

By Richard Kelly

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# Standards in the House of Commons

- 1 Introduction: Debate on Standards on 8 November 2021
- 2 Standards in the House of Commons
- 3 Review of the Code of Conduct
- 4 Timeline of the evolution of the Standards system

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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction: Debate on Standards on 8 November 2021</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Standards in the House of Commons</b>	<b>7</b>
2.1	Code of Conduct	7
2.2	Committee on Standards	8
2.3	The Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards	9
2.4	Bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme and Independent Expert Panel	10
<b>3</b>	<b>Review of the Code of Conduct</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Timeline of the evolution of the Standards system</b>	<b>13</b>



# 1 Introduction: Debate on Standards on 8 November 2021

This briefing summarises the events that led up to the decision to hold an emergency debate on the House of Commons standards system on Monday 8 November 2021. It includes an overview of the Commons standards system and a timeline showing how the system has evolved.

## Report on conduct of Owen Patterson

On 3 November 2021, the House debated [a motion to approve a report from the Committee on Standards](#) relating to the conduct of Owen Paterson; and to suspend him from the service of the House for 30 sitting days.

The House agreed to amend the motion. It declined to consider the report from the Committee on Standards and agreed that a new committee be appointed to consider:

- Whether the current standards system should give MPs the same or similar rights to people who are under investigation for alleged misconduct in other workplaces. This would include the right to legal representation, to examine witnesses and to appeal.
- How far procedures that relate to the Committee on Standards (including lay members), and to the Parliamentary Commissioner on Standards “should be made consistent with the principles of natural justice”.
- Whether the case against Owen Paterson should be reviewed or if the [report from the Committee of Standards](#) on this case should be reconsidered by MPs
- Other matters connected to the above.

## A new committee

The decision also allowed for the creation of a nine-member committee to be chaired by John Whittingdale. It would have four other Conservative members, three Labour and one SNP.

It would have the usual select committee powers to take evidence and report, to appoint specialist advisers and unusually to appoint legal advisers.

The Committee was required to report by 3 February 2022.<sup>1</sup>

### Political reaction to the new committee

The Labour, Scottish National and Liberal Democrat Parties said that they would not participate in the work of the Committee.

On 4 November 2021, Wendy Chamberlain, a Liberal Democrat MP, [made an application for an emergency debate](#) on “the consequences of the decision of the House on 3 November relating to standards.”<sup>2</sup> Her application was approved and the debate has been scheduled for Monday 8 November 2021.

Just before Wendy Chamberlain’s application, during the Business Statement on 4 November, the Leader of the House stated that any link between the case of Mr Paterson and a review of the standards process [needed “to be broken.”](#) The Leader told the Commons:

“While there is a very strong feeling on both sides of the House that there is a need for an appeals process, there is equally a strong feeling that this should not be based on a single case, or applied retrospectively. I fear last night’s debate conflated the individual case with the general concern. This link needs to be broken. Therefore, I and others will look to work on a cross-party basis to achieve improvements in our system for future cases. We will bring forward more detailed proposals once there have been cross-party discussions.”<sup>3</sup>

Later in the day on the 4 November, the Government confirmed there would be [a vote on the motion to sanction Owen Paterson](#), on a date to be announced by the Leader of the House.<sup>4</sup>

The Government said there would be a separate vote on any reforms of the standards process which would be proposed on a cross-party basis.

