders, and members, are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements • Striving to optimise the use of full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders. • Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively • Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively	• Constitution • Code of Conduct for members • The Corporate Plan • Scheme of delegation • Declaration of interest forms • Register of gifts and hospitality • Equality, Diversion and Inclusion policies • Whistleblowing policies and procedures • Member induction • Member/officer relations policy • Overview and Scrutiny/Governance and Audit/Policy Committees • Contract Procedure Rules • Regular statutory officer meetings • Complaints Procedure • Local Government Ombudsman annual letter

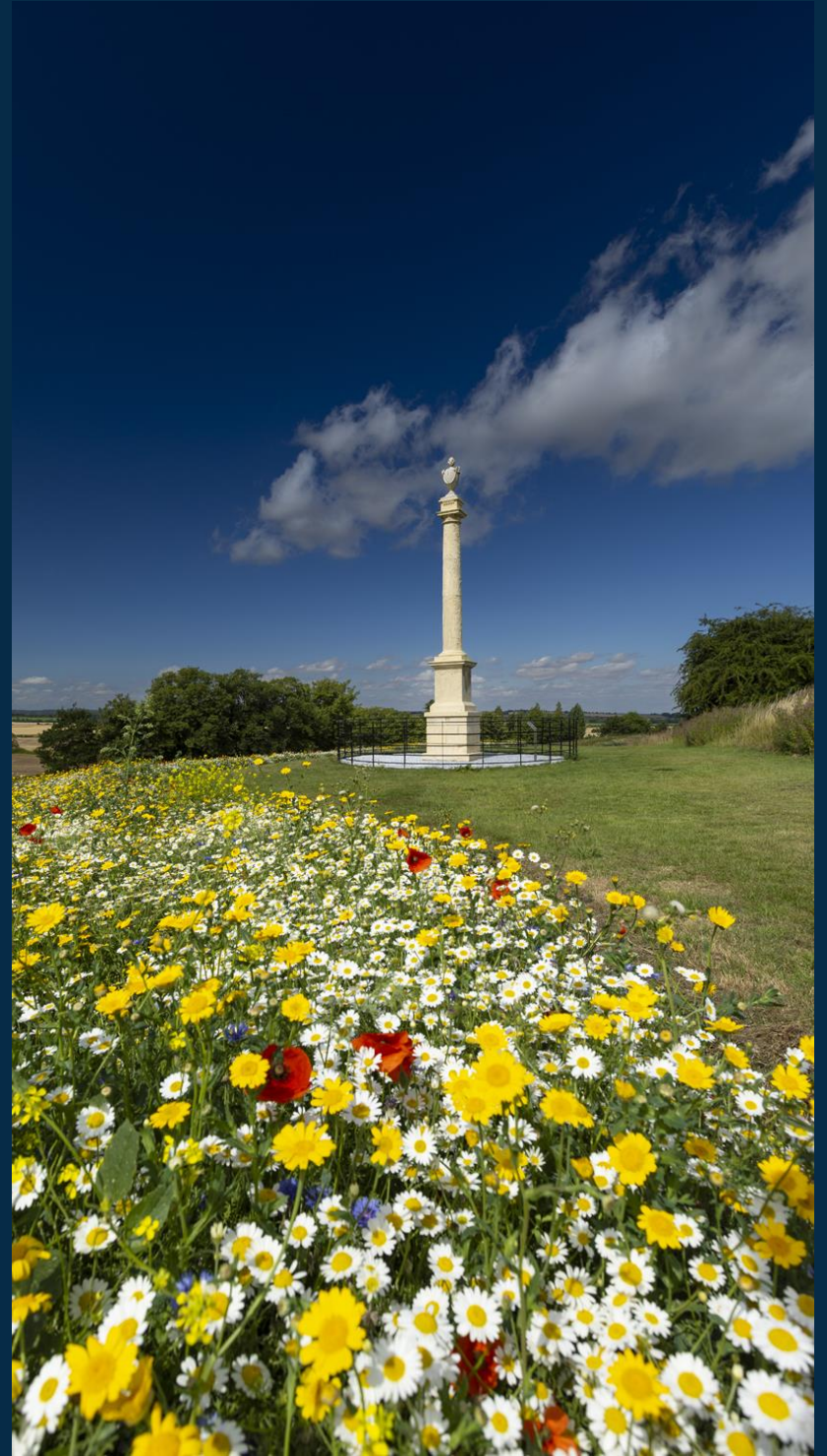| PRINCIPLE B – Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	
Actions and behaviours that demonstrate this:	**What we have in place:**

Openness
   • Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the organisation's commitment to openness
   • Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided
   • Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear.
   • Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions and courses of action.
 	
