Extracts lifted from the IDeA website pages:

Ethical governance toolkit

The purpose of the toolkit is to help local authorities to assess how well they are meeting the ethical agenda and to improve further their arrangements. The toolkit is joint badged by the Standards Board for England, the IDeA and the Audit Commission. The role of the Standards Board for England has been to support the development of the tools with the Audit Commission and the IDeA.

The toolkit consists of four key elements, each of which is administered by either the Audit Commission or the IDeA. The list below shows the tools and the key issues they address.

Self-assessment survey (Audit Commission)

Assesses awareness of ethical issues

Full audit (Audit Commission)

In-depth assessment of the council's:
- compliance with the Code of Conduct
- arrangements for local determinations and investigations
- the roles and responsibilities of standards committees
- monitoring officer roles and responsibilities
- chief Executive roles and responsibilities
- protocols and constitution
- arrangements for promoting confidence in local democracy
- understanding of ethical issues and behaviours

Light touch health check (IDeA)

A quick assessment of the following behaviours of the council:
- leadership
- relationships
- communication
- accountability
- management of standards
- team working and co-operation

Developmental workshops (Audit Commission or IDeA)

To improve awareness and understanding of ethical issues facing the council.

What are the benefits of using the toolkit?

The ethical governance toolkit contains various elements which will enable councils to have a better understanding of:
- how well they are meeting the ethical agenda
- where they can make improvements
- how they can address issues

- how well they are meeting CPA benchmarks
- how they can help ensure that high standards of ethical governance are sustained.

Failure to achieve high ethical standards has consequences for members, councils and local government more generally:

- loss of credibility and confidence in individual members, councils and local democracy by the public
- investigation, by the Standards Board for England or councils, sometimes leading to the disqualification of members
- potential litigation and costs of defending a challenge
- poor decision-making.

How does the toolkit work?

The toolkit has been designed so that users can 'pick and mix' the different elements. The self-assessment survey, full audit and light touch health check are 'diagnostic tools' and it is recommended that they be used prior to the developmental workshops. Councils can use the following combinations of diagnostic tools:

- 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)

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 materials are available on the website?

We strongly recommend that to get the full benefit from any of the toolkit materials councils use trained practitioners from either the Audit Commission, or the IDeA. Trained practitioners will constructively challenge existing processes, procedures, culture and behaviour.

The materials for the light touch health check and developmental workshops are, however, available on the website.

- An ethical governance light touch health check (PDF, 26 pages, 235KB) including a benchmark and an action plan template
- A context presentation (PDF, 23 pages, 271KB)
- A developmental workshop facilitation guide (PDF, 4 pages, 104KB) including individual action plan
- A handout on member officer roles (PDF, 5 pages, 59KB)
- A handout on the 10 general principles of conduct (PDF, 2 pages, 41KB)
- A range of 40+ ethical governance scenarios (PDF, 47 pages, 281KB) that include appropriate responses to scenarios. These have been developed jointly with the Standards Board for England and the Audit Commission and the IDeA
- The IDeA member skills framework (PDF, 5 pages, 681KB)

(Please contact the IDeA for PowerPoint versions of the context presentation and the ethical governance scenarios).

It should be noted that use of these materials will not guarantee improved ethical governance.

Rather, the materials provide a mechanism to identify and discuss ethical governance issues in your authority, and a means of developing solutions.

Before using any of the materials it is important that the facilitator has a broad understanding of ethical issues. It is recommended that, at the very least, they read the various guidance documents produced by the Standards Board for England. These documents, along with some useful websites, can be found on the useful links page.

How do I decide what tools I should use?

When making a decision about which diagnostic tools to use the council should consider the roles of the Audit Commission and IDeA and how this fits with their needs, and also the level of resources (in terms of finances and staff time) they are able to commit.

The strength of the Audit Commission is in addressing compliance, assurance, improvement and issues to do with arrangements. The IDeA has particular experience in working with members and officers on cultural and behavioural issues. It is recommended that either or both organisations should also be contacted for further details on costs, and further information about the tools and outputs.

Outputs

Both the Audit Commission and the IDeA work flexibly with councils on how feedback is provided to a council and councils can discuss the various options with them.

However, it is envisaged that the use of the various parts of the toolkit will lead to the following outputs:

- **Tool**: self assessment survey
  Output: short analysis and recommendations, action plan

- **Tool**: full audit
  Output: full report, recommendations, action plan

- **Tool**: light touch health check
  Output: summary report, action plan, presentation

- **Tool**: developmental workshops
  Output: presentation using 'ethical scenarios' and outline action plan.

Resource implications

The list below provides an indication of the time and range of people that we recommend are required for the various parts of the toolkit. Specific financial costs will need to be discussed with the Audit Commission or IDeA.

- **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
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- **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

Further information and contacts

Below are contact details for the Audit Commission, IDeA and the Standards Board for England.

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Useful links (from the IDeA website)

[Audit Commission](#)
[Committee on Standards in Public Life](#)
[Comprehensive Performance Assessment key lines of enquiry](#)
[Improvement Network](#)
[The Standards Board for England](#)
[Guidance on standards committees (PDF, 9 pages, 98KB)](#)
[Guide to part III of the Local Government Act 2000 (PDF, 7 pages, 97KB)](#)
[How do I register and declare interests, and register gifts and hospitality (PDF, 16 pages, 77KB)](#)
[How to conduct and investigation (PDF, 13 pages, 71KB)](#)
[How to make a complaint (PDF, 6 pages, 91KB)](#)
[Investigations by the Standards Board (PDF, 6 pages, 149KB)](#)
[Lobby groups, dual-hatted members and the code of conduct (PDF, 24 pages, 68KB)](#)
[Local investigations (PDF, 16 pages, 56KB)](#)
[The code to protect you (PDF, 8 pages, 550KB)](#)
[Standards committee determinations (PDF, 49 pages, 421KB)](#)
[The Local Authorities (Mode of Conduct) (England) Order 2001](#)