Part 5

Codes and Protocols

Part 5 – Members' Code of Conduct

Following implementation of the Localism Act 2011, all Councils were required to adopt their own codes of conduct for elected members, which had to be consistent with the Nolan Principles of Public Life. The Council adopted its current Code of Conduct on 10 July 2012. A copy is included as an appendix.

Members must register certain financial and other interests and a hard copy of the Register is available for inspection at the Council offices. The Register of Interests is also available for inspection on line.

Part 5 - Officers' Code of Conduct

Officers' Code of Conduct

This Council has a Code of Official Conduct in relation to its employees which offers guidance to employees

When implemented, all Local Government employees will be required to abide by an officers' Code of Conduct under Section 82 of the Local Government Act 2000 (see Appendices).

The Council has a "whistleblowing" policy to enable staff to raise issues of concerns about improper practices within the Council (see Appendices).

The Council has also developed an anti fraud and corruption strategy to prevent and detect fraud and corruption (see Appendices).

Part 5 – Planning Matters Guidance Note

Site Visits

Formal site visits will be held where there is a clearly identified benefit. A record should be kept of why a visit is being held and who attended it.   A site visit should generally take place where a proposal is either particularly complex or sensitive, and the impact is difficult to assess from submitted information and plans.

The site visit will either take place after initial consideration by the Planning Committee or in advance of such consideration, where the need for a site visit is recognised at an early stage, as determined by the Director of Community and Environmental Services

All Members of the Planning Committee will be invited to attend the site visit, together with Ward Members for the development site and appropriate adjoining Ward Members.   It will not normally be necessary for an officer to attend such meetings.

Member Interests

The Local Government Act 2000 and the Model Code place requirements on Members in relation to the registration and declaration of their interests and the consequences of a Member's participation in consideration of a particular issue, in the light of those interests.

The Model Code defines interest as either "personal" or "prejudicial" and refines the definition of those interests.

Where such interests are related to planning matters, Members must abstain from involvement in any issue the outcome of which might advantage or disadvantage the personal interests of the Councillor, his/her family, friends or employer.

Applications by Members or Officers

Should a planning application be submitted by or on behalf of any Member or officer of the Council or their relatives the Planning Committee will determine that application.

The Member(s) or officer(s) should notify the Director of Community and Environmental Services of any application at the time of its submission.

Any Member or officer who has submitted a planning application should play no part in the decision making process and the same must apply if any Member or officer acts as an agent for a third party who has submitted an application.

Dual Membership - Members of the Planning Committee who also sit on a Parish Planning Committee

Where a member of the Planning Committee is also a member of a Parish Council's Planning Committee which has previously considered a planning application which is before the Committee, the member shall be required to declare the interest as a personal, non-pecuniary interest on the night of the meeting and may then stay, speak and vote on the item, provided they can show that he/she:

- has an open mind about the application

- is not bound by the views of the Parish Planning Committee and

- can deal with the application fairly and on its merits on the night

Part 5 - Protocol on Member/Officer Relations

Principles Underlying Member-Officer Relations

- All staff are employees of and accountable to the whole Council and covered by employment legislation. The Council engages in national and local bargaining on pay and conditions.

- Staff are subject to the (national) code of conduct for local government employees and members are subject to the national code of conduct for councillors.

- Productive relationships are built on mutual respect, openness, trust and competence.

Roles of Members

- Councillors represent the views of their constituents in individual casework and overall when considering the appropriate use of resources.

- At full Council, Members decide the strategic policy and financial framework for the operation of the Council.

- Members of committees (and sub-committees) recommend the framework and make decisions within it.

- Members represent the Council on a variety of partnerships and external bodies.

Roles of Officers

- Staff are responsible for day-to-day managerial and operational decisions and the provision of professional advice to all parties in the decision making process (full Council and all committees).

- They are responsible for maintaining an effective system of record keeping of decisions.

- Officers may also represent the Council on partnership and external bodies.

- The roles of head of paid service (chief executive), chief finance officer and monitoring officer are defined in statute.

- In the course of their work officers sometimes meet with and/or negotiate with various individuals and bodies concerned with Council business. As a general rule it will not be appropriate for Members to attend.

- If it is necessary to advise Members of issues arising, the procedures outlined below will be used or there will be a report to the Information Bulletin. It follows that there should be no more reports to note at Committee).

- Occasionally it is appropriate to have a political perspective at such meetings and, if the Chief Officer so decides, the Lead Member will be invited and may invite other appropriate Members to attend.

