

**COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE
144th MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 17 JANUARY 2007
AT 35 GREAT SMITH STREET, WESTMINSTER**

Present: Sir Christopher Kelly KCB Chair
Rt Hon Alun Michael JP MP
Dr Elizabeth Vallance JP
Baroness Maddock
Lloyd Clarke QPM
Dame Patricia Hodgson DBE
Dr Brian Woods-Scawen DL CBE

Secretariat: Charles Ramsden, Secretary
Peter Hawthorne, Assistant Secretary
Jan Ashton, Secretariat Manager

Chair's Opening remarks

Sir Christopher Kelly welcomed members, expressed his pleasure at being in post and looked forward to working with current members and to those to be appointed shortly. He had already met some key stakeholders and had appeared before the Public Administration Select Committee during his first week. He had a series of further stakeholder meetings already arranged at which he expected to gain wider knowledge of current areas of concern

The Agenda was agreed

1. **The Minutes of the previous (143rd) meeting of 13 Dec 2007 were approved, with the following amendment: *paragraph 9, revise final sentence to read: "The Committee might be able to offer OCPA practical suggestions on the appointments process. It would be important to bear in mind that the key outcome of getting the "right" appointments process is the quality of the appointees."***

The following actions were noted as completed or ongoing:

Appointment of new committee members: The selection is now at short list stage and interviews will take place once a suitable date has been agreed
[Ongoing]

Follow-up to the Eleventh Report: A meeting will take place today between the Committee (Sir Christopher, Elizabeth Vallance, Brian Woods-Scawen) and the executive of the Electoral Commission to discuss future developments and co-operation.

Third Public Attitudes Survey: The fieldwork will commence towards the end of January **[Ongoing]**

Register of Interests

2. The latest issue of Register of Interests was reviewed and amendments are to be forwarded to the secretariat for correction. The Secretary apologised to Elizabeth Vallance for her omission from recent circulations of the register.

Committee Awayday March 12th 2008

3. It was felt that this event would be an extremely helpful opportunity to examine and develop the committee's future work plan including, if appropriate, the lead in to a new Inquiry. Four main areas should be discussed -

- o Possible topics for the next Inquiry (Fol and Accountability of Public Bodies);
- o The Committee's relationship with the media, both in terms of good media strategies and the best way of examining the media's contribution to the Committee's "trust in public life" agenda ;
- o The handling of the forthcoming work plan – for example, the use of seminars, involvement of the academic community.

Sir Gus O'Donnell will join the Committee for a working dinner at the end of the awayday. The intention would be to have quite a focussed discussion on the emerging workplan and how Cabinet Office can support the Committee on this, following short opening remarks by Sir Christopher and Sir Gus in order to 'set the scene' for discussion.

Future Work Programme

4. The Secretary spoke to this paper. 12th Inquiry topics that had emerged in 2007 and had so far stayed the course included Freedom of Information and Governance and Accountability of public bodies, though a number of "Active Monitoring" areas, in particular MPs' pay and allowances, and Party funding, were currently very active and might require Committee intervention at lower level than a full inquiry. **[Action: Secretariat to prepare papers assessing scope for a 12th Inquiry into Fol or Accountability issues, and circulate them in draft for members' comments before the February meeting]** The issue of whether the Committee should explore the media's role in influencing public perceptions of public standards also remained a live issue, and should be considered at the Awayday along with the Committee's own strategy for handling its media relations **[Action: Secretariat to prepare Awayday material on both these aspects of interacting with the media]**. Members were keen that the timing of any inquiry and the work plan more generally should take account of an election in 2009-10, and the associated 'purdah' period.

Follow up to the 11th Report

5. The Chair, two members and the secretary and assistant secretary would be meeting the executive of the Electoral Commission later that day. Topics for

discussion include the regulator's role, regional structure, regional disparities, individual registration and future co-operation.

Third Public Attitudes Survey

6. Fieldwork starts towards the end of January and the processes are currently running smoothly.

Current Issues & Concerns

7. The Committee reviewed current issues and concerns. Members were pleased that this monthly paper was now drawn from a wider range of sources. Circulation of web-links to help members access relevant reports etc were also welcomed.

Secretary's report

8. The Secretary spoke to his paper covering events over the last month.

Any Other Business

9. An open meeting was discussed and it was agreed that the Committee should follow recent annual practice by having one, either in April or May. This could provide a useful opportunity for the Committee, in presenting its Annual Report for 2007/08 and forward plans for 2008/09, to put across a coherent and shared view of its thinking on current public standards issues.

[Action – Secretariat to prepare the event, on the lines proposed]

Date of next meeting

The next Committee meeting will be held on 20 February 2008 in 35 Great Smith Street.

**Secretariat
January 2007**