SECTION 23

23. CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

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23.1 Introduction

23.1.1 The Vale of Glamorgan Council is committed to the principles of good corporate governance. Through the development, adoption and continued implementation and monitoring of a Code of Corporate Governance the Council formally confirms its ongoing commitment and intentions.

23.1.2 The Code of Corporate Governance comprehensively describes the Council's commitment to and understanding of corporate governance, and outlines the arrangements that it has put in place to ensure ongoing effective implementation and monitoring.

23.1.3 The Code of Corporate Governance also makes provision for a joint commitment by Members and Officers to the principles it contains, as well as a statement of assurance jointly signed by the Leader(s) of the Council and the Chief Executive. This helps to ensure that the principles of corporate governance are not only fully embedded and cascaded throughout the Council, but that they have the full backing of the Leader(s) of the Council and elected Members as well as the Chief Executive and the Corporate Management Team.

23.2 Why Adopt A Code Of Corporate Governance?

23.2.1 Adopting a Code of Corporate Governance is another way in which the Vale of Glamorgan Council shows its recognition of the fact that effective local government relies upon establishing and maintaining the confidence of local people in both elected Members and Council officials. Good corporate governance underpins credibility and confidence in the leadership and forms the foundation from which all Council services are provided.

23.2.2 Adopting, monitoring and complying with a Code of Corporate Governance helps enhance the Council's legitimacy and increases trust placed in the Council by local people.

23.2.3 Strong, transparent and responsive governance enables the Vale of Glamorgan Council to put citizens first by pursuing its aims and priorities effectively, and by underpinning them with appropriate mechanisms for managing performance and risk. In order to maintain citizens' confidence, these mechanisms must be sound and be seen to be sound.

23.2.4 The Vale of Glamorgan Council sees Corporate Governance as 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 and processes, and also the culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and how it accounts to and engages with its citizens.

23.2.5 Overall, adopting and committing to this Code of Corporate Governance puts in place a basis for a Council wide commitment to the way in which it intends fulfilling its role in leading and representing the community, providing opportunities for all, ensuring that there is a strong customer focus in all the Council does.

23.3 What Is Corporate Governance?

23.3.1 The Council has a key role in governing and leading our community. Effective local government relies on public confidence in elected Members and Council Officers.

23.3.2 Effective systems of Corporate Governance provide confidence in public services.

23.3.3 Corporate Governance is a phrase used to describe how organisations direct and control what they do.

23.3.4 For Local Authorities this also includes how a Council relates to the communities that it serves.

23.3.5 Good Corporate Governance requires Local Authorities to carry out their services in a way that demonstrates accountability, openness and honesty.

23.4 Why Do We Need A Code Of Corporate Governance?

23.4.1 Corporate Governance is important because it is crucial to:

(a) Providing high quality public services nationally, governance weaknesses have led to service failure and, on occasion, to tragedies. High performing organisations, on the other hand, have effective governance arrangements.

(b) Raising public trust. The public's trust is increased when the quality of services that they and their families experience is high, and when organisations are seen to be open and honest in communicating their performance, and in learning from their mistakes.

23.4.2 The Code of Governance is based upon the "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (CIPFA/SOLACE, 2016). The Framework positions the attainment of sustainable economic, societal, and environmental outcomes as a key focus of governance processes and structures. Outcomes give the role of local government its meaning and importance, and it is fitting that they have this central role in the sector's governance. Furthermore, the focus on sustainability and the links between governance and public financial management are crucial – Local Authorities must recognise the need to focus on the long term. Local Authorities have responsibilities to more than their current electors as they must take account of the impact of current decisions and actions on future generation.

23.4.3 The Framework defines the principles that should underpin the governance of each local government organisation. It is based on the following seven Core Principles:

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

B	Ensuring openness and comprehensive stake-holder engagement.
C	Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.
D	Determining the interventions necessary to optimise achievement of the intended outcomes.
E	Developing the entity'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.
G	Implementing good practice in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

23.4.4 Each of these core principles is an important part of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Corporate Governance arrangements. This Code describes how the Council will meet and demonstrate its commitment to good Corporate Governance in relation to these seven Core Principles.

