HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Standards Committee

Wednesday, 7 January 2009 at 3.00 p.m.
Committee Room 1, Runcorn Town Hall

David W R

Chief Executive

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Mr Bill Badrock (Chairman)	
Parish Councillor Ronald Crawford	
Parish Councillor Reverend David Felix	
Mr Robert Garner	
Mr Tony Luxton	
Councillor Philip Balmer	**Conservative**
Councillor Stan Parker	**Labour**
Councillor Linda Redhead	**Liberal Democrat**
Councillor Kevan Wainwright	**Labour**
Councillor Mike Wharton	**Labour**

Please contact Lynn Cairns on 0151 471 7529 or e-mail lynn.cairns@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Committee is on Wednesday, 25 February 2009

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Part I

In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE 7 JANUARY 2009

DRAFT ACTION LIST

The following list is for consideration by the Committee:-

NO.	PRIORITY	ACTION	BY	DATE
1	HIGH	Further role play session repeating the 'hearing' on 28th February 2007 with more time allowed – Role of Chair – To maintain impartiality throughout hearing. Facilitate and ensure compliance with procedure. Secure fairness of hearing. (previously 1,5,8,10) Council Solicitor to prepare and circulate flowcharts illustrating the sequence of events and deadlines in relation to hearings. Consider further training involvement by Charles Kerry (Chester) Consider further training involvement by Graeme Creer (Weightmans)	OD	Done – training carried out in Warrington 18 June 2008 Further training to be carried out in Warrington 12 January 2009
3	HIGH	Council Solicitor to arrange for Standards Committee members to attend other Council's Standards Committee hearings as a training opportunity.	OD	Done – Contact made with Wigan. In contact with other Monitoring Officers as well.
6	HIGH	Consider cost of training initiatives and make provision in budget for 2008/9. Consider funding sources for Training during 2007/8.	OD	No further funding available – training provided from within resources
7	MEDIUM	Develop Standards Committee internet website presence.	OD	June 2008- done further information

			uploaded on new complaints arrangements. Article being prepared for Inside Halton – deadline end January 2009

NO.	PRIORITY	ACTION	BY	DATE
9	LOW	Video of interview with Leader of Council and Chief Executive. Further use in conjunction with later training sessions. Explore ways of using training video as part of civic responsibility training in Halton's schools (previously 9,16) [the new monitoring officer to review the video when in post, taking into account recent changes, to determine what amendments are required]	OD	Video reviewed & now out of date due to new Code, on which training has been given
12	MEDIUM	Council Solicitor and Chair invite Halton's parish council clerks and chairpersons to meeting to explore training needs of parish councillors. Halton's parish council clerks and chairpersons training session of parish clerks and chairpersons (prev 12, 13)	Chair/OD	Done – Meeting commenced with Chief Executive, Council Solicitor & all Parish Clerks & Chairs to cover Personal issues. Took place 10th July 2008. Parishes to bring forward training and training requests. None received. Training on new Code given to all Parishes.
15	MEDIUM	Explore the idea of small loose-leaf folder for members of the Committee to keep copies of key documents: e.g. Principles, Code of Conduct and Guidance.	Chair/OD	.Further stock of pocket guide ordered from Standards Board as agreed at last meeting.
16	HIGH	Halton's preparations, arrangements and training for dealing with local filter duties.	OD	In place

17		A letter be sent to the Standards Board for England requesting that their method of allocating places on conferences be amended so that, in future, an invitation be sent to the Chairs of all Standards Committees initially and they be provided with the opportunity of taking up this offer by a specified date.	OD	Letter sent to Standards Board no response to date.

Agenda Item 4

REPORT TO:	Standards Committee
DATE:	7th January 2009
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director - Corporate & Policy
SUBJECT:	Standards Board Information Roundup
WARDS	N/A

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To bring Members of the Committee up to date with the latest news from the Standards Board.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 A copy of Bulletin 41, released since the last meeting of the Committee, is attached at Appendix 1. In particular, Members' attention is brought to the feedback on adjourning local assessment decisions. The feedback from the responses received indicated that the concerns stated in the article in Bulletin 40 far outweighed the advantages. The Standards Board will be issuing further guidance in 2009 incorporating the issue of adjournment.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton** – None.

6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton** – None.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton** – None.

6.4 **A Safer Halton** – None.

6.5   **Halton's Urban Renewal** – None.

7.0   RISK ANALYSIS

7.1   No key issues have been identified which require control measures.

8.0   EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1   None.

9.0   LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None under the meaning of the Act.

THE BULLETIN *41*

the Standards Board for England

DECEMBER 2008

Contents

Contact
Enquiries line: 0845 078 8181
Minicom: 0161 817 5449
www.standardsboard.gov.uk
email: bulletin@standardsboard.gov.uk

Welcome to Issue 41 of the *Bulletin*.

The local government ethical framework has changed a great deal this year.

The standards agenda is now successfully embedded at the local level, with standards committees taking responsibility for the initial assessment of Code of Conduct complaints. Local case handling is in place for all complaints except for those the Standards Board has taken back in the public interest. Your commitment and hard work has ensured that the transition to the locally-based system has been smooth and successful.

In this, our final Bulletin of the year, we look back – with a review of the Standards Board's online monitoring system, and feedback from the Seventh Annual Assembly of Standards Committees. And we reveal the high performing authorities shortlisted for the Standards and Ethics category at the Local Government Chronicle Awards 2009.

We also look forward – at the new authority annual return that forms part of the Standards Board's online monitoring system, and to the forthcoming amendments to the Code currently under consultation by Communities and Local Government. In addition, we examine the work on governance and partnerships that the Standards Board is undertaking to help us provide guidance to authorities on ensuring high standards of conduct in partnerships.

Other articles in this *Bulletin* address some key issues arising from the first few months of local case handling. These include a summary of the submissions received in response to *Bulletin 40*'s request for views on adjourning local assessment decisions.

Finally, I wish you all the very best for 2009.

Glenys Stacey
Chief Executive

Confidence in local democracy

THE BULLETIN*41*

Consultation on proposals for changes to the Code

Communities and Local Government (CLG) launched a Code consultation in October 2008. The consultation is on CLG proposals for changes to the Code of Conduct for members and the introduction of a model code for local government employees.

In the 2006 ruling in Livingstone v Adjudication Panel for England, the High Court decided that Section 52 of the Local Government Act 2000 required members to comply with the Code in their official capacity only, and that it could not govern the private conduct of members.

