

**Committee on  
Standards  
in Public Life**

# **Annual Report**

**July 2018 – June 2019**

## THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

The Seven Principles of Public Life apply to anyone who works as a public office holder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally or locally, and all people appointed to work in the civil service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, Non- Departmental Public Bodies, and in the health, education, social and care services. The Principles also apply to all those in the private sector delivering public services.

### SELFLESSNESS

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

### INTEGRITY

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

### OBJECTIVITY

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

### OPENNESS

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

### HONESTY

Holders of public office should be truthful.

### LEADERSHIP

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the Principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

## Foreword

I am pleased to present the Committee on Standards in Public Life's Annual Report 18/19, my first as Chair of the Committee, having taken over in November 2018.

I would firstly like to pay tribute to my predecessor Lord Bew who led the Committee from 2013. Under his Chairmanship the Committee considered new areas such as policing, ethics for regulators and, most recently, the worrying issue of intimidation of people in public life. His wisdom and humility combined with an incisive understanding of public life in the UK have furthered the Committee's standing and reputation.

I have been struck by the complex ethical standards landscape in which this Committee sits. A range of bodies are responsible for considering standards issues, some with regulatory powers, some without, some have clear remits, whilst for others, there is a lack of clarity for the public about what they can and can't do. Indeed, this Committee has no statutory remit or powers, but relies on building influence through evidence for which it has a long-established status and a well-developed reputation.

I am acutely aware that ethics cannot be systematically imposed from outside; ethical standards must be part of an organisation's DNA. Our report on local government ethical standards emphasised this point and made a package of recommendations to support high standards of behaviour in local councils across England. The Committee was impressed by the very high level of engagement and commitment from the sector for this review and has been encouraged by the way our package of recommendations and best practice is being widely disseminated and adopted. Although the geography and dynamics of each council differ, the Nolan principles continue to provide a common baseline against which they can strive to meet the public's expectations of those who serve them.

The past 12 months have certainly not seen any easing up in the Committee's workload. We completed our local government report; have actively followed up our 2017 report on intimidation in public life, working in particular with political parties and The Jo Cox Foundation; and we have taken a close and serious watching brief on the worrying culture of bullying and harassment in Westminster, reviewing the actions taken by the Parliamentary authorities. We have also launched a new review into artificial intelligence and its impact on standards in public life, looking ahead at the need to ensure the opportunities offered by developments in AI are matched by appropriate ethical checks and balances in the public sector. Our report will be published early in 2020.

Later this year we will mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Committee and the Nolan principles, an important moment to reflect on the relevance of the standards the public expect of public office holders and those delivering public service. We will continue to test those Principles with the public and against new technology as evidenced by our AI review.

