Code of Corporate Governance

Introduction

Our Code of Corporate Governance ('the Code') sets out the Council's governance standards. These standards ensure the Council is doing the right things, in the right way in a timely, inclusive, open, effective, honest and accountable manner.

The Council's Corporate Governance Principles

The Code is based on the seven governance principles set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE[1] guidance 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' (2016).

These principles ('A' to 'G') and their sub principles ('A1' to 'G3') are set out below, along with a series of 'we will' commitments which articulate the Council's approach to meeting the principles.

A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.

A1 - Behaving with Integrity

We will:
- Foster a culture of behaviour based on shared values, ethical principles and good conduct that is put into practice by members and officers alike.
- Take an 'Our Manchester' approach to everything that we do. This means we have five behaviours which represent how we should do things:

    1. We are proud and passionate about Manchester
    2. We take time to listen and understand
    3. We own it and are not afraid to try new things
    4. We work together and trust each other
    5. We show that we value our differences and treat people fairly

- Ensure that staff are aware of and know how to access whistle-blowing, and anti-fraud and corruption procedures. All our staff are expected to help prevent fraud and corruption, and are encouraged, supported, and protected to speak up if they encounter potential wrongdoing.

A2 - Demonstrating Strong Commitment to Ethical Values

We will:
- Operate a Standards Committee that champion high standards of ethical governance from elected members.
- Maintain robust policies and procedures so that ethical values are put into practice, including separate Codes of Conduct for members and staff and a

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[1] CIPFA is the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and SOLACE is the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives

Member / Officer Relations Protocol, which are clearly communicated and readily accessible.

- Operate effective procedures for the declaration of interests, gifts and hospitality for both members and officers.
- Operate ethical procurement policies to ensure that commitment to our values and integrity is delivered by external suppliers delivering services on our behalf.

A3 - Respecting the Rule of Law

We will:
- Appoint a Monitoring Officer (the City Solicitor) who is a member of the Strategic Management Team (SMT) and ensures that decisions are taken in a lawful and fair way, procedures are followed and that all applicable statutes and regulations are complied with.
- Put in place measures to address breaches of our legal and regulatory powers. The Council's Monitoring Officer (the City Solicitor) has statutory reporting duties in respect of unlawful decision making and maladministration. Similarly, the Chief Finance Officer (the Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer) has statutory reporting duties in respect of unlawful and financially imprudent decision making.
- Appoint Statutory Officers that have the skills, resources and support necessary to perform effectively in their roles. These include:
  - Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive)
  - Monitoring Officer (City Solicitor)
  - Chief Finance Officer (Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer)
- Support the statutory officers as well as other key post holders and elected Members to fulfil their responsibilities within legislative and regulatory requirements.
- Ensure that all Members and Officers appointed to undertake roles as Directors on either Company or Charity Boards are adequately trained and supported to ensure that they undertake their duties within the context of the relevant Acts that govern such bodies.

B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

B1 - Ensuring Openness

We will:
- Set out our website in a clear and accessible way, using infographics and plain language, with information which residents use most easily accessible from the homepage.
- Ensure that decisions taken by Council (the meeting attended by all Councillors), as well as those taken by Committees or by the Executive are recorded on our website, alongside the reasons and the evidence considered.
- Ensure that subject to limited exemptions these decisions are made in public and information relating to those decisions is made available to the public.

- Publish notification online of the intention to take the most significant executive decisions on a Register of Key Decisions.
- Provide live webcasts of decision making and Scrutiny Committee meetings.

B2 - Engaging Comprehensively with Institutional Stakeholders

We will:
- Develop and maintain relationships with leaders of other organisations across the private, public and voluntary sector contributing to the vision for the city in the Our Manchester Strategy.
- Maintain a register of our significant partnerships to assess the level of assurance for the governance arrangements of each partnership and highlight areas where improvements may be required to further strengthen these arrangements. This activity will be reported and accountable to Audit Committee and underpinned by clear and well documented supporting evidence.
- Ensure effective monitoring of the performance and outcomes delivered through the companies, Joint Ventures and charities which the Council is a party to, through the Council's Commercial Board and the Shareholder Panel.