In issuing his judgement in the Livingstone case, Collins J invited Parliament to be explicit about whether it wanted private conduct to be covered by the members' code. Parliament took this opportunity and passed the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. The 2007 Act amended the 2000 Act to allow for the application of the members' Code to cover some conduct in a private capacity, where this has led to a criminal conviction.

The Standards Board for England supports CLG proposals for the new Code for members to cover the conduct of members in their non-official capacity, where that conduct would be a criminal offence. It is proposed that a 'criminal offence' shall be defined as any criminal offence which has led to a conviction in a criminal court, but for which the member does not have the option of paying a fixed penalty notice.

We have also made a number of suggestions for changes to the drafting of the Code, which we believe will make it easier to interpret and apply.

The Standards Board has long advocated the introduction of a standardised national officers' code, and supports CLG's proposals to do so.

The proposed model code is likely to operate a 'two tier' approach. Broadly speaking, the first tier would apply to all local government officers, and would be similar to the general obligations that members have under part one of the current members' Code. The second tier, which would include obligations to register and declare interests, would either apply to officers who are delegated to discharge functions on behalf of the authority or those in politically restricted roles.

CLG proposes that any code for officers should extend to officers of parish councils. We strongly believe that the code should be extended to employees of parish councils.

We recognise that this may be seen as overly bureaucratic for small parishes. However, they are a key component of local democracy and some of the more difficult cases that the Standards Board has dealt with in the past have involved issues with the clerk's conduct.

The consultation document can be found at **www.communities.gov.uk**. Anyone wishing to respond to the consultation – and we would urge you to do so – must respond by 24 December 2008. A copy of our response will be available on our website once it has been submitted.

New regulations laid before Parliament

On 18 November 2008, the Case Tribunals (England) Regulations 2008 were laid before Parliament. These complement the Standards Committee (England) Regulations 2008 and make provision about the sanctions available to a case tribunal of the Adjudication Panel for England. They will come into force on 12 December 2008.

In particular, these regulations ensure that from 12 December, case tribunals will have the power to censure a member, require them to apologise, attend training, or enter into a process of

conciliation. These sanctions are currently available only to councils' standards committees. Making these sanctions available to case tribunals will allow them to deal proportionately with cases that are referred to them, for example, because they are seen as very serious, but which the tribunals conclude are not so serious. It will also enable tribunals to deal appropriately with cases referred to them because a standards committee is conflicted out.

The regulations also make provision about certain administrative procedures to be followed in relation to cases before the Adjudication Panel and its case tribunals.

The regulations are available from the website of the Office of Public Sector Information, at: **http://www.opsi.gov.uk**.

The government intends to complete its reform of the standards framework in January 2009 by making further regulations following consultation, which will allow councils to establish joint standards committees. These regulations will also enable the Standards Board to suspend a standards committee's powers to assess Code of Conduct allegations, in certain circumstances where we consider this to be in the public interest. They will also revise the existing dispensation regulations.

What's the alternative?

Delegates were given advice on how to use alternative action appropriately at this year's Annual Assembly of Standards Committees, held in Birmingham.

The **Alternative Action Masterclass** considered the advantages of using alternative action when appropriate and also discussed its potential challenges.

Referral to a monitoring officer for alternative action (or other action) is an option open to an assessment sub-committee when considering a new complaint or complaints – though it must consult its monitoring officer before doing this. Alternative action is a useful tool in specific circumstances where the allegations being made may be symptomatic of systemic problems within the council, which are more significant than the allegations in themselves.

In such cases, the assessment sub-committee needs to be satisfied that even if the specific allegation had occurred as alleged, it would not be in the public interest to investigate with a view to sanctioning. The assessment sub-committee must also be satisfied that other action could assist the proper functioning of the council. If alternative action is used, there is no investigation, no findings of fact and consequently there should be no conclusions drawn about whether members have complied with the Code of Conduct.

Delegates at the Annual Assembly were given examples of situations where alternative action might be appropriate. These included where there is evidence of poor understanding of the Code. They also included situations where there has been a breakdown of relationships within a council to such an extent that it becomes difficult to conduct the business of the council.

Speakers mentioned that if the assessment sub-committee decides on alternative action, then all involved in the process will need to understand that the purpose of alternative action is not to find out whether the member breached the Code. It is not appropriate for the assessment sub-committee to suggest an apology as a satisfactory form of alternative action. This implies that there has been a breach of the Code without there having been an investigation. Rather, the decision is made as an alternative to investigation. In addition, the purpose of using alternative action should be made clear, as should the time when the action is concluded.

Standards committees were told that once alternative action is initiated, they cannot go back and ask the monitoring officer to conduct an investigation. Furthermore, it should be seen as a way of moving forward constructively, rather than reiterating issues that have caused conflicts in the past.

Speakers advised delegates of the potential limitations of using alternative action – especially that it should not be seen as a 'quick fix'. It is not always a cheaper substitute for investigation and requires resources for training, mediation and other steps that could be carried out.

During a Q&A session, perceived disadvantages of alternative action were highlighted. These include the feeling among those involved that their issues may have been "swept under the carpet".

For more information on alternative action, please refer to our *Local Assessment of Complaints* and *Local investigations and Other Action guidance*, which are available on our website.

Annual Assembly materials online

More than 800 delegates attended the Standards Board's Seventh Annual Assembly of Standards Committees. Delegate feedback has been extremely positive.

The presentations and handouts from the event are available from **www.annualassembly.co.uk**. We are also developing a web version of the materials from the popular **Planning Ahead** session, which will be available on our website from December.

The Eighth Annual Assembly will be held on 12 and 13 October 2009 and we are currently establishing the steering committee for the event. The committee will help us to develop ideas for session content and generate examples of best practice to share with delegates.

Introducing the annual return

The Standards Board for England will be collecting information from standards committees on their activities and on their arrangements for supporting ethical conduct each year, starting in April 2009.

This information will enable us to drive up the performance of standards committees and of ethical conduct generally by identifying and then sharing notable practice. We will also be able to identify and offer support to those authorities experiencing problems.

The annual return will complement the quarterly return. Maintaining an ethical environment not only requires processes and protocols, such as codes of ethics, but also a culture that supports them. Therefore, while the quarterly return for the most part focuses on case handling, the annual return will collect information that will allow us to understand the culture and wider ethical governance arrangements in authorities.

