

Local Code of Governance

Final version: April 2024

Revision date: April 2025

1. **What is governance?**

Governance, and particularly good governance, can be defined in a number of ways. For local authorities the "[Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework](#)" (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) / Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) 2007) sets the standard for governance in local authorities across the country. This was reviewed in 2015 and a revised edition was published in 2016.

The framework and guidance produced by CIPFA / SOLACE aim to support local authorities in the development and maintenance of their own Codes of governance to enable them to discharge their responsibilities in an efficient and accountable way in ever changing circumstances. Key to this is ensuring resources are directed in accordance with priorities, decision making is sound and inclusive and there is clear accountability for the use of resources.

Put simply, governance is the means by which an organisation develops and maintains processes, policies, procedures and practices to direct and deliver its purpose / aim.

Our [Council Plan 2022-25](#) sets out the organisations aim, priorities and outcomes as detailed below:

Aim	Inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised. Together we are committed to developing a healthier, cleaner and safer Walsall and creating an environment that provides opportunities for all residents, communities and businesses to fulfil their potential and thrive.
Priorities	Economic – Enable greater local opportunities for all people, communities and businesses People – Encourage our residents to lead more active, fulfilling and independent lives to maintain or improve health and wellbeing Internal focus – Council services are customer focused effective, efficient and equitable Children – Have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well Communities – Empower our communities so that they feel they are connected and belong in Walsall, creating safe and healthy places whilst building a strong sense of community

Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supporting a dynamic resilient and diverse economy where businesses invest and everyone has the right jobs and the right housing in the right place. 2. Education, training and skills enable people to contribute to their community and our economy. 3. People can access support in their community to keep safe and well and remain independent at home. 4. People are supported to maintain or improve their health, wellbeing and quality of life. 5. We get things rights, first time and make all services accessible and easy to use. 6. The Council will deliver trusted, customer focused, and enabling services, which are recognised by customers and our partners for the value they bring. 7. Children and young people thrive emotionally, physically, mentally and feel they are achieving their potential. 8. Children and young people grow up in connected communities and feel safe everywhere. 9. Our communities will be more resilient and supportive of each other. 10. The people of Walsall feel safe in a cleaner, greener Borough.
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Good governance enables local authorities to pursue the delivery of outcomes whilst acting in the public interest at all times. This means there is an intrinsic link between governance and financial and risk management.

2. Purpose of the Code of Governance

As a public body the Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted with the highest ethical and legal standards, and that public money is safeguarded, properly accounted for and used economically, efficiently and effectively. Both elected members and officers have to work together to ensure that this duty is properly discharged.

The Code of Governance provides the framework which supports the delivery of outcomes for the communities it serves. It brings an underlying set of values, behaviours, legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes and systems that enable the effective delivery of outcomes and the council's aim that all inequalities are reduced and all potential is maximised. This Local Code of Governance connects the role of statutory officers and the Statutory Officer Group to the council's governance policies and procedures.

Governance ensures there are high standards of conduct and leadership; placing responsibility on elected members and officers to demonstrate leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct, thereby setting an example for the rest of the organisation. This will ensure that we do the right things, in the right way, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

Governance is about our people just as much as it is about the systems and processes we have in place. This includes our organisational values and behaviours, the way we manage

our business internally, and the way in which we engage with, and where appropriate lead our communities. The Council's values are set out below:

<i>Professionalism</i>	As stewards of public funds and information, we understand the importance of our jobs, we have respect for ourselves, our colleagues, our citizens and the organization that we represent. We act accordingly. We deal with issues, whether positive or negative, in a moderate and straightforward manner whenever possible.
<i>Leadership</i>	Together we will create an inspiring vision of the future. We will motivate and inspire people to engage with that vision. We recognize the talents of individuals and allow those talents to be utilized for the betterment of the organization.
<i>Accountability</i>	We adhere to a standard of professionalism in the workplace. We hold ourselves responsible for upholding the mission of our organization.
<i>Transparency</i>	We will ensure citizens the availability of information which can be made public.
<i>Ethical</i>	We will display integrity, honesty mindful of the rule of law, in order to successfully practice and promote transparency of government.

