

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Standards Committee                      **DATE:** 10<sup>th</sup> October, 2007

**CONTACT OFFICER:** Steven Quayle  
Director of Law & Corporate Governance  
(01753) 875004

**WARDS:** All

### **PART I** **FOR DECISION**

#### **ETHICAL GOVERNANCE - ACTION PLAN**

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

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to submit an Action Plan (Appendix A) for developing ethical governance within the Council given the results of the ethical governance survey undertaken last year.

##### **2. Recommendation/Proposed Action**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to resolve that the Action Plan annexed as Appendix A be approved as part of the Committee's work programme for 2007/08.

##### **3. Key Priorities – Taking Pride in Slough and Making a Difference to Communities and our Environment**

**Priority 5** – Maintaining excellent governance within the Council to ensure that it is efficient, effective and economic in everything it does.

- 3.1 By adopting the Action Plan now proposed the Council will help ensure that governance of the highest order is maintained which will also contribute to achieving the Council's other key priorities.

##### **4. Other Implications**

- 4.1 There are no financial, nor any direct legal (including Human Rights) implications arising from this report. There will be some staffing implications given the increased workload for Officers.

##### **5. Background/Supporting Information**

- 5.1 As Members of the Committee will be aware local authorities have a duty under Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 to :-
- a) Take responsibility for their own standards.
  - b) Adopt a Local Code of Conduct for their Members that requires compliance with high ethical standards.

- c) Adopt a Code of Conduct for Officers.
- d) Promote and maintain high ethical standards across the Authority.

5.2 It has been said that high ethical standards are a cornerstone of good governance and a failure to live up to the demands of the 2000 Act leads to individual Members being investigated by the Standards Board for England. This then leads to the Authority finding its reputation damaged not only with the public but also with its partners.

5.3 To help protect local authorities against the risks referred to above the Audit Commission and the Standards Board for England, together with the IDeA have developed a diagnostic to assess an Authority's arrangements and identify areas for improvement. Last year in light of some known difficulties with a small number of our own Members, Officers were authorised to invest in the ethical governance diagnostic referred to above which has three parts:-

- i) An audit of compliance with the Local Code of Conduct and how arrangements are developing.
- ii) A survey of Members and Officers including awareness and understanding of ethical behaviour.
- iii) Case studies for workshops with Members and Officers exploring dilemmas, conflicts of interest and equality issues.

5.4 Parts i) and ii) of the ethical governance diagnostic have now been completed by the Audit Commission and Members will recall that the results were summarised at their meeting held in April 2007. The Audit Commission made recommendations to the Council which were accepted by Members of the Committee.

5.5 The Action Plan submitted and annexed to this report embraces the recommendations of the Audit Commission and sets out the tasks and processes which are necessary to implement the recommendations together with the Lead Officer(s) identified.

## **6. Conclusion**

6.1 It is important that the Committee develop its work to maintain and develop high standards of ethical behaviour across the Authority and this includes a clear requirement to adopt a Local Code of Conduct for Officers.

### **Background Papers**

Result of ethical governance survey.

### **Appendix**

Appendix A -Proposed Action Plan.