

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

AUDIT COMMITTEE

LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To approve the updated Code of Corporate Governance which has been compiled in accordance with guidance provided by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Government Chief Executives (SOLACE) in their document "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework" (2016).
- 1.2 The council is committed to achieving good corporate governance and this Local Code describes how the council intends to achieve this in an open and explicit way.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In April 2016 the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Government Chief Executives (SOLACE) issued their document "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: a Framework". It is based on seven principles underpinning the framework.
 - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law
 - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
 - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits
 - Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of intended outcomes
 - Developing the entity's capacity, including the capacity of its leadership and the individuals within it
 - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong financial management
 - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability
- 2.2 In 2016/17 the council updated its Local Code using the principles in the framework, and which was approved by Audit Committee 27 September 2016. The Code is subject to annual review and the revised version is shown on Appendix 1.

Two particular areas have been amended to reflect the changes of the council's operating model, these being in relation to public engagement (Principle B) and organisational development (Principle E). In addition there has been minor amendments to other areas of the Code.

2.3 The changes relate to the following:

- The introduction of Customer Service Standards and Good Practice Checklist for services to complete to improve the quality of correspondence to customers.
- Public Engagement Stakeholder Group has been set up to champion and enable the principles and spirit of public engagement to become embedded in all service areas.
- The launch of the Residents' Panel.
- The development of the People Plan.
- The introduction and launch of the NLC Team Membership Pack and Team NL conversations.

2.4 The updated Code shows that overall the council continues to comply with the principles outlined in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework. The effectiveness of these arrangements will be reported in the Annual Governance Statement.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 The Committee is asked to consider whether or not the revised Code of Corporate Governance sufficiently sets out how the council complies with the Corporate Governance Principles. If it concludes that it does the Committee is invited to approve the updated Code. The Committee may make amendments or seek clarification as necessary.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 The Code of Corporate Governance provides this Committee with an overview of the council's governance arrangements. Members should seek clarification on its contents as necessary to ensure the Code provides sufficient assurance to fulfil their role as set out in the Committee's terms of reference.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 Regular reviews of governance arrangements should safeguard the council's assets and ensure that value for money is achieved in the use of resources.

6. OTHER RELEVANT IMPLICATIONS (e.g. CRIME AND DISORDER, EQUALITIES, COUNCIL PLAN, ENVIRONMENTAL, RISK etc.)

6.1 Ineffective corporate governance arrangements have a number of inherent risks in the context of organisational management, the use of resources and service delivery. Designing a Code of Governance based on national frameworks and responding to the issues raised in the 2018/19 AGS is a means of mitigating such potential risks.

7. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required.

8. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

8.1 The Code of Corporate Governance draws on contributions from all services and therefore represents a corporate view.

8.2 There are no conflicts of interests to declare.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 The Audit Committee is asked to approve the updated Code of Corporate Governance.

DIRECTOR: GOVERNANCE & PARTNERSHIP

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

CIPFA/SOLACE Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework (2016)

Code of Governance January 2019.



North Lincolnshire Council Local Code of Corporate Governance

Approved by: Audit Committee

**North
Lincolnshire
Council**

www.northlincs.gov.uk

LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE INTRODUCTION

The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014) defines governance as follows:

“Governance comprises the arrangements put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved”

The International Framework also states that:

“To deliver good governance in the public sector, both governing bodies and individuals working for public sector entities must try to achieve their entity’s objectives while acting in the public interest at all times”.

Acting in the public interest implies primary consideration of the benefits for society, which should result in positive outcomes for service users and other stakeholders”

GOOD CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

North Lincolnshire Council is committed to achieving good corporate governance and this Local Code describes how the council intends to achieve this in an open and explicit way. The local code is based upon the CIPFA SOLACE framework “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government” (April 2016) which replaced the document published in 2007. As laid out in the guidance it *“is intended to assist authorities individually in reviewing and accounting for their own unique approach. The overall aim is to ensure that resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities, that there is sound and inclusive decision making and that there is clear accountability for the use of those resources in order to achieve desired outcomes for service users and communities”*. Consequently, the local Code has been written to reflect the council’s own structure, functions, and the governance arrangements in existence.

