



AGENDA ITEM: 10

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

21st March 2011

Code of Corporate Governance

**Report by Dawn Docx, Deputy Chief Fire Officer and
Colin Everett, Clerk to the Authority**

Purpose of Report

- 1 To inform Members of amendments to 'The Account and Auditing (Wales) Regulations 2005' and the requirement to include a Governance Statement in the annual accounts.
- 2 To seek approval of a Local Code of Governance. This can then be used as a standard to measure the Authority's performance against in a self assessment exercise carried out at the end of the year to form the Annual Governance Statement.

Background

- 3 Changes to the Account and Auditing (Wales) Regulations 2005 now require that the Authority's Annual Statement of Accounts contain a Governance Statement. This replaces the Statement of Internal Control (SIC) in the Statement of Accounts.

Information

- 4 The purpose of the Annual Governance Statement is to report publicly on the extent to which an Authority complies with its own code on an annual basis, it will include how they have monitored the effectiveness of their governance arrangements in that year and on any planned changes in the coming period.
- 5 The attached Code of Corporate Governance is based on a document entitled 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework', produced by CIPFA and SOLACE, which

set out principles and standards aimed at helping Local Authorities to develop and maintain their own Codes of Governance and discharge their accountability for the proper conduct of business.

- 6 The framework recommends that authorities must be able to demonstrate that they are complying with the principles of Good Governance which were developed by the Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services, with support from the Office for Public Management and CIPFA in partnership with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- 7 The core principles are:
 - Focusing 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 the values for the Authority and demonstrating the values of Good Governance through upholding 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.
- 8 Each of the core principles have supporting principles each of which in turn translates into a range of specific requirements that should be reflected in the Authorities Local Code.
- 9 Officers of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service have been working with their counterparts in Mid and West Wales and South Wales Fire and Rescue Services to produce a Code of Corporate Governance appropriate for all three Authorities. The resulting code is attached as appendix 1.

Recommendation

- 10 Members are requested to approve the Local Code of Governance, against which the Fire and Rescue Authority can measure its performance against in the Annual Governance Statement.

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY



CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

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Policy Statement

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is responsible 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. In discharging this accountability, members and senior officers are responsible for putting into place proper arrangements for the governance of the Fire and Rescue Authority's affairs and stewardship of the resources at its disposal. To this end North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has approved and adopted a code of corporate governance which is consistent with the principles and reflects the requirements of the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy)/ SOLACE (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) Framework: *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government* together with associated guidance.

THE CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Introduction

Governance is about how local government bodies ensure that 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 through which they account to, engage with the community.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority recognise its responsibility as a public service organisation, to support these principles with Members and Officers acting in accordance with high standards of conduct.

These principles are reflected in the Authority's vision, mission statement and corporate aims which are set out below and which are regularly reviewed to ensure that they reflect the needs of our service and communities. The need for sustainability to be embedded within our organisation has been identified and this will be reflected in the way that individual objectives are managed locally.

The Authority's vision is emulated in its mission statement '*To make North Wales a safer place to live, work and visit*'.

In 2001 the Authority adopted a set of 5 corporate aims in order to achieve its mission statement:

1. To prevent accidental and malicious fires.
2. To protect people from being killed or injured by fire and other hazards.
3. To protect the community, businesses and the environment from being harmed by fire and other hazards.
4. To find ways to improve in order to meet the expectations of the community
5. To operate as effectively and efficiently as we can, making the best use of the resources we have available

Good governance flows from a shared ethos or culture, as well as from systems and structures. It cannot be reduced to a set of rules, or achieved fully by compliance with a set of requirements. This spirit or ethos of good governance can be expressed as values and demonstrated in behaviour.

Good governance builds upon the seven principles for the conduct of people in public life that were established by the committee on Standards in Public Life, known as the Nolan principles. Namely,

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

A hallmark of good governance is the development of shared values which become part of the organisations culture, underpinning policy and behaviour throughout the organisation. These are in addition to legal compliance on issues such as equalities.

The code developed by North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is divided into the six core principles identified by CIPFA/SOLACE, each of these have supporting principles, which translate into requirements that are reflected in the code adopted by the Fire Authority.

