

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL
JOINT MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEES
1st April 2011

Report of: Strategic Director (Corporate Services)

Report Title: Local Code of Corporate Governance

Ward: Citywide

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RECOMMENDATION

The Audit and Standards Committees note and comment on the revised local Code of Corporate Governance and note that with the exception of minor cosmetic changes, there are only minimal changes proposed to the Code content.

SUMMARY

This report details the development and monitoring of the local Code of Corporate Governance, in line with Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (CIPFA/SOLACE) Framework: Delivering Good Governance in Local Government.

The significant issues in the report are:

- best practice requirements for development of a local Code of Corporate Governance (paragraph 1.2)
- the six core principles of good governance as set out by CIPFA/SOLACE (paragraph 1.3)
- the local Code (Appendix 1)

Policy

The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2006 include a statutory requirement to prepare a statement on internal control in accordance with "proper practice". With effect from 2007/08 "proper practice" is defined by the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework as an Annual Governance Statement (AGS). Additionally, the Framework promotes the benefits of developing a local Code of Corporate Governance to facilitate completion of the AGS.

Consultation:

Internal: Directorate officers.

External: None necessary

1. The Governance Framework

- 1.1 Good governance for local authorities means ensuring they are doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It comprises the systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which local government bodies are directed and controlled and through which they account to, engage with and, where appropriate, lead their communities.
- 1.2 CIPFA/SOLACE provide a framework for developing and maintaining a local Code of Corporate Governance and for discharging accountability for the proper conduct of public business, to support the publication of an AGS. It defines the principles that should underpin governance, and suggests best practice as:
- reviewing the Council's **existing governance arrangements** against the Framework
 - developing and maintaining a **local Code of Corporate Governance**, including arrangements for ensuring its ongoing application and effectiveness. (A discretionary requirement but considered best practice)
 - preparing **annually, a Governance Statement** to report publicly on the extent to which the Council complies with its local code, including how the effectiveness of these arrangements during the year have been monitored, and on any planned changes in the coming period. (This is a statutory requirement under the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2006).
- 1.3 The Framework outlines six core principles of good governance and translates each one into a range of specific requirements that should be reflected in the local code. The six core principles are:
- Focussing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.
 - Members and Officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.
 - Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.

- Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk.
- Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective.
- Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

1.4 The Framework suggests four key roles which Governance arrangements should support:

- to engage in effective partnerships and provide leadership for and with the community
- to ensure the delivery of high quality local services whether directly or in partnership
- to perform a stewardship role which protects the interests of local people and makes the best use of resources
- to develop citizenship and local democracy

1.5 The Framework also requires a review, at least annually, of the Council's governance arrangements to ensure:

- continuing compliance with best practice as set out in the framework;
- arrangements are adequate and operating effectively in practice;
- where reviews of the governance arrangements have revealed gaps, action is planned that will ensure effective governance in future.

1.6 The Framework provides a new and strong focus on joint/group working and partnership governance arrangements.

2. The Annual Governance Statement

2.1 The AGS is the formal statement that recognises, records and publishes an authority's governance arrangements. It is a statement that is required to be published with the Council's financial statements to ensure compliance with the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2006. These Regulations require authorities to "conduct a review at least once in a year of the effectiveness of its system of internal control" and to prepare a statement on internal control in accordance with "proper practice". With effect from 2007/08, proper practice is defined as the requirement for an AGS, as set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework.

2.2 The process of preparing the AGS should itself add value to the corporate governance and internal control framework of the Council, and it should be

submitted to the Authority for consideration. This was achieved in the Audit Committee's Annual Report to Council.

- 2.3 The Framework requires that the AGS is owned and approved at a corporate level and should be confirmed as accurate and complete and signed by the most senior officer and most senior Member. Additionally, it recommends the review and approval of the statement by a Member group separately from the accounts to help ensure its robustness and its corporate standing. This responsibility is discharged by the Audit Committee.

