






GOOD GOVERNANCE STANDARD – SELF ASSESSMENT



TABLE A - Assessment questions for governors and governing bodies to ask themselves


QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
1. Good governance means focusing on the organisation's purpose and on outcomes for citizens and users			
<p>1.1 How clear are we about what we are trying to achieve as an organisation?</p> <p>Do we always have this at the front of our minds when we are planning or taking decisions?</p> <p>How well are we doing in achieving our intended outcomes?</p>	<p>Corporate aims and objectives in Corporate Plan</p> <p>Corporate Improvement Plan</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny function and call-in procedures</p> <p>Financial planning and budget linked to priorities – Medium Term Financial Strategy</p> <p>Star Chamber reviews spending, VFM etc. in line with Corporate priorities</p> <p>Business Plans linked to Corporate Plan and progress monitored/reviewed</p> <p>Performance Management Framework (PMF) in the process of being implemented and includes management/member review</p> <p>Escendency PM system in the process of being implemented, objectives, performance measures etc. linked to corporate objectives through a hierarchy</p> <p>BVPP</p> <p>Annual Audit Letter 2004/05</p>	<p></p>	<p>Action ongoing to implement PMF and Escendency</p> <p>Ensure aims/priorities per the Corporate Plan are effectively integrated into Service Business Plans</p> <p>Ensure the Corporate Improvement Plan is up-to-date and includes all significant actions arising from statutory inspections etc. The Plan to be readily available, responsibilities per the Plan accepted and delivered by the target date, progress being monitored through the PMF</p>



QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
<p>1.2 To what extent does the information that we have about the quality of service for users help us to make rigorous decisions about improving quality?</p> <p>Do we receive regular and comprehensive information on users' views of quality?</p> <p>How could this information be improved?</p> <p>How effectively do we use this information when we are planning and taking decisions?</p>	<p>Improving through implementation of the PMF, Escendency and Corporate Consultation Strategy also being implemented</p> <p>Consultation built into the budget and policy framework and results used to inform priorities</p> <p>Corporate complaints procedure</p> <p>Customer Care Charters/standards in place for some service areas</p> <p>Tenant forums etc. for Council Housing Services</p> <p>Communications Strategy</p> <p>Improvements made through use of Customer Services Centre e.g. bulky waste collections</p> <p>Results of consultation built into reports to members where appropriate thus informing the decision-making process</p> <p>BVPP</p>		<p>Develop a systematic approach to wide ranging consultation to inform and improve service delivery</p> <p>Publish comprehensive, challenging and measurable service standards</p> <p>Ensure feedback on service delivery informs day-to-day operational decisions as well as strategic decisions evidenced through a clear audit trail</p> <p>Ensure consultation and any feedback effectively feeds into the PMF</p> <p>Develop easily accessible results for all consultation undertaken and provide evidence of the information gathered being used to inform the decision-making process</p>



QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
<p>1.3 To what extent does the information that we have on costs and performance help us to make rigorous decisions about improving value for money?</p> <p>How effectively do we use this information when we are planning and taking decisions?</p> <p>How well do we understand how the value we provide compares with that of similar organisations?</p>	<p>Corporate approach not in place though improving through implementation of the PMF and Escendency</p> <p>Star Chamber process challenges costs against performance/objectives and promotes benchmarking</p> <p>Budget and Performance Panel responsible for carrying out Overview and Scrutiny for the Council's budget and performance at strategic and service level</p> <p>Understanding of value provided compared to other organisations varies from Service to Service - e.g. Planning Delivery Grant for Planning and Building Control, Services taking part in benchmarking groups etc.</p> <p>VFM considered as an integral part of audit reviews</p>		<p>Develop cost-effective PIs to measure performance and drive improvement across the Authority through the implementation of Escendency</p> <p>Performance to be linked to costs and informed by customer satisfaction</p> <p>Develop and evidence challenge mechanisms through benchmarking, consideration of outsourcing etc.</p>


QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
2. Good governance means performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles			
<p>2.1 Do we all know what we are supposed to be doing?</p>	<p>Constitution – executive roles and those of senior officers defined</p> <p>Constitution, Corporate Plan and other key documents available on the website/Intranet</p> <p>Induction training for officers and Members</p> <p>Job descriptions and EDPAs, the latter linked to corporate priorities/business plans through new PMF</p> <p>Cascade Team Briefings, staff briefings, Intranet etc.</p> <p>Legal library maintained by Legal Services</p>		<p>Ensure all principal responsibilities and statutory obligations are documented and effectively disseminated</p> <p>Improve the structure of the Intranet to ensure clarity (e.g. what constitutes a corporate document as opposed to a service document) and regularly review content</p> <p>Introduce a Corporate standard for documents to include a document date, author or responsible officer, approving body if applicable (e.g. Council) and proposed review date</p>
<p>2.2 Is our approach to each of the governing body's main functions clearly set out and understood by all in the governing body and the senior executive?</p> <p>What does the size and complexity of our organisation mean for the ways in which we approach each of the main functions of governance?</p>	<p>Constitution including Financial Regs.</p> <p>Committee agendas and minutes</p> <p>Service procedure manuals</p> <p>Principles of Corporate Governance built into the Statement on Internal Control (SIC) database used to evaluate the Council's position prior to producing the annual SIC</p>		<p>Raise officer and Member awareness of the principles of corporate governance through appropriate training</p> <p>Improve arrangements for monitoring compliance with the principles of corporate governance through strengthening the role of the Audit Committee. The results of monitoring to inform the SIC</p>



QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
<p>2.3 How clearly have we defined the respective roles and responsibilities of the non-executives and the executive, and of the chair and the chief executive?</p> <p>Do all members of the governing body take collective responsibility for the governing body's decisions?</p>	<p>Roles and responsibilities set out in the Constitution</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny function</p> <p>Standards Committee</p> <p>Appraisal Panel</p> <p>Annual Audit Letter 2004/05</p>		
<p>2.4 How well does the organisation understand the views of the public and service users?</p> <p>Do we receive comprehensive and reliable information about these views and do we use it in decision making?</p>	<p>Members serving their constituents</p> <p>Implementation of Consultation Strategy</p> <p>Consultation built into budget and policy framework and informing corporate priorities</p>		<p>See 1.2</p>



QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
3. Good governance means promoting values for the whole organisation and demonstrating the values of good governance through behaviour			
<p>3.1 What are the values that we expect the staff to demonstrate in their behaviour and actions?</p> <p>How well are these values reflected in our approach to decision making?</p> <p>What more should we do to ensure these values guide our actions and those of staff?</p>	<p>Codes of Conduct for Officers</p> <p>Member and Officer Protocol</p> <p>Compliance with legislation</p> <p>Disciplinary Policy and Procedure</p> <p>Capability Policy</p> <p>Probationary periods</p> <p>Setting personal objectives through the EDPA Scheme</p> <p>Corporate values in Corporate Plan including 'equality of opportunity'</p> <p>Registers of Interests, Gifts and Hospitality</p> <p>Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy</p> <p>Annual Audit Letter 2004/05</p>		<p>Introduce a formal review programme for the Codes of Conduct and more regular promotion amongst staff</p>



QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
<p>3.2 In what ways does our behaviour, collectively as a governing body and individually as governors, show that we take our responsibilities to the organisation and its stakeholders very seriously?</p> <p>Are there any ways in which our behaviour might weaken the organisation's aims and values?</p>	<p>See 3.1</p> <p>Members Code of Conduct</p> <p>Standards Committee</p>		
<p>4. Good governance means taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risk</p>			
<p>4.1 How well do our meetings work?</p> <p>What could we do to make them more productive and do our business more effectively?</p>	<p>Constitution</p> <p>Decision making process guidelines</p> <p>Key decisions – forward plan</p> <p>Registers of Interests, Gifts and Hospitality</p> <p>Agendas and minutes</p>		<p>The decision-makers, especially Council, to engage more with the public</p>




QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
<p>4.2 Have we formally agreed on the types of decisions that are delegated to the executive and those that are reserved for the governing body?</p> <p>Is this set out in a clear and up-to-date statement?</p> <p>How effective is this as a guide to action for the governing body and the executive?</p> <p>How well do we explain the reasons for our decisions to all those who might be affected by them?</p>	<p>See 4.1</p> <p>Published reports include the reason for the decision</p> <p>The Performance Review Group receives a quarterly report monitoring the implementation of executive decisions, outstanding actions from the previous report included</p>		
<p>4.3 Is the information we receive robust and objective?</p> <p>How could the information we receive be improved to help improve our decision making?</p> <p>Do we take professional advice to inform and support our decision making when it is sensible and appropriate to do so?</p>	<p>Standard report format</p> <p>Decision making template</p> <p>Report writing guide</p> <p>Statutory officer comments/ impact assessments in reports</p> <p>Report approval by Management Team to proceed for Member consideration</p> <p>Overview and scrutiny function</p>		

QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
<p>4.4 How effective is the organisation's risk management system?</p> <p>How do we review whether this system is working effectively?</p> <p>Do we develop an action plan to correct any deficiencies in the systems and, if so, do we publish this each year?</p>	<p>Risk Management Strategy</p> <p>Risk Management champions</p> <p>Risk Management Steering Group</p> <p>Risk and Insurance Manager in post</p> <p>Risk management in the process of being embedded, progress and work plan being regularly reported to the Audit Committee</p> <p>'Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)'' section in committee reports</p> <p>Risk register under development includes key corporate risks and officers responsible for managing the risks</p> <p>Risk register provides for 'potential impact' assessment</p> <p>Risk treatment plans built into risk register</p> <p>Internal Audit takes risk based approach reporting to Audit Committee. Reports include action plans</p> <p>Audit Committee responsible for risk management and receiving quarterly reports</p> <p>Effectiveness of risk management reported in the SIC and significant issues arising built into the Corporate Improvement Plan</p> <p>External reviews of risk management through CPA & UOR</p> <p>Annual Audit Letter 2004/05</p>		<p>Continue to implement the work plans for embedding risk management reported to the Audit Committee</p> <p>Identify all key risks and put in place processes to monitor management of the risks on an ongoing basis</p> <p>Regularly, and at least annually, review risks at service and operational levels</p> <p>Ensure processes are in place to identify new and emerging risks and to assign management of them</p> <p>Ensure processes are in place to test the robustness of risk assessments</p> <p>Continue to develop reporting to Members on risk</p>

QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
5. Good governance means developing the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective			
<p>5.1 What skills have we decided that governors must have to do their jobs effectively?</p> <p>How well does our recruitment process identify people with the necessary skills and reach people from a wide cross-section of society?</p> <p>What more could we do to make sure that becoming a governor is practical for as many people as possible?</p>	<p>Member training and induction</p> <p>Members Allowance Scheme including a Carer's Allowance</p>		<p>Political groups to consider the part they play in meeting the Standard through their selection procedures</p>
<p>5.2 How effective are we at developing our skills and updating our knowledge?</p> <p>How effective are our arrangements for reviewing the performance of individual governors?</p> <p>Do we put into practice action plans for improving our performance as a governing body?</p>	<p>Corporate training programme</p> <p>Needs/performance assessed through EDPAs</p> <p>Implementation of PMF</p> <p>External reviews – Audit Commission, IDeA etc. with actions built into Corporate Improvement Plan as appropriate</p>		<p>See 1.1 and 1.3</p>

QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
<p>5.3 What is our approach to finding a balance between continuity of knowledge and renewal of thinking in the governing body?</p> <p>What are our reasons for this approach?</p> <p>Do we need to review it?</p>	<p>Tied by electoral system</p> <p>Constitution setting out responsibilities/Terms of reference for Committees etc.</p> <p>Member training</p>		<p>No action identified the situation largely out of the Authority's control</p>
<p>6. Good governance means engaging stakeholders and making accountability real</p>			
<p>6.1 Who are we accountable to and for what?</p> <p>How well does each of these accountability relationships work?</p> <p>Do we need to take steps to clarify or strengthen any relationships?</p> <p>Do we need to negotiate a shift in the balance between different accountability relationships?</p>	<p>Members to electorate</p> <p>The responsibilities of decision-makers set out in the Constitution</p> <p>Community, customers and stakeholders</p> <p>Implementation of Consultation Strategy</p> <p>Complaints procedure</p> <p>Council Housing Tenant Forums</p> <p>Partnership Boards</p> <p>Annual Audit letter 2004/05</p>		<p>Consider ways to improve public engagement in decision-making (e.g. through more accessible meetings, public 'questiontimes' etc.)</p>

QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
<p>6.2 What is our policy on how the organisation should consult the public and service users?</p> <p>Does it explain clearly the sorts of issues on which it will consult which groups and how it will use the information it receives?</p> <p>Do we need to review this policy and its implementation?</p>	<p>Consultation Strategy in the process of being relaunched</p> <p>Service consultation champions identified</p> <p>Budget and Policy Framework and consultation informing corporate priorities communicated in Corporate Plan, press and leaflet sent out with council tax bills</p> <p>Comments and complaints procedures</p> <p>Tenants satisfaction survey</p> <p>Annual Audit letter 2004/05</p>		<p>Develop a clear consultation policy and publish a forward plan of issues to be consulted upon</p>
<p>6.3 What is our policy on consulting and involving staff and their representatives in decision making?</p> <p>Is this communicated clearly to staff?</p> <p>How well do we follow this in practice?</p> <p>How effective are systems within the organisation for protecting the rights of staff?</p>	<p>Consultation and Negotiation Protocol</p> <p>Joint Consultative Committee</p> <p>Cascade team briefings</p> <p>Speak easy</p> <p>Corporate Staff Briefings</p> <p>Forward Plan of Key Decisions</p> <p>Intranet</p> <p>EDPAs</p> <p>Member and Officer Protocol</p> <p>Whistleblowing Policy and Code of Practice</p> <p>Disciplinary Policy and Procedure</p> <p>Equal Opportunities Policy</p>		<p>Produce an annual Forward Plan of Key Decisions in line with the Consultation Strategy and make better use of the Intranet to engage staff and their representatives</p>

QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
<p>6.4 Who are the institutional stakeholders that we need to have good relationships with?</p> <p>How do we organise ourselves to take the lead in developing relationships with other organisations at the most senior level?</p>	<p>LSP</p> <p>West End Partnership</p> <p>Community Safety</p> <p>AONB</p> <p>Grant providers</p> <p>Regeneration partnerships</p> <p>Parish Councils</p> <p>Voluntary and Social Enterprises</p> <p>Chamber of Commerce</p> <p>Lancaster University and St. Martins College</p> <p>External inspectors etc. – e.g. Audit Commission, IDeA</p>		<p>Develop community engagement and leadership in partnerships</p>
<p>Applying the good governance Standard</p>			
<p>A. To what extent does the Good Governance Standard for Public Services apply to our organisation, bearing in mind its type and size?</p>	<p>The Council adheres to its statutory responsibilities in respect of governance. The Standard is aimed at all public service organisations and as such it is difficult to apply some questions to a local authority. Nevertheless the Standard is considered a useful self assessment tool.</p>		<p>Carry out an annual self assessment against the Standard in preparation for writing the SIC</p>
<p>B. Are we upholding and demonstrating the spirit and ethos of good governance that the Standard sets out to capture?</p>	<p>Completion of this self assessment suggests that we are close to fully implementing the Standard</p>		<p>Address the action areas set out in this document through work in preparation for the SIC</p>














QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
<p>C. Do we have a process for regularly reviewing our governance arrangements and practice against the Standard?</p> <p>What further improvements do we need to make?</p>	<p>See A</p>		<p>See A</p>
<p>D. Are we making public the results of our reviews and our plans for future improvements and are we inviting feedback from stakeholders and service users?</p>	<p>Public agendas and minutes are published on the Intranet and Website</p> <p>'Consultationfinder', in the process of being introduced, provides a means of implementing this a standard</p>		<p>Continue implementation of the 'Consutationfinder' system</p>






TABLE B - Questions for members of the public and their representatives to ask if they want to assess and challenge standards of governance




Questions answered in-house to test of openness and responsiveness to the public and service users




QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
1. Good governance means focusing on the organisation's purpose and on outcomes for citizens and service users			
1.1 What is this organisation for?	Corporate Plan/Council's role aims and priorities on website		
1.2 Can I easily find a clear explanation of what this organisation is doing?	Available on website: Corporate Plan A Cultural Strategy for the Lancaster District Lancaster District Regeneration Strategy Morecambe Resort Action Plan Housing Strategy 2002-2006		A clear explanation of how the key documents are related
1.3 Can I easily find out about the quality of service provided to the public?	BVPP available on website What is being done to improve services? Press releases Corporate Plan		Continue to develop, through Access to Services, specific service standards setting out what the public can expect and what staff are expected to deliver.




QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
1.4 Can I easily find out about the organisation's funding and how it spends its money?	Council Tax Leaflet Press Release 2006/07 Council Tax Rate Annual Statement of Accounts on website		Develop a Finance page on the website to include key financial documents (e.g. the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Budget Summary, Accounts Summary etc.)
2. Good governance means performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles			
2.1 Who is in charge of the organisation?	Leader of the Council Chief Executive – Head of Paid Service		
2.2 How are they elected or appointed?	Leader of the Council – elected Chief Executive - appointed		
2.3 At the top of the organisation, who is responsible for what?	Responsibilities set out in the Constitution		
3. Good governance means promoting values for the whole organisation and demonstrating the values of good governance through behaviour			
3.1 According to the organisation, what values guide its work?	Core values set out in Corporate Plan on website Compliance with legislative frameworks (e.g. Equal Opportunities, Disability Discrimination Act etc.) Constitution including Standing Orders, Codes of Conduct etc.		

QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
3.2 Does it follow these values in practice?	Disciplinary Policy and Procedure Standards Board Legal challenges		
3.3 What standards of behaviour should I expect?	Comments, Complaints and Reporting Suspected Fraud and Misconduct section of website Codes of Conduct for Officers and Members in Constitution on website Corporate values in Corporate Plan including 'equality of opportunity' Citizen's rights in dealing with Council on website Internal policies and procedures – e.g. Disciplinary Policy and Procedure Registers of Interests, Gifts and Hospitality Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy Annual Audit Letter 2004/05		
3.4 Do the senior people in the organisation put these standards of behaviour into practice?	Number of complaints, frauds, reports to Standards Committee and investigations in accordance with the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure Ombudsman Annual Letter and Report		

QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
3.5 Do they put into practice the 'Nolan' principles for people in public life (selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership)?	See 3.4		
4. Good governance means taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risk			
4.1 Who is responsible for what kinds of decisions in the organisation?	Set out in the Constitution		
4.2 Can I easily find out what decisions have been taken and the reasons for them?	'Modern.gov' system Press releases		Continue implementation of the 'Modern.gov' system including the forward plan module, member websites etc. Develop information provided on the website in relation to partnerships
4.3 Are the decisions based on up-to-date and complete information and good advice?	Report format and report writing guidance, reports containing Statutory Officer comments		
4.4 Does the organisation publish a clear annual statement on the effectiveness of its risk management system?	SIC included in Annual Statement of Accounts on website		

QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
<p>4.5 Does the organisation publish a clear annual account of how it makes sure that its policies are put into practice?</p> <p>Is the statement reassuring?</p> <p>How does it compare with my own experience?</p>	<p>SIC included in Annual Statement of Accounts on website</p> <p>Annual executive reports</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny year end report</p>		
<p>5. Good governance means developing the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective</p>			
<p>5.1 How does the organisation encourage people to get involved in running it?</p>	<p>Consultation</p> <p>Tenant Forums/ Tenant audits</p> <p>Local Democracy Week/Pupil Power</p> <p>Deep cleanse initiative</p> <p>Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Task Groups invite attendees</p> <p>The Constitution provides for the public presenting petitions and addresses and to ask questions having given prior notice</p>		<p>See Table A 1.2 and 6.2</p>
<p>5.2 What support does it provide for people who do get involved?</p>	<p>Pays expenses where appropriate</p> <p>Allows access to officers/Members and information</p>		

QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
5.3 How does the organisation make sure that all those running the organisation are doing a good job?	Standards Committee Overview and Scrutiny Committee Budget and Performance Panel Audit Committee Appraisal Panel EDPAs PMF developing		
6. Good governance means engaging stakeholders and making accountability real			
6.1 Can I easily get information to answer all these questions?	Situation improved since last year Provision of 'info@lancaster' e-mail facility Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme in place Information Management Officer in post 'Modern.gov' system		
6.2 Are there opportunities for me and other people to make our views known?	Comments, Complaints and Reporting Suspected Fraud and Misconduct section of website Consultation exercises		

QUESTION	L.C.C.'S KEY ELEMENTS	CURRENT POSITION	ACTION AREAS
6.3 Does the organisation publish an annual report containing its accounts for the year? Are copies freely available? Is the content informative?	Annual Statement of Accounts on website		
6.4 How do I find out what decisions were taken as a result of my and others' opinions being asked for?	Reports published through the 'Modern.gov' system 'Consultationfinder' system currently being developed Press releases		Continue implementation of 'Consultationfinders'
6.5 Are there opportunities to question the people in charge about their plans and decisions?	Citizen's Rights under Constitution Section of website Consultation exercises Complaints procedure Cabinet 'Questiontime' Provisions to ask questions etc. per the Constitution Member surgeries		See Table A 6.1
6.6 Can I easily find out how to complain and who to contact with suggestions for changes?	Comments, Complaints and Reporting Suspected Fraud and Misconduct Section of website	