

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE
328th MEETING HELD
AT 10.00 ON THURSDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2024**

MINUTES

Present: Doug Chalmers CB DSO OBE (Chair)
Rt Hon Lady (Mary) Arden DBE
Ewen Fergusson
Baroness (Simone) Finn
Professor Gillian Peele
John Henderson CB

Professor Mark Philp, Chair, Research Advisory Board

Lesley Bainsfair, Secretary
Amy Austin, Senior Policy Adviser
Peter Kelleher, Senior Policy Adviser
Lesley Glanz, Executive Assistant
Maggie O'Boyle, Press Officer¹

1. APOLOGIES

Rt Hon Baroness (Margaret) Beckett GBE
Rt Hon Ian Blackford

2. REGISTERS

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

Baroness Finn has been appointed Opposition Spokesperson for the Cabinet Office in the House of Lords.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2024 were agreed.

Chair's update

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; the Office for the Commissioner for Public Appointments; and the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

The Chair reported that Ed Davey had nominated Ruth Dombey to be the Liberal Democrat member of the Committee. Ruth had been appointed for a three year term, commencing 15 November.²

The Chair drew attention to the publication of the Ministerial Code which included some of CSPL's recommendations from its 2021 Upholding Standards in Public Life report. The Chair had published a statement welcoming the publication of the Code, in particular welcoming the prominence given to the Nolan Principles in the Code; and that new Code strengthened the independence of the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Standards, giving them the power to initiate investigations.

Baroness Finn wished to record that the previous Conservative administration did not agree with the move to give the Independent Adviser the power to initiate investigations.

In discussion of the government's plan to establish an Ethics and Integrity Commission, the Chair confirmed that he had written to the Minister explaining CSPL's role and that the Committee was well placed to assist the government in its development of the new Commission.

Ewen Fergusson reported back on the regulators' roundtable discussion hosted by the Electoral Commission on 12 November. The roundtable considered the recent general election, before discussing how regulatory collaboration could improve the UK's democracy in the coming years. The Electoral Commission has held a number of roundtables with interested regulators since 2016. (The Electoral Commission published their report on the general election on 13 November.)

Professor Mark Philp reported back on early discussions with the University of Sheffield on events to mark the Committee's 30th anniversary. Separately, It was agreed it would be useful to have a comprehensive note of what research was taking place on standards issues.

Members noted the Chair's recent and forthcoming meetings.³

4. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

A potential subject area for the Committee's next areas of review was discussed, and next steps agreed.

5. POLITICAL GAMBLING

²Political members are nominated by each of the three largest political parties in the House of Commons. The incumbent SNP Member joined the Committee prior to the 2024 general election and the subsequent changes to the make up of the House of Commons

³ Meetings are [published](#) in the Committee's register of stakeholder meetings.

Members discussed ethical issues around politicians engaging in political gambling.

6. RISK REGISTER

The Committee's risk register was noted. It was agreed to add a risk on the threat of cyber security.

7. CURRENT STANDARDS ISSUES

Members discussed the Civil Service Commission's Review into appointments by exception delegated to departments.⁴⁵

It was noted that the review found that fewer exceptions were made in this period than is typical in a similar length of time. Their usage varied by number and appointment length across Civil Service departments and organisations. The review identified a range of good practice and some areas that required improvement. The Commission was largely satisfied with processes in place within departments to apply, consider and approve exception requests but made recommendations to support greater consistency and improvements in practice.

8. FORWARD AGENDA

The Committee noted the forward agenda.

9. AOB

Communications Update

The Committee noted the monthly dashboard overview of CSPL's website for October 2024.

Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 19 December 2024 at 10.00.

CSPL Secretariat

November 2024

⁴ The Commission delegates power to departments to make appointments by exception at certain grades in particular circumstances. Given interest in a number of recent Civil Service appointments by exception, the Civil Service Commission undertook a review of appointments made by exception using delegated powers in July and August 2024 and the departmental processes in place to make such appointments.

⁵ Maggie O'Boyle, Press Officer, declared her interest as Press Officer for the Civil Service Commission.