As well as drawing on existing research, we have also been consulting with several groups of monitoring officers and chairs of standards committees for their thoughts on what information we should request.

We are now developing the specific questions that will make up the annual return. In the meantime, we will be undertaking further consultation and piloting to ensure that we get these questions right.

For further information about the annual return, please contact Hannah Pearson, Research and Policy Adviser: **0161 817 5417** or email **hannah.pearson@standardsboard.gov.uk.**

Feedback on adjourning local assessment decisions

In *Bulletin 40* we produced an article about adjourning local assessment decisions to seek cooperation with other action from the subject member. We invited your views on what you think should constitute the most appropriate practice. A total of 29 authorities responded to this article. We would like to thank those who participated.

Of the responses received, 14 were strongly against adjournment and eight were in favour. In addition, three authorities felt that the alternative suggested in the article would be preferable. The alternative suggested was that when the standards committee sends the case for investigation, it lets the monitoring officer know that it might not consider the case to be as serious, if the member is willing to comply with other action. This would mean that if the member indicated they would comply with other action, then the monitoring officer should feel free to ask that the case be returned to the standards committee.

The remaining four responses expressed the view that either adjournment of the assessment decision or this alternative approach would be acceptable.

Feedback from the responses received indicated that the concerns stated in the article about adjourning a local assessment decision far outweighed the advantages. For those against adjournment, the main concerns were:

- There is a danger that contacting the subject member before a decision has been made could ultimately suggest that the member has breached the Code, without there being a finding of fact.

- A member who refuses to engage with proposed alternative action could undermine confidence in the standards committee and public perceptions of justice.

- Adjournment would risk not meeting the 20 working day target for decision.

- Significant costs could be involved even if the matter was relatively trivial.

Those in favour of adjourning before making a decision gave the following reasons:

- The member may be more likely to cooperate if they were made aware of the options available.

- The standards committee would be more confident when making a decision in the knowledge that the member would/would not engage in other action.

- Other action allows the monitoring officer to seek resolution locally without a formal investigation or public hearing and may therefore prove more cost effective. Adjourning an assessment decision to seek cooperation from the subject member may increase the chances of other action succeeding.

The Standards Board is very grateful to everyone who responded. We intend to issue further guidance on other action in 2009, incorporating the issue of adjournment.

References to the Adjudication Panel for England by a standards committee

The President of the Adjudication Panel for England has recently issued guidance on the circumstances in which the Adjudication Panel would consider accepting a reference from a standards committee.

This guidance is now available on the Adjudication Panel's website and can be downloaded from the 'Guidance and Procedures' section at **www.adjudicationpanel.co.uk**.

Review of online monitoring system

In August 2008, we conducted a review of the Standards Board's online monitoring system. This formed part of a programme of work to assess how well our new systems are working.

We conducted telephone interviews with a random sample of monitoring officers or those nominated by the monitoring officers to make the online submission. A total of 24 out of a potential 50 interviews were successfully completed. Thank you to all who participated.

As this was the first time that monitoring officers or nominated staff were asked to submit an online return, we were expecting some 'teething problems'. What we actually found was that the majority of comments received were positive. The simplicity of the form was valued, with the majority experiencing minimal or no difficulty in making their online submission. This was confirmed with 98% of authorities submitting their return on time.

A large majority (83%) of monitoring officers or nominated staff interviewed expressed the view that the system is working effectively. We asked interviewees if they had contacted the Standards Board for assistance with the completion of the online form. A proportion of those interviewed (25%) had contacted the Standards Board for assistance. We invited those that had made contact to rate the response received in terms of speed, politeness, helpfulness and clarity of advice provided. All respondents rated the response for all categories as very good.

Respondents were also asked how the Standards Board can improve the support we provide. We received some useful suggestions – such as having a confirmation receipt upon completion of the submission and receiving a reminder when the submission is due. We were also interested in finding out about any technical issues that you may have experienced and were glad to hear that there were only minor technical problems.

We are now working to make improvements. The review does not end here and we will continue to carry out a review following the end of each quarter. We hope that this will ensure that we quickly pick up any problems you may be experiencing. We also look forward to speaking to some of you as part of the review of the second quarter of online monitoring.

If you have any questions about this review or future reviews of the system please contact Cara Afzal, Deputy Research and Monitoring Manager: **0161 817 5414** or email **cara.afzal@standardsboard.gov.uk**.

Six councils achieve top standards

The following local authorities are all in with a chance of winning the Standards Board-sponsored Standards and Ethics category at the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards 2009:

- Ceredigion County Council

- Leeds City Council

- Lincolnshire County Council

- Newark & Sherwood District Council

- Newcastle City Council

- Rossendale Borough Council

The authorities were shortlisted, from a total of 22 entries, for their dynamic approach to improving and promoting ethical standards among members while boosting public confidence in local democracy. The judges were Glenys Stacey, Chief Executive of the Standards Board, Nick Raynsford MP, and John Tizard, Director of the Centre for Public Service Partnerships at the University of Birmingham.

Dr Robert Chilton, Chair of the Standards Board, said:

"All the authorities shortlisted have been committed and innovative in achieving or maintaining high standards of member conduct. They've done this with methods like training, member support and partnership work, and promotional initiatives among councillors, officers and the public.

"The Standards Board is pleased to lend its support to this award and it was great to see such an encouraging response to the call for entrants. Following the changes in the standards system back in May, it's clear that plenty of authorities have embraced the chance to take ownership of ethical standards, and have begun to work proactively to endorse and promote the standards framework as well as managing their own complaints and investigations.

"We hope that many other authorities will follow suit."

The winner will be selected from the shortlist and announced at the LGC Awards at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London on 25 March 2009.

Governance and partnerships – work with Manchester City Council

The Standards Board for England is currently undertaking research on how to ensure that authority partners are working to high standards of behaviour. This will enable us to provide guidance to local authorities and their standards committees.

Partnership-working is a growing and important way of operating. It could present a risk to public confidence if individuals and bodies involved in decision-making are not operating to a consistent and agreed standard of conduct.

Previous research undertaken for the Standards Board by the University of Manchester (Greasley et al, *The Components of an ethical environment,*

Institute for Political and Economic Governance, University of Manchester, May 2006) highlighted the problems of organisations when they come to work together. The research found differences in organisational culture, openness and transparency, inconsistencies in the codes of conduct that partners work to and differences in how codes of conduct are enforced.