Relationship Between Chairman of the Council and Officers

- The Council chairman chairs meetings of full Council and carries out the civic and ceremonial duties of the Council.

- The chairman is entitled to officer support in preparation for and at Council meetings. This support will be primarily from the three statutory officers.

- The chairman is provided with administrative assistance in order to discharge the civic and ceremonial responsibilities efficiently and effectively.

Relationship between the Leader and Lead Members and Officers

- The primary officer support for the Leader and Lead Members is the officers' management board.

- In situations where one political group has an overall majority but the Policy and Resources Committee is made up of members from more than one political group, the management board will also support the majority members, who form the Administration.

- Should a Chief Officer (member of management board) require to inform the Leader of the Council or a Lead Member of an important confidential matter, that member should authorise the Chief Officer similarly to inform the appropriate Spokesperson or Group Leader of the other parties. Failing authorisation, the matter will remain confidential to those parties.

- When a Chief Officer takes the initiative to provide general information to the Leader of the Council or a Lead Member, that information will be similarly supplied to the other appropriate Spokespeople and Group Leaders.

- If a Lead Member, Spokesperson or Group Leader has asked for a brief from a Chief Officer, concerning a particular line being considered in connection with an agenda item, it would not be necessary or usual for the Lead Member, Spokesperson, Group Leader or the Chief Officer to provide a copy to any Member of the other political groups on the Council, nor to acknowledge that such a brief had been prepared.

- In summary, the prevailing philosophy will be that when a Chief Officer takes the initiative to give general information to individual Lead Members, the Chief Officer will provide such information to the counterparts in the other political groups.

- When individual Councillors, regardless of political group, seek advice from a Chief Officer, that advice will be given in confidence to them and it will be maintained by the Chief Officer until the Councillor agrees it can be released.

Relationships between Chairmen and Members of Committees and Officers

- The primary officer support for the Committees is departmental heads, that is the staff directly responsible to chief officers.

- The confidentiality provisions indicated above for the Leader and Lead Members also apply to the Chairmen of committees and the officers who advise them.

Relationship Between Chairmen and Members of Other Committees and Officers

- The primary officer support for the Planning Committee and Licensing Committee is the Team Leader, that is, the staff directly responsible to chief officers.

- The confidentiality provisions indicated above for the Leader and Lead Members also apply to the Chairmen of other Committees and the officers who advise them.

Procedure to be Followed When Taking Delegated Action in Consultation with Members of the Council

Apart from matters which are clearly delegated to Officers and in respect of the determination of planning applications, delegated action in consultation with Members can only be taken by Officers in any of the following situations.

(a)   where this is provided for in the Council's Scheme of Delegation to Officers;

(b)   where a committee or sub-committee has specifically authorised delegation to the Officer in consultation with nominated Members; and

If any Member nominated by the committee or sub-committee is absent, the Leader of the political group s/he represents must be consulted.

Procedure for consultation

Either:

(a)   consultation must be in written form explaining the proposed action/decision and the reasons therefore, with the Member responding with his/her agreement or otherwise in writing to the Officer before any action is taken; or exceptionally

(b)   where an urgent decision is required Officers may, in the first instance, seek agreement by telephone, fax or e-mail in the manner as in (a) above. Consultation should, where possible, be with the Chairman first followed by the other Members.

Opposition to officer delegation

If the Member(s) consulted under this arrangement is opposed to the Officer's suggested action/decision and agreement cannot be reached, then the matter must be reported to the appropriate committee or sub-committee for determination.

Reports of officer delegation

An official record must be kept by the Committee Section recording the action/decision taken in consultation with members under this procedure together with supporting papers where necessary. The record shall be available for inspection by Members at the subsequent meeting of the committee or sub committee.

Implementation and co-ordination

The co-ordination of this procedure and the dispatch of any correspondence shall be the responsibility of the Committee Section.

Briefings on Committee Business

Formal joint briefings will be arranged for the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of committees to consider the business to be transacted at each meeting as set out on the agenda.

The Chairman may use discretion to invite other appropriate chairmen or vice-chairmen or spokespeople of other groups, to attend such briefings.

Any political group not holding the chair or vice-chair of a committee may request a briefing on the business to be transacted at the Committee meeting. Such a request should be made

by the Committee Spokesperson or Group Leader to the Committee Manager who will make appropriate arrangements with the Chief Officer(s) concerned. The Chairman of the Committee concerned shall be informed that such a briefing is to be given.

These briefing sessions will be comparatively short.

