

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL'S CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Introduction

1. Herefordshire Council must meet high ethical and other standards in everything it does; it must comply with legal requirements; it must serve the people of Herefordshire well; and it must use public money and other resources economically, efficiently and effectively, accounting fully for its actions.
2. This Code of Corporate Governance sets out the Council's promise to the people of Herefordshire about how this will be done.

Responsibilities

3. All Members and Officers have a responsibility to ensure the proper governance of the Council's affairs and the stewardship of its resources. In particular, under the overall responsibility of the Chief Executive, the Council's Director of Resources is responsible for the effective application of the Code in matters of financial probity, performance and risk; and the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) is responsible for the effective application of the Code in respect of legal obligations and ethical standards.

Reporting

4. The Council will report annually on its compliance with this Code. That report will draw upon reports by the Director of Resources to the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee, and by the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic) to the Standards Committee, and upon the opinions of those Committees.

The principles of this Code

5. This Code follows five principles of good governance:
 - Provide the best possible service to the people of Herefordshire
 - Define the roles of Members and Officers, ensure that they work together constructively, and improve their effectiveness
 - Require high standards of conduct
 - Take sound decisions on the basis of good information
 - Be transparent and open: responsive to Herefordshire's needs and accountable to its people.
6. The rest of this Code demonstrates how the Council will put these principles into action.

Provide the best possible service to the people of Herefordshire

7. The Council will
 - Set out a strategic vision for the County, and its intended outcomes for citizens

- Provide high quality services representing excellent value for money;
- Develop and sustain effective partnerships
- Encourage public participation in Herefordshire local government
- Identify and manage risk
- Make environmental impact a key part of decision-making at all levels
- Measure performance rigorously and improve it where necessary

Define the roles of Members and Officers, ensure that they work constructively together, and improve their effectiveness

8. The Council will
- Encourage and support effective leadership, and constructive working relationships, at all levels
 - Make clear the roles of Members and Officers, the way in which decisions are taken, and the nature and limits of delegated authority
 - Determine remuneration in a transparent and open way, with recommendations on Members' allowances made independently
 - Ensure that Members and Officers have the training and support they need to be effective; that their performance is appraised; and that development needs are addressed

Require high standards of conduct

9. The Council will
- Create and maintain a climate of openness, and mutual support and respect
 - Ensure that Members and Officers display consistently high standards of conduct
 - Be punctilious in ensuring that governance and decision-making reflects these high standards
 - Take effective action on "whistleblowing": complaints based on matters of propriety and conscience
 - Support an effective Standards Committee

Take sound decisions on the basis of good information

10. The Council will
- Be open about how and why decisions are taken
 - Demonstrate and record the evidence and analysis underpinning decisions
 - Enable and support effective scrutiny of those decisions

- Guard against any conflict of interest
- Support an effective Audit and Corporate Governance Committee

Be transparent and open: responsive to Herefordshire's needs and accountable to its people

11. The Council will

- Be open about its actions and plans, subject to the requirements of the law or of personal or commercial confidentiality
- Give a high priority to communicating and explaining its policies
- Respond readily to public needs and aspirations
- Take prompt and effective action on complaints
- Publish a comprehensive annual report on this Code
- Review this Code annually at the time of the Compliance Report