We firmly believe that citizens should both expect and experience high standards of behaviour and probity wherever decisions are taken, or resources allocated, that affect lives and communities. Working in partnership should not compromise this.

As a minimum, local authorities should agree some shared values and standards of conduct with their partners at the outset of any joint working. These may be different for each and every partnership.

Our partnerships project aims to encourage high standards in partnership working. This will be done by creating a level playing field based on commitment to a set of agreed values and a description of appropriate behaviour.

It will achieve this through producing a description of appropriate behaviour in partnership with Manchester City Council and in consultation with the council's partner organisations in the region. The description will illustrate appropriate behaviour in day-to-day partnership working based on the Nolan Principles of Standards in Public Life, and the experiences and needs of Manchester City Council and its partner organisations.

We intend that the work and learning from this project will be used as a basis for providing guidance nationally.

For further information on the governance and partnerships project, please contact Hannah Pearson, Research and Policy Adviser: **0161 817 5417** or email **hannah.pearson@standardsboard.gov.uk**.

THE BULLETIN*41*

Complaints about standards committees: Role of the Local Government Ombudsmen

Standards committees are within the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsmen (LGO). Therefore it is possible to make a complaint to the LGO of maladministration causing injustice, as a result of some action or inaction by a standards committee or authority monitoring officer around the handling of a Code of Conduct complaint.

Parish councils are outside the LGO's jurisdiction. However, there is no jurisdictional bar to the LGO investigating the actions of a standards committee of a responsible authority regarding the committee's actions, which relate to a complaint about a parish council.

The LGO recognise that the Standards Board for England is the body established by statute to oversee member conduct. However, in some circumstances the LGO may wish to consider allegations of administrative fault where the complainant can claim to have suffered an injustice as a result of that fault.

A complaint to the LGO may only be made by, or on behalf of, a member of the public or a body other than a local authority or other public service body. A complainant must be able to claim a personal injustice. An elected member may only complain to the LGO about something which affects them personally as a member of the public. This can include actions of the authority's standards committee and officers carrying out functions in relation to the standards committee.

The Standards Board and the LGO have just signed a revised Memorandum of Understanding setting out our relevant jurisdictions and how we will work together effectively.

Further information about the work of the LGO is available at: **www.lgo.org.uk**.

NALC 'Stepping Stones' regional conferences

The Standards Board will be exhibiting at the National Association of Local Councils (NALC)'s Stepping Stones regional conferences which take place in spring 2009. The conferences aim to share good practice and provide a regional networking opportunity for councillors and officers in all tiers of local government. More information on our activity at these events will be available from our website soon.

The dates for the events are:

Wednesday 11 February
The Oak Tree Conference Centre, Coventry

Saturday 21 February
The Hospitium, York

Tuesday 10 March
The Council Chamber, Congress Centre, London

REPORT TO:	Standards Committee
DATE:	7 January 2009
REPORTING OFFICER:	Strategic Director – Corporate & Policy
SUBJECT:	Local Code of Corporate Governance
WARD(S):	Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable the Standards Committee to review the Council's draft Local Code of Corporate Governance. The Business Efficiency Board will receive a similar report.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

That the Standards Committee reviews the draft Local Code of Corporate Governance and recommends it is referred to the Council for adoption and inclusion in the Council's Constitution.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

3.1 CIPFA and SOLACE (the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) have published an updated governance framework for local authorities – 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government'. This draft Local Code of Corporate Governance has been developed in response to that publication.

3.2 Good governance is defined as "the way in which an organisation ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner".

3.3 Whilst adoption of a local code of corporate governance is not a statutory requirement, it is considered to represent best practice. The purpose of the code is to provide a public statement showing how the Council complies with the principles of good governance.

3.4 The Council's governance arrangements have been assessed against the principles set out in the Framework document by the Corporate Governance Group, which comprises:

- The Strategic Director – Corporate & Policy
- The Monitoring Officer
- The Operational Director – Financial Services (s151 officer)
- The Operational Director – Policy & Performance

- The Chief Internal Auditor
- The Chief Scrutiny Officer

3.5 This review has informed the production of a draft Local Code of Corporate Governance, which is attached to this report. This identifies:

- The systems, processes and documentation that provides evidence of compliance with the principles of good governance; and

- The individuals and committees responsible for monitoring and reviewing the systems, processes and documentation identified.

3.6 The effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements, and the way in which compliance with them is monitored, is required by legislation to be publicly reported upon in the Annual Governance Statement, which is published with the Council's financial statements.

3.7 The Business Efficiency Board is responsible for reviewing and approving the Council's Annual Governance Statement. The diagram in Appendix 1 shows the framework established to provide members with assurance over the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements. This report is being presented to the Board at their meeting today.

3.8 The attention of the Standards Committee is particularly drawn to principle 3 of the 6 core principles in the code and the narrative dealing with how the Council applies that principle.

4.0 POLICY, FINANCIAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The development of a Local Code of Corporate Governance effectively draws together into one comprehensive document, the Council's individual policies, practices, cultures and values that help to ensure the proper conduct of its business.

4.2 There are no financial or legal issues arising directly from this report. However, the draft Local Code of Corporate Governance explains the arrangements in place to ensure that the Council:

- Provides value for money to taxpayers and service users;

- Recognises the limits of lawful action and observes both the specific responsibilities of legislation and the general responsibilities placed upon it by public law.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

5.1 **Children and Young People in Halton**

See 4.1 above.

5.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

See 4.1 above.

5.3 **A Healthy Halton**

See 4.1 above.

5.4 **A Safer Halton**

See 4.1 above.

5.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

See 4.1 above.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 Good governance is essential to ensure that local authorities are meeting the needs of their citizens and service users and are developing their community leadership role. Poor governance will adversely impact on effectiveness and lead to poorer public services and loss of public confidence.

