



Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee 30 July 2012

Annual Governance Statement 2011/12

1. Summary and Reasons for Recommendations

- 1.1 The Council is required to produce and publish an Annual Governance Statement (AGS), covering six laid down core governance principles. The AGS is to be approved by Full Council, and signed by the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive Officer.

The proposed AGS for 2011/12 accompanies the Statement of Accounts. It covers:

- the Council's responsibilities in terms of the governance framework;
- St Edmundsbury's governance environment relating to the six laid down corporate governance principles; and
- the effectiveness of St Edmundsbury's arrangements and any significant areas of weakness identified, with proposed actions to address these.

The governance framework is designed to facilitate the achievement of the Council's policies, aims, and objectives and to identify and manage risk to a reasonable level. The governance framework is embedded within the Constitution and the systems, policies, procedures and operations in place throughout the council.

- 1.2 To prepare the AGS 2011/12 for publication in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2011.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:

- consider and review the draft AGS for 2011/12 prior to it accompanying the Council's 2011/12 Statement of Accounts; and
- endorse the process used to compile the AGS.

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3. Corporate Objectives

3.1 A sound system of corporate governance provides the framework and assurance within which the council can deliver its priorities. The Code of Corporate Governance defines governance as being about how the council 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.

The recommendation(s) meet the following priorities, as contained within the Corporate Plan:-

- Priority 1: Working together for strong, healthy and diverse communities
- Priority 2: Working together for prosperous and environmentally-responsible communities
- Priority 3: Working together for an efficient council

4. Key Issues

Background

4.1 Governance is about how the council 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 comprises the systems, processes, cultures and values, by which the council is directed and controlled and through which it is accountable to, engages with, and where appropriate, leads communities.

4.2 The council has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance which illustrates its commitment to the principles of good governance, maintaining its commitment through the development, adoption and continued maintenance of the Code.

4.3 At least once a year councils should carry out an annual review of their governance arrangements to ensure compliance with the six core principles of good governance as set out in their Code of Corporate Governance (as recommended by the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*):

- (1) Focusing on the purpose of the council and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area;
- (2) Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles;
- (3) Promoting values for the council and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour;
- (4) Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk;
- (5) Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective; and
- (6) Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

The key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the council's governance arrangements are outlined under these principles within **Annex A** of the AGS.

4.4 The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2011 contain a requirement that an AGS is prepared in accordance with proper practices in relation to internal control, is approved by the relevant body and accompanies the statement of

	accounts.
4.5	The AGS explains the processes and procedures in place that enable the council to carry out its functions effectively, providing assurance that its governance arrangements are adequate and operating effectively and / or identify action which is planned to ensure effective governance in the future.
4.6	Recognising that the preparation of the AGS is a wide ranging and a corporate matter, a working group of officers was established to oversee the process and production of the AGS. Evidence already held corporately was matched to the core principles with the group then asked to review and comment on the content. The group consisted of the Chief Finance Officer (S151 Officer), Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer), Internal Audit Manager, Senior Auditor, and the Policy, Performance & Customer Service Manager.
4.7	The outcome of the review has formed the basis of the AGS which is prepared on behalf of the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive Officer. Clearly both must be satisfied that the AGS is supported by reliable evidence and accurately represents the corporate governance environment.
4.8	The Committee receives this Statement for consideration and review prior to it accompanying the council's 2011/12 Statement of Accounts which is due to be submitted for approval at Full Council on 27 th September 2012. Any changes or comments this Committee wishes to make to the AGS will be made before it is signed by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive Officer.
5.	Other Options considered
5.1	N/A
6.	Community Impact
6.1	Crime and Disorder Impact <i>(including Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998)</i> None arise directly from this report.
6.2	Diversity and Equality Impact <i>(including the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment)</i> None arise directly from this report.
6.3	Sustainability Impact <i>(including completing a Sustainability Impact Assessment)</i> None arise directly from this report.
7.	Consultation <i>(refer to the Consultation and Community Engagement Strategy)</i>
7.1	Consultations have taken place with the AGS Working Group and Joint Management Team.
8.	Resource implications <i>(including asset management implications)</i>
8.1	The AGS accompanies the Statement of Accounts for 2011/12, although this report has no direct resource implications.

