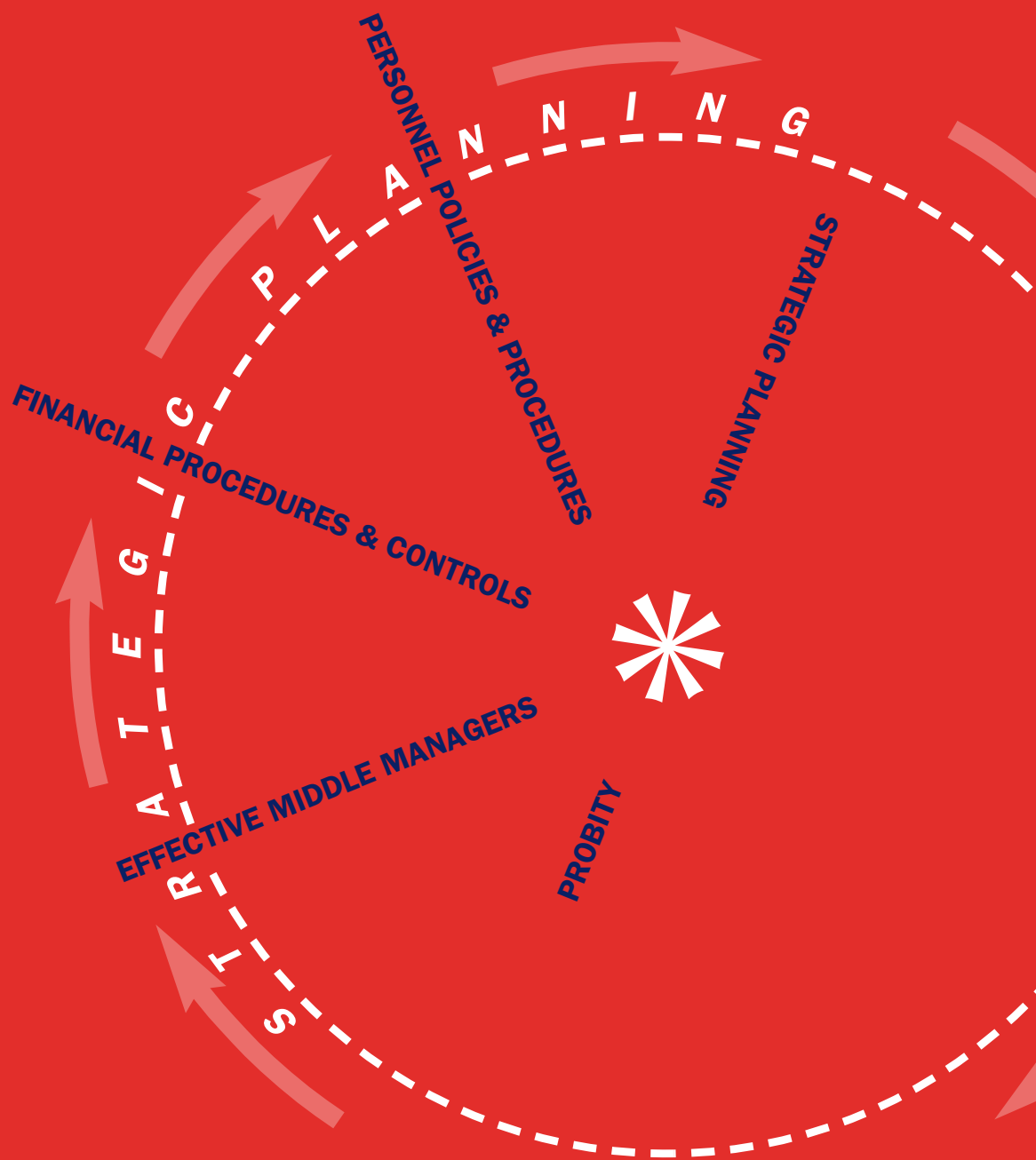


good governance & management at Thanet College



probity

INTRODUCTION

The FEFC Inspection of Thanet College in May 1998 assessed College Governance and Management as Grade 1 outstanding provision, which has many strengths and few weaknesses.

The College has been successful in bidding for resources under Strand 4 of the Standards Fund to develop this information pack as a contribution to sharing ‘good practice’ with other further education colleges in Kent. We are pleased to take this opportunity.

Our aim has been to produce material which conveys the overall nature and character of the approach which we follow at Thanet College without in any sense wishing to produce an A to Z guide. Our intention has been to make the pack useful, practical and supportive of colleagues in Kent and other colleges who believe there is a need to review their approach to aspects of management and governance.

The units in this pack cover the following governance and management issues:

- Strategic Planning
- Financial Procedures and Controls
- Personnel Procedures and Policies
- **Probity**
- Effective Middle Managers

COMMENTARY OF THE THANET COLLEGE INSPECTION TEAM

‘Inspectors agreed with the College self-assessment report that the College benefits from the considerable experience and expertise of governors: this includes finance, property, law, higher and secondary education, human resource management, public administration and service. Governors are committed to the College, they understand their role of stewardship and observe the boundary between governance and management. While governors give generous support to the executive, they do not do so uncritically and require action to be taken if they are concerned about a particular matter’.

