



Committee and date
Standards Committee

28 January 2010

Item No

8

Public

ETHICAL GOVERNANCE SURVEY

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Summary

To consider undertaking the Audit Commission's ethical governance self assessment survey to establish how the Council complies with the Code of Conduct for Members and other ethical governance systems and processes.

Subject to the Committee agreeing to carry out the survey, to appoint a Task and Finish Group to oversee and commence the exercise, and to report back to the Committee at its meeting in April.

Recommendations

- A. That approval be given to carrying out an ethical audit using the Audit Commission's Ethical Compliance Survey as a template.
- B. That a Task and Finish Group comprising two independent members, two councillors and one parish councillor (from the Standards Committee) to oversee and commence the survey and to report back to this Committee on 15 April 2010.

Report

1. It is extremely important, as well as being considered best practice, to audit a local authority's understanding of ethical issues and its compliance with the ethical framework introduced by the Local Government Act 2000. High ethical standards are paramount and the Audit Commission has commented that the provision of excellent local government services are linked to these, and vice versa.

2. Clearly therefore, high ethical standards will be of benefit to the Council (its members and officers) and to members of the public in Shropshire. They are an integral part of strong corporate governance and can lead to increased confidence in local democracy and service provision.
3. The Audit Commission has developed an ethical standards self assessment survey which the former Shropshire County Council used, successfully, in finding out levels of awareness amongst members and officers with regard to ethical governance systems and processes.
4. I am recommending as your Monitoring Officer that we should carry out an ethical governance audit using the Audit Commission's ethical standards self assessment survey as a template. The results of the audit would:
 - (i) provide clear evidence that the Council was not complacent about the maintenance of high ethical standards;
 - (ii) provide a benchmark for the future; and
 - (iii) identify any gaps in current performance which could be improved upon.
5. To give effect to the survey, with input from members of the Standards Committee, I am recommending that a Task and Finish Group of five members be appointed to commence the exercise.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)
Human Rights Act Appraisal The actions and recommendations in this report are compliant with the Human Rights Act.
Environmental Appraisal N/A
Risk Management Appraisal It is important that the Council continues to be proactive in the area of ethical standards and does not become complacent. A survey will assist the Council in drawing out any weaknesses which may not be apparent from work in this area to date.
Community / Consultations Appraisal N/A
Cabinet Member N/A
Local Member N/A
Appendices N/A