

PRESS NOTICE

14 July 2014

PARLIAMENT AND PARTIES MUST DO MORE TO MAKE NEW MPs AWARE OF ETHICAL STANDARDS

Lord Bew, the Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life today called for a renewed focus on ethical standards in the induction scheme for all new MPs, especially in the light of the new Recall Bill.

Publishing the Committee's latest report 'Ethics in Practice' which focuses on the role of induction', Lord Bew said:

"Awareness and understanding of the Seven Principles of Public Life cannot be left to chance. We need to make sure that all of those in public life are aware of their ethical responsibilities and are prepared to act as ethical leaders. The public expects nothing less.

"We were pleased to see that many areas of public life now have established induction programmes in place that include ethics - in Local Government and the Civil Service, for example. We were also pleased to note the calls, from Parliament and beyond, for induction to be introduced in areas where it was lacking, for example in relation to Police and Crime Commissioners and Special Advisers.

"However, of particular concern to us was the reported lack of engagement with induction by large numbers of Members of Parliament. With the prospect of a Recall Bill, which will give the public the power to remove MPs who have behaved in ways that fall short of the standards expected of them, the stakes have never been higher. In effect, ethical issues will now be under even greater scrutiny. More than ever, MPs need to be fully aware of the principles and the rules that guide their behaviour; Parliament and the political parties need to provide the opportunities for them to build that awareness and understanding. An induction programme that fully embraces ethical standards should be the first of those opportunities.

“The recently-announced Review of the Standards System by the House of Commons Standards Review Sub-Committee will doubtless be examining these issues and taking evidence from a wide range of perspectives. We hope this Report will be a useful contribution to their deliberations. “

To download a copy of the report go to www.public-standards.gov.uk

Notes to Editors

1. For media enquiries and interview requests please contact Maggie O’Boyle on 07880 740627.

2. More information about the work of the Committee is available on its website: www.public-standards.gov.uk

3. 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 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.” Additional terms of reference were announced on 12 November 1997: “To review issues in relation to the funding of political parties, and to make recommendations as to any changes in present arrangements.” In February 2013 the terms of reference were clarified by the Government 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 that the Committee’s remit encompasses all those in other sectors delivering public services. Hansard (HC), 5 February 2013, Col 7WS .

4. The current members of the Committee are: Lord (Paul) Bew, Chairman, Rt Hon Lord Alderdice, Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett MP DBE, Sheila Drew Smith OBE, Patricia Moberly, Dame Denise Platt DBE, David Prince CBE and Richard Thomas CBE and Dame Angela Watkinson MP DBE.