3. Local Code of Corporate Governance

- 3.1 To achieve best practice, the Council should be able to demonstrate that it is complying with the core and supporting principles contained in the Framework and should therefore develop a local Code of Corporate Governance appropriate to its own circumstances. The development of such a Code, consistent with the principles and requirements of the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework, will help to ensure that the Council fulfils its responsibilities to ensure it has proper arrangements in place for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.
- 3.2 The Framework commends the development of a governance code as best practice but leaves it as an optional/discretionary requirement for local determination.
- 3.3 Work took place on the drafting of a local Code of Corporate Governance in 2008/09 and the Code was formally adopted by Full Council in January 2009. It sets out the six core principles contained in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework, as set out in paragraph 1.3 above, together with relevant sub-principles, and describes the actions, processes and documentation through which the Council meets the expected standards of governance.
- 3.4 It is currently the Standards Board of England's expectation that the Standards Committee maintain an involvement in the governance arrangements of the Council. In accordance with this requirement the Standards Committee continue to meet jointly with the Audit Committee to consider amendments to the local Code as well as potential items for the AGS. However, with the proposed abolition of the Standards Board for England, as a result of the Localism Bill, and with it the statutory requirement for Local Authorities to have a Standards Committee, it is currently not clear how the Council will proceed in the next financial year. As such, the continuation of the joint meeting will also need consideration.
- 3.5 Work has been undertaken by Internal Audit to ensure that the current Code is a true and fair presentation of the Council's commitment to good governance. The review included:
- a reviewed against information provided by Key Officers as part of the AGS process;

- a review of the information accessible to the citizens of Bristol through the Bristol City Council website.
- A review of the plans and processes in place to ensure that the governance framework within the Council is maintained.

3.6 The provision of a local Code of Corporate Governance has facilitated the shortening of the AGS itself, leading to a more concise a much improved user-friendly document, which in turn informs the citizens of Bristol about the behaviour of their council and empowers them to become more involved with their city.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1 None necessary

5. Risk Assessment

5.1 The Council must provide an Annual Governance Statement for inclusion with its Statement of Accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Amendments) Regulations 2006.

5.2 There has been a recent consultation on the Accounting & Audit Regulations with no fundamental changes proposed, apart from a slight relaxation on the timetable for consideration of the Statement of Accounts. The changes will be addressed once the new Regulations have been issued.

5.3 Development and monitoring of a local Code of Corporate Governance was cited as best practice and failure to maintain such a Code may lead to a loss of transparency in how the Council operates, or negative comments from external inspectors.

6. Equalities Impact Assessment

6.1 None necessary for this report, although elements of the six core principles reflect on equalities issues.

7. Legal and Resource Implications

7.1 Legal - none sought

7.2 Resource - none arising from this report

Appendices

Appendix 1 local Code of Corporate Governance

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Background Papers

- CIPFA/SOLACE - Delivering good governance in Local Government: Framework
- CIPFA/SOLACE - Delivering good governance in Local Government: Guidance note for English authorities
- CIPFA Financial Advisory Network: The Annual Governance Statement



Bristol City Council
DRAFT
Local Code of
Corporate Governance

April 2011 ~~August 2010~~



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Bristol City Council

Local Code of Corporate Governance

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Version	Reviewed By:	Review Date
1	Full Council	13 th January 2009
2	Audit and Standards Committees	9 th April 2010
3	<u>Audit and Standards Committees</u>	<u>1st April 2011</u>

1. What is Corporate Governance?

1.1 The Corporate Governance framework is the systems and processes, culture and values by which an organisation is directed and controlled. For local authorities this includes how a council relates to the community it serves.

1.2 Good Corporate Governance requires the authority to be open, transparent, effective, inclusive of all sectors of the community, accountable to the public it serves and to demonstrate integrity.

1.3 This Code is a public statement of the ways in which the Council will achieve good corporate governance.

1.4 The Code is based around six principles which were identified in the joint publication by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE). Their published guidance 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government' identified the following as the essential criteria for the provision of good governance.

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.

1.5 By publishing a Code of Corporate Governance, the Council is demonstrating its commitment to ensuring the high quality of its public services.