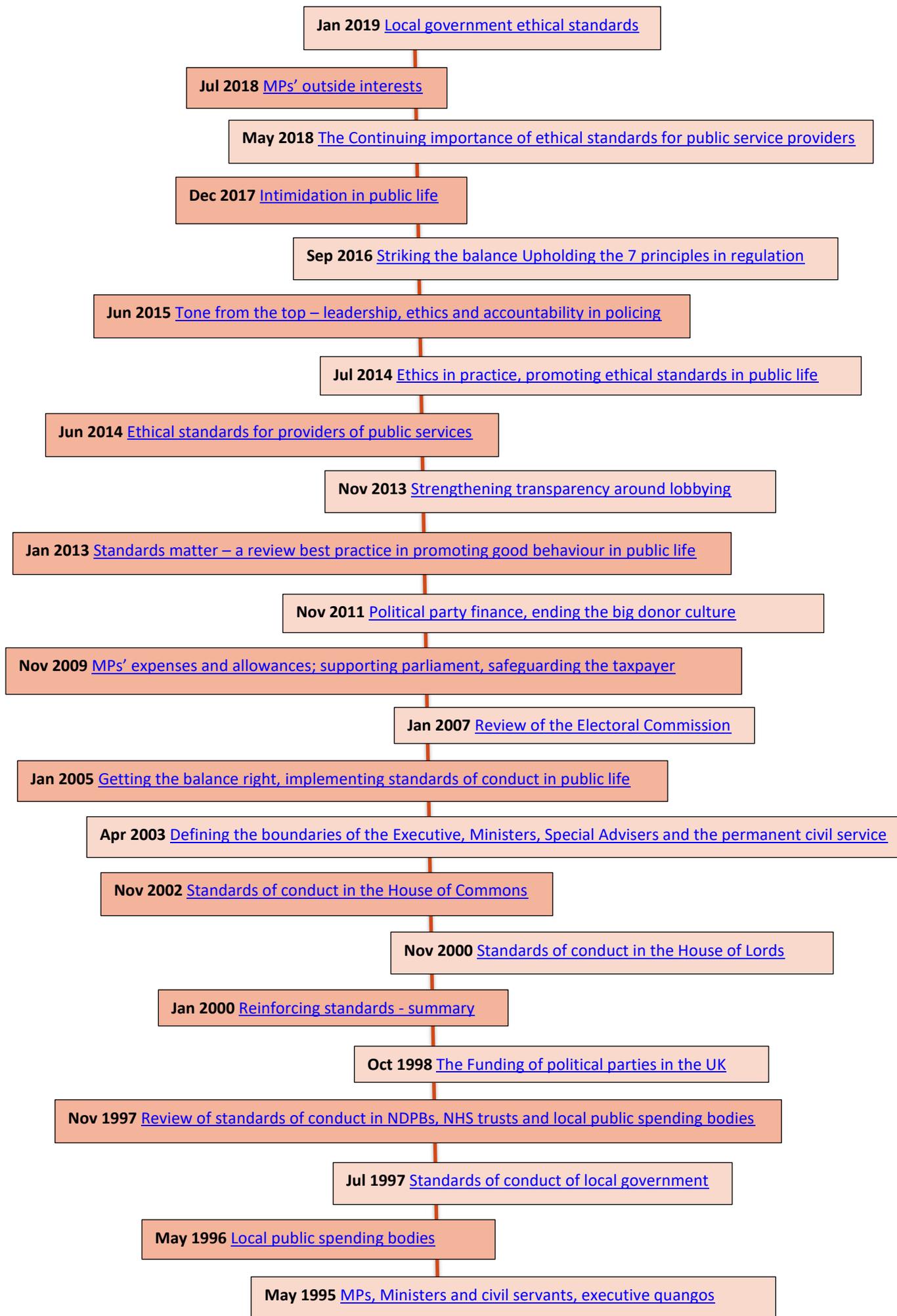
Our vision remains to reinforce clear expectations across public life of high standards of conduct.

I hope you find the report a useful account of our activities and a positive reinforcement of Nolan's vision, still relevant 25 years on.

**Lord (Jonathan) Evans of Weardale KCB DL**  
**Chair**



# Our reports



# July 2018/June 2019

## Key areas of focus for the Committee

### Local Government Ethical Standards

Report published January 2019 after a year of evidence gathering:  
Public consultation  
Desk research  
Roundtables  
Interviews  
Visits to councils  
Speeches at conferences pre and post launch



### AI and public standards

Launch of AI review March 2019  
Interviews  
Meetings  
Roundtables  
Focus groups  
Written submissions  
Desk research  
Speeches



### Intimidation in Public Life

Follow up work with political parties and The Jo Cox Foundation  
Attending external meetings; interviews, blogs, articles



### MPs' outside interests

Published report July 2018: interviews, meetings, roundtable, focus groups, research



### Bullying and harassment in Westminster

Close watching brief, reviewing Parliamentary authorities' responses  
Meetings with parliamentary authorities  
Blogs and articles



***Contributing to external consultations, speeches, participation in external meetings, articles, blogs, presentations to international delegations.***

