



**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE
172nd MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 13TH MAY 2010 AT 35 GREAT
SMITH STREET, WESTMINSTER, LONDON SW1P 3BQ**

Present: Sir Christopher Kelly KCB
Lloyd Clarke QPM
Rt Hon Alun Michael JP MP
Dame Denise Platt DBE
David Prince CBE
Dr Elizabeth Vallance JP
Sir Derek Morris MA Dphil
Dr Brian Woods-Scawen DL CBE

Apologies: Oliver Heald MP

Secretariat: Ruth Alaile, Secretary
Peter Hawthorne, Assistant Secretary
Martin Adams, Senior Policy Adviser
Rachel Finlay, Policy Adviser
Matthew Dowding, Secretariat Co-ordinator

The agenda for the Committee meeting was agreed.

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2010 were agreed.

Register and declaration of interests

1. The latest register was reviewed and amended by the Committee.

General and Local Elections May 2010

2. The Committee reviewed a paper on the 6 May general and local elections. It was noted that the general view among commentators was that the Parliamentary expenses scandal had not had a significant impact on the election result except that a number of the MPs affected had stood down. In the most closely fought election for a while, people appeared to have felt that it was important to stick to their party loyalties.
3. There had been a number of allegations of electoral fraud, but the true extent will not be known until police investigations are complete and the Electoral Commission reports later on in the year. The proposal by the new Government to speed up implementation of individual voter registration was welcomed.
4. The Committee considered the difficulties experienced on election night which had raised additional questions about the integrity of the electoral system and had no doubt further damaged public confidence. It was noted that the Electoral Commission had launched an inquiry which was due to report shortly. But it seemed clear from events that the concerns about the oversight of electoral administration which the Committee highlighted in its 11th report in 2007 had not been addressed.
5. Unlike in Northern Ireland where there is a Chief Electoral Officer with responsibility for administering elections, responsibility for electoral administration in Great Britain remains fragmented - with roles and responsibilities divided between the Electoral Commission, Ministry of Justice and Local Returning Officers. Despite the changes made since the Committee published its 11th report, there remains an underlying lack of accountability and transparency. It was agreed that the Committee should write to the Secretary of State for Justice to reiterate

its calls for more effective regulation – with clear standards which are robustly enforced by regional electoral officers.

Local and London government

6. A draft of the paper highlighting the emerging issues from the Committee's review of local and London government decision-making structures was reviewed. The Committee asked for a number of changes.

Party funding

7. The Committee noted the progress made on organising the hearing on 8th July. While pleased that the new Government had indicated its intention to pursue an agreement on limiting donations, it remained sceptical that a solution reached through negotiation between the three main parties alone would command public confidence. It agreed that the Chair should now follow-up his previous letter to the political parties inviting them to nominate representatives to give evidence at the July hearing.

Public perception research

8. The proposals for the Committee's 2010 public perception survey were considered and approved. It was agreed that quantitative poll should take place at the end of the year with a parallel internet survey undertaken at the same time to enable an evaluation of the viability of moving towards the latter method on a permanent basis.
9. The proposal to continue to fund a CASE studentship was approved.

Annual report 2009/10

10. The Committee approved the outline of its annual report 2009/10. A draft of the report will be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee for its consideration.

Open meeting 2010

11. The Committee agreed to hold their open meeting on the 9th September 2010 and a list of potential speakers were agreed.

Standards for England review of the standards framework

12. The Committee noted the report.

Public Concern at Work's review of legal protection for whistleblowers

13. The Committee noted the report.

Secretary's report

14. The report was noted.

Current issues and concerns

15. The report was noted.

Secretariat

16. It was noted that Ruth Alaile would be leaving the post of Secretary. Her replacement, Georgia Hutchinson, will be taking up the post at the beginning of June.

The Secretariat
May 2010