

Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme

The Freedom of Information Act encourages public authorities to make as much information as possible available to the public proactively. Under the Act, the Committee on Standards in Public Life is required to adopt a publication scheme which sets out the information that is routinely made available. We are also required to ensure that information is published in accordance with the scheme.

The Information Commissioner's model publication scheme commits a public authority to making the following classes of information available to the public:

- [Who we are](#)
- [Funding and administration](#)
- **Our work**
- **How we make decisions**
- **Our policies and procedures**
- **Lists and registers**

This publication scheme explains how you can gain access to that information:

From our website: www.public-standards.org.uk
By email: public@standards.x.gsi.gov.uk
By post: Committee on Standards in Public Life
35 Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BQ

Charging

All information is available free of charge online (please see [Table 1: How to access information on the website](#)) or in hard copy if requested.

Requests for other information under the Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 came into force on 1 January 2005. It establishes a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities, sets out exemptions and places obligations to public authorities (including this Committee). It entitles the public to make a written request for information held by the Committee, unless it falls under one of the exemption categories.

Within 20 days (calculated from the day after receipt) the Committee must:

- a) Inform in writing whether it holds the information specified in the request;
- b) Send the information if it is held.

The FOIA provides for an appeal process whereby the public may apply to the Information Commissioner for a decision on whether the Committee dealt with a request properly. However, it is expected that any internal complaints procedures must first be exhausted.

Requests for information not supplied in this Publication Scheme or on our website must be directed to the Committee's FOI Officer:

By email: public@standards.x.gsi.gov.uk
By post: 35 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BQ
By phone: 0207 276 2595

Who we are

1.1 The Committee's responsibilities

The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established in October 1994 under the chairmanship of the Rt Hon the Lord Nolan by the Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Sir John Major with the following terms of reference:

“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”.

The term “public life” includes: ministers, civil servants and advisers; Members of Parliament and UK Members of the European Parliament; members and senior officers of all NDPBs and of NHS bodies; non-ministerial office holders; members and other senior officers of other bodies discharging publicly-funded functions; and elected members and senior officers of local authorities.

On 12 November 1997 the Prime Minister announced additional terms of reference:

“To review issues in relation to the funding of political parties and to make recommendations as to any changes in present arrangements.”

The current Chairman is Sir Christopher Kelly KCB. Other members of the Committee are The Lord Alderdice, the Rt Hon Margaret Beckett MP, Lloyd Clarke QPM, Oliver Heald MP, Sir Derek Morris MA DPhil, Dame Denise Platt DBE, David Prince CBE, Dr Elizabeth Vallance JP and Dr Brian Woods-Scawen DL CBE. The Committee is supported by a small secretariat of four civil servants.

1.2 Status

The Committee is an independent advisory non-departmental public body (NDPB). Its members are appointed by the Prime Minister for renewable periods of up to three years. Seven members, including the Chairman, are appointed by the Prime Minister through open competition and under the rules of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA). Three members are appointed by nomination from each of the three main political parties.

The Committee is not founded in statute and has no legal powers, either to compel witnesses to provide evidence or to enforce its recommendations. In particular it has no powers to investigate individual allegations of misconduct.

1.3 Method of Working

To date the Committee has produced twelve major studies. Its method of working is as follows:

- Publish a consultation paper setting out the issues and questions it believes are of specific importance;
- Invite written submissions based on the issues and questions paper;
- Hold informal meetings with practitioners and experts;
- Hold formal hearings open to the public and media at which the issues are explored in detail;
- Publish a report of conclusions and recommendations together with a complete record of written and oral evidence.

1.4 Policy on Openness

In its first report the Committee defined and endorsed the Seven Principles of Public Life, which have since been adopted widely. Several of these principles are directly relevant to Freedom of Information policy (Leadership, Openness and Accountability). The Committee takes its public responsibilities extremely seriously and throughout its existence has sought to implement the Principles in fact and in spirit. The Committee has always been as open as possible with its own information. It welcomes the move towards a wider culture of openness which the provision of Publication Schemes across all public bodies will encourage.

