

CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

1. Introduction and background

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) published a document of corporate governance in local government, entitled "Delivering Good Governance In Local Government". Redbridge Council has drawn together a code of corporate governance which

- brings together the various aspects of our arrangements for corporate governance, in a single document;
- demonstrates our ongoing commitment to uphold the highest standards of integrity, openness and accountability; and
- underpins the credibility and confidence in our work as a service provider, community leader and employer.
- Reinforces our role and aims of delivering best value services and being properly accountable to all relevant parties and subject to effective scrutiny and challenge.

We want people to have confidence in the way we work as we tackle our 6 aims for making Redbridge a better place to live. Our aims are to make Redbridge:

- a safer place to live
- a cleaner, greener place to live
- a better place to learn
- a better place for care
- a better place for business
- a better place to live together

These aims are set out in our Corporate Strategy which we have updated and approved in November 2006. The Strategy sets out an integrated planning process that shows the thread which links the Community Strategy, the Councils Visions, aims and priorities right through to service planning and individual staff performance. The key to our success in achieving our aims lies in Members, staff and partners working together.

To do this we must be open about the way we do our business and about the standards of conduct we expect from our members and staff. We know that setting high standards of self governance provides a clear lead to our existing and potential partners, so this code of corporate governance provides the basis for effective community involvement.

2. What is corporate governance?

CIPFA and SOLACE say:

"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 and through which they account to, engage with and, where appropriate, lead their communities".

3. The six core principles of corporate governance

CIPFA and SOLACE have identified six core principles in delivering good governance. We fully embrace and support these principles of good corporate governance and will make sure they underpin the delivery of services to the public.

1. ***Focusing on the purpose of the authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.*** – Our corporate vision, aims and plan has been developed following close consultation with our partners and those we serve. We have clear strategies and systems for gauging Value for Money and our performance is closely monitored and reported through various means including our Annual Best Value Performance Plan and our published accounts.

2. ***Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.*** – Redbridge's Constitution sets out the respective roles of the Council, Cabinet (the executive) and Scrutiny and other Committee functions which provide the essential balance of authority, responsibility and accountability subjected to robust scrutiny and challenge. Our Standing Orders and Financial Regulations set out how the Authority's business should be conducted and these are supported by working protocols between Members and officers. We have key officers namely:

Our Chief Executive – responsible for all aspects of operational management and a pivotal role / relationship with the leader and all other members of the Council

The Director of Finance & Resources – responsible for the proper financial administration of authority and for maintaining an effective system of internal financial control.

The Borough Solicitor & Secretary - responsible for ensuring that the Authority operates in accordance with all applicable statutes and regulations.

We recognise the benefits and value of working with our partners and through the Redbridge Strategic Partnership and other mechanisms we will continue share our vision, practices and values with our partners in developing and delivering our services to the community.

3. ***Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.*** - Effective leadership is an essential part of corporate governance, so we will achieve these principles by leading by example in our decision- making and other actions and conducting ourselves to high standards. All Members and staff are required to act in accordance with relevant codes of conduct and standards and there are formal processes for declaring relationships or interests so as not to unduly influence or prejudice. There are appropriate mechanisms in place for dealing with anyone who breaches our standards and expectations.

4. ***Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk.*** - We are open and consult stakeholders on all relevant issues. We provide access to full, accurate and clear information and make sure all stakeholders and potential

stakeholders have the opportunity to be involved in our decision-making and actions. We have developed a Data Quality Strategy to help ensure that the information upon which decisions are made is robust. We seek to learn and improve through having an effective scrutiny function which last year was reviewed and strengthened. Furthermore, our Audit Committee, which is independent of the executive and scrutiny functions, continually reviews our governance and control frameworks. Our decisions and actions are transparent and documented. We are developing innovative new ways for our stakeholders to access our services and give us feedback. The “Redbridge-i” project is a key development and example of our determination to provide quick and easy access for all those for whom we serve and work with. We know that there are times when things can and do go wrong. We have a strong risk management strategy and processes which aims to minimise these events and identify ways of putting things right as well as “learning lessons” for the future. We actively encourage people to tell us where things have gone wrong and we expect our Members, staff, partners and contractors to tell us if they suspect any fraud or irregularity is occurring.

5. ***Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective.*** - We recognise the importance of having highly skilled and motivated Members and staff to drive through and deliver our demanding aims and to sustain public confidence in our services. We are committed to the development of Members and staff skills, knowledge and performance through programmes of induction, training and development programmes. We will also continue to share our practices with and involve our partners from all sections of the community to engage with and participate in the work of the Authority, thereby broadening our overall knowledge and skills base and shared values.

6. ***Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.*** - We are committed to engaging with all sectors of our community to ensure that we are directing our efforts to those areas of greatest concern and priority but being equally aware of the competing demands that need to be considered and addressed. Our approach to consulting with all stakeholders is set out in our document “Redbridge Consults”. Our aim is to be accessible to all groups in our diverse communities. Our new website “Redbridge-I” is a prime example of the Council’s strong commitment to innovation and accountability with stakeholders. This new communication channel is transforming the type of conversations the Council is able to have with its stakeholders, providing a means for residents to discuss local issues and give feedback in the forums and online polls. We also measure and report on our own performance through communications such as the Annual Report and via the Scrutiny process. We will continue to publish reports on how well we are achieving our objectives and remain open to scrutiny and encourage people to challenge performance and outcomes through public meetings, Area Committees and other forums.

4. Making the code work

We expect the principles set out in this code to be upheld by our members, staff and partners in the wider community. We will make sure this happens through a range of policies, systems and processes, including our:

- Community Strategy “Making a Difference in Redbridge”
- Corporate Planning and Performance Framework
- Constitution based on a system of Cabinet and Scrutiny
- Risk Management Strategy
- Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy including whistleblowing arrangements

- Project and Performance Management
- Human Resources policies & Codes of Conduct for members and officers
- Partnership policies
- The Corporate Strategy – “Delivering Excellence”
- Data Quality Strategy
- The Best Value Performance Plan

We will review the code each year and publish a statement setting out whether or not we are still meeting the standards.

Dated November 2007