

Chairman:
Sir Alistair Graham

*35 Great Smith Street
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PRESS NOTICE

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6 June 2006

COMMITTEE BEGINS PUBLIC HEARINGS FOR ITS ELEVENTH INQUIRY INTO THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION

The first public hearing for the Committee's 11th Inquiry: Review of The Electoral Commission will take place on:

Tuesday 13 June at 1 Birdcage Walk, Westminster, London SW1H 9JJ, 9.45am-3.30pm

The 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 written 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.*

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.

The following witnesses are to give evidence on the first day of public hearings:

10.00- 11.00

11.00- 12.30

14.00- 15.00

**Dr Michael Pinto-Duschinsky
Sam Younger, Chairman and Peter Wardle,
Chief Executive of The Electoral Commission
Peter Viggers MP and Dr Christopher Ward,
Secretary, from the Speaker's Committee**

Further hearings, which are all open to the public, will take place on:

Thursday 15 June

The Commonwealth Club, 25 Northumberland Avenue,
London WC2N 5AP

Wednesday 21 June	The Radisson SAS Hotel, The Gasworks, 3 Cromac Place, Omeau Road, Belfast, BT7 2JB
Tuesday 27 June	National Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1JF
Thursday 6 July	Jury's Hotel, Mary Ann Street, Cardiff, Cardiff, UK, CF10 2JH
Tuesday 11 July	The Commonwealth Club, 25 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5AP
Thursday 13 July	The Commonwealth Club, 25 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5AP
Tuesday 18 July	1 Birdcage Walk, Westminster, London SW1H 9JJ
Thursday 7 September	The Commonwealth Club, 25 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5AP
Thursday 14 September	The Commonwealth Club, 25 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5AP

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, Professor Hazel Genn CBE, Dame Patricia Hodgson DBE, Baroness Maddock, The Rt Hon Baroness Shephard DL, Dr Elizabeth Vallance, Dr Brian Woods-Scawen DL.

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