Officer relationships with party groups

In addition to the formal arrangements described above, the Management Board will meet with the Leader and Lead Members on a regular basis to advise generally on matters of policy which may become the subject of discussion by the Council or any committee, to review progress on the implementation of Council decisions and to consider any management problems on which the Board wishes general guidance.

It should be noted that the national conditions of service for all local government officers provide that no officer shall be called upon either to advise any political group of the Council or to attend any meeting of any such group.

The conditions for Chief Executives allow local arrangements to the contrary to be made but only with the agreement of the Chief Executive and with adequate safeguards to preserve political neutrality in relation to the affairs of the Council.

All political groups may request a private and confidential briefing including, but where appropriate going beyond, the provision of written information, on matters of policy which are or may become the subject of discussion by the Council or any Committee or which constitute important background information for the efficient and effective conduct of local government. All such requests must be made by the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Group concerned to the Chief Executive. If such a request is approved by the Chief Executive, a similar invitation will be given to the other political groups.

The Management Board, and in exceptional circumstances other Senior Officers, are prepared to provide such advice and assistance on the understanding that they will make their presentation, answer questions on it and then leave. Group Members should reserve political comment and discussion until after the departure of the staff involved.

Members in their Ward Role and Officers

- All members are entitled to consult staff over Council casework and to ask for appropriate enquiries and responses to be made.

The following facilities are available for members.

The Members' Suite is located on the first floor adjacent to the Council Chamber and Committee rooms. Access to the Members' Room can be gained by use of the identity card. The Suite also includes a kitchen and bar facility.

The Members' Room contains a personal computer, printer, telephone and stationery and library. A photocopier is located at the top of the main staircase. These facilities are available at no charge for Council business, but Party political business or personal use should be declared to the Chief Executive and will be recharged.

Members and Officers and Contracts

A member shall not issue any order in respect of any works which are being carried out by or on behalf of the Council, or claim by virtue of his/her membership of the Council any right to

inspect or to enter upon any land or premises which the Council has the power or duty to inspect or enter.

All members are entitled to the use of a personal computer at home or a grant towards the cost of purchase.

The Committee Section staff and other officers, as necessary, will support the chairmen in making arrangements for a Local Area Forum but will not clerk the meetings.

Councillor Access to Documents and Information

Any Member of the Council may report complaints to the appropriate member of staff by telephone, e-mail or in writing (see booklet "A-Z Council Contact Directory" for contacts) or seek answers from them to questions of a routine nature.

Any Member of the Council may ask the appropriate Chief Officer for written factual information about a department or service. Such requests will be met subject to any legal constraint and the paragraph below.

If the Chief Officer considers that the information requested could only be provided at unreasonable cost, the Chief Officer shall inform the Member. If the request is not withdrawn the Chief Officer shall seek direction from the Leader or the appropriate Lead Member as to whether it should be provided, and inform the Member accordingly. It remains the prerogative of a Councillor to raise such a request through the Committee, or Council whereon decisions can be taken in the light of available resources and agreed priorities.

The rules concerning access to information by councillors is set out fully in Part 4 of the constitution, Access to Information Procedure Rules.

Other individuals who are members of Council bodies

Such individuals are entitled to be treated by staff in the same manner as councillors while in the performance of their duties for the Council but not otherwise.

Press releases

All Council press releases will be drafted and issued by officers who will operate within the existing legal framework on publicity. All press releases will include a direct telephone number for the relevant Council Communications Officer. Press releases will be sent to the Leader of the Council and relevant Lead Member for comment and approval by the communications team before issue. Council press releases should be issued by the communications team.

Any request for information or questions asked by the press, websites, radio or television should initially be referred to the communications team.

Officers may speak directly to the media with the agreement of the communications team and after consultation with the Leader of the Council and relevant Lead Member.

All Council press releases will include contact details for the appropriate spokespeople for each of the Council's political groups.

Press releases should be published on the Council website and removed or updated if they become out of date.

If the Leader or Spokesperson of any political group wishes to issue a press statement in a group capacity, use may be made of Council facilities, e.g. typing, printing and distribution facilities, on a rechargeable basis by prior arrangements with the Chief Executive. Chief Officers may be requested only to provide factual information to assist in the preparation of such statements.

The Chairman of the Council has a special role in public relations and will reply on the appropriate headed notepaper, being guided by the Communications team who will collate responses from appropriate officers and will consult the Chief Executive when necessary. A copy of all such correspondence will be held on file.

Council press releases reporting the work of the Chairman of the Council must be approved by the Chairman before issue.

