

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

12 APRIL 2007

REPORT OF
CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM

COUNCIL DECISION/

CORPORATE – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Coleman

ETHICAL GOVERNANCE AUDIT - IDeA LIGHT TOUCH HEALTH CHECK

1. Summary

This report provides Cabinet with an opportunity to comment on the proposed action plans arising from the Ethical Governance Audit and IDeA Light Touch Health Check.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet considers and comments on the proposed action plans and subject thereto, recommends the plans to Council for approval.

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

In order to ensure that the Council continues to encourage, develop and maintain high standards of conduct and probity as part of the continuous improvement of its service planning and service delivery.

4. Members Interests

Members (including co-opted members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (paragraph 8) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest (paragraph 10 of the code of conduct).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held, whilst the matter is being considered; not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (paragraph 12 of the Code).

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SUMMARY

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DETAIL

1. Cabinet received a detailed report regarding the proposed Ethical Governance Light Touch Health Check and ethical governance surveys of Members, Employees and Key Partners in June last year.
2. The surveys were carried out in November 2006 and the Health Check was undertaken in December last year.
3. The survey results and the IDeA Light Touch Health Check report and recommendations have previously been considered by the Members Advisory Panel and the Standards Committee and copies are attached at **Appendix 1**.
4. Attached at **Appendix 2** are copies of draft action plans for each of the three surveys (it is simpler to produce separate action plans as opposed to a combined action plan), and an action plan specific to the Light Touch Health Check. The plans have previously been reported to, and agreed by the Standards Committee and the Members Advisory Panel.
5. Cabinet's views are requested on each of the draft action plans with a view to a recommendation to Council to approve them, for implementation in the new municipal year.

6. When implementing the agreed action plans, reports will be taken back to the Members Advisory Panel, the Standards Committee and other relevant Committees (eg Planning, Select Committees) for consideration of, and views on particular elements of the plans. It may also be necessary to report back to Cabinet and Council eg if key constitutional changes are proposed.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial

7. Costs associated with the audit/survey and implementing any resulting recommendations and action plans, such as training and development, will be met from within existing budgets.

Legal

8. There are no legal implications arising directly from the report although there are risks involved as regards any failure to achieve or maintain high standards of conduct.

RISK ASSESSMENT

9. Failure to achieve high ethical standards has consequences for Members, Officers, local authorities and local government in general, and may result in loss of credibility and confidence; a poor reputation; investigation by the Standards Board; sometimes leading to sanctions against Members; potential legal challenges and ineffective, poor decision-making. Potential breaches of the Code of Conduct are assessed as a high risk for the Authority, but with ongoing measures in place to control the risk. The ethical governance audit and its implementation is one of the key measures in that context.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

10. Ethical governance is a key feature of the requirement of local authorities to encourage, develop and maintain high standards of conduct and is critical to effective service planning and quality service delivery. This is crucial for each of the Community Strategy themes.

CONSULTATION

11. The Council's ethical governance audit arrangements have been the subject of previous reports to Members and Officers. The arrangements proposed for 2006/07 were discussed and agreed with Members and Officers and Cabinet and Council, as well as the Standards Committee. The IDeA Health Check report has been circulated to all those involved in the process, as well as all other Members and relevant Officers. Once action plans are agreed (through Cabinet and Council), details of specific elements of the action plans and proposals regarding them will be reported back to the Members Advisory Panel as well as to relevant Committees as appropriate, and reports will also be submitted to Cabinet and Council for the purposes of obtaining any necessary approvals to, for instance, key constitutional changes.

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<u>Background Papers</u>	The appendices to the report
<u>Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:</u>	Not Ward specific
<u>Property Implications</u>	None