London Borough of Barnet
Code of Corporate Governance
2022/23

BARNET
LONDON BOROUGH

To deliver good governance within the Council, all councillors, officers and partners should strive to achieve the Council's objectives while acting in the public interest. This should result in positive outcomes for service users and other stakeholder's

The Council should keep governance arrangements up to date and relevant. The main principle underpinning the development of the new Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016 (CIPFA/Solace) continues to be that local government is developing and shaping its own approach to governance, taking account of the environment in which it now operates. The overall aim is to ensure that resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities, that there is sound and inclusive decision making and that there is clear accountability for the use of those resources, in order to achieve desired outcomes for service users and communities.
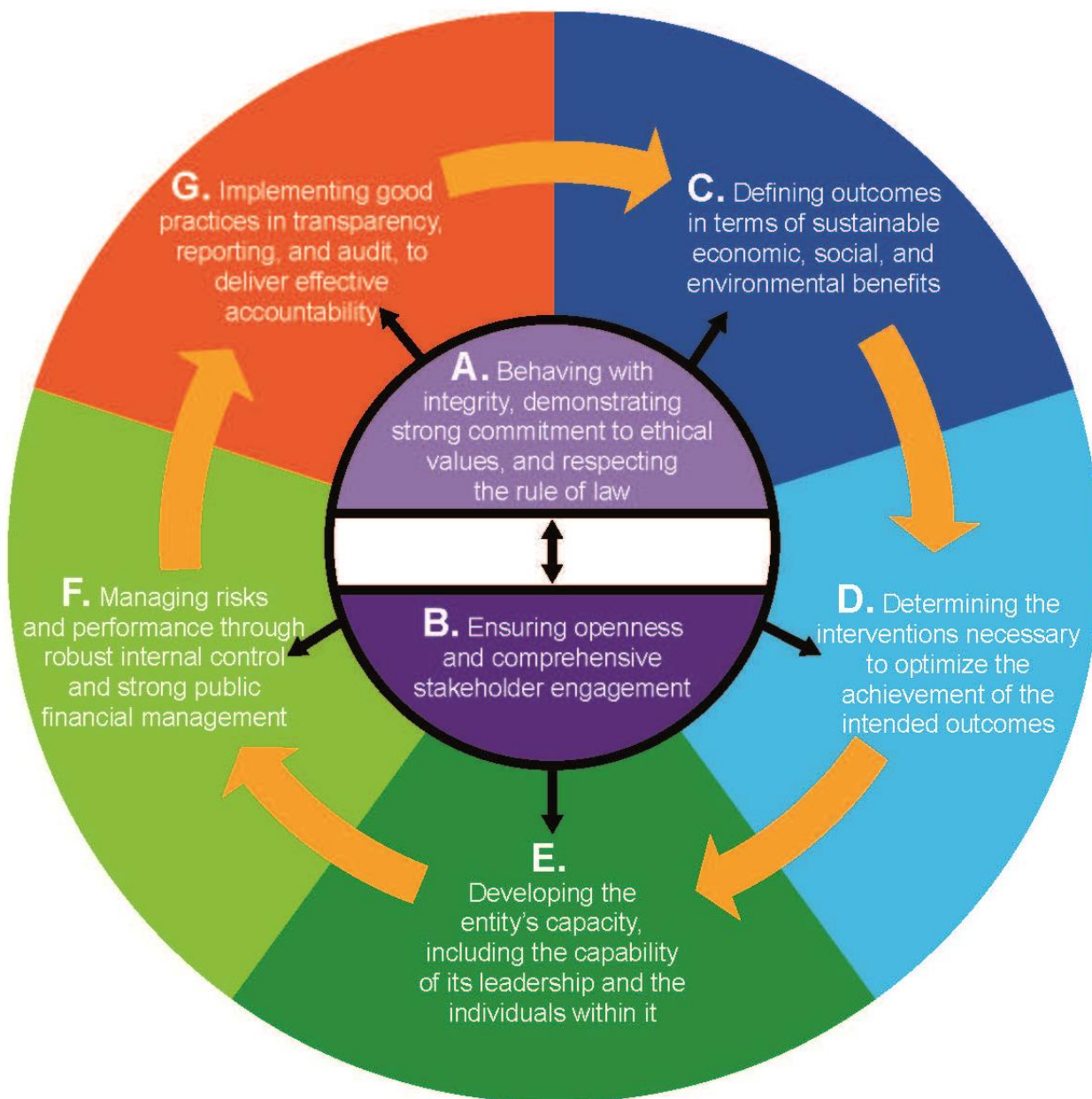
As outlined in the CIPFA Framework, the governance processes and structures focus on achieving economic, societal, and environmental outcomes. Furthermore, the focus on sustainability and the links between governance and public financial management are crucial – the Council recognises the need to focus on the long-term. The Council has responsibility to more than their current electors and should take account of the impact of current decisions and actions on future generations.