*The local code is based on the following 7 principles, the first 2 of which underpin the remaining 5 with the overall aim of “**Achieving the intended outcomes while acting in the public interest at all times**”.*

The principles are as follows:

Acting in the public interest requires a commitment to and effective arrangements for:

- A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law
- B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

In addition to the overarching requirements for acting in the public interest in principles A and B, achieving good governance also requires a commitment to and effective arrangements for:

- C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits
- D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the 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
- G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability

The following details how the council meets the core principles and the systems, policies and procedures it has in place to support this.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

The design and content of the Code of Corporate Governance is subject to annual review and update to reflect changes in the council's policies and processes.

The effectiveness of the governance arrangements are assessed annually and reported in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The council has adopted the "three lines of defence model" of assurance, where:

First Line – (delivery/operational area)

Each Director is required to complete an annual self-assessment as to how assurances are sought to confirm that the services and functions they are responsible for comply with each of the seven principles.

Second Line - (oversight of management activity and separate from those responsible for delivery)

A range of reports are produced annually or throughout the year from those responsible for the oversight of management activity which provide assurance on the operation of elements of the governance framework, including:

Executive Reporting

- Annual Report of Adults Safeguarding Board
- Annual Report of the Children's Multi Agency Resilience and Safeguarding Board
- Annual Education report
- Director of Public Health Annual Report
- Annual Report for Adult Social Care (Local Account)
- Annual Report for Children's Services
- Annual Special Education Needs Report
- Annual Adult Education Report
- Annual Complaints Report (including Children and Adults Social Care)

Non-Executive Reporting

- Annual Risk Management Report
- Annual Report of the Standards Committee
- Annual Report of the Audit Committee
- Annual and Mid-Year Treasury Management Report
- Annual Fraud Report
- Annual ICT Assurance Report
- Annual Statement of Accounts

Third line (independent oversight)

- External inspectorates, such as Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission
- External audit
- Internal audit
- Ombudsman

Core Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law

Rational: Local government organisations are accountable not only for how much they spend, but also for how they use the resources under their stewardship. This includes accountability for outputs, both positive and negative, and for the outcomes they have achieved. In addition, they have an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies. It is essential that, as a whole, they can demonstrate the appropriateness of all their actions across all activities and have mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and to respect the rule of law.

To demonstrate its commitment to achieving good governance, North Lincolnshire Council has:

