

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Corporate governance is the system by which this Authority will direct, manage and monitor its functions. The fundamental principles that underpin good governance are openness, inclusivity, accountability, integrity and effectiveness.
- 1.2 The Authority's Code of Corporate governance is based on the guidance set out in the document 'A Keystone for Community Governance' produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and directed towards local authorities.
- 1.3 The corporate framework comprises five key areas:
- community focus
 - service delivery arrangements
 - structures and processes
 - risk management and internal control
 - standards of conduct.
- 1.4 The Authority is responsible for monitoring the compliance with this Code.
- 1.5 The Authority's Monitoring Officer and S151 officer will be responsible for reviewing compliance with this Code on an annual basis, and reporting the findings to the Authority.

2 Community focus

- 2.1 The Authority, through carrying out its general duties and responsibilities, and specifically its duty to 'seek to foster the social and economic well-being of communities within the National Park in furthering national park purposes', and exerting wider influence within the community, will:
- **Work for and with the local community;**
 - **Promote the well-being of the area, in the furtherance of national park purposes, where appropriate, through maintaining effective arrangements:**

- for explicit accountability to stakeholders for our performance, effectiveness in the delivery of services and the sustainable use of resources;
- that demonstrate integrity and openness in our dealings in building effective relationships with other public agencies and the private and voluntary sectors;
- that demonstrate inclusivity by communicating and engaging with all sections of the community to encourage active participation.

2.2 To ensure these principles are complied with, the Authority will:

- publish each year its **annual financial accounts** in accordance with the statutory requirements; this report will confirm the Authority's compliance with relevant professional standards and Code of Practice for Corporate Governance;
- publish by the 30 June each year, a **Best Value Performance Plan**, to be known as a 'Corporate Plan' which will present an objective and understandable account and assessment of its activities and achievements and its financial position and performance;
- review and publish a **National Park Management Plan** at no longer than 5 year intervals;
- engage in a professional relationship with External Auditors to allow independent scrutiny of its financial and operational processes;
- establish appropriate relationships and arrangements with the Forestry Commission, the Verderers, Natural England, local authorities, town and parish councils, voluntary groups, businesses and other local interest groups to ensure they are able to engage with and contribute to the work of the Authority;
- adopt proper arrangements to enable complaints against any aspect of the Authority's activities to be easily made and properly addressed.

3 Service delivery arrangements

- 3.1 The Authority through ensuring that continuous improvement is sought, agreed policies are implemented and decisions are carried out, will:

- **Discharge its accountability for service delivery at a local level;**
- **Ensure effectiveness through setting targets and measuring performance;**
- **Demonstrate integrity, in dealings with service users, and in developing partnerships to ensure the optimum provision of services;**
- **Ensure policies and decisions are flexible and can be adapted to accommodate change and meet user wishes where appropriate.**

3.2 To ensure these principles are complied with the Authority will:

- ensure that it has a management structure which delivers effective, efficient and economic services;
- continually assess and adopt good practices in the delivery of services;
- maximise the resources available and allocate them according to priorities;
- adopt comprehensive performance plans and monitor and report performance in the delivery of services against the agreed standards and targets;
- provide good and relevant management information to measure performance;
- foster effective relationships with other public sector agencies, and the private and voluntary sectors.

4 Structures and processes

4.1 The Authority, through establishing effective governance structures and processes for decision-making and the exercise of authority within the organisation will:

- **Define the roles and responsibilities of members and officers to ensure clarity and accountability of its business;**
- **Ensure that there is proper scrutiny and review of all aspects of its performance and effectiveness;**
- **Demonstrate integrity by ensuring a proper balance of power and authority;**

- **Document clearly and review such structures and processes and ensure that they are available, communicated and understood, and are capable of being adapted to accommodate change.**

4.2 To ensure these principles are complied with, the Authority will:

- ensure there are proper protocols in place which clearly define the roles and responsibilities of and relationships between members and officers;
- ensure there is corporate ownership of policy development and implementation by ensuring that the Authority provides effective strategic leadership and discharges its overall responsibilities;
- meet on a regular basis, with meetings open to the public except where reasons of confidentiality require the meeting to be closed;
- develop and maintain a scheme of delegation that reserves appropriate responsibilities to the members and also provides the powers necessary to officers to conduct routine business;
- put formal arrangements in place which govern the conduct of the Authority's business, ensuring that all activities are legal and comply with financial regulations, are fully documented and appropriately authorised;
- ensure that members are properly trained for their roles and have access to relevant information, advice and resources as necessary for them to carry out their role effectively;
- ensure that an officer is made responsible for ensuring that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, for keeping proper financial records and accounts and for maintaining an effective system of internal financial control;
- ensure that a Director is made responsible for all aspects of operational management;
- ensure that an officer is designated as the Monitoring Officer and that the responsibilities of the post are properly defined.

