

**Divisions Affected – N/A**

## **AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**13 March 2024**

### **OXFORDSHIRE CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE**

**Report by the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1. To approve the Oxfordshire Code of Corporate Governance attached to this report.**

#### **Background**

- 2. In 2016 CIPFA & SOLACE produced an updated guidance and framework with the identified principles that should underpin the governance of each local authority, and a structured approach to assist individual authorities to achieve good governance, 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016 Edition'. The Council's Code of Corporate Governance is based upon this guidance.**
- 3. The Council's Code of Corporate Governance (the Code) is based on the seven core principles which are set out in 2016 CIPFA & SOLACE: "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016 Edition": -**
  - A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law;**
  - B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement;**
  - C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits;**
  - D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes;**
  - E. Developing the County Council's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it;**
  - F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management; and**
  - G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.**

4. The Framework urges local authorities to test their structures against these principles by:
  - Reviewing their existing governance arrangements against the Framework;
  - Developing and maintaining an up-to-date local code of governance including arrangements for ensuring its ongoing application and effectiveness;
  - Preparing an Annual Governance Statement in order to report publicly on the extent to which they comply with their own code, including how they have monitored the effectiveness of their governance arrangements in the year, and on any planned changes for the coming period.
5. The Corporate Governance Assurance Group (an internal officer group) has reviewed and updated Oxfordshire County Council's Code of Corporate Governance, which is subject to an annual review; the next review date is March 2025.

## **Format of the Oxfordshire Code of Corporate Governance**

6. The Code shows how Oxfordshire County Council complies with the principles of good governance.
7. Appendix A of the code sets out the actions and behaviours taken by the Council that demonstrate good governance.
8. This section of the Code is taken from 2016 CIPFA & SOLACE: 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016 Edition' guidance as written, to aid the reading of it, and is not subject to change by the Council or more eloquent words.
9. Appendix B of the Code provides evidence that demonstrates that the Council is delivering good governance.
10. This Code has been drafted with the oversight of the Corporate Governance Assurance Group (CGAG) and with input from Extended Leadership Team representatives. The Council Management Team (CMT) have also had an opportunity to review the code and comment upon it ahead of the Audit and Governance Committee.

## **Financial implications**

11. There are no direct financial implications.

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## Legal implications

12. There is no statutory requirement for a Code of Corporate Governance. The code complements and underpins the Annual Governance Statement by demonstrating, with evidence, how the Council meets the good governance principles set out in the Good Governance Framework published in 2016 by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy.

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Annex: Oxfordshire Code of Corporate Governance

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