By promoting the principles of openness, accountability, integrity and effective governance, the Council encourages public trust.

The Code provides the public with greater awareness of the

Council's arrangements and equips them with the knowledge to question the Council's plans and actions, thereby becoming more involved in the running of their city.

2. The Principles of Corporate Governance

2.1 Focusing on the purpose of the Council and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision of the local area.

2.1.1 The Council will communicate its purpose and vision and its intended outcomes for the citizens and service users by:

- ➔ Publishing a three year Corporate Plan, which details the vision and priorities the Council has for the city of Bristol and its citizens.
- ➔ Maintaining a Communications Strategy.
- ➔ Playing a leading role in the Bristol Partnership, and its Partnership Boards, and ~~delivering a sustainable Community Strategy – Bristol One City Together and Local Area Agreement for Bristol~~working together with strategic partners and citizens to promote Bristol as one of the top twenty cities in Europe with the Bristol 20:20 plan.
- ➔ Publishing ~~three year~~annual Service Delivery Plans for all ~~service-units~~divisions, detailing the directorate priorities and service improvements and reflecting Corporate Plan priorities. ~~These plans are updated annually.~~
- ➔ Publishing an Annual ~~Performance Plan~~Review Report and publishing performance against which includes three year targets for national and key local performance indicators, including targets for the following year, where appropriate, and regularly reporting on progress.
- ➔ Distributing the "Our City" and other publications to all homes across Bristol, clearly communicating the vision and priorities.
- ➔ Being a leading member of the West of England Partnership, working with the other Authorities in the sub-region with shared vision and priorities for the sub-region.
- ➔ Working with the four West of England Authorities to establish a Local Enterprise Partnership with the business community.
- ➔ ~~Working together with strategic partners and citizens to promote Bristol as one of the top twenty cities in Europe with the Bristol 20:20 plan.~~

2.1.2 The Council will ensure that users receive a high quality of service whether provided directly, or in partnership, or by commissioning by:

- ➔ Maintaining a Citizen's Panel, and conducting service user satisfaction surveys, publishing the results appropriately.
- ➔ Providing a complaints/comments procedure (Fair Comment), and utilising the resulting information to identify areas where service quality is not satisfactory in order to take action to bring about an improvement.
- ➔ Maintaining joint Commissioning Arrangements with the National Health Service.

- ➔ Taking action upon weaknesses identified as a result of external reviews, for example External Auditor, Ofsted, CSCI etc.
- ➔ Providing integrated customer Access to Bristol, giving the citizens of Bristol easier access to their Council and the services it provides.
- ➔ Actively engaging staff in customer focus and providing appropriate training and development opportunities.

2.1.3 The Council will ensure it makes the best use of resources and that the council tax payers and service users receive excellent value for money by:

- ➔ Implementing a Value for Money Strategy.
- ➔ Producing an annual Environmental Statement.
- ➔ Publishing a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), setting out spending plans for the next 3 years on a rolling basis.
- ➔ Progressing a Transformation Programme which has already resulted in efficiency savings and will continue to do so thereby increase the Value for Money received by the citizens of Bristol.
- ➔ Benchmarking with other Local Authorities, eg the Core Cities, neighbouring authorities and comparative groups.
- ➔ Public scrutiny of the MTFP and budget proposals.
- ➔ Adopting best practice in commissioning and procurement
- ➔ Maximising the economy and well being of Bristol citizens within global conditions.

2.2 Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.

2.2.1 The Council will ensure that there is effective leadership with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for executive, non-executive and scrutiny functions by:

- ➔ Maintaining a Constitution which sets out the roles and responsibilities of both Members and officers, including a Scheme of Delegation which is updated annually.
- ➔ Appointing committees to discharge the Council's regulatory and scrutiny responsibilities.
- ➔ Providing all Committees with a clear terms of reference and work programme to set out their roles and responsibilities.
- ➔ Appointing a Chief Executive (and Head of Paid Service) and Strategic Leadership Team, and ensuring all staff have clear conditions of employment and job descriptions which set out their roles and responsibilities.
- ➔ Appointing a Monitoring Officer (the Head of Legal Services), who carries overall responsibility for legal compliance, working closely with other officers to advise on requirements.
- ➔ Providing opportunities for Cabinet and Scrutiny members to come together both formally and informally, to ensure the Council's business is conducted appropriately.

