Westmorland and Furness Council Local Code of Corporate Governance 2023/24

Introduction – what is Corporate Governance?

Corporate governance comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values that ensure the Council upholds the highest standards of ethical conduct, engages effectively with its stakeholders and is able to demonstrate effective decision making and accountability to ensure the delivery of its priorities, aims and objectives.

Good governance leads to good management, better informed and longer-term decision, good stewardship of public money, good public engagement and ultimately good outcomes for citizens and service users. It ensures the efficient use of resources and is characterised by robust scrutiny.

2023/24 is the first year that Westmorland and Furness Council has operated as a local authority. It is particularly important that in this first year the systems, processes, cultures and values which will underpin good governance are adopted and embedded throughout the organisation. It is recognised that this will be a process of development throughout this and subsequent years. This Local Code of Corporate Governance incorporates both the systems and processes which are currently in place and those which will be adopted and strengthen during the course of the year.

The Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance follows the CIPFA / SOLACE guidance; Delivering Good Governance in Local Government 2016. The guidance sets out seven principles on which arrangements for good governance should be based. This code describes the arrangements that Westmorland and Furness Council has and will put in place to support these principles.

The Monitoring Officer will report annually on Compliance with the Code and the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements. This report will be the basis for the production of the Annual Governance Statement which will be published with the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts. The Annual Governance Statement will help to identify key learning which help strengthen and improve this code and the systems and processes which underpin good governance.

The diagram on the next page sets out the seven principles which underpin good governance. The following sections set out how Westmorland and Furness Council will ensure it meets these seven principles and the evidence which supports this.
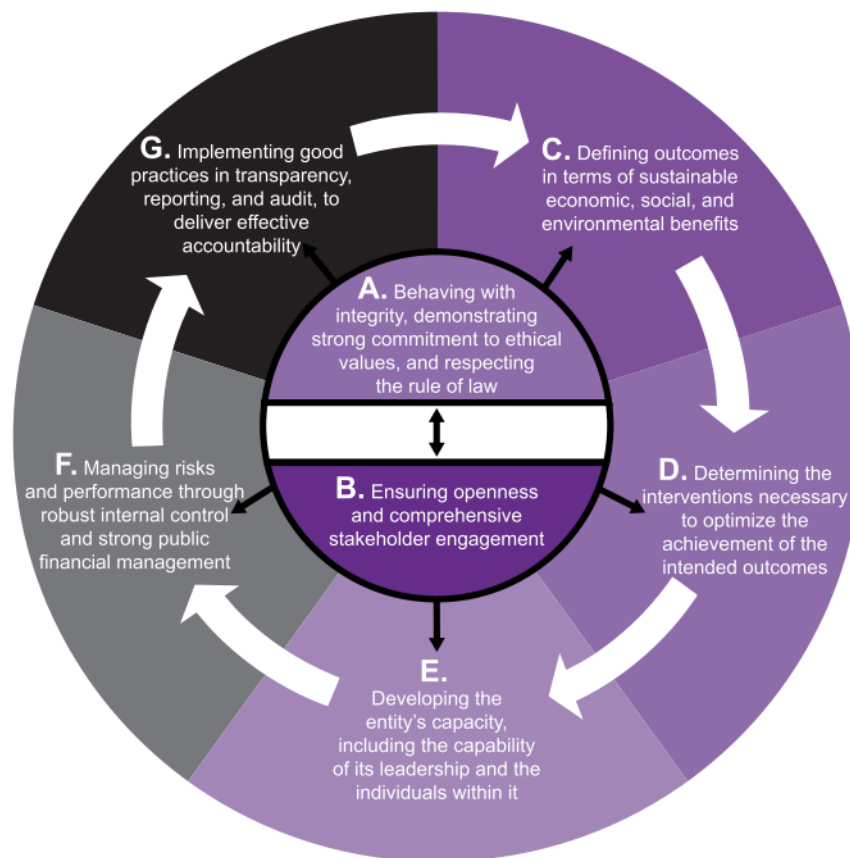
The Seven Principles

