**CSPL (18) 54**

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE**

**TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY-SIXTH MEETING**

**HELD AT 10.00 ON THURSDAY 17 MAY 2018**

**IN** **70 WHITEHALL, LONDON**

**MINUTES**

Present: Lord Bew, Chair

Rt Hon Dame Margaret Beckett DBE MP

Simon Hart MP

Dame Shirley Pearce DBE

Jane Ramsey

Monisha Shah (for part of meeting)

Rt Hon Lord Stunell OBE

Lesley Bainsfair, Secretary

Ally Foat, Senior Policy Advisor

Dee Goddard, Senior Policy Advisor

Stuart Ramsay, Senior Policy Advisor

Amy Austin, Office Manager

Maggie O’Boyle, Press Officer

Apologies: Dr Jane Martin CBE

**1. REGISTERS**

It was noted that Monisha Shah had registered her interest as a Trustee of the Donmar Warehouse.

**2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2018 were agreed.

**Matters arising:**

**Westminster Harassment**

Maintaining its active watching brief on the issue, the Committee noted three further developments in the issue of Westminster harassment: the appointment of Dame Laura Cox DBE on 23 April to head the Independent Inquiry of the Commons Commission into the bullying of House of Commons staff; the consultation on a draft behaviour code by the Independent Complaints and Grievance Policy Steering Group; and news reports of 16 May that the Commons Standards Committee had declined to authorise an investigation by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards into a complaint against the behaviour of the Speaker.

The Committee remained deeply concerned about the stories emerging from Parliament and agreed it was imperative to continue to keep a close eye on the situation. In particular, the Committee was concerned how the governance issues around the different work taking place within Parliament would be resolved.

It was agreed that the Committee would submit evidence to the consultation on the draft Behaviour Code.

Regarding the decision of the Committee on Standards and the Chair of that Committee’s [statement](https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/standards/news-parliament-2017/speaker-statement-17-19/) regarding the voting rights of lay members, the Committee noted that the most recent statement by the Committee on Standards of Public LIfe on voting of lay members was that of September 2014: *We believe that the lay members should be included in both an Adjudication Sub-Committee and at the review stage conducted by the Committee on Standards itself. We would prefer the lay members to have a vote at both stages, but if this raises insuperable Privilege or similar issues, we would expect to see at the least the publication of any dissenting opinion.*

**Launch of the Continuing Importance of Ethical Standards for Public Service Providers**

The Committee noted the successful online launch of this follow up report on 10 May 2018 and the Minister’s immediate welcome response which would be published on the Committee’s website. It was agreed it was important to monitor the Government’s substantive response on this.

It was noted that the report had received good press coverage from specialist journals and it was intended the report would feature in an FT article in due course.

It was agreed to set up a meeting with the National Audit Office to discuss the report’s recommendations in relation to the inclusion of ethical standards when considering value for money.

**3. MPs’ OUTSIDE INTERESTS**

The Committee fully discussed the final draft of the report on MPs’ outside interests and a number of edits and amendments were noted. In line with our Code of Practice, political members did not take part in drawing conclusions or formulating the recommendations made in this report.

The launch and communications plan was discussed and it was agreed to launch the report online with a series of planned interviews and speeches.

The final formatted version of the report would be presented to the June Committee meeting. The Chair thanked Jane Ramsey for all her work in leading the project.

**4. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS REVIEW**

The Committee noted the update on progress with the local government ethical standards review. 173 submissions to the public consultation had been received to date. A paper setting out themes would be presented to the June Committee meeting.

**5. GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)**

The Committee noted the paper confirming the requirements of the GDPR which come into force on 25 May 2018, and the action required by the Committee and Secretariat.

**6. STANDARDS CHECK**

The Committee noted the standards check for April/May 2018.

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

The Committee noted the forward agenda and forward look of key events. It was agreed the the issue of Westminster harassment should stay on the forward agenda.

**8. AOB**

**Communications Update**

The Committee noted the communications update for April 2018

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

**Thursday 21 June 2018 to be held in Conference Room E, 70 Whitehall.**

**CSPL Secretariat**

**May 2018**