Behaving with integrity

- A well-established Code of Conduct for Members to ensure that high standards of conduct are maintained. All new members are made aware of the Code as part of their induction process.
- A ‘Declaration of Acceptance of Office’ that is signed by Members once elected which makes reference to the Code.
- Established procedures for dealing with breaches of the Member Code of Conduct.
- Promoted the NLC Code of Conduct to Town and Parish councils which all have adopted.
- A Standards Committee responsible for overseeing the conduct of members and identifying learning and development for members in relation to the Code of Conduct. The Committee receives a report at each meeting on the progress of complaints/investigations. An annual report is presented to the Standards Committee on councillors’ compliance with the ethical standards framework.
- Trained all Standards Committee Members on the Code of Conduct.
- An Employee Code of Conduct that sets out standards of behaviour and conduct the council expects of its employees to ensure that public business is conducted with fairness and integrity. This is signposted as part of staff induction.
- The NLC Team Membership Pack containing information on the council; including what can be expected from the council as well as from the employee.
- #teamNL conversations held with all staff regarding our council values and behaviours.
- An Employee Handbook containing information on the council; including what can be expected from the council as well as from the employee.
- A standard decision making report format to ensure that all those responsible for taking decisions have the necessary information on which to do so. Key decisions are also supported by an Integrated Impact Assessment.
- Visual Identity Standard and Guidelines provides specific guidelines and standards for NLC employees to apply across all forms of communication and media.
- Style Guide that presents the way we should write as a council – currently being reviewed.
- A Code of Practice for Employees for declaring interests and registering gifts and hospitality.
- On its website a register of Members’ is published.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Members' policy for acceptance and registration of gifts and hospitality. • A standing agenda item to record members' declaration of interests. Minutes show declarations of interest were sought and appropriate declarations made. • A Customer Complaints and Comments Policy that is published on the council's website. • A Whistleblowing Policy in place to enable individuals to raise concerns about malpractice or wrongdoing. <p>Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A regularly reviewed and externally validated Constitution which sets out how the council operates and how it makes decisions. It also states that the council will exercise all its duties in accordance with the law. • Terms of Reference for all committees and decision making meetings. • Policies and procedures that are updated, to ensure adherence to ethical standards including the HR Manual, Contract Procedure Rules (this is out of date). • An annual review to ensure compliance with CIPFA's Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government (CIPFA, 2015). • Many council staff are also subject to the ethics of their professional body. <p>Respecting the rule of law</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defined the statutory roles to designated posts, set out in the Constitution, including the role of Monitoring Officer responsible for ensuring the council operates within the law and decisions are administered correctly. • Set out Role Descriptions for all councillors in the Constitution. • A Counter Fraud Strategy which is supported by the Whistleblowing Policy and a hotline for employees and customers to report irregularity and fraud. • Quarterly overview to update the council's Assurance Group on the position against set criteria which helps identify the council is fulfilling its duties as an organisation and employer.
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Core Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	
<p>Rational: Local government is run for the public good, organisations therefore should ensure openness in their activities. Clear, trusted channels of communication and consultation should be used to engage effectively with all groups of stakeholders, such as individual citizens and service users, as well as institutional stakeholders.</p>	<p>To demonstrate its commitment to achieving good governance, North Lincolnshire Council has:</p> <p>Openness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of annual reports that summarise achievements for the year across a range of functions that set out outcomes achieved for North Lincolnshire residents. • Its annual statement of accounts published annually prior to external audit and post audit. • A Publication Scheme that describes the kinds of information available and provides guidance about how to access information and submit a Freedom of Information request. • Systems in place to ensure that relevant decisions taken by officers are published in accordance with legislative requirements – Officer Decision Notice and Record. • Mechanisms for seeking views from service users, stakeholders and residents ‘Engaging With You’ statement • A standard decision making report format is used to ensure the decision maker is presented with all the information necessary to inform the decision including outcomes of consultation. • The Impact Assessment toolkit is used for all key decisions and helps ensure that the decisions taken consider a range of potential impacts/risks. • Agendas, reports and minutes are published on the council’s website. Meetings are open to the public unless there are good reasons for not doing so on the grounds of confidentiality. • Dates for submitting, publishing and distributing timely reports are set and adhered to. • A Council Plan that sets out the vision and priorities for North Lincolnshire and strategic direction for the council. • A copy of the Constitution is available on the council’s website. <p>Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established strong partnerships with the public sector, business and community and voluntary sector across North Lincolnshire, including statutory arrangements for Community Safety, Health and Wellbeing and Safeguarding. • Mechanisms in place to consult where necessary with public sector bodies such as Police and Fire.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established a North Lincolnshire Place Partnership as a forum for Chief Officers of member public sector organisations to work collectively as ‘Place Leaders’ to improve outcomes for people and place together with voluntary & community sector and business sector representation. • The Adults Partnership and Children’s & Young People Partnership provide a framework for consulting and engaging with key stakeholders including voluntary and community groups. • Ensured that capturing the voice of the customer and of the staff and outside bodies is at the heart of the Performance Framework. <p>Engaging stakeholders effectively including individual citizens and service users</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is provided to the public about Council activities and its business in the form of News Direct, which is distributed on a quarterly basis. • A Community Engagement Plan that sets out how the council will consult with the public. New on-line tools are being developed in relation to consultations. • A Public Engagement Framework and ‘Engaging With You’ statement, which summarises how the council engage. • The Council is launching a Residents Panel made up of a large number of people over 16. • Good Practice Checklist for services to complete to improve the quality of correspondence to customers. • Public Engagement Stakeholder Group set up to champion and enable the principles and spirit of public engagement to become embedded in all service areas. • Community Safety Partnership regularly engage and consult with the community about their priorities and progress towards achieving them. • Good arrangements to engage with specific population groups and service users. For example, the Youth Council provides a forum for young people to communicate and promote views of young people. • A petitioning process for the public to bring concerns to the council’s attention. • We ensure that the voice of our citizens and service users are fed back through the Performance Management and Assurance process to improve our services.
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Core Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefit	
<p>Rationale: The long-term nature and impact of many of local government’s responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable. Decisions should further the organisation’s purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes, and remain within the limits of authority and resources. Input from all groups of stakeholders, including citizens, service users, and institutional stakeholders, is vital to the success of this process and in balancing competing demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available.</p>	<p>To demonstrate its commitment to achieving good governance, North Lincolnshire Council has:</p> <p>Defining Outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Council Plan that sets out the council’s ambitions and defines the outcomes, goals and values for people and place. • A regularly reviewed and updated Strategic Needs Assessment which analyses local intelligence and needs analysis about economic, housing, health, wellbeing and social care needs of the local population. • A strategic planning framework that links all strategies and plans to the Council Plan and needs assessment. • Set the budget around the outcomes and priorities. <p>Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Impact Assessment used in the decision making process considers risks and impacts for individuals and communities, for the area and other legal or governance matters to ensure that fair access to service is not adversely affected. Updated August 2019. • A Social Value toolkit that is designed to assist commissioners and procurers to maximise opportunities to improve the social, economic and environment condition of our local area through effective commissioning and procurement. • Better Business Case – Best Practice Guide and Support. Updated July 2019 and is structured around the Government’s Five Case Model (best practice standard recommended by HM Treasury. Provides an overview of the principles and methodology used in the development of business cases. • An agreed set of principles for the purposes of budget setting.