B3 - Engaging with Individual Citizens and Service Users Effectively

We will:
- Use the Our Manchester approach when engaging with residents, with the principles of better lives, listening, recognising strengths and working together. This means that we focus first on the strengths and potential in people and places, rather than starting from their challenges.
- Use the most appropriate methods to engage and consult to ensure the reach is as broad and inclusive as possible, including but not limited to community engagement, formal consultation, and working with residents and service users to design services that best meet their needs.
- Proactively engage with the city's diverse communities and identity groups to inform the development and delivery of our functions. This includes recognising the distinction between engaging communities of geography (a finite number of residents within individual neighbourhoods) and communities of identity. Identity groups can mean people with protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act, which includes disabled people, older people, communities experiencing racial inequality, and LGBTQ+ people, who are widely dispersed across Manchester. The Council also engages with a broader range of identity groups than those defined in the Equality Act, including ex-armed forces personnel and their families, people living in poverty, people with caring responsibilities and homeless people.
- Work with Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations to assist in effective engagement with Manchester's diverse communities within neighbourhoods and communities of identity.
- Strives to balance the feedback we receive from more active stakeholders with that from less active stakeholders through monitoring responses by age, gender, location, ethnicity, sexuality, and other factors and delivering targeted

promotion where required to ensure that the sample of respondents is representative of the city as a whole.

- Adopt a "You Said … We Did" approach to consultation and promotes material advising the public and other stakeholders of the key findings from consultations and how they have been taken into account.
- Maintain effective channels for dialog and debate with residents, including via social media.
- Maintain effective complaints and compliments handling and monitoring procedures, so that we can identify where improvements in service delivery are needed and learn effectively from the complaints that we have received.

C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits

C1 - Defining Outcomes

We will:
- Engage and consult with residents, partners and other key stakeholders when designing key strategies.
- Ensure that outcomes are focused on achieving delivery of the overall vision for the city in the Our Manchester Strategy.
- Maintain a current Corporate Plan which sets out the priorities which the Council will focus on to play its part in delivering the vision for the city.
- Put the Our Manchester Strategy and Corporate Plan priorities at the heart of our budget, business planning, and service planning processes.
- Commit to service managers ensuring that Service Plans are clearly communicated to all staff, so that they understand the role that they will play in delivering the Corporate Plan priorities.
- Commit to consulting with the businesses and residents of Manchester in the design of our budget proposals to understand their priorities, and to be transparent about financial limitations.
- Develop a Medium-Term Financial Strategy which sets out financial assumptions and provides a set of goals for financial decision making for the planning period ahead.

C2 - Sustainable Economic, Social and Environmental Benefits

We will:
- Commit to considering the full combined economic, social and environmental implications of our decisions through, for example, data analysis and consultation with affected parties so that our decisions advance the achievement of the city's vision.
- Set out the impact a decision will have on the five Our Manchester Strategy outcomes and include both an Environmental, and an Equality Impact Assessment, in any reports which recommend a decision.
- Maintain up to date plans to address climate change and provide regular online progress updates on delivery. This includes progress towards science-based carbon reduction targets for Manchester which require the city to become net zero carbon by 2038.

- Provide political leadership on our equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) priorities at Executive Member level, and senior officer leadership at SMT level.
- Ensure that services are clear about their role in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty (S149 of the Equality Act 2010). When required, Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out to assess the impact of proposals which may have a differential effect on individuals with protected characteristics and communities across the city.
- Commit to progressing EDI for our workforce, informed by our Employee Network Groups and the represented Trade Unions.
- Enact plans and strategies which will boost productivity in the city, to reduce poverty and create an economy that is inclusive and benefits everyone. We will meet the vision of Manchester being a more highly skilled city using learning and employment, creating an economy where more of our residents are connected to the city's success.
- Have a set of social value priorities and an approach for promoting social value, particularly through our procurement. We will continually look to refine and update our approach, introducing innovations where possible.

