

Thame Town Council

Code of Corporate Governance

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Thame Town Council is committed to the principles of good corporate governance and wishes to confirm its ongoing commitment and intentions through the development, adoption and continued maintenance of a Code of Corporate Governance.
- 1.2 This document sets out and describes the Council's commitment to corporate governance. It identifies the arrangements that have been made, and indeed will continue to be made, to ensure its effective implementation and application in all aspects of the Council's work.

2. Corporate Governance

- 2.1 For the purpose of this Code, Thame has accepted the definition of Corporate Governance as follows:-

“Corporate governance is the system by which local authorities direct and control their functions and relate to their communities”.

The Council recognises that effective local government relies upon establishing and maintaining the confidence of the public in both the elected Members and Officers of the Council. It further recognises that the setting of high standards of self governance provides a clear and demonstrable lead to both our existing and potential partners, and therefore provides the basis of effective community governance.

3. The Principles

- 3.1 The Council positively recognises and accepts the following underlying principles of good governance:-
- Openness and Inclusivity
 - Integrity
 - Accountability
 - Transparency
- 3.2 In order to comply with these principles, it must undertake to ensure that systems and processes are continually monitored and reviewed and are kept up to date.
- 3.3 The need for effective leadership is acknowledged as providing the keystone to corporate governance, and as such the principles can only be achieved if effective leadership is demonstrated through;
- Providing a vision for the community and leading by example in decision making and other processes and actions.
 - Members and Officers conducting themselves in accordance with high standards of conduct.

4. The Vision

4.1 The Council is determined to continuously improve the services it delivers and to meet the wider needs and aspirations of the community. It has a duty to promote and improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the town and will be responsive to the priorities of the community.

4.2 The core values in relation to the Council in pursuing its vision are;

Services

It will deliver services:

- (i) Of the highest quality
- (ii) With the legitimacy of the knowledge through consultation of customers' and residents' needs
- (iii) Targeted wherever possible to meet individual or specific requirements
- (iv) In a fair, consistent and non-discriminatory manner, against a backdrop of equal opportunity
- (v) In a timely and responsive way
- (vi) From an open caring, customer and resident focused environment committed to a regime of continuous improvement
- (vii) Within managed capacity and resources
- (viii) At the most affordable prices possible.

Test of Competency

The Council will measure competency by:

- (i) Timely and regular reviews of services
- (ii) Carrying out regular customer consultation and satisfaction surveys
- (iii) Regularly reviewing performance and management of progress against targets and achievements
- (iv) Regularly monitoring complaints as a measure of user satisfaction.

Functions and Activities

The Council recognises:

- (i) The legitimacy and integrity of the Council's function and activities is derived from understanding the needs of the Town, socially, economically and environmentally as well as the needs, requirements and aspirations of its residents, customers and service users

- (ii) That consultation, participation and engagement in partnership is at the heart of understanding area and community needs and forms the foundation for the direction and focus of the Council's functions and activities
- (iii) That knowing what to do, and having systems in place to deliver is the key to public service delivery success
- (iv) The importance of having defined roles and responsibilities of Members and Officers and appropriate structures which make effective use of scarce resources, allows challenge and change and promotes a strong and sustainable partnership between Members and Officers
- (v) That the principles of strong and effective governance and community leadership will deliver the measurable benefits for the areas and its residents.

5. Monitoring

5.1 The Council recognises the following dimensions to its corporate activities, accepting that these are not mutually exclusive;

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

5.2 Every year, the Council is required to publicly report on its financial position, and publish an Annual Return.

5.3 An external opinion as to the accuracy and integrity of the financial statements and the effectiveness of the Council's internal control systems will be made by the External Auditor.

5.4 The Council will maintain a continuous Internal Audit of internal control processes to ensure that they are effectively reviewed and tested on a systematic basis.

6. Commitment

6.1 The principles of Corporate Governance will be applied to all dimensions of the Council's corporate activities, and in particular;

Community Focus

The Council will continue to;

- Work for and with the community of Thame
- Exercise leadership in the community, where appropriate.
- Undertake an ambassadorial role to promote the wellbeing of the Town where appropriate.
- Establish clear channels of communication with all sections of the community.
- Facilitate and enable younger people to have a greater involvement in public life
- Publicise its performance through its website, newsletter and Annual Report

Service Delivery Arrangements

The Council will continue to;

- Ensure that continuous improvement is sought
- Ensure that agreed policies are implemented
- Monitor and report performance against established standards and targets.
- Foster effective relationships and partnerships with the public and private sectors.

Structures and Processes

The Council will continue to;

- Maintain effective legitimate and managerial structures and processes to govern decision making and exercise authority within the organisation.
- Maintain clearly documented protocols and policies governing relationships between Members and Officers.

Risk Management and Internal Control

The Council will continue to;

- Establish and maintain a systematic strategy and process for managing risk
- Ensure that internal control processes are effectively tested.
- Ensure that changes are accommodated and systems are up to date.

Standards of Conduct

The Council's Members and Senior Officers will continue to;

- Exercise leadership by conducting themselves as role models for others within the authority to follow.
- Define the standards of personal behaviour that are expected from Members and staff and all those involved in service delivery.
- Put in place and maintain arrangements to monitor and ensure compliance.

Openness and Reporting

The Council will;

- a) Ensure that the Code of Corporate Governance is made available to all Members and Officers, and is made publicly available through the website.
- b) Designate the Town Clerk as the Officer responsible for overseeing, implementing, monitoring and reviewing the operation of the Code in practice.
- c) Report annually on compliance with the Code and any changes that may be necessary to maintain it and ensure its effectiveness in practice. This will include any recommendations made by recognised external bodies such as the External Auditor.

- d) Develop an Action Plan to identify and review areas of the Code where further work is required, and make the necessary arrangements to ensure it is undertaken.
- e) Provide an annual statement on how the Council is complying with the Code, including how it has maintained the effectiveness of its Corporate Governance arrangements during the year, and any planned changes for the forthcoming year.

7. Conclusion

Thame Town Council is fully committed to the principles of Corporate Governance, and through the measures outlined within this Code will ensure that adequate arrangements are made with regard to its continued implementation, monitoring and review.