9. Risk/Opportunity Assessment *(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)*

9.1 No significant risks have been identified from preparing the AGS.

Risk area	Inherent level of Risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual Risk (after controls)
Failure to regularly monitor and improve the council's governance arrangements could weaken corporate governance, impacting on service delivery and leading to adverse comments from External Audit.	Medium	The Statement is fully supported by relevant documentation and evidence. An action plan will be introduced to address any issues identified.	Low

10. Legal or policy implications

10.1 The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2011 require the council to prepare and publish an AGS.

Ward(s) affected	All
Background Papers	a) Accounts and Audit (Amendment)(England) Regulations 2006 b) Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2011 c) Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (CIPFA SOLACE, 2007)

Annual Governance Statement 2011/12

By the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive Officer

1. Scope of responsibility

- 1.1 St Edmundsbury Borough Council (the council) 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. The council also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2 In discharging this overall responsibility, the council is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs and facilitating the effective exercise of its functions, including arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3 The council has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA / SOLACE Framework *Delivering Good Governance in Local Government*.
- 1.4 A copy of the Code is available electronically (via the website <http://www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/sebc/live/pdf/policy/Code%20CG.pdf>) or can be obtained from Internal Audit.
- 1.5 This Statement explains how the council has complied with the Code and also meets the requirements of Regulation 4(3) of The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 whereby all relevant bodies should prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

2. The purpose of the governance framework

- 2.1 Governance is about how the council 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. (Definition taken from the CIPFA/SOLACE document referred to above in paragraph 1.3).
- 2.2 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, and culture and values by which the authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the council to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost effective services.
- 2.3 The system of internal control is a significant part of that framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can therefore only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to

identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the council's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

- 2.4 The governance framework has been in place at the council for the year ended 31 March 2012 and up to the date of approval of the annual Statement of Accounts.

3. The governance framework

- 3.1 The council has adopted the fundamental principles of corporate governance set out in the CIPFA / SOLACE governance framework. These are:
- (a) focusing on the purpose of the council and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area;
 - (b) members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles;
 - (c) promoting values for the council and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour;
 - (d) taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk;
 - (e) developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective; and
 - (f) engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.
- 3.2 The key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the council's governance arrangements are discussed under these principles in **Annex A**.
- 3.3 In June 2009, CIPFA launched its *Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Public Service Organisations*. The Statement recommended that organisations should use the document as a framework to benchmark their existing arrangements, and that they should report publicly on compliance to demonstrate commitment to good practice in both governance and financial management.
- 3.4 The Chief Finance Officer undertook the self assessment in 2009/10 to determine the degree with which the council complies. Overall, the self assessment illustrated that the council was already substantially complying with requirements. The main area for development where we could further strengthen our arrangements was that more work should be undertaken in collaborating with partners and stakeholders when planning the longer term financial strategy of the council. This area has been acknowledged and indeed is a fundamental part of the work being undertaken to take forward our shared services strategy with Forest Heath District Council.

3.5 In addition, the governance requirements to support the principles in the Chief Financial Officer statement were incorporated into the authority's local Code of Corporate Governance.