[Owen Paterson announced that he would resign](#) as an MP at around 2.30pm on 4 November 2021.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [HC Deb 3 November 2021 cc938-973](#); Committee on Standards, [Mr Owen Paterson](#), 26 October 2021, HC 797 2021-22

<sup>2</sup> [HC Deb 4 November 2021 cc1073-1074](#)

<sup>3</sup> [HC Deb 4 November 2021 cc1054](#)

<sup>4</sup> Guardian, [Live politics blog, 4 November 2021, 12:36pm](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Press Association Twitter Feed, 4 November 2021, 2.30pm](#)

## 2

# Standards in the House of Commons

In its 2015 report on [The Standards System in the House of Commons \(PDF, 1678 KB\)](#), the Committee on Standards described the Commons standards system as:

“...one of self-regulation with strong independent elements in the shape of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards and the lay members of the Committee on Standards. The authority ultimately responsible for setting and maintaining standards in the House of Commons is the House itself. The other elements of the formal system are the Code of Conduct and guide to the Rules relating to the conduct of Members, the Commissioner for Standards, and the Standards Committee.”<sup>6</sup>

Since the 2015 report, the House has amended the Code of Conduct to incorporate a Behaviour Code and an Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS). The ICGS was adopted to handle queries and complaints from current and former members of the parliamentary community related to bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct. The Behaviour Code and ICGS were first adopted by the House in July 2018.

In June 2020, the Independent Expert Panel (IEP) was established to consider cases against MPs raised under the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme.

## 2.1

### Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct is based on the Seven Principles of Public Life, formulated by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in 1995, to which everyone holding public office is expected to adhere. These principles (also known as the ‘Nolan Principles’ after the first Chair of that Committee) are: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

While the Speaker is responsible for the orderliness of parliamentary proceedings, the Code of Conduct and the related Guide to the Rules are concerned with ethical matters.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Committee on Standards, [The Standards System in the House of Commons](#), (PDF, 1678 KB), 10 February 2015, HC 383 2014-15, para 21

<sup>7</sup> House of Commons, [The Code of Conduct together with The Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members](#), 10 October 2019, HC 1882 2017-19

## 2.2

# Committee on Standards

The [Committee on Standards](#) considers matters relating to the conduct of MPs. It is a House of Commons committee and is appointed in accordance with Standing Order No 149,<sup>8</sup> 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.”<sup>9</sup>

The Committee’s membership includes an equal number of MPs and lay members (who must not MPs or Members of the House of Lords).

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](#).<sup>10</sup>

Initially three lay members were appointed to the Committee but in 2015, the House agreed that the Committee should have a total of 14 members, with an equal number of MP and lay members. There are currently two vacancies among the lay members on the Committee.

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<sup>8</sup> House of Commons, [Addendum to Standing Orders – Public Business](#), 22 July 2021, [SO No 149](#)

<sup>9</sup> House of Commons, [Standing Orders – Public Business 2019](#), November 2019, HC 314 2019, Standing Order No 149(1)

<sup>10</sup> Committee on Standards in Public Life, [MPs’ Expenses and Allowances: Supporting Parliament, safeguarding the taxpayer](#), 2009

## 2.3

# The Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards

The Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards is an independent officer of the House of Commons. The current Commissioner is Kathryn Stone OBE.<sup>11</sup>

[The Commissioner publishes an annual report](#). In their most recent one, the tasks of the Commissioner are listed as:

- a) keeping the Register of Members' Financial Interests and the other Registers of the House of Commons;
- b) giving confidential advice on registration to MPs and others;
- c) advising the Committee on Standards, its subcommittees and individual Members;
- d) monitoring the operation of the Code and registers, and making recommendations to the Committee on Standards;
- e) investigating allegations about the conduct of Members and reporting to the Committee on Standards and
- f) considering cases arising from the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme.<sup>12</sup>

The Commissioner's role is formally set out in Standing Order No 150.<sup>13</sup>

The procedure the Commissioner should take when investigating if MPs have breached the Code of Conduct is set out in [Chapter 4 of the Guide to the Rules \(PDF, 638 KB\)](#)<sup>14</sup> and in an [Information Note \(PDF, 3.2 KB\)](#)<sup>15</sup> available on the Commissioner's webpages.