In addition to these values, elected members and officers are expected to adopt the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#) initially set out by Lord Nolan.

The [Seven Principles of Public Life](#) (also known as the Nolan Principles) apply to anyone who works as a public office holder and includes those who are elected or appointed to public office both nationally and locally. They are overseen by the Committee on Standards in Public Life who advise the Prime Minister on ethical standards across the whole of public life in England. The Seven Principles are:

[Accountability](#) - holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

[Honesty](#) - holders of public office should be truthful.

[Integrity](#) – holders of public office must avoid situations where they are placed under any obligation to people or organisations that might try to inappropriately influence their work. Holders of public office should not take actions or decisions to gain financial or other material benefits and must declare and resolve and interests and relationships.

[Objectivity](#) – holders of public office must action with impartiality in all action they take and decisions they make, using the best evidence available and acting without discrimination or bias.

[Selflessness](#) – holders of public office should act solely in the interest of the public and not for themselves.

[Openness](#) – holders of public office should act and taken decisions openly and transparently, not withholding any information from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons to do so.

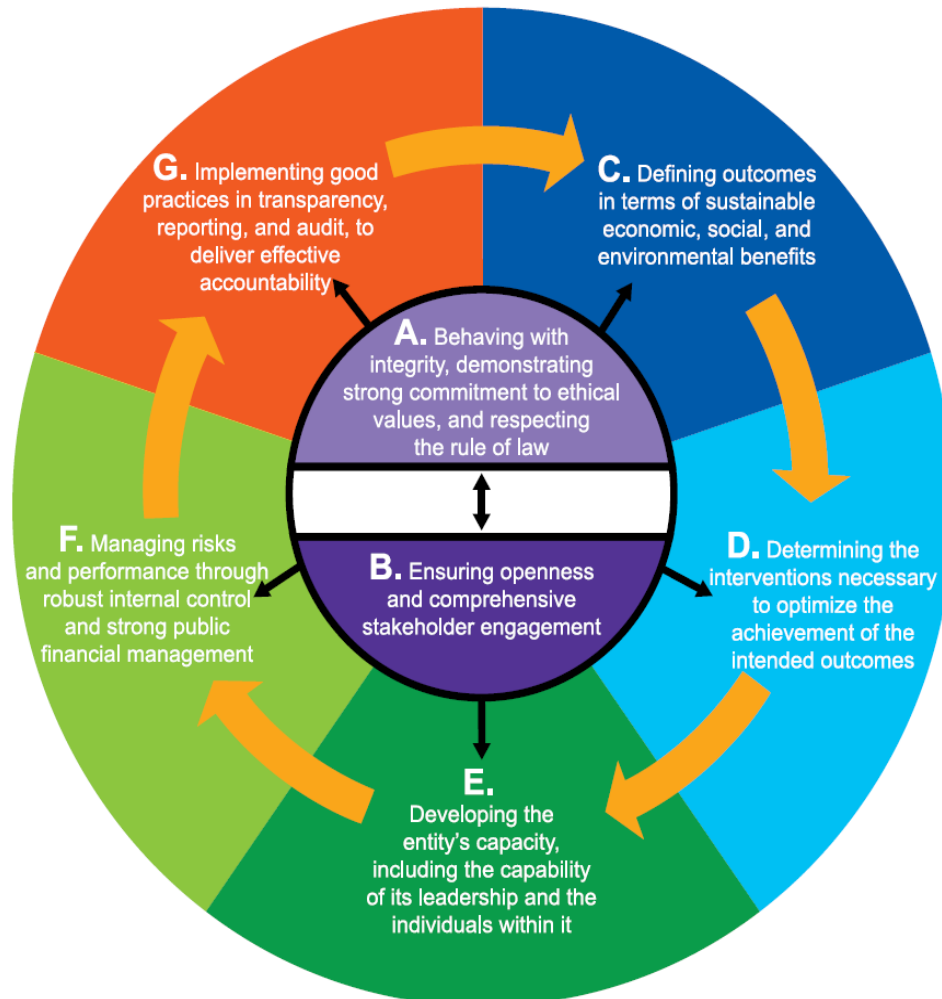
[Leadership](#) – holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. The Seven Principles should be actively promoted and whenever poor behaviour occurs it should be challenged.