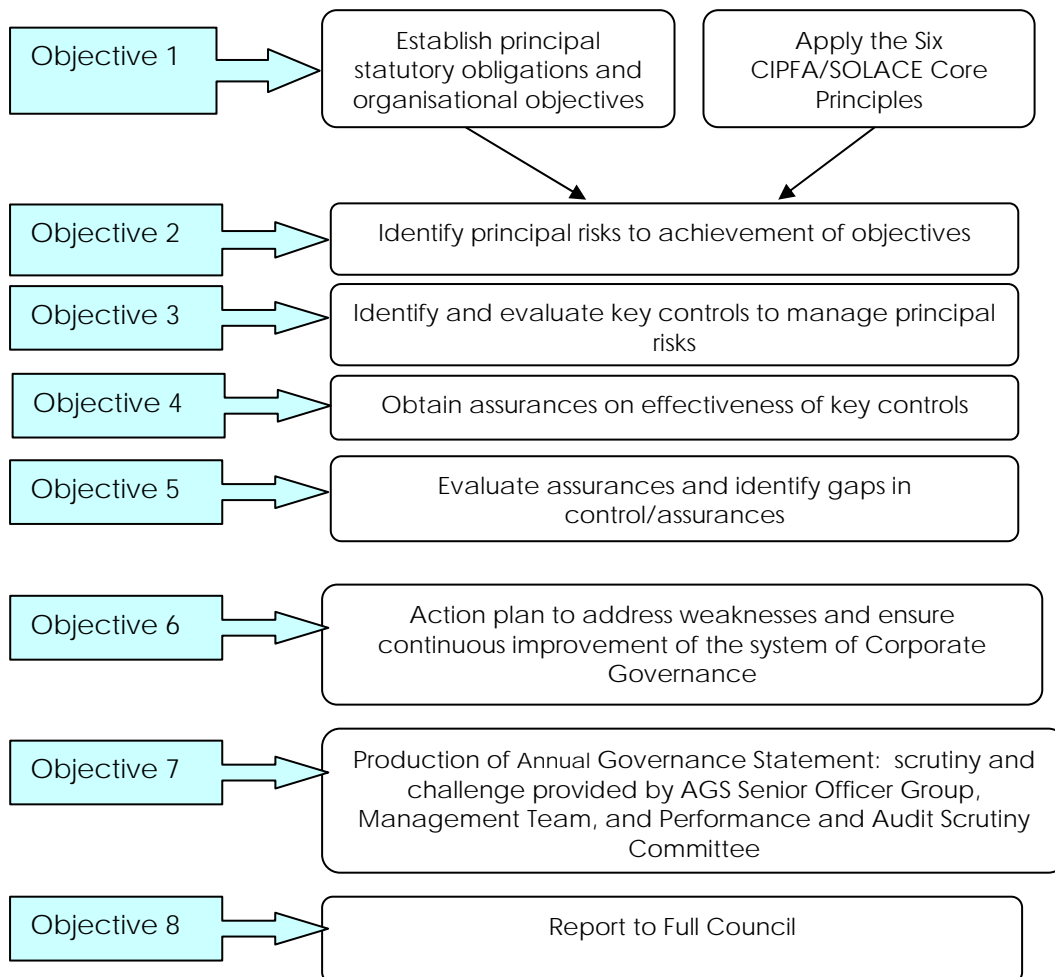
4. Review of effectiveness

4.1 St Edmundsbury Borough Council has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by:

- the work of the senior managers within the council who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment;
- the Internal Audit Manager's annual report; and also
- comments made by the external auditors and other review agencies and inspectorates.

4.2 This review of effectiveness is undertaken in line with CIPFA guidance 'The Annual Governance Statement, Rough Guide for Practitioners' and follows the process shown below.

Review of Annual Governance Statement and Assurance Gathering Process:



- 4.3 Recognising that the preparation of the AGS is a wide ranging and a corporate matter, a working group of officers was established to oversee the process and production of the AGS.
- 4.4 Maintaining and reviewing the effectiveness of the governance framework is achieved through / informed by the following:
- The council revised its **Code of Corporate Governance** during 2008 to ensure that it reflects good practice. Further changes were made in 2010 in accordance with the CIPFA / SOLACE framework document '*Application Note to Delivering Good Governance in Local Government; a Framework*' issued in March 2010. In addition to reviewing the Code, the council continues to review and put into place improved policies, management processes and reporting arrangements to enable it to satisfy itself that its approach to corporate governance is both adequate and effective in practice and that sound systems of internal control are operating.
 - The council's **corporate governance arrangements** include clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the Constitution for the Chief Executive Officer (as Head of Paid Service), the Head of Legal and Democratic Services (as Monitoring Officer) and the Chief Finance Officer (as the council's Section 151 Officer).
 - The **Monitoring Officer** is responsible for the administration of the council's political management structures, including ensuring that the council has acted lawfully and that agreed standards have been met.
 - The **Chief Finance Officer** is Section 151 Officer for the purposes of satisfying the Local Government Act 1972 and is responsible for ensuring that appropriate advice is given to the council on all financial matters, for keeping proper financial records and accounts, and for maintaining an effective system of internal financial control.
 - Issues of strategic and corporate importance are referred to the **Cabinet**. Executive functions are performed by the Cabinet. These functions are grouped together in the form of Cabinet portfolios, with responsibility for them allocated to individual Members of the Cabinet, on an annual basis.
 - **Management Team** has overall responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment and reviews the draft Annual Governance Statement prior to submission to Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee.
 - A **Standards Committee** is in place. It comprises three councillors; three independent members; and three members of parish/town councils in the council's area. Its roles and functions include promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors, assisting councillors to observe the Members Code of Conduct, monitoring the operation of the Members Code of Conduct and dealing with complaints that the Code has been breached. (The Standards regime will change as a result of the Localism Act. It is

proposed that the three elected members continue in post for the time being to form a smaller Standards Committee, but in the near future it is expected that shared arrangements with Forest Heath will be put in place).

