

Agenda Item:

Report to: STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Date: 7 December 2006

Report from: BOROUGH SOLICITOR AND MONITORING
OFFICER

Title of report: **ETHICAL GOVERNANCE TOOLKIT**

Purpose of report: To seek members' views on the use of the Toolkit.

Recommendations: Members views are sought regarding use of the "light touch" exercise.

Introduction

1. "Ethical governance is concerned about the standards of conduct of all holders of public office, including arrangements in relation to financial and commercial activities." (Hansard 1994).
2. The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), the Audit Commission and the Standards Board for England, have joined together to devise an Ethical Governance Toolkit. The purpose of the Toolkit is to assist authorities to assess and understand how well they are achieving under the ethical framework, what more needs to be done to improve their position and how to make this improvement sustainable. Failure to meet the standards expected has the negative aspects of lack of public confidence, repeated references to the Standards Board, possible litigation and poor decision-making.

The Toolkit and how it works

3. There are two elements to the Toolkit – the diagnostic phase and the developmental phase.
4. There are varying levels of investigation available in the diagnostic phase, which as its name suggests is designed as an ethics health check. The levels are as follows and this also shows which outside body contributes towards the process:-
 - self assessment survey (Audit Commission)
 - self assessment survey and full audit (Audit Commission)
 - self assessment survey (Audit Commission) and light touch health check (IDeA)
 - full audit (Audit Commission)
 - light touch health check (IDeA)
5. The developmental workshops, using ethical scenarios, seek to increase awareness and understanding of the Code of Conduct and ethical behaviour. The developmental workshops should be tailored to meet any awareness and understanding issues identified during the diagnostic stage.

What resources are needed

6. The IDeA website shows the resource implications for the various levels of assessment as follows:-

- **Tool:** self assessment survey
Audit Commission
Target audience: all elected members, senior officers (1st-3rd tier), staff from democratic services
Time: 1-4 days depending on output required
- **Tool:** full audit
Audit Commission
Target audience: corporate leadership, senior management, standards committee members
Time: 7-10 days depending on size of the council
- **Tool:** light touch health check
IDeA
Target audience: standards committee members, monitoring officer, chief executive, senior management
Time: 0.5-1 day
- **Tool:** developmental workshops
IDeA or Audit Commission
Target audience: standards committee members, councillors, monitoring officer, chief executive, senior management
Time: 1 day per workshop

Specific financial costs will need to be discussed with the Audit Commission or IDeA. I shall endeavour to obtain an indication of these in time for the meeting.

What is required locally

7. If members wish to pursue assessment, it is suggested that the light touch health check would be appropriate. The Toolkit for this assessment is attached as appendix A for information.

Equalities & Community Cohesiveness	
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	
Risk Management	
Environmental issues	
Economic / Financial implications	
Human Rights Act	
Organisational Consequences	X

Report written by: Jayne Butters, Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

Tel. 01424 451733, e-mail jbutters@hastings.gov.uk

Appendix A to this report cannot be published on the website. A copy may be obtained from Elaine Wood, Principal Committee Administrator, telephone 01424 451717.