



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

# Committee on Standards in Public Life

Governance Reform and Democracy

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## What is the Committee on Standards in Public Life?

- The Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) is an independent advisory non-departmental public body of the United Kingdom Government, established in 1994 to advise the Prime Minister on ethical standards in public life.



## What does it actually do?

The Committee has a secretariat and budget provided by the Cabinet Office. It is responsible for:

- advising the Prime Minister on ethical issues relating to standards in public life
- conducting broad inquiries into **standards of conduct**
- making recommendations as to changes in present arrangements
- promoting the **7 principles of public life.**



## The 7 principles – the Nolan Principles

### 1. **Selflessness**

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

### 2. **Integrity**

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

### 3. **Objectivity**

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.



## The 7 principles (continued)

### 4. **Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

### 5. **Openness**

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

### 6. **Honesty**

Holders of public office should be truthful.

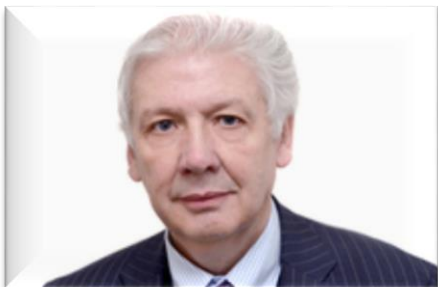
### 7. **Leadership**

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.



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## Members of the Committee



**Lord Paul Bew (Chair)**



**Dame Shirley Pearce**



**Dame Margaret Beckett**



**Monisha Shah**



**Jane Ramsey**



**Dr Jane Martin**



**Simon Hart MP**



**Lord Andrew Stunell OBE**



## CASE STUDY: Member of Parliament Expenses

The Committee last looked at this issue as part of its inquiry into MPs' expenses in 2009 and recommended that:

- MPs should remain free to undertake some paid activity outside the House of Commons, provided it is kept within reasonable limits and there is transparency about the nature of the activity and the amount of time spent on it.
- Consideration should be given to ways of increasing the accessibility and usability of the Register of Members' Financial Interests.
- MPs should be required to register positions of responsibility in voluntary or charitable organisations, even if unpaid, together with an indication of the amount of time spent on them.
- All candidates at parliamentary elections should publish, **at nomination**, a register of interests including the existence of other paid jobs and whether they intend to continue to hold them, if elected.



## **CASE STUDY:** **Strengthening Transparency around Lobbying**

The Committee last looked at this issue in 2013 and made recommendations including:

- Recording meetings with lobbying organisations
- Declining all but the most insignificant or incidental gifts, benefit or hospitality from professional lobbyists.
- Public office holders' registers of interest, gifts and hospitality should be published regularly
- Imposing restrictions on parliamentary lobbying by former MPs
- Public bodies should routinely publish information about hospitality involving external attempts to influence a public policy decision
- Government departments should publish the number of secondment and interchanges in and out of their organisation. Other public bodies should similarly proactively disclose such information



## What about standards in local government?

- The Coalition Government (2010 -2015) announced in its Programme for Government in May 2010 that the “Standards Board regime”, which regulated the treatment of councillors’ conduct and pecuniary interests, was to be abolished. This was done via the Localism Act 2011. *Standards for England* was abolished on 1 April 2012.
- The new standards arrangements replace the prior Government’s ethical framework for local councillors. This was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 and amended by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Local government standards are devolved to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.



## Why was this change made?

A Ministry press release in 2012:

*“These new measures, outlined in the Localism Act, will replace the bureaucratic and controversial Standards Board regime, which ministers believe had become a system of nuisance complaints and petty, sometimes malicious, allegations of councillor misconduct that sapped public confidence in local democracy”*



## What did the change do?

The Localism Act 2011 included the following measures:

- The abolition of Standards for England (previously the ‘Local Government Standards Board for England’);
- A requirement for local authorities to promote and maintain high standards of conduct;
- Provision for the introduction of local codes of conduct and local responsibility for investigating alleged breaches of those codes. Local authorities were to establish a code, which was to be based on the seven ‘**Nolan principles**’ and to specify sanctions for breaking it;
- Requirements concerning how local codes of conduct should treat the registration and disclosure of pecuniary and other interests;
- The creation of a new criminal offence of failing to comply with the statutory requirements for disclosure of pecuniary interests.



## Local government standards

The CSPL is currently undertaking a review of local government ethical standards. The terms of reference for the review are to:

1. Examine the structures, processes and practices in local government in England for:
  - a) Maintaining codes of conduct for local councillors;
  - b) Investigating alleged breaches fairly and with due process;
  - c) Enforcing codes and imposing sanctions for misconduct;
  - d) Declaring interests and managing conflicts of interest; and
  - e) Whistleblowing
2. Assess whether the existing structures, processes and practices are conducive to high standards of conduct in local government;
3. Make any recommendations for how they can be improved; and
4. Note any evidence of intimidation of councillors, and make recommendations for any measures that could be put in place to prevent and address such intimidation.

**The Committee is currently analysing the responses to the consultation**