



Conduct Committee

Minutes of the meeting on Monday 29 June at 4.30pm via MS Teams

Present:

B. Anelay of St Johns	Vanessa Davies
L. Brown of Eaton-under-Heywood	B. Donaghy
Cindy Butts	B. Hussein-Ece
Mark Castle	L. Mance (Chair)
Andrea Coomber	

With the Clerk of the Parliaments

1. Minutes of the meeting on Thursday 21 May 2020

The minutes of the meeting on Thursday 21 May were agreed.

2. Oral update on appeal timetable

The Chair provided an oral update to the Committee. The Committee discussed the deadline for the written appeal and the impact on the complainant.

It was confirmed that all Committee members who will be sitting on the appeal have also completed the Valuing Everyone training.

3. Oral update on meeting with Chris Bryant MP regarding investigation of ex MPs

The Chair provided an oral update to the Committee. He had met with Chris Bryant MP, Chair of the Standards Committee, to discuss ICGS complaints against ex-MPs in the House of Lords regarding conduct when they were in the Commons. Mr Bryant was in favour of a model involving the Commons carrying out the entire investigation and the Lords having a purely formal role in agreeing any sanction.

The Committee agreed to consider a proposed way forward at its next meeting but noted concern at the Lords only having a formal role.

4. Oral update on Steering Group for Change [standing item]

Baroness Donaghy, Chair of the Steering Group for Change, provided an oral update on the work of the Steering Group.

Baroness Donaghy will also be on an appointment panel for an external review of the management structure of the House of Lords administration.

The Committee agreed to discuss the use of language with the Commissioner.

5. Valuing Everyone Training update [standing item]



Progress has been made with 307 members having attended VE training with 30 more booked to attend, equalling 43 per cent of the House. It was also confirmed there is sufficient capacity in future sessions to achieve the 50 per cent target by the summer recess.

There was discussion on whether the attendance allowance should be applied to members' attendance at the Valuing Everyone training, to provide an incentive to attend and whether it would address equality issues regarding members' diverse means. However, it was noted the Commission had previously considered that the attendance allowance should not be associated with activities that are part of the responsibilities of being a member.

There was also discussion on whether a sanctions regime should be introduced for members who fail to attend the training.

The Committee requested an analysis of what characteristics were shared by members who had done the training versus those who had not yet booked to attend.

6. Data on Commissioner workload [standing item]

This data was noted by the Committee. It was also noted that the data needed to be benchmarked going forward to ensure resourcing levels are sufficient for case work and cases are not taking too long.

7. Consultation on draft Terms of Reference for the ICGS 18 month review

The ICGS Implementation Manager updated the Committee on the preparation for the 18-month review of the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS), and invited views on the review's draft Terms of Reference.

The Committee agreed that the review should solely concentrate on the operation and policies of the scheme and not the work of the Committee and the Commissioner (except insofar as her work on ICGS cases was concerned). However, the Committee also agreed to emphasise that at the right time they would be supportive of reviewing the processes of their work and that of the Commissioner.

The Committee agreed to write to the Commission detailing they had discussed an early draft of the Terms of Reference and to outline suggested amendments.

8. Freedom of Speech and the ICGS

The Registrar of Lords' Interests, Tom Wilson, introduced this paper inviting the Committee to consider proposed text changes to the Code to address issues to do with the Code of Conduct and freedom of speech in Parliament.

The Committee agreed to support option 1 presented in the paper, preferring a more simple approach that would provide guidance to the Commissioner when handling complaints where there is tension between views and opinions and the scope of the ICGS.

The Committee also agreed to discuss this issue with the Commons to seek consistency in approach.



9. Draft Report to the House

The Registrar of Lords' Interests invited the Committee to comment on the draft third report.

The Committee agreed a small amendment to paragraph 147 of the Guide to the Code dealing with the investigation process. The Committee also agreed an amendment to paragraph 153 of the Guide to the Code, allowing the Chair to consult other members of the Conduct Committee before deciding what appeal timetable to set.

The Committee discussed paragraph 27 of the draft report, regarding the financial interests of members' staff. The Committee agreed this paragraph needed further consideration and to remove this paragraph from the draft report.

10. Complaint campaigns

The Standards and Registry clerk introduced this paper covering the large number of complaints the Commissioner had recently received about a member's conduct on Twitter.

A further paper was requested which would present recommended wording for the Code to give the Commissioner discretionary powers to make limited details of complaints public.

11. Any other business

There was no further business.

Chloe Mawson
Clerk to the Conduct Committee
x8796