

## **COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE - NEWSLETTER**

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Wards affected: All

### ***PROPOSED DECISION***

That the report be noted.

#### **Corporate Implications**

1. The Standards Committee's terms of reference include upholding standards of conduct for Members of the Council. Awareness of the work of other bodies which have similar objectives will help the Standards Committee in its work and all Council Members in their roles as representatives of their local communities.

#### **Executive Summary**

This report draws to Members' attention the regular Newsletters now being published by the CSPL, its role, and the work it carries out which enables Standards Committee to maintain and increase its awareness of wider standards and ethics issues in public life.

#### **Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities - Implications**

This report helps support the Council's Corporate Plan by supporting its values in ensuring its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards.

#### **Background and Issues**

The Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) was established in 1994 to enquire into public concerns about standards in public life. Its first Chairman was Lord Nolan and its first report, published in 1995, established the seven principles of conduct, now known as the Nolan Principles, which continue to underpin standards in public life and continue to form the basis of the Code of Conduct for Members.

The CSPL is currently chaired by Lord Bew. Its terms of reference were expanded in 1997 by adding the functions of reviewing and making recommendations on the funding of political parties, and in 2013 by clarifying that the Committee should not inquire into matters relating to the devolved legislatures and governments unless they so agree, but adding that the remit to examine standards of conduct of all holders of public office encompasses all those involved in the delivery of public services, not solely those appointed or elected to public office.

It continues to advise on ethical standards across the whole of public life in the UK and it monitors and reports on issues relating to the standards of conduct of all public office holders.

The CSPL has recently decided to produce a quarterly newsletter, and the latest edition, the Spring Newsletter 2016, can be found at <http://us10.campaign-archive2.com/?u=d2f347f620a6262d64418434e&id=34b0327f70&e=a5b526c57b>

The newsletter has been circulated to Members by email in order to access to the links. In particular, this edition includes:

- A response to the proposals in a report by Sir Gerry Grimstone on the transparency of the public appointment process - the appointment of the Rt Hon Peter Riddell CBE as the preferred candidate for Commissioner for Public Appointments was welcomed, as were proposals to improve transparency, though unease about the cumulative effect of other changes were expressed;
- An exploration of the Committee's Ethics for Regulators Review project, on the internal practices of regulatory bodies, and how well they live up to the Seven Principles of Public Life – these issues have been discussed with over 20 regulators and over 45 responses received, including from academics, regulators and other stakeholders;
- Coverage of the evidence given by the Chairman Lord Bew, and former Chairman Sir Christopher Kelly to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Trade Union Bill. The Select Committee's report was published on 2 March and debated in the House of Lords on 9 March.
- An update on the Committee's approach to policing, in light of the Committee's June 2015 published report "Tone from the top: Leadership, ethics and accountability in policing" and the forthcoming PCC elections, with all candidates urged by the Committee to sign up to an Ethical Checklist;
- The Committee's further response to the Government's 21 October 2015 response to the Committee's November 2013 report on "Strengthening Transparency Around Lobbying";
- Publication of a new online guide for public services providers which follows up on the Committee's June 2014 report – this offers short practical guidance on building and embedding ethical standards in an organisation;
- The Committee's response to the Law Commission's review of the offence of misconduct in public office – the response focussed on the definition of "public office holders", sanctions for misconduct, principles, and culture.
- The Committee's response to the publication on 21 January 2016 of a consultation exercise by Kathryn Hudson, the Independent Parliamentary Commissioner, to help her review the current Code of Conduct for MPs. The response argues for a principles-based approach, and considers leadership is essential in promoting and supporting the seven principles and that the Code of Conduct should reinforce those fundamental values. On 15<sup>th</sup> March Lord

Bew also gave evidence to the Parliamentary Standards Committee as this is exploring the same issue;

- Notification that that the Committee has been joined by a new member, Monisha Shah, who has been appointed for a 5 year term;
- Highlighting a number of blogs published by the Committee, some covering the above issues.

Members are invited to note the Newsletter, which provides a valuable public insight into the work that the Committee is undertaking and the areas it views as worthy of investigation.

It is proposed that subsequent newsletters be presented to the Committee on a regular basis.

### **Options**

There are no options.

### **Conclusions**

Access to the newsletters by Members generally will support the Committee's work to uphold good standards of conduct by drawing attention to areas of work that the CSPL is dealing with which affect wider standards and ethics.

### **Next Steps**

Future reports will be presented to Committee.

### **Background Papers**

None, other than those referred to in the report.