



**7th meeting
COND/21-22**

Conduct Committee

Minutes of the meeting on Wednesday 9 February at 4pm in G-32, Millbank House and via MS Teams

Present:

L. Blair of Boughton	B. Donaghy
Cindy Butts	L. Garnier (via Teams)
Mark Castle (via Teams)	B. Hussein-Ece
Andrea Coomber	B. Manningham-Buller (Chair)
Vanessa Davies (via Teams)	

With the Clerk Assistant.

DELIBERATION IN PRIVATE

The Chair began by welcoming everyone to the meeting, and new members of the Committee introduced themselves.

1. Minutes of the meeting from 8 December 2021

1.1. The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

2. Introductions and oral update by the Chair

2.1. Alex Brocklehurst provided the Committee with an overview of the Valuing Everyone training, noting that there would be a full paper on this at the next meeting.

3. Background briefing for the Committee (COND/21-22/33)

3.1. The Registrar of Lords' Interests introduced this paper.

3.2. Tom Wilson noted that the Committee on Standards was continuing to consult on proposed changes to the Code of Conduct for MPs. The Committee were invited to consider if they wished to engage in any way, given the possibility that any changes could have implications for the House of Lords.

3.3. On cluster reporting, no further decision was required by the Committee, but the proposal needed to be endorsed by the House of Commons before being implemented.

4. The Code of Conduct and free speech (COND/21-22/34).

- 4.1. The Committee discussed recent events surrounding the Commissioner's handling of a complaint made about Lord Cormack, Baroness Fox of Buckley, Lord Blencathra and Baroness Meyer, relating to statements they had made on transgender prisoners during a parliamentary debate on the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. The Commissioner, Akbar Khan, dismissed the complaint at preliminary assessment on the grounds that complaints of bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct made by third parties are not accepted. Following their receipt of the dismissal letters from the Commissioner, the members had expressed concern that the complaint had not been dismissed on the basis of parliamentary privilege.
- 4.2. The Committee agreed to publish a report addressing the concerns expressed by members about free speech and parliamentary privilege and explaining the procedures followed by the Commissioners. The draft report would be circulated for agreement by correspondence.

5. Updating the Addison Rules (COND/21-22/35)

- 5.1. Tom Wilson stated that the aim of the paper was to resolve discrepancies between the Addison Rules, as set out in the Companion to the Standing Orders, and the Guide to the Code of Conduct.
- 5.2. He noted that, in certain instances, the Addison Rules could be more restrictive for members than the Code, and that the terminology on the Addison Rules might require updating.
- 5.3. The Committee agreed to the proposed addition of a cross-reference to the Companion in paragraph 30 of the Guide, and supported proposals to update the terminology in both the Guide and the Companion.

6. Commissioner activity (COND/21-22/36)

- 6.1. Donna Davidson introduced this paper, noting that the Commissioner, Martin Jelley, had recently published a report on the conduct of Lord Mountevans.
- 6.2. Baroness Donaghy reported that the Commissioners had attended the Steering Group for Change meeting.

7. Any other business

- 7.1. The Committee discussed whether future meetings should be held in person, remotely or in a hybrid format. There was general support for hybrid meetings.
- 7.2. The Chair informed the Committee that she would be attending a meeting with the Association of Conservative Peers on 9 March. This meeting would be relevant to ongoing discussions on freedom of speech and parliamentary privilege.

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The next meeting would take place via Teams on Tuesday 8 March at 2pm.

The Committee adjourned.

Christopher Johnson
Clerk to the Conduct Committee
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