The core principles and sub-principles of good governance and how they are met at Barnet are set out in the table below. However, good governance cannot be achieved by rules and procedures alone. Shared values that are integrated into the culture of the organisation, and are reflected in both behaviour and policy, are hallmarks of good governance.

The Council produces an Annual Governance Statement to report publicly on the extent to which the Council complies with its local code and this is a statutory requirement.

Principles of Good Governance

Relationships between the Principles for Good Governance in the Public Sector

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

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

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

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

B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

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

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

A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law	
Supporting Principles	**How the Principles are met by the Council**
Ensuring Members behave with integrity and develop robust policies which place emphasis on agreed ethical values.	The Principles of Public Life are established within the Members Code of Conduct. The Code outlines the behaviours and values that are required when acting in the capacity of an elected Councillor. The Council's Monitoring Officer is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct.
Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the Council's ethical standards and performance.	The Constitution & General Purposes Committee consider and make recommendations to Council on how it can satisfy the continuing duty to promote and maintain standards of conduct by Members, as well as ethical standards in general across the authority. A Standards Committee is in place to investigate and determine allegations of any breaches of the code.
Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the Council are required to act with integrity and in compliance with ethical standards.	Contractors must act in compliance with all relevant council policies and the law.
Creating the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders, and members, are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements.	All committee reports are subject to clearance procedures, to ensure decisions taken are compliant with the budget and policy framework, the law and the council's constitution. Comprehensive schemes of delegation are in place detailing how chief officers will discharge the statutory powers within their remit. The Assurance Group is responsible for governance and compliance and includes Internal Audit, Governance and the statutory Monitoring Officer. Members oversight is through the council's formal governance arrangements, primarily theme committees and their review of financial and corporate performance information, the Audit Committee, the Constitution & General Purposes Committee and Full Council.
Dealing with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively.	Appropriate action is taken by the Council's legal services (Harrow & Barnet Public Law) with oversight by the Monitoring Officer in liaison with officers within the Assurance Group.
Ensuring corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively.	The Monitoring Officer and Corporate Anti-Fraud Team investigate all allegations of fraud and irregularities across the council and its partners.

B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.	
Supporting Principles	**How the Principles are met by the Council**
Providing clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and being explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used.	Committee reports cover the options available and the reasons for recommendations. Every report sets out why the report is needed, reasons for the recommendation(s) and alternative options considered but not recommended. The formal minutes of the meeting will record the reasons for Members decisions, which are then published on the council's website. Delegated powers reports by officers also record reasons for decisions.
Effectively engaging with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully. Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively. Ensuring that partnerships are based on trust, a shared commitment to change, a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners and that the added value of partnership working is explicit.	Where formal partnerships exist between institutional bodies, joint strategies and plans are developed in a collaborative way and jointly adopted through a joint body. Examples include the Safer Communities Strategy (agreed by the Safer Communities Partnership Board) and Health & Wellbeing Strategy (agreed by the Health & Wellbeing Board). In addition, the councils recently updated, Project Management Guidance provides advice on stakeholder engagement. Several partnerships are in place to support work in specific joint areas including community safety (Safer Communities Partnership Board), health and social care (Health & Wellbeing Board), improving the wellbeing of Children across the Borough (Barnet Children's Partnership Board) and sub-regional joint working (West London Economic Prosperity Board).
Establishing a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve communities, individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes.	A Consultation & Engagement Strategy is in place which details the type of decisions that the council will consult on, who we will consult with and how feedback will inform decisions taken. Consultation takes place on any issue that affects residents such as service or policy changes, or various statutory processes (such as planning, traffic or highways matters).