Website and Social Media

The Council's social and new media are co-ordinated by the Communications team. Any major announcements made through these channels that have not been approved in press release form should be agreed with the Communications team and include consultation with the Council Leader and relevant Lead Member.

The Council's websites will be checked regularly by the Communications team to ensure that all information is up to date.

Decisions and/or minutes from all Committees should be published on the Council's website within 24 hours of the end of the meeting. Notification of the above should be made at the same time, using the appropriate medium.

Reporting elections

The Council will comply with the Government's recommended Code of Practice on Local Government Publicity in regards to publicity restrictions prior to elections.

Local media representatives will be invited to attend election counts. Media representatives must comply with all count rules and must be accompanied by a Council communications officer at all times.

Filming, photography and audio recording are forbidden on the election count floor. The Communications team can arrange for photographs or filming to be made outside of the count floor or before or after the count. The Council may supply stock images to the media as an alternative.

Media representatives may interview Councillors, Candidates, Agents and Council Officers on the count floor with their agreement, where this does not disrupt the count.

Media representatives may publish on websites and social media direct from the count floor.

Correspondence

Correspondence between Officers and Members should tend to be on a formal basis. Casual conventions undermine the differentiation of roles and the absence of a recognised etiquette may tend to confuse less experienced Officers and Members.

For example, if writing to a Member it should begin 'Dear Councillor ......'. Careful consideration in accordance with this Protocol should be given as to whether or not to copy

the communication to anyone else and, if so, to whom. It should be readily apparent to all parties why and to whom any particular copy was sent. Special care is needed when dealing with Chairmen, Spokespeople or Leaders.

Inevitably e-mail is less formal so even more care is needed about what is sent or forwarded and to whom, to ensure that this protocol is observed.

Members may write to whoever appears to be the appropriate Officer but it is often better to write to the Chief Officer, especially if more than one department is involved in a single problem. Chief Officers are responsible for ensuring that their staff send adequate replies but, if a Member directs a letter to a specific member of staff, it has to be accepted that the individual may only know part of a wider story and so unwittingly give misleading information.

It is an essential part of the etiquette towards Members that officers reply promptly and fully to Members' correspondence. Acknowledgements should be sent unless a full answer can be given within two weeks of receipt and full replies must be sent as soon as possible.

Much correspondence from Members is in the form of details about a problem experienced by a (Ward) resident and/or a letter from the resident. In the majority of cases the reply should take the form of a letter to the resident, copied to the Member, and beginning 'I received an enquiry on your behalf on (date) from Councillor ………. about ………'. Occasionally it will be more appropriate to write to the Member giving confidential details to permit a response.

No Member should correspond with Council Tax payers, ratepayers or other groups, organisations or individuals on behalf of the Council. That is a job for officers. If a Member conducts such correspondence as an individual Councillor, it is important to ensure that the person receiving the letter is aware of that distinction. This is especially true if the Member holds a position as Leader of the Council, Lead Member, Chairman, Vice-Chairman or Spokesperson of a committee as the public can be easily confused about status. Similar arrangements should apply to meetings.

Any member who considers s/he has a justifiable exception to this rule should obtain the agreement of the Chief Executive before writing.

Review

The protocol should be operated with flexibility according to circumstances. The Group Leaders and the Chief Executive will periodically review the operation of these guidelines and are available to try to resolve problems which may arise in these areas from time to time.

Part 5 – Local Code of Corporate Governance

Three Rivers District Council

Local Code of Corporate Governance

April 2008

Three Rivers District Council

Local Code of Corporate Governance

Corporate Governance is the system by which organisations direct and control their activities. In local government, it is about how the Council ensures it is 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 the Council is directed and controlled and through which it accounts to, engages with and, where appropriate, leads the community. Three Rivers District Council is committed to the principles of good corporate governance. This document explains how the Council will achieve good corporate governance.

The Local Code follows the six core principles taken from *The Good Governance Standard for Public Services* (2004) developed by the Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services with support from the Office for Public Management and incorporated into *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government – Framework* published by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). They 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 achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles
- Promoting the 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

The framework urges local authorities to test their structures against these principles by:-

- Reviewing their existing governance arrangements against the framework
- Developing and maintaining an up-to-date local code of governance, including arrangements for ensuring its ongoing application and effectiveness
- Preparing a governance statement in order to report publicly on the extent to which they comply with their own code on an annual basis, including how they have monitored the effectiveness of their governance arrangements in the year, and on any planned changes in the coming period.

