



Corporate Governance Policy and Code

Introduction

Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council is committed to the principles of good corporate governance.

Corporate governance is the system by which this Council directs, monitors and controls its functions and relates to the community. The Town Council is dependent on its Members and staff delivering excellent corporate governance which requires them to conduct themselves in accordance with the high standards expected by the Council and the local community.

Four fundamental principles of corporate governance are Openness, Inclusivity, Integrity and Accountability in line with the five interlocking dimensions in a corporate governance framework consisting of:

- Community Focus
- Service Delivery
- Structures and Processes
- Risk Management and Internal Control
- Standards of Conduct

This Code of Corporate Governance specifically identifies the action to be taken for each of the five interlocking dimensions of our Council.

This Code formed from the Nolan Principles will inform and guide the Council's Standing Orders and associated strategy documents which set out the Council's vision, alongside corporate and service objectives, targets, performance etc. The document also recognises the wider requirements of policy and strategy and the necessity for interfacing with policy areas of other providers.

This Council also places a great importance on partnership working, in terms of the delivery of services, assisting other providers to meet their targets and responsibilities and in terms of the development of local partnerships across a broad range of other complimentary bodies.

Commitments

Within the commitments of this Code, the Council will ensure that the principles of corporate governance are applied in all aspects of its activities and, in particular:

Community Focus

- Establish and utilise a series of working forums with relevant areas of the local community.
- Exercise leadership in the community.
- Undertaking an ambassadorial role to promote the well-being of the town.

Service Delivery Arrangements

- Ensuring that continuous improvement is sought.
- Ensuring that agreed policies are implemented.

Structures and Processes

- Both Members and Officers understand and accept the responsibilities of the organisation.
- Ensuring Members are fully involved in decision-making.

Risk Assessment and Internal Control

- Establishing and maintaining a system strategy and process for managing risk.
- Ensuring that internal control processes are effectively tested.
- Ensuring that internal processes, procedures and systems are reviewed regularly and updated to accommodate any required changes whether those changes be from lessons learned, legislation or best practice

Standards of Conduct

- Defining the standards of personal behaviour that are expected from Members and Officers.
- Put in place and maintain arrangements to monitor and ensure compliance.

Actions to be taken by the Town Council in relation to each dimension of corporate governance:

Community Focus

The Town Council will:

- a. Publish on an annual basis a review of the Council's activities, achievements, financial position and performance.
- b. Put in place proper arrangements designed to encourage individuals and groups from all sections of the community to engage with, contribute to and participate in the work of the Council. This is achieved through specific working with individual groups and organisations and establishing links and

regular meetings with local interest groups/forums. The Council also has a policy of providing a public session time in advance of each Council or Standing Committee meeting.

- c. Make an explicit commitment to openness in all dealings, subject only to the need to preserve confidentiality in those specific circumstances where it is proper and appropriate to do so.
- d. Demonstrate openness and honesty in its communications and in working with others. The Council has detailed protocols and procedures for processing Data Protection or Freedom of Information requests. The Information Policy and Publication Scheme exist for such access.
- e. Establish clear channels of communication with all sections of the community and other stakeholders and put in place proper monitoring arrangements to ensure they operate effectively.
- f. Have a positive communication strategy in terms of providing information for the local press and media.
- g. Ensure that a vision for their local communities and their strategic plans, priorities and targets are developed through robust mechanisms, and in consultation with the local community and other key stakeholders. The Council believes that it is working towards this achievement by its membership of various local partnerships.

Service Delivery Arrangements

The Town Council will:

- a. Set standards and targets for performance in the delivery of services on a sustainable basis and with reference to equality policies.
- b. Monitor and report performance against agreed standards and targets and develop comprehensive and understandable performance plans.
- c. Foster effective relationships and partnerships with other public sector agencies and with the private and voluntary sectors. The Council will consider outsourcing where it is efficient and effective to do so in the delivery of services to meet the needs of the local community and put in place processes to ensure that they operate effectively in practice.
- d. Respond positively to the findings and recommendations of auditors and statutory inspectors and put in place arrangements for the effective implementation of agreed actions and recommendations.
- e. Present auditors reports and responses to the Council, together with action plans to address issues raised.