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

Rationale: Local government achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory, and practical interventions (courses of action). Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that local government has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved. They need robust decision-making mechanisms to ensure that their defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best trade-off between the various types of resource inputs while still enabling effective and efficient operations. Decisions made need to be reviewed frequently to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.

To demonstrate its commitment to achieving good governance, North Lincolnshire Council has:

Determining interventions

- A financial planning process that determines level of resources to achieve Council priorities and outcomes and meet statutory duties.
- A standard decision report format to ensure relevant information to be considered as part of the decision making process of members and officers.

Planning interventions

- A Strategic Planning Framework that explains how strategic planning is undertaken at NLC and to set out the key principles and associated guidance to help ensure that a consistent and structured approach is undertaken across the council.
- A regularly reviewed and published Integrated Strategic Needs Assessment provides an opportunity to identify service developments that will enhance achievement of outcomes and priorities.
- Statement of Service Plans that are developed by senior leaders to stimulate strategic thinking and articulate the ambitions and priorities across the Council.
- Annual work programmes developed by Overview and Scrutiny committees.
- Reviewed the performance management framework which provides reporting at operational, strategic and executive.
- Financial management and reporting processes that enable regular and timely reporting to budget holders, leadership team and Cabinet.

Optimising achievement of intended outcomes

- Integrated Strategic Assessment that is structured around four high level outcomes. Brought together evidence across the outcomes giving the council an overview of the state of North Lincolnshire with a focus on the people who live there.
- Annually updated Procurement and Commissioning Plans, supported by sector specific Market Position Statements that identifies service developments and specification.
- A medium term financial strategy agreed and reviewed annually based upon Council Plan ambitions and priorities.
- Securing continuous improvement through engagement with external and peer review mechanisms.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual reporting of achievement of impact of intervention, for example Adult Social Care Local Account; Annual Education Report. • Quarterly overview to update the council’s Assurance Group on the position against set criteria which helps identify the council is fulfilling its duties as an organisation and employer.
Core Principle E: Developing the entity’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it	
<p>Rationale: Local government needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications and mindset, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve intended outcomes within the specified periods. A local government organisation must ensure that it has both the capacity to fulfil its own mandate and to make certain that there are policies in place to guarantee that its management has the operational capacity for the organisation as a whole. Because both individuals and the environment in which an organisation operates will change over time, there will be a continuous need to develop its capacity as well as the skills and experience of individual staff members. Leadership in local government is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of backgrounds, reflecting the structure and diversity of communities.</p>	<p>To demonstrate its commitment to achieving good governance, North Lincolnshire Council has:</p> <p>Developing the entity’s capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly reviewed and published employee policies. • Mechanisms established for staff engagement, for example Listening and Learning Group. • Access to a range of benchmarking information to support resource planning and value for money, for example CFO Insights. • Governance structures for strategic planning of workforce development - Organisational Development People Executive. <p>Developing the capability of the entity’s leadership and other individuals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader and Cabinet political management model is well established and clearly recognises the role of the Mayor and opposition group within the Constitution. • The political management model provides opportunities for non-executive members to focus on their key roles in overview and scrutiny, on regulatory committees, outside bodies and as local community representatives. • Protocols are in place for governing Members’ and statutory officers’ responsibilities. Member role descriptions are set out in the Constitution. • Protocols in place to ensure the Leader and Chief Executive have a shared understanding of roles and objectives. • A Scheme of Delegation to Officers and Appointment of Proper Officers that are reviewed annually in light of legal and organisational changes. • A Constitution that sets out financial management arrangements through the Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules and supplemented by the Finance and Procurement Manuals. • Tracking of new government legislation, announcements, consultations and bills via the tracker system on a weekly basis and circulated to key individuals.