**CSPL (17) 19**

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE**

**TWO HUNDRED AND FORTY-SECOND MEETING**

**THURSDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2017 AT 10:00**

**ROOM G11, 1 HORSE GUARDS ROAD,** **LONDON, SW1A 2HQ**

**MINUTES**

Present: Lord Bew, Chair

Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP

Sheila Drew Smith OBE

Dr Jane Martin CBE

Jane Ramsey

Monisha Shah

Lord Stunell OBE

Richard Thomas CBE

Research Advisory Board: Professor Mark Philp

Secretariat: Lesley Bainsfair, Secretary

Dee Goddard, Senior Policy Advisor

Maggie O’Boyle, Press Officer

Apologies: Dame Angela Watkinson DBE MP *(on leave of absence)*

1. **Strategy Discussion**

The Committee discussed strategy, work models and work priorities going forward. It was agreed at the next meeting to consider a draft paper which reviewed the Committee’s response to, and impact of, the 2013 Triennial Review, and which set out a strategic plan for the Committee the next three years.

**2. Registers**

The Committee reviewed the register of interests, and the registers of external meetings, gifts and hospitality. The register of interests would be updated to reflect Sheila Drew Smith’s and Monisha Shah’s current positions; and Dr Martin reported the following interests: from January 2017 Chair of the Legal Services Consumer Panel (remunerated), and Local Government Pension from February 2017.

**3. Minutes and matters arising**

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2017.

*Informal meeting with House of Commons Standards Committee*

Committee members noted the record of the meeting held on 31 January with the House of Commons Standards Committee. It was suggested the lay members of the Committee on Standards should be invited to attend a Committee meeting for an informal discussion.

*Dame Louise Casey’s report into Opportunity and Integration.*

The Committee noted that the DCLG team charged with taking Dame Casey’s recommendations forward had met informally with the Secretariat. The discussion had been around their idea of a public oath for public office holders.

*Government’s response to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Trade Union BIll and Party Funding*

The Committee noted the Government’s response of December 2016 to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Trade Union BIll and Party Funding. It was noted that essentially the Government was not moving forward with any reform on party funding other than being ‘open to debate and dialogue on small-scale measures which could command broad support’.

*Conservative Membership of the Committee*

The Committee agreed that the Chair should write seeking clarification of the conservative membership of the Committee.

*EU Referendum campaign expenditure*

The Committee discussed Mr Stephen Kinnock MP’s letter to the Committee setting out his concerns about Vote Leave campaign expenditure in the 2016 Referendum. The Committee welcomed Mr Kinnock’s letter which raised serious issues regarding party funding and third party donations which had long been of concern to the Committee. It was agreed to reply to Mr Kinnock welcoming the Electoral Commission’s suggestion that the three parties might meet to discuss.

*DUP Funding of Brexit Campaign*

The Committee discussed the media coverage of the story that pressure was mounting on the Democratic Ulster Party (DUP) to reveal who funded its pro-Brexit campaign. It was complex issue; the reasons for the different rules in Northern Ireland were understood but the lack of transparency was not sustainable for the integrity of the political system.

*Secretariat staffing update*

The Committee noted the revised Secretariat arrangements.

**4. Local Government**

The Committee welcomed the fact finding briefing paper on local government. It was agreed that the Secretariat should undertake the following further work: (a) find out whether or not there had been any further reports by other organisations e.g. Local Government Information Unit, Lawyers in Local Government, Transparency International; (b) write to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee drawing attention to our planned work and our report *Tone from the top* which raised issues of oversight and accountability arrangements; (c) check whether the Department for Communities and Local Government intended to review local government standards following the abolition of the Standards Board in the Localism Act of 2012.

The Committee would decide whether to proceed and the terms of reference of any project on local government once they had had an opportunity to consider this further evidence.

**5. Ethical Standards for Public Service Providers**

The paper reporting progress on the follow-up to the report on *Ethical Standards for Public Service Providers* was noted.

**6. Standards Check**

The Committee noted the standards check. Richard Thomas’ blog on the ‘revolving door’ was highlighted.

**11. Forward work programme and future grid**

The Committee noted the forward work programme and future grid.

**12. AOB**

The Committee noted the communications update.

The Committee approved the draft contribution to the Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee’s inquiry into ‘fake news’ subject to strengthening the point around ‘honesty’.

**Date of next meeting**: Thursday 23 March 2017 at 10:00.

**CSPL Secretariat**

**February 2017**