6.2 The way in which the Council promotes and demonstrates the principles and values of good governance forms part of the annual 'Use of Resources' assessment. Failure to adopt a Local Code of Corporate Governance would represent a missed opportunity to publicise and strengthen the Council's governance arrangements.
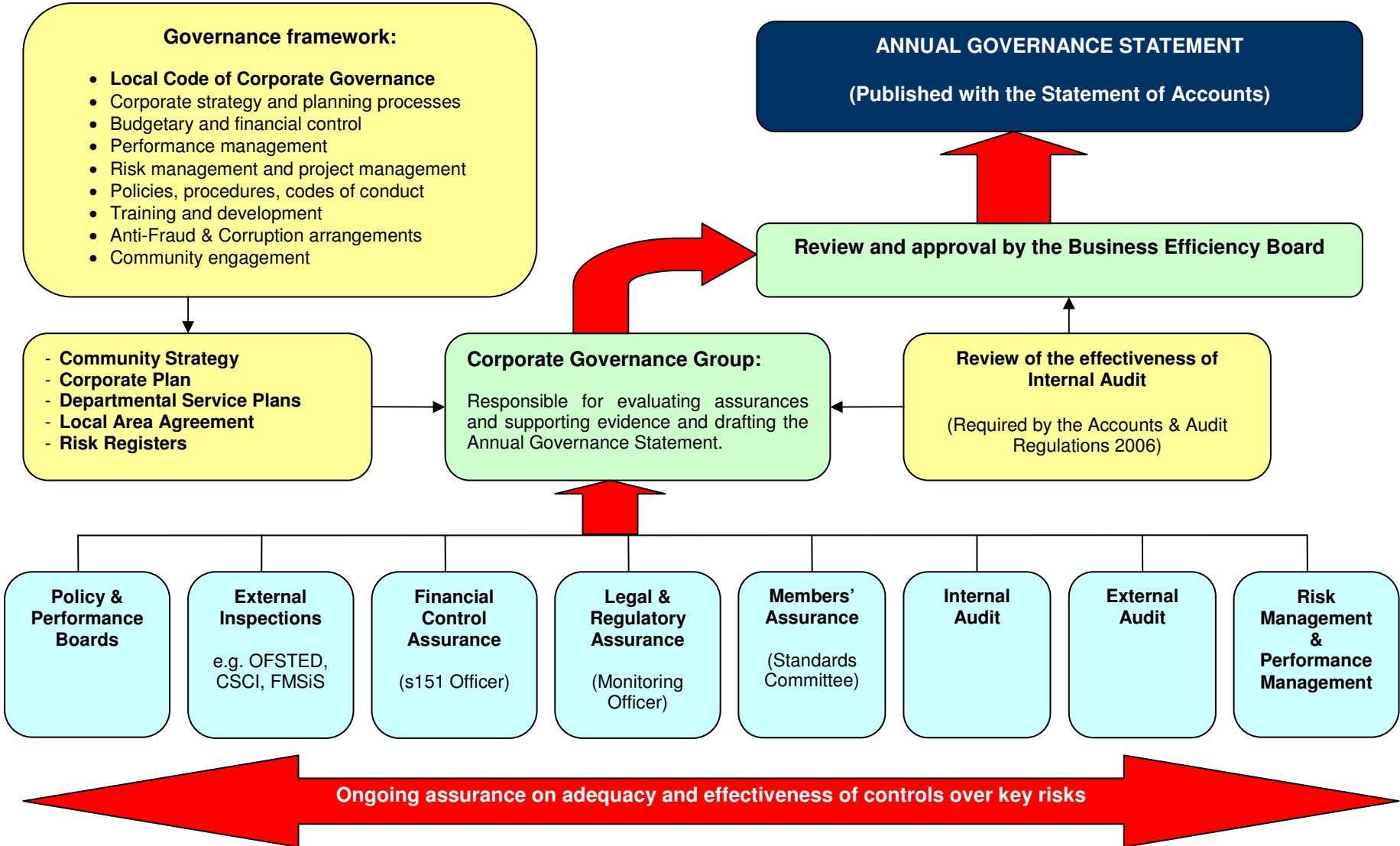
7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 The adoption of a Local Code of Corporate Governance would help to demonstrate that the Council recognises its accountability to its diverse communities.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact
CIPFA / SOLACE – Delivering good governance in Local Government: Framework (2007)	6th Floor, Municipal Building, Kingsway, Widnes	Mervyn Murphy

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT – ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

Governance framework:

- **Local Code of Corporate Governance**
- Corporate strategy and planning processes
- Budgetary and financial control
- Performance management
- Risk management and project management
- Policies, procedures, codes of conduct
- Training and development
- Anti-Fraud & Corruption arrangements
- Community engagement

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

(Published with the Statement of Accounts)

Review and approval by the Business Efficiency Board

- **Community Strategy**
- **Corporate Plan**
- **Departmental Service Plans**
- **Local Area Agreement**
- **Risk Registers**

Corporate Governance Group:

Responsible for evaluating assurances and supporting evidence and drafting the Annual Governance Statement.

Review of the effectiveness of Internal Audit

(Required by the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2006)

| Policy & Performance Boards | External Inspections e.g. OFSTED, CSCI, FMSiS | Financial Control Assurance (s151 Officer) | Legal & Regulatory Assurance (Monitoring Officer) | Members' Assurance (Standards Committee) | Internal Audit | External Audit | Risk Management & Performance Management |

Ongoing assurance on adequacy and effectiveness of controls over key risks

HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

1. Introduction

1.1 Governance is about how an organisation such as a local authority ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It is made up of the systems, processes, cultures and values, by which the organisation is directed and controlled and through which it accounts to, engages with and, in the case of a local authority, leads the community.

1.2 Good governance leads to good management, good performance and good stewardship of public money. It therefore enables the Council to effectively implement its vision in accordance with its values and to engage effectively with its citizens and service users and ensure good outcomes for them.

1.3 Halton Borough Council is committed to meeting best practice standards for good governance. This Code provides a public statement that sets out the way in which the Council will meet and demonstrate that commitment.

2. Principles of Corporate Governance

2.1 The Council operates through a governance framework which brings together and reflects legal requirements, governance principles and good management processes.

2.2 The Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance is based on the following six core principles:

(1) Focusing on the Council's purpose and on outcomes for the community.

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

(3) Promoting the Council's values and demonstrating the values of good governance through 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 accountability.

2.3 Supporting each of the core principles is a series of supporting principles. The way in which the Council has translated these principles into its governance framework is described in the appendix to this Code.

3. Monitoring and Review

3.1 The Council has two Committees that are jointly responsible for monitoring and reviewing the Council's corporate governance arrangements:

(1) The Business Efficiency Board is responsible for:

- Acting as the Council's Audit Committee;
- Approving the Council's Accounts;
- Approving the Annual Governance Statement;
- Monitoring performance against the Council's Efficiency Strategy.

(2) The Standards Committee is responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by the members and co-opted members of the authority.

