

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE
314th MEETING HELD
AT 10.00 ON THURSDAY 20 JULY 2023**

MINUTES

Present: Lord Evans of Weardale KCB DL, Chair
Rt Hon Lady Arden DBE
Ewen Fergusson
Professor Gillian Peele (joined the meeting remotely)
Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP

Professor Mark Philp, Chair, Research Advisory Board (joined the meeting remotely)

Lesley Bainsfair, Secretary
Nicola Richardson, Senior Policy Adviser (joined the meeting remotely)
Elliot Ammar, Senior Policy Adviser (joined the meeting remotely)
Maggie O'Boyle, Press Officer¹

1. APOLOGIES

Rt Hon Ian Blackford MP and Baroness Finn.

2. REGISTERS

Members were asked to let the Secretariat know of any changes to the register of interests which had been circulated.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023 were agreed.

Chair's update

Upholding Standards in Public Life: Government response

Members discussed the Committee's response to the government response to the Upholding Standards in Public Life report (November 2021). A blog would be published in the Chair's name once the government response had been published. Members agreed to keep a watching brief on the government's planned reforms to ACOBA.

Commons Committee on Standards: inquiry into the standards landscape

¹ Maggie O'Boyle provides part-time press support to the Civil Service Commission, the House of Lords Appointments Commission, the Office for the Commissioner for Public Appointments and the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

It was noted that the Commons Committee on Standards had launched on 18 July an inquiry into the standards landscape. Sir Laurie Magnus, Independent Adviser for Ministers' Interests, gave oral evidence on 18 July. The Committee has said that they will take further oral evidence in the autumn.

The deadline for submissions is 25 September. The Secretariat will draft a response and circulate for comments to members by email.

Opposition plans for an Ethics and Integrity Commission

Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, wrote to the Chair on Wednesday 12 July about the Labour Party's plans for an Ethics and Integrity Commission. The Chair replied on 19 July, saying that the Committee would be pleased to contribute to their consultation once announced. The Committee's role is to advise the Prime Minister, so any engagement with HM Opposition would be on the same terms as any other organisation e.g. academics/think tanks interested in the Committee's evidence and recommendations on the complex standards landscape.

Update on possible project on the Principles and Codes of Conduct

The Chair and Lady Arden updated the Committee on preliminary discussions. A paper would come to a forthcoming meeting for consideration.

Recruitment for independent member

It was noted that the advert for the independent member closed on 11 July. The closing date for applications for the role of Chair had been extended to 25 July 2023.

Regulating Election Finance: letter from the Minister

Members noted the letter of 10 July 2023 from Baroness Scott, Minister with responsibility for election finance rules. The letter confirms that the government does not intend to respond further to the report's recommendations. (The government published what seemed to be an interim [response](#) in September 2021.)

The letter was picked up by the Sunday Mirror which ran an article on it on Sunday 16 July.

Leading in Practice

Members noted that the Leading in Practice report continued to attract wide interest and a number of speaking engagements had been received and confirmed for the Chair and Ewen Fergusson.

National Security Bill - amendment on identification of donations from a foreign power

The Bill received Royal Assent on 11 July. It was noted that the government had committed to "consult on enhancing information sharing between relevant agencies or public bodies to help identify and mitigate the risks of foreign interference in political donations that are regulated by electoral law." The government considers that greater information sharing may help in the prevention and identification of breaches of the law in relation to impermissible donations from foreign powers.

The government has committed to tabling a report in the House at the end of this consultation which will set out conclusions and next steps.

Welsh Local Government Association Standards Committee Chair's Forum

Members noted that Professor Mark Philp had spoken to the Welsh Standards Committee Chair's Forum about our 2019 Local Government and Ethical Standards report. This was at the Forum's invitation.

FOI request

The following information was requested of the Committee under the the Freedom of Information Act (2000):

Please provide me with copies of any policies, procedures, guidance or training materials which clarify the scope of the work of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, its members and staff.

The applicant also asked a number of specific questions about our scope of work.

The response has been published on the Committee's website.

Interviews

Members noted that the Chair had been interviewed by Sky News as part of their Westminster Accounts series. The interview was likely to be broadcast in the week beginning 24 July.

4. LOBBYING

The Committee noted a paper with updated plans for the seminar on lobbying to be held in the autumn. Members were invited to send comments on the agenda and guest list to the Secretariat.

5. AI AND PUBLIC STANDARDS: UPDATE

Members noted the paper which provided an update on follow up work to the Committee's *AI and public standards* report, published in 2020. Two areas of action were noted for the Secretariat: (a) research how the EU were tackling regulatory issues; (b) include for the Committee's planned seminar consideration of broader,

more philosophical questions in relation to AI (noting that the focus would be the regulatory framework).

6. CURRENT STANDARDS ISSUES

The Committee noted the media coverage of standards issues which had been circulated.

7. FORWARD AGENDA

The Committee noted the forward agenda.

8. AOB

Communications Update

The Committee noted the Press Officer's comms brief and the communications updates for June 2023.

Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 21 September 2023 at 09.00.

CSPL Secretariat
July 2023