Structures and Processes

The Town Council will:

- a. Put in place clearly documented protocols governing relationships between members and officers.
- b. Put in place arrangements to ensure that Members are properly trained for their roles and have access to all relevant information, advice and resources. Upon appointment, each Councillor is provided with a Council Handbook and in-house guidance and advice is provided by the Town Clerk. The Council subscribes to training from the County Association, The National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks.
- c. Provide the strategic direction for the Council and ~~is~~ develop a performance management policy that clearly identifies the role of Councillors, Committees and appointed staff.
- d. Develop and maintain a scheme of delegated powers, which should include a formal schedule of those matters specifically reserved for the collective decision of the Council.
- e. Put in place clearly documented and understood management processes for policy development, implementation and review and for decision making, monitoring and control and reporting; and formal procedural and financial regulations to govern the conduct of the Council's business.
- f. Ensure that the Town Clerk is made responsible to the authority for all aspects of operational management. This forms part of the specific job description and is a key requirement. Equally the RFO of the Council (currently also the Town Clerk) is the responsible person for ensuring that appropriate advice is given to it on all its financial matters, for keeping proper financial records and accounts and for maintaining an effective system of internal financial control.
- g. Adopt clear protocols and Codes of Conduct to ensure that the implications of supporting community leadership of the whole Council is acknowledged and resolved.
- h. Adopt clear protocols and codes of conduct are set out in respect of Members' Code of Conduct, Information Policy, Media Communications Protocol and the policy documents relating to good governance within the Council.

Risk Management and Internal Control

The Town Council will:

- a. Put in place proper arrangements for the independent review of its financial and operational reporting processes. This will be achieved through the appointment of an External Auditor and an independent Internal Auditor directly appointed by the Council. The Finance and General Purposes Committee will receive reports and reviews from the Internal Auditor and recommendations for action will be taken to Full Council.
- b. Maintain a risk register encompassing all activities of the Council. Such register to be reviewed by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Full Council.
- c. Develop and maintain robust systems for identifying and evaluating all significant risks which involve the proactive participation of all those associated with planning and delivering services.
- d. Develop a risk management strategy, however while in development risk management frameworks exist for all service areas, the day to day responsibility for risk management rests with the Town Clerk.
- e. Aim to ensure that our services are delivered by trained and experienced people.
- f. Ensure that all posts have job descriptions and person specifications detailing the essential and desirable qualities, abilities, qualifications and expertise necessary to undertake the duties of any post. The Council is committed to providing professional development opportunities for all members of staff.
- g. Maintain an objective and professional relationship with its external auditors and statutory inspectors.
- h. Will build up the necessary relationships with its internal auditor and external auditor. The annual audit reports are presented to Council and/or Internal Affairs Committee, as appropriate.

Standards of Conduct

The Town Council will:

- a. Develop and adopt formal codes of conduct defining the standards of personal behaviour to which individual members, officers, and agents of the Council are required to subscribe and put in place appropriate systems and processes to ensure that they are complied with.
- b. Regularly review policy documents around the requirements of promoting high standards of personal behaviour as expected from Members and Officers.
- c. Put in place arrangements to ensure that Members and employees of the Council 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.

- d. Adhere to the Code of Conduct and other policies stipulating that they must not be influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest in any matter relating to the Council. All declarations of interest are recorded in the appropriate minute book and staff, where appropriate; assist Members to ensure that guidance is provided.
- e. Put in place arrangements for whistle blowing to which staff and all those connected with the Council have access.

Our Aspirations

This Code of Corporate Governance is designed to set out the current operational systems of the Council and the policies and procedures that we have in place to promote good corporate governance.

Adopted by Full Council – April 2017
Reviewed by Full Council – Nov 2017.