



Conduct Committee

Minutes of the meeting on Wednesday 20 March 2024 at 4pm in committee room 3A, Palace of Westminster, and via MS Teams

Present:

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

Vanessa Davies (via Teams)
L. Garnier (acting Chair for item 7)
B. Manningham-Buller (Chair for items 1–6)
L. Scriven

With the Clerk Assistant. Apologies were received from Baroness Mallalieu.

DELIBERATION IN PRIVATE

1. Minutes of the meeting of 21 February 2024

The minutes of the last meeting were approved. The Clerk updated the Committee on an outstanding matter from the previous meeting.

2. Chair's oral update

The Chair thanked Michael Torrance for his support to the Committee and welcomed Gabby Longdin as the new Standards Clerk.

The Chair will meet Lt. Gen Doug Chalmers, the Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, in May.

3. Commissioners' office oral update

Michael Torrance updated the Committee on current investigations.

4. ICGS oral update

Alex Smith (ICGS Lords Lead) updated the Committee. The review of the ICGS by Paul Kernaghan will be completed shortly. Draft recommendations on quality and timeliness have been prepared, which draw on the existing practice of the House of Lords Commissioners for Standards. The outcome of the review will be shared with the Committee once the recommendations have been finalised.

5. Code of Conduct review: call for evidence and timetable

(COND/23-24/06) Paper by the Clerk

The Chair introduced the paper. The Chair asked members of the Committee to note the proposed future meeting dates and to inform the Clerk if they are unable to attend a meeting on any of the proposed dates. Members were invited to suggest to the clerk any individuals from whom evidence should be sought.

The Committee discussed the proposed call for evidence, and whether to include a question on the personal honour provision of the Code of Conduct. The Committee agreed to include a reference to personal honour in the question concerning reputational damage.

The Committee agreed the proposed call for evidence as amended.

6. The conduct of Lord Mann

Commissioner's report (COND/23-24/07), Lord Mann's appeal (COND/23-24/08), note by the Clerk (COND/23-24/09)

The Committee agreed to hear the appeal on the papers.

The Committee considered Lord Mann's written appeal against the Commissioner's finding that he breached the rules on the use of facilities (and therefore the Code of Conduct) by making more than incidental use of his parliamentary office to support an external role. The Committee agreed to dismiss Lord Mann's appeal against the Commissioner's finding.

The Committee considered Lord Mann's appeal against the Commissioner's proposed sanction that he should make a personal statement of apology to the House. Noting mitigating factors, the Committee agreed that Lord Mann should instead write a letter of apology to the Chair of the Committee in respect of the two findings of breach of the Code.

The Chair recused herself from agenda item 7 due to a personal connection with the appellant. The Committee appointed Lord Garnier acting Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

7. The conduct of Lord Geidt

Commissioner's report (COND/23-24/10), Lord Geidt's appeal and supporting documents (COND/23-24/11), note by the Clerk (COND/23-24/12)

The Committee agreed to hear the appeal on the papers.

The Committee considered Lord Geidt's written appeal against the Commissioner's finding that he breached the Code of Conduct by providing a parliamentary service in return for payment or other reward. The Committee agreed to dismiss Lord Geidt's appeal against the Commissioner's finding.

The Committee considered the Commissioner's proposed sanction, noting that the Commissioner's report detailed the mitigating factors which were taken into account in proposing the sanction. The Committee agreed to uphold the Commissioner's

recommended sanction, that Lord Geidt write a letter of apology to the Chair of the Committee.

8. Any other business

The Conduct Committee will next meet on 24 April 2024 at 4pm.

The Committee adjourned.

Christopher Johnson
Clerk to the Conduct Committee
x3828