Principle A: Behaving with Integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law		
Supporting Principles	**To achieve this, Westmorland and Furness Council:**	**This is evidenced by:**
- Behaving with Integrity - Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values - Respecting the rule of law	Has adopted formal codes of conduct defining standards of behaviour expected of both Members and Officers Will comply with legislation and all relevant professional standards Has established a register of business interests for Members and will seek declarations at all Council meetings Has established registers of interests, gifts and hospitality for Officers and will publicise the need for all real and perceived conflicts of interest to be recorded and managed. Will undertake annual appraisals for all staff and reinforce the Council's Behaviours through the appraisal process Has adopted a policy framework to address the risks of fraud and corruption including a Counter-Fraud, Bribery & Corruption Policy and a Confidential Reporting Policy. Will publish an Annual Governance Statement which publicly reports on the effectiveness of the governance framework, compliance with this Code and declares any significant governance issues arising. Has established a Good Governance Group which has representation from all Directorates and champions good governance across the Council.	- Members Code of Conduct and Guidance - Members Development Group - Code of Good Practice for Members and Officers involved in the Planning Process - Officers Code of Conduct - Member/Officer Protocol - Constitution, which includes: - Role description for all members - Guide to decision making - Minutes of council meetings - Register of Interests - Register of gifts and hospitality - Appraisal Scheme - Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy - Counter-Fraud, Bribery & Corruption policy - Annual Governance Statement - Internal Audit Charter - Regular progress reports from Internal Audit reports to Audit Committee

	Has established an effective Standards and Governance Committee.	• The Internal Audit Annual Report including the Annual Head of Internal Audit Opinion
	Will investigate all allegations of irregularities involving Officers or Members.	• Contract Procedure Rules
	Will adopt a complaints policy and arrangements to learn from complaints and feedback	• Financial Procedure Rules • Standards and Governance Committee
	Will provide training for Officers on key aspects of governance.	• Recruitment, Appointment & Induction Policy
	Will adopt a Recruitment, Appointment and Induction Policy.	• Complaints Policy • Good Governance Group
	Will adopt up to date job descriptions for Officers to ensure clarity over roles and responsibilities.	• Annual assessment of compliance with the CIPFA Statements on the roles of the Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Internal Audit
	Has appointed the statutory roles of Head of Paid Service, S151 (Chief Finance) Officer and Monitoring Officer.	
	Ensures arrangements comply with relevant CIPFA Statements on the roles of the Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Internal Audit and reviews this annually.	

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement		
Supporting Principles	**To achieve this, Westmorland and Furness Council:**	**This is evidenced by:**
• Openness • Engaging comprehensively	Will seeks the views of stakeholders when setting priorities	• Council Plan • Medium Term Financial Plan • Annual Consultation on Budget • Constitution

with institutional stakeholders • Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users	Provides a variety of opportunities and channels for stakeholders to engage with the Council Has adopted a public participation scheme which allows members of the public to ask questions and present petitions at meetings of full Council, Cabinet, Locality Boards and Planning and Licensing Committees Has published a Council plan setting out the agreed priorities for the Council. Ensures Council business in conducted in public unless legislation deems it appropriate for matters to be considered in private. Publishes agendas and minutes and a full calendar of Council meetings. Publishes all reports and decisions taken at Council meetings including the professional and technical advice received unless legislation deems it appropriate for matters to be considered in private. Publishes all Executive Decisions taken by Officers under delegated powers Ensures compliance with the requirements of the Transparency Code. Publishes information in accordance with our Publication Scheme. Will publish an annual report of the Scrutiny activities for consideration by full Council	• Calendar of Council Meetings • Publication Scheme • Public Participation Scheme • Council Website • Forward Plan of all Key Decisions and non-Key Decisions to be considered by Cabinet

	Will provide opportunities for suppliers to work with the Council through supplier days and the use of the Chest procurement portal	

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable, economic, social and environmental benefits		
Supporting Principles	**To achieve this, Westmorland and Furness Council:**	**This is evidenced by:**
• Defining Outcomes • Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	Has adopted a Council plan setting out the priorities for the Council Has developed a Council Plan Delivery Framework setting out how the priorities will be delivered. Will use the Council Plan as a basis for Area and Service Plans Will monitor and report on delivery of the agreed priorities. Has adopted a Medium Term Financial Plan and a Workforce Development Plan to ensure priorities continue to be appropriately resourced. Will identify and manage risks to delivery of priorities and objectives. Will ensure investment decisions take into account a range of factors including economic, social and environmental benefits.	• Council Plan • Council Plan Delivery Framework • Medium Term Financial Plan • Performance & Risk Management Framework • Strategic Risk Register • Risk Management Policy/Strategy • Operational, programme and project risk registers • Business Cases for investment decisions • Corporate Procurement Strategy • Climate Action Plan • Local Nature Recovery Strategy • Biodiversity Policy

		• Climate Adaptation Policy

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes

Supporting Principles	To achieve this, Westmorland and Furness Council:	This is evidenced by:
• Determining interventions • Planning interventions • Optimising achievement of intended outcomes	Has adopted a Council plan setting out the priorities for the Council Has developed a Council Plan Delivery Framework setting out how the priorities will be delivered. Has made a clear statement of the council's aims and will use this as a basis for service planning. Will develop performance measures for each service which will be regularly reported on. Has ensured budgets are prepared in line with our corporate framework and are monitored and regularly reported on. Will provide senior managers and elected Members with timely and accurate financial and performance information. Will undertake options appraisal as part of any decision making process	• Council Plan • Service plans • Service plan reporting • Medium Term Financial Plan • Budgets held on Budget Manager • Staffing establishment held legacy systems and linked to budget monitoring report • Reporting of budgets to DMTs / CMT • Strategic planning reports to Cabinet and Council • Business cases for investment decisions • Strategic planning • Templates for Committee Reports and Officer Decision and Officer Key Decision Records

