Code of Corporate Governance

April 2025

Code of Corporate Governance

Bury Council is committed to ensuring the highest standards of governance, this code of governance is underpinned by the seven key principles set out in the current revised framework 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Guidance notes for English Authorities (2016 Edition)', published by Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA), and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives & Senior Managers (SOLACE). The guidance states that "the overall aim is to ensure that resources are directed in accordance with agreed policy and according to priorities, that there is sound and inclusive decision making and that there is clear accountability for the use of those resources in order to achieve desired outcomes for service users and communities."

Corporate Governance is the term used to describe how the council manages its affairs and its relationship with the community, colleagues, customers, and partners. Engaging with our residents and stakeholders. It focuses on outcomes for the community and implements our vision. It sets out how we take decisions ensuring that we do so in a transparent and accountable way that are subject to effective scrutiny. We monitor our performance and manage risk. Councillors and officers working together effectively to achieve outcomes to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles. Developing the capacity and capabilities to provide effective leadership.

The code promotes the values of the Authority upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour, ethical standards and legal compliance.

A - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.

We ensure that members and officers behave with integrity –

- The council has a Code of Conduct for employees. Final Section 2 - EE Code of Conduct.pdf
- The council has a Code of Conduct for Members alongside supporting guidance for Members SECTION 1- The Code of Conduct.pdf
  4. Supporting guidance on Code of Conduct.pdf
- The Council has an Officer Member protocol PROTOCOL FOR MEMBER AND OFFICER RELATIONS.pdf
- Members' training programme – this is updated annually and reviewed by the Member Development Group consisting of Members and Officers.
- There is a system for Member and Officer declarations of interest
- We ensure that staff know how to access our whistleblowing procedure Bury Council Whistle Blowing Policy - July 2023

We have anti-fraud and corruption procedures. All our staff are expected to help prevent fraud and corruption, and are encouraged, supported, and protected to speak up if they encounter potential wrongdoing.
https://councildecisions.bury.gov.uk/documents/s40038/BuryAntiFraudCorruptionStrategyJuly2023.pdf

We seek to establish, monitor, and maintain the organisation's ethical standards and performance by:

- Investigation of complaints about elected members in consultation with the Independent Persons whom the Council is required to appoint under the Localism Act 2011. We have a standards Committee and separate Codes of Conduct for members and officers.

- Maintaining registers of gifts & hospitality and member & officer interests, with reminders being issued on a regular basis

- Ensuring that appropriate protocols are in place for Member/Officer relations alongside effective procedures for the declaration of interests, gifts and hospitality for both members and officers.

- Operate ethical procurement policies to ensure that commitment to our values and integrity is delivered by external suppliers delivering services on our behalf.

Respecting the Rule of Law – Demonstrated by the appointment of a Monitoring Officer and statutory officers these include:

- The Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer (Director of Law and Governance), s151 Officer (Director of Finance).

- The council operates the following Assurance Boards:-

- Governance and Assurance Board
- Policy Digital and Transformation Board
- Finance Board
- Commercial Board
- Regeneration & Sustainability Board
- The Boards report on a monthly basis to the Executive Leadership Team.

- Members Assurance Board lead by the Leader receives highlight reports from the assurance boards and receives assurance reports from areas of focus across all areas of the Council.

- The Council has a Director of Law & Governance (Council Solicitor) who acts as the Council's Monitoring Officer overseeing arrangements for allegations of breach of the Members' code of conduct.

- Our Internal Audit function carry out audits and evaluate the internal control framework.

- We have a Senior Information Risk Owner and Data Protection Officer in line with the legislative requirements. We regularly report our performance in relation to compliance with GDPR to our Audit committee.

- The Council has a policy and compliance team who have oversight of all complaints across the Council. Complaints dealt with in accordance with our complaints policy. Complaints procedure - Bury Council

- We review the learning from complaints.

- We record and track all complaints made to the Ombudsman.

- All complaints data is reported to the Governance and Assurance Board for oversight.

B - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement

- We ensure that the Council website and buildings are accessible to the public. We publish details of our Committees, dates of meetings, publication of reports in advance of meetings. Browse Meetings, 2000 - Bury Council

- We publish a forward plan of decisions to be taken by the Council Browse forward plans - Bury Council

- We operate the following scrutiny committees
- Overview and scrutiny
- Children and Young Persons Scrutiny
- Health Scrutiny
- The public participation guidance sets out have the public can engage with our meetings, and participate in matters with the Council – FInal Public Participation Guidance.pdf

- We live stream our Cabinet and Council meetings Bury Council - Council Stream

- The Council ensures compliance with the requirements of the Transparency code.

- The Council web site is accessible, providing details of Council meetings, its policies procedures and the Council constituti on.

- All budget papers are accessible online including our Medium term financial strategy .

- We publish an Annual Statement of Accounts and Annual Auditors report to inform stakeholders and service users of the previous years outcomes.

- Our Standards and Audit Committees both contain Independent Members.

- We have a publication scheme - Freedom of Information publication scheme - Bury Council

- We publish our forward plan. Forward plan - Notice of Key Decisions - published January 2025 - Bury Council

- Our forward plan sets out the details of the key decisions which the Executive Cabinet, individual Executive Members or Officers expect to take during the next four month period. The Plan is rolled forward every month and is available to the pub lic 14 days before the beginning of each month.

- A key decision is a decision taken at a Cabinet meeting, by an individual Cabinet Member, or a Joint Committee of the Cabinet and is:

Any decision in relation to an executive function which results in the council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the council's budget for the service or function concerned. A decision will be considered financially significant if it results in incurring expenditure or making savings of £500,000 or greater; unless the specific expenditure or savings have previously been agreed by full Council.

Any other executive decision which in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer is likely to be significant having regard to:

(a) the number of residents/service users that will be affected in the Wards concerned;

(b) whether the impact is short term, long term or permanent.
(c) the impact on the community in terms of the economic, social and environmental well-being.

Maintain and develop relationships with Organisations across the public and voluntary sector

- We will consult at an appropriate time with our stakeholders, we will seek the views of Residents when we bring forward specific proposals requiring consultation. We will review and evaluate all responses we receive.
- Bury VCFA is a local infrastructure organisation providing Volunteering and Development support to the VCSE sector in Bury, enhancing their ability to support local communities. Bury VCFA also promotes the VCSE sector and advocates on their behalf at a strategic level with other stakeholder.
- Ensuring effective relationships with our joint venture partners and company arrangements with oversight of the Commercial Board.
- The Council has established a joint venture partnership with two large, national developers to deliver regeneration at scale in both Prestwich and Bury Town Centres.

C - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits

- We will engage and consult with residents, partners and other key stakeholders when designing key strategies.

- The Let's Do It Strategy sets out a clear ambition for Bury 2030: to stand out as a place that is achieving faster economic growth than the national average, with lower than national average levels of deprivation. Bury Council play a central role in driving the delivery of this ambition. LET'S Do It! was codesigned with a wide range of stakeholders and partners, including the Bury business community who have a critical role to play here in supporting the delivery of this ambition as partners across our borough.

- Let's Do It! strategy - Bury Council

- Ensure that outcomes are focused on achieving delivery of the overall vision for the and to be transparent about financial limitations.

- Develop a Medium-Term Financial Strategy which sets out financial assumptions and provides a set of goals for financial decision making for the planning period ahead.

- Delivery of our social value strategy, climate change policies and providing leadership on our equality, diversity and inclusion priorities.

- Our Social Value Strategy will be driven by a Steering Group bringing together representatives from all Council Departments, the Bury VCFA and business community. The steering Group is responsible for assuring delivery and recommend an annual set of TOM that align to our Corporate strategy.

- Cabinet will also receive an annual report on social value activity and achievements (economic, social, and environmental benefits) in all of its commissioning/ procurement, and this is mandated within Contractual Standing Orders.

