**CSPL (16) 66**

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE**

**TWO HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SEVENTH MEETING**

**THURSDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 10:00AM**

**ROOM G11, 1 HORSE GUARDS ROAD,** **LONDON, SW1A 2HQ**

**MINUTES**

Present: Lord Bew, Chair

Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP

Sheila Drew Smith OBE

Jane Ramsey

Monisha Shah

Richard Thomas CBE

Secretariat: Lesley Bainsfair, Secretary

Renny Mendoza, Senior Policy Advisor

Maggie O’Boyle, Press Officer

Apologies: Dame Angela Watkinson DBE MP

Paul Croney, Governance and Communications Co-ordinator

1. **Membership**

The Chair welcomed Jane Ramsey to her first Committee Meeting. Jane had been appointed to the Committee for a five year term on 1 September.

The Committee noted that Dame Angela Watkinson was on leave of absence from all appointments until January 2017. The Chair reported that Lord Alderdice’s successor on the Committee had not yet been confirmed.

The Committee paid tribute to Patricia Moberly who had sadly passed away on 3 September 2016. Patricia had been a key member of the Committee (April 2012 - 1 September 2016), charming, dignified, intelligent, and with particular expertise in education and health. Patricia had contributed hugely to the Committee’s work, particularly on the *Tone from the Top* Report, and most recently on *Striking the Balance,* even when she was not in full health. The Committee asked that their sincere condolences be passed to Patricia’s family.

**2. Registers**

The Committee reviewed the register of interests, and the registers of external meetings, gifts and hospitality. It was noted that the register of interests would be updated to note that Sheila Drew Smith had been asked to sit on the appointment panel for the new Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

Jane Ramsey declared that she was married to a senior civil servant in the Department for Education.

The Committee noted that the Chair had returned a gift, valued at over £140, which had been sent by Limkokwing (Malaysia) University.

**3. Minutes and matters arising**

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2016 subject to noting the correction that Sheila Drew Smith was no longer a member of the Bar Standards Board *Appointments Panel*.

*Annual Report and Party Funding Paper*

The Committee noted that the Annual Report and Dr Michael Pinto Duschinsky’s paper on party funding had been successfully published online on 4 August and had received good media coverage.

The Committee received the report on party funding questions that had been included in this year’s British Electoral Study. It was agreed that the report should be published and a decision on the publication date would be taken in due course.

The Committee discussed, in light of recent individual cases reaching the press, whether at some point it would be worth reviewing the public’s view of standards generally, whether people’s definition or toleration of ethics have moved in anyway since the Nolan Principles were first published. This might be a health check to see if the Principles were in line with the public’s own expectations.

The Secretariat would discuss with the Research Advisory Board.

*Commissioner for Public Appointments*

The Committee noted that the new public appointments Governance Code, was due to be published shortly.

**4. Ethics for regulators**

The Chair thanked Richard Thomas for his excellent work on leading on the report and presenting to stakeholders at the preview event on Tuesday 13 September.

The Committee discussed Tuesday’s event. It had been a full house and a high quality and lively debate had followed the presentations by the panel. It had not been possible to publish the report on Tuesday due to delays beyond the Secretariat’s control in the laying of the report in parliament. But this had not, in the end, detracted too much from Tuesday’s event, and it was noted that the report had been published on the morning of Thursday 15 September and distributed widely.

It was agreed it was important to follow up the report and Richard Thomas and Sheila Drew Smith offered to work with the Secretariat on this.

**5. Referendum Seminar**

The Committee discussed the forthcoming seminar to be held jointly with the Constitution Unit, UCL. The Secretariat would discuss a revised agenda with the Constitution Unit and outline the Committee’s desired aims and outcome.

**6**. **PACAC Inquiry into ACOBA**

The Committee discussed the current PACAC inquiry into the role of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACOBA) and the independent adviser on ministers’ interests. The deadline for submissions to PACAC was 26 September.

**7. French High Authority for Transparency**

The Committee agreed that the Chair should accept the invitation to join the French High Authority for Transparency’s network for institutions in charge of transparency, ethics and integrity of elected and non-elected public officials. And to attend the launch of the initiative in Paris, 7-9 December. The Secretariat would monitor the network, in particular resources and costs.

**8. Review into Electoral Fraud**

The Committee noted the Electoral Commission’s response to Sir Eric Pickles’ review into Electoral Fraud which was felt to be a robust explanation of the Electoral Commission’s regulatory status. No action was needed on the part of the Committee at present.

**9. Standards Check**

The Committee noted the Standards Check. The Secretariat would check whether the PCC mentioned in an article about standards had signed the PCC checklist promulgated earlier in the year.

**10. Forward Agenda**

The Committee noted the forward agenda.

**11. AOB**

The Committee noted the Communications Update.

The Committee noted that the Chair had spoken in the second reading of Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe’s Lobbying (Transparency) Bill (House of Lords) on 9 September.

The Committee agreed to invite Professor Richard Rose to present his research on corruption to a future meeting of the Committee.

It was agreed to move the meeting planned for 16 March 2017 to 23 March 2017, to avoid a clash with an invitation to the Chair to speak at an overseas event.

**Date of next meeting**: Thursday 20 October 2016.

**12. Presentation**

The Committee received an insightful presentation from Councillor Ferris Cowper of East Hampshire District Council and Tom Horwood, Executive Director of the Council, on local government standards and enforcement issues/sanctions.

The Committee were grateful for such an interesting presentation which would help inform future work on local government standards. The Secretariat would follow up with Councillor Cowper and Mr Horwood later in the year.

**CSPL Secretariat**

**September 2016**