C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits	
Supporting Principles	**How the Principles are met by the Council**
Having a clear vision, which is an agreed formal statement of the organisation's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provide the basis for the organisation's overall strategy, planning and other decisions.	The Barnet Corporate Plan 2021-2025 sets out the four priorities for the Borough, to be clean, safe and well run, family friendly, healthy and thriving. The Plan outlines these priorities and how the council will work to achieve them. The Budget for 2022/23 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2022/23-2025/26 outlines how resources will be aligned to the strategic outcomes set out in the Barnet Corporate Plan. Performance indicators are also regularly reported to the Policy & Resources Committee and theme committees.
Specifying the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. It could be immediately or over the course of a year or longer.	Impact of decisions will be evidenced in council committee reports and in delegated powers reports. Equality issues will be further evaluated within equality impact assessments.
Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available.	The Barnet Corporate Plan and Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy set out the council's strategic priorities and how resources will be allocated to support these. All committee reports must include a section on any implications any decisions or recommendations will have on resources.
Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes.	Risk Management Framework is in place and a Corporate Risk Register is maintained, which is published as part of the annual Business Planning report taken to Policy & Resources Committee and Full Council. Mitigating actions are put in place where required. Risks are reported periodically to Council Management Team, the Policy & Resources Committee, and theme committees.
Managing service users' expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available.	Where appropriate, and in compliance with statutory duties, public consultation is carried out with service users. The Council also maintains an effective Citizens Panel which informs priorities and resource allocation.
Considering and balancing the combined economic, social and environmental impact of policies and plans when taking decisions about service provision.	Committee reports cover this principle and strategic cross-borough planning is also undertaken in liaison with the Mayor of London and the West London Economic Prosperity Board.

Determining the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs.	Committee reports cover this principle, with alternative options considered and implications of all decisions being outlined in every report. The Medium-Term Financial Strategy also covers these principles
Ensuring fair access to services.	Committee reports will cover equality legislation and ensure that decision-makers are aware of impact upon citizens with the protected characteristics. Equality impact assessments are completed where relevant. The Council also ensures impacts on other disadvantaged local citizens are considered.

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

Supporting Principles	How the Principles are met by the Council
Determining the right mix of corporate (legal, assurance, regulatory, and finance) interventions to ensure intended outcomes are achieved.	The Chief Executive in liaison with Chief Officers carries out this determination quarterly, in liaison with Chief Officers.
Decisions made need to be reviewed frequently to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.	Committee reports detail post-decision implementation steps. If outcomes are not delivered, the relevant chief officer will ensure that the decision is reviewed, and remedial steps taken.
Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and of associated risks – therefore ensuring best value is achieved however services are provided.	Chief Officers and their direct reports evaluate options and give appropriate advice to decision-makers. Committee reports include sections on 'Alternative options considered and not recommended', 'implications of decisions' and 'Risk management'.
Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available.	Feedback from public consultations and the Citizens Panel is set out within relevant committee reports and delegated powers reports and used to inform decision making.
Establishing and implementing robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets.	Quarterly reporting to the Policy & Resources Committee and theme committees including results of key performance indicators and the management of strategic contracts. In addition, an annual planned programme of work is undertaken by Internal Audit.

Considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively, including shared risks.	Shared risks are identified in a register and reviewed at least quarterly; significant risks facing each partner are subject to quarterly review.
Ensuring arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering goods and services can be adapted to changing circumstances.	When making a decision, or making recommendations to Members regarding a preferred option, chief officers take into account the following: delivery of high-quality services; value for money; and the scope to vary arrangements to take into account changing circumstances.
Establishing appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs).	The Corporate Plan details the KPIs required to deliver the council's objectives.
Ensuring the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term.	As set out within the Constitution's Financial Regulations and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

E. Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	
Supporting Principles	**How the Principles are met by the Council**
Reviewing operations, performance and use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness.	An Asset Management Plan is in place, which provides a strategic approach to the management of property assets (approved and overseen by the Housing and Growth Committee). Performance reports are presented to all theme committees which detail KPIs and financial monitoring. Chief Officers are responsible for the performance of services within their remit and a Commercial Team is in place for oversight and management of key strategic contracts.
Improving resource use through application of techniques such as benchmarking to determine how resources are allocated so that defined outcomes are achieved effectively.	CIPFA benchmarking exercises are undertaken across the Council. Best practice reviews are undertaken as part of service improvement initiatives.
Recognising partnership benefits and collaborative working where added value can be achieved.	Full engagement through the Barnet Partnership Board, sub-regional partnerships (such as the West London Alliance), the Mayor of London and Greater London Assembly, London Councils and with public sector partners, particularly Health and the Police.

Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body.	The council's Constitution is explicit about which decisions are reserved to Council or committees and which are delegated to officers. Chief officers maintain schemes of delegated authority that are published and regularly updated.
Ensuring the leader and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services set by members.	The council's Constitution details the roles and responsibilities of the leader (Article 6) and chief executive (Article 9). The leader and councillors set the councils' priorities and strategic direction; the chief executive is responsible for delivering these priorities, supported by chief officers.
Developing the capabilities of members and officers, including induction, continuing professional development training, and lessons learnt from governance weaknesses.	A Member Development Programme is agreed and implemented during each council cycle. Members must attend mandatory training before serving on some committees and are strongly encouraged to keep their knowledge and skills up to date in relation to the committees that they serve on. A comprehensive induction programme is provided to all new Councillors following the local elections, as well as following any by-elections. The Council has now achieved chartered status for its member development programme and will be working with Councillors towards the achievement of Charter Plus status. Officers have an induction programme, a corporate learning and development programme and an e-learning Hub is in place. Where governance weaknesses are identified, remedial actions are put in place and delivery is monitored.
Ensuring that there are structures in place to encourage public participation.	Public participation rights are set out in the Constitution (Article 3); decisions that affect residents are usually the subject of public consultation.
Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs.	Performance Related Pay is in operation within the Council. Performance Reviews consider training / development needs and ensure that these are addressed.
Ensuring arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing.	Arrangements are put in place by Human Resources with oversight by the Constitution & General Purposes Committee (which has responsibility for HR matters).

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

Supporting Principles	How the Principles are met by the Council
Implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that responsibilities for managing risks are clearly allocated.	A Risk Management Framework is in place, with officer responsibilities clearly allocated. Strategic risks are reported to the Policy & Resources Committee, theme committees and Chief Officers.
Monitoring service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review.	Chief Officers are responsible for delivering services within their respective portfolios including specifying outcomes/outputs, monitoring performance, contract management and post-implementation reviews. Internal Audit provide independent assurance on key financial systems and areas of service delivery on a risk-based approach.
Making decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisation's financial, social and environmental position and outlook.	All committee reports and delegated powers reports require information on relevant risks and how these will be managed.
Encouraging effective and constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives to support balanced and effective decision making.	A 'Committee System' governance structure is in place (distinct from a Leader/Cabinet model) which permits cross-party political discussion at all committee meetings on major strategic decisions. All Members are entitled to submit one Members item for an agenda for a meeting of a committee or sub-committee on which they serve. Members are also entitled to attend and speak at any committee meeting by giving notice to the Chairman before the start of the meeting.
Providing Members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement.	Regular reports are taken to the Policy & Resources Committee and theme committees. Chief Officers are provided regular updates and reports via the Council Management Team meetings.
Ensuring effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place.	Responsibilities are set out within the Constitution and Code of Conduct. In addition, the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team is in place within the Assurance Group with the necessary specialist skills to undertake various types of fraud and anti-corruption investigations.

Ensuring additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor.	Assurance undertaken by Internal Audit within the Assurance Group with a plan of work being approved by the Audit Committee on an annual basis.
Ensuring an Audit Committee or equivalent group function provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment.	Assurance provided by the Policy & Resources Committee, theme committees and also by the Audit Committee.
Ensuring effective arrangements are in place for data use and storage and when sharing data with other bodies.	Arrangements in place with the Information Management Team and Insight and Intelligence Team.

G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability	
Supporting Principles	**How the Principles are met by the Council**
Writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and understandable style.	Report writing guidance is in place to clarify information required in each section of reports. Officers, via the report clearance process, review the content and structure of reports to ensure that they can be understood by the public and stakeholders. The Governance Service offers report writing workshops to departments across the council, to provide advice and training on how to ensure reports are easy to understand not unnecessarily complex.
Providing sufficient information to satisfy transparency demands while not being too onerous for users to read and understand.	The Open Barnet data portal can be accessed via the council's website. Published datasets and other information of interest can be searched via one searchable database for anyone to access. Council, committee reports and delegated powers reports are available on the website.
Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in this Framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment, including an action plan for improvement.	The Council produces an Annual Governance Statement, which provides a self-assessment of compliance with the Framework and actions which need to be undertaken to address any governance or practice weaknesses identified. The statement is reported to the Audit Committee.

Ensuring that this Framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate.	Included within Assurance and Barnet Group protocol arrangements.
Ensuring an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place, providing assurance with regard to governance arrangements and that recommendations are acted upon.	In place through Internal Audit and the tracking of recommendations via quarterly Audit Committee reporting.
Gaining assurance on risks associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the Annual Governance Statement.	Via contract clauses within our contracts with Capita, CSG Re, BELS (Barnet Education & Learning Service) and the Barnet Group the council have the right of access to their records and internal audit reports. The council can also undertake our own audits of their systems and processes and this right is exercised, with protocol / liaison meetings in in place to support this. Chief Officer structure details accountability lines for services and portfolios of activity. Public accountability requirements are met via publication of committee information on the website, opportunities for public participation, consultation on key decisions, Freedom of Information requests and information on the Open Data Portal.