3.2 The Corporate Governance Group will be responsible for monitoring and providing assurance on the governance process and making reports to the Business Efficiency Board and Standards Committee as appropriate. Its membership will include:

- The Strategic Director – Corporate & Policy
- The Monitoring Officer
- The Operational Director – Financial Services (s151 officer)
- The Operational Director – Policy & Performance, and
- The Chief Internal Auditor
- The Chief Scrutiny Officer

3.3 Assurance that the Council's corporate governance framework is operating as intended will come from a range of sources that include:

- Audit Commission Organisational Assessments
- Self-assessment against regulatory frameworks
- External inspections
- External Audit
- Internal Audit
- Standards Committee
- Policy & Performance Boards
- Performance management framework
- Risk management framework
- Budgetary control and financial management processes

4.   Annual Governance Statement

4.1   Each year the Council will review its corporate governance arrangements and publish an Annual Governance Statement. This will describe the arrangements that have been in place during the year and highlight any areas where improvement is required.

4.2   The Annual Governance Statement will be published as part of the Council's Statement of Accounts and will be reviewed by the Council's external auditor.

Signed: _____
                (Chief Executive)

Signed: _____
                (Council Leader)

How Halton Borough Council applies the Principles of Good Governance

Principle 1: Focusing on the Council's purpose and on outcomes for the community

Supporting Principle:	Being clear about the Council's purpose and its intended outcomes for citizens and service users.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
1.1	We have determined and published our vision and long term priorities for Halton.	• Corporate Plan 2006-2011
1.2	We have developed a long term strategy for the local area with our partners. It is based on consultation with local people about the sort of place they want the area to be. The strategy co-ordinates the actions of the public, private, voluntary and community sectors.	• Sustainable Community Strategy 2006-2011
1.3	We have agreed targets with Central Government that are based on the improvements that local people want to see.	• Local Area Agreement • Local Public Service Agreement
1.4	Our corporate planning framework ensures that the Council's operational activities are complementary to the delivery of our community aspirations and legal and statutory responsibilities.	• Departmental Service Plans
1.5	We publish our annual financial statements on the Council's website.	• Abstract of Accounts

Supporting Principle:	Making sure that users receive a high quality of service.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
1.6	We aim to ensure that the purchase or commissioning of goods, services and works required to deliver services are acquired under Best Value terms and are in accordance with our Strategic Priorities.	• Procurement Policy and Improvement Plan • Procurement Standing Orders
1.7	We have established a range of performance indicators used to measure progress against our key priorities. These are reported to the Corporate Management Team and to the Policy and Performance Boards (PPBs).	• Quarterly monitoring reports
1.8	We have established arrangements to ensure that services provided, whether directly or by contractors, partners or the voluntary sector, are delivered to a high standard.	• Contract monitoring procedures
1.9	We have effective procedures to respond to complaints.	• Corporate complaints procedure
1.10	We have developed arrangements to ensure that critical service delivery can be maintained or recovered during an emergency,	• Business Continuity Plans

Supporting Principle:	Making sure that taxpayers and service users receive value for money.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
1.11	One of our priorities is 'Corporate Effectiveness and Efficient Service Delivery', the aim of which is to "create the maximum effect on the quality of life in the communities of Halton through the efficient use of the Council's resources".	• Corporate Plan 2006-2011
1.12	We have developed, and are implementing, a strategy that formalises what we can do to ensure that we make the most of the resources available to continue to improve services and provide positive benefits for the people of Halton.	• Efficiency Strategy • Departmental Service Plans reflect efficiency improvements
1.13	We have established arrangements to ensure that financial resources are directed to our priorities.	• Medium Term Financial Strategy • Capital Programme • Revenue budget process
1.14	We have an internal audit function that provides a continuous audit of the Council's activities. It examines, evaluates and reports on the adequacy of the control environment as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources.	• Internal Audit Strategy • Annual Internal Audit Plan • Internal Audit reports
1.15	Our external auditors provide an annual assessment on how well we are managing and using our resources to deliver value for money and better and sustainable outcomes for local people.	• Use of Resources assessment
1.16	We have developed robust procedures to respond positively to the findings and recommendations of external auditors and statutory inspectors.	• Action plans developed in response to external inspections

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
1.17	We have established arrangements to minimise the risk of fraud and corruption.	• Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Strategy • Fraud Response Plan • Whistle-blowing Policy (Confidential Reporting Code) • A Benefits Investigation Unit whose primary task is to detect Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit fraud and take appropriate legal action against people who commit this type of fraud. • An internal audit function which is alert to the risk of fraud and corruption when reviewing the Council's systems and services.
1.18	The financial management of the Council's schools is externally assessed every three years to ensure that they are exercising effective financial control and stewardship over the significant amounts of public money delegated to them.	• Financial Management Standard in Schools assessment and accreditation

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

Supporting Principle:	Being clear about the Council's executive and non-executive functions and the roles and responsibilities of the scrutiny function.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
2.1	We have produced a documented framework that sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to make sure that these are efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. This framework sets out the roles and responsibilities of: • The Executive, the Leader and other Executive Members; • Policy & Performance Boards, which advise the Executive and Council on its policies, budgets and service delivery; • The committees established to fulfil the Council's regulatory and other functions.	• The Council Constitution

Supporting Principle:	Ensuring that a constructive working relationship exists between members and officers and that the responsibilities of members and officers are carried out to a high standard.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
2.2	We have clearly documented protocols governing relationships between members and officers.	• Member / Officer Protocol
2.3	We have clearly defined the relative roles and responsibilities of Members and senior officers.	• The Council Constitution • Councillor Role Profiles • Job descriptions
2.4	We have delegated most functions to the Executive and its sub-committees/boards with the exception of certain functions that are reserved for decision by Full Council.	• The Council Constitution
2.5	The Chief Executive is responsible for and accountable to the Council for all aspects of operational management.	
2.6	The Operational Director – Financial Services, as the s151 Officer appointed under the 1972 Local Government Act, carries overall responsibility for the financial administration of the Council.	
2.7	The Monitoring Officer (Operational Director – Legal, Organisational Development& Human Resources) carries overall responsibility for legal and regulatory compliance. The Monitoring Officer is required to report to Members should any proposal, decision or omission give rise to unlawfulness or maladministration.	

