

Chairman:
Sir Alistair Graham

*35 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BQ*

PRESS NOTICE

PN 190

10 July 2006

CORRECTION TO THE RUNNING ORDER OF PN188

COMMITTEE'S PUBLIC HEARINGS IN LONDON ON TUESDAY 11th AND THURSDAY 13th JULY: ELEVENTH INQUIRY INTO THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

1. There is a correction to the running order of witnesses for the Committee's Public Hearing on **Tuesday 11 July from 10.30am to 1.00pm and 2.00pm to 4.15pm in the Commonwealth Club, 25 Northumberland Avenue, London, WC2N 5AP (PN188).**

The correct running order is:

10.30	Michael Crick
11.30	Dr Alan Whitehead MP
14.00	Andrew Tyrie MP
15.15	Rt Hon Kenneth Clarke QC MP

2. **On Thursday 13 July from 9.15am to 12.30pm and 2.00pm to approximately 4.00pm in the Commonwealth Club, 25 Northumberland Avenue, London, WC2N 5AP, there will be a further public hearing**

Witnesses include **Phil Woolas MP**, Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government, **Rt Hon John Spellar MP**, **John Turner** from the Association of Electoral Administrators and **Ken Ritchie** from the Electoral Reform Society.

The following witnesses are to give evidence:

9.15	Rt Hon John Spellar MP
10.00	Phil Woolas MP, Minister of State, Department for Communities and Local Government
10.45	Dr David Butler, CBE, FBA, Emeritus Fellow, Nuffield College Oxford and Professor Iain McLean
11.45	John Turner, Chairman, Association of Electoral Administrators
14.00	David Monks, Chair Electoral Matters Panel, SOLACE
15.15	Ken Ritchie, Chief Executive, Electoral Reform Society

The Committee's Inquiry is looking at key themes critical to public trust in our democratic system through a review of the mandate, governance and accountability of the Electoral Commission. Key issues already raised in evidence to the Committee (<http://www.public-standards.gov.uk/11thinquiry/evidence.asp>) include:

- *the integrity and application of the current political party funding arrangements, and implications of any changes;*
- *electoral propriety including voter registration, electoral administration and electoral fraud; and*
- *the contribution these issues make to voter engagement with the political process.*

The Committee has held public hearings in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and will hold three more in London throughout July and early September. The Committee will then consider all the evidence and intends to publish conclusions and recommendations towards the end of this year. Witnesses have been invited to help the Committee examine the current responsibilities of The Electoral Commission, set up five years ago following the Fifth Report of the Committee in 1998. The Commission is an independent body set up by Parliament to promote integrity, effectiveness and participation in the democratic process. The Inquiry takes place against a background of public concerns about arrangements for postal voting following some high-profile legal cases, safeguards for voter registration, and allegedly circumventory loans to political parties.

OPERATIONAL NOTE: NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Media Enquiries

For all media enquiries and interview requests on any matters relating to the Committee and its chairman, Sir Alistair Graham, media should contact:

Mark Pearson, Press Officer on 07841-021468 (including out of hours)

Or, if unavailable:

Dr Richard Jarvis, Secretary to the Committee on 020 7276-2597 or 07818-075-284 (mobile).

Media wishing to attend/film any public hearings are requested to contact Mark Pearson in advance on the number above. There will be no advance accreditation of media, but journalists will need to produce formal ID, preferably a photographic pass, when they arrive. Journalists should sign in on arrival, as this will ensure that they receive any follow-up material. Stills photography will not be permitted during the course of the hearings. Broadcasters may pick up a sound feed of the hearings by prior arrangement with the venues (please contact Jan.ashton@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk at the Committee secretariat, 020 7276 2594, for more information).

Transcripts

The Committee has appointed WordWave, 190 Fleet Street, London EC4A 2AG (tel: 0207 421 9269, fax: 0207 404 1424; email: drew.macaulay@Merrillcorp.com) to produce official transcripts of the proceedings. These will be available within five working days of each day's hearing, and on the Committee's website. Corrected transcripts will be published as a second volume to the report.

Witnesses

No approach should be made to witnesses in the hearing room.

Witnesses have been told that they are not giving evidence to a court or tribunal, so their statements will not be privileged from action for defamation. Witnesses should take care that any remarks made by them which are critical of another person or organisation or which place such persons or organisations in an unfavourable light are statements: which are based on facts which can be

substantiated; in which they have an honest belief; and made solely for the purpose of assisting the Committee in its work.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. The Committee published an Issues and Questions paper, inviting written evidence, on 16 February 2006. The Issues and Questions Paper and written evidence received can be found on the Committee's website www.public-standards.gov.uk.
2. The Electoral Commission was established as an independent statutory authority on 30 November 2000. This followed the recommendations of the Committee on Standards in Public Life's Fifth Report, The Funding of Political Parties in the United Kingdom and the subsequent commencement of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.
3. The Committee's standing terms of reference are: "To examine current concerns about standards of conduct of all holders of public office, including arrangements relating to financial and commercial activities, and make recommendations as to any changes in present arrangements which might be required to ensure the highest standards of propriety in public life".
4. On 12 November 1997 additional terms of reference for the study on the funding of political parties were announced by the Prime Minister as: "To review issues in relation to the funding of political parties, and to make recommendations as to arrangements". The Committee's 11th Inquiry is located within these two combined terms of reference. The Committee's terms of reference specifically preclude it from investigating individual cases or specific allegations of misconduct. Nor has the Committee any powers to require others to do so. But the Committee may take account of information on material cases in formulating its recommendations.
5. The full membership of the Committee is: Sir Alistair Graham (Chairman), Lloyd Clarke QPM, Rita Donaghy CBE, Dame Professor Hazel Genn DBE, Dame Patricia Hodgson DBE, Baroness Maddock, The Rt Hon Baroness Shephard DL, Dr Elizabeth Vallance, Dr Brian Woods-Scawen DL.

Issued by:

The Committee on Standards in Public Life
35 Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BQ
Internet site: www.public-standards.gov.uk
e-mail: standards.evidence@gtnet.gov.uk

Further information from:

Mark Pearson, Press Officer on 07841-021-468
(including out of hours)

Or if unavailable
Richard Jarvis
Secretary to the Committee
Tel: 020 7276 2597
Fax: 020 7276 2585 Mobile: 07818 075284