

Research Briefing

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Committee on Standards - lay members

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Committee on Standards

The Committee on Standards considers matters relating to the conduct of MPs. It is a committee of the House of Commons and is appointed in accordance with Standing Order No 149, which gives it the following functions:

(a) to oversee the work of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards; to examine the arrangements proposed by the Commissioner for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of the Register of Members' Financial Interests and any other registers of interest established by the House; to review from time to time the form and content of those registers; and to consider any specific complaints made in relation to the registering or declaring of interests referred to it by the Commissioner; and

(b) to consider any matter relating to the conduct of Members, including specific complaints in relation to alleged breaches in any code of conduct to which the House has agreed and which have been drawn to the committee's attention by the Commissioner; and to recommend any modifications to such code of conduct as may from time to time appear to be necessary.¹

The Committee's membership includes an equal number of MPs and lay members.

¹ House of Commons, [Standing Orders – Public Business 2021, 2 December 2021](#) (PDF), HC 804 2021-22, Standing Order No 149(1)

Lay members were first appointed to the Committee in 2012, following a recommendation from the independent Committee on Standards in Public Life, in its 2009 report on the expenses and allowances of MPs.

Initially three lay members were appointed to the Committee but in 2015, the House agreed that the Committee should have 14 members, with an equal number of MP and lay members. There is currently one vacancy among the lay members on the Committee.² In addition the term of three lay members ends on 30 March 2023.

2 Motion to appoint a lay member

A motion to appoint four lay members to the Committee on Standards. It is scheduled to be debated on Monday 9 January 2023, in the Chamber.³

The appointment of lay members to the Committee on Standards is governed by [Standing Order No 149A](#) (PDF). Debate on such a motion may last for up to one hour.

The [motion](#) provides that:

- (1) Sir Francis Habgood be appointed as a lay member of the Committee on Standards for a period of six years, with immediate effect;
- (2) Rose Marie Parr, David Stirling and Carys Williams be appointed as lay members of the Committee on Standards for a period of six years, from 31 March 2023.

It follows a report, published on 15 December 2022, from the House of Commons Commission that recommended six-year appointments for Sir Francis Habgood (“with immediate effect”) and Rose Marie Parr, David Stirling and Carys Williams (from 31 March 2023).⁴

The Commission’s report described the recruitment process to fill the existing vacancy (from May 2022)⁵ and to recruit three lay members to replace those whose terms end in March 2023:

8. The post was advertised on the Parliamentary website, through social media and advertisement and search by recruitment consultants. There were 299 applicants. These were reduced through sifts and interviews to a short list of eleven for final interview on 22 and 23 November by a Selection Panel comprising Shrinivas Honap (Independent Chair and external member of the

² The previous exercise to recruit two members resulted in the appointment of one lay member

³ House of Commons, [Provisional Order Paper 9 January 2023](#), Item 5

⁴ House of Commons Commission, [Lay Members of the Committee on Standards: Nomination of Candidates](#) (PDF), 15 December 2022, HC 977 2022-23

⁵ Two vacancies arose in May 2022 as the terms of Jane Burgess and Dr Arun Midha ended. Victoria Smith filled one of those vacancies in June 2022

House of Commons Commission), Chris Bryant MP (Chair of the Committee on Standards), Dr Lynn Gardner (Clerk of the Interparliamentary Relations Office and former Clerk of the Committee on Standards), Ms Mehmuda Mian (lay member, Committee on Standards) and Dr Arun Midha (former lay member, Committee on Standards).

9. The panel recommended four candidates to the Commission for appointment, each for a six year term.⁶

In its report, the Commission said it believed “all four candidates will, individually, and in combination, bring an effective mix of skills and knowledge to the Committee’s work and contribute to maintaining public confidence in the independent element in the House’s disciplinary processes”.⁷

The Commission also thanked the lay members, Tammy Banks, Rita Dexter and Paul Thorogood, who will leave the Committee on 30 March 2023, “for the significant contribution they have made to the Committee on Standards and to the standards system in the House more widely”.⁸

3

Committee on Standards membership

Standing Order No 149 states that the Committee on Standards “shall consist of seven Members, and seven lay members”.⁹ The members of the Committee (at 22 December 2022) are listed in the table overleaf.

