

Conwy County Borough Council

Local Code of Corporate Governance 2024

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 at the right time, ensuring we are inclusive, open and effective.

The Councils Corporate Governance Principles

The Code is based on the seven governance principles set out in the CIPFA CIPFA/SOLACE publication Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016.

These principles (A to G) and their sub principles (A1 to G3) are set out below, along with evidence of how we can demonstrate that we are achieving these principles.

Principle A requires us to “Behave with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law”

A1 - Behaving with integrity

- We have a [Constitution](#) which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.
- We have a protocol governing [Member Officer Relations](#).
- There is a [process](#), and register of personal and business interests (intranet).
- There is a process to declare any interests in committee meetings, which are recorded in the minutes.
- There is a [policy](#) and associated [corporate procedures](#) for ensuring that complaints can be made and impartially investigated, and for ensuring that any lessons learnt can be applied.
- Our Internal Audit team is an independent objective assurance and consulting activity, designed to add value and improve our operations. It helps the Authority to accomplish its objectives by bringing a systematic, disciplined approach to

evaluate and improve the effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes.

A2. Demonstrating a strong commitment to ethical values

- We have a [Code of Conduct](#) & Ethics Training (intranet) for members which is communicated via member induction and all members must sign to acknowledge their compliance. Training on the Code of Conduct is also compulsory for all members. (intranet)
- We have a planning code of conduct,
- We have a [Standards Committee](#) which promotes and maintains a high standard of conduct by councillors through the members' Code of Conduct.
- We have a staff induction which covers Conwy behavioural values, competency framework, expectations around the role as a public sector employee, the respect booklet, disciplinary policy and financial regulations.
- We have an employee code of conduct.
- We have [Corporate Values](#) that are shared with all members and staff and underpin all aspects of council services

A3. Respecting the rule of law

- The Head of Law and Governance is the designated 'Monitoring Officer' in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act, 1989, and ensures compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations
- All statutory officers are issued with job descriptions which clearly state their legislative and regulatory responsibilities.
- We have [Contract Procedure Rules](#) (intranet) and we have [Declaration of Interests at Meetings](#).
- We hold a new member induction
- There is a [Whistleblowing Policy](#) (intranet)
- We have a [Gifts and Hospitality Policy](#) (intranet)
- There is a [Counter Fraud Strategy](#) (intranet) that identifies the responsibilities of both elected members and staff in promoting a culture of honesty and integrity and includes procedures for [Anti Money Laundering](#) (intranet)

- We also have an [ICT Security Policy](#) (intranet) which aims to preserve the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the IT systems, electronic assets and information throughout the Authority

Principle B requires us to “Ensure openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

B1 Openness

- All [Cabinet and Council meetings](#) are held in public (with the exception of exempt items) and all papers are published on our council website. All meetings operate on a hybrid model.
- In accordance with [Inclusive Conwy](#), - (our Strategic Equality Plan), all key decisions must assess the impact on protected characteristics. We have an integrated equality impact assessment which includes the Socio Economic Duty which came into force on 31st March 2021.
- All reports tabled for Council, Cabinet and Governance & Audit Committee are reviewed by a Report Review Group (RRG) to ensure that they are of a sufficiently high standard.
- We webcast and record key democratic meetings. All meetings operate on a hybrid model.
- There is a committee [Forward Work Programme](#).
- There is a [Record of Decisions](#) – all committee meetings are minuted and saved on Modern.gov.
- The public can ask for information via the [Freedom of Information](#) regulations

B2 Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders

- We maintain relationships with institutional stakeholders and we are involved in several collaboration arrangements in order to improve outcomes for the community. There is [collaboration implementation guidance](#) (intranet) which outlines our approach to ensure that good governance and value for money are achieved and that the outcome priorities and values of the Authority are promoted and safeguarded when working in partnership. We review all key collaborations annually to ensure they are still appropriate.
- We are partners in the following key collaborations:
 - Regional Leadership Board
 - [North Wales Economic Ambition Board](#)
 - [Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board](#)

- [North Wales Social Care and Well-being Regional Collaborative](#)
- [Regional School Effectiveness and Improvement Service - Gwe](#)
- [NWCREPS](#) (North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service)
- [Safer Conwy Community Safety Partnership](#)
- A Strategic Housing Partnership supports the implementation of the [Conwy Local Housing Strategy](#)

