

About the Committee on Standards in Public Life

1. The Committee on Standards in Public Life is an advisory Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) sponsored by the Cabinet Office. The Chair and members are appointed by the Prime Minister. The Committee was established in October 1994, by the then Prime Minister, with the following terms of reference:

“To examine current concerns about standards of conduct of all holders of public office, including arrangements relating to financial and commercial activities, and make recommendations as to any changes in present arrangements which might be required to ensure the highest standards of propriety in public life.”

2. The remit of the Committee excludes investigation of individual allegations of misconduct.
3. On 12 November 1997 the terms of reference were extended by the then Prime Minister:

“To review issues in relation to the funding of political parties, and to make recommendations as to any changes in present arrangements.”

4. A triennial review of the Committee was carried out this year, the report of which was published by the Government in February 2013. As a result, on 5 February 2013, the terms of reference of the Committee were clarified in two respects: ‘...in future the Committee should not inquire into matters relating to the devolved legislatures and governments except with the agreement of those bodies’ and ‘...the Committee’s 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.’¹

¹ Hansard (HC) 5 February 2013, col. 7WS

Membership of the Committee

The Lord Bew (Chair)
The Lord Alderdice
The Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP
Sheila Drew Smith OBE
Patricia Moberly
David Prince CBE
Richard Thomas CBE
Dame Angela Watkinson DBE MP
Carolyn Fairbairn

Secretariat

5. The Committee is assisted by a Secretariat consisting of: Ruth Thompson (Secretary), Isobel Croot (Senior Policy Advisor), Laurie Mousah (Policy Advisor) and James Anderson (Secretariat Coordinator). Press support is provided by Maggie O'Boyle.

Research

6. For this report the Committee commissioned: Chris Prosser to undertake a detailed statistical analysis of headline findings from Ipsos MORI 'Public Awareness and Police Accountability' 2015. Jas Gakhal was employed as a Research Assistant.

The Committee's previous reports

7. The Committee has previously published the following reports.
 - Ethical standards for providers of public services, June 2014
 - Strengthening Transparency Around Lobbying, November 2013
 - Standards Matter: A review of best practice in promoting good behaviour in public life (Fourteenth Report), Cm 8519, January 2013
 - Political party finance: Ending the big donor culture (Thirteenth Report), Cm 8208, November 2011
 - MPs' expenses and allowances: Supporting Parliament, safeguarding the taxpayer (Twelfth Report), Cm 7724, November 2009
 - Review of the Electoral Commission (Eleventh Report), Cm 7006, January 2007

- Getting the balance right: Implementing standards of conduct in public life (Tenth Report), Cm 6407, January 2005
 - Defining the boundaries within the Executive: Ministers, special advisers and the permanent civil service (Ninth Report), Cm 5775, April 2003
 - Standards of conduct in the House of Commons (Eighth Report), Cm 5663, November 2002
 - Standards of conduct in the House of Lords (Seventh Report), Cm 4903, November 2000
 - Reinforcing standards: Review of the First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (Sixth Report), Cm 4557, January 2000
 - The funding of political parties in the United Kingdom (Fifth Report), Cm 4057, October 1998)
 - Review of standards of conduct in executive NDPBs, NHS trusts and local public spending bodies (Fourth Report), November 1997
 - Local government in England, Scotland and Wales (Third Report), Cm 3702, July 1997
 - Local public spending bodies (Second Report), Cm 3207, June 1996
 - Members of Parliament, ministers, civil servants and quangos (First Report), Cm 2850, May 1995
8. The Committee is a standing Committee. It can not only conduct inquiries into areas of concern about standards in public life, but can also revisit those areas and monitor whether and how well its recommendations have been put into effect.