

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE  
330th MEETING HELD  
AT 10.00 ON FRIDAY 24 JANUARY 2025**

**MINUTES**

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

Professor Mark Philp, Chair, Research Advisory Board

Lesley Bainsfair, Secretary  
Nicola Richardson, Deputy Head, Secretariat  
Amy Austin, Senior Policy Adviser  
Peter Kelleher, Senior Policy Adviser

Maggie O'Boyle<sup>1</sup>, Press Officer<sup>1</sup>

**1. APOLOGIES**

Rt Hon Baroness (Margaret) Beckett GBE.

**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 19 December 2024 were agreed.

**CHAIR'S UPDATE**

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

Members noted the Chair's recent and forthcoming meetings.<sup>2</sup>

### **Political members: expenses**

The Chair reported that the Cabinet Office had agreed a change in policy to pay reasonable expenses (not fees) to political members for travel and accommodation, effective from 1 January.

An updated governance note would be published on the website.

### **PACAC review into ALBs**

It was noted that PACAC had launched its review into ALBs.<sup>3</sup> The terms of reference were specifically about the government's policy on public bodies: where it should reside; governance and transparency requirements; tests relating to whether public bodies should continue or new ones be established; and the means by which ministers influence public bodies' work.

### **House Of Commons Speaker's Conference on the Security of Candidates, MPs and Elections**

A draft response to the Speaker's conference on the security of candidates, MPs and elections, would be circulated to Committee members. The consultation considers the factors influencing the threat levels against candidates and MPs, and the effectiveness of the response to such threats; and the arrangements necessary to secure free and fair elections, and the appropriate protection of candidates and MPs at future parliamentary elections in the UK.

### **Chair's letter to the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) on Regulating Election Finance**

The Chair had written to the DPM drawing attention to the Committee's report on Regulating Election Finance. It was hoped that the recommendations contained in that report would assist the government as it considered ways to protect the integrity of our electoral system.<sup>4</sup>

### **Report of the House of Lords Conduct Committee into the Review of the Code of Conduct**

The House of Lords Conduct Committee had published the report of its review into the Code of Conduct and Guide to the Code of Conduct. Members noted the report,

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<sup>2</sup> Meetings are [published](#) in the Committee's register of stakeholder meetings.

<sup>3</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/8745/public-bodies/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulating-election-finance-report>

and queried and discussed the report's recommendation that in future 'members should not register non-financial interests'.<sup>5</sup>

### **FOI requests**

It was noted that the Committee had not received any new FOI requests over the past month.

## **4. CURRENT REVIEW**

The final draft report of the review was discussed and comments noted. The media and communications plan was noted and agreed.

## **5. 30th ANNIVERSARY PLAN**

Members noted an update on the planned events to mark the Committee's 30th anniversary year. This included work on Principles case studies, discussion groups with university students and updating the standards map produced in 2020.

## **6. LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

Members discussed the planned seminar to be held on 20 February.

## **7. CURRENT STANDARDS ISSUES**

Lady Arden raised the issue of algorithms turbo charging social media posts and shutting down other debates to the damage of our democracy.

It would be helpful to know the extent of the Information Commissioner's powers and any possible enforcement actions with regard to posts on social media platforms.

Councillor Dombey added that there was an important issue around why people seemed to trust information from an unknown individual, but not experts or the individual involved in the decision-making that might be under discussion.

## **8. FORWARD AGENDA**

The Committee noted the forward agenda.

## **9. AOB**

### **Communications Update**

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<sup>5</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5901/ldselect/ldcond/66/6602.htm>

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

**Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 20 February 2025 at 10.00, to be followed by the local government seminar.

CSPL Secretariat  
January 2025