

# S'kan Council's graft fight plan

## David Thien

KOTA KINABALU: Sandakan Municipal Council (SMC) leads other local authorities to have the Anti-Bribery Management System (ABMS) certified under ISO



37001:2016 to check graft in local government set-up by integrating the system into governance framework.

"ABMS is crucial in promoting good governance within local governance.

"There is a need to emphasise the need for alignment between ABMS and broader governance initiatives, such as strategic planning, risk management, and performance evaluation."

SMC Deputy President 1, Wilson @ Terence bin Thomas (pic), said this in his presentation: "Enhancing Good Governance via Implementation of Anti-Bribery Management System" at the "Seminar on Empowering Local Governance Through Inclusive and Collaborative Participation" at the Shangri-La Tanjung Aru Resort and Spa here.

He said the key components of ABMS

include:

- **Risk Assessment and Management** – identifying bribery risks, evaluating their potential impact, and developing strategies to mitigate those risks effectively.

- **Policies and Procedures** – ABMS relies on well-defined and comprehensive policies and procedures.

- **Training and Awareness Programmes** – programmes aimed to educate individuals about the ABMS policies, anti-bribery laws, and the importance of ethical behaviour.

- **Reporting and Investigation Mechanism** – whistleblower protection measures are crucial to encourage individuals to come forward without fear of retaliation.

- **Monitoring and Review Processes** – enable local governments to assess the effectiveness of their anti-bribery measures, identify any gaps or weaknesses, and make the necessary improvements.

On recommendation for local governments to strengthen enforcement and monitoring mechanisms, Wilson said, "Effective enforcement sends a strong message that bribery will not be tolerated and reinforces the commitment to ethical conduct.

"Continuous monitoring and periodical evaluation of the ABMS implementation are also essential to identify gaps, measure progress, and make necessary improvements," Wilson said.

As for building partnerships with civil society and the private sector, Wilson said, "It is helpful to seek partnerships with civil society organisations and the private sector to enhance the effectiveness of the ABMS.

"Building partnerships with these stakeholders create a collaborative and collective approach to combating bribery, where resources, knowledge, and best practices are shared," Wilson said.

Engaging NGOs, private sector entities, and anti-corruption agencies creates a multi-stakeholder approach that strengthens the effectiveness of the ABMS by creating a united front against corruption and fostering a culture of integrity and good accountability as part of Corruption Risk Management (CRM).

On the need for continuous improvement and learning from experiences, he said:

"Adapting and evolving the ABMS based on feedback, changing bribery

risks, and emerging best practices is crucial to stay effective and relevant.

"The cultivation of an ethical culture and strong leadership commitment further strengthens the foundation of good governance, while enhancing stakeholder confidence and trust through effective ABMS implementation lays the groundwork for a positive relationship between the government and its constituents.

"Integrating ABMS principles and practices, strengthening enforcement mechanisms, building partnerships, and continuously improving their anti-bribery efforts, local governments can pave the way for a governance framework that upholds integrity, transparency, and accountability."

Wilson stressed that compliance with anti-corruption laws and regulations ensures that local governments operate within the boundaries of legal frameworks, leading to a more transparent and responsible administration.

He said leaders need to emphasise the importance of ABMS principles through regular communication, setting a strong example and visibly demonstrating support for anti-bribery initiatives.