



## Councillors should think twice!

A new guide urging councillors to ‘think twice’ when commissioning local council services has been mailed to thousands of councillors throughout the UK calling for councillors to become actively involved in the commissioning processes that will determine future public service provision.

Commenting on the guide Paul O’Brien Chief executive of APSE said *“Commissioning is about delivering better services that meet the needs of local citizens. Councillors have a job to do in examining current and future service needs before any decisions are made to turn commissioning into a procurement exercise. Local councillors need ownership and control of commissioning decisions at every stage”*

The guide ‘Think Twice: The role of elected members in commissioning’ was drawn up by a research partnership between APSE, the LGIU and UNISON.

The guide crucially urges councillors to:-

- i. Ensure commissioning is not synonymous with procurement or outsourcing services
- ii. Ensure elected member involvement in all stages of commissioning public services
- iii. Explore continuous improvement of in-house public services as an integral part of the commissioning process
- iv. Ensure that in-house capacity to deliver core services, including complex services, is retained so councils do not become hostage to the market place.

Launching the guide Dave Prentis, General Secretary of UNISON said *“Commissioning in some quarters has become a by-word for market testing. This guide should help councillors think twice and make the right decisions about delivering vital services to local communities. Commissioning should be about better services. Not about privatisation”*.

Andy Sawford, Chief Executive of the LGIU stressed the importance of genuine political accountability for decisions that are taken and which can have a huge impact on the local area. *“Democratically elected councillors are best placed to provide local accountability for local government services. Councillors are capable of making the decisions that they are answerable to the local electorate on. Excluding elected members, from so called ‘commissioning decisions’ removes the rightful role of a local councillor in determining local services to meet local needs.”*

## **Ends**

APSE is the association for public service excellence and works with over 300 authorities throughout the UK. Providing a network supporting continuous improvement in local government front line services. APSE also hosts the UK's largest voluntary performance benchmarking service across a range of front line services from refuse collection through to school meals providing data analysis and supporting performance management.

LGIU is the Local Government Information Unit provides support to councils and champions local democracy. The LGiU is an independent think-tank and a resource for local government. In July 2008, the LGiU was voted Think-Tank of the year at the Public Affairs Awards.

UNISON is Britain and Europe's biggest public sector union with more than 1.3 million members working in the public services, for private contractors providing public services and in the essential utilities. They include frontline staff and managers working full or part time in local authorities, the NHS, the police service, colleges and schools, the electricity, gas and water industries, transport and the voluntary sector..

The guide 'Think Twice' is available for media contacts in PDF format.

To arrange for interview please contact:-

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