23.5 The Vale of Glamorgan Council's Principles of Good Governance

23.5.1 Core Principle A

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

Local government organisations are accountable not only for how much they spend, but also for how they use the resources under their stewardship. This includes accountability for outputs, both positive and negative, and for the outcomes they have achieved. In addition, they have an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest in adhering to the requirements of legislation and government policies. It is essential that, as a whole, they can demonstrate the appropriateness of all their actions and have mechanisms in place to encourage and enforce adherence to ethical values and to respect the rule of law.

23.5.1.1 **The Corporate commitment which underpins this Principle.**

- Good governance flows from a shared ethos or culture, as well as from systems and structures. It cannot be reduced to a set of rules, or achieved fully by compliance with a set of requirements. This ethos or spirit of good governance can be expressed as values and demonstrated as behaviour. It depends on building a corporate environment where members and officers alike believe personally in acting in accordance with generally accepted values.

- High standards of conduct and effective governance can only be achieved if those who hold public office have the highest standards of behaviour and encourage others to do so.

- The Council is committed to adopting a culture of behaviour based on shared values, ethical principles and good conduct.

Sub-Principles	**Behaviours and Actions that Demonstrate Good Governance in Practice at the Vale of Glamorgan Council**
Behaving with integrity	The Council has adopted a Code of Conduct for its elected Members which builds on the seven principles of public life and has arrangements to receive and investigate allegations of breaches of proper standards of conduct which is outlined with the Council's Constitution. The Council has also developed and implemented a Local Dispute Resolution Procedure as well as a Protocol of Standards to support the Members' Code of Conduct that are both contained within the Constitution. The Employee Code of Conduct is well embedded within the Council. The Council's Standards Committee is active and effective in its role of overseeing compliance with the Code of Conduct in conjunction with the Public Services Ombudsman. The Council also maintains and keeps under review the Anti-Fraud and Bribery Policy, the Whistleblowing Policy and Contract and Financial Procedure Rules. These policies will therefore: Ensure that Members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visibly and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the Council. Ensure that Members take the lead in establishing a culture and specific values for the Council and its staff and they are communicated and understood. These values build on the Seven Principles of Public Life. Members and Officers will lead by example and using these values as a framework for decision making and other actions this will be demonstrated, communicated and embedded in values through appropriate policies and processes which are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are operating effectively.

Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values	The Council will seek to establish, understand, monitor and maintain the Council's ethical standards and performance. It will underpin personal behaviour with ethical values, ensuring they permeate all aspects of the Council's culture and operations. The Council will develop and maintain robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values, ensuring that external providers of services on behalf of the Council are required to act with integrity and in compliance with high ethical standards
Respecting the rule of law	The Council will ensure that Members, Chief Officers and staff demonstrate a strong commitment and respect for the rule of law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations. Through its Constitution, the Council will create the conditions to ensure that the statutory Chief Officers, other key post holders, Members and (where appropriate) statutory committees are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory requirements, striving to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders. The Council will deal rigorously with reported breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively, particularly ensuring that corruption and misuse of power are dealt with effectively.

23.5.2 Core Principle B

Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

Local Government is run for the public good, organisations therefore should ensure openness in their activities. Clear, trusted channels of communication and consultation should be used to engage effectively with all groups of stakeholders, such as individual citizens and service users, as well as institutional stakeholders.

22.5.2.1 **The Corporate commitment which underpins this principle.**

- The Vale of Glamorgan Council has considered the values that are needed to underpin the work of elected Members and staff and these values describe the professional behaviours that will contribute to the Council's ability to adapt to future demands and deliver the actions contained with the Corporate Plan and achieve

the Council's vision of strong communities with a bright future. These values are Ambitious, Open, Together and Proud.