2.2.2 The Council will ensure that a constructive working relationship exists

between Council Members and officers and the responsibilities of said Members and officers are carried out to a high standard by:

- ➔ Maintaining a Members/Officers protocol within the Constitution which describes and regulates the way in which Members and Officers should interact to work effectively together.
- ➔ Ensuring Directorate schemes of delegations are in place and reviewed on a regular basis, thereby providing clear direction to officers of the scope of their responsibilities.
- ➔ Maintaining a Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) made up of the Chief Executive, ~~Deputy Chief Executive~~ and Strategic Directors that meets every week to discuss matters which are of strategic and operational importance to the Council.
- ➔ Regular meetings between the Cabinet and the Strategic Leadership Team, and engagement of senior managers with the scrutiny function.
- ➔ The Service Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) and the Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer), who are not member of SLT having an open invitation to attend when necessary and receiving all papers.
- ➔ Maintaining a performance management system for all staff including senior officers.
- ➔ Adopting Codes of Conduct for Members and officers, to which all must adhere.
- ➔ Maintaining a Standards Committee with responsibility for overseeing the behaviour of Members.
- ➔ Maintaining a Scrutiny Function, which provide overview and scrutiny of all Council activities and operates a call in facility.
- ➔ Maintaining an Audit Committee with the responsibility for overseeing the governance arrangements within the Council.
- ➔ Providing Members with adequate training and development opportunities in order for them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.
- ➔ Providing fortnightly Executive Member briefings.

2.2.3 The Council will ensure that its relationships with its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other by:

- ➔ Adopting a Policy for partnership working to ensure that there are clear governance arrangements and accountabilities when the Council is working with partners.
- ➔ Being the accountable body and supporting a partnership agreement for all the partnerships the Council is involved with, including the Bristol Partnership, detailing the vision, objectives, the partners' roles and a resolution protocol for any disputes.
- ➔ Adopting good governance principles for key partnerships
- ➔ Providing links to external Strategic partnerships via the Bristol website.

2.3 Promoting the Council's values and upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.

2.3.1 The Council strives to ensure its Members and officers exercise leadership by behaving in a way that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective

governance by:

- ➔ Ensuring adherence to Codes of Conduct which includes a requirement for declarations of interest to be completed by all Members annually, by all new staff, and biennially by staff working in sensitive areas or paid above a certain grade.
- ➔
- ➔ Providing details of the standards of conduct required of Members within the Council's Constitution.
- ➔ Monitoring the conduct of Members through a Standards Committee, which is also responsible for investigating allegations of misconduct by Members.

2.3.2 The Council will ensure its values are put into practice and are effective by:

- ➔ Having a clear decision-making protocol contained within the Constitution.
- ➔ Providing an Anti-fraud and Corruption policy for all Members and staff, with regular reminders of its existence issued by way of payslip notices and through newsletters.
- ➔ Having clear and concise Financial and Procurement Regulations in place which are regularly updated.
- ➔ Maintaining a Whistleblowing Policy which is readily available to both Members and staff.
- ➔ Upholding an Equalities policy.
- ➔ Maintaining clear performance management arrangements for officers.

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

2.4.1 The Council will be rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken by:

- ➔ The Full Council setting the policy and the budget framework. Within this framework, all key decisions are made by Cabinet.
- ➔ The decision-making process being scrutinised by a scrutiny function which also undertakes pre-decision and policy development work.
~~Publishing the decisions made by Directors via the Members Information Service.~~
- ➔ Providing access to meetings, including web casts of Council meetings.
- ➔ The provision of a Public Forum agenda item at all Committee meetings, giving Members the opportunity to raise issues of public interest.
- ➔ A consultation process with the provision for the citizens of Bristol to have their say through e-consultation which is available on the Council website.
- ➔ Publishing the Leader's Forward Plan on the Bristol website and elsewhere, giving Bristol citizens access to details of forthcoming key decisions.
- ➔ Involving our community in decision making is part of the Bristol Performs agenda which sets out how we can work together successfully to meet the challenges ahead.

