

West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority

Code of Corporate Governance

Introduction

The definition of corporate governance is that it is about 'how bodies ensure they do 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 culture and values, by which bodies are directed and controlled and through which they account to, engage with and, where appropriate, lead their communities.'

The West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority has adopted a corporate governance framework based on best practice guidance issued jointly by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE). The framework is based upon the following six core principles:

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

The WYITA is committed to meeting these principles and this statement sets out how the supporting principles beneath each statement will be achieved, monitored and reviewed.

The Authority's core principles

- 1. Focussing on the purpose of the Authority and on outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area.**

Supporting principles:

Exercising leadership by clearly communicating the Authority's purpose and vision and its intended outcome for citizens and service users.

The WYITA has defined 15 policy statements which underpin all areas of its activity. These are reflected through the 20 year vision which sets out what the future of transport provision in West Yorkshire should look like. The vision is supported by the Local Transport Plan, bus and rail strategies and a corporate plan which sets out key priorities and outcomes for the next three years. The Authority plays a key role in shaping transport priorities through involvement on the Local Transport Panel and the City Region.

Ensuring that users receive a high quality of service whether directly, or in partnership or by commissioning.

The Authority produces an annual performance report, formerly the best value performance plan, which reviews its activities and the outcomes these have produced by setting out the corporate targets and the achievement against them. The report includes information on financial performance and the outcome of tracker surveys and consultations which demonstrate user satisfaction with the services provided.

Ensuring that the Authority makes best use of resources and that tax payers and service users receive excellent value for money.

The Authority prepares a three year financial strategy which is scrutinised by Members and by the Association of West Yorkshire Authorities during the levy discussions. Annual accounts are produced and an audit opinion on these and on the value for money position is provided by the Audit Commission.

- 2. Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles.**

Supporting principles:

Ensuring effective leadership throughout the Authority by being clear about executive and non executive functions.

Ensuring a constructive working relationship exists between elected Members and Officers.

Ensuring relationships between the Authority and the public are clear.

The Authority has in place a clear constitution and a Committee structure covering all aspects of its activities. Working Groups consider each policy area, providing direction to the full Authority and scrutinising recommendations made by the Executive. The Authority appoints appropriately skilled Directors to lead the Passenger Transport Executive and appoints non-Executive Directors to provide an additional level of challenge to the decisions made by the Executive Board. The Executive implements the policies of the Authority and has in place a Human Resources strategy which ensures it takes a thorough approach to the recruitment and development of staff. The Executive appoints appropriately skilled and capable officers who are able to advise the Authority in accordance with their defined roles. The Authority has appointed a s151 Officer with the required qualifications to undertake their role and a Monitoring Officer. A Protocol for Members and Officer Relations has been developed to ensure the interaction between the two organisations is clearly defined.

3. Promoting values for the Authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour.

Supporting principles

Ensuring members and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that uphold high standards of conduct and exemplify effective governance.

Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective.

The WYITA expects the highest standards of conduct and personal behaviour from its Members and staff. Robust arrangements are in place to ensure that these high standards are promoted and upheld. The values adopted by the Authority are shared with the Executive and both organisations have in place policies and protocols which develop these further. The Authority has issued, and regularly updated, a number of documents including a Member Code of Conduct, an Officer Code of Conduct, a Protocol for Members and Officer Relations, a complaints procedure and an anti fraud and anti corruption policy which includes the whistleblowing policy. The Standards Committee includes external representation to strengthen its independence and the Audit and Governance Committee meet regularly. A set of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations are reviewed and adopted annually by the full Authority. The Executive has put in place similar measures to demonstrate and ensure its commitment to high standards of conduct.

4. Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk.

Supporting principles

Exercising leadership by being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are made.

Having good quality information, advice and support.

Making sure an effective risk management system is in place.

Recognising the limits of lawful action.

The WYITA ensures that decision making is transparent and that appropriate advice is taken in reaching decisions. All key decisions are made in public meetings with the majority of documents available to the public via the internet. The debates and information provided to the Working Groups are also available to the public via the internet. Within the Executive the Authority has ensured a level of scrutiny by the appointment of external non-Executive Directors who attend Board meetings. Appropriately qualified and skilled legal and finance staff also provide input to these meetings. Scrutiny is also provided via District Councils.

The Audit and Governance Committee oversees all governance arrangements and ensures these are operating effectively. It monitors and formally reviews the work of the internal audit function which is reported to the public via the Annual Governance Statement within the financial statements. This Committee also reviews at each meeting the risk register of the Authority, ensuring all risks are identified and are adequately addressed. It endorses the anti fraud and corruption policy and the whistleblowing procedure. The Executive has in place similar arrangements, including an Audit Committee (chaired by a non-Executive Director), detailed risk registers for all sections and arrangements to ensure business continuity.

5. Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective.

Supporting principles

Making sure Members and Officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well.

Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities.

Encouraging new talent for membership of the Authority.

The WYITA seeks to ensure all Members and Officers have the necessary skills and training to fulfil their roles. Members receive an induction programme when they join the Authority and this is supplemented by specialised training courses where appropriate. Officers are appointed using competency based job descriptions and their performance against these competencies is regularly monitored and reviewed. A detailed learning and development plan ensures that training needs are met at both an individual and an organisational level. The commitment to staff development is demonstrated in the continued re-accreditation of both the Investor in People and Customer Service Excellence standards.

6. Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

Supporting principle

Exercising leadership through a robust scrutiny function which effectively engages local people and all local institutional stakeholders.

The WYITA engages with stakeholders and local people in a variety of ways. Its actions are readily available to the public via the publication of all meeting papers and decisions on the internet. Through the Executive it engages with the public as set out in its consultation strategy. It has recently set up a Youth Panel to further progress engagement with all groups.

Monitoring and review

It is the responsibility of the Audit and Governance Committee to keep corporate governance matters under review. As part of this process it reviews the processes and systems in place during the year which are set out in the Annual Governance Statement. This includes the work carried out by the internal audit section. The Committee must formally approve this Annual Governance Statement which forms part of the statutory annual accounts which are then subject to external audit.

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