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational Development Plan (ODP) that is an overarching framework for the whole council to implement and realise the vision of a progressive and agile organisation. It is structured around three priorities Work well, Wellbeing and Council Re-design. • Progress of the ODP and against the OD Outcomes Framework is monitored via the OD Senior Leadership Team meeting. • Organisational Priority Executive Groups are responsible for delivering the priority outcomes and progress on People and Digital in support of the ODP. • People Plan that is a delivery plan for the people aspects of the council's ODP be setting out how the council will engage, support and encourage innovation from the workforce. • All new staff are required to be introduced to the NL Council Team Membership Pack which provides information on all you need to know about working for the council and to attend a #teamNL conversation about the council values and behaviours. • All current staff have also been required to be introduced to the NL Council Team Membership Pack which provides information on all you need to know about working for the council and to attend a #teamNL conversation about the council values and behaviours. • Induction Programme for officers which includes the assignment of an Induction Buddy to help new staff through their first weeks at the council. • Employee Performance Review meetings are held. • Specific training for officers is made available through the annual Corporate Training Programme. Learning Lincs offers a wide range of development and support via eLearning packages. • Member induction and development programme to ensure specific and specialist roles have up to date training to effectively carry out role. E-learning packages are available for members. • The Leadership and Management Framework is being developed. • Health & Safety policies designed to protect and enhance the welfare of staff are actively promoted and monitored. Externally validated by the ROSPA. • Apprenticeship Programme offering training, skills and experience in Local Government. The Apprenticeship Plan sets out aims and vision for positively promoting apprenticeships within the Council. • Listening & Learning Group and be Yourself at Work conversations that helps to channel voices and views of the workforce.
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Core Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	
<p>Rationale: Local government needs to ensure that the organisations and governance structures that it oversees have implemented, and can sustain, an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services.</p> <p>Risk management and internal control are important and integral parts of a performance management system and are crucial to the achievement of outcomes. Risk should be considered and addressed as part of all decision making activities.</p> <p>A strong system of financial management is essential for the implementation of policies and the achievement of intended outcomes, as it will enforce financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery and accountability.</p> <p>It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny are in place as a key part of accountable decision making, policy making and review. A positive working culture that accepts, promotes and encourages constructive challenge is critical to successful scrutiny and successful service delivery. Importantly, this culture does not happen automatically, it requires repeated public commitment from those in authority.</p>	<p>To demonstrate its commitment to achieving good governance, North Lincolnshire Council has:</p> <p>Managing risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Council Assurance group which provides strategic oversight of the processes in place to manage risk and to identify and manage council and strategic risk. • Risk management arrangements in place including robust systems of identification, evaluation and control of risks which threaten the council's ability to meet its objectives to deliver services. • A regularly reviewed Risk & Opportunities Protocol. • Responsibilities for managing individual risks are contained within the Risk & Opportunities Protocol. • The publication of the RISK roundup newsletter twice a year. • The Audit Committee is responsible for considering the effectiveness of the authority's risk management arrangements. This includes a review of the risk profile of the organisation and assurances that action is being taken on risk-related issues, including partnerships with other organisations, and approval of the Risk & Opportunities Protocol. <p>Managing performance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A well-established performance management framework, with various levels and frequencies for reporting. • Use data from various sources, such as CFO insights, CIPFA and the LGA to benchmark the services provided by the Council. • Performance monitoring reports that are produced periodically throughout the year. Dates for submitting, publishing and distributing reports are set and adhered to. • The format of decision making reports ensure that all relevant information is considered such as analysis of options, resource implications, outcomes of Integrated Impact Assessment etc.. • Reports and minutes and decisions under member consideration are published on the website and are available in hard copy in a variety of formats on request. • Work Programmes developed involving all members and co-opted members of panels apply the overview and scrutiny disciplines of policy review and development, call-in, added items and monthly review meetings with Cabinet Members and Directors. • Agenda, minutes of scrutiny meetings and any associated reports with recommendations to the Executive are published on the council's website.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In response executive action plans, targets and progress of implementation are produced by services which are reviewed by scrutiny panels. • Overview and Scrutiny training for members is provided initially at induction, also on an annual basis or on specific subjects within scrutiny panel meetings. • Quarterly overview to update the council's Assurance Group on the position against set criteria which helps identify the council is fulfilling its duties as an organisation and employer <p>Robust internal control</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An annual report is produced by Internal Audit which provides an opinion on the council's control environment, and a self-assessment of its arrangements against the public sector internal audit standards and CIPFA's guide to the role of the Head of Internal Audit. • Counter Fraud Strategy which is subject to regular review and is approved by the Audit Committee. An annual fraud report summaries anti-fraud activity in the year. • AGS that provides a high level summary of how the council is meeting the principles of good governance. The AGS is reviewed annually by the Audit Committee and the external auditors alongside our annual financial statements. • An effective internal audit service is resourced and maintained. Internal Audit prepares and delivers a risk based audit plan which is