- The primary purpose of the **Overview and Scrutiny Committee** is to improve the delivery of policies and services by providing a check on the way the council works i.e. by acting as a 'critical friend' and assessing the 'corporate health' of the authority as a whole.
- The **Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee** is independent from the executive function. The Committee monitors and scrutinises the performance of the council's services through receiving regular reports in relation to performance indicators, financial performance, risk management and internal control. This committee also acts as the council's audit committee.
- The role of the **Strategic Risk Management Group** is to manage the process of updating the corporate risk register on a quarterly basis (prior to the register being reviewed by Management Team and Corporate Management Team).
- The council has a **Performance Management Group**, its vision to support the Council and its partners to improve performance and value for money for service users. The Performance Management Group meets approximately every two months to monitor and review performance across all services using national frameworks/toolkits and individual service information to improve performance for the authority (this arrangements is under review as part of shared services and is likely to change in the near future).
- The council monitors the performance of its services by quarterly reporting to the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, using a set of key performance indicators which are reviewed and updated annually.
- **Internal Audit** is an assurance function that provides an independent and objective opinion to the organisation on the control environment, by evaluating its effectiveness in achieving the organisation's objectives. It objectively examines, evaluates and reports on the adequacy of the control environment as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources.
- Based upon the audit work undertaken during the financial year 2011/12 the **Internal Audit Manager** has confirmed that he can provide reasonable assurance that the system of internal control of the council, within the areas reviewed, as well as the risk management systems, have operated adequately and effectively during the year. Internal Audit work has, however, identified a number of areas where existing arrangements could usefully be improved.

- The council is subject to an annual programme of **independent external audits and statutory inspections**. The external auditor summarises the findings from his audit of the council's systems and his assessment of the council's arrangements to achieve value for money.
 - The council's Constitution includes both **Financial and Contracts Procedure Rules**. All proposals of a significant nature are assessed for legality, risk and financial impact prior to a decision being made.
- 4.5 We (the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive Officer) have been advised on the implications of the result of the review of the effectiveness of the governance framework by the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee. Specific opportunities for improvement in governance and internal controls identified as part of the assurance processes detailed above have been addressed or are included in action plans for the relevant managers.

5. Significant governance issues

- 5.1 Governance is about running things properly ensuring that the council is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It is foundation for the delivery of good quality and improved services that meet the local communities needs.
- 5.2 In determining the significant issues to disclose, we have considered whether issues had:
- seriously prejudiced or prevented achievement of council objectives;
 - resulted in a need to seek additional funding to allow it to be resolved or had resulted in a significant diversion of resources from another aspect of the council's services;
 - led to material impact on the accounts;
 - committee had advised that it should be considered significant for this purpose;
 - received adverse commentary in external inspection reports;
 - the Internal Audit Manager had reported on it as significant in the annual opinion on the council's internal control environment;
 - attracted significant public interest or had seriously damaged the council's reputation; and
 - resulted in formal action being taken by the S151 Officer and / or the Monitoring Officer.

Conclusion

- 5.3 As a result of the work undertaken to review arrangements within the governance framework for 2011/12, we have reached the opinion that no significant issues have been identified. This is a reflection of the strong corporate governance framework adopted by the council.