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<sup>11</sup> House of Commons, [Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards](#)

<sup>12</sup> Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, [Annual Report 2020-21](#), 30 June 2021, HC 309 2021-22, p5

<sup>13</sup> House of Commons, [Addendum to Standing Orders – Public Business](#), 22 July 2021, [SO No 150](#)

<sup>14</sup> House of Commons, [The Code of Conduct together with The Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members](#), 10 October 2019, HC 1882 2017-19

<sup>15</sup> Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, [Commissioner's information note](#), 2015

## 2.4

## Bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme and Independent Expert Panel

Complaints about the behaviour of MPs related to bullying harassment and sexual misconduct are handled separately under the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS). It was adopted in July 2018 and is overseen by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, although the Independent Expert Panel (IEP) may recommend sanctions and hears appeals.

The ICGS gave the Committee on Standards responsibility for carrying out its appeal function. The Committee on Standards has published two reports on how it proposed to take on these responsibilities.<sup>16</sup> In the second of these reports, the Committee set out a framework for appeals.<sup>17</sup>

In [The Bullying and Harassment of House of Commons Staff – Independent Inquiry Report \(PDF, 1343 KB\)](#), Dame Laura Cox recommended that the “process for determining complaints of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment brought by House staff against Members of Parliament will be an entirely independent process, in which Members of Parliament will play no part”.<sup>18</sup>

Following Dame Laura’s report, the Committee on Standards accepted its roles under the ICGS until the full package of reforms was in place.<sup>19</sup>

### An independent process

Responsibility for developing an independent process fell to the House of Commons Commission. It consulted on its preferred approach in February 2020 and then agreed an implementation plan at its meeting in April 2020.<sup>20</sup> The Commission published an Explanatory Paper, [Independent Expert Panel for considering cases brought under the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme](#), on 22 June 2020.

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<sup>16</sup> 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; and [The Committee’s role in ICGS appeals](#), 13 March 2019, HC 1976 2017-19

<sup>17</sup> Committee on Standards, [The Committee’s role in ICGS appeals](#), 13 March 2019, HC 1976 2017-19, para 13. The Committee modified these arrangements, see: Committee on Standards, [Formal Minutes 2017-19](#), 23 July 2019, p36

<sup>18</sup> Dame Laura Cox, [Bullying and harassment of House of Commons staff – independent inquiry report](#), 2018, p6

<sup>19</sup> 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, para 10

<sup>20</sup> House of Commons Commission, [Decisions – 27 April 2020](#), Item 2

On 23 June 2020, the House agreed to establish the Independent Expert Panel to [consider cases against MPs raised under the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme](#). It agreed to the functions and responsibilities of the Panel, the method of appointing the Panel and made consequent changes to Standing Orders.

The House also agreed an amendment to ensure that any decisions relating to recommendations made by the Panel, that needed to be ratified by the House, should be decided without a debate in the Chamber.

The Independent Expert Panel's functions are:

- “a) to determine the appropriate sanction in ICGS cases referred to it by the Parliamentary Commissioner on Standards;
- (b) to hear appeals against the decisions of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards in respect of ICGS cases involving Members of this House;
- (c) to hear appeals against a sanction imposed under paragraph (a);
- (d) to report from time to time, through the Clerk of the House, on the operation of the ICGS as it relates to Members of this House”

On 25 November 2020, the House approved the [appointment of the first eight members of the Panel](#), as recommended by the House of Common Commission.

In February 2021,, the Panel issued its own guidance on its role: [Appeals, referrals and sanction: Guidance for the parties](#), (PDF, 198 KB)

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# 3

## Review of the Code of Conduct

In September 2020, the Committee on Standards announced that it was undertaking a “[comprehensive and far-reaching inquiry](#) into the operation of the Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament”<sup>21</sup>. In a press notice, the Committee outlined how this review would proceed:

“The public-facing inquiry by the Committee, to be held in autumn 2020, will be the first stage in a multi-stage process of preparing a new text of the Code for approval by the House. The Committee will work closely with and seek input from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards during its inquiry.”<sup>22</sup>

The stages of the review process include:

- Public evidence sessions which will contribute to the Committee on Standards report
- The Commissioner taking up her own review of the Code of Conduct, when the Committee publishes the report
- A public consultation on a revised text of the Code of Conduct
- The Committee proposing a final revised text for recommendation to the House
- Consideration of possible changes to the Guide to the Rules, which will also need to be put before the House of Commons for its approval.<sup>23</sup>

Details of the evidence sessions held and the written evidence received can be found on the [Code of Conduct: inquiry](#) webpage on the Committee’s website.