- The up-to-date [membership of the Committee](#) is available on its website.

The quorum of the Committee on Standards is three members who are MPs and three lay members.¹⁰

Under Standing Order No 122B, the Chair of the Committee on Standards is elected by the whole House but has to be a member of the Official Opposition.¹¹

⁶ House of Commons Commission, [Lay Members of the Committee on Standards: Nomination of Candidates](#) (PDF), 15 December 2022, HC 977 2022-23, paras 8-9

⁷ House of Commons Commission, [Lay Members of the Committee on Standards: Nomination of Candidates](#) (PDF), 15 December 2022, HC 977 2022-23, para 11

⁸ House of Commons Commission, [Lay Members of the Committee on Standards: Nomination of Candidates](#) (PDF), 15 December 2022, HC 977 2022-23, para 12

⁹ House of Commons, [Standing Orders – Public Business 2021, 2 December 2021](#) (PDF), HC 804 2021-22, Standing Order No 149(2)

¹⁰ As above, Standing Order No 149(6)

¹¹ As above, Standing Order No 122B(8)(f)

| MPs | Lay members |
|----------------------------|---|
| Chris Bryant (Lab) (Chair) | Mrs Tammy Banks (from 31 March 2017 for six years)* |
| Andy Carter (Con) | Mrs Rita Dexter (from 31 March 2017 for six years)* |
| Alberto Costa (Con) | Dr Michael Maguire (from 10 Nov 2020 for six years)** |
| Allan Dorans (SNP) | Mehmuda Mian (from 28 June 2021 for six years)*** |
| Yvonne Fovargue (Lab) | Victoria Smith (from 22 June 2022 for six years)**** |
| Sir Bernard Jenkin (Con) | Mr Paul Thorogood (from 31 March 2017 for six years)* |
| Sir Charles Walker (Con) | Vacant# |

* [HC Deb 15 March 2017 cc492-493](#). The Commission has proposed that these members are replaced by Rose Marie Parr, David Stirling and Carys Williams at the end of their term

** [HC Deb 10 November 2020 cc843-864](#)

*** [HC Deb 28 June 2021 cc85-87](#)

**** [HC Deb 22 June 2022 c930](#)

Jane Burgess and Dr Arun Midha, were appointed on 19 May 2016, for a period of six years. Victoria Smith filled one of the vacancies. The House of Commons Commission has recommended that Sir Francis Habgood fills the other vacancy

4 Background – timeline

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|-------------------------|--|
| November 2009 | The Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) recommended that there should be at least two lay members on the Committee on Standards and Privileges. ¹² |
| 26 November 2009 | The Committee on Standards and Privileges' report, Implementing the Twelfth Report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life (PDF), welcomed the CSPL recommendation. It suggested that voting rights should only apply to standards matters and recommended that two lay members be added to its number. ¹³ |
| 2 December 2010 | The House of Commons debated the idea and approved, in principle, that lay members should sit on the Committee on Standards and Privileges; and asked the Procedure Committee to bring forward proposals to do so. ¹⁴ |

¹² Committee on Standards in Public Life, [MPs' expenses and allowances: Supporting Parliament, safeguarding the taxpayer](#) (PDF), November 2009, Cm 7724, paras 13.66-13.67 and Recommendation 51, p107

¹³ Committee on Standards and Privileges, [Implementing the Twelfth Report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life](#) (PDF), 26 November 2009, HC 67 2009-10

¹⁴ [HC Deb 2 December 2010 cc995-1017](#)

