

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE  
TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY-THIRD MEETING  
HELD AT 10.00 ON THURSDAY 10 JANUARY 2019  
IN 70 WHITEHALL, LONDON**

**MINUTES**

Present: Lord Evans KCB DL, Chair  
Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP  
Simon Hart MP  
Dr Jane Martin CBE  
Professor Dame Shirley Pearce DBE  
Jane Ramsey  
Monisha Shah  
Rt Hon Lord Stunell OBE

Professor Mark Philp, Chair, Research Advisory Board  
Lesley Bainsfair, Secretary  
Nicola Richardson, Senior Policy Advisor  
Aaron Simons, Senior Policy Advisor  
Amy Austin, Policy Advisor  
Lesley Glanz, Executive Assistant (part of meeting)  
Maggie O'Boyle, Press Officer

**1. REGISTERS**

Changes were noted to the register of interests.

**2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2018 were agreed subject to one amendment.

**Matters arising:**

**Chair's update**

The Chair updated the Committee on his further introductory meetings with key stakeholders, and recent press articles were discussed. Members noted the Chair's further assurances of no conflicts of interest or time in relation to his roles outside the Committee. Members were pleased to note in particular a positive meeting with the Chief Executive of the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary of the Cabinet Office.

**3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS REVIEW**

The Committee noted arrangements were in hand for the launch date of 30 January 2019.

#### **4. WESTMINSTER HARASSMENT**

The Committee considered developments in the issue of bullying and harassment in Westminster since their last meeting. Members were pleased to note the House of Commons had approved the Commons Committee on Standards report setting out initial proposals in response to the Cox report.

The Committee agreed it was important for Parliament to make progress in developing a modern, appropriate and independent complaints process for both Houses. The Committee would actively maintain its close and serious interest in the issue, including reviewing the pace of actions by the House of Commons to follow up the Cox recommendations, and any further developments in standards in Parliament, at the Committee's February meeting.

In order to inform its own thinking on this matter, the Committee discussed and agreed options that should be included for a paper to be presented to the Committee at their February meeting which would include exploring options for an independent complaints process for both Houses.

#### **5. INTIMIDATION IN PUBLIC LIFE: FOLLOW-UP**

The Committee noted it was planned to hold a second meeting with political parties to follow up the recommendation that there should be a joint political code of conduct.

The Committee would continue to follow up the report's recommendations and responses to them.

Committee members also expressed their serious concern about recent increased incidents of intimidation and harassment of MP and journalists. Notwithstanding the right and importance of disagreement and differing views in a democracy, a culture of civility needed to be maintained and it was fundamental to democracy that MPs and journalists should be able to carry out their work openly and be accessible to the public.

Options for publicly restating the Committee's concern were discussed.

#### **6. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered how best to explore planned work on how AI is used in public service, its impact, how standards can be upheld in its commissioning and deployment, and whether any safeguards or regulation were needed. Terms of reference would be discussed at the February meeting.

The Committee also considered the Chair of RAB's discussion paper on the Principles; whether there was a group of issues around the principles that might warrant further discussion or restatement. The Secretariat was tasked over the next few months to research whether there was evidence to suggest any amendment to the Principles was necessary, in particular to cover values of respect, compassion - what people have said on those issues.

Thirdly, the Committee debated the idea of whether the Committee should undertake any public research, either on its own or in partnership with another organisation, into public trust/standards. The Secretariat would research previous and others' work in this area, and in the light of what that revealed, prepare a paper on what the options might be for the Committee, objectives and costs. It might be that there would be potential in exploring public research into the Principles, and public views on them looking ahead.

**7. STANDARDS CHECK**

The Committee noted the standards check for December 2018.

**8. FORWARD AGENDA AND FORWARD LOOK OF EVENTS**

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

**9. AOB**

**Communications Update**

The Committee noted the communications update for December 2018.

**April 2019 meeting**

It was noted that the April meeting would be held on 25 April and not 18 April as originally planned in order to avoid meeting during the Parliamentary recess.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

**Thursday 28 February 2019 to be held in Conference Room E, 70 Whitehall.**