This review of the Code of Conduct was begun before the House agreed to establish a different committee, to be chaired by John Whittingdale (on 3 November 2021) to consider the House’s standards system.

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<sup>21</sup> Committee on Standards news, [Standards Committee launches inquiry into Code of Conduct for MPs](#), 22 September 2020

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

## 4

## Timeline of the evolution of the Standards system

The timeline on the following pages sets out the key decisions that the House has taken on its standards regime. It includes references to the debates when decisions were taken and any reports that preceded these decisions.

It is not entirely chronological. The final part of the timeline covers sanctions and confidentiality of Members under investigation. The Committee on Standards' work on this issue began before the end of the previous part of the timeline, which covers the ICGS and the Independent Expert Panel.

### Creation of the Committee on Standards and Privileges and Office of Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| May 1995    | Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL), established in 1994, publishes its first report, in the wake of the “cash for questions” scandal. It recommended changes to the House of Commons’ standards regime and the appointment of a Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. <sup>24</sup>                                  |
| 18 May 1995 | Debate on the CSPL’s report. <sup>25</sup>   |
| 6 June 1995 | House of Commons appointed the Select Committee on Standards in Public Life, to consider the CSPL’s report as it related to the rules and procedures of the House; to advise on how its recommendations relating to the House might be implemented; and to recommend specific resolutions for decision by the House. <sup>26</sup> |
| 6 Nov 1995  | Committee on Standards and Privileges (11 members) created; Committee on Members’ Interests abolished; and Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (PCS) established, by Standing Order of the House of Commons. <sup>27</sup>  |

<sup>24</sup> [Standards in Public Life](#), First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, Volume 1, May 1995, Cm 2850-1

<sup>25</sup> [HC Deb 18 May 1995 cc481-570](#)

<sup>26</sup> [HC Deb 6 June 1995 c118](#); members were appointed to the Committee on 13 June 1995 [[HC Deb 13 June 1995 c698](#)]

<sup>27</sup> [HC Deb 6 November 1995 cc610-682](#)

The appointment of the first PCS was also confirmed by the House.<sup>28</sup>

The changes to Standing Orders followed recommendations from the CSPL and a review by a specially established select committee (see May and June 1995).<sup>29</sup>

### Rectification procedure

April 2002 The Committee on Standards and Privileges confirmed that it had agreed that the PCS could rectify minor or inadvertent failures to declare or register interests without reporting to the Committee on Standards.<sup>30</sup>

### CSPL review of House of Commons standards regime and changes

Nov 2002 Publication of CSPL's review [Standards of Conduct in the House of Commons](#).<sup>31</sup> It recommended regular reviews of the Code of Conduct; reviewed the role of the PCS; recommended the establishment of an Investigatory Panel to handle serious, contested cases; that no party should have a majority on the Committee on Standards and Privileges; that the PCS should be a fixed-term appointment.

Feb 2003 Response to the CSPL report from the Committee on Standards and Privileges and from the House of Commons Commission were published.<sup>32</sup>

The Committee on Standards and Privileges proposed an alternative approach to the operation of the Investigatory Panel.

The House of Commons Commission commented on recommendations relating to the appointment of the PCS and the appointment process.

