

Draft

**Doncaster Metropolitan
Borough Council**

**Local Code
of Corporate Governance**

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Introduction

Welcome to the Doncaster local code of corporate governance.

We hope that having a local code of corporate governance will be helpful as it sets out clearly and concisely our intent and commitment to having good governance arrangements. Good governance is important to us. A local code provides information about the standards by which the Council is governed.

Doncaster Council operates under the Mayoral governance model, which means we have an elected Mayor who is personally responsible for making decisions on a very wide range of issues within the Borough, from education to roads, social care to housing to leisure.

We also have 63 elected councillors from 21 wards whose role it is to make key strategic decisions (e.g. the budget) within which the Mayor operates. They also carry out regulatory functions – e.g., planning, licensing and overview and scrutiny functions which assist and challenge the Mayor in making policy decisions and scrutinising some decisions made by the Mayor.

Governance

Before getting into the detail of the local code of governance it is perhaps helpful to share what we mean by ‘governance’, for without some common understanding it is difficult to share ownership and so to move forwards together.

The dictionary defines ‘governance’ as ‘the manner of conducting the policy and affairs of an organisation’. So ‘governance’ in the council is the means by which the policy and affairs of the council are conducted.

A fuller definition is that ‘governance’ in local government comprises the systems and processes, the cultures and values by which a local authority is directed and controlled and through which the local authority accounts to, engages with, and where appropriate, leads the community.

In Doncaster, the Mayor is a key player in much of this, helping and directing the organisation in doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in an open, honest and timely manner.

The Importance of Good Governance

In Doncaster we recognise that governance in a public and democratic organisation relies upon high standards of probity and integrity.

Good governance leads to good management, good performance, good stewardship of public funds, good public engagement and to good outcomes for citizens and service users. Failure to deliver this undermines the

confidence of the public in our ability to fairly and effectively deliver services and lead in community matters.

As a council we seek to be valued as an example of good governance in our community. We not only want to attain and maintain high standards, but want to improve them further.

Good corporate governance requires the council to be open, transparent, effective, inclusive of all sectors of the community, accountable to the public it serves and to demonstrate integrity.

We acknowledge that the public have a right to expect nothing less and through this code we will seek to meet all the hallmarks of a successful council. In places this code sets active targets for improvement which we will strive to meet as quickly and effectively as possible.

How It Works In Doncaster

The council operates through a governance framework which brings together the complex layers of regulatory and statutory requirements that exist upon local authorities, with good sound governance principles and management processes.

The Council's constitution sets out the legal and authoritative expectations and rules of governance on many key issues including on how decisions are made and how public funds are to be spent wisely.

The Mayoral system of governance makes us different from many other councils; the practical impact, reflected in the Constitution, is generally in who makes the decisions.

We review and revise the Constitution annually to make sure it continues to be relevant and effective in providing the governance framework of a large democratic organisation.

The Constitution embodies things like;

- who does what,
- committee standing orders (ensuring council meetings are conducted in an orderly and fair way),
- financial and contract rules (setting out commonsense rules for the administration of council funds and letting of contracts) and
- the Council's scheme of delegation (who can decide what).

This is supported by a lot of written internal procedures and management processes.

This local code of corporate governance summarises all these things in one simple short document making them easily available and open. But as legislative requirements and service needs change, so must the Council's governance arrangements and so this code will be reviewed annually and is likely to change to reflect any such developments.

Good Governance Principles

The Council commits to following the 6 key principles of good governance adapted from the Independent Commission's report on Good Governance in Public Services.

These principles are summarised below and then expanded upon in the succeeding pages about what they mean for the council.

1. **Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area**
2. **Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles**
3. **Promoting values for the Authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour**
4. **Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk**
5. **Developing the capacity and capability of Members and officers to be effective**
6. **Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.**

PRINCIPLE 1:

Focussing on the purpose of the Council and on outcomes for the community including citizens and service users and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.

How we do this;

- Through exercising leadership, the centre of which is normally the Mayor, in consultation with the Council, the community and our partners via the local Partnership organisation, the Discover the Spirit Board. This facilitates helpful and meaningful communication of the Mayor's and the Council's purpose and vision and it's intended outcomes for citizens, service users and partners. These are summed up in the Mayoral manifesto, the Sustainable Borough Strategy and the Local Area Agreements through which the council works with other public sector organisations in our locality such as the Health Trusts and Police to achieve common objectives.

- Ensuring service users receive high quality services.
- Ensuring the council makes the best use of its resources.
- Allocating resources in line with our priorities. This is done through the 3 year revenue budget, and the 5 year capital programme and 5 year assets strategy.
- Reviewing regularly the contribution our services make to realising the vision for the area.