Sub-Principles	**Behaviours and Actions that Demonstrate Good Governance in Practice at the Vale of Glamorgan Council**
Openness	The Council's vision and priorities in the form of well-being objectives are set out clearly in the Corporate Plan and align to the Public Services Board's Well-being Plan. The Corporate Plan is underpinned by a set of enabling strategies which together form the Council's overall policy framework for supporting continuous improvement. The Council's vision and priorities are articulated in an Annual Delivery Plan and thereafter reflected in Service Plans. These link to team plans and personal development plans for staff. All decisions made by Cabinet are taken on the basis of written reports, which include consideration of financial, employment, legal and equalities implications. Consideration is also given to how proposals demonstrate the five ways of working as detailed in the Well-being of Future Generations Act and contribute to the Council's Well-being Objectives. The policy framework within which decisions are taken is indicated in any reports as well as including details of those consulted and involved in the production of reports. Links to Corporate objectives and consultation (including ward Member consultation) also form an integral part of the decision-making process. Cabinet meetings are open to the public with the exception of items exempt under the Access to Information Act. Cabinet decisions are subject to scrutiny by five scrutiny committees which support the work of the Cabinet and the Council as a whole. The Council also publishes details of all expenditure over £500 on its website regularly. This will enable the Council to:- Ensure an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and communicating the Council's commitment to openness.

	Making decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption is for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential should be provided. Provide clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and be explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, ensuring that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear. The Council will use formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions / courses of action.
Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	The Council is committed to engaging effectively with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably. The Council will develop formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively; ensuring that partnerships are based on: trust; a shared commitment to change and a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners and that the added value of partnership working is explicit. The Council's commitment to the Public Services Board, Regional City Deal and various other strategic collaborations are examples of this which are regularly reported to the Cabinet and details provided to all elected Members.
Engaging with individual citizens and service users effectively	The Council will establish a clear policy on the type of issues that the organisation will meaningfully consult with or involve communities, individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes; ensuring that communication methods are effective and that Council Members, Chief Officers and staff are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement. The Council will encourage, collect and evaluate the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs and implement effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how views have been taken into account. Corporately, this information will be regularly collated and used strategically to inform decision making, including the

	incorporation of relevant information in Equality Impact Assessments. The Council will clearly balance feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity whilst taking account of the impact of decisions on future generations of tax payers and service users.

23.5.3 Core Principle C

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

The long term nature and impact of many of local government's responsibilities mean that it should define and plan outcomes and that these should be sustainable. Decisions should further the organisation's purpose, contribute to intended benefits and outcomes, and remain within the limits of authority and resources. Input from all groups of stakeholders, including citizens, service users, and institutional stakeholders, is vital to the success of this processes and in balancing competing demands when determining priorities for the finite resources available.

23.5.3.1 **The Corporate commitment which underpins this principle**.

- The Council recognises that Public Sector programmes will respond to changes in the current environment, but these responses should always be framed within the Council's long term objectives and aspirations for the service and the resources available;

- The Council understands that all public bodies need to make sure that when making their decisions they take into account the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future and this is something that the Vale of Glamorgan Council has embedded within its Corporate Plan and is reflected in Equality Impact Assessments, including consideration of the socio-economic duty;

- The Council has incorporated the five things that public bodies need to think about to show that they have applied sustainable development principle introduced as a statutory duty by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act. The Council acknowledges that following these ways of working will help the Council work better, avoid repeating past mistakes and tackle some of the long-term challenges it faces. These ways of working are:

- **Long Term** – The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet the long-term needs;

- **Prevention** – How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives;

- **Integration** – Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies;

- **Collaboration** – Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different part of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives;

- **Involvement** – The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

Sub-Principles	**Behaviours and Actions that Demonstrate Good Governance in Practice at the Vale of Glamorgan Council**
Defining outcomes	The Council will have a clear vision, which is an agreed formal statement of the Council's purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provides the basis for the Council's overall strategy, planning and other decisions. This will be embedded in its Corporate Plan which sets out how the Council will work towards the delivery of this vision and the promotion of well-being. The Council's vision is "Strong communities with a bright future". The vision is delivered through a range of well-being objectives and supported by the organisation's values through the professional behaviours of its Members and staff which are "Ambitious, Open, Together and Proud". The Council will specify the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users. This will incorporate balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability for others to meet needs in the long-term. The Council is committed to delivering defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available whilst identifying and managing risks to the achievement of outcomes. This is embedded in its corporate framework for financial planning, financial management and control. The Medium Term Financial