Signed:**Date:**.....
Leader of the Council

Signed:**Date:**.....
Chief Executive Officer

	Core Principle	Supporting Principles	St Edmundsbury Evidence
1	Focusing on the purpose of the council and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.	Exercising strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the council's purpose, vision and its intended outcome for citizens and service users.	<p>The council has had a Corporate Plan since 2003. Whilst the Plan has been subject to an annual review, the same four corporate priorities have remained in place. Following the borough council elections in May 2011, it was identified that a revision of the Corporate Plan and priorities was necessary due to a number of factors, not least because of the council's more limited budget, increased focus on localism and the ending of the major capital programme. A new Corporate Plan for the period 2012-2016 has been developed. The draft Plan was considered by Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet in February and March 2012 and it is subject to approval by Full Council in June 2012.</p> <p>The Corporate Plan sets out the council's vision for the future. It also establishes the priorities and, most importantly, actions that the council needs to take to help make that vision a reality. Communities are at the heart of the Corporate Plan, with priorities focused on delivering actions which will improve support and improve the borough for the benefit of communities. The Plan identifies three new priorities.</p> <p>The Corporate Plan represents the key planning document for the council from which a number of supporting strategies / plans are developed. These include, amongst others, the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Asset Management Plan and Local Development Framework. The Corporate Plan also links with a number of other key drivers, all of which help to shape the future of the borough, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision 2031 which is a new strategic long term vision which includes every aspect of life in Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and the Rural Area including housing, shops, business, open spaces, schools, transport, health, social services, leisure and planning for new neighbourhoods. • The West Suffolk Partnership (previously the West Suffolk Local Strategic Partnership until it was dissolved in February 2012) is a group partners who have a shared interest in developing and maintaining safe, strong and sustainable communities whilst also delivering value for money and improving efficiency.

		<p>Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service whether directly, or in partnership, or by commissioning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Suffolk Community Strategy is a document which informs work across the county which local organisations are working towards. <p>Promotion of the council's vision and priorities comes via the council's corporate magazine, Community Spirit and the Annual Report which provides highlights of the council's achievements and progress over the past 12 months.</p> <p>The council's services are divided into different service areas. Annually each is required to write a service plan which sets a clear direction for the service by outlining what the future tasks and projects are for that area. Each service plan considers the corporate priorities of the council and as such they feed in to, and are derived from, the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>The council has a Performance Management Group, the group meets regularly to monitor and review performance across all services using national frameworks/toolkits and individual service information to improve performance for the authority.</p> <p>Key performance indicators are considered and monitored by Management Team and Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis to ensure both are fully aware of progress against targets. Any major service issues and developments would be referred to Cabinet for attention.</p> <p>The council endeavours to get things right first time, but recognises that there may be occasions where it does not. A feedback form is available for complaints, comments and suggestions, as the sooner the council is notified of them the sooner it can put things right and improve its services. These can be made on-line, by telephone, or in writing. Results are reported twice a year to Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, in order that they can monitor any trends. A formal complaints procedure is also in place with targets set for responding to all complaints received.</p> <p>During 2011/12 the council carried out three customer surveys to support the development of shared services business cases for Planning, Housing, and Environmental Health. These</p>
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		<p>Ensuring that the council makes best use of resources and that tax payers and service users receive excellent value for money.</p>	<p>customer surveys were designed to help understand how customers feel when accessing services and whether or not they would like to access services differently in the future. In addition, the customer service team at West Suffolk House continues to distribute feedback forms to visitors in order to monitor the level of service provided and to address any issues.</p> <p>The council's overall financial arrangements are governed by the Medium Term Financial Strategy which sets out the financial framework for delivery of the council's priorities.</p> <p>The current economic climate continues to have a significant impact on local authorities. The council has responded to these changes by seeking opportunities for joint working with other local authorities, in particular with Forest Heath District Council, the purpose of which is to achieve efficiency savings for both, whilst maintaining and where possible, improving services offered to the residents of both areas.</p> <p>Given the financial environment, in particular the squeeze on household budgets, Cabinet took the decision in 2011/12 to undertake an extensive public consultation regarding the council's key savings/new income proposals for 2012/13. The results of this survey underpinned all of the budget decisions made regarding 2012/13.</p> <p>The council has adopted an innovative approach to achieving efficiencies through service reviews and the DR-IVE (Dynamic Review, Innovation, Value and Enterprise) programme and has an excellent track record of achieving year on year budget savings, having delivered £8.9million since 2005/06.</p> <p>An annual audited Statement of Accounts is produced and published showing the council's financial position.</p> <p>A senior officer pay policy was approved in February 2012: this being the first such pay policy in Suffolk.</p>
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Evidence to Support the Core Principles

