



## BRIEFING PAPER

Number 08369, 15 July 2019

# ICGS Briefing Paper Appendices

By Richard Kelly

## Appendix 1: Urgent Question on Dame Laura Cox's Report (section 6.1)

On 16 October 2018, John Mann was granted an Urgent Question, "To ask the Leader of the House to make a statement on "The Bullying and Harassment of House of Commons Staff Independent Inquiry Report".<sup>1</sup>

Before calling Mr Mann, the Speaker made a short statement. He told the House that

... Without seeking to pre-empt what the House might ultimately decide, I firmly believe that the only possible way to resolve this matter is the establishment of a body that is both entirely independent of and external to Parliament to hear and adjudicate on all allegations of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct, including deciding how far to investigate past misconduct. Whether the allegations involve MPs or staff, the same entirely independent body should be in complete control of the process from start to finish.<sup>2</sup>

In response to the Urgent Question, Andrea Leadsom thanked Dame Laura for her report and reviewed the work that had been done in developing the ICGP. She outlined the elements of the ICGP and noted that it was to be reviewed after six and 18 months. She said that "Dame Laura's inquiry report will be central to shaping those views". She also announced that the House of Commons Commission would meet on Monday 22 October "to consider this report".<sup>3</sup> (The Commission's meeting was subsequently postponed to Wednesday 24 October to allow Jane McCall, one of the external members of the Commission, to chair the meeting.)

In response to questions following her answer to the Urgent Question, Andrea Leadsom acknowledged Dame Laura's call for a culture change in the House and said that the ICGP steering group would accept that.<sup>4</sup> She said that calls on senior management to consider their positions meant "She is essentially urging all hon. Members to allow senior management to consider not only their own views on their own involvement, but what action needs to be taken by senior management to ensure that change is forthcoming".<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> [HC Deb 16 October 2018 cc529-548](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, c529

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, cc529-530

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, c531, c536

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, c533

## 2 ICGS Briefing Paper Appendices

She agreed that the question of using the new procedures to investigate pre-2017 allegations should be considered in the six-month review.<sup>6</sup>

Andrea Leadsom highlighted the complexities in “the House” taking forward Dame Laura’s recommendations:

In this place, we are all aware that a number of issues are “matters for the House”. That is quite a tricky concept, because nowhere in the workplace are things simply a matter for all those who are involved in that workplace. So we have some unique challenges in trying to deal with Dame Laura’s recommendations, but deal with them we must. As I have said, the starting point will be the House of Commons Commission meeting on Monday, after which we will have a clearer way forward in what is not a matter for me, as Leader of the Commons, but a matter for the House. I, as Leader of the Commons, will make sure that I facilitate whatever the House decides.<sup>7</sup>

Training would form part of the sanctioning process but there was also voluntary training for managers. Andrea Leadsom said more need to be done to encourage the take-up of such training by MPs. Compulsory training for new Members would be introduced after the next election but there had been “no consensus in favour of compulsory training for those who were already Members”.<sup>8</sup> The Leader of the House undertook to let the House know when the training on harassment and bullying was available.<sup>9</sup>

The Committee on Standards expects “the Commissioner to consult it before exceptionally initiating an inquiry into a former Member or in respect of a matter which goes back more than seven years”.<sup>10</sup> Sir Paul Beresford questioned whether the rule should be rethought. Andrea Leadsom thought that the Commission should consider this when it met.<sup>11</sup>

Chris Bryant asked whether the Commission, which was criticised in Dame Laura’s report was the appropriate body to consider the report. He suggested that more backbenchers should be involved. Andrea Leadsom thought the review had to start somewhere: “I think it needs to start with the House Commission discussing how we take this forward.”<sup>12</sup>

Matt Warman asked, “Does the Leader of the House agree that in this instance, regardless of any personnel changes, we also need to change some fundamental structures if we are to change the culture?” Andrea Leadsom noted his interesting point”.<sup>13</sup>

Valerie Vaz, the shadow Leader of the House, thanked Dame Laura for her report, and noted as Dame Laura had that it was an inquiry, not an investigation, into allegations. She noted Dame Laura’s criticism that the ICGP had been implemented before her report was published and asked the Leader to confirm that Dame Laura’s report would be fed into the six-month review of the ICGP.<sup>14</sup>

