**CSPL (19) 58**

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE**

**TWO HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SEVENTH MEETING**

**HELD AT 10.00 ON THURSDAY 16 MAY 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

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 25 April 2019 were agreed.

**Matters arising:**

**Chair’s update**

The Chair updated the Committee on:

* His meeting with Prof Mark Philp and Prof Cees Van der Eijk to discuss the future working of the Research Advisory Board;
* His meeting with a delegation from the Agency of the Republic of Kazakhstan for Civil Service Affairs and Anti-Corruption (at their request and approved by the FCO);
* His meeting with the Chairs of Independent Offices - this had been a successful meeting and it had been agreed to meet again to discuss any potential common areas of interest that the group might wish to develop and articulate collectively. This was welcomed by the Committee whilst recognising the unique position of the Committee as sitting slightly apart from those with more regulatory functions.

**3. WESTMINSTER HARASSMENT**

The Committee noted the paper which reviewed the Committee’s considerations on this issue to date (as requested by members at their April meeting) and which also noted elements of the complaints system on which the Committee may wish to develop a position in due course.

It was agreed the Committee should continue its close and serious interest in this subject, but would not intervene directly at this stage. The Committee would review its position in September by which time various strands of work and inquiries should have completed. The Committee would however need to be ready to respond as necessary to the Gemma White QC and Naomi Ellenbogen QC inquiries that were due to report before the summer recess.

The Committee agreed that the Secretariat should draft a submission to the Commons Committee on Standards’ current inquiry into sanctions. The Secretariat would circulate a draft response for members’ comments.

**4. INTIMIDATION IN PUBLIC LIFE**

The Committee discussed follow up to the intimidation in public life report, in particular, the Committee (1) welcomed the government response to their consultation ‘[Protecting the Debate](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/799873/Protecting-the-Debate-Government-Response-2019.05.01.pdf)’; and (2) discussed ongoing work with the political parties to draw up a joint statement of principles (this led on from the recommendation in the report that political parties should work together to draw up a joint code of conduct on intimidatory behaviour during election campaigns).

Given the continuing live nature of the issue of intimidation in public life, the Committee should continue to respond to opportunities to drive home the message and recommendations of the report. For example, attending meetings and taking media opportunities where it was sensible and appropriate to do so.

With regard to the work with political parties, it was agreed that the work to draw up a joint ‘statement of principles’ should cover parties holding Westminster seats, with the view of inviting other parties to sign up to any statement once that statement had been agreed.

The Committee noted with thanks that Simon Hart MP had arranged a Westminster Hall debate on intimidation in public life for Tuesday 21 May.

**5. AI AND PUBLIC STANDARDS**

The Committee discussed the update on progress with the AI review. Suggestions were made to the agenda for the roundtables to be held in May and June which were noted. The Chair thanked members in advance for their attendance at the forthcoming roundtables.

The Committee agreed to go ahead with 2 focus groups to try to capture some of the public’s view on AI and public standards, particularly younger people. It was also agreed that it was important to talk to groups that represented minorities to ensure their views were included in the review.

**6. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS FOLLOW UP**

The Committee noted the brief update on progress in following up the local government ethical standards report. Dr Martin reported a helpful conversation with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) who had confirmed that the LGO was very happy to take on the role of appeal body for councillors suspended for breaching their code of conduct. The Committee welcomed the positive letter from John Austin, Chair of Joint ADSO/LLG/SLCC Task Force to the Minister in support of the report.

**7. ANNUAL REPORT**

The Committee discussed the draft outline annual report. Whilst it was important to report and account for the Committee’s activities over the year, it was felt that this might be done in a more accessible way that more suited the size and nature of the Committee, It was agreed to revise the structure as follows: a narrative of the Committee’s key activities over the past year and looking ahead to the Committee’s 25th year; with annexes providing factual and functional detail about the Committee, using links as much as possible to the Committee’s website and blogs.

**8. PACAC INQUIRY INTO ELECTORAL REFORM**

The Committee noted the draft submission to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Select Committee’s (PACAC) inquiry into electoral reform. Comments were requested by members by 20 May.

**9. STANDARDS CHECK**

The standards check for April/May was noted.

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

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

**10. AOB**

**Communications Update**

The Committee noted the communications update for April 2019.

**FOI request**

The Committee noted a freedom of information request to the Committee and agreed the proposed response.

**2020 Meeting dates**

The Committee noted the proposed meeting dates for 2020.

**Date of Next Meeting**

**Thursday 20 June 2019 to be held in Conference Room E, 70 Whitehall.**