Core Principle 1

Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area

The function of governance is to ensure that the Council and its partners fulfil their purpose and achieve the intended outcomes for citizens and service users and operate in an effective, efficient, economic and ethical manner. This concept should guide all governance activity.

The Council will continue to develop and articulate a clear vision of its purpose and intended outcomes for citizens and service users that is clearly communicated, both within the Council and to external stakeholders.

Supporting Principle	How this will be Achieved
Exercising strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the Council's purpose and vision and its intended outcome for citizens and service users	− By developing and promoting the Council's purpose and vision
	− By reviewing on a regular basis the Council's vision for the local area and its implications for the Council's governance arrangements
	− By ensuring that partnerships are underpinned by a common vision of their work that is understood and agreed by all partners
	− By publishing an annual report on a timely basis to communicate the Council's activities and achievements, its financial position and performance
Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service whether directly, or in partnership, or by commissioning	− By deciding how the quality of service for users is to be measured and by making sure that the information needed to review service quality effectively and regularly is available.
	− By putting in place effective arrangements to identify and deal with failure in service delivery
Ensuring that the Council makes best use of resources and that tax payers and service users receive excellent value for money	− By deciding how value for money is to be measured and making sure that the Council or partnership has the information needed to review value for money and performance effectively. By measuring the environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions.

Core Principle 2

Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles

The full Council has overall responsibility for directing and controlling the organisation. It agrees the Council's constitution and agrees the budget and policy framework. The Policy and Resources Committee is responsible for proposing the budget, policy framework and key strategies and their implementation.

The Chief Executive advises Councillors on policy and procedures to drive the aims and objectives of the Council and leads a management board consisting of senior managers.

Supporting Principle	How this will be Achieved
Ensuring effective leadership throughout the Council and being clear about the functions of the Committees	– By setting out a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Policy and Resources Committee Members individually and the Council's approach towards putting this into practice
	– By setting out a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of other Council members, members generally and of senior officers
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	– By determining 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 by ensuring that it is monitored and updated when required
	– By making the Chief Executive responsible and accountable to the Council for all aspects of operational management
	– By developing protocols to ensure that the leader and chief executive negotiate their respective roles early in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained
	– By making the S151 Officer responsible to the Council 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
	– By making the Monitoring Officer responsible to the Council for ensuring that agreed procedures are followed and that all applicable statutes and regulations are complied with

Core Principle 2 (Continued)

Supporting Principle	How this will be Achieved
Ensuring relationships between the authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other	− By developing protocols to ensure effective communication between members and officers in their respective roles
	− By setting out the terms and conditions for remuneration of members and officers and an effective structure for managing the process, including an effective remuneration panel
	− By ensuring that effective mechanisms exist to monitor service delivery
	− By ensuring that the Council'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
	− When working in partnership, by ensuring that members are clear about their roles and responsibilities both individually and collectively in relation to the partnership and to the Council
	− When working in partnership:
	− by ensuring that there is clarity about the legal status of the partnership
	− by ensuring that representatives of organisations both understand and make clear to all other partners the extent of their authority to bind their organisation to partner decisions

Core Principle 3

Promoting values for the Council and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour

Good governance flows from a shared ethos or culture, as well as from systems and structures. It cannot be reduced to a set of rules, or achieved fully by compliance with a set of requirements. This spirit or ethos of good governance can be expressed as values and demonstrated in behaviour. Good governance builds on the principles for the conduct of people in public life established by the Nolan Committee and the Local Government Act 2000. In addition to compliance with legal requirements, e.g. equal opportunities, good governance is the development of shared values which become part of the Council's culture, underpinning policy and behaviour throughout the Council.

Supporting Principle	How this will be Achieved
Ensuring Council members and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance	– By ensuring that the Council's leadership sets a tone for the organisation by creating a climate of openness, support and respect
	– By ensuring that standards of conduct and personal behaviour expected of members and staff, of work between members and staff and between the Council, its partners and community are defined and communicated through codes of conduct and protocols
	– By putting 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 by putting in place appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice
Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective	– By developing and maintaining shared values including leadership values for both the Council and staff reflecting public expectations, and by communicating these with members, staff, the community and partners
	– By putting in place arrangements to ensure that systems and processes are designed in conformity with appropriate ethical standards, and by monitoring their continuing effectiveness in practice
	– By using the Council's shared values to act as a guide for decision making and as a basis for developing positive and trusting relationships within the Council
	– In pursuing the vision of a partnership, by agreeing a set of values against which decision making and actions can be judged. Such values must be demonstrated by partners' behaviour both individually and collectively

Core Principle 4

Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk

Decision making within a good governance framework is complex and challenging. It must further the Council's objectives and strategic direction and be robust in the medium and longer terms. To make such decisions, members must be well informed. They need the support of appropriate systems to help ensure that decisions are implemented and that resources are used legally and efficiently.