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity and capability including the capacity of its leadership and the individuals within in		
Supporting Principles	**To achieve this, Westmorland and Furness Council:**	**This is evidenced by:**
• Developing the entity's capacity • Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals	Has set out a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of the full Council, Cabinet and individual Members through the constitution. Has established a workforce development plan to ensure appropriate skills and resources are available to deliver the changing needs of the Council. Has established Officer and Member induction programmes. Will provide training and development for Members to continue to develop their skills through a programme of Member Development. Will review and update the Constitution and Scheme of Delegation as required. Will ensure arrangements are in place to support the health and wellbeing of the workforce. Will ensure staff receive feedback on their performance and maintain development plans through the appraisal process.	• Constitution • Scheme of delegation • Member / officer protocol • Workforce development plan • Induction Programmes • Appraisal Process • Job descriptions • Better Health at Work • Health Advocates • Stress Awareness Sessions • Leadership and Management Development Programme • ELT Development Programme • Member Development Group • Apprenticeship Programme • IOSH Health and Satefy Training

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management		
Supporting Principles	**To achieve this, Westmorland and Furness Council:**	**This is evidenced by:**
• Managing risk • Managing performance • Robust internal control • Managing data • Strong public financial management	Has established a strategic risk register which will be regularly updated. Will regularly report on strategic risks to Audit Committee. Has established and will continue to develop an effective Scrutiny function. The council has established 4 scrutiny committees and a joint overview and scrutiny committee with Cumberland and they have agreed programmes of work. Has established a risk management policy/strategy Will ensure risks are considered in service plans, programmes and projects and in operational service delivery Will manage performance by ensuring the corporate Performance Management Framework is adhered to. Will provide training for Audit Committee to enhance their skills and ability to provide and challenge assurances. Maintains financial procedure rules to provide clarity over the Council's rules. Has adopted a policy framework to address the risks of fraud and corruption including a Counter-Fraud, Bribery & Corruption Policy and a Confidential Reporting Policy.	• Strategic Risk Register • Audit Committee minutes • Annual report on Audit Committee effectiveness • Scrutiny Terms of reference and programmes of work • Risk management policy/strategy • Project/programme management • Outcomes of Internal Audit reviews • Performance and Risk Management Framework • Audit Committee training • Financial procedure rules in constitution • Confidential Reporting Policy • Counter-Fraud, Bribery & Corruption policy • Assessing compliance with CIPFA's Financial Management Code • Audit plan

	Ensures arrangements comply with CIPFA's Financial Management Code. Prepares an annual risk based internal audit plan to provide independent assurance on governance, risk management and internal control. Reports outcomes of Internal Audit work to Corporate Management Team and the Audit Committee. Ensures effective information governance policies, procedures and training are in place ensuring there are effective arrangements in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data. Ensures financial management supports decision making and transformation of council services. Ensures decisions are based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the Council's financial, social and environmental position. Will provide members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement.	- Annual Internal Audit Report and opinion of the Head of Internal Audit - Information Governance policies - Information e-learning training and monitoring of take-up - Information Gateway for Information Sharing and Data Protection Impact Assessments - Budget Manager System - Training for Budget Managers - Budget Monitoring Reports to CMT and Cabinet aligned with the quarterly performance reports and the strategic risk register - Report Templates for Committee Reports and Officer Decisions which require consideration of options, risks, finance, environmental and equality aspects of decision

Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit, to deliver effective accountability		
Supporting Principles	**To achieve this, Westmorland and Furness Council:**	**This is evidenced by:**
• Implementing good practice in transparency • Implementing good practices in reporting • Assurance and effective accountability	Will maintain compliance with the local government Transparency Code and publish all required information in a timely manner. Has established a Good Governance Group to oversee annual review of compliance with this Code and publish an Annual Governance Statement to report publicly on the outcomes of the review. Maintains an effective Internal Audit service which complies with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Head of Internal Audit. Will ensure performance information is prepared and reported on a timely basis Will produce regular financial information and budget monitoring reports.	• FoI responses published online • Annual Governance Statement • Audit Charter • Audit progress reports to Audit Committee • Annual Internal Audit Report and opinion of the Head of Internal Audit • Internal Audit Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme • Performance and Risk Management Framework • Narrative Statement in the Council's Financial Statements • Budget Monitoring Reports.