Annex A

2	<p>Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.</p>	<p>Ensuring effective leadership throughout the council and being clear about executive and non-executive functions and of the roles and responsibilities of the scrutiny function.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>The council has approved a Constitution which defines and documents the roles and responsibilities of councillors, the Leader, the Major and Cabinet along with senior officer functions. Elements of the Constitution are subject to annual review to ensure that it reflects new legislation and working practices and remains fit for purpose.</p> <p>Policy and decision making are facilitated by a clear framework of delegation as set out in the council's Constitution, with clear details of delegated authorities to officers. The Constitution also sets our rules of procedure and codes of conduct defining the standards of behaviour for members and staff.</p> <p>The council has several committees which carry out regulatory or scrutiny functions.</p> <p>In 2011/12 Corporate Management Team met on a weekly basis providing the strategic direction of the council in delivering the requirement of members. This arrangement has been superseded early in 2012/13 with the introduction of a joint Management Team consisting of senior officers from both Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury who now meet fortnightly.</p> <p>The statutory roles of Head of Paid Service, Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer have been vested in the Chief Executive Officer, Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Chief Finance Officer (in respect to the Chief Finance Officer role the council's governance arrangements comply with the requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Public Service Organisations) respectively.</p> <p>The Constitution includes guidance on communicating with the media, Member / Officer Protocols and the Members' Allowance Scheme.</p>
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		<p>Ensuring relationships between the council, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other.</p>	<p>The Corporate Plan is the key document which outlines the council’s vision for the future, establishing priorities and most importantly, actions the council plans to take to help make the vision a reality. When identifying priorities for the Corporate Plan the views of stakeholders are taken into account.</p> <p>Appropriate routes and methods are used to ensure two-way communication is maintained between St Edmundsbury's services, their customers, partners and the public generally. With the declining use of expensive printed material, services are now beginning to explore the use of social media to interact with interested groups and individuals.</p> <p>St Edmundsbury recognises the importance of partnership working and the benefits it can bring in the shaping, commissioning and delivery of services for local people and achieving more efficient use of resources. For example, in September 2011 we supported the community asset transfer of the Southgate Community Centre to the Southgate Community Partnership, and in November 2011 the transfer of ownership of the popular Victory Sports Ground in Bury St Edmunds to a partnership comprising of Victory Sports Ground Ltd, Bury St Edmunds Cricket Club and South Lee School who will develop a new sports hall and pavilion for the community at the ground.</p> <p>A memorandum of understanding has been drawn up between St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath, in respect of the shared services agenda. The purpose of the document is to demonstrate to the public, councillors and staff how the two councils will work together to maintain service levels, increase resilience and deliver services at lower costs to residents, businesses and visitors in West Suffolk.</p> <p>The council's website provides information to the public on 'Your Councillors'. We also use translation services when requested for overcoming language barriers.</p>
3	Promoting values for the council and	Ensuring members and officers exercise leadership by	<p>The council has adopted a Code of Corporate Governance which has been prepared in accordance with the principles outlined in the CIPFA/SOLACE publication.</p>

Evidence to Support the Core Principles

Annex A

	<p>demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.</p>	<p>behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance.</p> <p>Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective.</p>	<p>The behaviour of officers and members is regulated through separate Codes of Conduct which have been formally approved and adopted.</p> <p>Both Codes are supported by the Member / Officer Protocol and Responsibility of Functions, all of which form an integral part of the Constitution, as are the Financial Procedure Rules and Contract Procedure Rules.</p> <p>Separate policies exist on Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption, Whistle Blowing, Money Laundering and E-mail and Internet Usage, which are promoted internally via communication channels.</p> <p>Registers for the recording of financial / non financial interests which could be considered to conflict with authority's interests and the offer / receipt of goods and hospitality are maintained for both officers and members.</p> <p>Each member receives copies of the meeting agenda in advance. As one of the agenda items for each meeting, members are required to declare any interests at the outset of the meeting.</p> <p>The council supports a culture of behaviour based on its organisational values as defined in the Corporate Plan. These values guide both how the long term vision of the council is put into effect and how members and officers behave in their day-to-day work.</p> <p>A Standards Committee is in place, its roles and functions include promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by councillors, assisting councillors to observe the Members Code of Conduct, monitoring the operation of the Members Code of Conduct and overseeing matters referred to the Monitoring Officer by an Ethical Standards Officer of the National Standards Board. High compliance with the Code of Conduct is indicated by the very small number of complaints of breach. In 2011/12 the Standards Committee has dealt with five complaints, of which two were against Borough Councillors. Both have been investigated but not yet concluded.</p> <p>A staff disciplinary and capability policy / procedure is in place which sets out the councils</p>
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			<p>expectations in terms of behaviour, conduct and performance which staff are made aware of through induction and the performance development review process.</p> <p>The council has been successful in being awarded the Member Development Charter for a further three years from 5 October 2011.</p>
4	Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk.	Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcome of constructive scrutiny.	<p>The council's Constitution sets out how the council operates and the process for policy and decision making, with a copy published on the council's website.</p> <p>Open data is about increased transparency and sharing the information the council holds with the wider community. An 'open data' page has been created on the website which provides information about the way in which the council works and how its finances are spent, for example, all payments to suppliers over £500 is published on the website, whilst details of senior officer salaries are published within the Statement of Accounts.</p> <p>Full Council sets the policy and budget framework, whilst all key decisions are made by the Cabinet, with each member of the Cabinet having a portfolio of work for which they take responsibility for.</p> <p>The Leader's Forward Plan of key decisions to be taken over the next four months is published on the council's website.</p> <p>All committee agendas and minutes are available on-line for the public to access, with paper copies available on request (except where there are restrictions).</p> <p>A protocol for the referral of Councillor Calls for Action to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee exists, to guide members seamlessly through the process.</p> <p>Registers for the recording of financial / non financial interests which could be considered to conflict with authority's interests and the offer / receipt of goods and hospitality are maintained for both officers and members.</p>