	Plan will clearly reflect and link to the priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan to ensure they are financially viable. The Council will continue to manage service users' expectations effectively by having regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available. The Council's transformational change programme is an example of this which aims to enable the Council to continue to deliver a broad range of services to meet residents' needs and take action on wide ranging community issues.
Sustainable economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits	The Council will continue to consider and balance the combined economic, social, cultural and environmental impact of policies and plans when taking decisions about service provision. This is the bedrock on which the Council's Corporate Plan 2020-25 has been based. It encapsulates the five ways of working whilst underpinning the sustainable development principle that is central to the Well-being of Future Generations Act in terms of looking to the long term, taking an integrated approach, involving and working in collaborative ways. This will ensure at all times, residents have fair access to services.

23.5.4 Core Principle D

Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

Local government achieves its intended outcomes by providing a mixture of legal, regulatory, and practical interventions (courses of action). Determining the right mix of these courses of action is a critically important strategic choice that local government has to make to ensure intended outcomes are achieved. They need robust decision making mechanisms to ensure that their defined outcomes can be achieved in a way that provides the best trade-off between the various types of resource inputs while still enabling effective and efficient operations. Decisions made need to be reviewed frequently to ensure that achievement of outcomes is optimised.

23.5.4.1 **The Corporate commitment which underpins this principle**:

- The Council recognises that informed decision making is a fundamental part of good governance. It requires Councils to be both rigorous in their examination of options but also open to consider representation and views from all sectors of the community allocated so that it is clear who is accountable for decisions that are made. The Council has adopted a Cabinet structure together with Committees to carry out the Council's

Scrutiny responsibilities. Roles and Responsibilities are defined in the Constitution which is kept under regular review;

- Scrutinising these decisions is also a key part of the Council's political structure and plays an important role in ensuring that the Council's services are delivered effectively, efficiently and in the interests of residents and those who work in or visit the Vale of Glamorgan. Scrutiny Committees are able to influence decisions that are taken by Cabinet and to ensure that the views and needs of the community are taken into account.

Sub-Principles	**Behaviours and Actions that Demonstrate Good Governance in Practice at the Vale of Glamorgan Council**
Determining interventions	The Council will continue to ensure that decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and associated risks. This is specifically included within structure of Cabinet / Committee reports and forms a part of the way in which business cases are developed. This will therefore ensure best value is achieved however services are provided. The Council will continue to consider feedback from citizens and service users when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to priorities competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts.
Planning interventions	The Council will establish and implement robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets. The Council will engage with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered. The Council will consider and monitor risks facing each partner when working collaboratively, including shared risks. The Council will ensure that arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering goods and services can be adapted to changing circumstances. The Council will establish appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects are measured whilst ensuring that capacity exists to

	generate the information required to review service quality regularly. The Council will prepare budgets in accordance with objectives, strategies and the medium term financial plan. The Council will inform medium and long term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy.
Optimising achievement of intended outcomes	The Council will ensure that the medium term financial plan integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints. It will ensure that the budgeting process is all inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium to long term. It will ensure the medium term financial plan sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage. The Council will ensure the achievement of social value through service planning and commissioning and the regular monitoring of these activities.

23.5.5 Core Principle E

Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and individuals within.

Local government needs appropriate structures and leadership, as well as people with the right skills, appropriate qualifications and mind-set, to operate efficiently and effectively and achieve intended outcomes within the specified periods. A local government organisation must ensure that it has both the capacity to fulfil its own mandate and to make certain that there are policies in place to guarantee that its management has the operational capacity for the organisation as a whole. Because both individuals and the environment in which an organisation operates will change over time, there will be a continuous need to develop its capacity as well as the skills and experience of individual staff members. Leadership in local government is strengthened by the participation of people with many different types of backgrounds, reflecting the structure and diversity of communities.

23.5.5.1 **The Corporate commitment which underpins this principle**:

- Effective leadership requires clarity regarding roles of executive (Cabinet) and non-executive Members and respect and recognition for the scrutiny function. In addition to this constructive working relationship between Members and staff, mutual respect for each of these respective roles is vital. Finally the Council needs to ensure that residents understand our role and the level of service they can expect;

- The Council is committed to ensuring that Members and Officers have the necessary skills to operate a multi-million pound organisation that provides a multitude of different services and recognises that this is one of the most important aspects of governance. This can be demonstrated by the Member Development Strategy which provides a framework for supporting elected Members in their onerous roles to enable them to undertake improved scrutiny and challenge for all Council activities.