Pete Wishart, the SNP’s shadow Leader of the House, who served on the Steering Group, reiterated the call in the report to address the culture of Westminster.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, c535, c538

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, cc535-536

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, cc540-542

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, c545

<sup>10</sup> House of Commons, [\*The Code of Conduct together with The Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members\*](#), 14 April 2015, HC 1076 2014-15, Guide to the Rules, Chapter 4, para 11

<sup>11</sup> HC Deb 16 October 2018 cc536-537

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, c537

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, c545

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, cc531-532

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, c534

## Appendix 2: Debate on the Cox Report (section 6.4)

On 5 November 2018, the House held a general debate on Dame Laura Cox's report - *The Bullying and Harassment of House of Commons Staff – Independent Inquiry Report*.<sup>16</sup>

Andrea Leadsom opened the debate. She outlined the steps that had been taken since the launch of the ICGS in July. She reported that two new independent helplines and investigative services, with corresponding policies, were in place to deal with (i) bullying and harassment, and (ii) sexual misconduct; and that an independent human resources support service was available for Members' staff.<sup>17</sup>

She then discussed Dame Laura's "three key recommendations". She noted that House staff had been able to access the ICGS since July and that the pre-existing Valuing Others and Respect Policies had been discarded. She stated that "The steering group agreed that historical allegations would be accepted by the new Scheme".<sup>18</sup> The House of Commons Commission recommended that the House amended the ICGS "to ensure that House employees with complaints involving historical allegations can access the new Scheme".<sup>19</sup> She said that she looked forward to hearing from Kate Green, the new Chair of the Committee on Standards, on how to ensure greater independence of the process".<sup>20</sup>

Andrea Leadsom was of the "strong view" that in addressing the culture of Parliament, "we need to look at the governance of the House of Commons, and we need to democratise it to ensure that with authority comes full accountability".<sup>21</sup> She said that

My three personal tests for considering future proposals for change in the House's leadership are, first, will they mean that everyone who works here can expect to be treated with dignity and respect? Secondly, will they rebuild the confidence of those who have suffered in the past? Thirdly, do all those who work here feel they have a proper stake in the decisions that affect them?<sup>22</sup>

Valerie Vaz asked the Leader to "update the House on how a cultural change will be measured so we know we are making progress".<sup>23</sup>

Maria Miller echoed Sir Bernard Jenkin's observation that "culture is something we all have ownership of". He returned to that theme in his speech.<sup>24</sup> Maria Miller also noted that Dame Laura had reported issues concerning the behaviour of staff as well as Members. Later, she said that:

The report could not be clearer. We have to make sure that there is senior management change in this place before we can make sure that the important process changes come into play. We have to make sure that the Commission is democratically accountable in the way that the Leader of the House has talked about. I believe that we also have to insulate the role of Speaker from dealing with these sorts of organisational issues, which are an immense distraction from his main role, which is to be in here presiding over impartial debate.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> [HC Deb 5 November 2018 cc1277-1312](#)

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, c1278

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, cc1280-1281

<sup>19</sup> House of Commons, [Statement from the House of Commons Commission on the Dame Laura Cox Report](#), 24 October 2018

<sup>20</sup> HC Deb 5 November 2018 cc1281-1282

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, c1282

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, c1283

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, c1284

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, c1287, c1278 and cc1298-1299

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, c1289

#### 4 ICGS Briefing Paper Appendices

During Alison Thewliss' speech, Mrs Miller intervened on the same issue asking whether she was concerned that the Commission had not commented on the need "for complete management change". Alison Thewliss agreed that there needed to be changes.<sup>26</sup> Philip Davies noted that Asda provided a good example of a private sector organisation that had changed its culture but he also cautioned against criticising individuals, saying "This is a much deeper and widespread problem than that".<sup>27</sup>

Tom Brake reviewed the decisions that the Commission had taken.<sup>28</sup>

Kate Green reflected on making the ICGS completely independent of Members. She noted that Members would be involved in designing any process and it would need to be approved by the House.<sup>29</sup>

Jess Phillips and Alison Thewliss suggested that a mechanism was required for logging incidents, without necessarily taking a complaint forward, in order to see patterns of behaviour.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, c1292

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, c1295

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, cc1296-1298

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, c1300

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, c1304, c1293

## About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email [papers@parliament.uk](mailto:papers@parliament.uk). Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email [hcinfo@parliament.uk](mailto:hcinfo@parliament.uk).

## Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).