**CSPL (20) 113**

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE**

**TWO HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SECOND MEETING**

**HELD AT 10.00 ON THURSDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2020**

**BY VIDEO CALL**

**MINUTES**

Present: Lord Evans KCB DL, Chair

Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP

Dr Jane Martin CBE

Dame Shirley Pearce DBE

Monisha Shah

Rt Hon Lord Stunell OBE

Rt Hon Jeremy Wright QC MP

Professor Mark Philp, Chair, Research Advisory Board

Lesley Bainsfair, Secretary

Amy Austin, Senior Policy Adviser

Nicola Richardson, Senior Policy Adviser

Aaron Simons, Senior Policy Adviser

Lesley Glanz, Executive Assistant

Maggie O’Boyle, Press Officer

Sarah Petit, Director of Cultural Change, House of Commons (attended 10.00 - 10.30)

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

**CULTURAL CHANGE IN PARLIAMENT**

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair welcomed Sarah Petit, Director of Cultural Change, House of Commons.

Sarah updated the Committee on progress to deliver cultural change across the House of Commons service in line with the Commons values and the Behaviour Code - building confidence in formal processes; supporting a cultural shift in line management; prevention of poor behaviour; encouraging a speak out culture; and looking particularly at groups who have had a particularly poor experience.

The Committee was grateful to Sarah for speaking to the Committee, to hear about the initiatives being taken and for the work she was doing to take forward change.

**1. APOLOGIES**

No apologies were received.

**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 15 October 2020 were agreed.

**Chair’s update**

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair recorded warmest thanks to Jane Ramsey who had resigned from the Committee on taking up a new role, leading on the establishment of a new independent complaints process for internal disciplinary matters at the Labour Party. Jane Ramsey had always been fully committed to and engaged in all of the Committee’s work, leading on a number of substantive and highly influential reports, contributing to the maintenance of high ethical standards in public life. The Committee would miss Jane’s independence of mind, her intellect and judgement as well as her good humour and thoughtfulness.

The Committee noted an update on the recruitment process for Committee members. Members noted that it was assumed that the Chair would chair the selection panel, as for previous recruitments, and the panel would also include an Independent Member. Members noted their thanks to Monisha Shah who had kindly agreed a 4 month extension to her term of appointment to 31 March 2021 following a request from the Minister.

Members thanked Dame Shirley Pearce for representing the Committee and speaking at an event at the Public Chairs’ Forum on leadership and AI governance on 23 October.

Members noted that the Chair and Dr Jane Martin would be appearing before the Commons Standards Committee on 24 November to give evidence into their inquiry on the MPs’ Code of Conduct.

Members noted the Chair’s successful Hugh Kay lecture delivered at the Institute of Business Ethics on 11 November, and the widespread press coverage of the speech.

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

The Committee noted evidence-taking for review was coming to an end. Members approved the outline report structure. It was noted that the report would need to point out the differences between elections and referendums in terms of ongoing accountability for compliance with spending rules.

**5. STANDARDS MATTER 2**

Members had a full discussion on the review and the best approach to take, both in terms of the scope of the review itself and in terms of the Committee speaking out on standards issues.

It was agreed that the Chair and Dr Martin would meet with the Secretariat to discuss a revised project plan and that further thought would be given to the nature and frequency of the Committee’s engagement on high-profile standards issues.

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

The Committee noted: the Chair had met with Robert Halfon MP, Chair Education Select Committee, to discuss AI; the Chair had chaired a workshop organized by Wilton Park and RUSI on AI governance, and the secretariat had written to regulators asking how they were adapting their governance to meet the challenges of AI. The government response to the Committee’s report was due in December.

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

The Committee noted follow up work to the local government ethical standards report. The Secretariat had emailed all councils in England seeking an update on the report’s best practice recommendations. There was now a steady stream of responses from local authorities. There was still no response from the government to the report.

Members noted that Dr Martin and Jane Ramsey had spoken at two recent (virtual) conferences organised by the LGA and (separately) Hoey Ainscough Associates.

Members noted that the LGA had finished the consultation on the model code of contract but had not yet published the final code. The secretariat would keep members updated.

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

The Committee noted progress with the planned follow up work on intimidation in public life. It was intended to publish a follow up progress report in December 2020.

**9. BULLYING AND HARASSMENT IN PARLIAMENT**

Given the round of recent meetings with stakeholders on this subject, changes being made in Parliament, and the 18 month review of the Independent Complaints and Grievances system to which the Committee would submit a response, it was agreed that the Committee would now scale back its active watching brief. The secretariat would keep up-to-date on developments and inform the Committee as required.

**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 October/November 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 October 2020.

**Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 17 December 2020 at 10.00 via video conference call.

CSPL Secretariat

November 2020