**CSPL (19) 95**

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE**

**TWO HUNDRED AND SEVENTIETH MEETING**

**HELD AT 10.00 ON THURSDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2019**

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

**MINUTES**

Present: Lord Evans KCB DL, Chair

Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE 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

Ally Foat, 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 18 July 2019 were agreed subject to one agreed amendment.

**Chair’s update**

The Committee noted the Chair’s update.

**Conservative membership:** The Committee noted that the Secretariat was liaising with the Cabinet Office about Conservative membership of the Committee. Simon Hart MP had resigned from the Committee in July following his appointment as Parliamentary Secretary in the Cabinet Office.

**Presentation to Architects Registration Board:** Dame Shirley Pearce had presented to the Architects Registration Board on 11 September 2019 on the role of the Committee and good practice for Boards. Dame Shirley drew attention to two points in particular that were raised: how to raise and maintain awareness of the Committee and its reports with regulators and others in the standards field; and the issue of standards in the current political crisis.

**Awareness of the Committee and its reports:** The Secretariat was asked to consider practical ways of maintaining awareness of the Committee’s work.

**Importance of standards in current political crisis:** Following a full discussion, it was agreed that the Committee should publish on its website an open letter to public office holders emphasising the importance of everyone in public life, but especially those at the top - government and parliament - observing and demonstrating high standards and all of the Nolan Principles. The current obvious pressures in the public sphere needed clear leadership to stop public debate deteriorating into intimidation and abuse.

**New ways of working:** The Committee noted and agreed the Chair’s paper on new ways of Committee working, including a trial period of a new way of distributing Committee papers.

**3. WESTMINSTER HARASSMENT**

The Committee noted and agreed the recommendations of the sub committee of independent members. Members welcomed the Lords Commission’s public commitment to change, and the progress by both Houses in implementing the ICGS;

looked forward to cooperation between both Houses on adopting a bicameral approach to the ICGS; and supported the direction of travel towards independence in the Lords. The issue was live and the Committee again stressed the need for both Houses to keep up the pace of change.

**4. INTIMIDATION IN PUBLIC LIFE**

 The Committee noted the paper setting out follow up work to intimidation in public life.

The Chair had, at the invitation of The Jo Cox Foundation, spoken at the Big Tent Festival of Ideas on 31 August; the Chair would be attending The Jo Cox Foundation’s 3rd birthday evening reception on 19 September; the Chair and Jane Ramsey would be meeting with the Deputy National Security Advisor, Madeleine Alessandri, to discuss the Cabinet Office’s programme ‘Defending Democracy’; Jane Ramsey had met with the [Behavioural Insights Team](https://www.bi.team/what-we-do/); and the Secretariat had met with the Parliamentary Security Team for an update on their work in this area.

Jane Ramsey updated the Committee on the work that was underway with The Jo Cox Foundation on developing a joint ‘standard’ for political parties on conduct and behaviour.

Jane Ramsey reported to the Committee a suggestion from The Foundation that the joint standard should apply at all times and not just during periods of general elections. The Intimidation in Public Life report had recommended the latter, but the review could not have foreseen political events following the report’s publication in December 2017. Given the evidence of the continuance of intimidation in public life and the current political climate, with political parties effectively campaigning even though an election had not been called, it seemed sensible to agree that the joint standard should apply at all times. This was agreed. An update to the original recommendation would be placed on the Committee’s website.

**5. AI AND PUBLIC STANDARDS**

 The Committee noted the progress on the review and discussed the draft report. The Secretariat noted drafting suggestions from members.

Initial plans for the launch of the report were discussed and noted.

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

Jane Martin updated the Committee on the follow-up to our review into Local Government Ethical Standards. It was agreed that the Committee would write to the Minister asking for a formal response to the review once Parliament had returned, but in any event no later than end October 2019.

**7. CSPL 25th ANNIVERSARY**

The Committee noted progress with and agreed plans to mark the Committee’s 25th anniversary.

**8. STANDARDS CHECK**

The standards check for August and September 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 August 2019.

**Date of Next Meeting**

**17 October 2019.**