

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE
TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FOURTH MEETING
HELD AT 10.00 ON THURSDAY 28 FEBRUARY 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 Adviser
Aaron Simons, Senior Policy Adviser
Amy Austin, Policy Adviser
Lesley Glanz, Executive Assistant
Maggie O'Boyle, Press Officer

1. REGISTERS

Members were asked to let the Secretariat know of any changes to their register of interests.

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 January 2019 were agreed.

Matters arising:

Chair's update

The Chair updated the Committee on his further introductory meetings with key stakeholders. It was agreed that it would be a very good thing if the Chair, or Committee members were able to speak on ethical standards at some of the forthcoming leadership programmes for senior public leaders given Nolan's emphasis on training.

3. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS: LESSONS LEARNT

The Committee noted lessons learnt from the review on local government ethical standards. Overall the report had run smoothly and been well-received. It was

agreed it would be helpful when undertaking a substantive review, to have Committee members join the lead member to hear and take evidence.

A plan for following up the recommendations was important. Suggestions were noted and the Secretariat would prepare a paper on follow up for the Committee's consideration.

4. INTIMIDATION IN PUBLIC LIFE: FOLLOW-UP

Jane Ramsey reported that she had attended on 27 February a meeting arranged by the Jo Cox Foundation to discuss increased intimidation of those in public life and the need to balance freedom of speech with protecting the individual in public life. There were worrying consequences for the individual, their voice and safety, and more widely for democracy.

Options for further engagement on this issue and publicly restating the Committee's concern were discussed.

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

5. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: AI AND PUBLIC STANDARDS

The Committee considered the scoping papers on AI and its impact on public standards and agreed the review's terms of reference subject to noted amendments. Project plans were agreed.

6. WESTMINSTER HARASSMENT

The Committee noted the paper which, at the request of members at their January meeting, set out options for a modern and effective complaints process within Parliament and helpfully set out the history of the Committee's involvement in standards issues in Parliament.

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.

It was agreed to publish or blog a factual piece of work that would set out in one place the various initiatives and pieces of work currently taking place in Parliament with a timeline.

The Chair reported that he was minded to submit a contribution to the House of Lords consultation on incorporating into the Lords Code of Conduct a new process for investigating allegations of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct involving members. The consultation was open to Peers only, not external organisations. Members expressed some reservations about the Chair submitting a personal contribution to a review where the Committee has an active role and interest and felt there would be more impact if the Chair could speak representing the Committee

if/when invited to do so. The Chair said he would submit a contribution which reflected the Committee's past views on these issues.

7. TRUST AND POLLING

Following discussion, the Committee decided in view of the prohibitive cost and likely outcome not to undertake a major piece of public research into trust and standards, certainly at the current time. It may be possible to do something in partnership with another organisation. The RAB and Secretariat would pursue this option. It was agreed to publish a blog about the current situation for those in public life, both in politics and more widely.

8. STANDARDS CHECK

The Committee noted the standards check for January 2019.

9. FORWARD AGENDA AND FORWARD LOOK OF EVENTS

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

19. AOB

Communications Update

The Committee noted the communications update for January 2019

Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) Report and framework guidance

The Committee praised the ASCL report and guidance which all agreed was an excellent piece of work and thanked Jane Martin for her contribution to the work.

Electoral Commission roundtable on the challenges posed by digital campaigning

Jane Ramsey reported that she had attended a roundtable organised by the Electoral Commission on the challenges posed by digital campaigning.

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 21 March 2019 to be held in Conference Room E, 70 Whitehall.