The Secretary of the Committee has responsibility for the operation and maintenance of our publication under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

1.5 Funding and administration

The Committee is an independent advisory body which presents its recommendations direct to the Prime Minister. It receives its budget through the Cabinet Office, but day-to-day responsibility for financial controls and budgetary mechanisms are delegated to the Secretary of the Committee, who are permanent civil servants.

For this reason, some of the material which other public authorities are likely to include in their Publication Schemes on management and staffing issues may be found in the main Cabinet Office Publication Scheme at: <http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/>

Table 1: How to access information on the website

Category of Information	How to access information on the website
Who we are	<p>Information about the Committee on Standards in Public Life is available from the 'About us' section of our website at www.public-standards.org.uk/about.html.</p> <p>For details of how to contact the Committee please visit</p>

Category of Information	How to access information on the website
	<p>the 'Contact us' section of the website at www.public-standards.org.uk/contactus.html.</p> <p>Information on the Committee's constitutional status is available at www.public-standards.org.uk/About/Terms_of_Reference.html.</p> <p>The Committee does not provide services direct to the public. However information about our role and work is available at: www.public-standards.org.uk/ourwork.html.</p>
Funding and administration	<p>Information about the Committee's financial arrangements is available at: http://www.public-standards.org.uk/About/Financial_Information.html.</p> <p>Information about the Committee's expenditure is available from its annual reports, which are available at: www.public-standards.org.uk/OurWork/Annual_Reports.html.</p>
Our work	<p>The Committee publishes an overview of its activities in its annual reports available at: www.public-standards.org.uk/OurWork/Annual_Reports.html.</p> <p>Summaries of Committee meetings, including discussion of progress on priorities, are also available at www.public-standards.org.uk/OurWork/Meeting_Summaries.html.</p> <p>Press notices which are available at: www.public-standards.org.uk/PressCentre/Press_Notices.html.</p> <p>Inquiries – evidence, transcripts and reports are available at: www.public-standards.org.uk/OurWork/Inquiry_Reports.html.</p>
How we make decisions	<p>Information on how the Committee makes its decisions is available from:</p> <p>The Code of Practice of the Committee on Standards in Public Life available at: www.public-standards.org.uk/About/Code_of_Practice.html.</p> <p>'About us' section of our website at: www.public-standards.org.uk/About/What_We_Do.html.</p> <p>Minutes of Committee meetings: www.public-standards.org.uk/OurWork/Meeting_Summaries.html.</p>
Our policies and procedures	<p>Details of the Committee's written protocols are available from the following sections of the website.</p> <p>Finance: www.public-</p>

Category of Information	How to access information on the website
	standards.org.uk/About/Financial_Information.html . Standards of Conduct: www.public-standards.org.uk/About/Code_of_Practice.html . Method of working: www.public-standards.org.uk/About/Method_of_Working.html .
Lists and registers	The Committee's Register of Members' Interests is available at: http://www.public-standards.org.uk/About/Register_of_Interests.html .

Complaints and Feedback

If you have any comments about the Committee's Publication Scheme, or if you feel that you have not been supplied with information in accordance with the FOIA, you may write to the address given above. We would especially welcome suggestions for additional classes of information that could be included.

If you are still dissatisfied, the complaints procedure entitles you to ask the Chairman of the Committee to review the matter. The Committee aims to deal with initial complaints within 20 working days, and to complete investigations within 28 working days.

If you remain dissatisfied, you can complain direct to the Information Commissioner if you feel we have not complied with our obligations. Further details are available at www.ico.gov.uk. If you prefer, you may contact the Information Commissioner directly:

By post: Information Commissioner's Office
 Wycliffe House
 Water Lane
 Wilmslow
 Cheshire SK9 5AF

By telephone: 08456 30 60 60 or 01625 54 57 45

Review of the Publication Scheme

The Committee will therefore review the Publication Scheme in September 2012 and annually thereafter.