# Committee membership: July 2019

## Terms of appointment



**Dr Jane Martin CBE**  
(1 Jan 2017 – 31 Dec 2021)



**Dame Shirley Pearce DBE**  
(31 Mar 2018 – 21 Mar 2023)



**Jane Ramsey**  
(1 Sep 2016 – 31 Aug 2021)



**Monisha Shah**  
(1 Dec 2015 – 30 Nov 2020)



**Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP (Labour)**  
(1 Nov 2016 – 31 Oct 2019)



**Simon Hart MP (Conservative)**  
(24 Jul 2017 – 23 Jul 2020)



**Rt Hon Lord Stunell OBE (Liberal Democrat)**  
(1 Dec 2016 – 30 Nov 2019)



**Chair, Lord Evans of Weardale KCB DL**  
(1 Nov 2018 – 31 Oct 2023)

*Independent Chair and 4 independent members, appointed for 5 years, non-renewable appointments.*

*3 political representatives, appointed for 3 years, renewable appointments.*

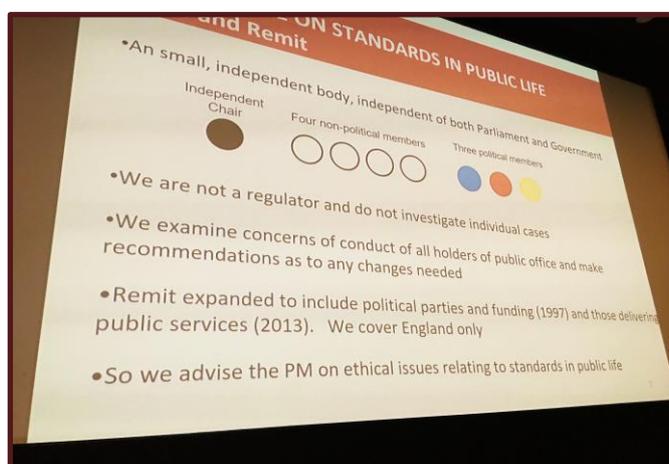
*All appointments made by the Prime Minister.*

# Introduction

**The Committee was established in 1994 with a clear purpose: to examine areas of concern about the standards of conduct of public office holders, advise the Prime Minister accordingly, and to promote the highest standards of conduct across public life.**

The maintenance of high standards in public life is important for the good functioning of society as a whole, it helps maintain public trust in institutions, and is important for democracy. High standards of conduct underpin public confidence in every aspect of public life, from the delivery of health and social care services to education, policing and legislation.

This Committee plays a key role in examining areas of concern and maintaining a watching brief on standards in public life. We are not a regulator so we have no statutory powers and no remit to investigate individual cases. Instead we use a variety of means to do our work, to extend our influence, to persuade and make sure our voice is heard. Our independence of Government and Parliament alike is key.



The Committee seeks to identify areas of concern in conduct and behaviours before they develop into breaches of trust or worse; undertakes balanced, comprehensive reviews with recommendations based on robust evidence; makes informed contributions to public debates about ethical standards, including submissions to public consultations; proactively identifies and responds to emerging ethical risks, and engages with a wide-range of partners on the ethical standards agenda.

It is a broad field so we are committed to working with others to ensure this vision of high ethical standards is met and that the Principles of Public Life are understood and embedded across public life. We have been pleased to hear directly from some of those also playing important roles in this landscape.

Our effectiveness depends on our ability to build powerful arguments using research and evidence which convinces others to take forward our recommendations for change.

In this report, we describe how we have carried out these activities in areas that have been our priorities in the period July 2018 – June 2019; and we look forward to marking our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Factual information about the Committee's remit, membership, data protection, financial information, reports published, speeches and meetings, and our Research Advisory Board can be found in Annexes A-G.

**We are fully committed to openness in our activities. We will ensure that we communicate our work effectively, to make it visible to everyone with an interest in ethical standards.**

# Review of activities: July 2018 – June 2019

## Local Government Ethical Standards

The main focus of our work this year was our review into local government ethical standards. The Committee has had a long-standing interest in local government - the Committee's third report, in 1997, was on local government - and many of the institutional changes that have taken place in local government standards in the last two decades have been in response to the Committee's recommendations.

