

PRESS NOTICE

Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards

Annual Report April 2013 – March 2014

The Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, Kathryn Hudson today published her annual report for 2013-14. This is her second report, covering her first full year in office.

The Report sets out the work of the Commissioner during the year, including inquiries into the conduct of individual Members, the preparation of the four registers of interests, reviews of the agreements with the Metropolitan Police and IPSA, the development of the Respect Policy and new rules concerning the regulation of All Party Groups.

During the year, 93 formal complaints were received, of which nine were accepted for inquiry. Ten inquiries were resolved including two brought forward from the previous year. The Commissioner continued to ensure that confidential advice was available to Members and their staff, including briefings about the registration requirements. The report also acknowledges changes in the accommodation and staffing of the Commissioner's team which have assisted the development of her work.

However, the Report highlights again the previous Commissioner's review of the Guide to the Rules completed in December 2012 saying;

“I would be failing in my responsibility to the House if I did not express my grave concern that the House still has not been given the opportunity to consider the revisions to the Guide to the Rules proposed by the Committee on Standards and Privileges in December 2012. It is extremely disappointing that time has not been found for such a debate, not least because the new rules are considerably clearer on certain issues, including some which have been the subject of inquiries this year. If there is disagreement with some of the Committee's proposals, MPs would be free to amend them in debate and leadership may be shown by addressing issues transparently and honestly, rather than by avoiding difficult discussions. In my first annual report I expressed my disappointment that the House had not found time to consider the changes. Another full year has now passed without such a debate and decision on the rules.”

The need for this leadership is made all the more relevant by plans agreed in recent weeks for the Standards Committee to undertake a review of the way in which it works and make recommendations for the future.

On receipt of the Commissioner's Annual Report, the Chair of the Committee on Standards, Mr Kevin Barron MP, said

'... I welcome the independent Commissioner's Annual Report and fully endorse her comments on the need for debate on the revisions to the rules put forward by the Committee on Standards.'

The Commissioner also reminds MPs and others of the seven principles of conduct for those in public life, saying in conclusion;

"Many MPs and staff of the House already show leadership in adhering to these principles. I suggest that part of the thinking for the coming year might be about the ways in which we might all make these standards more visible in our everyday work"

Notes for Editors

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1. The current framework for Parliamentary Standards dates from 1995, when the first Commissioner was appointed. Kathryn Hudson is the fifth Commissioner. She was appointed for five years with effect from 1 January 2013. The appointment is not renewable.
2. The Commissioner's main duties are:
 - to maintain the Register of Members' Financial Interests and the other registers of interests for Members' staff, journalists and All-Party Groups;
 - to provide advice confidentially on matters relating to the registration and declaration of interests;
 - to advise the Committee on Standards on the interpretation of the Code of Conduct;
 - to monitor the operation of the Code of Conduct and registers and to make recommendations to the Committee thereon;
 - to investigate, if she thinks fit, specific matters which have come to her attention relating to the conduct of Members and to report on them to the Committee on Standards.

The Commissioner's remit does not extend to the House of Lords. Information about the House of Lords Commissioner for Standards can be found at

<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/the-commissioner-for-standards/>

Complaints about the misuse of the scheme for parliamentary expenses since May 2010 are a matter for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority. Information about their Compliance Officer is available at <http://www.parliamentarycompliance.org.uk/>

3. The Commissioner's Annual Report can be found at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmcomstan.htm>

Memoranda on individual cases investigated by the Commissioner during the year were published as appendices to Reports of the Committee on Standards and Privileges, and can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/standards-and-privileges-committee/publications/>

Details of cases concluded via the rectification process since 2008 can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/pcfs/publications/inquiries/matters-rectified/>

Details of cases not upheld without a memorandum to the Committee since 2008 can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/pcfs/publications/inquiries/matters-not-upheld/>

Information about the Commissioner's current caseload can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/pcfs/publications/inquiries/current-inquiries/>

Statistics on complaints can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/pcfs/publications/inquiries/complaints-statistics/>

Description of the process for investigating complaints can be found at http://www.parliament.uk/documents/documents/Procedural_Note-April_2012.pdf

The latest edition of the Register of Members' Financial Interests can be found at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmregmem/contents.htm>

4. The Commissioner's office is available for media enquiries on 020 7219 8431.