



**Breckland**  
COUNCIL

## **Breckland District Council**

# Local Code of Corporate Governance

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### Introduction

Corporate Governance is a term used to describe the way that organisations direct and control what they do. For local authorities, it includes the systems, policies and processes, as well as the culture and values that underpin a Council's arrangements for effective:

- Leadership
- Management
- Performance
- Delivery of positive customer outcomes
- Community engagement
- Stewardship of public money

### Good Corporate Governance

Breckland Council is committed to achieving good corporate governance and this Local Code describes how the Council intends to achieve this in an open and explicit way.

In developing this code, the Council has considered best practice and guidance, particularly the CIPFA/SOLACE framework "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government".

The code is based on the following six core principles:

- 1. Creating and implementing a vision** – good corporate governance means focusing on the purpose of the Council and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.
- 2. Roles and responsibilities of members and officers** – good corporate governance means members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.
- 3. Standards of conduct and behaviour** – good corporate governance means promoting values for the Council and by upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.
- 4. Decision making, scrutiny and risk management** – good governance means taking informed and transparent decisions that are effectively scrutinised and managing risk.
- 5. Developing capacity and capability of members and officers** – good governance means developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective.
- 6. Engaging with local people and stakeholders** – good governance means engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

The following details how the Council meets these core principles.

## 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

| Supporting Principle   | Description of Governance Mechanisms  |
|--|---|
| <p>1) Exercising strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the authority's purpose and vision and its intended outcome for citizens and service users</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Council has developed and promoted its purpose and vision in the <a href="#">Corporate Plan</a>. This plan sets out the Council's corporate values and behaviours and identifies the four priority areas.</li> <li>▪ The Council has developed and maintains proper financial management arrangements. This includes approving a balanced budget and publishing an annual <a href="#">Statement of Accounts</a> which give electors, local taxpayers, Members of the Council, employees and other interested parties clear information about the Council's finances.</li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Corporate Performance</a> is reported to the Cabinet every quarter and also via the <a href="#">Overview &amp; Scrutiny Commission</a>. The report consists of the Council's key indicators and projects. Monitoring the performance of these indicators and projects helps the Council to ensure that priorities set in the Corporate Plan are achieved and that areas of underperformance are addressed. Financial Performance is also reported every quarter to the Cabinet.</li> <li>▪ The <a href="#">Budget and Medium Term Plan</a> set out the Council's long-term budget planning. It outlines what the Council plans to deliver for residents and includes issues such as our plans for setting the levels of Council Tax and how we plan to manage financial risks. The Council also has a <a href="#">Capital Strategy</a> which explains how the Council plans to manage our capital assets within the district to make sure our capital spending plans are well managed and ensure that local needs can be met.</li> </ul> |
| <p>2) Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service whether directly, or in partnership, or by commissioning</p>   |   |
| <p>3) Ensuring that the authority makes best use of resources, and that taxpayers and service users receive excellent value for money</p>                                    |   |