B3 Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively

- Community engagement has been fundamental in the development of all strategic plans and key decisions. Ensuring people in Conwy are informed, included and listened to and can actively contribute, is one of the nine citizen outcomes within the Corporate Plan for 2022-2027. We have in place:
 - [Overview & Scrutiny Public Engagement Protocol](#) (intranet);
 - [Communication and Engagement Strategy](#);
 - [Community Involvement Strategy](#)
 - We are part of the [North Wales Citizen Panel](#);
 - There are five Local Area Forums
 - We have processes for [Complaints, comments & compliments](#);
 - We have a [Strategic Equality Plan](#);
 - A bilingual software solution for [e-petitions](#)
 - We have a digital [Council Tax Leaflet](#) and digital [NDR](#) leaflet which details how we manage our budget.
 - We have a strong social media presence on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) We are developing an Improving Access to Conwy Council's Services and Information Strategy.
 - We have an instant interpretation system for [sign language](#) and BSL videos for FAQs.
 - We have made the website compliant with accessibility legislation.
 - There are procedures in place to comply with the legislative requirements of the [Freedom of Information Act](#) and the [General Data Protection Regulations](#).
- We have a Manager's Forum, and a Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) to ensure that there is regular communication with staff and Trades Unions and there is a staff suggestion scheme.
- Our approach to modernisation, accessibility, openness and engagement has undergone a significant change through the work of the Modernisation Programme. The programme has resulted in an increased online customer presence and open plan office accommodation in Colwyn Bay called Coed Pella. Coed Pella has enabled us to future proof our way of working and houses most front lines services in one location
- Through the [Workwise Framework](#) (intranet), we have introduced a hybrid working model for office based staff.

Principle C requires us to define outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

C1 Defining Outcomes

- During every administration, we publish a [Vision](#) and five year strategic [Corporate Plan](#) to provide a focus on our key priorities for improvement. This also serves as the council's Wellbeing Objectives. It is supported by a number of service specific strategies.
- A [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#) is also reviewed annually.
- We have a [Business Planning Framework](#) (Intranet) for business cases for inclusion within the revenue and capital budgets.
- Annually each service area produces an outcome focused service plan

C2 Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits

The evaluation of progress against strategic outcomes are recorded in a series of Reports including:

- Corporate Plan [Annual Report](#) & 6 monthly performance reports;
- [Conwy and Denbighshire PSB Annual Report](#);
- [Annual Governance Statement](#)
- [Finance Reports](#);
- [Director of Social Services Annual Report](#);
- [Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report](#);
- [Conwy Economic Strategy](#);
- [Net Zero Carbon Performance Report](#)

Principle D requires us to determine the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

D1 Determining interventions (courses of action)

- We have an approved [Constitution](#) which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.
- The [Committee structure](#) details how decisions or interventions are made by local councillors, or officers under their guidance.
- There are four [Overview and Scrutiny committees](#):
 - Finance & Resources
 - Economy & Place,
 - Education & Skills
 - Social Care and Health

- There are three [regulatory committees](#): Planning Committee, Licensing and Regulation Committee and Governance & Audit Committee. There is also a [Standards Committee](#) and Democratic Services Committee.
- The Report Review Group (RRG) meets twice a month to review the reports scheduled to go to Cabinet, and considers the forward work plans of the Scrutiny functions. There is a [Standard Committee Report Template](#) (Intranet) for all reports.
- The CEO and Strategic Directors together with the Head of Environment, Roads & Facilities, Head of People and Performance, Statutory Head of Education and the Monitoring Officer meet twice a month as a Strategic Leadership Team.
- The senior management of the Authority meet monthly as the Senior Management Team, comprising the CEO, Strategic Directors, and Heads of Service.
- A Managers' Forum meets quarterly to share messages and seek consistency, listen to key note speakers and debate developments between Directors and managers within the organisation.

D2 Planning interventions

- Six monthly service performance reviews take place to review service progress, risks and finances ([Performance Management Framework](#)) (Intranet)
- There is a school effectiveness and standards group to review and support school performance.
- We have implemented the [Conwy Conversation](#) (intranet), supporting staff to achieve their objectives, feel valued and listened to through more regular check-in conversations with their line manager.
- We have a Corporate [Safeguarding policy](#) and there are agreed arrangements enable the Authority to comply with [statutory requirements](#) in respect of child protection and the protection of vulnerable adults.

D3 Optimising achievement of intended outcomes

- We use an integrated performance management system to support service planning, risk management, incidents, audit, and project management.
- There is a [Performance Management Framework, \(PMF\)](#) which seeks to provide a clear link between the delivery of objectives set for individual officers in their

personal development plans and service plans which in turn help deliver the Corporate Plan citizen outcomes.

- We have in place [a Project and Programme Management Framework](#) (intranet) and a Programme and Project Managers Forum (PPM) meets on a quarterly basis.
- The Conwy Opportunities Board provide strategic oversight of all projects and programmes across the authority and reviews all staff suggestions.

