**CSPL (20) 90**

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE**

**TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTIETH MEETING**

**HELD AT 10.00 ON THURSDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**BY VIDEO CALL**

**MINUTES**

Present: Lord Evans KCB DL, Chair

Dr Jane Martin CBE

Dame Shirley Pearce DBE

Jane Ramsey

Monisha Shah

Rt Hon Lord Stunell OBE (attended part of meeting)

Rt Hon Jeremy Wright QC MP

Professor Mark Philp, Chair, Research Advisory Board

Lesley Bainsfair, Secretary

Amy Austin, Senior Policy Adviser

Lesley Glanz, Executive Assistant

Nicola Richardson, Senior Policy Adviser

Maggie O’Boyle, Press Officer

Kathryn Stone OBE, Commons Commissioner for Standards (attended 10.00 - 10.30)

The meeting was held by video call in view of COVID-19.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair welcomed Kathryn Stone OBE, Commons Commissioner for Standards. The Committee had invited Kathryn to discuss current standards matters in the House of Commons. Kathryn kindly updated the Committee on recent developments including the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS); the establishment of the Independent Panel to hear serious ICGS cases; the Standards Committee’s sanctions report; and the confidentiality of investigations.

The Chair thanked Kathryn for her time and for a very interesting and thoughtful discussion about current standards issues. In particular, the Committee noted the Commissioner’s views on the need to be allowed to revisit the confidentiality agreements of July 2018 and publish lists of ongoing non-ICGS investigations and have the discretion to disclose information on ICGS cases where appropriate. The Chair confirmed that the CSPL would continue its close and active watching brief on these serious issues in Parliament. Both organisations agreed to stay in touch.

**1. APOLOGIES**

Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP.

Rt Hon Lord Stunell OBE attended the first 30 minutes of the meeting only.

**2. REGISTERS**

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

**3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2020 were agreed.

**Chair’s update**

The Committee noted the Chair’s update.

The Committee discussed the recent FOI request about the ethnicity of Committee members. Whilst noting the formal reply to the FOI request and that there was no obligation to release this personal information, Committee members decided, in the interests of openness, to make an ethnicity declaration, voluntarily, on the CSPL website and in future Annual Reports.[[1]](#footnote-0) This was not intended to set any precedent for future members of the Committee.

The Committee noted that Cabinet Office staff were being encouraged to think about a flexible, rota-based approach to returning to the office. The Committee agreed that Committee and Secretariat work had continued very effectively and unhindered whilst operating remotely. Meeting rooms suitable for the Committee were not yet available hence Committee meetings would continue to take place on video calls until further notice.

**4. REVIEW OF REGULATION OF ELECTION FINANCE**

The Committee noted good progress to date on the review of the regulation of election finance.

**5. FUTURE WORK: SECOND REVIEW**

The TOR for a second review were confirmed subject to minor amendments.

**6. AI AND PUBLIC STANDARDS: FOLLOW UP**

The Committee noted follow up work to the AI and Public Standards report. Members expressed a desire to raise the profile of the issues raised in the report with regulators as soon as possible subject to Secretariat resources which were currently stretched.

**7. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS: FOLLOW UP**

The Committee noted Dr Martin (lead member on the report) had a call planned with the Chair of the LGA (postponed from earlier in the year due to COVID-19) to discuss the LGA’s progress with their consultation on a model code of conduct.

**8. INTIMIDATION IN PUBLIC LIFE: FOLLOW UP**

The Committee noted the planned follow up work on intimidation in public life and that a letter had now been sent to all political parties with seats in Westminster about the statement of conduct for political parties.

**9. BULLYING AND HARASSMENT IN PARLIAMENT**

The Committee noted recent developments in both Houses of Parliament. Members agreed that the Committee should continue its close and active watching brief of this serious issue and to offer what support it could to those delivering change in the standards field in Parliament, including the Commissioner for Standards. Those responsible for delivering change were faced with serious responsibility and a heavy workload. It was noted that meetings had been arranged with key players in both Houses. Members suggested that the Commons Director for Cultural Change should be invited to a future Committee meeting.

**10. COVID-19: WATCHING BRIEF**

The Committee noted its continued watching brief on risks to the Principles by COVID-19.

**11. STANDARDS CHECK**

The standards check for August/September was noted.

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

The Committee noted the forward agenda.

**13. AOB**

**Communications Update**

The Committee noted the communications update for July 2020 and welcomed the Press Officer’s accompanying narrative.

**Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 15 October 2020 at 10.00 via video conference call.

CSPL Secretariat

September 2020

1. The response was issued in line with Cabinet Office advice as the data controller. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)