kept under review to reflect changing priorities and emerging risks. • The council is subject to External Audit and inspection regimes which require action plans which are assigned to officers. • The Audit Committee, which is independent of the Executive, oversees the management of governance issues, internal controls, risk management and financial reporting. Its performance is subject to annual self-assessment. • Audit Committee Terms of Reference are reviewed annually and revised to reflect professional bodies' expectations and best practice. • Training is provided to new Audit Committee members on their role and responsibilities. • The Constitution, through its Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules has opportunities for the council's three scrutiny panels to challenge and debate policy and objectives before, during and after decisions are made. <p>Managing data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Information Governance Framework sets out the roles, responsibilities, policies and procedures for managing the council's information assets. This is subject to an annual review.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective information sharing is undertaken in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation / Data Protection Act 2018 and the council's Data Protection & Confidentiality Policy. • The council's Information Security and ICT Security Standards provide guidance on the arrangements that must be in place to ensure personal data is kept protected and secure. • Information governance and security awareness with officers and members through mandatory information governance training, annual information governance campaign, council wide messages and top desk postings. • Data Subjects are informed why their personal information is being collected and how it will be processed (including when shared with other bodies) through the council's overall Privacy Notice published on the website and individual Privacy Statements also published on the website and included on forms, in booklets etc. • Information Sharing Agreements are reviewed on a regular basis, are in place to document the sharing of information using national agreements, the template in the Humber Information Sharing Charter or similar templates in use in other areas of the country. • Data verification and validation processes are integrated within systems and processes. • The council completes external self-assessments when required e.g. NHS Data Security and Protection Toolkit. • A Data Quality Framework has been developed. • A record of processing document has been put together where personal information is processed to explain this processing. • An Information Asset Register has been produced to document systems in place, including where these contain personal data. • Data Protection Impact Assessments are carried out where necessary to access and manage the risk of the new processing of personal data or changing the way personal data is processed • PSN Code of Connection. <p>Strong public financial management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Medium Term Financial Plan makes a realistic assessment of the resource that growth allows and allocates that resource to create a sustainable council capable of delivering council priorities and outcomes. • Underpinned by a set of principles which guide the council in its budget setting decisions • In a 'one council' culture of shared responsibility encourages the sharing of good practice and secures cross-council synergies.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With effective financial management secured through budget planning and control using a system of devolved budget management. • Contract Procedure Rules and Financial Regulations set out the council’s arrangements and ensure that processes continue to operate consistently. • Financial accountability applied through a hierarchy of reporting arrangements up to council level. • Financial procedures documented and available for reference on the council’s on-line Topdesk platform.
<p>Core Principle G: Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability</p>	
<p>Rationale: Accountability is about ensuring that those making decisions and delivering services are answerable for them. Effective accountability is concerned not only with reporting on actions completed, but also ensuring that stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the organisation plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner. Both external and internal audit contribute to effective accountability.</p>	<p>To demonstrate its commitment to achieving good governance, North Lincolnshire Council has:</p> <p>Implementing good practice in transparency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agendas, reports and minutes are published on the council’s website. <p>Implementing good practices in reporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of an Annual Reports summarising achievements in the year published on the council’s website. • Annual Financial Statements are produced to meet legal requirements on timeliness and accuracy; are subject to independent external audit; and published on the council’s website. <p>Assurance and effective accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AGS that sets out the council’s governance framework and the results of the annual review of the effectiveness of the council’s arrangements. The AGS includes areas for improvement. • An effective internal audit service is resourced and maintained. The Service has direct access to members and provides assurance on governance arrangements via an annual report containing an opinion on the council’s internal control arrangements. • An annual report is produced by Internal Audit which includes a self-assessment of its arrangements against the public sector internal audit standards and CIPFA’s guide to the role of the Head of Internal Audit. • External Audit provides an annual opinion on the council’s financial statement and arrangements for securing Value for Money.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outcome to leaning through external review e.g. LGA corporate peer challenge - such reviews are reported to Cabinet.• The Council responds to the findings and recommendations of Internal Audit, External Audit, Scrutiny and Inspection bodies.• The respective roles of officers and associated responsibilities are set out in the Constitution.
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