

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Standards Committee – 9 December 2009

Ethical Governance Toolkit

Report of the Monitoring Officer, Tonya Meers

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To agree the letter and questionnaire to go out to all members and senior officers and the timescales for the survey to be carried out.

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 requested the Monitoring Officer to provide a questionnaire to be agreed by the Committee prior to this being undertaken.
- 2.3 A letter and questionnaire has been prepared and is attached at Appendix A to this report.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 to approve the letter and questionnaire and agree the process to be undertaken in order to carry out the review.

Contact Tonya Meers, Monitoring Officer,
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Tel 01823 356391 Fax 01823 356329
email: t.meers@tauntondeane.gov.uk

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 hopefully will 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 see where and what the issues are 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.

Yours faithfully

Anne Elder

Chair of the Standards Committee

Ross Henley

Leader of the Council

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL – STANDARDS COMMITTEE

ETHICAL STANDARDS SELF-ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Please indicate whether you are a:

Member

Officer

Members and Officers' Ethical Standards and Compliance

(A) Code of conduct – compliance

For each statement/question please tick the box that most closely reflects your view

1) I know where to find the codes and procedures that govern the ethical standards expected of Members/Officers of the Council.

YES NO

2). I know how to report a breach or potential breach of the Members/Officers' codes of conduct.

YES NO

3) The Council encourages high ethical standards and appropriate behaviour across the Council.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(B) Standards Committee

4) The Standards Committee is making a positive difference to the ethical environment within the Council.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5) What else should the Standards Committee do to encourage and develop high ethical standards within the Council?

(C) Whistle blowing

6) I know that the Council has clear and confidential arrangements for staff to express concerns about misconduct, fraud and corruption.

YES NO

7.1) I know where to find the policy and procedure for reporting misconduct, fraud and corruption.

YES NO

7.2) I would feel confident in expressing concerns about misconduct, fraud and corruption under the whistle blowing policy.

YES NO

7.3) If you answered No to question 7.2 please let us know the reasons why you would not feel confident using the whistle blowing policy.

(D) Training

8) Appropriate training is given to Members/Officers on issues of conduct.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered Disagree or Strongly Disagree to Question 8 please let us have your views or give examples where you think training has been lacking.

9) I have been provided with advice, a briefing note/information or training on the following. Please tick those that apply.

Human Rights Act	<input type="checkbox"/>	Freedom of Information Act	<input type="checkbox"/>
Data Protection Act	<input type="checkbox"/>	Race Relations (Amendment) Act	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sex Discrimination Act	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disability Discrimination Act	<input type="checkbox"/>

(E) (a) Interests – Members

10) I understand the differences between a personal and a prejudicial interest.

YES NO

11) I regularly record and update my relevant interests in the Council’s Register of Members’ Interests.

YES NO

12) I am aware of the sorts of interests that should be included in the Council’s Register of Members’ Interests (e.g. land ownership; business interests; membership of certain bodies).

YES NO

13) I am aware of the rules for registration of gifts and hospitality.

YES NO

(E) (b) Interests – Officers

14) I am aware that I must declare any personal interests that conflict with the Council’s interests.

YES NO

15) I am aware of the rules regarding receipt of gifts and hospitality in the course of my work.

YES NO

(F) Codes of Conduct – Behaviour and Cultural Leadership

16) Members listen to the advice of officers.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

17) Members involve officers inappropriately in party political issues.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

18) Members treat all others fairly and without discrimination.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19) Members perform their duties with honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20) I understand the role of the Council's Monitoring Officer.

YES NO

(G) Communications

21) The communication between Members is open and constructive.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

22) The communication between Members and Officers is open and constructive.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(H) Relationships

23) There is an atmosphere of trust in the Council between Members and Officers.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

24) There is a culture of bullying in the Council.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25) I am aware of the Member/Officer Protocol.

YES NO

26) I know where to find the Member/Officer Protocol.

YES NO

(I) Accountability

27) Decision making by Members is transparent, objective and follows agreed procedures.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

28) Members must account for their decisions and actions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

29) I think that Members are aware that they are accountable for their decisions and actions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

30) The public has easy access to information on who has taken particular decisions.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(J) Management of Standards

31) Decisions made by Members may be challenged, without reprisal, by other Members, Officers, partner organisations or the public.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you Disagree or Strongly Disagree please give your reasons.

32) The Council's complaints procedures are clear and accessible.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you Disagree or Strongly Disagree please give your reasons.

33) The Council takes seriously complaints from the public relating to ethical standards.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you Disagree or Strongly Disagree please give your reasons.

34) The Council has a clear commitment to fight financial misconduct, fraud and corruption.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

35) Please add any additional comments as to how the Council could ensure compliance with ethical governance standards and build public confidence in local democracy.

If you require any information regarding issues identified in this survey then please contact Tonya Meers, Legal & Democratic Services Manager and Monitoring Officer (t.meers@tauntondeane.gov.uk or 01823 356391)

SURVEY TO BE RETURNED BY *** IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED.**

Optional Details – Both your response and identity will be kept confidential.

Name:

Contact Telephone Number:

Position in the Council:

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey. It will help the Council to act where appropriate to maintain high ethical standards and

public confidence in local government, which is of benefit to us all, members, officers and the public.