Principle E requires us to develop the Councils capacity, including the capacity of its leadership and the individuals within it

E1 Developing the Council's capacity

- We have [a Members' Development Strategy](#).
- We have a [People Strategy](#) which sets out the authority's approach to attract, support, develop and retain staff in order to build upon the 'Team Conwy' culture, and make a difference for the people of Conwy.
- There is a [scheme of delegation](#) which clearly defines the mandate for decision making within all levels of the organisation. This is supported by [contract procedure rules](#) and [financial regulations](#).
- [Recruitment and Selection Policy](#) (Intranet).
- There are a series of [HR policies](#) (intranet) which support a variety of aspects of staff management.
- All members of staff are issued with a contract, job description and have regular 1 to 1 check-ins as part of the [Conwy Conversation](#).
- A staff survey is undertaken every 3 years to seek staff views. As part of the ongoing review of the hybrid working model, regular staff and member surveys have been conducted.

E2 Developing the capability of the Councils leadership and other individuals

- All staff can access a [Corporate Learning and Development Plan](#) (Intranet) which includes a variety of courses to support personal and organisational development.
- There is a Member Development Forum.

- There is an [Attendance Management Policy](#) and staff have access to an external company for occupational health support.
- We also provide an employee assistance and employee benefits scheme through [Care First](#). (Intranet)

Principle F requires us to Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management

F1 Managing risks

- We have a [Risk Management Policy and Framework](#) (Intranet).
- The corporate risk register is reviewed every 6 months and published through [Governance & Audit Committee](#).
- All services have health & safety risk assessments.
- All services have service continuity plans which are uploaded to Resilience Direct.
- We have a [Cyber Resilience Strategy](#).

F2 Managing performance

- The evaluation of progress against strategic outcomes are recorded in a series of Reports including:
 - [Corporate Plan Annual Report & 6 monthly performance report;](#)
 - [Conwy and Denbighshire PSB Annual Report;](#)
 - [Annual Governance Statement](#)
 - [Finance Reports;](#)
 - [Director of Social Services Annual Report;](#)
 - [Welsh Language Annual Monitoring Report](#)

F3 Robust internal control

- Internal Audit have an assurance map which is used to inform the Internal Audit annual plan.
- There is an [Internal Audit Charter](#) (Intranet).
- Internal Audit performance reports are regularly produced and presented to [Governance & Audit Committee](#).
- An Improvement and Audit Group ensures that identified risks and external and internal audit recommendations for improvement are being appropriately addressed.

- We have a policy library to ensure policies are reviewed by their review date.

F4 Managing Data

- We have an Information Governance Unit which is responsible for General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Environmental Information Regulations & Freedom of Information requests (FOIs) and an Information Governance Group meet quarterly.
- We have an [Information Governance Framework](#) of information policies
- Information Governance Training is available online and via sessions for all Elected Members and Staff.
- We have a [Performance Measure Policy](#) (Intranet) for recording and monitoring data and a Research and Information Unit which provides statistical data and needs analysis to support and inform decisions.

F5 Strong public financial management

- The Chief Financial Officer's role (S151 Officer) is included in the responsibilities of the Strategic Director of Finance and Efficiencies. The Director has responsibility for the proper administration of the Authority's financial affairs.
- Our treasury management arrangements follow professional practice and are subject to regular review. There are robust arrangements for effective financial control through the Authority's accounting procedures and financial regulations such as:
 - [Finance Reports](#)
 - [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#)
 - [Members Allowances Scheme](#)
 - [Treasury Management Strategy](#) [Asset Management Plan](#)
 - [Statement of Accounts](#)
 - [Financial Regulations](#) (Intranet)
 - [Council Tax Information](#)
 - [Contract Procedure Rules](#) (Intranet)
 - [Corporate Procurement Strategy](#) (Intranet)
- An Annual Certificate of Compliance issued by external auditors confirms that the Authority complies with its responsibilities relating to financial reporting.

Principle G requires us to implement good practices in transparency reporting and audit, to deliver effective accountability

G1 Implementing good practices in transparency

- All [Cabinet and Council meetings](#) are held in public (with the exception of exempt items) and all papers are published on our council website. All meetings operate on a hybrid model.
- All agendas and reports are available on the Authority's website unless they contain exempt information.
- We have a members' register of interests.
- There is a [Democratic Services Committee](#).
- Governance & Audit Committee members completed the CIPFA Audit Committee Individual Self-Assessment Knowledge & Skill Framework relating to the effectiveness of the Governance and Audit Committee.

G2 Implementing good practices in reporting

- There are regular Internal Audit performance reports presented to [Governance & Audit Committee](#).
- An Improvement and Audit Group ensures that identified risks and external and internal audit recommendations for improvement are being appropriately addressed.

G3 Assurance and effective accountability

- An [annual report](#) of Scrutiny performance is published each year to review and reflect on the scrutiny function.
- We have an [Overview & Scrutiny Engagement Protocol](#).
- We have [Inspectorate Reports](#).
- The Head of Audit publishes an annual report having conducted a review of the effectiveness of our system of internal control and issues a conclusion (Audit opinion) on the control environment.
- We receive an annual programme of external audit reviews and which include:
 - [Audit Wales reports](#)
 - [Estyn Audit reports](#)
 - [Care Inspectorate Wales](#)