## Core Principle 2 – Members and officer working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles

| Supporting Principle   | Description of Governance Mechanisms  |
|--|---|
| <p>1) Ensuring effective leadership throughout the authority and being clear about executive and non-executive functions and of the roles and responsibilities of the scrutiny function</p>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The <a href="#">Constitution</a> sets out:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ How the Council operates including defining the roles and responsibilities of the executive, members and officers</li> <li>➤ How decisions are made and the procedures which are to be followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people</li> <li>➤ How the Council manages its financial affairs including financial regulations and procurement rules</li> <li>➤ Clearly documented protocols governing the working relationships between members and officers</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Elected a Leader of the Council and nominated a Cabinet made up of Cabinet Members with defined executive responsibilities.</li> <li>▪ Appointed <a href="#">Overview and Scrutiny Commission</a>. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission and its Task and Finish Groups support the work of the Cabinet and the Council as a whole. They allow citizens to have a greater say in Council matters by holding public inquiries into matters of local concern. The Commission has a set work programme which is decided by the members either by picking forthcoming reports from the Forward Plan or by members requesting that the Commission scrutinise a certain issue. These lead to reports and recommendations which advise the Cabinet and the Council as a whole on its policies, budget and service delivery. They can ‘call-in’ a decision which has been made by the Executive but not yet implemented and may recommend that the decision be reconsidered.</li> <li>▪ The <a href="#">Governance and Audit Committee</a> oversees the work of the Internal and External Audit functions of the Council and provides independent assurance of the effectiveness of governance arrangements, risk management and financial management processes. The Governance and Audit Committee has six members, plus two substitutes. Membership of the Committee is decided annually by the Council. This committee is supported by one independent member.</li> <li>▪ Appointed a Chief Executive to be responsible and accountable for all aspects of operational management (the Head of Paid Service).</li> <li>▪ Appointed nominated Senior Officers are responsible for proper administration of the Council’s financial affairs (Section 151 Officer – known as Assistant Director - Finance) and for ensuring the Council acts in accordance with the law (Monitoring</li> </ul> |
| <p>2) Ensuring that a constructive working relationship exists between elected members and officers and that the responsibilities of authority members and officers are carried out to a high standard</p> |   |
| <p>3) Ensuring relationships between the authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other</p>   |   |

Officer – known as the Deputy Chief Executive).

- Established an effective Corporate Management Team including the Chief Executive and three Directors and six Assistant Directors.
- Developed and agreed a [Code of Conduct for Members](#) and [Officers](#) to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained.
- Developed a Member and Officer Relations protocol to ensure Members and officers work together constructively in a spirit of mutual trust and confidence to successfully achieve the Council's objectives.

**Core Principle 3 – Promoting values for the Council and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour**

| Supporting Principle   | Description of Governance Mechanisms  |
|--|---|
| <p>1) Ensuring authority members and officer exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Council has developed and promotes a culture of behaviour based on shared values, high ethical principles and good conduct by having:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ An effective internal audit function which reports regularly to the Governance and Audit Committee</li> <li>▪ A <a href="#">code of conduct for Members</a></li> <li>▪ A <a href="#">code of conduct for Officers</a></li> <li>▪ A <a href="#">Counter Fraud, Corruption, Bribery Policy</a>, <a href="#">Whistleblowing Policy</a> and <a href="#">Money Laundering Policy</a></li> <li>▪ A <a href="#">Register of Interests</a> for Members, for which details are to be found by individual <a href="#">Councillor</a></li> <li>▪ A Register of Hospitality is held in the Democratic Services Department.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ The Council is committed to developing its Councillors. A comprehensive training programme exists for members and all new Members receive an induction following elections.</li> <li>▪ The Council has an established approach to dealing with <a href="#">corporate compliments, complaints and feedback</a>. This includes dealing with complaints about services, a member of staff or Councillors.</li> </ul> |
| <p>2) Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective</p>  |   |

