
REPORT TO:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 11
DATE OF MEETING:	21ST JULY 2009	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	HEAD OF LEGAL & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	ANDREA McCASKIE (EXT. 5831)	DOC:U:\JAYNE\Commtee\COMM RE\Review Assess May 09.doc
SUBJECT:	LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE – REVIEW OF SELF ASSESSMENT	REF: AGM/JB

1.0 Recommendation

- 1.1 That the Committee review and report to Council on progress in achieving the action points set out in the Self Assessment of performance under the Local Code of Corporate Governance.

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to:
- (1) outline the background and process which has led to the submission of the appended Review of Self Assessment document and Action Plan;
 - (2) invite the Committee to consider the document and report to Full Council on progress.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 A revised Local Code of Corporate Governance was adopted by the Council on 3rd July 2008, at which time it was reported that a Self Assessment audit had been carried out by officers to provide evidence of how the Council had fulfilled or intended to fulfil its commitment to corporate governance.
- 3.2 In approving the Code, Full Council resolved that the Standards Committee should receive half yearly reports on progress in relation to compliance with the six core principles on which the Code is based. This was to ensure that the Standards Committee had a pivotal role in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct throughout the Authority.

What is corporate governance ?

- 3.3 Corporate Governance in local government is the system by which a Council directs and controls its functions and relates to its community. Good Corporate Governance is essential in demonstrating there is credibility and confidence in the public services we provide. Sound arrangements are founded upon openness, integrity and accountability, together with the over-arching concept of leadership.

The purpose of a Local Code of Governance

3.4 The Local Code of Governance is a single document that aims:

- to serve as a management tool for reviewing and monitoring existing Corporate Governance arrangements
- to ensure that evidence about our governance arrangements, e.g. for “Use of Resources” assessment, and Annual Governance Statement etc. is available
- to help develop plans for improving arrangements for Corporate Governance

Our commitment to Corporate Governance

3.5 South Derbyshire District Council is committed to having sound Corporate Governance arrangements. The development and maintenance of a Local Code of Corporate Governance will assist in achieving this aim.

3.6 The Code assists in demonstrating good governance of the Council’s affairs and that the stewardship of the resources at its disposal are effective.

3.7 The Code of governance will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains up to date.

What our governance arrangements are measured against

3.8 Further CIPFA/SOLACE guidance entitled “*Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*” has recently been issued and the Council has made use of the six core and supporting principles to assess our governance arrangements.

3.9 The six core principles are:

1. Focusing on the purpose of the Council 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 Council 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.

3.10 In May 2008, the corporate group of senior officers consisting of the Director of Corporate Services, Head of Legal & Democratic Services, Head of Financial Services, Head of Organisational Development and the Corporate Performance and Policy Officer met and will continue to do so on a six-monthly cycle to assess our governance arrangements.

- 3.11 The group carried out an assessment against the CIPFA/SOLACE checklist by assessing the documents/processes and other means used to measure compliance with the six supporting principles.
- 3.12 The way in which the Officers have measured compliance with the supporting principles is with a score between 0 and 10, as set out in the table below. Although the scores awarded are judgemental, they are determined through robust discussion by the corporate group. In addition, any comments/plans for improvement are noted for subsequent review, compliance with which will result in at least one additional point being added to the self assessment score.

Score	Level of compliance with supporting principle
1 – 6	Unacceptable
7	Partial
8	Substantial
9	Practically
10	Fully

- 3.13 It was agreed that an Action Plan, identifying those areas where we had scored 7 or below, would be created with a view to addressing those issues over the next twelve months. A copy of the Action Plan, showing the progress made to date is attached at **Annexe ‘A’**
- 3.14 The self assessment provides the evidence of how the Council has fulfilled, or intends to fulfil its commitment to high standards of corporate governance, and establishes the Council’s baseline position as regards compliance with the six principles. On 19th May 2009, Officers again met to review the assessment they undertook on 6th November 2008. A report showing the progress that has been made in the last six months, with a recalculation of the score where justified, is attached at **Annexe ‘B’**.
- 3.15 One of the issues raised by Members at their last meeting was that they wanted an external review of the Authority’s corporate governance arrangements. The Council asked Janie Barrett of SOLACE Enterprises, who sat on the joint working party that produced both versions of the CIPFA/SOLACE Code of Corporate Governance guidance, to undertake such a review in March 2009.
- 3.16 The review confirmed that the Council’s local Code complies in full with best practice, as set out in the national framework and guidance for the production of the Code and its contents, identifying individuals and committees to be responsible for monitoring and reviewing the systems, process and documentation referred to in the Code, with evidence to show that this is taking place.
- 3.17 The review goes on to state that the Council has identified those areas where it wishes to improve and how these should be addressed.

3.18 The conclusion of the review was that the next stage is for the Council to consider how it can go beyond policies and processes and embed good corporate governance into all Council activity. This was an area looked at by the senior officer group on 19th May who believe that this can be achieved by developing examples of good practice and utilising the Comprehensive Area Assessment to these ends. Current examples of good practice include:

- introduced a locally based system for the assessment, referral, investigation and hearing of complaints of alleged Member misconduct
- reviewed the Officer Scheme of Delegation
- adopted a revised local Code of Corporate Governance in accordance with the CIPFA/SOLACE framework, which is reviewed six monthly
- reviewed and updated the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act policy, procedure, guidance and training, in line with best practice
- reviewed and updated the Protocol for the Use of Information Technology by Members of South Derbyshire District Council, in line with changes introduced by Government Connect
- adopted Member role profiles and personal development plans
- approved a Monitoring Officer Protocol
- developed a robust Action Plan to take us to Level 3 of the Equality Standard that included undertaking Equality Impact Risk Assessments
- published an Annual Report
- reviewed the Corporate Communications function
- introduction of a new Performance Management system
- creation and adoption of a new Corporate Plan 2009/14

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 None directly arising from the report.

5.0 Corporate Implications

5.1 The Code overarches all the Council's activities and compliance with it will necessarily take into account all the Council's policies and strategies in relation to these issues.

5.2 The self assessment process is an important element in ensuring that the Council keeps under review its Local Code of Corporate Governance, in order to continue to maintain the six core principles.

6.0 Community Implications

- 6.1 A key aim of the authority is community leadership, which is concerned with the style and manner in which the Council operates and how we relate to local people and partners. One important aspect included in this aim is our policies and arrangements for corporate governance.

7.0 Background Papers

- Local Code of Corporate Governance – hyperlink to Constitution
- CIPFA/SOLACE publication “*Delivery Good Governance in Local Government*”.