2.4.2 The Council will ensure good quality information, advice and support is provided to ensure that services are delivered effectively and are what the community wants/needs by:

- ➔ All key decisions made by Cabinet being on the basis of written reports, including assessments of the legal and financial implications, policy, equalities and environmental impact assessments, and consideration of the risks involved and how these will be managed.
- ➔ Scrutiny having the power to call a decision if they feel it is made without proper consideration of accurate and relevant information.
- ➔ Publishing performance information on a regular basis.
- ➔ Making use of national comparative data and participating in benchmarking with other Core Cities, neighbouring authorities and other comparative groups.
- ➔ Making effective use of management information to inform where improvement in quality is required.
- ➔ Making provision for Members and public questions at full Council meetings.
- ➔ Providing numerous avenues for public participation, including Citizens Panel, Tenants Groups, surveys including Quality of Life, Libraries, young people and public forums.
- ➔ Providing Bristol citizens with advice to maximise their economic growth, including links to guidance and support networks through the BCC website.

2.4.3 The Council will ensure that an effective risk management system is in place by:

- ➔ Adopting a Risk Management Policy Statement, and striving to embed Risk Management within the Council.
- ➔ Maintaining a Corporate Risk Register which is reviewed by senior officers and Members on a regular basis to endorse the content and validate the extent to which the risks included are being effectively managed.
- ➔ Requiring each directorate within the Council to maintain a Directorate Risk Register and to nominate a Risk Management "champion" to maintain their directorate register and risk management processes.
- ➔ Supporting a Corporate Risk Management Group which includes the relevant Executive Member and is chaired by the Strategic Director ([Corporate Services Resources](#)), who meet to identify best practice in respect of risk management and provides opportunities for sharing learning across departments.
- ➔ Requiring risk in decision making, projects and service delivery planning to be properly identified, evaluated and managed.
- ➔ The Audit Committee overseeing the effectiveness of risk management arrangements and providing assurance to the Council in this respect in their annual report.
- ➔ Providing risk management training to Members and offices where

appropriate.

- ➔ Providing Risk Management guidance on the Council's intranet, including guidance on risk within partnerships.

2.4.4 The Council will strive to ensure that Members are utilising their legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in their area by:

- ➔ Clearly documenting the roles and responsibilities of Members and the scope of their activities within the Constitution.
- ➔ Appointing a Monitoring Officer, who's responsibilities include the maintenance of the Constitution and the guidance to Members contained therein.
- ➔ Regularly reviewing Ombudsman and external audit reports to identify areas where improvements should be made.
- ➔ Providing Members and directorates with Legal briefings on changes in legislation and having legal advice available when required.
- ➔ Having an appeals/complaints systems which is available to the citizens of Bristol, details of which can be accessed through the Council website and other methods.

2.5 **Developing the capacity and capability of Members and officers to be effective.**

2.5.1 The Council will ensure that Members and officers have the skills, knowledge and experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles by:

- ➔ Providing a Councillors' Development Policy to assist Members to develop and strengthen their capacity as confident and effective political and community leaders.
- ➔ Giving all Members the opportunity to attend the Leadership Academy which is aimed at both current leaders and those who aspire to the position, media training, one to one meetings with their group leader, mentoring and training away-days.
- ➔ Providing a Corporate Development Programme for officers.
- ➔ Providing training specific to Committee Chairs including Chairing Skills Training.
- ➔ Operating a Performance Management & Development Scheme (PMDS) for all Council employees which incorporates an annual Personal Development Plan (PDP).
- ➔ Providing new staff with an induction into the Council processes, offering cross cutting training and development to all staff ~~and sustaining IIP-accreditation.~~
- ➔ Ensuring all employees have a job description which clearly details their roles and responsibilities.
- ➔ Ensuring that Statutory Officers such as the Monitoring Officer and the s151 Officer have clear job descriptions and personal specification of their responsibilities.
- ➔ Providing Members briefings on relevant topics.
- ➔ Requiring senior officers to consider resource implication when collating

their Service Delivery Plans.