*"The recent publication from the Committee on Standards in Public Life has refocused attention on a vital aspect of good governance: setting and enforcing standards of behaviour for local authority members."*  
(LGC 18 March 2019)

We launched the review on 29 January 2018. The report was not prompted by any specific allegations of misconduct, but more to check that the current framework was helpful in promoting and maintaining the standards expected by the public. The review, published on 30 January 2019, considered the structures, processes, and practices for local government standards in England, including codes of conduct, sanctions, investigatory processes, the roles of Monitoring Officers, Clerks, and Independent Persons, and an ethical culture in local government.



Importantly, we did not propose a return to a centralised, standardised system. Rather the report produced recommendations intended to be implemented as a package to address the risks we identified and to maintain the balance of a system that supports the best instincts of councillors whilst addressing unacceptable behaviour by a minority and guarding against potential corporate standards risks.

### Launch of Report

Panel (L-R) Jonathan Goolden, Dame Stella Manzie DBE, Dr Jane Martin CBE, Lord Evans

The report has been well received in the sector. Since publication, we have followed up by liaising with leadership organisations in the sector, the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG); and independent members have spoken at 5 conferences:

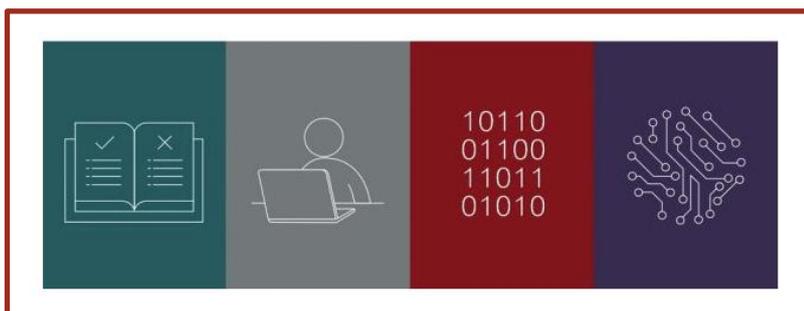
- National Association of Local Councils, 11 February, London;
- Society of Local Council Clerks, 15 February, Kenilworth;
- Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) weekend conference, 29 March, London;
- LLG Annual Monitoring Officers' conference, 14 June, London;
- Monitoring Officers conference, London, 10 July.



Jane Ramsey speaking at LLG annual weekend conference, 29 March 2019

As stated in the report, we will review in 2020 councils' take up of our best practice recommendations.

## Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Public Standards



In March 2019, we launched a new review into whether the existing frameworks and regulations in relation to AI are sufficient to ensure that high standards of conduct are upheld as the use of these technologies becomes more widespread.

This is a new area of research for this Committee, but highly relevant as technologically assisted decision-making is adopted more widely across the public sector.

The launch of this review followed two months' desk research into the impact of artificial intelligence on public services in the UK and international approaches to AI ethics.

*"You need a culture of design in which transparency, interpretability and explicability are built in at the beginning."*  
Roundtable, 23 May 2019



Six months into the review, the Committee has invited written submissions and undertaken a wide-ranging series of meetings with academics, AI professionals, and government officials, including 3 [roundtables](#), to gain expert advice and obtain a clear picture of how AI will change public services and how it will affect public standards. Focus groups were held in June to gain insight into the general public's views on how standards should apply in a future where public services are delivered by artificial intelligence. This research and evidence gathering will help us evaluate if government and public bodies are ready to meet the 6 key challenges we have identified that AI poses for public standards.

We want to thank Imperial College, London, for hosting our second roundtable on 29 May 2019.

We will draft the report in the autumn following further meetings and research, aiming to publish in early 2020.

Roundtable held on 23 May 2019, 1 Horse Guards Road

*"How can responsibility for AI systems can be clarified at the point of use... It is clear that we cannot abdicate responsibility here and it is a question of how we maintain that responsibility and accountability."*  
Roundtable, 29 May 2019

## Intimidation in Public Life

We have been working actively to follow up our December 2017 report, *Intimidation in public life* - a review the Committee undertook at the request of the Prime Minister in July 2017.



The report, published in December 2017, examined the shocking intimidation experienced by candidates at the 2017 General Election, and significantly highlighted the wider effect on public life. The problem has not gone away and intimidation remains a real danger to our democracy.

