Code of Corporate Governance

Introduction

Hambleton District Council is committed to the principles of good corporate governance and this code specifies our intention to deliver the necessary procedures and practices to enable the highest standards to be maintained. The code schedules our commitment in five key areas:

- Community Focus
- Service Delivery Arrangements
- Structures and Processes
- Risk Management and Internal Control
- Standards of Conduct

Community Focus

The Council is charged with the responsibility of 'community leader' and therefore has a duty to work with, lead and act on behalf of the communities it serves. To assist in achieving these aims the Council will:

- Publish on a timely basis an annual report presenting an objective, understandable account of the Council's activities, achievements, financial position and performance.

- Publish on a timely basis a performance plan presenting an objective, balanced and understandable account of the Council's current performance and intentions regarding improvements to service delivery.

- Put in place proper arrangements for the independent review of the financial and operational reporting process.

- Put in place proper arrangements designed to encourage individuals and groups from all sections of the community to engage with, contribute to and participate in the work of the Council.

- Make an explicit commitment to openness in all of our dealings, subject to the need to preserve confidentiality in specific instances.

- Establish clear channels of communication with all sections of the community and put in place proper monitoring arrangements to ensure this is operating effectively.

- Ensure that a vision for communities is developed and that strategic plans, priorities and targets are developed through robust mechanisms. They are developed in consultation with the local community and other key stakeholders and they are clearly articulated and disseminated.

Service Delivery Arrangements

In delivering its services the Council needs to ensure agreed policies are implemented and that it strives for continuous improvements. It will therefore:

- Set standards and targets for performance of services on a sustainable basis and with reference to equality policies.

- Put in place sound systems for providing management information to aid performance management.

- Monitor and report performance against agreed standards and targets and develop comprehensive and understandable performance plans.

- Put in place arrangements to allocate resources according to priorities.

- Foster effective relationships and partnerships with other agencies including public, private and voluntary sector bodies. Also to consider outsourcing where it is efficient and effective to do so in delivering services to meet community needs, and put in place measures to ensure such arrangements operate effectively.

- Respond positively to the findings and recommendations of external auditors and statutory inspectors and put in place arrangements for the effective implementation of agreed actions.

Structures and Processes

A local authority needs to establish effective political and managerial structures and processes to govern decision making and exercise authority within the Council. Arrangements will therefore be made to:

Balance of Power and Authority

- Clearly document protocols governing relationships between Members and officers.

- Ensure that the relative roles and responsibilities of executive, other Members and senior officers are clearly defined.

Roles and Responsibilities – Members

- Ensure Members meet on a formal basis regularly to set the strategic direction of the authority and monitor service delivery.

- Maintain a scheme of delegated powers which will include a formal statement of those matters specifically reserved for the collective decision of the Council.

- Put in place clearly documented and understood management processes for policy development implementation and review along with formal procedural and financial procedure rules to govern the conduct of the Council's business.

- Put in place arrangements to ensure that Members are properly trained for their roles and have access to all relevant information, advice and resources necessary to enable them to carry out their roles effectively.

- Define, in writing, the role of the executive Members including responsibility for providing effective strategic leadership and for ensuring the Council successfully discharges its responsibility for the activities of the organisation as a whole.

- Define, in writing, the roles and responsibilities of all Members of the Council together with the terms of their remuneration and its review.

Roles and Responsibilities – Officers

- Make the Chief Executive responsible to the Council for all aspects of Operational Management.

- Make the S151 Officer responsible to the Council for ensuring that appropriate advice is given to it on all financial matters, for keeping proper financial records and accounts and for maintaining an effective system of internal financial control.

- Make the Monitoring Officer responsible to the Council for ensuring that agreed procedures are followed and that all applicable statutes, regulations and other relevant statements of good practice are complied with.

- Define in writing the roles and responsibilities of all senior officers together with the terms of their remuneration and its review.

- Adopt clear protocols and codes of conduct to ensure that the implications for supporting political leadership for the whole Council are acknowledged and resolved.

Risk Management and Internal Control

To ensure the Council manages risks effectively it needs to maintain a strategic framework. To this end the framework will:

- Develop and maintain robust systems for identifying and evaluating all significant risks which involve the proactive participation of all those associated with planning and delivering services.

- Put in place effective risk management systems, including systems of internal control and internal audit. These arrangements will comply with all applicable statutes, regulations and statements of best practice to ensure that public funds are properly safeguarded and are used economically, efficiently and effectively, and in accordance with the statutory and other authorities that govern their use.

- Ensure that services are delivered by trained and experienced people.

- Put in place effective arrangements for an objective review of the effectiveness of risk management and internal control, including internal audit.

- Maintain an objective and professional relationship with statutory auditors and inspectors.

- Publish on a timely basis, within the annual report, an objective, balanced and understood statement and assessment of the Council's risk management and internal control mechanisms and their effectiveness in practice.

Standards of Conduct

The openness, integrity and accountability of individuals within a Council form the cornerstone of effective corporate governance. The Council therefore will:

- Develop and adopt formal codes of conduct defining the standards of personal behaviour to which individual Members, officers and agents of the Council are required to subscribe and put in place appropriate systems and processes to ensure that they are complied with.

- Put in place arrangements to ensure that Members and employees of the Council are not influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest in dealing with different stakeholders and put in place appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice.

- Put in place arrangements to ensure that their procedures and operations are designed in conformity with appropriate ethical standards, and to monitor their continuing compliance in practice.

- Put in place arrangements for whistle blowing to which staff and all those contracting with the Council have access.