**CSPL (18) 13**

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE**

**TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SECOND MEETING**

**HELD AT 10.00 ON THURSDAY 18 JANUARY 2018 IN**

**70 WHITEHALL,** **LONDON, SW1A 2AS**

**MINUTES**

Present: Lord Bew, Chair

Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP

Sheila Drew Smith OBE

Simon Hart MP

Jane Ramsey

Monisha Shah

Rt Hon Lord Stunell OBE

Professor Mark Philp, Chair, Research Advisory Board

Lesley Bainsfair, Secretary

Ally Foat, Senior Policy Advisor

Dee Goddard, Senior Policy Advisor

Stuart Ramsay, Senior Policy Advisor

Maggie O’Boyle, Press Officer

Apologies: Dr Jane Martin CBE

**1. REGISTERS**

There were no changes to the register of interests.

**2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2017 were agreed.

**Matters arising:**

**Westminster Harassment**

The Committee noted the Leader of the House’s statement on the independent complaints and grievance policy, and the ensuing debate which took place in the House of Commons on Thursday 21 December 2017. The Committee agreed it would maintain an active watching brief and revert to a substantive discussion of this issue at the February meeting.

**3. FOLLOW UP TO ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE PROVIDERS**

The Committee noted the latest draft report on ethical standards for public service providers. Since the Committee had last considered the report, Carillion, one of the government’s biggest contractors and providers of public services, had gone into liquidation.

It was agreed that the Committee would publish a blog and article offering immediate comment on the implications of the company’s collapse.

Drafting changes to the report were suggested and noted, including changes needed in light of this recent development. The draft would also clearly highlight the evidence that the Committee has received in the course of the review, of the tension for private companies when considering the descriptor to the Selflessness principle when providing public services in line with in the Nolan Principles. It was important that any particular wording could not be used by public service providers as an excuse for not following the Principles.

The revised draft would be considered at the February meeting.

**4. INTIMIDATION IN PUBLIC LIFE: LESSONS LEARNT AND OPTIONS FOR FOLLOW UP**

The Committee noted the lessons learnt paper, whilst observing that some of the lessons for this particular review which was unexpected and driven by a short, hard deadline, may not be applicable to other reviews. It was noted however, that for all reviews, it was important to be realistic about time and arrange additional Committee meetings early on when this was thought to be required; to accept that meetings may need to take place later on in the process; and to ensure shared knowledge/handover of corporate memory within the Secretariat.

The options proposed for following up the Committee’s recommendations were noted and a preferred option was agreed. It was noted that, in following up the report, it had been particularly helpful to have had set timelines against the recommendations.

Simon Hart MP reported that he had applied for a backbench business debate on the subject.

**5. REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

The Committee discussed and raised some queries with regard to the draft terms of reference (TOR) and consultation questions for the forthcoming local government review. The Secretariat would circulate the revised TOR and consultation questions to Committee members with a view still to publishing a public consultation on the review by early February 2018.

**6. MPs’ OUTSIDE INTERESTS**

The Committee considered the paper setting out the proposed handling of the review of MPs’ outside interests.

The Committee considered and debated fully how best to handle the involvement of the political members in the review. It was essential to protect the political members from real and/or perceived conflicts of interest, and to protect the integrity of the Committee whilst making the most of the political members’ knowledge of the role of MP and Westminster working practices.

On the one hand, the precedent of political members recusing themselves from any reviews concerning pecuniary interests was a well-understood approach. On the other, it would be wise and sensible for the Committee to utilise the political members’ experience and their observations so as to maximise the Committee’s knowledge of the issue, provided this could be done in a way that satisfied the Committee’s integrity.

Following a full debate of a number of options in which the Committee carefully considered all sides of the argument, the consensus was that the review should proceed under the following conditions:

*In line with our Code of Practice, to avoid any actual or perceived conflict of interest, the three political members of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (nominated by the Conservative, Liberal Democrat and Labour parties), will not take part in drawing conclusions or formulating the recommendations of the Committee in relation to its ongoing review on the subject of MPs’ outside interests. The conclusions and recommendations will be formed by the independent members of the Committee and its independent Chair.*

*The political members will, however:*

* *receive copies of all evidence submitted to the committee. The evidence will be publicly available to anyone through the Committee’s website;*
* *be available to act as a source of information to the Committee on relevant Parliamentary issues;*
* *help facilitate any discussions with their political parties which may be appropriate as part of the inquiry.*

**7. STANDARDS CHECK**

The Committee noted the standards check.

It was agreed to invite the Commissioner for Public Appointments to the February Committee meeting to discuss public appointments in general and ‘due diligence’ with regard to pre-appointment checks in particular.

**8. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME AND FORWARD LOOK OF EVENTS**

The Committee noted the forward agenda and forward look of key events.

**9. AOB**

The Committee noted the Communications Update.

**Review of the Committee**

The Chair reported that the Committee would, during the course of this year, be subject to a ‘light touch’ review to be carried out by the Cabinet Office.

It was also noted that the Secretariat was recruiting for a replacement for Khadija Haji-Aden. The Committee expressed their thanks for Kay’s work, in particular for the excellent administrative support provided in the run-up to the launch of the intimidation report.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

**Thursday 8 February 2018 to be held in Conference Room E, 70 Whitehall. The Commissioner for Public Appointments would be invited to attend.**

**CSPL Secretariat**

**January 2017**