*“There is no easy, single solution to address this problem, and the Opposition welcome the package of recommendations outlined by the Committee on Standards in Public Life for the Government, social media companies, political parties, the police, broadcast and print media, MPs and parliamentary candidates.”*

(Cat Smith MP, Shadow Minister, Cabinet Office, Westminster Hall debate, 21 May 2019)

In that report, we made 33 recommendations to:

- government
- social media companies
- political parties, press organisations
- MPs
- candidates and
- other public office-holders.

The Government [responded](#) formally to the report in March 2018 committing to action on most of the recommendations made to government. The Government published a further [response](#) on 7 March 2019 updating action taken in response to the report. We welcomed the Government’s [‘Protecting the Debate’](#) – the Government’s response to their consultation on proposals aimed at protecting the electoral system against intimidation and undue influence of candidates, campaigners and voters.

Since the publication of the report, we have been actively following up responses to our recommendations and have received further [responses](#) from social media companies, political parties, the press regulators and the National Police Chiefs’ Council. The Committee has attended external meetings and seminars and the Chair has written a number of [blogs](#) and [articles](#) on this issue.

In particular, we have been working with political parties on a joint approach to tackling intimidation. We were delighted to announce on 21 May 2019 that [The Jo Cox Foundation](#) had agreed to act as an independent third party to support this work and we will be working with The Foundation and political parties holding seats in Westminster to draw up a joint standard on intimidatory behaviour to encourage cross-party consensus to recognise and address this worrying issue.

*“I was [therefore] pleased to read the letter and joint statement that have gone out today from the Committee on Standards in public Life and The Jo Cox Foundation about the work that they will be looking to do together to continue her legacy.”*

Kevin Foster MP, Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office, Westminster Hall debate, 21 May 2019

## MPs' Outside Interests



In July 2018, we published our report [MPs' Outside Interests](#).

The Committee had previously considered the issue of MPs' outside interests in its 2009 report on MPs' Expenses and Allowances.<sup>1</sup>

The 2018 report recommended a package of important reforms to ensure that MPs' outside interests remain within reasonable limits.<sup>2</sup> These included:

- Revising the Code of Conduct for MPs, so that any outside roles, whether or not they are paid, do not prevent MPs from undertaking the range of duties expected of them in their primary role as an MP.
- To facilitate greater transparency of the registration and declaration of interests, the Register of Members' Financial Interests must be more accessible, searchable and usable.
- The Cabinet Office should issue guidance to Parliamentary candidates on the registration of outside interests, so voters know whether candidates intend to carry on any of their existing jobs if they are elected.

*"MPs will be reminded that their principal job is to serve their constituents" The Telegraph, 2018*

The majority of the recommendations require changes to the Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members. The Commons Committee on Standards has stated that it proposes to undertake a comprehensive review of the Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules, involving public consultation. The Commons Committee on Standards has published its response to the report [here](#).

The Committee expects this review to implement the Committee's recommendations and to address the specific issues raised in *MPs Outside Interests*. The Committee met with the Commons Committee on Standards on 4 June 2019 to discuss these recommendations and other issues of common interest to the two Committees.

*"There needs to be even greater transparency and openness to the public on outside interests — in a fully searchable digital register of interests — and at elections. Transparency may not automatically deliver greater trust, but it is essential in reducing the likelihood of poor behaviour and increasing the chances of detection if it does occur." (Lord Bew, Times Red Box article, 3 July 2018)*

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<sup>1</sup> In its 2009 report, the Committee recommended that MPs should be able to continue with outside employment, as long as any outside interests were within reasonable limits and there was transparency, and that information about it should be drawn to voters' attention at election time

<sup>2</sup> The review was paused when the 2017 general election was called, and again when the Committee reviewed, as a priority, intimidation in public life. The Committee came back to the review in January 2018 and the report was published in July 2018.

## Bullying and harassment in Westminster

*The Committee believes that all those who work in and around Parliament – or support Parliamentarians in their constituency offices – deserve to be treated with courtesy and respect both by their colleagues and MPs and Peers.*

During this reporting year, the Committee has continued to take a close and serious interest in the issue of bullying, harassment and sexual harassment first reported in autumn 2017, monitoring the response of the Parliamentary authorities.