Risk management is important to the successful delivery of public services. An effective risk management system identifies and assesses risks, decides on appropriate treatments and then provides assurance that the treatments are effective.

Supporting Principle	How this will be Achieved
Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcomes	– By developing and maintaining an effective scrutiny function which encourages constructive challenge and enhances the Council's performance overall
	– By developing and maintaining open and effective mechanisms for documenting evidence for decisions and recording the criteria, rationale and considerations on which decisions are based
	– By putting in place arrangements to safeguard members and employees against conflicts of interest and by putting in place appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice
	– By developing and maintaining an effective audit committee which is independent
	– By ensuring that effective, transparent and accessible arrangements are in place for dealing with complaints
Having good quality information, advice and support to ensure that services are delivered effectively and are what the community wants / needs	– By ensuring that those making decisions whether for the Council or partnerships are provided with information that is fit for purpose – relevant, timely and gives clear explanations of technical issues and their implications
	– By ensuring that proper professional advice on matters that have legal or financial implications is available and recorded well in advance of decision making and used appropriately

Core Principle 4 (Continued)

Supporting Principle	How this will be Achieved
Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place	– By ensuring 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
	– By ensuring that effective arrangements for whistle-blowing are in place to which officers, staff and all those contracting with or appointed by the Council have access
Using legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in their area	– By actively recognising the limits of lawful activity placed on the Council by, for example, the ultra vires doctrine but also by striving to utilise powers to the full benefit of the community
	– By recognising the limits of lawful action and observing both the specific requirements of legislation and the general responsibilities placed upon the Council by public law
	– By observing all specific legislative requirements placed upon the Council, as well as the requirements of general law, and in particular by integrating the key principles of good administrative law - rationality, legality and natural justice – into procedures and decision making processes

Core Principle 5

Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective

Effective local government relies on public confidence in members and officers. Good governance strengthens credibility and confidence in public services. The Council needs people with the right skills to run them. Governance is strengthened by the participation of members with many different types of knowledge and experience drawing from the largest possible pool of potential members. This will also help to increase the diversity of members in terms of age, ethnic background, social class, life experiences, gender and disability.

Supporting Principle	How this will be Achieved
Making sure that members and officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles	– By providing induction programmes tailored to individual needs and opportunities for members and officers to update their knowledge on a regular basis
	– By ensuring 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
Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance as individuals and as a group	– By assessing the skills required by members and officers and make a commitment to develop those skills to enable roles to be carried out effectively
	– By developing skills on a continuing basis to improve performance, including the ability to scrutinise and challenge and to recognise when outside expert advice is needed
	– By ensuring 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
Encouraging new talent for membership of the authority so that best use can be made of individuals' skills and resources in balancing continuity and renewal	– By ensuring 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 authority
	– By ensuring that career structures are in place for members and officers to encourage participation and development

Core Principle 6

Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability

Local government is accountable in a number of ways. Members are accountable to the electorate. Councils are subject to external review through the Audit Commission. Councils are required to publish accounts and encouraged to produce an annual report. Their performance is reported against national performance indicators. The government has powers to cap budgets. Members and officers are subject to codes of conduct. If maladministration occurs an aggrieved person may appeal to the ombudsman.

Supporting Principle	How this will be Achieved
Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive accountability relationships	− By making clear to itself, all staff and the community exactly who the Council is accountable to and for what − By considering those institutional stakeholders to whom the authority is accountable and assess the effectiveness of the relationships and any changes required
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 Council, in partnership or by commissioning	− By ensuring clear channels of communication are in place with all sections of the community and other stakeholders, and by putting in place monitoring arrangements and ensuring that they operate effectively − By holding meetings in public unless there are good reasons for confidentiality − By ensuring 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 by establishing explicit processes for dealing with these competing demands − By establishing a clear policy on the types of issues the Council will meaningfully consult on and by engaging the public and service users in feedback to demonstrate what has changed as a result − By publishing on an annual basis 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 − By ensuring that the Council as a whole is open and accessible to the community, service users and its staff and by ensuring 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.
Making best use of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meet responsibility to staff	− By developing and maintaining a clear policy on how staff and their representatives are consulted and involved in decision making