DARTMOOR NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Adopted: December 2009
Reviewed: April 2014, March 2017, May 2018, May 2019, May 2020, May 2021, May 2022, May 2023, May 2024, May 2025

Introduction

Every local government body operates through a governance framework which brings together an underlying set of legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes. Corporate governance arrangements encompass all of the policies and procedures that determine and control the way the authority operates. Good governance leads to good management, good performance, good stewardship of public money, good public engagement and, ultimately, good outcomes from the services provided.

The foundation of the Dartmoor National Park Authority's corporate governance arrangements can be traced directly to the "Good Governance Standard for Public Services" published by the Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services in January 2005, and subsequently refined for local government through a framework promulgated in 2007 by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE).

In December 2009, the Authority adopted its own governance principles, customised to its own needs and circumstances from this framework. Since then, local government has been subject to continued reform to improve local accountability and engagement, and in 2016 CIPFA and SOLACE produced a revised framework "Delivering Good Governance".

This framework defines the principles that should underpin the governance of each local government body and provides a structure which should assist individual authorities with their governance arrangements.

The Core Principles are:

Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law;

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement;

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits;

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes;

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

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management;

Principle G: Implementing good practice in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

In addition to the *overarching requirements for acting in the public interest* in Core Principles A and B, achieving good governance also requires a commitment to Core Principles C to G. In order to translate these principles into practice, the Authority needs

to operate through a clear Corporate Governance policy supported by a Local Code of Corporate Governance.

The Authority's Values

Dartmoor National Park Authority will apply the following values to all its work:

1   Strong and Fair Leadership

Members and Officers will provide strong and effective leadership and provide a clear vision for the organisation, acting as champions for Dartmoor National Park, both within the Park and beyond

2   Integrity

We will strive to ensure that our relationships with the public, partners and each other are founded on honesty transparency, impartiality and consistency. We welcome and respect diversity and will demonstrate equality in all aspects of our work

3   Involvement

We will seek to be open and approachable and proactively seek participation from all sectors of society in achieving our statutory purposes

4   Accountability

We will take responsibility for our decisions and ensure all decisions and actions of the Authority are open and transparent, with clear reasons.

5   Improvement

We will endeavour to continually improve our performance in delivering National Park purposes and welcome feedback to help us achieve this

6   Valuing People

We value the people who work for us and will ensure staff, Members and volunteers are equipped to undertake their roles effectively

7   Action Focused

We will remain focused on our agreed priorities and doing what we say

Responsibilities

Members of the Authority are collectively and individually responsible for good governance. Primary responsibility lies with the Chair who has a key role in ensuring there is a culture within the organisation which reflects its values. The Chair is supported in this role by all members, but particularly the Deputy Chair and the Chairs of the committees and sub-committees of the Authority.

The Audit & Governance Committee is responsible for advising the Authority on its corporate governance policies and agenda and implementing and managing the Authority's agreed policies in this area. It will receive an annual governance report incorporating the Annual Governance Statement. The Standards Sub-Committee is responsible for the oversight of ethical issues.

Officers of the Authority are responsible for following the policies and procedures of the Authority in support of the Governance arrangements. Particular responsibility is vested in the "Statutory Officers", namely the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service, the S151 officer who has responsibility for the financial affairs of the Authority and the Monitoring Officer. The lead officer on Governance issues is the Monitoring Officer.

Internal and external auditors are responsible for assessing the Authority's governance arrangements and providing assurance to Members through audit reports and the Annual Governance Report.

LOCAL CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Principle A: Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law	
Supporting Principles:	**Evidenced by:**
Behaving with integrity Ensuring Members and Officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the Authority. Ensuring Members and Officers take a lead in establishing specific standard principles or values for the organisation (based on seven Nolan Principles) Leading by example and using the principles as framework for all actions and decisions Demonstrating, communicating and embedding the standard operating principles through appropriate policies and processes, which are regularly reviewed to ensure effectiveness.	Member & Officer Codes of Conduct Officer and Member Induction programme Officer and Member processes appraisal Organisational Development Strategy Communications Strategy Statement of Community Involvement Mission Statement and Core Values in Business Plan & Partnership Plan Standing Orders Register of Interests & declaration at meetings Declaration of gifts and Hospitality Record of decisions made Appointment of Independent Persons to Standards Sub-Committee Arrangements for dealing with complaints and regular review to make changes and improvements Declaration of interests made at meetings Scheme of Delegation Financial Regulations & Procurement Procedures Confidential Reporting Policy - Whistleblowing Anti-fraud & Corruption Policy
Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values Seeking to establish, monitor and maintain the Authority's ethical standards and performance Underpinning personal behaviour with ethical values and ensuring they permeate all aspects of the Authority's culture and operation Developing and maintaining robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values Ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the Authority act with the integrity and ethical standards expected by the Authority	Organisational Development Strategy Member Role Description Members' Code of Conduct Staff Code of Conduct (under review) Staff and Member Appraisal process Equal Opportunities Policy Statement HR policies Contractor vetting Partnership arrangements backed up with robust formal legal agreements, setting out roles, responsibilities and behaviours
Respecting the rule of law Ensuring Members and Officers demonstrate strong commitment to the rule of law Creating the conditions for the three Statutory Officers and Members to fulfil their regulatory	Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation Role of three Statutory Officers Role of Monitoring Officer to report on illegality Role of Chief Financial Officer to report on unlawful