		<p>Having good quality information, advice and support to ensure that services are delivered effectively and are what the community wants/needs.</p> <p>Ensuring that an effective risk</p>	<p>The council has an active scrutiny function and audit committee. The primary purpose of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is to improve the delivery of policies and services by providing a check on the way the council works, i.e. by acting as a 'critical friend' and addressing the 'corporate health' of the authority as a whole. The Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee acts as the council's Audit Committee and has specific responsibility for scrutinising the Statement of Accounts, risk management, performance management, audit arrangements, the Annual Governance Statement and budgetary control and monitoring.</p> <p>The council has a formal complaints procedure which allows the public and other stakeholders to make a complaint regarding the service received from the council. Complaints can be made on-line, by telephone, or in writing, and the council has set targets for responding to all complaints received.</p> <p>All decisions made by Cabinet are made on the basis of written reports, including assessments of the legal, policy and resource implications, sustainability, diversity and equality and community impact, and consideration of the risk involved and how these will be managed. All Cabinet decisions are made in the full knowledge that they may be 'called in' by a small group of councillors.</p> <p>As a council we collect and use many different types of data from a wide variety of sources, including customers, stakeholders and partners and other local authorities and government bodies. Data quality is crucial and the availability of complete, accurate and timely data is important in supporting customer care, corporate governance, management and service agreements for service planning and accountability. The council first adopted a Data Quality Policy in 2008 which has been revised in 2011 to take into account the Localism Bill and the government's transparency agenda. The policy was updated in partnership with Forest Heath District Council. We also publish our equality data in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>The Risk Management Strategy provides guidance to members and officers on responsibilities and on the application of risk management processes.</p>
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			<p>Within service areas staff monitor the introduction of legislation specific to their expertise, for example changes to planning fees or new food safety regulations. Where legislation has a corporate or cross-cutting effect, Legal Services and Policy will generally co-ordinate dissemination of information and training.</p> <p>Policies and procedures governing the council's operations include both Financial and Contracts Procedure Rules. Ensuring compliance with these is the responsibility of management across the council. Internal Audit checks that policies and procedures are complied with. Where incidents of non-compliance are identified, appropriate action is taken.</p> <p>It is the role of the council's Internal Audit section to review, appraise and report on the effectiveness and efficiency of the system of internal control, risk management and governance and how these arrangements are operating. This is achieved by undertaking audits across the council's functions in accordance with the Audit Plan. Annually, the Internal Audit Manager drafts a report for presentation at the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee which includes his opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's risk management systems and internal control environment.</p>
5	Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective.	Making sure that members and officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles.	<p>The council aims to ensure that members and officers have the skills, knowledge and capacity they need to discharge their responsibilities and recognises the value of well trained and competent officers in effective service delivery.</p> <p>A Workforce Development Plan is in operation and includes the following aspects: developing leadership capacity, developing skills and capacity of the workforce, developing the organisation, resourcing local government and pay and rewards.</p> <p>Job descriptions and person specifications have been drawn up for posts to ensure that the best candidates are appointed into each position.</p> <p>Corporate induction days are held for new officers, which provide an overview of the corporate vision and priorities of St Edmundsbury Borough Council, an understanding of the activities of</p>

