

Review and Updating of the Recruitment Principles

February 2014

Committee on
Standards in
Public Life

Chair: Lord Paul Bew

RESPONSE FROM THE COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE TO THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION'S CONSULTATION ON THE REVIEW AND UPDATING OF THE RECRUITMENT PRINCIPLES

1. The Committee on Standards in Public Life is pleased to have an opportunity to respond to the Civil Service Commission's consultation on the review and updating of the Recruitment Principles.
2. The Committee on Standards in Public Life promotes high ethical standards in public life in the UK. The Committee works to ensure that the Seven Principles of Public Life - selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership – underpin all aspects of public life.
3. The Committee notes that the current regulatory arrangements for civil service appointments, as well as the Civil Service Code values of honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity, were put on a statutory basis by the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act in 2010. The legislation requires that appointments to the civil service should be made on the basis of merit on the basis of fair and open competition, and that civil servants should adhere to the Code values in performing their duties. We endorse the primacy and value of the merit principle as a means of ensuring that the best candidates are appointed to a civil service that is effective, impartial and free of patronage.
4. The legal requirement for merit in the context of civil service appointments echoes the Committee's own Principle of Objectivity, which states that "Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias." Furthermore, as we said in our Ninth Report in 2003, we believe that "there is no conflict between the principle of selection on merit and the need for the Civil Service to be fit for purpose [...] the overriding principle of selection on merit should be maintained."
5. The Committee also agrees that streamlining, simplifying and consolidating the range of guidance relating to civil service appointments is appropriate and welcomes the approach taken by the Civil Service Commission to move to a single document that focuses on principles and essential processes only. The Committee believes that clearer and simpler Recruitment Principles should make the regulatory framework more transparent, which is to be welcomed. Any changes to the provisions for Head of Department appointments which may arise from the consultation process should therefore also be uncomplicated and transparent, whilst clearly in line with the overarching principles of merit, fairness and openness which apply to all civil servants.
6. Given the role of the Committee on Standards in Public Life in calling for the introduction of the Civil

Service Code, and promoting the Seven Principles of Public Life, we are also pleased to note your proposal to introduce explicit testing of the Code values of impartiality and objectivity into the selection process where appropriate. We believe that a commitment to the Civil Service Code values and the Seven Principles of Public Life should be at the heart of what it means to be a civil servant.

7. The Committee will maintain an interest in the outcome of this consultation and would welcome being kept informed of the impact and effectiveness of the new *Recruitment Principles* in due course.

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