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|--------------------------|---|
| 7 November 2011 | The Procedure Committee's report Lay membership of the Committee on Standards and Privileges (PDF) was published. The Committee recommended acceptance of the principle of the CSPL's recommendation; the separation of the Committee on Standards and Privileges; and the appointment of, initially, two lay members to the Committee on Standards. ¹⁵ |
| 12 March 2012 | House of Commons debated the Procedure Committee's report and agreed to separate the Committee on Standards and Privileges and to recruit up to three lay members to serve on the Committee on Standards. ¹⁶ |
| 13 December 2012 | The House agreed the appointment of the first three lay members to the Committee on Standards: Mr Peter Jinman, Mr Walter Rader and Ms Sharon Darcy. ¹⁷ |
| 7 January 2013 | The new structure took effect. |
| 8 April 2014 | The Committee on Standards published the lay members' reflections on their first year on the Committee. ¹⁸ These prompted the Committee to set up a Standards Review Sub-Committee. |
| 10 February 2015 | The Sub-Committee's review was published by the Committee on Standards. It recommended that there should be an equal number of MPs and lay members on the Committee and suggested seven was an appropriate number of each. It recommended lay members be appointed for up to six years. ¹⁹ |
| 17 March 2015 | The House agreed to the changes proposed by the Committee on Standards. |
| 10 September 2015 | Mr Peter Jinman, Mr Walter Rader and Ms Sharon Darcy were re-appointed as lay members until 30 March 2017. ²⁰ |
| 19 May 2016 | Jane Burgess and Dr Arun Midha were appointed as lay members for six years; and Charmaine Burton and Sir Peter Rubin were appointed as lay members for four years. ²¹ |
| 15 March 2017 | Tammy Banks, Rita Dexter and Paul Thorogood were appointed as lay members for six years from 31 March 2017. ²² |

¹⁵ Procedure Committee, [Lay membership of the Committee on Standards and Privileges](#) (PDF), 7 November 2011, HC 1606 2010-12

¹⁶ [HC Deb 12 March 2012 cc69-84](#)

¹⁷ [HC Deb 13 December 2012 c472-478](#)

¹⁸ Committee on Standards, [Reflections of the Lay Members on their first year in post](#) (PDF), March 2014

¹⁹ Committee on Standards, [The Standards System in the House of Commons](#) (PDF) 10 February 2015, HC 383 2014-15

²⁰ [HC Deb 10 September 2015 c644](#)

²¹ [HC Deb 19 May 2016 cc240-242](#)

²² [HC Deb 15 March 2017 cc492-493](#)

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|-------------------------|---|
| 19 July 2018 | The House of Commons approved the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Delivery Report; endorsed the Behaviour Code and incorporated it in the Code of Conduct; and the policies and procedures relating to bullying and harassment and sexual harassment set out in the Delivery Report. It agreed changes to Standing Orders to give lay members of the Committee on Standards an indicative vote (rather than a formal vote) before any division in the Committee. |
| 10 December 2018 | The Committee on Standards' report, Implications of the Dame Laura Cox report for the House's standards system: Initial proposals (PDF), was published. It recommended that full voting rights should be extended to lay members of the Committee ²³ |
| 7 January 2019 | The House agreed that lay members of the Committee on Standards could move motions and amendments, including to reports, and vote. |
| 10 November 2020 | Dr Michael Maguire was appointed as a lay member for six years. ²⁴ |
| 28 June 2021 | Mehmuda Mian was appointed as a lay member for six years. ²⁵ |
| 22 June 2022 | Victoria Smith was appointed as a lay member for six years. ²⁶ |

5 Previous reports recommending the appointment of lay members to the Committee on Standards

Between 2012 and 2015, the first lay members, Mr Peter Jinman, Mr Walter Rader and Ms Sharon Darcy, were appointed for the remainder of the 2010 Parliament with the possibility of a re-appointment of up to two years from the dissolution of the Parliament. Just before the dissolution, the Standing Order was amended and new appointments were for a single fixed-term of no more than six years.

