

# Question and Answer Session – Leader of the Council

Standards Committee

Date: 19 January 2009

---

**Author:** Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer)

**Wards Affected:** All

## Purpose

- To provide the Committee with an opportunity to discuss with the Leader of the Council the authority's approach to ethical governance.

## Recommendation

- That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to amend the Desktop Ethical Audit in the light of the new IDeA Ethical Audit Toolkit and the discussion with the Leader of the Council on ethical governance.

## 1. Reasons

- 1.1 To progress the updating of the desktop ethical audit and keep the Standards Committee informed of issues of probity in the Council.

## 2. Detail

### *Desktop Ethical Audit*

- 2.1 Since January 2005, the Committee has carried out a regular desktop ethical audit of the Council against the criteria set out in an Ethical Audit Toolkit prepared by the IDeA (Improvement and Development Agency), to demonstrate compliance with all the elements required for the ethical framework and that all the necessary processes and procedures are in place.
- 2.2 As referred to in the Ethical Framework Update report earlier in this agenda, the Council has been assessed by the Audit Commission as being at level 4 (the highest performing level) in the last two years, 2006/07 and 2007/08, for probity and propriety. A copy of the notable practice submission is attached as Appendix '1' to that report.
- 2.3 At its last meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2008, the Committee reviewed the Ethical Audit Matrix, which had been updated with actions carried out since its last review in July 2007. This document is attached at Appendix '1'.
- 2.4 In addition, the Committee was informed that the IDeA in conjunction with the Standards Board and Audit Commission had updated the ethical

---

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Stephen Taylor on Direct Dial on 01793 463012 or Email [staylor@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:staylor@swindon.gov.uk).

## Question and Answer Session – Leader of the Council

Standards Committee

Date: 19 January 2009

---

governance toolkit, to reflect changes brought about by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, and noted the new categories within the Ethical Audit Toolkit (attached at Appendix '2').

- 2.5 The Committee agreed that it wished to invite the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive to its next meeting to discuss their key priorities and key areas for action and review in the light of the Desktop Ethical Audit. This would allow the Monitoring Officer to update the ethical audit and report back to a future meeting following this discussion.
- 2.6 The Leader will attend the meeting to discuss with the Standards Committee the Council's approach to ethical governance, in the light in particular of the new categories within the toolkit set out in the sections on 'Leadership Behaviour and Styles' and 'Relationships' which relate to the roles of the Leader and Chief Executive in ethical governance and ensuring that ethical standards are upheld.

### Alternative Options

- It is open to the Committee not to carry out an ethical audit, but this would not be in accordance with good practice.

### Risk Management

#### *Financial and Procurement Implications*

- There are no direct financial implications

#### *Legal / Human Rights Implications*

- There are no direct legal or human rights implications

#### *Links to Corporate Plans and Policies (in particular to Swindon 2010 Promises)*

- Monitoring of issues of probity in the Council underpins the Council's plans and policies and to the delivery of the 2010 objectives.

### Consultees

- The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.
- Leader of the Council
- Chief Executive
- Group Director, Business Transformation

### Background Papers and Appendices

- Appendix 1 –Updated Ethical Audit Matrix, October 2008
- Appendix 2 – Revised Ethical Audit Categories

---

Further information on the subject of this report can be obtained from Stephen Taylor on Direct Dial on 01793 463012 or Email [staylor@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:staylor@swindon.gov.uk).