

Summary of Code of Corporate Governance commitments impacted by the Covid-19 Pandemic

In order to fulfil the principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE Good Governance Framework a number of commitments are set out in the MCA's Code of Corporate Governance.

The table below indicates the commitments under each principle that have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and outlines the impact (positive or negative). Not all commitments have been affected and are therefore not included here.

| Principle B - 'Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement' | |
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| Commitment affected | Impact |
| Holding MCA meetings in public. | At the onset of the first national lockdown in March 2020 the MCA only cancelled one of its formal meetings (23 rd March) and quickly put arrangements in place to conduct virtual meetings as soon as legislation would allow. Audit and Standards Committee and Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings were paused for one cycle and returned to the original schedule of meetings from summer 2020 onwards. All meetings were webcast and the most meeting of the MCA in January 2021 welcomed a member of the public who had submitted a question. Webcast viewing figures have increased steadily over the last 12 months. |
| Establishing clear channels of communication and effective engagement with all stakeholders, encouraging consultation and collaboration. | Equipping and mobilising the organisation to virtual meetings has supported continued effective stakeholder engagement and consultation during the pandemic. During the early stages of the pandemic additional meetings were scheduled with specific groups to ensure clear channels of communication including MCA and PTE Audit Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs, Local Authority Chief Executives, Combined Authority Finance Directors. The MCA has also played a key role in convening working groups to address the early issues around PPE availability and the LEP in ensuring business representation on key issues. |
| Consulting appropriately to determine effective interventions and courses of action. | Consultation on the Strategic Economic Plan continued as planned, as well as consultation on the development of the Renewal Action Plan. |

| Principle C - 'Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits' | |
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| Commitment affected | Impact |
| Have in place a formal statement that describes the vision for the City Region and sets out purpose and intended outcomes of the MCA and LEP. | As referenced above, despite the challenges circumstances the Strategic Economic Plan was approved by the MCA in January. Alongside this, the Renewal Action Plan has been developed and approved in order to mitigate the worst effects of the Covid crisis. |

| Principle D - 'Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes' | |
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| Commitment affected | Impact |
| To ensure, as appropriate, that the views of stakeholders are considered in the decision-making process. | Extensive SEP and RAP consultations undertaken Private Sector lead sessions with major private sector stakeholders to understand the impact of the pandemic on business and the economy and to inform the development of the Renewal Action Plan. |
| To ensure that decision making arrangements are robust but flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances. | In addition to the move to virtual meetings, urgency provisions in the constitution were exercised in the early part of the pandemic to ensure the organisation could continue to operate effectively. |
| Ensures commissioned schemes/investments made are measured against defined outcomes and that they represent the best use of resources and value for money. | In the absence of site visit to monitor project delivery, contract monitoring processes adapted to include submission of images at agreed gateways. |
| Engages with internal and external stakeholders in determining how courses of action should be planned and delivered. | Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the first national lockdown weekly SY CEX meetings were convened • 2 Weekly Business Development Managers Meetings were convened to focus on the delivery of support programmes • Informal monthly meetings schedule with the Chairs and Vice-chair of PTE and MCA Audit Committees |

| Principle E - 'Developing the entity's capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it' | |
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| Commitment affected | Impact |
| Ensures a clear protocol exists to support a constructive working relationship between Members and Officers and seeks to develop partnerships and collaboration where most value can be added. | A protocol has been developed during the last 12 months to support the political leadership in the thematic areas of MCA priorities. |
| Holds staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs | The timing of the roll out of performance reviews has been re-scheduled, to ensure the system is consistent across the MCA Exec and PTE. |
| Ensures arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing. | Recognising the impact of the pandemic and adapted working on the health and wellbeing of the workforce a number of additional arrangements were introduced during the last year including additional all staff briefings, daily and then weekly bulletins, staff surveys, wellbeing sessions, sign posting to additional services (counselling etc), the introduction of mental health first aiders, DSE assessments |

| Principle F - 'Managing risk and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management' | |
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| Commitment affected | Impact |
| An effective Audit and Standards Committee who lead on ensuring robust risk management arrangements are in place and are evaluated regularly. | In response to internal audit recommendations refreshed and updated risk management arrangements were endorsed by the ASC and approved by the MCA. Work is ongoing to embed new processes. |
| To review the effectiveness of the decision-making framework, including delegation arrangements regularly. | Increase in delegation to £200k from £100k to in order to enable officers to make corporate decisions affecting the running of the Executive organisation. |
| Has in place robust arrangements for internal and external audit to provide assurance over the effectiveness of systems of internal control. | Whilst the Internal Audit Plan has been impacted by the ongoing situation, sufficient audit activity has been undertaken in year to enable a Head of Audit opinion to be given. Disruption and other priorities caused by the lockdown has resulted in some target dates for internal audit actions slipping. Despite disruption to the timetable the external audit was completed, and the accounts submitted by the statutory deadline. |
| Has in place a properly resourced and skilled Finance team with embedded processes compliant with best practice. | A dedicated, full time S73 joined the organisation in June 2020. Implementation of new Finance system which has enabled the MCA to tailor its system based control to its own operating environment, improve the provision of management information, and deliver operating efficiencies through the use of one Group wide platform. |
| Ensures compliance with relevant laws and regulations, internal policies and procedures and that all expenditure is lawful. | Changes required by new procurement law have been implemented. Adaptation of internal processes to remote working including electronic signatures and paperless sign off ensuring adequate internal control and segregation of duties. |
| Financial management supports both long terms achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance | Significant amount of work has been undertaken to manage and administer emergency funding from Government, as well as work to keep budgets under review to ensure they are strategy and priority led and reserves used appropriately. |

| Principle G - 'Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit, to deliver effective accountability' | |
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| Commitment affected | Impact |
| Holds all MCA meetings in public, unless there are good reasons to exclude the press and public. | See above |
| Reviews the effectiveness of its decision-making framework | See above |

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| including delegation arrangements | |
| Welcomes peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies | MHCLG's annual performance review of the LEP undertaken virtually. CfGS LEP Peer Review in progress during March. |