Sub-Principles	**Behaviours and Actions that Demonstrate Good Governance in Practice at the Vale of Glamorgan Council**
Developing the entity's capacity	The Council will continue to review operations, performance and use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness. The Council will continue to improve the use of resources through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how resources are allocated so that defined outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently. The Council is committed to partnership and collaborative working, recognising the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved. The Council will develop and maintain an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources, supported by workforce planning actions contained within service plans.
Developing the capability of the entity's leadership and other individuals	The Council is committed to developing protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained. The Council will continue to publish a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body, these are clearly set out in the Council's

	Constitution. The Council will continue to ensure the Leader(s) and the Chief Executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the Chief Executive leads in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other's authority again as set out in the Council's Constitution. The Council continues to be committed to developing the capability of Members and senior management to achieve effective leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by: - Ensuring that Members and staff have access to an appropriate induction tailored to their role and that ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and participation is encouraged; - Ensuring Members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis; - Ensuring personal, organisational and system wide development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external; - Ensuring there are structures in place to encourage public participation; - Taking steps to consider the leadership's own effectiveness and ensuring leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections; - Holding staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs.

23.5.6 Core Principle F

Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.

Local government needs to ensure that the organisations and governance structures that it oversees have implemented and can sustain an effective performance management system that facilitates effective and efficient delivery of planned services. Risk Management and internal control are important and integral parts of a performance management system and are crucial to the achievement of outcomes. Risk should be considered and addressed as part of all decision making activities.

A strong system of financial management is essential for the implementation of policies and the achievement of intended outcomes, as it will enforce financial discipline, strategic allocation of resources, efficient service delivery and accountability. It is also essential that a culture and structure for scrutiny are in place as a key part of accountable decision making, policy making and review. A positive working culture that accepts, promotes and encourages constructive challenge is critical to successful scrutiny and successful service delivery. Importantly, this culture does not happen automatically, it requires repeated public commitment from those in authority.

23.5.6.1 **The Corporate commitment which underpins this principle**:

- The Council recognises that both Financial and Risk Management are an important feature of the Council's Code of Corporate Governance and it is also recognised that successful financial and risk management relies on a corporate approach to ensure that all financial matters and risks are identified and managed systematically and consistently across the Council. An effective corporate framework for financial planning, management and control is in place. A Risk Management Strategy has been adopted by the Council which sets out the Council's approach to the identification of and responses to strategic and operational risks. The roles and responsibilities of both elected Members and officers are identified with Cabinet acing as Risk "champion" for the Council. A comprehensive Risk Register has been established which is reviewed regularly by the Insight Board and monitored by Corporate Management Team, Cabinet and Governance and Audit Committee on a regular basis. Service plans contain specific risks and mitigating actions and together these are monitored and reported quarterly as part of the Council's holistic approach to integrated planning activity.

Sub-Principles	**Behaviours and Actions that Demonstrate Good Governance in Practice at the Vale of Glamorgan Council**
Managing Risks	The Council recognises and will demonstrate that risk management is an integral part of all activities and must

	be considered in all aspects of decision making. The Council is committed to implementing robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensuring that they are working effectively. This is illustrated by the corporate risk strategy, monitoring of the corporate risk register and service plan risk management processes. The Council will ensure that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated.
Managing Performance	The Council has a well-established Performance Management Framework (PMF) which helps the Council remain focused on achieving its vision and priorities and will continue to be kept under review and developed further. The procurement of performance management software will further strengthen the Council's approach to performance management and will enable the Council to further reinforce a performance management culture within the Council. This will enable the Council to: Monitor service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review; Make decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the organisations financial, social and environmental position and outlook; Ensure an effective scrutiny or oversight function is in place which provides constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the organisation's performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible; Encourage effective and constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives to support balanced and effective decision making; Provide Members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement, associated use of resources and ensuring there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (e.g. financial statements).

