

REPORT TO: Cabinet

DATE: 26 February 2009

SUBJECT: Local Leadership and Public Trust:
Committee on Standards in Public Life

**WARDS
AFFECTED:** All

REPORT OF: Legal Director

**CONTACT
OFFICER:** Caroline Elwood
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**EXEMPT /
CONFIDENTIAL:** No

PURPOSE / SUMMARY:

To report on the 12th Inquiry of the Committee on Standards in Public Life which deals with openness and accountability in Local and London Government seeking comments on a number of issues. There is also the opportunity to apply to give evidence at one of the number of Public Hearings to be held throughout the UK in early Spring.

REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:

This is an initial issues and questions paper to stimulate debate.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That Members note the report.
2. That Members determine whether they wish to comment on any of the issues raised.
3. That Members determine if they wish to apply to give formal evidence at one of the Public Hearings.

KEY DECISION: No

FORWARD PLAN: No

IMPLEMENTATION DATE: Following the expiry of the 'call-in' period for the minutes of the meeting

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:

Not to respond to the Consultation Paper at this stage

IMPLICATIONS:

Budget / Policy Framework: Not applicable

Financial: Not applicable

<u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u>	2006/ 2007 £	2007/ 2008 £	2008/ 2009 £	2009/ 2010 £
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/N	When?			
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

Legal: Not applicable

Risk Assessment: Not applicable

Asset Management: Not applicable

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN / VIEWS

Overview & Scrutiny Management Board Standards Committee Members
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CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:

<u>Corporate Objective</u>		<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community		√	
2	Creating Safe Communities		√	
3	Jobs and Prosperity		√	
4	Improving Health and Well-Being		√	
5	Environmental Sustainability		√	
6	Creating Inclusive Communities		√	
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy	√		
8	Children and Young People		√	

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT
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12 th Inquiry of the Committee on Standards in Public Life – Issues and Questions Paper
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1.0 BACKGROUND:

- 1.1** The Committee on Standards in Public Life was originally set up in October 1994 to examine concerns about standards of conduct of all holders of public office and to make recommendations to ensure the highest standards of propriety in public life. In 1997 additional terms of references tasked the Committee with reviewing issues in relation to the funding of Political Parties. The current Inquiry will look at how well the governance arrangements for London and Local Government across the UK do reflect the seven principles of public life (see **Annex A**) with particular emphasis on the principles of leadership, openness and accountability. It is also intended to examine the impact governance arrangements have had on public trust and confidence in public office holders.
- 1.2** The current Inquiry is concerned with how well the seven principles of public life are promoted by the current structure within Local and London governance. The Committee has already been tracking public attitudes towards the conduct of public office holders in various professions since 2004. It has recently published the results of its third survey revealing 45% of people trust Local Councillors to tell the truth, with 35% trusting Senior Managers in Local Government. The Committee would welcome views and evidence about levels of public confidence and trust, factors influencing levels and confidence in trust and is particularly interested in the impact on the type of governance and decision making on public perception.
- 1.3** This first Consultation Paper sets out issues and questions which seem most relevant to the Committee at this early stage. The Committee does not consider itself restricted to the questions asked which are intended to stimulate and focus public debate and invite responses. The Committee would welcome written submissions on all or any of the subjects in the Consultation Paper. There is no need or requirement for respondents to answer every question or to confine questions to the specific questions in the Paper. Relevant extracts from the Consultation Paper are set out at **Annex B**. Comments are sought on the following issues:-
- **Leadership and Decision Making** (paragraph 2.19) - views and evidence are sought on whether certain models of leadership or decision making in Local Government (ie. elected mayors, leader and cabinet, committee system or other models) better support or reflect the seven principles of public life
 - **Openness and Accountability** (paragraph 2.29) - views and evidence are sought on how well the provisions to support openness and accountability in Local Government work in practice
 - **Role and Accountability** (paragraph 2.37) - views and evidence are requested on whether the roles and responsibilities of Senior Officers

are clearly defined and understood by the public, how well Senior Officers are held to account and their role in supporting the accountability framework

- **Accountability and Partnerships** (paragraph 2.40) – views and evidence are sought on how Local Authorities ensure openness and accountability when working in partnership

2.0 The closing date for submissions is 25th February 2009 but permission has been sought in view of the Council's committee cycle for submissions to be sent shortly after this meeting. In addition it is intended to hold a number of Public Hearings throughout the United Kingdom, relevant provisional dates are:-

- Birmingham – 30th April 2009
- London – 12th March, 23rd April, 19th May 2009

3.0 Copies of this Report and the Paper have been circulated to the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Management Board and copies sent to the Members on the Council's Standards Committee. Views are sought on whether Members wish to make comment on any of the issues raised or alternatively wish to apply to give formal evidence at one of the Public Hearings.