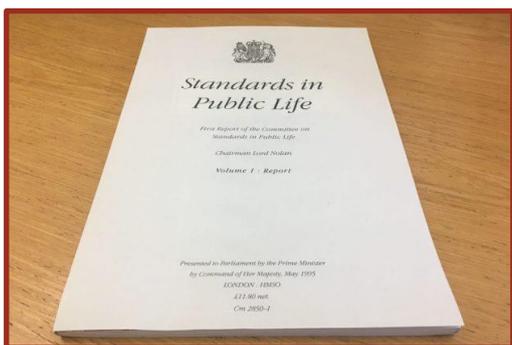
The Committee welcomed the steps announced by the Leader of the House in July 2018 to put in place independent processes for dealing with allegations of bullying and harassment, but the [report](#) of the independent inquiry headed by Dame Laura Cox QC into the bullying and harassment of House of Commons staff indicated that more needed to be done.

The Committee has been struck by the complex picture of inquiries, reviews and working groups commissioned this year. There has been a multi-faceted response which appears to have resulted from the emerging nature and scale of the problem. In March, we published a [blog post](#) which set out in one place the initiatives underway in Parliament, to increase public understanding and to encourage rapid progress. It has continued to hold meetings with senior people in Parliament responsible for delivering change.

It is important that Parliament responds appropriately to the outcome of each of these work areas and that change is swift so that people in Parliament feel confident they are working in an environment where high standards of behaviour are upheld but where there is a formal complaint, the investigation process is fair.

The [published minutes](#) of the Committee meetings have recorded the active watching brief the Committee is maintaining in this area. The Committee has made public statements and published [correspondence](#) on its website where it felt it was important to express its concerns, for example, at the seemingly longstanding and unaddressed culture of bullying and harassment revealed by the Cox Report and in the aftermath, at the lack of clarity around accountability for the process to implement the Cox recommendations.

## 25 years on



On 25 October 1994, the Rt Hon Sir John Major [announced](#) the setting up of the Committee in Standards in Public Life; Lord Nolan's first [report](#) was published in May 1995.

People then may not have expected the report to have much influence or that the Committee would survive beyond that Parliament, but that report and the Committee's subsequent reviews have led to fundamental changes across standards in public life over the past 25 years.

The Committee is not complacent. Building and maintaining an ethical culture requires constant attention. Whilst there is much to suggest the Principles are still relevant and offer a clear articulation of expected standards in public life, we intend to re-test the principles in particular with students, the next generation. We want to see what they make of the principles, whether they think they are the standards to which we should be holding those who serve in public office to account. The Committee is looking forward to hearing what they have to say at this workshop which we intend to hold later this year.



We also want to do some work to outline the standards landscape. Few would disagree that the standards landscape is crowded and confusing which is likely to make it less effective than it might be. We will be working with an academic to review the landscape, to set out clearly the role, functions, status, powers and history of each individual body responsible for the upholding of standards across public life in England.

The Committee will continue its work in this complex area of standards - identifying areas for review, promoting good practice and evaluating progress against our recommendations. We look forward to the next 25 years.

## Annexes

[Annex A – About the Committee](#)

[Annex B – Membership of the Committee](#)

[Annex C – Data Protection](#)

[Annex D – Reports Published](#)

[Annex E – The Research Advisory Board](#)

**Annex F – Speeches, presentations, visitors, consultations**

In the period July 2018 - June 2019, the Chair, independent members and members of the Secretariat have spoken at a number of events on standards issues, promoting the work of the Committee and the importance of the Seven Principles of Public Life, including:

- 4 July 2018: Lord Bew (then Chair) addressed a University of Warwick (London-based) conference on the Construction of Public Office and the Pursuit of Integrity
- 3 October 2018: Jane Ramsey and Secretariat received an international delegation arranged by the Public Service Commission
- 16 October 2018: Jane Ramsey and Secretariat participated in the General Pharmaceutical Council event on professional standards
- 29 October 2018: Dame Shirley Pearce and Secretariat participated in the CfPS, Public Private Partnerships seminar – The Value of Scrutiny
- 30 October 2018: Jane Ramsey and Secretariat received an international delegation arranged by the Public Service Commission
- 21 January 2019: Royal United Services Institute (RUSI): The National Security AI Policy Framework, Lord Evans
- 11 February 2019: National Association of Local Councils (NALC) conference
- 15 February 2019: Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) practitioners' conference, Kenilworth
- 29 March 2019: Lawyers in Local Government (LLG) weekend annual conference
- 14 June 2019: LLG annual monitoring officers' conference
- 10 July 2019: Standards conference for monitoring officers
- Since his appointment in November 2018, Lord Evans has met with the Committee's key stakeholders who share our interest and role in standards matters, including: Minister for the Cabinet Office; Chair, Electoral Commission; Commissioner for Public Appointments; Chair, IPSA; Commons Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards; Lords Commissioner for Standards; Chair, Commons Committee for Standards; Chair, Lords Privileges and Conduct Committee; Director Regulation, UK Statistics Authority; First Civil Service Commissioner; Chair, Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; Clerk, House of Commons; Director, Institute of

Business Ethics; Government Chief People Officer; CEO, National Centre for Public Sector Leadership.

The Committee has also promoted the Seven Principles of Public Life through responses to a number of consultations, including:

- September 2018: NCVO [consultation](#) on charity code of ethics
- March 2019: Joint Committee on Human Rights [inquiry](#) into democracy, free speech and freedom of association
- May 2019: Commons Committee on Standards [inquiry](#) into possible reforms to the system of sanctions for breaches of the rules set out in the Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament
- June 2019: Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (PACAC) [inquiry](#) into electoral reform
- June 2019: House of Commons Commission [consultation](#) on non-recent complaints of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct
- June 2019: [Government's Online Harms White Paper](#).

In addition, Dr Jane Martin, worked with and supported the Ethical Leadership Commission of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) on their framework for ethical leadership in education and wrote the foreword to their [report](#).

Kevin Dunion OBE, Convener, the Standards Commission for Scotland and Lorna Johnston, Executive Director of the Standards Commission for Scotland, joined the October 2018 Committee meeting for a general discussion comparing standards issues in local government in Scotland.

Professor Allyson Macvean (Professor of Policing and Criminology, Bath Spa University); Professor Vassilios Papalois (Surgeon at Imperial College); Chief Constable Julian Williams (NPCC portfolio for ethics); and Rev Prof Scott Shackleton (Deputy Chaplain of the Fleet in Naval Command HQ Portsmouth) joined the November 2018 Committee to present their work in relation to ethics and integrity through the Police Ethics Network.

Julie Harding, Independent Director of Cultural Transformation, House of Commons spoke to the Committee in April 2019 to update them on Parliament's response to Dame Laura Cox's recommendations to deliver cultural change in Parliament.

Professor Richard Susskind OBE spoke on Artificial Intelligence to the Committee at their June 2019 meeting.

Professor Cees Van der Eijk and Dr Jonathan Rose presented their research on perceived fairness of the EU Referendum to the July 2019 Committee meeting. Their paper can be found [here](#).

## **Annex G – Financial Information**

Independent members of the Committee on Standards in Public Life may claim £240 for each day they work on Committee business. The Chair is paid a remuneration of £36k per annum with the expectation that they commit an average of 5-6 days a month although this can increase significantly during periods of Committee reviews.

Independent members are reimbursed for expenses necessarily incurred.

The 3 political members of the Committee do not receive any fees or expenses.

As an advisory non-departmental public body, the Committee on Standards in Public Life receives a delegated budget from the Cabinet Office. Day-to-day responsibility for financial controls and budgetary mechanisms are delegated to the Secretary of the Committee. Creation of new posts are subject to the Cabinet Office Approvals process.

Members of the Secretariat are permanent civil servants employed by the Cabinet Office. There are 5 full-time members of the Secretariat.

For the financial year 2018/19, the Committee's budget was £339k with a final outturn of £361k.

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**July 2019**