

Sefton Council

**Code of Corporate Governance**

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## Summary Sheet

### Document Information

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## Introduction

### Good Governance

Good governance is about how Sefton Council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the communities it serves, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. Good governance will enable the Council to pursue its vision and secure its agreed objectives in the most effective and efficient manner.

### Our Commitment

Sefton Council is committed to upholding the highest possible standards of good corporate governance, believing that good governance leads to high standards of management, strong performance, effective use of resources, increased public involvement and trust in the Council and ultimately good outcomes.

Good governance flows from shared values, culture and behaviour and from systems and structures. This Code of Corporate Governance is a public statement that sets out the framework through which the Council meets its commitment to good corporate governance.

### The Governance Framework

The Governance Framework comprises the systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and through which it accounts to, engages with and, where appropriate, leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate cost-effective services.

Corporate governance in Sefton is based on the following principles recommended by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy / Society Of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (CIPFA/SOLACE) in a joint document entitled “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016 Edition)” which builds on the seven “Principles for the Conduct of Individuals in Public Life” (Appendix A):

The seven principles of Corporate Governance laid out in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework: Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (2016 Edition) are as follows:-

- A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law;
- B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement;
- C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits;
- D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of intended outcomes;
- E. Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it;



- F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management; and
- G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit, to deliver effective accountability.

**Achieving the Intended Outcomes While Acting in the Public Interest at all Times**



*(International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014) (the “International Framework”)*

The Framework is based on the principles in the inner circle permeating and being evident throughout the application of the principles in the outer circle. The diagram also illustrates that good governance is dynamic and involves continuous evaluation and review.

This document describes how the Council achieves the seven principles of good governance and describes how the council’s corporate governance arrangements will be monitored and reviewed.



## How Sefton Council achieved the seven principles of good governance

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

Sub – Principles	How Sefton Council Achieves the Principle
<p>Behaving with integrity.</p> <p>Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values.</p> <p>Respecting the rule of law.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ The Council has an agreed constitution which sets out how the council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures that are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.</li> <li>◇ The Council has put processes in place to minimise the risk that its Councillors and employees act in an improper way (influenced by prejudice, bias or conflict of interest) when dealing with stakeholders.</li> <li>◇ The Council has Codes of Conduct and a suite of policies and procedures for Councillors and employees which define the standards of behaviour expected. Deviation from these policies may result in the use of the embedded disciplinary processes in place.</li> <li>◇ The Council's Vision (Imagine Sefton 2030) is clear and demonstrates its commitment to its stakeholders. It also takes into account ethical behaviour in its promise.</li> </ul>

### B - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

Sub – Principle	How Sefton Council Achieves the Principle
<p>Openness.</p> <p>Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders.</p> <p>Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ The Council publishes all relevant information (as required by the Local Government Transparency Code 2015) (as amended) on its website.</li> <li>◇ The Council website contains comprehensive information pertaining to Council Services.</li> <li>◇ The Councils decision making information, including committee agendas and minutes (not restricted) is available via the council's website and intranet.</li> <li>◇ The Council undertakes consultation exercises regularly; a recent example is the Imagine Sefton 2030 consultation.</li> <li>◇ Council engagement with its stakeholders is governed with and through the Public</li> </ul>



	Consultation and Engagement Panel
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### C - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.

Sub – Principle	How Sefton Council Achieves the Principle
<p>Defining Outcomes</p> <p>Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ The council is committed to community engagement and involvement and this has been demonstrated as part of the Imagine Sefton 2030 consultation exercise and through its continued use of and commitment to the Public Consultation and Engagement Panel.</li> <li>◇ The Council has a clear vision for the future as set out in Imagine Sefton 2030 which takes into account all relevant economic, social and environmental factors.</li> <li>◇ The Council's Framework for Change has been developed to achieve financial sustainability, to ensure services align with the core purpose and that the Council works with partners to achieve better outcomes.</li> <li>◇ The Council has a structured Budget and Treasury Management process in place.</li> </ul>

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

Sub – Principle	How Sefton Council Achieves the Principle
<p>Determining interventions.</p> <p>Planning interventions.</p> <p>Optimising achievement of intended outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ The Council operates a Scrutiny and Review committee system and the decision making process allows for challenge where necessary.</li> <li>◇ The Council has a robust financial strategy with Financial Planning protocols in place (Framework for Change, 3 years budget plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and Forward plans.)</li> <li>◇ The Council has a Communication Strategy in place.</li> <li>◇ The Council undertakes consultation exercises with its stakeholders in relation to service provisions and new initiatives.</li> <li>◇ Social value is considered for all Council tender/ARFQ exercises, with the requirement for</li> </ul>



	Social Value being clearly documented in the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.
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**E - Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.**

