

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE
318th MEETING HELD
AT 10.00 ON THURSDAY 21 DECEMBER 2023**

MINUTES

Present: Doug Chalmers CB DSO OBE (Chair)
Rt Hon Lady Arden DBE
Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP
Ewen Fergusson
Baroness Finn
Professor Gillian Peele

Professor Mark Philp, Chair, Research Advisory Board

Lesley Bainsfair, Secretary
Nicola Richardson, Senior Policy Adviser
Amy Austin, Policy Adviser
Maggie O'Boyle, Press Officer¹

1. APOLOGIES

Rt Hon Ian Blackford MP

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 16 November 2023 were agreed.

The Chair introduced himself to the Committee. The Chair explained that he hoped that the Committee would be able to take a strategic approach under his chairmanship, focusing on three strands: regular engagement with bodies across the standards landscape, including the Devolved Administrations to learn and keep each other informed; promoting the Principles of Public Life, both informally and through more formal channels; and undertaking formal inquiries, whilst being conscious of the Committee's capacity and resources.

The Chair said he was grateful for the time spent with members so far, on a one to one basis.

The Chair reported that he had been invited to give evidence to the Commons Standards Committee's inquiry into the House of Commons Standards Landscape.

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

This would take place on 23 January 2024. Professor Gillian Peele would accompany the Chair.

Lady Arden reported that she had been invited to speak at a Society of Labour Lawyers event to discuss how standards are currently upheld and whether there are reforms which would improve ethics in Parliament. It was agreed that it would be a useful opportunity to explain the work of the Committee. Lady Arden would attend but would comment only on the Committee's work, not on any Labour party proposals.

Members agreed to keep a close watch on intimidation issues in the forthcoming year. On that subject, Committee members noted that The Jo Cox Foundation would kindly attend the January Committee meeting to brief members on the recommendations from their Civility Commission report which was due to be published in January.

4. AI AND PUBLIC STANDARDS: UPDATE

Members discussed how best to proceed with the AI and Public Standards follow up work. It was agreed to consider the draft AI follow up report at the January meeting when the draft report would be near completion. We were waiting for final responses to our write round including the key government response.

[Note: The Committee had agreed in July to write to stakeholders to see what progress they had made against recommendations made in our 2020 AI and Public Standards report. It was also agreed that once those responses had been received it might be helpful to hold a workshop/seminar with key players in the AI world to identify if there was any area in which CSPL could add value.]

5. CODES OF CONDUCT PROJECT

Members discussed the potential project on codes of conduct and the Principles. Members considered priorities and capacity. It was agreed to invite the College of Policing to attend the February Committee meeting to talk through their consultation on the revised Code of Ethics for policing which was to be launched in January 2024.

6. CURRENT STANDARDS ISSUES

The Committee noted the media coverage of standards issues which had been circulated. Members discussed the recall process for MPs, and the handling of public inquiries.

7. FORWARD AGENDA

The Committee noted the forward agenda.

8. AOB

Communications Update

The Committee noted the communications updates for November 2023.

Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 18 January 2024 at 10.00.

CSPL Secretariat
December 2023