**CSPL (18) 98**

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE**

**TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTIETH MEETING**

**HELD AT 10.00 ON THURSDAY 18 OCTOBER 2018**

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

**MINUTES**

Present: Lord Bew, Acting Chair

Lord Evans, Chair Designate, observing

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

Lesley Bainsfair, Secretary

Ally Foat, Senior Policy Advisor

Stuart Ramsay, Senior Policy Advisor

Amy Austin, Office Manager

Maggie O’Boyle, Press Officer

Nicola Richardson, Incoming Senior Policy Advisor, observing

Aaron Simons, Incoming Senior Policy Advisor, observing

Apologies: Monisha Shah (leave of absence)

Kevin Dunion OBE, Convener, the Standards Commission for Scotland and Lorna Johnston, Executive Director of the Standards Commission for Scotland, joined the Committee meeting at the end of formal business for a general discussion.

Lord Bew welcomed Lord Evans who was observing this meeting before taking up formal appointment.

**1. REGISTERS**

There were no changes to the register of interests.

**2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2018 were agreed.

**Matters arising:**

**Seminar: online targeting of voters**

The Committee noted an update on the Constitution Unit’s proposed seminar on online targeting of voters through social media. The Committee would await further details from the Constitution Unit.

**Westminster Harassment**

The Committee had an initial discussion concerning Dame Laura Cox’s report, published on Monday 15 October, of her independent inquiry into the bullying and harassment of House of Commons Staff.

Margaret Beckett referred to her interview on report and explained the background and apologised to the Committee if it had seemed that she was speaking on behalf of the Committee which had absolutely not been her intention. Margaret had made it clear to the broadcaster that she was speaking in a personal and political capacity and that only the Chair could speak on the Committee’s behalf. The Committee was grateful to Margaret for her explanation and apology.

The Committee noted that Dame Laura’s report had cast light onto a worrying and seemingly long-standing culture in the House.

Members were clear that the Committee’s role was not to become involved in the detailed processes of any procedures that may be put in place by the House authorities, but to maintain a watching brief across the standards landscape, including the House of Commons, in order to ensure the highest ethical standards amongst public office holders.

The Committee agreed that the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, should write to the Commission members in light of the report and await with close interest the outcome of the Commission’s meeting to be held on Monday 22 October.[[1]](#footnote-0)

The Committee would maintain its close and serious interest in and actively track developments on the issue of bullying and harassment in Westminster, and consider the Commission’s response at its November meeting.

**3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS REVIEW**

The Committee discussed the first full draft of the report. The Committee was grateful for the excellent first draft and the work that had gone into the report to-date.

Comments, points of clarification and drafting suggestions were noted.

The publication date would be confirmed outside the meeting.

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

The Committee noted progress following up the December 2017 report on intimidation in public life. It was noted that the Conservative Party had not yet responded to the invitation to the meeting to political parties to discuss a joint code of conduct. This would be pursued.

**5. STANDARDS CHECK**

The Committee noted the standards check for September/October 2018.

**6. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD LOOK OF EVENTS**

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

**7. AOB**

**Communications Update**

The Committee noted the communications update for September 2018.

**Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)**

Jane Martin reported that the ASCL had now finalised their ethical framework for educational leadership. The Secretariat would circulate the framework to members for their information.

**Seminar on Professional Standards for Regulators**

Jane Ramsey reported that she had spoken on 16 October at a seminar for professional standards for regulation organised by the General Pharmaceutical Council.

Discussions at the seminar had prompted the thought that the Committee might discuss at a future date, whether or not the current Principles of Public Life should include the idea of ‘compassion’ or ‘humanity’. This suggestion was noted.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

**Thursday 15 November 2018 to be held in Conference Room E, 70 Whitehall.**

**8. DISCUSSION WITH STANDARDS COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND**

The Chair welcomed Kevin Dunion OBE, Convener, the Standards Commission for Scotland and Lorna Johnston, Executive Director of the Standards Commission for Scotland.

Kevin outlined the remit and work of the Commission which was a complaints -based system that was triggered by a complaint by an individual. There was a full discussion of the work of the Commission, the issues that came before it, and the sanctions available to the Commission. On behalf of the Committee, Lord Bew thanked Kevin and Lorna for taking the time to visit and speak to the Committee. The meeting had been very useful and productive; the Committee and Commission had different remits but there were clear analogies between the two. It was agreed to try to maintain more regular contact in future.

**CSPL Secretariat**

**October 2018**

1. Subsequently rearranged by the Commission for Wednesday 24 October 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)