responsibilities	expenditure
Striving to optimise the use of full powers available for the benefit of stakeholders Dealing effectively with breaches of legal or regulatory provisions Ensuring corruption and misuse of powers are dealt with effectively	Appointment of Internal and External Auditors and reporting arrangements in place to Audit and Governance Committee Annual Governance Review and Statement Registration of Related Party Transactions Declarations of lobbying and of interests at committee meetings Transparency about business dealings between the Authority, Members and senior Staff Record of decisions and legal advice given Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy Confidential Reporting (Whistleblowing) procedures

Principle B: Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement	
Supporting Principles:	**Evidenced by:**
Openness	
Ensuring an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating our commitment to openness.	Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act Access to Information arrangements Compliance with the Openness of Local Government Regulations 2014 Data Transparency Code and arrangements for the information to be available on the website Adoption of the ICO's standard Publication Scheme
Making decisions that are open and transparent; presumption against confidentiality without justification	Publication of agendas, reports and minutes for the Authority and its Committees on the website Record of decisions made published on the website (to be reviewed)
Providing clear reasoning and evidence relating to actions and decisions, and ensuring the impact and consequences are clear	Published calendar of meetings and internal corporate calendar to ensure timetable met Reports include legal, financial, and human resources (HR) equality implications where necessary. Record of discussion and decisions recorded in minute and published on website
Using formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate courses of action	Residents (and other) Surveys Consultations undertaken on range of service delivery matters and strategic plans Formal and informal consultation Partnership Plan Board Local Plan consultations Stakeholder consultations Attendance by Officers and Members at Parish Council meetings National Park Forum Parish Council workshops Local Access Forum
Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	
Ensuring that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably.	Communications strategies per campaign (as required)
Developing formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively.	Corporate Contacts database to enable engagement with stakeholders for correct purposes
Ensuring that partnerships are based on trust, a shared commitment to change, and a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners; the added value of partnership is explicit	Partnership arrangements backed up with robust formal legal agreements, setting out roles, responsibilities and behaviours

Effective engagement with individual citizens and service users Establishing a clear policy on consultation with stakeholders to ensure service provision contributes to intended outcomes Ensuring communication methods are effective in relation to community engagement Encouraging, collecting and evaluating the views of stakeholders including reference to future needs Implementing effective feedback mechanisms and ensuring inclusivity of all feedback Balancing feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other groups to ensure inclusivity. Taking account of impact of decisions on future generations of taxpayers/service users	Communications strategies per campaign (as required) Use of social media channels Statement of Community Involvement Public consultations undertaken as required, well publicised and results and feedback reported to the Authority Formal and informal consultation: Partnership Plan Local Plan Stakeholders Attendance by Officers and Members at Parish Council meetings National Park Forum Dartmoor Hill Farm Project Local Access Forum

Principle C: Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits	
Supporting principles:	Evidenced by:
Defining Outcomes Having a clear vision as an agreed formal statement of the Authority's purpose and intended outcomes Specifying the intended impact on stakeholders Delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within resources Identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes Managing service users expectations with regard to determining priorities	The Authority's role defined by the two statutory purposes and the duty; and the Mission Statement & Vision in the Partnership Plan and Business Plan. Golden thread through to individual work programmes. The Partnership Plan: developed together with partners, stakeholders and community involvement - sets 20 year vision and 5 year objectives. The Business Plan is developed from the Partnership Plan to implement the objectives Financial planning - annual budget and Medium Term Financial Plan Declaration of Climate and Ecological Emergency and subsequent adoption of detailed action plan to support the ambition of carbon neutrality (currently being reviewed). Risk management policy & Strategic Risk Register Performance Management Framework and reporting quarterly to Leadership Team and Audit & Governance Committee
Sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits Consider and balance the combined economic social and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions Taking a long term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently in the face of conflicting interests Determining the wider public interest when balancing conflicting interests, through consultation where possible	Equality, sustainability and environmental impact assessment undertaken for projects, work programmes and service delivery when relevant Climate Action Plan (under review) Member Working Panels provide opportunities for Officer / Member discussion, evaluation and assessment in advance of and to aid decision making process Records of decisions published on website in committee minutes Public consultations undertaken when required with groups as set out previously