The six core principles are-

- focusing 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 the 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

The code adopted by the Authority takes the core and supporting principles and identifies what we will do to meet them and how we will demonstrate compliance.

Principle 1- Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area

The principles of good governance adopted	What we will do to meet them	How we will measure compliance
<p>Focus on the purpose of the authority and outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for North Wales:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exercising strategic leadership by clearly communicating the Authority's vision for citizens and service users. 2. Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service directly, or in partnership. 3. Ensuring that the Authority make best use of resources and demonstrates excellent value for money. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make and regularly review a clear statement of the Authority's purpose and vision as a basis for service planning 2. Publish on an annual basis, a plan of intended activities and outcomes to improve services and the means by which performance against these objectives is to be measured. 3. Publish a report on the Authority's activities, achievements and performance, including its financial performance and position. 4. Develop and implement a forward financial plan in line with WAG requirements to ensure adequate resources are available to meet its intended plans and to deliver value for money. 5. Develop plans to maintain optimum services in the event of disruption to service continuity. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Publish a clear statement of the Authority's vision, mission statement and values in its Risk Reduction and Improvement Plans. 2. Publish an Annual Report and Improvement Plan with quarterly performance updates available. 3. Publish an annual Statement of Accounts with regular budget monitoring reports to the Fire & Rescue Authority & Executive Group. 4. Operate a process for recording and responding to complaints and comments and reporting thereon. 5. Maintenance and regular testing of service continuity plans based on a risk assessment of threats to the Authority. 6. Publish a partnership strategy 7. Publish all external assessments of performance.

Principle 2 - Members and Officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles

The principles of good governance adopted	What we will do to meet them	How we will measure compliance
<p>Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles by:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being clear about the functions and roles of the Authority, its committee's and officers. 2. Ensuring that constructive and effective working relationships between Members & Officers and that the responsibilities of both groups are carried out to a high standard. 3. Ensuring that the relationships between the Authority and the public are clear so each knows what to expect of the other. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set out a clear statement of the respective roles & responsibilities of Members & Officers which clarify the delegations to officers. 2. Establish a protocol to ensure effective communication between Members and Officers. 3. Clarify the terms & conditions of employment, including the remuneration of Members and Officers and establish an effective mechanism for managing the process. 4. Ensure that effective mechanisms for monitoring service performance are established. 5. Ensure that the legal status and purpose of any partnerships are clear and that the roles and responsibilities of all partners are clear. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain committee terms of reference for all committees. 2. Maintain a scheme of delegations to the Officers. 3. Maintain a scheme of standing orders and a Member/Officer protocol to manage Member/Officer interaction. 4. Ensure all staff have up to date and relevant job descriptions. 5. Continual reporting of performance assessment by Managers.

Principle 3 - Promoting the values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour		
The principles of good governance adopted	What we will do to meet them	How we will measure compliance
<p>Promoting the values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour by:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensuring that Members and Officers behave in a way which represents the Authority's values. 2. Ensuring that these values are put into practice and effective. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish and articulate the Authority's values to the public. Its staff and stakeholders. 2. Demonstrate the application of these values in decision making and general behaviour. 3. Adopt codes of conduct defining the standards and behaviour expected when working for or with the Authority. 4. Maintain arrangements to ensure members and senior managers are not influenced by personal interests, bias or prejudice when making decisions. 5. Maintain arrangements for reporting, investigating and dealing with occasions where standards fall below those expected. 6. When working with partners, agree those values by which all parties to the partnership will operate. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Publication of vision, mission, values and objectives. 2. Publish and operate codes of conduct for Members and Officers. 3. Annually require Members and Senior Officers to complete declarations of interest and related party transaction returns. 4. Maintain a standards committee to oversee Member standards and hear any complaints. 5. Maintain a disciplinary process to deal with any breaches of the code of conduct for Officers. 6. Maintain Authority and Standing Orders up to date. 7. Maintain and publish a 'whistle blowing' protocol to enable concerns about behaviour to be reported in confidence. 8. Maintain an Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy. 9. Maintain a complaints and comments/compliments procedure and report results at least annually.