D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

D1 - Determining Interventions

We will:
- Ensure that decision makers receive accurate, relevant and timely performance information and intelligence to support them with objective and rigorous analysis of options, covering intended outcomes, financial impact and associated risks informing efficient service delivery.
- Seek to continuously enhance the insights made available to decision makers, for example by delivering improvement programmes focusing on key areas such as digital and data.
- Commit to seeking continuous feedback from residents and those who use our services both in planning service changes and improvements, for example through surveys, consultations or bespoke feedback gathering.
- Ensure effective delegation of decision making to officers so that they can deal with the day-to-day running of services without the need to constantly refer matters back to elected Members. Details of what decisions are taken in this way are included in the Scheme of Delegation in the Council's Constitution.

D2 – Planning Interventions

We will:
- Plan our activity at a strategic level through our budget and business planning cycle, in consultation with internal and external stakeholders, to ensure services delivered across different parts of the organisations and partners complement each other and avoid duplication.

- Ensure consistent and effective service planning, with each service completing an individual plan. Services will ensure that their priorities and activities set out in their service plan all contribute towards delivery of our Corporate Plan, and that there is also a focus on continuous improvement.

D3 - Optimising Achievement of Intended Outcomes

We will:
- Integrate and balance our service priorities, affordability, and other resource constraints, considering the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term, including both revenue and capital spend budgets. This includes producing a medium-term financial plan.
- Take an integrated approach to the deployment of revenue and capital spend, aligned to delivery of the Our Manchester priorities.
- Consider social value at pre-tender and tender stage to ensure that appropriate desirable outcomes can be offered by suppliers in their tender submissions.

E. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

E1 - Developing the Organisation's Capacity

We will:
- Have organisational development plans in place which support staff to develop the skills and behaviours to enable us to effectively deliver against the Our Manchester Strategy, and to continue to transform our culture.
- Enact strategies which aim to create a more inclusive Council, where our workforce fully reflects the rich diversity and talent of the communities we serve at all levels.
- Deliver change programmes which will continue to reshape how services are delivered internally and externally, using new technologies, ways of working and new delivery models.

E2 - Developing the Capability of the Organisation's Leadership and Other Individuals

We will:
- Ensure that newly elected Council Members receive an induction into the work of the Council and their role as a local member.
- Provide ongoing elected Member development, including briefings by officers into any new developments which affect their role.
- Ensure that all staff have regular one to ones with their manager, known as "About You" sessions. These will include discussions on objectives and goals, performance, understanding training and development needs, and health and wellbeing.
- Listen to the views of our staff through surveys and then use the learnings from these to inform and improve the way that we prioritise, operate, and communicate.

- Run events which give all staff the opportunity to connect with priorities, and engage with the senior leadership, for example in question-and-answer sessions.
- Commit to developing all our managers at all stages throughout their careers. We offer a broad range of courses ranging from those aimed at all new managers, existing managers, and leaders.
- Ensure that all managers are aware of, understand and are following key corporate people management policies and processes such as managing attendance.
- Commit to supporting the physical, mental, social, and financial wellbeing of our workforce. This includes providing support and guidance on the Intranet, a 24/7 Employee Assistance Programme for staff and their families, and a health and wellbeing strategy.

F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

F1 - Managing Risk

We will:
- Operate a risk management framework that aids decision making in pursuit of the organisation's strategic objectives, protects the Council's reputation and other assets and is compliant with statutory and regulatory obligations.
- Ensure that staff are appropriately trained to ensure that they manage risk effectively using appropriate methodologies, including the management of safeguarding risks in line with professional standards.
- Consider emerging pieces of legislation and policy changes to understand and prepare for their potential impact.

F2 - Managing Performance

We will:
- Ensure that services use timely and accurate performance information and insight about service delivery, to support intervention to address any barriers to good performance.
- Provide SMT with concise, clear, and integrated finance and performance reports to support effective resources allocation, and to shine a light on any challenges so that they can be addressed.

F3 - Effective Overview and Scrutiny

We will:
- Maintain Scrutiny Committees, which hold decision makers to account and play a key role in ensuring that public services are delivered in the way that residents want.
- Ensure that where appropriate officers know how to engage with and support the Scrutiny Committees.

