



**6th meeting
COND/21-22**

Conduct Committee

Minutes of the meeting on Wednesday 8 December at 2.30pm in Committee Room G

Present:

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

With the Clerk Assistant.

DELIBERATION IN PRIVATE

The Chair noted that this would be the final meeting for Lady Anelay and Lord Brown and thanked them for their contributions to the Conduct Committee. The Chair informed the Committee that this would also be his last meeting. He thanked the rest of the Committee for their work and contributions and wished them well for the future.

1. Minutes of the meeting from 10 November

The Chair noted that further consideration was needed regarding the Committee's position on the Addison Rules. The minutes of the meeting on 10 November were approved.

2. Oral update by the Chair

The Chair asked the Committee to consider whether British Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies would be considered as 'foreign governments' for the purposes of the new rule on registration of foreign interests. The Chair noted that they were self-governing, and that it would be possible for lobbying to occur on behalf of those respective governments. Members inclined to the view that both Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories should be considered as foreign governments but agreed that it would be beneficial to have more detailed advice on this matter from the Registrar.

3. House of Commons Committee on Standards report on the Code of Conduct review

The Standards Clerk introduced this paper. The paper outlined possible changes to the Code of Conduct on which the House of Commons Committee on Standards is currently consulting, and sought to highlight the recommendations that appeared to be of greatest interest to the House of Lords.

The Committee considered the proposal that the descriptors attached to each of the Seven Principles be revised to reflect more closely how they apply to a Member's role. Some members of the Committee thought it would be inappropriate to alter the descriptors set by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. Others expressed their support for the proposed changes, arguing that the expansion of the descriptors would give more clarity and enhance what is expected in terms of behaviour by Members.

The paper also invited Committee members to consider adding a new principle, 'Respect', to sit alongside the Seven Principles in the Code of Conduct. Most members of the Committee opposed this on the grounds that there was already sufficient material within the Seven Principles covering the proposed 'Respect' principle.

The Committee considered the Commons committee's proposals regarding social media and subjecting individuals to personal attack, which echoed changes adopted by the Welsh Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Standards Clerk noted that this could be seen as a compromise between a full disrepute clause and the status quo. She added that under the proposals in the Committee on Standards' paper, complaints from third parties would be accepted.

Members of the Committee agreed that it would be easier for members of the public to understand the concept of a personal attack than a clause which penalised 'bringing the House into disrepute', although the Chair was concerned over the parameters of what might constitute a personal attack, and whether such a provision could be exploited by vexatious complainants. He also suggested that the 'personal attack' description would set a lower bar for complaints than the wording of the disrepute clause previously discussed by the Committee. Members noted that the Committee on Standards in Public Life had encouraged organisations to consider producing guidance on the use of social media. The Committee agreed to wait on developments in the House of Commons.

The Committee discussed the proposal that breaches of confidentiality relating to an ICGS investigation should be considered as a breach of the Code rather than contempt of the House. The Committee saw merit in making this change if the House of Commons agreed it.

The Committee discussed the proposed change to the rules on ministerial registration, requiring Ministers to register benefits and hospitality received as a Minister. The Committee agreed to recommend this change if the House of Commons adopted it.

Finally, the Committee considered the proposals in the paper surrounding paid advocacy. Concern was expressed that the changes would have a negative impact on

Lords Members, hampering the ability of the House to draw on outside expertise. The Committee agreed that more time was needed to consider these changes. The Chair proposed engaging with the Commons Standards Committee in the New Year.

4. Any Other Business

The Committee noted that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday 9th February at 4pm via Microsoft Teams.

The Committee adjourned.

Christopher Johnson
Clerk to the Conduct Committee
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