Principle D: Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes	
Supporting principles:	**Evidenced by:**
Determining Interventions Ensuring decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating associated risks, thereby ensuring best value is achieved Considering feedback from citizens and service users when making service improvements in order to prioritise competing resource demands	Member Working Panels provide opportunities for Officer / Member discussion, evaluation and assessment in advance of and to aid decision making process Committee reports contain rationale and relevant considerations / options appraisals / Financial implications on which decisions are based. Equality, sustainability and environmental impact assessments considered when relevant
Planning Interventions Establishing and maintaining robust planning and control cycles for plans, priorities and targets Engaging with stakeholders in relation to planning and delivery; considering and monitoring risks facing each partner when working collaboratively, including shared risks Ensuring arrangements are flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances Establishing key performance indicators; and ensuring capacity exists to generate information needed to review service quality regularly Prepare budgets in accordance with objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan Inform medium and long term resource planning through a sustainable funding strategy	Reporting cycles for Business Plan targets, priorities, financial budget, corporate governance and risk management in place Communications strategies per campaign (as required) Residents survey, consultation exercises and Forums in place as described previously Risk management policy and Strategic Risk Register focuses on key risks; monitored and reviewed quarterly and plans adapted accordingly National Park family and local performance indicators to reflect Business Plan outcomes. Leadership Team performance meeting held on a quarterly basis. Annual budget and Medium Term Financial Plan process that is aligned with Business Plan, Partnership Plan and Government priorities such as those reflected in the Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework. Individual work programmes reflect Business Plan priorities Reserves reviewed and maintained on a risk-based approach

Optimising achievement of intended outcomes Ensuring the budget process is all-inclusive of full cost of operations over medium and longer term	Annual budget and Medium Term Financial Plan process that is aligned with Business Plan, Partnership Plan and wider Government priorities
Ensuring medium term financial strategy is responsive to external circumstances to optimise resource usage/integrates and balances resource constraints	Regular budget monitoring reports to Leadership Team and Audit & Governance Committee allows realignment if required.

Principle E: Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its

leadership and the individuals within it;	
Supporting principles:	**Evidenced by:**
Developing capacity Reviewing operations and resources to ensure continued effectiveness Improving allocation of resources so that defined outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently Recognising the benefits of partnership working where added value can be achieved Developing and maintaining an effective workforce plan to enhance allocation of resources	Workforce planning overseen and reviewed by Leadership Team ICT Strategy Internal and external audit of processes Partnership Plan review cycle Business Plan review cycle Local plan review cycle Budgetary control reported to Leadership Team and Audit & Governance committee Continuous review of Partnerships and delivery of outcomes Performance Indicators and benchmarking undertaken with other National Parks
Developing capability of leadership Developing protocols to ensure that shared understanding of roles and responsibilities is maintained Ensuring Chair and CEO have clearly defined roles Publishing a statement that specifies the types of decisions	Codes of conduct Officer Job descriptions, person specification and competency framework Organisational Development Strategy Role/Protocols of Statutory Officers Members Role Description Scheme of Delegation, Standing Orders and Financial Regulations regularly reviewed Decisions published through Open Data requirements
Developing capabilities of Members and Senior Management by giving access to induction and ongoing training; Members and Officers have appropriate skills and support to fulfil roles and this is kept updated; development through shared learning and learning from identified weaknesses Ensure structures in place to encourage public participation in development	Member job descriptions Staff and Member induction programme Training and Development programmes for Members and Officers Staff Development & Training Days Focus groups Forums and groups as described previously Consultation and engagement through Partnership and Local Plan review processes.
Taking steps to ensure leadership's effectiveness through peer reviews and appraisals Holding staff to account through performance reviews Ensuring arrangements in place to maintain physical and mental wellbeing of Officers	Member and Officer Appraisals; including CEO Member Role Description Member and Officer personal development plans and Officer competency framework HR Policies and procedures Access to Occupational Health scheme Employees Assistance Programme in place DNPA is a registered "Mindful Employer", running regular training events to promote mental wellbeing Electronic learning modules (some compulsory for all staff)