F4 - Robust Internal Control

We will:
- Maintain robust internal control processes, which support the achievement of our objectives while managing risks. The current approach will be set out annually in Risk and Internal Audit reports to Audit Committee.
- Maintain and communicate clear policies and arrangements in respect of counter fraud and anti-corruption.
- Maintain an Audit Committee which oversees the effectiveness of governance and risk management arrangements, internal systems of control, and anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements.
- Annually report to Audit Committee our internal auditor's findings into the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control.
- Ensure that implementation of, or response to improvement recommendations made by Internal and External Auditors and other external assessors occurs within due dates.

F5 - Managing Data

We will:
- Comply with data protection legislation, which includes the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). This will ensure that data processing is carried out fairly, lawfully, and transparently.
- Ensure that all valid requests from individuals to exercise the rights provided for in data protection legislation are dealt with as quickly as possible, and by no later than the timescales allowed in the legislation.
- Review and supplement our policies, and keep our processing activities under review, to ensure they remain consistent with the law, and any compliance advice and codes of practice issued from time to time by the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).
- Ensure that it is clear to all staff and Members that they are personally accountable for using the Council's information responsibly and appropriately.
- Ensure that staff and Members are appropriately trained in protecting information.
- Make information available to the public via the information access regimes provided for by Freedom of Information and Environmental Information legislation.
- Ensure that Information Governance is overseen at a senior level by the Corporate Information Assurance and Risk Group (CIARG), chaired by the City Solicitor who is the Senior Information Risk Officer for the Council (SIRO).

F6 - Strong Public Financial Management

We will:
- Maintain an approach to Financial Management that ensures that public money is safeguarded at all times, ensuring value for money. Our approach supports both long-term achievement of objectives, and shorter term financial

and operational performance. This is outlined within the Council's Medium Term Final Strategy.

- Via Financial Regulations and through the leadership of the Chief Finance Officer (Deputy Chief Executive and City Treasurer), ensure that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, proper financial records and accounts are kept, and oversees an effective system of internal financial control. The City Treasurer ensures well developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control including management of financial risks, systems, and processes.
- Comply with the Financial Management Code (FM Code) which sets out the standards of financial management expected for local authorities and is designed to support good practice, and to assist local authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability. As part of this we will carry out credible and transparent financial resilience assessments.
- When making our budget calculations, ensure that the Chief Finance Officer (CFO) reports to Council on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations, and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
- Follow CIPFA's Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code of Practice which set out the risk framework through which the Council manages its balance sheet and makes capital investment decisions.
- Maintain strategies and processes detailing our approach to decision making on capital investments, and treasury management (including debt management and cash investing).

G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

G1 - Implementing Good Practice in Transparency

We will:
- Commit to publishing information, including reports, in a manner which is accessible to residents and other stakeholders.
- Ensure that our website is set out in a clear and easily accessible way, using infographics and plain language.
- Follow the Local Government Transparency Code, which includes requirements and recommendations for local authorities to publish certain types of data.

G2 - Implementing Good Practices in Reporting

We will:
- Make reports publicly available online which chart the city's progress towards its vision and priorities as set out in the Our Manchester Strategy.
- Provide integrated finance and performance monitoring information to SMT. This will enable monitoring of delivery of our Corporate Plan priorities, support effective resource allocation, and help to identify any challenges so that they can be addressed.

- Produce Communities of Identity reports, working with communities, VCSE organisations and partners to identify the different experiences of diverse communities in Manchester.

G3 - Assurance and Effective Accountability

We will:
- Welcome peer challenge, internal and external review and audit, and inspections from regulatory bodies, giving thorough consideration to arising recommendations.
- Monitor the implementation of internal and external audit recommendations. Assurance reports will be presented to Audit Committee and the Council's external auditors, summarising the Council's performance in implementing recommendations effectively and within agreed timescales.
- Follow the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), which includes a commitment to develop audit plans which are designed to invite comment from management and the Audit Committee.

Meeting the commitments set out in the Code

Each year the Council publishes an [Annual Governance Statement (AGS)](#) to accompany the Annual Accounts.

The AGS provides an overview of how the Council's governance arrangements operate, including how they are reviewed annually to ensure they remain effective.

In 'The Governance Framework' section of the AGS (Section 4) key examples are given of how the Council has met the governance commitments set out in the Code. This includes hyperlinks to sources of further information, which include more detail about how the Council has implemented its commitments.