<b>Sub – Principle</b>	<b>How Sefton Council Achieves the Principle</b>
<p>Developing the entity's capacity.</p> <p>Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ The Council has an agreed constitution which details roles and responsibilities of Councillors and key Officers of the Council.</li> <li>◇ The Council requires all new members of staff and new Councillors to undertake an induction process.</li> <li>◇ The Council has a number of human resource policies in place.</li> <li>◇ The Council has a personal development process in place for staff and provides or facilitates access to development opportunities for Councillors.</li> <li>◇ Financial Regulations are contained within the Council Constitution and all members of staff are required to operate within them.</li> <li>◇ A number of new projects are being progressed as part of the framework for change – Public Sector Reform. E.g. Accommodation Strategy and Agile Working.</li> <li>◇ The Council works with a number of partners in order to deliver services throughout the borough.</li> <li>◇ Areas of the Council have been or are under review to ensure that they are operating efficiently and effectively within resources available for example the development of the Green Sefton service</li> </ul>

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

<b>Sub – Principle</b>	<b>How Sefton Council Achieves the Principle</b>
<p>Managing risk.</p> <p>Managing performance.</p> <p>Robust internal control.</p> <p>Managing data.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ The Council has a Risk Management Framework in development.</li> <li>◇ The Council's Performance Management of new projects linked to the framework for change has been implemented with an Executive Leadership Board.</li> </ul>



Sub – Principle	How Sefton Council Achieves the Principle
Strong public financial management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ A system of scrutiny and review is in place as part of the Council’s decision making process.</li> <li>◇ The Council has an Audit &amp; Governance Committee who meets quarterly and provides independent assurance on the adequacy of the Council’s Risk Management Framework and the associated control environment.</li> <li>◇ The Council has a Risk Management Handbook and the Audit &amp; Governance Committee review the Corporate Risk Register at each meeting.</li> <li>◇ An internal audit function is maintained and reports quarterly to the Audit &amp; Governance Committee.</li> <li>◇ A data management framework and procedures are in place and readily available to all members of staff.</li> <li>◇ The Council has a robust financial strategy with Financial Planning protocols in place (Framework for Change, 3 years budget plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and Forward plans.)</li> <li>◇ Council Financial Statements are available to the Public on the Councils website.</li> </ul>

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

Sub – Principle	How Sefton Council Achieves the Principle
<p>Implementing good practice in transparency.</p> <p>Implementing good practices in reporting.</p> <p>Assurance and effective accountability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ The Council adheres to the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, with relevant information accessible via the council’s website.</li> <li>◇ The Councils website is designed for ease of navigation and includes “Browse aloud” function.</li> <li>◇ The Council has a Communications Policy in place.</li> <li>◇ The Council’s financial statements and Auditors letter is available on the Councils website.</li> <li>◇ The Council produces financial statements in accordance with CIPFA’s Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the UK following</li> </ul>





	<p>International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). The Financial statements are scrutinised by the external auditor with a separate report produced.</p> <p>◇ An Annual Governance Statement is produced and incorporated into the financial statements.</p>
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## Monitoring and reporting

The Council will undertake an annual review of its governance arrangements to ensure continuing compliance with best practice to provide assurance that corporate governance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively in practice. Where reviews of the corporate governance arrangements have revealed gaps, actions will be planned to enhance the governance arrangements accordingly.

The Council will prepare an Annual Governance Statement which will be submitted to the Audit and Governance Committee for consideration and will form part of the Council's annual Financial Statement.

The Annual Governance Statement will include:

- an acknowledgement of responsibility for ensuring there is a sound system of governance and system of internal control;
- a brief description of the key elements of the governance arrangements;
- a brief description of the process that has been applied in maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance arrangements;
- an evaluation of the level of assurance that the systems and processes that comprise the Council's governance arrangements can provide; and
- an outline of the actions taken, or proposed, to deal with significant governance and internal control issues.

The Annual Governance Statement will be signed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive on behalf of the Council.

In reviewing and approving the Annual Governance Statement, members of the council will be provided with detailed information regarding the effectiveness of the governance arrangements and system of internal control and how these address the key risks faced by the Council. Those assurances will be available from a wide range of sources, including internal and external audit, a range of external inspectorates and managers from across the Council.

The Council will aspire to operate an assurance framework, embedded into its business processes, that maps corporate objectives to risks, controls and assurances. This framework and regular reports on its application and effectiveness will provide members with assurances to support the Annual



Governance Statement and will help members to identify whether corporate objectives and significant business risks are being properly managed.

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## **The Seven Principles of Public Life**

The Seven Principles of Public Life apply to anyone who works as a public office holder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the civil service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, non-departmental public bodies, and in health, education, social and care services. All public office holders are servants of the public and stewards of public resources. The principles also apply to all those in other sectors delivering public services.

### **1. Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

### **2. Integrity**

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

### **3. Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

### **4. 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.

### **5. Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

### **6. Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful.

### **7. Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.



***The Seven Principles were established in the Committee's first report in 1995, the accompanying descriptors were revised following a review in the Fourteenth Report, published in January 2013.***

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