Each principle detailed above is a hyperlink to a short video produced by the Committee on Standards in Public Life which provides more insight into the individual principle.

These values and principles will help officers and elected members ensure that their conduct aligns with and embeds the principles of good governance.

Principles of Good Governance

The key principles of the CIPFA / SOLACE “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework” are illustrated below:



Each of these seven principles (including sub principles) and how the council meets them is detailed in the following table:

Principles of Good Governance (Sub principles)	Examples of how we meet these Principles
<p>A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Behaving with integrity</i> • <i>Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values</i> • <i>Respecting the rule of law</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council constitution, in particular all codes and protocols, scheme of delegations, roles, responsibilities, and decision making processes • Member induction and training and development programmes • Officer learning and development plans • Officer performance reviews (APC's) • Our Values and Behaviour frameworks

<p>B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Openness</i> • <i>Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders</i> • <i>Engaging stakeholders effectively, including citizens and service users</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Transparency Code • Decision making processes including Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA's) • Public and officer consultations • Key national data (e.g. Census and Indices of Deprivation) • Joint Strategic Needs Assessment • Customer engagement strategy • Publication of key decisions, including officer and urgent decisions • We are Walsall 2040 Strategy • Consultation activity
<p>C. Defining outcome in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Defining outcomes</i> • <i>Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Plan 2022-2025, detailing priorities and outcomes • The Walsall Plan: Our Health and Wellbeing Strategy • Key strategies, policies and plans, for example Customer Experience Strategy, Digital Strategy, Climate Emergency Action Plan etc.
<p>D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievements of the intended outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Determining interventions</i> • <i>Planning interventions</i> • <i>Optimising achievement of intended outcomes</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Risk Register • Procurement and Contract Management Documents • Consultations informing decision making • Council Plan Performance Reports and annual Review of Achievements • Policy monitoring and reviews • Government performance targets (e.g. housing, planning applications) • Fees and Charges (statutory and discretionary)
<p>E. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Developing the entity's capacity</i> • <i>Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member induction and training and development programmes • Officer learning and development plans • Officer performance reviews (APC's) • Workforce Strategy • Open and transparent recruitment processes • Ways of Working Policy
<p>F. Managing the risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Managing risk</i> • <i>Managing performance</i> • <i>Robust internal control</i> • <i>Managing data</i> • <i>Strong public financial management</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remit of Audit Committee • Medium Term Financial Strategy • Strategic Risk Register • Information Governance Framework • Performance Management Framework

<p>G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Implementing good practice in transparency</i> • <i>Implementing good practices in reporting</i> • <i>Assurance and effective accountability</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complies with Local Government Transparency Code
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3 Effectiveness and Assurance

It is important that corporate governance is not static as the challenges facing local government change significantly and rapidly, which means the council has to adapt meet these challenges in order to deliver the level of services our customers want in a fair and transparent manner, dependent upon available resources.

To assure that our governance arrangements, processes and procedures are proportionate, effective and embedded the council completes an annual review of the effectiveness of internal controls as part of the production of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS).

The framework of the AGS recognises that the Local Code of Governance is a key document / guide of the framework that supports the council's delivery of our aim, priorities and outcomes.

A key component of governance arrangements is delivered by Internal Audit, particularly in regard to providing assurance that governance processes and arrangements are embedded.

Governance is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it is flexible yet robust. Preparation of the Annual Governance Statement supports this annual review and provides a brief public report on how the council complies with its own Local Code of Governance as part of the review of internal controls. This includes details of how the Council has monitored and evaluated the effectiveness of governance arrangements throughout the year and provides comment on any proposed changes to governance. This process also improves the effectiveness of corporate governance and the internal control framework. This seeks to offer assurance that control measures are effective and embedded. It is important that any changes to governance are properly evaluated, and risk assessed in the context of the aims and objectives of the council going forward, whilst reflecting the environment the council is operating in.

The Annual Governance Statement itself provides a brief assessment regarding the review of governance that has taken place, and the role of the governance structures involved (such as the authority itself, the audit committee, and other committees). It is high level, strategic and written in an open and readable style. It is focused on outcomes, value for money, and relates to the authority's vision for the area.