2.5.2 The Council will evaluate the performance of the people with governance responsibilities as individuals and as a group by:

- ➔ Maintaining a Member Development Programme.
- ➔ Offering the facility for Members to participate in individual 1:1 meetings to review their areas of interest and identify areas they would like to develop.
- ➔ Evaluating the effectiveness of the Standards and Audit Committees, and reporting annually to Council on the impact of their work.
~~Operating its own 'Bristol Manager' scheme of key management competencies, and monitoring and evaluation progress against the competencies.~~
- ➔ Operating performance arrangements for the Chief Executive and the Strategic Leadership Team.
- ➔ Making provision for internal secondment opportunities to enable officers to acquire skills outside their normal remit.
- ➔ Giving recognition to Council staff who have exceeded their remit through an annual Celebration of Success.

2.5.3 The Council attempts to encourage new talent for membership of the Authority so that best use can be made of individuals' skills and resources in balancing continuity and renewal by:

- ➔ Supporting Political groups, who have a primary role in encouraging new talent and representatives of all sections of the community to stand election as Members of the Council.
- ➔ Supporting Equalities Forums, Citizens Panels, and Stakeholder Engagement .
- ➔ Ensuring open recruitment of school governors, encouraging participation of members of the community with varying skills. Supporting recruitment with appropriate training.
- ➔ Providing a 'Councillor shadowing' scheme to encourage new Members.
- ➔ Participating in various BME schemes in order to encourage candidates for Council membership from minority groups throughout Bristol.

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

2.6.1 The Council will exercise leadership which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive, accountable relationships by:

- ➔ ~~Supporting the well established~~**Establishing** Neighbourhood Partnerships to provide a focus for community engagement
- ➔ Supporting ~~a Bristol Community Strategy~~**the Bristol 20:20 plan through the Bristol Performs agenda with the Bristol Partnership.**
- ➔ Providing the citizens of Bristol with information about the Council and its spending through the distribution of a leaflet with their Council Tax bill and

the publication of a summary of the year end accounts in the 'Our City' publication which is distributed to all homes in Bristol.

- ➔ Publishing the Corporate Plan on the Bristol City Council website.
- ➔ Supporting a Citizens' Panels tackling local issues.
- ➔ Requiring our Strategic Partners to report to the Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee (OSM) on a regular basis.
- ➔ Supporting a Planning user Group, who meet quarterly to review needs of customers and improve service.
- ➔ Participating in a Bristol Property Agents group and Bristol Neighbourhood Planning Network as part of the Council's engagement with stakeholder.
- ➔ Participating in the West of England Joint Scrutiny in order to strengthen accountability.

2.6.2 The Council will take an active approach to dialogue with, and accountability to, the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly by the Authority, in partnership or by commissioning by:

- ➔ Taking a leading role in the Bristol Partnership.
- ➔ Subjecting itself to peer review on areas of strategic importance and instigate action to implement any resulting recommendations accepted.
- ➔ Maintaining a Consultation Strategy
- ➔ Provide the citizens of Bristol with the opportunity to have their say through e-consultation, Ask Bristol and E-petitions and by participating in Citizen's Panels, or by completing a satisfaction survey.
- ➔ Providing web casts of Full Council meetings on the Bristol website in order to keep Bristol's citizens up-to-date.
- ➔ Maintaining an Equalities Forum.
- ➔ Supporting a Corporate Consultation Team and providing a Consultation Finder on the Bristol website.
- ➔ All Cabinet reports containing a "Consultation" section.
- ➔ All Members being expected to offer, as best practice, surgeries, or equivalent means of providing assistance, for their constituents and key partners (eg. Police) could be involved where appropriate.
- ➔ Establishing Neighbourhood Partnerships covering all wards to facilitate engagement with local stakeholders and to identify local priorities.
- ➔ Publishing a free newsletter " Our City " which communicates the Council's vision and priorities and is delivered to homes across Bristol.
- ➔ Publishing a Council Tax booklet which is distributed annually.
- ➔ The Council's planning and decision making process being designed to include consultation with stakeholders and the submission of views by local people including publishing applications on the website.
- ➔ Maintaining a comprehensive complaints/appeals procedure.
- ➔ Maintaining a Freedom of Information policy and acting upon requests in a timely manner.
- ➔ Maintaining a relationship and providing support to the Bristol Members Youth Parliament.
- ➔ Participating in outreach work with ethnic groups.
- ➔ Publishing annual targets and the Council's performance against said

