



11th meeting
COND/22-23

Conduct Committee

Minutes of the meeting on Wednesday 25 October 2023 at 4pm in 2-03 Millbank House and via MS Teams

Present:

Lord Blair of Boughton
Cindy Butts (via Teams)
Mark Castle (via Teams)
Andrea Coomber

Vanessa Davies (via Teams)
Baroness Mallalieu
Baroness Manningham-Buller (Chair)

With the Clerk Assistant

Apologies were received from Lord Garnier and Lord Scriven.

DELIBERATION IN PRIVATE

1. Minutes of the meeting on 13 September 2023

The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

2. Oral update by the Chair

The Chair welcomed Nicolas Besly to his first meeting of the Committee as the new Registrar of Lords' Interests.

The Chair had written to congratulate Harriet Harman MP on her election as Chair of the Commons Standards Committee, and to arrange an introductory meeting.

3. Commissioners' office oral update

Michael Torrance (Standards Clerk) updated the Committee on current investigations.

4. ICGS oral update

- ICGS Annual Report (July 2022 to June 2023) – update from ICGS Director
- Update from the ICGS Lords Lead
- ICGS Assurance Group meeting – 18 September

Thea Walton (ICGS Director) briefed the Committee on the ICGS Annual Report. The ICGS review, led by Paul Kernaghan, had commenced on 23 October and he was intending to invite

feedback from stakeholders in due course. The terms of reference for the review had been published.¹

Alex Smith (ICGS Lords Lead) provided an oral update on the ICGS more generally. Alex noted the recent case of Peter Bone MP, including how the investigation had drawn on ‘case law’ from Lords committees. This complaint would be used as a case study during a training day for the independent investigators, which Martin Jelley (the Lords Commissioner for Standards) had agreed to attend.

Andrea Coomber provided an update from the ICGS Assurance Group, which had discussed confidentiality at its recent meeting.

5. Confidentiality in consideration of complaints

Note by the Standards Clerk (COND/22-23/38)

Michael Torrance (Standards Clerk) introduced the paper. The Committee discussed how confidentiality requirements are communicated to complainants and respondents, including the importance of being clear and consistent in that respect throughout the process. It was noted that parties to the complaint should feel able to seek support during an investigation without breaching confidentiality.

The Committee *agreed* that a joint statement emphasizing the importance of confidentiality could be issued by the ICGS Director, IEP Chair and the Commissioners in both Houses. The Committee noted that standard letters to complainants and respondents would be reviewed to ensure they are as clear as possible on the requirement for confidentiality. The Committee *agreed* to consider possible amendments to the Guide to the Code of Conduct, clarifying the confidentiality requirements, as part of the next revision of the Code and Guide.

6. The Conduct of Lord Skidelsky

Commissioner’s report (COND/22-23/39), Lord Skidelsky’s appeal (COND/22-23/40),
Note by the Clerk (COND/22-23/41)

The Committee *agreed* it was unnecessary to hear from Lord Skidelsky in person, given his comprehensive written appeal.

The Committee considered Lord Skidelsky’s written appeal against the severity of the sanction recommended by the Commissioner, including with reference to previous cases, and *agreed* to dismiss the appeal.

The Committee *endorsed* the Commissioner’s recommended sanction of suspending Lord Skidelsky for one month. The Committee noted that, due to prorogation, the report would be published at the beginning of the next session, before the House was invited to agree to the suspension.

¹ www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/icgs-documents/icgs-review-oct-2023---agreed-tors_.pdf

7. Briefing note on the 'standards landscape'

Note by the Assistant Standards Clerk (COND/22-23/42)

The Committee *noted* the paper.

8. Any Other Business

The Conduct Committee will next meet on Wednesday 15 November 2023 at 4pm.

The Committee adjourned.

Christopher Johnson
Clerk to the Conduct Committee
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