26 June 2003 The rectification procedure, which allowed the PCS and Member concerned to agree an outcome to a complaint, was included in Standing Order No 150. The PCS would not be required to report such cases to the Committee on Standards and Privileges.<sup>33</sup>

The power of the PCS to appoint or the Committee on Standards and Privileges to request an Investigatory Panel was introduced.<sup>34</sup>

Changes were made to the procedures for dismissing a PCS – a resolution of the House had been required from the outset but from June 2003, the motion needed to be moved by a member of the House of Commons Commission, after the Committee on Standards and

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<sup>28</sup> [HC Deb 6 November 1995 cc683-699](#)

<sup>29</sup> [Standards in Public Life](#), First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, Volume 1, May 1995, Cm 2850-1, p4; Select Committee on Standards in Public Life, First Report, 6 July 1995, HC 637 1994-95

<sup>30</sup> Committee on Standards and Privileges, [A New Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules](#), 30 April 2002, HC 763 2001-02, paras 37-39

<sup>31</sup> Committee on Standards in Public Life, [Standards of Conduct in the House of Commons](#), Eighth Report, Cm 5663, November 2002

<sup>32</sup> Committee on Standards and Privileges, [Eighth Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life: "Standards of Conduct in the House of Commons"](#), 11 February 2003, HC 403 2002-03; House of Commons Commission, [Response to the Eighth Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life: Standards of Conduct in the House of Commons](#), 11 February 2003, HC 422 2002-03

<sup>33</sup> [HC Deb 26 June 2003 cc1257-1258](#) (after debate, [cc1239-1256](#))

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

Privileges had reported that the Commissioner was unfit to hold office or unable to carry out their functions.<sup>35</sup>

The House agreed that the PCS should be appointed for a single five-year term.<sup>36</sup>

In the debate, Peter Hain, then Leader of the House of Commons, confirmed that the Government accepted the CSPL's recommendation that no party should have a majority on the Committee on Standards and Privileges. He said that "Subject to the agreement of the usual channels, and of the House, we intend to move towards a Committee of 10 Members, of whom five would be from the Government party and five from the Opposition parties".<sup>37</sup>

### Extending the rectification procedure and size of the Committee on Standards and Privileges

13 July 2005 Amendments were made to extend the rectification process to allow House staff to establish the facts in cases relating to misuse of expenses.<sup>38</sup> The Committee on Standards and Privileges recommended the change in its report on the review of the Code of Conduct at the end of the previous Parliament.<sup>39</sup>

At the beginning of a new Parliament the size of the Committee on Standards and Privileges was reduced to 10 so that "no party had overall control".<sup>40</sup> This addressed the CSPL's previous recommendation that no party should have a majority on the Committee (see November 2002).

### Lay members on the Committee on Standards; PCS's initiative; and publication of information about investigations by the PCS

1 Nov 2009 The CSPL's report, [MPs' allowances and expenses: Supporting parliament, safeguarding the taxpayer](#), recommended that the PCS should be able to conduct investigations without receiving a formal complaint and that there should be at least two lay members on the Committee on Standards and Privileges.<sup>41</sup> The CSPL had been asked to investigate MPs' expenses before the expenses crisis. Whilst it was undertaking its inquiry, the scandal broke, and the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority was established.<sup>42</sup>

Nov 2010 The Committee on Standards and Privileges published reports on:

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> [HC Deb 26 June 2003 c1258](#)

<sup>37</sup> [HC Deb 26 June 2003 c1240](#)

<sup>38</sup> [HC Deb 13 July 2005 cc930-934](#)

<sup>39</sup> Committee on Standards and Privileges, [Review of the Code of Conduct](#), 4 April 2005, HC 472 2004-05, paras 15-17

<sup>40</sup> [HC Deb 13 July 2005 cc930-934](#)

<sup>41</sup> Committee on Standards in Public Life, [MPs' allowances and expenses: Supporting parliament, safeguarding the taxpayer](#), Twelfth Report, November 2009, Cm 7724, recommendation 51, paras 13.65-13.67

<sup>42</sup> IPSA was originally established to be responsible for determining MPs' expenses, paying those expenses and paying MPs' salaries. The CSPL recommended that IPSA should also be responsible to determining MPs' salaries. The CSPL recommendation was accepted and IPSA's remit extended.

