

# COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE: PUBLICATION SCHEME

## 1 About Us

### 1.1 The Committee's responsibilities

The Committee on Standards in Public Life was established, under the chairmanship of the Rt Hon The Lord Nolan, by the then Prime Minister, the Rt Hon John Major, in October 1994, 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 Ministers 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 Lloyd Clarke QPM, Oliver Heald MP, Rt Hon Alun Michael JP MP, Sir Derek James Morris MA Dphil, Dame Denise Platt DBE, David Prince CBE, Dr Elizabeth Vallance JP, Dr Brian Woods-Scawen DL CBE. The Committee is supported by a small secretariat of seven 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 of its 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. Three of the members are appointed by nomination from each of the three main political parties. It 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

Since its creation the Committee has produced twelfth major studies. It established its method of working early on:

- Publishing a consultation paper setting out the issues and questions it believes are of specific importance;
- Inviting written submissions based on the issues and questions paper;
- Informal meetings with practitioners and experts;
- Formal hearings, open to the public and media, at which the issues are explored in detail;
- Publication of a report containing conclusions and recommendations, together with a complete record of written and oral evidence.

#### **1.4 Policy on Openness**

As an integral part of its first report the Committee defined and endorsed the Seven Principles of Public Life, which have since been adopted widely – either in response to specific recommendations from this Committee or as a matter of best practice. Several of these principles, which have of course been incorporated into the Committee's own Code of Practice, 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 its Principles both 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. The Secretary and the rest of the team which make up the Secretariat (currently 7 staff) are permanent civil servants employed by the Cabinet Office.

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/>

## **2 Freedom of Information Act**

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) came fully 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 to the right and places a number of obligations on public authorities. The FOIA applies to a large number of public authorities, including the Committee on Standards in Public Life. It entitles you to make a written request for information held by the Committee, and, unless the information falls under one of the specified exemptions in the FOIA, to:

1. be informed in writing by the Committee whether it holds the information specified in the request, and
2. have the information sent to you if the Committee does hold that information.

The FOIA obliges the Committee to provide the information requested within 20 working days, calculated from the day after receipt of the request, in most circumstances. The FOIA also provides an appeal process whereby you may apply to the Information Commissioner for a decision as whether the Committee dealt with your request properly and in accordance with the Act. However, the Information Commissioner will expect applicants to have first exhausted any internal complaint process. A detail of the Committee's Complaint Procedure is set out below.

The Committee is allowed to make charge for processing requests under the FOIA. The fee structure is prescribed by statutory instrument.

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Copies of the FOIA are available from the Stationary Office (TSO). It is also available on the HMSO website at: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk>.

**Most of the information held by the Committee is readily available to members of the public and others, and does not require a request under the FOIA to access it. Besides contacting the Committee in writing, telephone or email, the public can access information via the Committee's website at [www.public-standards.org.uk](http://www.public-standards.org.uk) and can request copies of publications promoted on the website.**

### **3 What is a Publication Scheme?**

#### **3.1 Definition**

Under Section 19 of the FOIA, every public authority is required to adopt and maintain a Publication Scheme specifying:

1. Classes of information which has published or intends to publish;
2. The manner in which the information is or is intended to be published, and
3. Whether the material is or is intended to be made available to the public free of charge.

The purpose of the publication scheme is to ensure that a large amount of information is readily available to the public and to inform the public of the extent of information which is available. 'Readily available' means information which is available on the Committee's website, can be purchased from TSO or HMSO, can be obtained from a public library or will be supplied by the Committee immediately on request in writing, by telephone or by email from the Committee.

The scheme provides the public with a guide to the information the Committee publishes or intends to release as a matter of course, how and when it will do so, and whether this information will be free of charge or on payment.

On this context 'publication' does not refer solely to printed material. Publication has been interpreted as widely as possible to include the website, one off printed documents from a desktop PC, electronic documents, printed books, reports and CD-Roms.

#### **3.2 Implementing the legislation**

The Ministry of Justice has lead responsibility for the Act.

Responsibility for overseeing the operation of the Act rests with the Information Commissioner, an independent public official responsible directly to Parliament. More information on the Commissioner's role can be found on their website, [www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk).

### **4 Publication Scheme Formats**

As well being available on the website we can provide you with a copy of the scheme in printed form, Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat's Portable Document Format. Please contact the Secretariat with your specific requirements (see 'How to Contact us')

## 5 Copyright

The Committee is a Crown body and the information it produces is subject to Crown copyright, which is managed by the Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI). The material listed in this publication is covered by Crown copyright unless stated otherwise. Accessing documents under the FOIA does not give the person or organisation receiving it the automatic right to reuse the documents in any way that would infringe copyright. This would include making multiple copies or publishing and issuing copies to the public.

Under the fair dealing provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (Sections 29 and 30), you may reproduce brief extracts of the material for the purpose of research, private study, criticism, review and news reporting.