5 Risk management and internal control

- 5.1 The Authority has established a systematic strategy, framework and processes for managing risk that includes:

- **Robust systems for identifying, profiling, controlling and monitoring all significant strategic and operational risks;**
- **Making public statements to stakeholders on its risk management strategy, framework and processes to demonstrate accountability;**
- **Mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing effectiveness against agreed standards and targets and the operation of controls in practice;**
- **Ensuring that risk management and control processes are monitored and complied with and reviewed regularly.**

5.2 To ensure these principles are adhered to the Authority will:

- maintain effective and robust systems for identifying and evaluating all significant risks, including systems of internal control;
- ensure compliance with all statutes, regulations and relevant statements of best practice to provide assurance that public funds are properly safeguarded and are used economically, efficiently and effectively, and in accordance with agreed policies;
- maintain an internal audit function, and ensure that its staff are competent to perform their role;
- ensure that risk management systems, including systems of internal control and internal audit, are reviewed as part of the performance management system;
- include in the annual accounts, an objective and balanced assessment and statement of the Authority's risk management and internal control mechanisms and their effectiveness in practice.

6 Standards of conduct

6.1 The reputation of the Authority, in terms of good corporate governance, depends upon openness, integrity and accountability of its individual members and officers. To ensure these standards of conduct are adopted the Authority will ensure that its members and officers, as appropriate:

- **Exercise leadership by conducting themselves as role models for others within the Authority;**

- **Define the standards of personal behaviour that are expected from members and staff and all those involved in service delivery, and put in place arrangements to ensure:**
 - accountability through establishing systems for investigating breaches and disciplinary problems and taking action where appropriate, including arrangements for redress;
 - compliance with these systems are monitored;
 - integrity is demonstrated by applying objectivity and impartiality in all relationships;
 - standards are documented and clearly understood, and reviewed on a regular basis.

6.2 To ensure these principles are adhered to, the Authority will have in place:

- formal codes of conduct which define the standards of personal behaviour which members, staff and agents of the Authority are required to adopt;
- appropriate processes and systems to ensure all codes of conduct are complied with;
- operational procedures that reinforce compliance with appropriate ethical standards;
- Codes of Conduct, Standing Orders as to Contracts and Financial Regulations, to ensure that members and officers are not prejudiced, biased or subject to conflicts of interest, in their dealings on behalf of the Authority;
- arrangements for reporting concerns at work (whistle blowing) are accessible to all staff and contractors.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

COMMUNITY FOCUS	SERVICE DELIVERY	STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES	RISK MANAGEMENT AND INTERNAL CONTROL	STANDARDS OF CONDUCT
National Park Management Plan	National Park Performance Assessment	Protocol on Member/Officer relations	Internal Audit	Standing Orders as to Meetings
Corporate Plan	IIP Accreditation	Member induction training and development programme	Financial Regulations	Model Code of Conduct governing Standards expected of Members
Web Site	Complaints Officer/procedure	Member Allowance Scheme	Standing Orders as to Contracts	Local Protocol for Members/Officers dealing with Planning Matters
Newsletter and news bulletins	Budgetary Control Reports	Job descriptions for Officers	IT Security Policy for Officers and Members	Protocol on Member/Officer relations
Information Centre	Asset management	Protocols on the role of the Monitoring and S151 Officers	Business continuity/ Disaster Recovery plans Data Protection and Freedom of Information policies and procedures	Whistle-blowing policy
Financial Strategy	Sponsorship of external voluntary bodies	Published schedules of all Authority meetings	Standards Committee	Procedure for alleged Members' breach of Code of Conduct
Annual Statement of Accounts	Partnership agreements	Formal agendas and minutes of all public meetings	Finance/Resources Committee	Procedures for alleged Members' breach of local protocols
District Audit Reports and annual Management Letter	Development Control Charter	Conditions of Employment	Schemes of Delegation	
Service standards		Employee Handbook	Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures	
		Staff Performance Management and Development Systems	Training Plans	
				District Audit Reports and annual Management Letter