Supporting Principle:	Being clear about relationships between the Council, its partners and the public.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
2.8	We have developed a protocol to ensure effective communication between members and officers in their respective roles.	• Member/Officer protocol
2.9	We have clearly set out terms and conditions for the remuneration of members and officers and there is an effective structure for managing the process.	• Independent Remuneration Panel • Members Allowance Scheme • Pay and Grading Review
2.10	We have established a range of mechanisms to communicate our service objectives and to monitor performance.	• Local Area Agreement • Departmental Service Plans • National and local performance indicators • Corporate Performance Management Framework • Partnership Performance Management Framework • Customer satisfaction surveys • Corporate complaints procedure • Line management responsibilities
2.11	We have developed our vision, strategic plans, priorities and targets through robust mechanisms, and in consultation with the local community and other key stakeholders. We ensure that they are clearly articulated and disseminated.	Communities and stakeholders are consulted through: • Regular residents' surveys • Use of citizens' panels • Focus groups • Stakeholder consultation • Neighbourhood Management boards • Area Forums Communities and stakeholders are kept in touch through: • Council Newspaper • Area Forums

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
		• The Council's website • The Council's partners' websites • Stakeholder groups
2.12	We remind Members about their roles and responsibilities both individually and collectively in relation to partnership working. We also provide training for officers on partnership ethics.	• Member training and seminars
2.13	All joint or partnering arrangements with other bodies are subject to the prior approval of the Operational Director and Monitoring Officer (Legal, Organisational Development and Human Resources).	• Procurement Standing Orders
2.14	Our significant partnerships have been identified and work is ongoing to ensure that appropriate governance arrangements are in place for those partnerships.	• Governance of Partnerships Checklist • The work of Internal Audit • A Code of Practice for Partnership working is being developed

Principle 3: Promoting the Council's values and demonstrating the values of good governance through behaviour

Supporting Principle:	Ensuring that members and officers behave in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
3.1	We have defined and communicated the standards of conduct and personal behaviour expected of Members and employees through codes of conduct and protocols.	• Members' Code of Conduct • Employee Code of Conduct • Member/Officer Protocol • Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy • Standing Orders relating to Finance • Procurement Standing Orders • Member Training Programme • Dignity at Work Policy • Equal Opportunities Policy • Induction procedures • Members' Information Bulletin
3.2	We have put into place arrangements to ensure that Members and employees are not influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest in dealing with different stakeholders. We have also established appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice.	• Registers of Interests • Registers of Gifts & Hospitality • Whistle-blowing Policy (Confidential Reporting Code) • Systems to report and deal with any incidents of fraud and corruption • Grievance procedures • Internal Audit

Supporting Principle:	Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
3.3	We have developed and maintain shared values, including leadership values, for both the organisation and employees that reflect public expectations. We communicate these values to Members, employees, the community and our partners.	• Induction procedures • Human Resources policies • Publication of an Annual Governance Statement
3.4	We have put in place arrangements to ensure that systems and processes are designed in conformity with appropriate ethical standards and we monitor their continuing effectiveness in practice.	• Monitoring Officer role • Internal Audit • Corporate complaints procedure • The role of the Standards Committee in supporting Members' observation of their Code of Conduct • Employee Development Review procedures • Performance Management Framework
3.5	We have established an effective Standards Committee that promotes high standards of conduct and supports Members' observation of their Code of Conduct.	• Standards Committee Terms of Reference • Standards Committee minutes and agendas • Standards Committee training • Publicising the process to complain about Members' conduct

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

Supporting Principle:	Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
4.1	We operate an open and effective process for decision-making. We publish key decisions in the Council's Forward Plan. Our Council meetings are open to the public with the exception of where confidential or personal matters may be disclosed. We publish minutes of all Council meetings on our website.	• The Council Constitution • Forward Plan • Minutes of Council meetings
4.2	We have established six Policy & Performance Boards (PPBs) to provide an effective scrutiny function that encourages constructive challenge and enhances the Council's performance.	• PPBs' Terms of Reference • Minutes of PPB meetings
4.3	We have put into place arrangements to safeguard Members and employees against conflicts of interest.	• Registers of Interests • Registers of Gifts & Hospitality • Declarations of personal or prejudicial interests at the start of each meeting in which discussions involve a matter in which a Member has an interest. • The Monitoring Officer may be approached to advise on conflicts of interest.
4.4	We have designated the Business Efficiency Board (BEB) as the Council's Audit Committee. The Board is independent of the executive and scrutiny functions. Its terms of reference are consistent with CIPFA guidance on Audit Committees.	• BEB Terms of Reference • Minutes of BEB meetings
4.5	We have established effective, transparent and accessible arrangements to deal with complaints.	• Corporate complaints procedure

Supporting Principle:	Having and using good-quality information, advice and support.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
4.6	We have established, and are continuing to develop, sound systems for providing management information for performance measurement and decision-making purposes.	• Performance Management Framework • Data Quality Strategy
4.7	We provide decision-makers with information that is fit for purpose. This includes ensuring that decision-makers are provided with clear explanations of legal, financial and technical issues and their implications. We provide training to Members to ensure that we have a strong basis for quality decision-making.	• The executive report template requires information to be provided explaining the legal and financial implications of decisions, as well as implications for each of the corporate priorities. • Advice on financial, legal and technical issues is provided by the s151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer and other officers as required. • Reports are sent to decision-makers with the agenda of meetings on a timely basis. • The Council publishes a Forward Plan listing key decisions to be taken. • Policy is evidence based. The Community Strategy and Corporate Plan are based on regularly updated 'State of the Borough' reports, which bring together key facts and statistics with the result of surveys and consultation. Strategic needs analyses of Health, the economy and Community Safety have been undertaken. • Member Training Programme.

Supporting Principle:	Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
4.8	We have put in place risk management systems, including systems of internal control and an internal audit function, which are continually being developed. Members and officers at all levels recognise that risk management is part of their jobs.	• Risk Management Policy and Toolkit • Corporate Risk Register • Directorate Risk Registers linked to Departmental Service Plans • A Partnership Risk Register produced by the five specialist strategic partnerships (SSPs) • Member and officer training on risk management • The executive report template contains a section to consider the 'risk implications' of any decisions. • Internal Audit • The Business Efficiency Board reviews the Internal Audit work programme and oversees the implementation of audit recommendations. • Health and safety policies and procedures
4.9	We have established effective arrangements for 'whistle-blowing'.	• Confidential Reporting Code • Fraud telephone hotline • On-line reporting facility on the Council website

Supporting Principle:	Using legal powers to the full benefit of citizens and communities.	