Principle 4 - Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk

The principles of good governance adopted	What we will do to meet them	How we will measure compliance
<p>Take informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk by:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive comments. 2. Have good quality information, advice and support to ensure that services are delivered effectively and meet the needs of the community. 3. Ensure that we are operating an effective risk management strategy. 4. Ensuring that we operate within the legislative framework for the benefit of the community. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain arrangements for recording the decisions of the Authority and the basis on which those decisions were made. 2. Maintain arrangements for identifying and recording conflicts of interest by Members and Senior Officers and ensure that these do not affect the decision making process. 3. Maintain arrangements whereby Members, staff, contractors, stakeholders and the public can raise concerns about the behaviour of anyone connected with the work of the Authority. 4. Maintain effective arrangements for the independent internal audit of the Authority. 5. Maintain an effective Standards Committee. 6. Ensure that decision makers have sufficient appropriate information to take effective decisions, including professional financial and legal advice. 7. Ensure that risk management is embedded into the culture of the Authority and that Members and Officers take account of risks in decision making. 8. Work within the legislative framework available. 9. When working in partnership, ensure that the same standards of good governance are applied to the partnership's activities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Publish Authority minutes and reports on the web site. 2. Maintain a publication scheme and comply with FOI requests within the stipulated timescales. 3. Maintain a register of interests of Members and Senior Managers. 4. Maintain a 'whistle blowing' protocol to enable concerns about behaviour to be reported in confidence. 5. Reporting of annual internal audit plan and annual report to senior management and the Audit Committee. 6. External Audit overview of Internal Audit arrangements. 7. Publish Standards Committee minutes and reports. 8. Publish and operate a Risk Management policy and strategy. 9. Regularly report on the current status of strategic and business risks to the Fire & Rescue Authority.

Principle 5 - Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective		
The principles of good governance adopted	What we will do to meet them	How we will measure compliance
<p>Develop the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective by:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Making sure that members and officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform their roles. 2. Developing the capability of individuals and groups to evaluate their performance. 3. Encouraging representation from all sectors of the community which we serve. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess the skills required by Members and Officers, including the statutory officers, and continually develop these to enable individual roles to be undertaken effectively and efficiently. 2. Regularly review the performance of committees and senior officers and implement plans for further development and training where necessary. 3. Maintain arrangements to encourage all sections of the community to work for and with the Authority and contribute to the development of its policies and activities. 4. When working with partners, ensure that the same principles are applied to the work of the partnership. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Operate a Staff Individual Development Review Scheme incorporating personal development and training requirements. 2. Implement an annual Member training and induction programme and record attendance. 3. Operate the national IPDS system for operational staff. 4. Publish a communication and consultation strategy. 5. Establish public and staff consultation process. 6. Promote the fire service as a career opportunity.

Principle 6 - Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability

The principles of good governance adopted	What we will do to meet them	How we will measure compliance
<p>Engage with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability by:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engaging local people and stakeholders. 2. Taking an active and planned approach to consultation with the public to ensure effective service delivery. 3. Taking an active and planned approach to meet responsibilities to staff. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set out clearly the Authority's key accountabilities and the means by which these will be reported. 2. Maintain arrangements for communicating and consulting with all sections of the public and key stakeholders about the Authority's policies and services. 3. Maintain processes to consult with staff and their representatives. 4. Ensure that feedback from the consultation process is incorporating into the development of future performance plans. 5. Publish an annual performance plan with quarterly performance updates setting out plans and performance, including financial performance. 6. Ensure that all Authority meetings and reports are accessible to the public except where legislation requires confidentiality to be preserved. 7. When working with partners ensure that the same principles are applied to the work of the partnership. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Publish and deliver a Combined Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan. 2. Meet regularly with union representatives to consult on both key policy and service delivery changes. 3. Identify in Authority reports where the results of consultation have influenced policy decisions. 4. Copies of annual reports, the Improvement and Risk Reduction Plan made available on the web site and libraries. 5. All Authority meetings open to the public, and all reports and minutes available via the internet. Other documents to be made available under FOI provisions. 6. Include clear accountability and communication provisions within all partnership agreements.