

**TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL
BUDGET AND POLICY COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 12th JANUARY, 2021**

BRIEFING NOTE

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE: CONSULTATION –
STANDARDS MATTER**

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Committee will recall in July considering a draft Model Code of Conduct being developed by the Local Government Association arising from which the Council, inter alia, observed:

the recommended sanctions for serious misconduct were inadequate to deal with the more serious cases of misconduct and poor behaviour. As such the LGA be invited to canvass Government to adopt the provisions as recommended by the Committee on Standards in Public Life

- 1.2 However, the core remit of that consultation was on the Code of Conduct, as opposed to sanctions and standards in public life and so this strand was not further developed.
- 1.3 This report arises from a further consultation being brought forward by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (Appendix 1 refers regarding the questions posed) which now more specifically addresses the matter of standards/behaviour/sanctions – see also [Government Website - Standards Matters 2: Public Consultation](#)
- 1.4 In determining whether to respond this Committee and Council may wish to consider whether to make representations upon the topic raised in its totality – for example reviewing nationally cited incidents such as the recent cases involving the Home Secretary, or past Speaker of the House of Commons. Or, in the alternative, more specifically focus on the sector within which this Council operates. One of the difficulties that arises with the first approach is comparing regimes in different sectors with different arrangements.

2. ACTIONS

- 2.1 By way of assistance in 2019 the Committee on Standards in Public Life (at the request of Prime Minister Teresa May previously) made a prior report (Appendix 2 refers)

[Government Website - Standards in Public Life](#) It is suggested that excerpts from pages 1-19 of that report may assist in considering the matter now before the Committee (the remainder being more aligned to the prior consideration of the Model Code). As such it identified a range of deficiencies in the current local authority regime and made a series of recommendations and improvements which included (as regards sanctions) provisions relating to suspension in serious cases together with a 'List of Best Practice' accompanied by a series of recommendations for Government.

2.2 The new consultation from the Committee on Standards in Public Life provides an opportunity for the Council to consider the extent to which it wishes to reflect any of those issues raised in the 2019 report in its response to the current consultation.

2.3 Linking to the excerpt from a previous decision (in para 1.1) above the Council noted that from a sector perspective an omission/difference from the report of the CSPL was *a recommendation to/support for a meaningful sanction for serious misconduct. Whereas the CSPL recommended the ability to suspend councillors for up to 6 months without allowances for the most serious offences the LGA report suggests only suspension from serving on a committee(s) (i.e. not Council) for up to 2 months.*

2.4 The Committee and Council may therefore, as a minimum, wish to

- reiterate the representations previously made by Council (para 1.1 refers) and
- consequentially endorse the recommendations for Government as listed in the prior Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life;
- together with such other comments as appropriate.

2.5 The instructions of the Committee and Council are sought.

CARL HEARN

TOWN CLERK

DECEMBER 2020

TAVISTOCK TOWN COUNCIL

APPENDIX 1

Question 1: Standards of Conduct in the UK

- A. How well do you think ethical standards - as enshrined by the Seven Principles of Public Life - are upheld in public life today?
- B. Do you believe that there have been any notable shifts in approaches or attitudes to ethical standards in public life in recent years?
- C. What do you see as the most significant threats to ethical standards in public life today?

Question 2: The Seven Principles of Public Life

- A. Do the Seven Principles of Public Life accurately describe the appropriate ethical responsibilities for those in public roles, including both political and non-political office-holders?
- B. Would you amend or replace any of the principles or their descriptors? If so, how?

Question 3: The UK's arrangements for regulating standards

- A. Are you confident that the UK's arrangements for regulating ethical standards are robust and effective?
- B. Are there any areas of public life where regulation on issues of ethical standards is not strong enough?

Question 4: Best practice in standards regulation

- A. What makes an effective standards regulator?
- B. Do the UK's standards regulators have the right powers and remit to act effectively?
- C. Should the independence of standards regulators be enhanced and protected, and if so, how?

Question 5: Creating ethical cultures

- A. How can the Seven Principles best be embedded within a public sector organisation's working culture?
- B. What are the most significant obstacles to embedding high ethical standards in a public sector organisation?