

Research Briefing

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Committee on Standards - lay members

1

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.

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 are currently two vacancies among the lay members on the Committee.

2 Motion to appoint a lay member

A motion to appoint a lay member to the Committee on Standards is scheduled to be considered on Monday 28 June 2021, in the Chamber.

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

The [motion](#) provides that “Ms Mehmuda Mian be appointed as lay member of the Committee on Standards for a period of six years, with immediate effect”.

It follows a report, published on 23 June 2021, from the House of Commons Commission that recommended that Mehmuda Mian be appointed to the Committee for six years.²

The terms of two previous lay members ended in May 2020. A report from the House of Commons Commission in July 2020 recommended two people to fill those vacancies. Initially a motion to appoint both was tabled.³ But the Leader of the House told the Chair of the Committee on Standards and that there was some concern about the recruitment process.⁴ 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.⁵

¹ House of Commons, [Standing Orders – Public Business 2019](#), November 2019, HC 314 2019, Standing Order No 149(1)

² House of Commons Commission, [Lay Members of the Committee on Standards: Nomination of Candidate](#), 23 June 2021, HC 474 2021-22

³ House of Commons, *Order Paper*, 22 October 2020 – [Remaining Orders and Notices](#), Item 9.

⁴ [HC Deb 22 October 2020 cc1240-1241](#)

⁵ [HC Deb 10 November 2020 cc843-864](#)

Consequently, a recruitment exercise was undertaken for the remaining vacancy. The House of Commons Commission described that process, in its June 2021 report:

The post was advertised on the Parliamentary website, through the Outreach Service, through social media and through advertisement and search by recruitment consultants. There were 265 applicants. These were reduced through sifts and interviews to a shortlist of four for final interview in May 2021 by a Selection Panel comprising Rima Makarem (external member of the House of Commons Commission and Chair of the selection panel), Chris Bryant MP (Chair of the Committee on Standards), Eve Samson (Clerk of the Journals) and Paul Thorogood (lay member of the Committee on Standards).⁶

3 Committee on Standards membership

Standing Order No 149 states that the Committee on Standards “shall consist of seven Members, and seven lay members”.⁷ The current members of the Committee are:

MPs	Lay members
Chris Bryant (Lab) (Chair)	Mrs Tammy Banks (from 31 March 2017 for six years)*
Andy Carter (Con)	Mrs Jane Burgess (from 19 May 2016 for six years)**
Alberto Costa (Con)	Mrs Rita Dexter (from 31 March 2017 for six years)*
Allan Dorans (SNP)	Dr Michael Maguire (from 10 Nov 2020 for six years)***
Chris Elmore (Lab)	Dr Arun Midha (from 19 May 2016 for six years)**
Mark Fletcher (Con)	Mr Paul Thorogood (from 31 March 2017 for six years)*
Sir Bernard Jenkin (Con)	Vacant****

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

** [HC Deb 19 May 2016 cc241-242](#)

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

**** Charmaine Burton and Sir Peter Rubin, were appointed on 19 May 2016, for a period of four years; one vacancy was filled by Dr Maguire on 10 November 2020

⁶ House of Commons Commission, [Lay Members of the Committee on Standards: Nomination of Candidate](#), 23 June 2021, HC 474 2021-22, para 6

⁷ House of Commons, [Standing Orders – Public Business 2019](#), November 2019, HC 314 2019, Standing Order No 149(2)

The quorum of the Committee on Standards is three members who are MPs and three lay members.⁸

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.⁹

4 Background – timeline

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. ¹⁰
26 November 2009	The Committee on Standards and Privileges' report, Implementing the Twelfth Report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life , 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. ¹¹
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. ¹²
7 November 2011	Procedure Committee's report Lay membership of the Committee on Standards and Privileges 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. ¹³
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. ¹⁴

⁸ Ibid, Standing Order No 149(6)

⁹ Ibid, Standing Order No 122B(8)(f)

¹⁰ Committee on Standards in Public Life, [MPs' expenses and allowances: Supporting Parliament, safeguarding the taxpayer](#), November 2009, Cm 7724, paras 13.66-13.67 and Recommendation 51, p107

¹¹ Committee on Standards and Privileges, [Implementing the Twelfth Report from the Committee on Standards in Public Life](#), 26 November 2009, HC 67 2009-10

¹² [HC Deb 2 December 2010 cc995-1017](#)

¹³ Procedure Committee, [Lay membership of the Committee on Standards and Privileges](#), 7 November 2011, HC 1606 2010-12

¹⁴ [HC Deb 12 March 2012 cc69-84](#)

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. ¹⁵
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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷
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. ¹⁸
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. ¹⁹
15 March 2017	Tammy Banks, Rita Dexter and Paul Thorogood were appointed as lay members for six years from 31 March 2017. ²⁰
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 , was published. It

¹⁵ [HC Deb 13 December 2012 c472-478](#)

¹⁶ Committee on Standards, [Reflections of the Lay Members on their first year in post](#), March 2014

¹⁷ Committee on Standards, [The Standards System in the House of Commons](#), 10 February 2015, HC 383 2014-15

¹⁸ [HC Deb 10 September 2015 c644](#)

¹⁹ [HC Deb 19 May 2016 cc240-242](#)

²⁰ [HC Deb 15 March 2017 cc492-493](#)

	recommended that full voting rights should be extended to lay members of the Committee ²¹
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. ²²

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

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 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 (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](#), 31 October 2012, HC 709 – approved on 13 December 2012.²³

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. The end of their appointments has caused the current vacancies.

- House of Commons Commission, [Additional Lay Members of the Committee on Standards: Nomination of Candidates](#), 20 April 2016, HC 848 2015-16 – approved on 19 May 2016.²⁴

²¹ Committee on Standards, [Implications of the Dame Laura Cox report for the House's standards system: Initial proposals](#), 10 December 2018, HC 1726 2017-19

²² [HC Deb 10 November 2020 cc843-864](#)

²³ [HC Deb 13 December 2012 c472-478](#); reappointed on 10 September 2015 – [HC Deb 10 September 2015 c644](#)

²⁴ [HC Deb 19 May 2016 cc240-242](#)

Following the end of the original lay members' term, 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](#), 6 March 2017, HC 1073 2016-17 – approved on 15 March 2017.²⁵

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](#), 22 July 2020, HC 437 2019-21 – approved on 10 November 2020.²⁶

²⁵ [HC Deb 15 March 2017 cc492-493](#)

²⁶ [HC Deb 10 November 2020 cc843-864](#)

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