For details of the arrangements for reusing Crown copyright material, contact Her Majesty's Stationary Office (OPSI) or visit the OPSI website:

OPSI  
Kew  
Richmond  
Surrey  
TW9 4DU

Phone: 020 8876 3444

Email: [licensing@opsi.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:licensing@opsi.gsi.gov.uk)

Website: [www.opsi.gov.uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk)

For authorisation to reuse copyright material not owned by the crown. You should contact the copyright holder direct. If you have any questions about the copyright, contact OPSI in the first instance.

## 6 What does the Scheme Cover?

### Right to information

Individual right of access to information applies to all types of recorded information held by the Committee, regardless of the date of the information. The Act does, however, set out some exemptions to this right. Our aim is to make available all information which is not subject to one of these exemptions.

However in some cases you will find documents made available under our Publication Scheme will have gaps in the text. This is because the information within them falls within an exemption. Where this is the case the document will be clearly marked to show where information has been removed.

If you wish to challenge the claim to an exemption you can pursue the matter through our complaints procedure.

Guidance on the public's rights under the Act is available from the Ministry of Justice, their contact details are:

Ministry of Justice  
102 Petty France  
London

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Publication Scheme

SW1H 9AJ  
United Kingdom

Tel: Telephone: +44 (0)20 3334 3555

Email: [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)

## 7 How to Contact Us?

The Secretary to the Committee has overall responsibility for the publication scheme, and for co-ordinating requests for information under the FOIA.

The Secretary to the Committee is Ruth Alaile, she can be contacted in writing, by email or telephone to:

The Secretary to the Committee  
Committee on Standards in Public Life  
35 Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BQ  
020 7276 2597

[ruth.alaile@standards.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ruth.alaile@standards.x.gsi.gov.uk)  
[www.public-standards.org.uk](http://www.public-standards.org.uk)

**Requests for information under the FOIA should be made to the Secretary of the Committee. You should include details of how you would like the information sent to you.**

## 8 What are the charges?

Most of the information referred to in this Publication Scheme is available free of charge from the website. Some documents on the website are published in Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). To view or print PDF documents, you will need the Adobe Acrobat Reader software.

The publications are free unless otherwise stated. If you request a paper copy of a document which is available on the website, there will be no charge for a single paper copy. There may be a charge for multiple copies.

## 9 Classes of Information

Publication schemes are intended to encourage public organisations to be more proactive in making information they hold more readily available to the public and to contribute to a culture of greater openness. Not all of the information held by the Committee can or should be included in this scheme.

The publication scheme contains the following list of classes published by the Committee.

### About us

#### What we do

- *Information covering the governance of the Committee, including the Committee's Code of Practice, the Committee's method of working and the Committee's Terms of Reference.*

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**Financial Information**

- *Information covering the financial aspect of the Committee, including the Committee's Expenses Policy and the fees claimed by Committee Members from January 2008 till September 2009*

**Members**

- *Information regarding the structure of the Committee, including biographies of current members, the Register of Interests for current members and a list of previous members.*

**Our Work**

**Latest News**

- *Information regarding the work of the Committee, including statements made by the Committee and responses to other committees and consultations.*

**Inquiries**

- *Information tracking the progress of the Committee's full twelve inquiries from the first stages of consultation to publication of recommendations*

**Annual Reports**

- *Information on the Committee's Annual Reports including the full reports from the previous three years*

**Other Reports, Statements and Publications**

- *Information about other Committee work, reviews and publications including Committee contributions to public policy developments, the Quinquennial Review of the Committee and a Review of the First Seven Reports*

**Meeting Summaries**

- *Information on the summaries of Committee Meetings and a progress of the Committee's work including summaries of the Committee meetings since January 2008.*

**Public Attitude Surveys**

- *Information of the Committee's Public Attitude Surveys including all three Public Attitude Surveys that have been published.*

**Press Centre**

- *Information of the Committee's media activity including press notices since January 2007, press officer contact details and photographs of Committee members.*

**FAQ's/Links**

- *Information about stakeholders and other sources of information about the work of the Committee, and standards issues elsewhere in the public sector.*

**Contact Us**

- *Information on the Secretariat supporting the Committees work.*

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**10 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.

If after investigation of your complaint, you are still dissatisfied, the complaints procedure entitles you to ask the Chairman of the Committee to review the matter, if you remain dissatisfied, you may refer your complaint to the Information Commissioner.

The Committee aims to deal with initial complaints within 20 working days, and to complete investigations within 28 working days.

You can also complain direct to the Information Commissioner if you feel we have not complied with our obligations under that requirement, further details are available at <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

If you prefer, you may alternatively contact the Information Commissioner direct at:

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

Tel: 08456 30 60 60 or 01625 54 57 45

If you wish to comment or complain about our Publication Scheme we would be pleased to hear from you. We would especially welcome suggestions for additional classes of information that could be included.

**11 Review of the Publication Scheme**

The Committee will therefore review the Publication Scheme in January 2011, and annually thereafter.