## Core Principle 4 – Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk

| Supporting Principle  | Description of Governance Mechanisms   |
|---|--|
| 1) Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny                | <p>The Council has effective arrangements in place to ensure decision-making is effective and transparent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Agendas, minutes and decisions are published on the <a href="#">Council's website</a>. A decision tracking system was launched in January 2012 which informs officers of key decisions.</li> <li>▪ The Council has a <a href="#">Key Decision Plan</a> which is a record of all key decisions the Council and Executive expects to make in the next twelve months and is updated and published monthly. The purpose of the Key Decision Plan is to give advance notice of the key decisions that the Council is likely to make in the future.</li> <li>▪ Appointed <a href="#">Overview and Scrutiny Commission</a>. The Overview and Scrutiny Commission and its Task and Finish Groups support the work of the Cabinet and the Council as a whole. They allow citizens to have a greater say in Council matters by holding public inquiries into matters of local concern. The Commission has a set work programme which is decided by the members either by picking forthcoming reports from the Forward Plan or by members requesting that the Commission scrutinise a certain issue. These lead to reports and recommendations which advise the Cabinet and the Council as a whole on its policies, budget and service delivery. They can 'call-in' a decision which has been made by the Executive but not yet implemented and may recommend that the decision be reconsidered.</li> <li>▪ An effective internal audit function which reports regularly to the <a href="#">Governance and Audit Committee</a></li> <li>▪ Risk management is embedded in the culture of the authority. The <a href="#">Risk Management Policy</a> has been approved by the Audit Committee and is reviewed on an annual basis. Regular risk updates are provided to the <a href="#">Governance and Audit Committee</a>.</li> <li>▪ The Council's Anglia Revenues Partnership has a Fraud section whose duties include detecting fraudulent claims, stopping and reducing payment in fraudulent cases and calculating overpayments of benefit on the discovery of the true facts.</li> </ul> |
| 2) Having good quality information, advice and support to ensure that services are delivered effectively and are what the community wants/needs |  |
| 3) Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place  |  |
| 4) Using legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in their area   |  |

## Core Principle 5 – Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective

| Supporting Principle  | Description of Governance Mechanisms   |
|---|--|
| <p>1) Making sure that members and officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles</p>                       | <p>The Council has arrangements in place to ensure that those with responsibility for governance have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience they need to perform well by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Operating robust recruitment and selection processes.</li> <li>▪ Supporting on-going personal and professional development for both Members and officers. Training is offered to Members covering the following programmes: Communication, Community, Managing Breckland, Managing Yourself, Specialism and Leadership. Specific training has been provided for officers on performance management and financial management. The council’s training team also provide a comprehensive training programme for managers and staff, including political awareness training, presentation skills, appraisal training and time management.</li> <li>▪ Performance Development Review (PDR) meetings now take place at least quarterly. They assess each employee’s abilities, identify any training needs and measure performance against individual objectives. Individual 1-2-1’s are carried out throughout the year.</li> <li>▪ Induction programmes are carried out for new employees and Members to ensure they have access to all relevant information, advice and resources to enable them to perform their roles effectively.</li> </ul> |
| <p>2) Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance as individuals and as a group</p>                       |  |
| <p>3) Encouraging new talent for membership of the authority so that best use can made of individuals’ skills and resources in balancing continuity and renewal</p> |  |



## Core Principle 6 – Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability

| Supporting Principle   | Description of Governance Mechanisms   |
|--|--|
| <p>1) Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive accountability relationships</p> | <p>The Council has arrangements in place to seek and respond to views of stakeholders and the community, this has been achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Welcoming feedback and views from the stakeholders via the <a href="#">Corporate Compliments, Comments and Feedback</a> section of the website or via the Contact Centre.</li> <li>▪ The results from all customer consultation are made available on the <a href="#">Council's website</a>.</li> <li>▪ Developed a “Breckland Direct” service, which allows customers to register for email alerts informing them of the latest news relating to the Council.</li> <li>▪ The Council has a <a href="#">Key Decision Plan</a> which is a record of all key decisions the Council and Executive expects to make in the next twelve months and is updated and published monthly. The purpose of the Key Decision Plan is to give advance notice of the key decisions that the Council is likely to make in the future.</li> <li>▪ Developed an informative and user friendly <a href="#">website</a> to publish and share relevant information with the community which has been completely updated from April 2016.</li> <li>▪ The Council has an effective human resources function that reports as necessary to the Corporate Management Team and Members. This includes development and maintenance of a wide range of employee related policies and procedures. Relevant employees and Union representatives are consulted on employee related matters.</li> <li>▪ Establishing a staff forum which consists of two elected staff members from each portfolio and a union representative. The forum meets on a regular basis and provides staff with the opportunity to promote their ideas and encourage ways of improving the working environment and the Council’s services.</li> </ul> |
| <p>2) 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 authority, in partnership or by commissioning</p>       |  |
| <p>3) Making best use of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meet responsibilities to staff</p>  |  |