Robust Internal Control	The Council will align the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives. The Council will evaluate and monitor risk management and internal control on a regular basis. The Council will ensure effective counter fraud and anti-corruption arrangements are in place. The Council will ensure additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor: which will include: - A Governance and Audit Committee, which is independent of the Cabinet and accountable to the governing body, provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment; - Its recommendations being listened to and acted upon.
Managing Data	The Council will ensure effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data. The Council will ensure effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies. The Council is committed to reviewing and auditing regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring.
Strong public financial management	The Council will ensure that financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operation performance. The Council will continue to ensure that well developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and control.

23.5.7 Core Principle G

Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to deliver effective accountability.

Accountability is about ensuring that those making decisions and delivering services are answerable for them. Effective accountability is concerned not only with reporting on actions completed, but also ensuring that stakeholders are able to understand and respond as the organisation plans and carries out its activities in a transparent manner. Both external and internal audit contribute to effective accountability.

23.5.7.1 **The Corporate commitment which underpins this principle**:

- The Council continues to be committed to implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit to delivery effective accountability. This can be demonstrated in a number of ways including:

  - There is a mechanism in place for reporting progress against key regulatory recommendations / improvement proposals via the Governance and Audit Committee, all Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet;

  - All Committees have a clear Terms of Reference and work programme.

- Procedures for sign-off of Cabinet Reports ensuring legal and financial implications have been appropriately assessed and are consistent with corporate policy.

- Scrutiny challenge performance to drive improvement in services and focus on decision-making in line with corporate priorities.

Sub-Principles	**Behaviours and Actions that Demonstrate Good Governance in Practice at the Vale of Glamorgan Council**
Implementing good practice in transparency	The Council continues to be committed to writing and communicating reports for the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and understandable style appropriate to the intended audience and ensuring that they are easy to access and interrogate. The Council will continue to strike a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand, for example through the publication of

	expenditure over £500.
Implementing good practices in reporting	The Council will continue to report at least annually on performance, value for money and stewardship of resources to stakeholders in a timely and understandable way. The Council will ensure Members and senior management own the results reported. The Council will ensure that robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in this framework have been applied and publishing the results on this assessment, including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance (the annual governance statement). The Council will ensure that this framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate. The Council will ensure that the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other, similar organisations.
Assurance and effective accountability	The Council will continue to ensure that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon. The Council will ensure that an effective internal audit service with direct access to Members is in place, providing assurance with regard to governance arrangements and that all recommendations made are acted upon. The Council will welcome and participate in peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and is committed to implementing any recommendations made in order to continuously improve. The Council will gain assurance on risk associated with delivering services through third parties and that this is evidenced in the annual governance statement. The Council will ensure that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met.

23.6 **Monitoring and Review**

23.6.1 Good Corporate Governance requires the active participation of Members and Officers across the Council.

23.6.2 Development, implementation and continuous improvement of the Council's Corporate Governance culture.

23.6.3 Preparation, adoption and maintenance of an up-to-date Code of Corporate Governance, including arrangements for ensuring its implementation and ongoing application.

23.6.4 Co-ordination and review of the Annual Governance Statement.

23.6.5 Promotion of best practice in Corporate Governance throughout the Council.

23.6.6 The Governance and Audit Committee is responsible for monitoring and reviewing the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements.

23.6.7 Through this Committee the Council will ensure that these arrangements are kept under continual review by:

(a) The work of Internal Audit;

(b) Reports prepared by managers with responsibility for aspects of this Code;

(c) External Audit opinion;

(d) Other review agencies and Inspectorates.

23.7 **The Annual Governance Statement**

23.7.1 Each year the Council will publish an Annual Governance Statement.

23.7.2 This will provide an overall assessment of the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements and an appraisal of the key controls in place to manage the Council's key governance risks.

23.7.3 The Statement will also provide details of where improvements need to be made.

23.7.4 The Annual Governance Statement will be reviewed by Corporate Management Team and approved by the Governance and Audit Committee, prior to being signed by the Leader(s) of the Council and the Chief Executive.

23.7.5 The Annual Governance Statement will be published as part of the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts and will be audited by our External Auditors.