Principle F: Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management	
The local code requires us to:	Evidenced by:
Managing risk Ensuring risk management is an integral part of all decision making Implementing robust and integrated risk management Ensuring individual responsibilities for managing risk are clearly allocated	Risk Management Policy in place and Strategic Risk Register approved annually and reviewed by Leadership Team and Audit & Governance Committee on continual basis Operational risk is built into work programmes and monitored by Heads of Service/Team managers Scheduled risk and review meetings with insurers Risk based approach to financial management and maintenance of Reserves and working balances Internal and External Audit report to Members on a risk based approach
Managing performance Monitoring service delivery effectively Making decisions based on clear and relevant objective analysis including risks Providing Members and LEADERSHIP TEAM with regular reports on service delivery Encouraging effective and constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives Ensuring consistency between specification stages and post implementation reporting	Robust performance management framework in place: Business Plan monitoring, Performance Indicators, Risk Register and Financial Management; reviewed by Leadership Team and Audit & Governance Committee on quarterly basis Working Panels review and debate new policies and projects in advance of formal approval being sought Audit & Governance Committee undertake performance improvement reviews for services/teams as required Terms of Reference for Audit & Governance Committee and appropriate training provided Financial Regulations and financial management
Robust internal control Aligning risk management strategy and policies Evaluation and monitoring risk management Ensuring counter-fraud and anti-corruption measures in place Ensuring additional assurance through effective internal audit Ensuring audit committee independent of the executive	Risk management policy and strategic risk register in place and reviewed and monitored on quarterly basis Anti- fraud and corruption policy in place; regularly reviewed Internal Audit provided by Devon Audit Partnership Audit & Governance Committee in place as previously described
Managing data Ensuring effective arrangements for safe collection and use of data including sharing of personal data Effective arrangements for sharing data with other bodies Regularly reviewing and auditing quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring	Data Protection Policy and Procedures Compliance with Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) Nominated Data Protection Officer Data Sharing arrangements made and signed off as required with third parties Access to information Policy includes storage and retention guidelines Compliance with Payment Card Industry Standard

Strong public financial management Well-developed financial management to support long term and short term financial and operational performance Ensuring financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control	Robust financial planning processes and procedures: Annual budget and Medium Term Financial Plan linked to the Business Plan and Partnership Plan Quarterly budget monitoring reports to Leadership Team, and Audit & Governance Committee. Risk based approach to maintenance of reserve balances Financial implications considered and reported in all committee reports and in project management framework

Principle G: Implementing good practice in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability	
The local code requires us to:	Evidenced by:
Good Practice in Transparency Writing and publishing reports in a balanced, understandable and easily accessed style Striking a balance with regard to the amount of information provided	Reports template used for all committees and reports reviewed and signed off by senior officers before publication All committee business published on website Freedom of Information/Environmental Information Regulations compliance Publication Scheme Open Government requirements (including delegations) Annual Review published on Website
Good Practice in Reporting Reporting at least annually on performance, value for money and stewardship of resources in a clear, timely way Ensuring members and officers take "ownership" of the reported results Ensuring robust arrangements for assessing the principles in this framework are applied, including an action plan for improvement Ensure this framework is applied to joint working/shared services Ensuring that performance information accompanying the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and allows for comparison with similar organisations	Robust performance management framework in place: Business Plan monitoring, Performance Indicators, Regular programme of service updates reviewed by Leadership Team Annual Review of performance and outcomes achieved External Audit reports to Authority annually on Value for Money and Use of Resources Scheme of Delegation, Standing Orders, Financial Regulations Continual review of systems of internal control by officers and Internal / External audit. Formal review of governance arrangements in order to produce the Annual Governance Statement to accompany the Statement of Accounts Annual Review report produced at year end that summarises the Authority's performance against Business Plan objectives and outcomes. National Park family performance indicators reported annually
Assurance and accountability Ensuring that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted on. Ensuring an effective internal audit service is in place. Welcoming peer challenge and regulatory	Internal and External audit plans and reports taken to Audit & Governance Committee and to the Authority at year end. All recommendations and actions reported publically. Internal Audit provided by the Devon Audit Partnership who demonstrate compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. Benchmarking and Officer working groups in place

inspections and acting on recommendations. Gaining assurance on risks delivered through third parties and ensuring that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement. When working in partnership, ensuring arrangements for accountability are clear.	across National Parks family to challenge, learn and share best practice. Audit report recommendations are followed up and implemented. Formal partnership agreements are always put in place that set out roles, responsibilities, accountabilities and risk. Continual risk management undertaken and reported to Members during the year to provide assurance.