PRINCIPLE 2:

Councillors and Officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles

How we do this;

- Ensuring clarity over the respective roles of the Mayor, elected members and officers. This is set out in the Mayor's Scheme of Delegation which determines what Councillors and Officers can make decisions about.
- Ensuring there is a constructive working relationship and culture of mutual respect and support between the Mayor, members and officers, supported by a relationship protocol.
- Having clear goals and priorities, with plans on how these are to be met, that are well communicated.
- Having a clear accountable framework for things the elected Mayor and members do.
- Clarifying the contribution of partner organisations to achieve a common purpose via the Discover the Spirit Board and the Local Area Agreements (with other public sector bodies in Doncaster such as the National Health Service providers, the Police, the Fire service, Voluntary Sector etc)

PRINCIPLE 3:

Promoting the values of the Council and demonstrating the values of good governance through appropriate behaviour

How we do this;

- Ensuring that the Mayor, councillors and officers exercise leadership in upholding high standards of personal conduct, exemplifying effective governance, sharing the agreed objectives and achievements of the Council with elected members, staff and all other stakeholders.
- Defining organisational values (the moral principles and standards setting the organisational tone of behaviour and appropriate organisational culture) and reflecting these in Codes of Conduct.
- Ensuring that staff deliver services to high standards of customer care and do so by monitoring this closely through effective performance management arrangements across all services.
- Having an effective Standards Committee that promotes the appropriate high standards of good governance in an open and transparent way. This includes addressing any inappropriate behaviour by officers and councillors through competency and disciplinary channels.

PRINCIPLE 4:

Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk

How we do this;

- Being rigorous and transparent in decision-making, ensuring that full Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings take place in open forum (to the public and the media) and that decisions are published on the Council's website,
- Having good quality information for decision-makers with suitable and effective advice and support to them from professional skilled and experienced staff.
- Resourcing and actively supporting a relevant and effective Overview and Scrutiny function that operates independently of the Executive, determining its own work programmes and focussing on the major issues thereby holding the Mayor and the Executive to account.

- Having effective risk management arrangements in place, based upon a clear and regularly reviewed risk management strategy. We have effective risk management actions in place that are monitored to ensure that risks are appropriately and effectively managed. We also have business continuity plans to ensure we can continue to deliver our main services and we have a clear and tested Emergency Plan in the event that we have to address issues of a magnitude of the 2007 floods
- Conducting as much business as possible in the public domain,
- Having effective independent audit and assurance and through operating best practice Audit Committee and Standards Committee arrangements.

PRINCIPLE 5:

Developing the capacity and the capability of the Mayor and Councillors to be effective and ensuring that officers (including the Statutory Officers) also have the capability and capacity to deliver

How we do this;

- By supporting the Mayor and elected members in their Council roles.
- Through clarity of roles and responsibilities of all key parties involved, as set out in the Constitution.
- By requiring the appropriate qualifications and resourcing of the 3 statutory officer functions; the Head of Paid Service (our Chief Executive), the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Financial Officer, so ensuring that the council operates within the law with competent, knowledgeable advisors.
- By ensuring that the Mayor and elected members receive appropriate and effective training when newly elected and on an on-going basis.
- By adequately resourcing the Executive office, Scrutiny and Democratic Services functions, to support the Mayor and elected members in their roles,
- By sharing information so that the Mayor, elected members and staff can do their jobs effectively,
- By briefing the Mayor, elected members and staff on key issues affecting their roles and responsibilities and impacting

on the council's delivery of services and meeting of objectives and goals,

- Through the Committee Chairman and Vice chairman system which ensures that there is the capability to maintain and guide committees in an effective manner,
- Through succession planning and delegation of functions so as to maintain key council and service functions at all times

PRINCIPLE 6:

Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust local public accountability

How we do this;

- Through the Mayoral and Councillor election systems,
- Through corporate consultation arrangements with the public and service users,
- Ensuring service users and residents know what they can expect through our Customer Service Strategy, Sustainable Borough Strategy and Local Area Agreements and service standards
- By consulting our partners on the Discover the Spirit Board, and through effective liaison with other public sector bodies over Local Area Agreements,
- Via the Neighbourhood Model where service delivery is arranged on a local neighbourhood basis,
- By listening to, responding to and taking notice of complaints,
- By taking account of what our customers say through customer feedback questionnaires and being responsive to their feedback and needs,
- Through the system of Mayoral consultation and Councillor surgeries where local people speak to the Mayor and to their local councillors,
- Through public external inspections of our services,
- By responding to requests for information, and having clear and effective processes for handling such requests including effective ways for dealing with Freedom of Information requests through nominated channels,
- Through public rights of access to our records, e.g. on planning matters, and on financial matters,

- By giving access to our External Auditor who has rights of access to information and has a responsibility to report on matters of concern and to respond to enquiries raised with him.

Further Information

This local code of corporate governance is intended as a summary statement of commitment to good governance in Doncaster Council.

It does not contain every bit of detail about how the council is governed. If you want to look further at how this takes place, you are very welcome to do so. Details can be found on the Council's website or for staff and elected members, on the Council's intranet site.

The Council has documented its governance arrangements and these are accessible to all.

The council annually reviews its governance arrangements and the outcome of this review can be found in the council's Annual Governance Statement, which too is accessible on its website/intranet site and is also published in its financial statement of accounts each year.

If you would like to speak to someone about the council's governance arrangements the Director of Resources will be pleased to assist you.

Tel 01302 862484 or e mail governance@doncaster.gov.uk

(NB NEED NEW MAILBOX SETTING UP AND ALLOCATION OF RESPONSIBILITY TO CHECK & RESPOND).