- Ensure our strategic partners share our important Corporate Parenting mission by working closely with large Private Sector organisations with which we have Strategic Partnerships and Joint Ventures to ensure our Looked After Children and Care Experienced young people receive direct benefits from large scale activities occurring within the Borough.

- Ensure that services are clear about their role in meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty (S149 of the Equality Act 2010). When required, Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out to assess the impact of proposals which may have a differential effect on individuals with protected characteristics and communities across the Borough, these reports will be appended to our Cabinet reports.

- Commit to progressing EDI for our workforce, informed by our Employee Groups and the Trade Unio

D - Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes –

- Ensure our corporate planning is clearly focused on delivery

- Ensure consistent and effective service planning, with each service completing an individual plan. Services will ensure that their priorities and activities set out in their service plan all contribute towards delivery of our Corporate Plan, and that there is also a focus on continuous improvement.

- Collectively tackle alongside our partners our plans in the Let's Do it strategy

- Plan our activity at a strategic level through our budget and business planning cycle, in consultation with internal and external stakeholders. We work with our external stakeholders through Bury Together to ensure services delivered across different parts of the organisations and partners complement each other and avoid duplication.

E - Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it

To develop the Capability of the Organisation's Leadership and Other Individuals we -

- Provide an induction programme for all newly elected members.

- We provide a members development programme for all Members which is reviewed and updated annually, the programme provides a training programme for the municipal year and specific programmes for Members to develop their Leadership skills. Mandatory Training is provided to Members sitting on Audit, Planning and Licensing Committee. Members are asked to complete core training modules each year including corporate parenting training but also have access to a range of online training.

- All staff Members have an annual personal development review.

- Staff are required to complete a suite of mandatory training modules , compliance is reviewed regularly, Managers are provided with a dashboard providing this information.

- A full induction is provided to all new starter and all staff moving roles.

- There is a programme of briefings to all staff, the Chief Executive has a regular VLOG

- All staff members have access to our Employee Assistance programme.

F - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management, to do this we -

- Operate an effective risk management framework, ensuring that a system of risk recording is across all areas of the Council to inform the corporate risk register.

- Clear performance metrics against the corporate plan are reported to Members on a quarterly basis, under pinned by a system of Boards and Members Assurance Group.

- Effective Overview and Scrutiny committees.

- Internal controls to assist in the management of risks. Response to internal and external audit reports including responding to any recommendations from our Auditors.

- Internal control processes, which support the achievement of our objectives while managing risks. The current approach will be set out annually in Risk and Internal Audit reports to Audit Committee and supported by our governance Boards.

- Maintain and communicate clear policies and arrangements in respect of counter fraud and anti-corruption.

- Maintain an Audit Committee which oversees the effectiveness of governance and risk management arrangements, internal systems of control, and antifraud and anti-corruption arrangements.

- Annually report to Audit Committee our internal auditor's findings into the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control.

- Ensure robust and integrated risk management arrangements are in place, we have risk registers supported by a risk tool kit. Our corporate risk register is reviewed by our Audit Committee

- Maintain financial regulations to ensure consistency and clear financial protocols

- Maintain a transparent complaints and feedback procedure.

- Internal Audit annual risk-based programme of internal audits informed by the council's risk register.

- Ensure effective information governance arrangements are in place to support compliance with existing and emerging legislation for data protection and privacy.

- Production of our Annual Governance Statement

- Regular Finance and performance reporting – quarterly budget monitoring to Members.

Managing Data - Comply with data protection legislation, which includes the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA). This will ensure that data processing is carried out fairly, lawfully, and transparently

- The Monitoring Officer is the council's Senior Information Risk Owner SIRO) and a Head of Governance is the Councils Data Protection Officer.

- A suite of policies are in place 03 Data Protection Policy September 2024.pdf

- Two Caldicott Guardians are in place for Children and Adults they provide leadership and guidance on complex matters.

- A system is in place for the reporting of data breaches.

- The DPO provides advice on Privacy Impact Assessments and Data Processing agreements.

- The Council maintain a Record of Processing.

- The Council operate of system of Information Governance champions.

- The DPO works with other DPO/Leads across GM and alongside the GMCA team ensuring that good practice is maintained.