		<p>Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance, as individuals and as a group.</p>	<p>the council and the role of officers in these activities. In conjunction with Forest Heath District Council we also held familiarisation sessions whereby staff from both authorities visited the offices. This supported the shared service agenda.</p> <p>Induction training courses for members are provided after each election which are open to experienced as well as new members, and include a section on standards, ethics and codes of conduct.</p> <p>All officers receive an annual performance development review at which performance is measured against set objectives, with training / development needs also identified as part of this process.</p> <p>A shared Learning and Development Service exists across both St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath, offering a range of learning opportunities to officers with a focus on interventions to support the delivery of the shared services programme.</p> <p>A learning and development resource page is available on the council's intranet. The page contains quick links, contact information, information relating to local providers and other learning and development resources.</p> <p>Training courses are regularly advertised in the weekly staff newsletter, whilst e-learning modules continue to be developed. Where possible, joint training sessions are held for staff at St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath.</p> <p>Annually, councillors are provided with a Member Development Plan to complete, in order to identify their own priorities for improved skills and knowledge. In addition, a range of skills workshops via the Member Development Programme are offered to councillors.</p> <p>We continue to support workforce development through the positive promotion of Adult Learner Week and in 2010 were delighted to win the East of England Local Government Association's Award for Workforce Development. Our focus on adult learning has also resulted in our work</p>
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Evidence to Support the Core Principles

Annex A

		Encouraging new talent for membership of the council so that best use can be made of resources in balancing continuity and renewal.	<p>being identified as best practice by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.</p> <p>Political groups have a role in encouraging new talent and representatives of all sections of the community to stand for election as members of the council.</p> <p>Budget provision is set aside annually to ensure training / development needs are met.</p>
6	Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.	Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive accountability relationships.	<p>The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has a variety of ways in which to challenge the Cabinet, one being via the call-in process, although the council uses this mechanism sparingly, which can be taken as a sign that the decision making process is working as it should.</p> <p>The Councillor Call for Action (CCfA) allows the council to refer matters to its Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration. The aim is to help councillors raise matters on an authority's agenda on behalf of their constituents.</p> <p>The Annual Scrutiny Report sets out achievements and explains the future work programme. The report is not intended to cover all the work of the scrutiny committees, but to present some examples of where and how scrutiny has contributed to changes and service improvements.</p> <p>For 2011/12, the council's external auditors are the Audit Commission: they audit the Statement of Accounts as well as providing the council with an Annual Audit and Inspection Letter containing a detailed commentary on the council's affairs, financial and otherwise.</p> <p>Task and Finish Groups have been appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee since July 2011 of which 2 have been completed, 5 are currently running and 2 yet to be commenced with the success of this new way of working judged by the outcomes of the Groups. A vast range of organisations and individuals have been consulted by the Groups since they commenced, including members of the public, Suffolk Constabulary, over 30 local and national</p>

		<p>Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly by the council or in partnership.</p>	<p>disability and voluntary organisations, owners and occupiers of Conservation Areas, the Homes and Communities Agency and visitors to the Bury St Edmunds Christmas Fayre, amongst many others. Although it is still early days for this way of working, the Groups have proven successful in allowing more in-depth scrutiny and a stronger Member lead on often controversial issues.</p> <p>St Edmundsbury recognises that communication with all stakeholders is a fundamental role in the successful delivery of high quality, cost effective services.</p> <p>A West Suffolk Communications Strategy is set to be developed and approved by St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath councils during 2012. Communications plans are used to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery for specific projects or activities either by St Edmundsbury alone or in partnership with other organisations. St Edmundsbury's communications adhere to the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity 2011, especially those elements which relate to accountability and cost-effectiveness.</p> <p>Given the wider financial environment, in particular the squeeze on household budgets, Cabinet took the decision this year to undertake extensive public consultation regarding the key savings/new income proposals. This consultation took the form of focus groups with residents, parishes and town councils, a postal survey to 2,000 households and an online survey. The results underpinned all of the budget decisions made regarding 2012/13.</p> <p>The council is committed to seeking the views of people living and working within the borough to ensure that their views are reflected in the council's priorities and service delivery. The Community Engagement Strategy sets out the council's approach to consultation and community involvement, along with providing guidance to councillors and officers about how to consult people effectively.</p> <p>The principles within the Community Engagement Strategy are influenced by the Statement of Community Involvement, a document which sets out how the council intends to involve all the people who have a stake or an interest in the future planning of the borough, whether they are organisations, developers or members of the public.</p>
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