[Publication of information about complaints about Members \(PDF, 1,012 KB\)](#), recommended allowing the PCS to publish reports on matters that had been rectified and brief details about cases that were under investigation.<sup>43</sup>

[Power of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards to initiate investigations \(PDF, 785 KB\)](#).<sup>44</sup>

- 2 Dec 2010 The House agreed in principle to the recommendation from the CSPL (in its report on MPs' expenses) that lay members should sit on the Committee on Standards and Privileges – the matter was referred to the Procedure Committee.<sup>45</sup>
- The House approved the two reports from the Committee on Standard and Privileges (4 Nov 2010). It agreed that the PCS could publish reports about complaints that had been rectified and complaints that had not been upheld; and information about complaints received and matters under investigation. It agreed that the PCS should be able to initiate investigations. Changes were made to Standing Order No 150 to implement.<sup>46</sup>
- 7 Nov 2011 Publication of the Procedure Committee's report on lay membership and the Committee on Standards and Privileges.<sup>47</sup>
- 2 March 2012 Publication of the Government response to the Procedure Committee's report.<sup>48</sup>
- 12 Mar 2012 House agreed to split the Committee on Standards and Privileges; that the Committee on Standards should have two or three lay members. Lay members would be able to take part in proceedings, question witnesses but not move motions or vote.
- House agreed a new Standing Order (Lay members of the Committee on Standards: appointment, etc).<sup>49</sup>
- 10 Feb 2015 The Committee on Standards published the Standards System in the House of Commons. It recommended that the Committee should have seven elected and seven lay members. It made recommendations about appointments. It recommended that its Chair should be elected by the whole House.<sup>50</sup>
- 17 Mar 2015 The House agreed that the Committee on Standards should comprise seven MPs and seven lay members and that its Chair should be elected by the House. It agreed that lay members should be appointed for a single term, no longer than six years.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Committee on Standards and Privileges, [Publication of information about complaints against Members](#), 2 November 2010, HC 577 2010-12

<sup>44</sup> Committee on Standards and Privileges, [Power of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards to initiate investigations, 4 November 2010](#), HC 578 2010-12

<sup>45</sup> [HC Deb 2 December 2010 cc995-1017](#)

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Procedure Committee, [Lay membership of the Committee on Standards and Privileges](#), 7 November 2011, HC 1606 2010-12

<sup>48</sup> Procedure Committee, [Lay membership of the Committee on Standards and Privileges: Government Response to the Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2010-12](#), 2 March 2012, HC 1869 2010-12

<sup>49</sup> [HC Deb 12 March 2012 cc69-84](#)

<sup>50</sup> Committee on Standards, [The Standards System in the House of Commons](#), 10 February 2015 HC 383 2014-15

<sup>51</sup> [HC Deb 17 March 2015 cc685-706](#)

## Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme

- Nov 2017 Cross-party working group established to develop an Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme. Its report was published on 8 February 2018.
- 28 Feb 2018 The House agreed that a behaviour code, independent complaints and grievance scheme and policies and training should be developed.<sup>52</sup>
- 13 Jul 2018 Committee on Standards report, Independent Complaints and Grievance Policy: Implementation, published. It reviewed the Working Group's proposals, how it required changes to the Code of Conduct and the role of the Committee and the PCS in overseeing the Scheme.<sup>53</sup>
- 16 Jul 2018 [Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Delivery Report](#) published.
- 19 Jul 2018 The House approved the ICGS Delivery Report and the Committee on Standards Implementation Report. It made changes to the Code of Conduct to incorporate the Scheme.
- It gave oversight of the ICGS to the PCS.
- To ensure confidentiality in the ICGS, the PCS was no longer able to publish details of MPs under investigation (whether related to ICGS or not).
- It required the Committee on Standards to hold an indicative vote of lay and elected Members before any formal division of elected Members took place.<sup>54</sup>
- 10 Dec 2018 Committee on Standards examined the implications of Dame Laura Cox's report for the House's standards system.<sup>55</sup> It examined how the processes of the Committee and the standards systems could ensure independence in the ICGS in line with Dame Laura Cox's recommendations.
- It recommended full voting rights for lay members of the Committee; the abolition of a requirement on the PCS to consult the Committee before initiating an investigation relating to events more than seven years earlier; and allow complaints to be made to the Commissioner by email.
- 7 Jan 2019 The House agreed to give full voting rights to lay members on the Committee on Standards, to allow complaints to be made by email, and to allow the Commissioner to initiate investigations without reference to the Committee.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> [HC Deb 28 February 2018 cc866-904](#)

<sup>53</sup> Committee on Standards, [Independent Complaints and Grievance Policy: Implementation](#), 13 July 2018, HC 1396 2017-19

<sup>54</sup> [HC Deb 19 July 2018 cc627-660](#)

<sup>55</sup> 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. [The Bullying and Harassment of House of Commons Staff – Independent Inquiry Report](#), by Dame Laura Cox was published on 15 October 2018. Dame Laura had been commissioned by the House of Commons Commission in March 2018 to undertake an inquiry into the bullying and harassment of House staff.

<sup>56</sup> [HC Deb 7 January 2019 cc124-136](#)

## Independent Expert Panel

23 June 2020 The House agreed to establish the Independent Expert Panel (IEP) to consider cases against MPs raised under the ICGS.<sup>57</sup>

The PCS was given responsibility for overseeing and making findings in connection with ICGS cases; and to refer cases to the IEP, “where a sanction beyond her powers is contemplated”.<sup>58</sup>

The Committee on Standards no longer had responsibility for the PCS in relation to ICGS matters.<sup>59</sup>

## Sanctions and confidentiality of Members under investigation

19 June 2020 Committee on Standards published proposals to allow the Commissioner to publish information about MPs under investigation in non-ICGS cases: [Confidentiality in the House’s standards system](#)<sup>60</sup>

21 July 2020 Committee on Standards published proposals on the sanctions that could be imposed by the PCS, the IEP, the Committee on Standards and those sanctions that could only be imposed after a decision by the House of Commons: [Sanctions in respect of the conduct of Members](#)<sup>61</sup>

30 March 2021 Committee on Standards published revised recommendations on sanctions and reporting information about MPs under investigation by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards: [Sanctions and confidentiality in the House’s standards system: revised proposals](#)<sup>62</sup>

21 April 2021 The House agreed that the PCS should restart publishing information about non-ICGS investigations into Members that were ongoing.<sup>63</sup>

The PCS was given authority to hold discussions with Members to express concern (informal discussion) or give advice (formal discussions) about their reported attitude, behaviour or conduct.<sup>64</sup>

The House also agreed the sanctions that could be imposed by the PCS, the IEP and the Committee on Standards, and those which needed the approval of the House before they could be imposed on an MP. These sanctions were set out in Resolutions of the House.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> [HC Deb 23 June 2020 cc1244-1272](#)

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> Committee on Standards, [Confidentiality in the House’s standards system, 19 June 2020, HC 474 2019-20](#)

<sup>61</sup> Committee on Standards, [Sanctions in respect of the conduct of Members, 21 July 2021, HC 241 2019-21](#)

<sup>62</sup> Committee on Standards, [Sanctions and confidentiality in the House’s standards system: revised proposals, 30 March 2021, HC 1340 2019-21](#)

<sup>63</sup> [HC Deb 21 April 2021 cc1074-](#)

<sup>64</sup> Ibid

<sup>65</sup> Ibid



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