Strong Public Financial Management

- Financial management led by the Finance Board which is Chaired by the s151 Officer.

- Compliance with the Financial Management Code (FM Code) which sets out the standards of financial management expected for local authorities and is designed to support good practice, and to assist local authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability decisions.

- Ensure advice is given on all financial matters, proper financial records and accounts are kept, and oversees an effective system of internal financial control.

- Comply with the Financial Management Code (FM Code) which sets out the standards of financial management expected for local authorities and is designed to support good practice, and to assist local authorities in demonstrating their financial sustainability.

- When making our budget calculations, ensure that the Chief Finance Officer S151 reports to Council on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of the calculations, and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.

- Follow CIPFA's Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code of Practice which set out the risk framework through which the Council manages its balance sheet and makes capital investment decisions.

- Maintain strategies and processes detailing our approach to decision making on capital investments, and treasury management

G - Assurance and Effective Accountability

G1 - Implementing Good Practice in transparency,
- We follow the Local Government Transparency Code, which includes requirements and recommendations for local authorities to publish certain types of data The council is committed to being open and transparent about its financial affairs.

- Details of all council expenditure over £500 are published on the council's website

- Our pay policy statement is published on line as is details of senior officer remuneration

- We publish our contract register which contains details of all contracts for the supply of goods and services to the council that have a value in excess of £5,000.

- Internal audit independently and critically evaluates the council's internal control framework and, where necessary, makes recommendations for improvement and the introduction of best practice.

- The Head of Internal Audit presents an annual report to Audit Committee to provide an opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's internal control environment.

- The Audit Committee meet to receive the reports of both Internal and External Audit.

G2 – Implementing good practice in reporting

- We report on finance and performance against our plans on a quarterly basis to Cabinet.

- We ensure that the Executive Leadership team receive reports from our Governance Boards to ensure identified challenges can be addressed.

- We produce an annual State of the Borough report

G3 - Assurance and effective accountability

Internally we have six Assurance Boards, reporting into Executive Leadership Team and Members Assurance Group through a monthly highlight report which will also be shared with the Cabinet Members. The Boards are chaired by an Executive Director and attended by Directors. The assurance boards meet monthly, with clear Terms of Reference, work programmes, a lead Officer and action notes/action tracker. The Assurance Boards are:

- Commercial
- Finance
- Governance and Assurance
- Performance, Delivery and Transformation
- Property and Estates
- Regeneration

Executive Leadership Team (ELT) meet weekly, chaired by the Chief Executive and with formal action notes and action tracking by the Chief Executives PA. Attendance to include all Executive Directors and statutory officers. The standing agenda will include:

- o Delivery of the improvement plan
- o Corporate assurance, through a highlight report from each Board on a rotating basis and updates on workforce and budget monitoring
- o The decision making forward plan and meeting preparation
- o The GM interface
- o Communications messages for dissemination

A weekly Member Assurance Group is held to facilitate private political briefing and challenge on key areas of risk, membership to include, the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and the Chief Executive. Action notes and action log are to be produced and shared weekly at ELT. Other Officers to attend by invitation – key areas of focus:

- o Internal audit recommendations
- o Financial transformation
- o Estates, including the corporate landlord, and estates compliance
- o Project Safety Valve.

- A consistent structure, including a standardised agenda is applied to Departmental Management Teams, which will support the Board structure by providing oversight and assurance of Business-as-Usual activity including workforce and budget management. Standard Agenda to include:
  - o Operational overview and update, including update/feedback to Directors from ELT
  - o Actions/issues from Assurance Boards
  - o Highlight reports from corporate business partners, provided on at least a quarterly basis
  - o Decision making

- The Strategic Leaders' Group of Council Directors meet on a quarterly basis with a specific remit to develop a high-performance culture.

- Elected Member Oversight will be provided via regular reporting into the Council's Audit Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. A standardised agenda will be re-developed for consideration at Cabinet Portfolio Meetings, which will include internal audit reports and assurance board highlight report.

Bury Council