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
4.10	We actively recognise the limits of lawful activity placed on the Council but also strive to utilise our legal powers to the full benefit of the community.	• One of the functions of the Monitoring Officer is to ensure the lawfulness and fairness of decision making. • The executive report template contains a section to consider the 'legal implications' of any decisions.
4.11	We recognise the limits of lawful action and observe both the specific requirements of legislation and the general responsibilities placed on local authorities by public law.	• The Legal Services Division produces a regular legal bulletin to update officers on relevant changes in legislation.
4.12	We observe all specific legislative requirements placed upon the Council, as well as the requirements of general law and, in particular, integrate the key principles of good administrative law – rationality, legality and natural justice – into our procedures and decision-making processes.	• Involvement of the Council's legal advisors in all major issues. • Member and officer training.

Principle 5: Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective

Supporting Principle:	Making sure that Members and officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
5.1	We provide induction programmes tailored to individual needs and opportunities for Members and Officers to update their knowledge on a regular basis.	• Member and employee induction programmes • Member training programme • Employee training and development programme • Achieving and maintaining the Investor in People Standard
5.2	We ensure that the Council's statutory officers have the skills, resources and support necessary to perform effectively in their roles and that these roles are understood throughout the Council.	• Departmental Service Plans reflect human resource requirements • Employee Development Review procedure • Job descriptions and person specifications have been produced for all posts • Recruitment and appointment policies and procedures • Reports from inspectorates and regulators • Systems exist to cascade information to Members and employees • Publication of the Constitution on the intranet and Council website

Supporting Principle:	Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance, as individuals and as a group.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
5.3	We assess the skills required by Members and employees and are committed to developing those skills to enable roles to be carried out effectively.	• Member induction programme • Corporate (employee) induction programme
5.4	We develop skills on a continuing basis to improve performance, including the ability to scrutinise and challenge, and to recognise when outside expert advice is needed.	• Personal development interviews for Members • Standards Board training
5.5	We ensure that effective arrangements are in place for reviewing the performance of the executive as a whole and of individual members.	• Scrutiny Development Plan • North West Charter for Elected Member Development - Exemplar Level status • Training opportunities for members individually and collectively, including a programme of seminars on topical matters • Comprehensive training programme for officers backed up by regular Employee Development Reviews

Supporting Principle:	Encouraging new talent for membership of the authority so that best use can be made of individuals' skills and resources in balancing continuity and renewal.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
5.6	We have established arrangements to encourage individuals from all sections of the community to engage with, contribute to, and participate in the work of the Council.	• Individuals are encouraged to participate in the work of the Council through extensive consultation on plans and strategies. • The Council's newspaper and website informs the community of forthcoming meetings, events and items in which the community are able to participate.
5.7	We will ensure that career structures are in place for Members and employees to encourage participation and development.	• Workforce Development Plan • Member training programme • Employee training and development programme • Employee Development Reviews • Personal development interviews for Members

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

Supporting Principle:	Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive accountability relationships.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
6.1	We are accountable to local people and institutional stakeholders.	- Elected Members are democratically accountable to their local area and this provides a clear leadership role in building sustainable communities. - The Corporate Plan is published on the Council's website. - The 'call in' procedure allows members to examine decisions made by the Executive in detail. Decisions may be 'called in', which means that implementation does not take place immediately to allow an opportunity for further consideration. - Elected members are involved in the Halton Strategic Partnership Board and its Specialist Strategic Partnerships (SSPs). Partnership minutes and performance are reported to the PPBs. - PPBs co-opt additional members, for example, LiNK representatives on the Healthy Halton PPB. - Provision exists in the Council's Constitution for the consideration of petitions. - Our financial statements are audited and published on the Council website. - Our External Auditor provides an annual organisational assessment of the Council's performance.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
		• We receive reports from numerous inspectorates and regulators throughout the year.
		• We are subject to, and report on performance against, a range of national indicators.

Supporting Principle:	Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
6.2	We ensure that clear channels of communication are in place with all sections of the community and other stakeholders.	- Partnership Community Engagement Strategy - Communication Strategy - Council website - Council minutes and agendas - Monthly staff magazine - Council Newspaper - Formal consultation arrangements include the Halton 2000 Citizen's Panel, the seven Area Forums, the Youth Forum and the Older Person's engagement network. - Informal consultation arrangements include contact via our website, Halton Direct Link and magazine based customer surveys. - Community and voluntary sector representatives have decision-making roles on the Halton Strategic Partnership Board and on all its SSPs. - Neighbourhood Management Partnership - Development of a Stakeholder Involvement Toolkit.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
6.3	We hold Council meetings in public, unless there are good reasons for confidentiality, and we allow the public the opportunity to speak.	• Council meeting minutes and agendas
6.4	We have arrangements in place to engage with all sections of the community effectively. These arrangements recognise that different sections of the community have different priorities and establish explicit processes for dealing with these competing demands.	• Sustainable Community Strategy • Area Forums • Strategies, policies and other publications are available in alternative formats upon request.
6.5	We have established a clear policy on the types of issues that the public and service users will be consulted on. This includes providing a feedback mechanism for those consultees to demonstrate what has changed as a result.	• Community Engagement Strategy • The Community Engagement Practitioners Network is responsible for developing a central register of all engagement activities across the Council. • Information regarding community engagement is clearly articulated on a dedicated section of the Halton Strategic Partnership website.
6.6	We publish performance information that gives information on the Council's vision, strategy, plans and financial statements. We also publish information about outcomes, achievements and service user satisfaction.	• We publish a summary of performance information and our financial statements. This is distributed to every household with the Council Newspaper. • Performance information and performance reports are published on the Council's website. • Places Survey (satisfaction survey)

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
6.7	The Council as a whole is open and accessible to the community, service users and employees. We have a commitment to openness and transparency in all our dealings, including partnerships, subject only to the need to preserve confidentiality in those specific circumstances where it is proper and appropriate to do so.	• Council agendas and minutes are published on the Council's website • Freedom of Information Publication Scheme • Publication of Management Team minutes on the intranet • Staff Team Briefs

Supporting Principle:	Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the staff.

Ref	How we apply the principles	How this is evidenced
6.8	We have developed and maintain a clear policy on how employees and their representatives are consulted and involved in decision-making.	• Trade Unions consultation • Staff surveys • Employee Development Reviews • Chat with the Chief Executive meetings • Team Briefings with feedback mechanism • Staff suggestion scheme • Monthly staff newsletter