Engaging effectively with Institutional Stakeholders
   • Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably.
   • Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more effectively.
   • Ensuring partnerships are based on trust, a shared commitment to change, a culture that promotes and accepts challenge amongst partners, and that the added value of partnership working is explicit
 	
Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users
   • Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve communities, individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes
   • Ensuring that communication methods are effective and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement
   • Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs
   • Implementing effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how views have been taken into account
   • Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity.
   • Taking account of the impact of decisions on future generations of tax payers and service users
	• Consultation and Engagement strategy
	• Public consultations
	• Open public council meetings
	• Access to information rules
	• Customer feedback and complaints
	• Citizens Panel
	• Statement of accounts
	• Joint Staff Consultative Committee
	• Freedom of information process and procedures
	• Partnership protocols
	• Central Lincolnshire Joint strategic planning committee
	• District Joint Committee
	• Social media platforms
	• Citizens Panel
	• Consultation and Engagement Strategy
	• Consultation pages on website

PRINCIPLE C – Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	
Actions and behaviours that demonstrate this	**What we have in place**
Defining outcomes • Having a clear vision which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provide the basis for the organisation's overall strategy, planning and other decisions • Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer • Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available • Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes • Managing service users' expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available. Sustainable Economic, social and environmental benefits • Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision • Taking a longer term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the organisation's intended outcomes and short term factors should as the political cycle or financial constraints • Determining the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade offs • Ensuring fair access to services, taking full account of the access needs of disabled and vulnerable people	• Corporate Plan • Corporate Policies • Medium term financial plan • Annual budget setting • Equality Impact Assessments • Robust Programme management process • Annual business planning cycle • Board cycles • Strategic Risk register

PRINCIPLE D – Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of intended outcomes	
Actions and behaviours that demonstrate this	**What we have in place**
Determining interventions • Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and associated risks. Therefore, ensuring best value is achieved however the services are provided • Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts. Planning interventions: • Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets • Engaging with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered • Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively, including shared risks • Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering goods and services can be adapted to changing circumstances • Establishing appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured • Ensuring capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly • Preparing budgets in accordance with objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan • Informing medium and long term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy Optimising achievement of intended outcomes: • Ensuring the medium term financial strategy integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints • Ensuring the budgeting process is all inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term	• Complete committee reports including consultation summary, alterative options and implications • State of the district report • Corporate and operational risk registers • Monthly budget monitoring • Budget setting • Policy planning framework • Project management • Capital programme • Five year medium term financial strategy • Local Resilience Forum • Detailed Project management (4 stages) • Progress and Delivery

• Ensuring the medium term financial strategy sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage • Ensuring the achievement of social value through service planning and commissioning	

PRINCIPLE E – Developing the Council's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	
Actions and behaviours that demonstrate this	**What we have in place**
Developing the Council's capacity • Reviewing operations, performance and use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness • Improving resource use through appropriate application of techniques, such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how resources are allocated so that defined outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently. • Recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved. • Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources Developing the capability of the Council's leadership and other individuals • Developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained • Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those that are reserved for collective decision making • Ensuring the Leader and Head of Paid Service have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the Head of Paid Service leads in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and balance for each other's authority	• Team meetings • 121s • Appraisal process • Corporate training budget • Corporate induction • Organisational values and behaviours framework • Leaders symposium • Partnership working with New Local • Apprenticeship scheme • Mentor scheme • Wider management team meetings • Member Induction process • Staff members on Joint Staff Consultative Committee • Corporate training including safeguarding, information

• Developing the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes by:
   - Ensuring members and staff have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and the ongoing training and development matching individual organisational requirements is available and encouraged
   - Ensuring members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis
   - Ensuring personal, organisational, and system wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external
   - Identifying and developing talent within the Council's workforce
   - Developing succession planning
 	
• Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation
• Taking steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections
• Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs
• Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing
	governance, equality and diversity,

PRINCIPLE F – Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	
Actions and behaviours that demonstrate this	**What we have in place**
Managing Risk • Recognising that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must be considered in all aspects of decision making • Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively • Ensuring the responsibilities for managing individual risks and clearly allocated Managing Performance • Monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review • Making decision based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook • Encouraging effective and constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives to support balanced and effective decision making • Providing members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement • Ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (eg financial statements) Robust internal control • Aligning the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives • Evaluating and monitoring risk management and internal control on a regular basis • Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place • Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor • Ensuring an audit committee which is independent and accountable to the governing body • Provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment • That recommendations are listened to and acted upon	• Corporate Information Governance Group meets regularly. • Staff training on data protection • Regular staff messages about cyber security • Data protection officer • Anti-fraud and bribery policy • Risk Management Strategy • Internal Audit plan • Governance and Audit committee • Regular oversight of risk register by senior management and elected members

Managing data
 	
   • Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for safe collection, storage, use and sharing fo data including processes to safeguard data
   • Ensuring effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies
   • Reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring
 	
Strong public financial management
 	
   • Ensuring financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short term financial and operational performance
   • Ensuring well developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls.	

• **PRINCIPLE G – Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability**	
Actions and behaviours that demonstrate this	**What we have in place**

Implementing good practice in transparency
 	
   • Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in an understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring they are easy to access and interrogate
   • Striking a balance between providing the amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand
 	
Implementing good practices in reporting
 	
   • Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and the stewardship of its resources
   • Ensuring members and senior management own the results
   • Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in the Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment including evidence to demonstrate good governance
	• Council's website
	• Access to information rules
	• Comply with local government transparency rules
	• Publication of committee reports
	• Annual governance statement
	• Governance and Audit Committee (with independent members)

• Ensuring that this framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations • Ensuring the performance information that accompanies the financial statement is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other organisations Assurance and effective accountability • Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon • Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place which provides assurance with regard to governance arrangements and that recommendations are acted upon • Welcoming peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implementing recommendations. • Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement • Ensuring that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and that the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met.	• Roles and responsibilities outlined in Constitution • Progress and delivery framework • RIPA inspections • Annual audit findings received by external auditor • Partnership working arrangements reviewed annually