**CSPL (19) 01**

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE**

**TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SECOND MEETING**

**HELD AT 10.00 ON THURSDAY 13 DECEMBER 2018**

**IN** **70 WHITEHALL, LONDON**

**MINUTES**

Present: Lord Evans KCB DL, Chair

Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP

Simon Hart MP

Dr Jane Martin CBE

Professor Dame Shirley Pearce DBE

Jane Ramsey

Rt Hon Lord Stunell OBE

Professor Mark Philp, Chair, Research Advisory Board

Lesley Bainsfair, Secretary

Stuart Ramsay, Senior Policy Advisor

Amy Austin, Policy Advisor

Lesley Glanz, Executive Assistant

Maggie O’Boyle, Press Officer

Nicola Richardson, Incoming Senior Policy Advisor, observing

Apologies: Monisha Shah (leave of absence)

**1. REGISTERS**

One change was noted to the register of interests.

**2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2018 were agreed.

**Matters arising:**

**Chair’s update**

The Chair updated the Committee on his further introductory meetings with key stakeholders.

**3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS REVIEW**

The Committee noted the proof of the report and confirmed the launch date of 30 January 2019. The invitee list was discussed

It was noted that due to practical considerations, this report would not be produced as a Command Paper.

It was agreed that it would be important to follow up recommendations in the report and to maintain oversight of progress.

**4. WESTMINSTER HARASSMENT**

The Committee considered developments in the issue of bullying and harassment in Westminster since their last meeting. Members welcomed the Commons Committee on Standards report in response to the Cox report.

The Committee reiterated their concern about the House of Lords’ decision to remit the first report of the Conduct and Privileges Committee concerning the case of Lord Lester. The Committee strongly welcomed the further report by the House of Lords Conduct and Privileges Committee which had clearly and firmly endorsed the Commissioner’s and the Committee’s original recommendations. It was agreed that it would be helpful for the Chair to meet with the Chair of the Conduct and Privileges Committee.

The Committee would maintain its close and serious interest and review any further developments in standards in Parliament at their January meeting and consider an options paper at the February meeting. This paper would set out different potential and existing models for dealing with harassment and bullying in the context of a legislature - the decision-making process, the element of independence involved; the dilemma of, at times, political expediency versus standards; what range of sanctions are and might be applied and by whom.

**5. INTIMIDATION IN PUBLIC LIFE: FOLLOW-UP**

The Committee noted a positive meeting with political parties to follow up the recommendation that there should be a joint political code of conduct. It had been agreed to hold a further meeting in February.

The Committee would continue to follow up the report’s recommendations and responses to them.

**6. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee confirmed its forward work programme. Further scoping work would be done and an announcement would be made in the new year.

**7. STANDARDS CHECK**

The Committee noted the standards check for November/December 2018.

**8. FORWARD AGENDA AND FORWARD LOOK OF EVENTS**

The Committee noted the forward agenda and forward look of key events.

**9. AOB**

**Communications Update**

The Committee noted the communications update for November 2018.

**Seminar on regulating for responsible technology**

Jane Ramsey reported she had attended a seminar on 28 November organised by Doteveryone, considering the regulation of technology. The key proposal put forward was for a new office that would empower regulators and inform the public about the risks and benefits and the redress for harms caused.

**Constitution Unit seminar on regulating digital campaigning**

Dame Shirley Pearce reported that she had attended a similarly-themed seminar organised by the Constitution Unit. Key themes were on the need to improve discourse; the importance of transparency; the constraints placed on the Electoral Commission by outdated legislation and inadequate fines; and the role of the political parties.

**Electoral Commission seminar on the challenges arising from digital campaigning**

The Committee noted that Jane Ramsey and Dame Shirley Pearce would be attending a seminar organised by the Electoral Commission on 28 January to consider the challenges arising from digital campaigning.

**CfPS seminar on public private partnerships**

The Committee noted the report of the Centre for Public Scrutiny Public Private Partnership roundtable that Dame Shirley had attended on 29 October.

**Brexit**

In the light of the possibility of a no deal outcome, the Committee agreed to consider publishing at that time a thought piece for the website/blog site setting out the importance of the Principles of Public Life even in a state of national extremity: that even in extreme circumstances, there should still be ethical decision-making and principles of transparency and accountability should not be neglected.

**Association of School and College Leaders**

Dr Martin reported that she had agreed to write a foreword for the report of the ASCL Ethical Leadership Commission.

**Farewell to Stuart Ramsay, Senior Policy Advisor**

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Stuart for his unstinting and excellent work for the Committee and wished him success in his future career.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

**Thursday 10 January 2019 to be held in 70 Whitehall.**