targets.

~~Providing the means for Bristol residents to participate in the 'State of the City debate' the most recent of which was held in January of 2008.~~

- ➔ Striving to ensure good information exchange within the Council and with external partners, with the provision of an internal intranet site and an external website, which is accessible to our partners and the citizens of Bristol.
- ➔ Instigating a review of the Council's website, with a view to further enhancing the level of services and information which can be accessed through the site, than is currently available on the existing website.

2.6.3 The Council will make the best of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meeting responsibilities of staff by:

- ➔ Maintaining comprehensive consultation arrangements with the Trade Unions.
- ➔ Having an agreed consultation procedure for managing change.
- ➔ Maintaining an effective Performance Management Development Scheme.
- ➔ Preparing a Workforce Development Plan and Human Resources (HR) Strategy with performance reported annually and highlighting under represented groups.
- ➔ Maintaining comprehensive and effective HR policies including an Equalities policy.
- ~~Requiring senior officers to attain the Bristol Manager competencies.~~
- ➔ Requiring all staff to participate in annual development review through the Council's Performance Management & Development Scheme (PMDS)
- ➔ Participation in recognised volunteer programmes.
- ➔ Accessing staff opinions through biennial staff surveys
- ➔ Improving the working environment through the Bristol Performs agenda

3. Monitoring and Review

3.1 Good corporate governance requires the active participation of both Members and employees across the Council.

3.2 In order to ensure that this Code is effectively maintained and embedded within the Council, the following monitoring review procedures will apply.

3.3 Internal Audit will have the responsibility for:

- ➔ Ensuring the Code is maintained as a living document.
- ➔ Undertaking an annual review of internal control and governance, utilising assurance statements from Strategic Directors, the statutory officers and other appropriate senior staff
- ➔ Utilising the annual review to prepare a draft Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and implementing any changes to the Code identified by the AGS process.

3.4 The Audit Committee will have responsibility for providing assurance to Council in respect of :

- ➔ the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements, risk management framework and internal control environment, including overseeing:
 - ➔ risk management strategies
 - ➔ anti-fraud arrangements
 - ➔ whistleblowing strategies
 - ➔ Internal and External Audit Activities
- ➔ the effectiveness of the Council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent it affects exposure to risk and poor internal control
- ➔ the approval of the Annual Governance Statement
- ➔ the review and approval of the annual statement of accounts, confirming the appropriate accounting policies have been followed, including the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts

3.5 The Standards Committee terms of reference state that it will exercise the functions conferred upon it by or under part III of the Local Government Act 2000 (as amended by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007) including the following general functions:

- ➔ promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by the members and co-opted members of Bristol City Council;
- ➔ assisting those members and co-opted members to observe the members' code of conduct and any other codes and protocols agreed by the Council;

and the following specific functions:

- ➔ advising the council on the adoption or revision of its members' code of conduct and any associated codes and protocols;
- ➔ monitoring and reviewing the operation of the Council's code of conduct;
- ➔ advising, training or arranging to train members and co-opted members of the council on matters relating to the members' code of conduct.
- ➔ considering and determining any allegations against Members of the council of misconduct, meaning a breach of the Members' code of conduct or other codes/protocols approved by the Council or by the Standards Committee on its behalf.

~~Expectations from the Standards Board of England are that the Standards Committee will continue to take a role in the Council's governance arrangements now and in the future.3.6~~