CORE PRINCIPLES

- The Board abides by the principles recommended in the report of the Nolan Committee, Standards in Public Life – selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, leadership.
- Stakeholder involvement is actively promoted to achieve high levels of external accountability e.g. use of annual meeting, annual report and community representation on the Board.

KEY FEATURES OF THE THANET COLLEGE APPROACH TO PROBITY ISSUES

- The Board acts only within its statutory powers and has well informed objective support and advice.



- Governors understand their own position relating to their personal liabilities.
- The relationship/terms of reference of the main Board and its committees enables each group to undertake its role in a manner which is mutually supportive and efficient.
- Person specifications which define the nature of the background and experience required of governors enable them to play a full role on the Board and in specific committees.
- Transparency and openness in the selection process for governors involving recruitment publicity through the local press.
- Induction programmes for newly appointed governors allied to governor training and development programmes.
- A code of conduct for governors providing a framework in which they fulfil their role in a manner which underpins the principles defined in the report of the Nolan Committee.
- The core competencies and qualities required of board members are:
 - Ability to think strategically
 - Specialist skills
 - Commitment to the area
 - Time available to commit to the role
 - Ability to work effectively within a team
 - Commitment to education and training
- Annual statement of eligibility and annual declaration of interest by governors and regular review and updating of governors' register of interests.
- Commitment by the Board to succession planning which ensures a balance between 'new blood' and experience.
- The Board's robust process of self-assessment.
- The clear understanding between the governors and executive of the boundaries between governance and management, which enables each to play their specific and mutually supportive role.
- Effective system in place for co-opting onto sub committees to broaden the expertise available in decision making and to achieve greater external accountability.
- The role of the Audit Committee acting as the independent watchdog of the College in dealing with irregularities and fraud.
- The role of the Audit Committee acting as 'client' in monitoring the effectiveness of the audit service provider.
- Complaints procedures supporting high levels of public confidence in the College.
- Self-evaluation methodologies established which enable the Corporation and individual governors to assess their performance against agreed criteria.



- Whistle blowing procedures on suspected irregularity and fraud which complement the College's financial procedures.
- Role of the Clerk who has unrestricted access and is appraised annually by the Chair.
- Clear policy and procedure guidelines for staff to promote the integrity of their decision making thereby protecting the assets of the College and safeguarding its good name.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Governing Body

Adopts the principles of the report of the Nolan Committee. Updates annually a register of governor interests and maintains the role of critical friend in monitoring and reviewing the work of the College within a strategic framework which reflects the Nolan principles.

Audit Committee

Responsibility for monitoring effectiveness of internal controls. Oversees risk assessment of the College's core systems of financial control to minimise opportunities for breach of probity.

Principal

Overall responsibility to the Board for the executive management of the College including accounting officer for the public funds allocated to the College. Provides the leadership conducive to the College meeting its strategic aims and for ensuring probity at all times in college management.

Clerk to the Corporation

Appointed by and responsible to the Corporation. Ensures it operates within its powers and follows agreed and proper procedures.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

We would be willing to share relevant information/documentation developed by the College on request.

YOUR RESPONSE TO THIS PACK

Our commitment is to respond to colleges who may wish to pursue an interest with us in using any of our ideas or information.

We are continually reviewing and modifying our management and governance capability in the clear recognition of its value in achieving better outcomes in College performance and effectiveness. Should you wish to comment upon the information contained in the pack we would be pleased to hear from you. Contact either Bryan Mitchell, project co-ordinator or Teresa Fitzgerald on 01843 605000 or Email: principal@thanet.ac.uk



annex

Thanet College

Model Terms of Reference

AUDIT COMMITTEE

1. To advise the Governing Body on the effectiveness of the College's whole system of internal control, including controls for security, economy, efficiency and effectiveness (value for money).
2. To advise the Governing Body on the appointment, reappointment, dismissal and remuneration of external auditor and the Internal Audit Service.
3. To advise the Governing Body on the scope and objectives of the work of the external auditor and the Internal Audit Service.
4. To ensure co-ordination between the Internal Audit Service and the external auditor.
5. To consider and advise the Governing Body on the audit needs, assessment and strategic and annual internal audit plans for the Internal Audit Service.
6. To advise the Governing Body on internal audit assignment reports and annual reports and on control issues included in the external auditor's management letters, and management's response to these.
7. To consider and advise the Governing Body on relevant reports by the NAO and the council, and where appropriate, management's response to these.
8. To monitor, within an agreed timescale, the implementation of agreed recommendations relating to internal audit assignment reports, internal audit annual reports and external auditors' management letters.
9. To establish, in conjunction with college management, relevant performance measures and indicators and to monitor the effectiveness of the Internal Audit Service and external auditor through these measures and indicators.
10. To produce an annual report for the Governing Body which includes the committee's advice on the effectiveness of the College's system of internal control. The report should incorporate any significant matters arising from the work of the Internal Audit Service and external auditor.