On 10 September 2015, Mr Peter Jinman, Mr Walter Rader and Ms Sharon Darcy were appointed as lay members of the Committee until 30 March 2017

²³ Committee on Standards, [Implications of the Dame Laura Cox report for the House's standards system: Initial proposals](#) (PDF), 10 December 2018, HC 1726 2017-19

²⁴ [HC Deb 10 November 2020 cc843-864](#)

²⁵ [HC Deb 28 June 2021 cc85-87](#)

²⁶ [HC Deb 22 June 2022 c930](#)

(two years after the dissolution of the 2010 Parliament), in accordance with their original appointment.

- House of Commons Commission, [Lay members of the new Standards Committee: Nomination of Candidates](#) (PDF), 31 October 2012, HC 709 – approved on 13 December 2012 (reappointed on 10 September 2015).²⁷

In 2016, when the number of lay members on the Committee had increased to seven, four additional lay members were appointed on 19 May 2016, to fill the additional places: Jane Burgess and Dr Arun Midha were appointed as lay members for six years; and Charmaine Burton and Sir Peter Rubin were appointed as lay members for four years.

- House of Commons Commission, [Additional Lay Members of the Committee on Standards: Nomination of Candidates](#) (PDF), 20 April 2016, HC 848 2015-16 – approved on 19 May 2016.²⁸

In 2017, as the end of the original lay members' term approached, three new lay members were appointed to succeed them. On 15 March 2017, Tammy Banks, Rita Dexter and Paul Thorogood were all appointed as lay members for six years from 31 March 2017.

- House of Commons Commission, [Lay Members of the Committee on Standards: Nomination of Candidates](#) (PDF), 6 March 2017, HC 1073 2016-17 – approved on 15 March 2017.²⁹

In 2020, following the end of the four-year appointments of Charmaine Burton and Sir Peter Rubin, Dr Michael Maguire was appointed as a lay member for six years:

- House of Commons Commission, [Lay Members of the Committee on Standards: Nomination of Candidates](#) (PDF), 22 July 2020, HC 437 2019-21 – approved on 10 November 2020.³⁰

The Commission had recommended two people be appointed. Initially a motion to appoint both was tabled.³¹ But the Leader of the House told the Chair of the Committee on Standards and that there was some concern about the recruitment process.³² In the event on 10 November 2020, a motion to fill one of the vacancies was debated. An amendment to appoint the second nominee was rejected on a division.³³

²⁷ [HC Deb 13 December 2012 c472-478](#); reappointed on 10 September 2015 – [HC Deb 10 September 2015 c644](#)

²⁸ [HC Deb 19 May 2016 cc240-242](#)

²⁹ [HC Deb 15 March 2017 cc492-493](#)

³⁰ [HC Deb 10 November 2020 cc843-864](#)

³¹ House of Commons, Order Paper, 22 October 2020 – [Remaining Orders and Notices](#), Item 9.

³² [HC Deb 22 October 2020 cc1240-1241](#)

³³ [HC Deb 10 November 2020 cc843-864](#)

In 2021, the remaining vacancy was filled on 28 June 2021, when Mehmuda Mian was appointed as a lay member for six years:

- House of Commons Commission, [Lay Members of the Committee on Standards: Nomination of Candidate](#) (PDF), 23 June 2021, HC 474 2021-22 – approved on 28 June 2021.³⁴

In 2022, the six-year appointments of Jane Burgess and Dr Arun Midha came to an end on 18 May. Following a recruitment process to fill both vacancies, the House of Commons commission recommended the appointment of one lay member, Victoria Smith, for six years:

House of Commons Commission, [Lay Members of the Committee on Standards: Nomination of Candidate](#) (PDF), 15 June 2022, HC 406 2022-23 – approved on 22 June 2022.³⁵

³⁴ [HC Deb 28 June 2021 cc85-87](#)

³⁵ [HC Deb 22 June 2022 c930](#)

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