

## Annex A to report on key line of enquiry 2.3

### Audit Commission key line of enquiry 2.3

*“Does the organisation promote and demonstrate the principles and values of good governance?”*

#### The problem is the public’s perception

Good governance is essential to ensure public bodies are meeting the needs of their users and developing their community leadership role. Poor governance, especially where public bodies are working in complex partnerships, will adversely impact on effectiveness and lead to poorer public services and loss of public confidence.

The Audit Commission report, [Corporate Governance: Improvement and trust in local public services](#), noted that there are two main areas affecting public confidence and trust:

- the quality of services that individuals and their families receive; and
- how open and honest bodies are about performance, including their willingness to admit to and learn from mistakes.

In general, the public does not rate public bodies highly on the second of these. Only one in eight believes their local hospital, council or police service always admits when it makes a mistake, and only one in four believes these organisations learn from the mistakes they make.

#### Task

To show people what we do to make sure standards are maintained.

#### Target audience

- Swale residents and businesses
- Members
- Staff
- The media
- Other stakeholders and partners.

#### Key messages

- Local democracy in Swale is open and our councillors are accountable
- We have systems in place to maintain our standards and help you hold us to account.

#### What are the systems?

1. Members’ code of conduct (for district and parish councilors)
2. Recording members allowances and expenses claims
3. List of members interests
4. The Standards Committee, chair is a volunteer from the local community
5. Complaints procedure and leaflet

Promotional opportunities:

	2009	Audience	Action	Who
1	<b>Publications:</b> Inside Swale  Business Bulletin :	Swale residents  Local business	Expenses for holder of public office are a recent talking point. Schedule an article in Inside Swale in the same edition as the annual canvass (autumn) Deadline for this joint issue is 16 August	TH to speak with Mark James
2	<b>Local papers</b> EKG KM KosMedia	Swale residents	We have three chairman of the independent standards committee. Offer each of the three newspaper groups an interview with one of them to talk about the process and how what they do helps maintain standards (in the light of the recent 'hot topic' or save it until the next MPs' scandal).	Mark James
3	<b>Broadcast media</b> Invicta KMFM Radio Kent	Kent people	Ditto  Sunday am programme on ethics	Mark James
4	<b>Reception</b>	Visitors to SBC	Make sure the complaints leaflet is clearly on display at all times in reception and in other places where the public wait.	Sue Parry
5	<b>Website</b>	Residents and all other stakeholders	Reconfigure 'Governance Code' page of the website to something more meaningful for the public: eg 'Standards and trust in public service'. Provide links to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Code of conduct <a href="http://swale.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5094">swale.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5094</a></li> <li>2. Complaining about a councillor's behaviour <a href="http://swale.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4813">swale.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4813</a></li> <li>3. Register of members' interests <a href="http://swale.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4626">swale.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4626</a></li> <li>4. Members allowances scheme  <a href="http://www.swale.gov.uk/media/adobe/pdf/i%2Ff%2FMembers_Allowances2.pdf">www.swale.gov.uk/media/adobe/pdf/i%2Ff%2FMembers Allowances2.pdf</a> </li> </ol> Link to the Governance Code page from the 'Minutes' page.	Jason Wignall
6	<b>Radford's reminders</b>	Members	Blog of conduct-related topics published on the website in the members pages with a link emailed out to all members.	