

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

## Standards Committee – 19 January 2010

### Ethical Governance Toolkit

#### Report of the Monitoring Officer, Tonya Meers

#### **1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To agree the letter to go out in respect of the Ethical Governance Toolkit and to decide to whom it should be sent in the first tranche.

#### **2. Background**

- 2.1 In October this Committee agreed to carry out a 'light touch' health check to establish how far the ethical governance framework had been embedded into the Council.
- 2.2 The Committee agreed at its last meeting on 9 December 2009 that the questionnaire prepared by the Monitoring Officer should be sent out towards the end of January 2010 together with a suitably worded covering letter.
- 2.3 The proposed letter has been prepared and is attached at Appendix A to this report.

#### **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1 To approve the letter to accompany the previously agreed questionnaire and agree to whom it should be sent.

Contact Tonya Meers, Monitoring Officer,  
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**Tonya Meers**

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Our Ref: TM/102567

Your Ref:

«Date»

«Name and Address (no more than 6 lines)»

Dear Member/Officer

### **Ethical Standards Self Assessment Survey**

I am one of the Independent Members and also the Chairman of the Standards Committee of Taunton Deane Borough Council and with the support of the Leader of the Council, I am writing to you to introduce a self-assessment survey of Ethical Standards within the Council.

As you will hopefully be aware the Standards Committee has a statutory responsibility to promote and maintain high standards of conduct and to assist elected members to observe the Code of Conduct. The Committee is also responsible for guidance and training on matters relating to the Code. It is important that there is a check on whether there are issues that have not yet come to the surface that could be dealt with more easily by an earlier intervention. The Committee need to establish where and what the issues may be as part of an initial "health check".

As part of the first stage, we are surveying the views of both officers and members of the Borough council in relation to a wide area of ethical governance related matters. You are one of the "chosen" ones and your assistance in completing and returning the attached form will be greatly appreciated by the whole Committee. The survey results will help the Committee to identify and concentrate on those areas that require further development, improvement or support. It will also help the Council to demonstrate that it has arrangements in place designed to promote and ensure probity and propriety in the conduct of its business, in accordance with the key lines of enquiry for the Use of Resources Assessment carried out by the Audit Commission. Finally, it will provide a benchmark for comparison with surveys carried out in subsequent years.

No doubt you will appreciate that failure to achieve high ethical standards has consequences in terms of loss of credibility and public confidence, allegations of breaches of the Code of Conduct, poor decision-making and possible challenge. We

all have a responsibility to ensure that the reputation of local government is strengthened particularly at a time when the reputation of government generally is under such close public scrutiny and therefore your participation in this matter would be very much appreciated.

Therefore I would be grateful if you would complete the attached survey and return it to the address provided by 2010. Once all of the information has been collated it will enable the Standards Committee to assess areas that require further development as stated above and a programme of training/information sharing will be arranged.

Yours faithfully

Anne Elder

Chair of the Standards Committee

Ross Henley

Leader of the Council