

## **Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards**

### **Annual Report April 2018 – March 2019**

The Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, Kathryn Stone OBE, today publishes her Annual Report.

The Report describes the work of the Commissioner's office during the 2018-19 business year, which was Kathryn's first full year in office. The Commissioner is responsible for advising the Committee on Standards, for keeping the Registers, for reviewing the Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules, and for investigating allegations that MPs have breached their Code of Conduct and the associated rules.

During the year, the House of Commons made some important changes to the Commissioner's remit and her working arrangements. On 19 July 2018 the House gave the Commissioner the extra responsibility of overseeing investigations of complaints of harassment, bullying or sexual harassment against MPs, and of deciding most of these. On 7 January 2019 the House modernised some of the Commissioner's procedures. As a result, she can now investigate allegations sent to her by email or in other formats. And she could investigate a former MP or a case more than 7 years old, or refer it to the Metropolitan Police, without consulting the Standards Committee. These changes affirm the Commissioner's independence.

In Chapter 3 the Commissioner reports on her first experience of overseeing investigations and determining cases under the new Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme, introduced in July 2018. As there were so few of these cases in this period, she gives only an outline of this work.

The Commissioner gives a more detailed account of other inquiries she has started and completed during the year. These involved failures to disclose interests, misuse of House facilities, and in one case a breach of the advocacy rule. During 2018-19 the Commissioner received a record 2,456 complaints against MPs, many submitted as part of a campaign organised through social media. She brought forward 9 investigations from the previous year, opened 18 new ones and resolved 17. Ten investigations continue in 2019-20.

The Commissioner regrets that, as a result of decisions taken on 19 July 2018, she is not permitted to disclose anything about these ongoing investigations or about any new ones started in 2019-20. She agrees that confidentiality is important during investigations of harassment, bullying or sexual harassment, particularly when complainants are vulnerable. But she believes that the electorate has a right to know when MPs are under investigation for other matters such as failures to disclose interests.

## **Notes for Editors**

1. The current framework for Parliamentary Standards dates from 1995, when the first Commissioner was appointed. Kathryn Stone OBE is the sixth Commissioner. She was appointed for five years with effect from 1 January 2018. 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.
- to consider cases arising under the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme.
- The Commissioner's remit was extended on 19 July 2018 to allow her to consider complaints against MPs of bullying, harassment and sexual harassment under the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS).

Details of the ICGS scheme can be found here:

<https://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-8369>.

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

<https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/house-of-lords-commissioner-for-standards-/house-of-lords-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.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial->

[interests/parliamentary-commissioner-for-standards/publications/annual-reports/](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/standards/publications/annual-reports/)

Memoranda on individual cases investigated by the Commissioner during the year were published as appendices to Reports of the Committee on Standards

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/standards/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-financial-interests/parliamentary-commissioner-for-standards/complaints-and-investigations/allegations-the-commissioner-has-rectified/>

Details of cases not upheld, where no memorandum was sent to the Committee since 2008, can be found at

<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/parliamentary-commissioner-for-standards/complaints-and-investigations/allegations-the-commissioner-has-not-upheld/>

Statistics on complaints can be found at

<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/parliamentary-commissioner-for-standards/complaints-and-investigations/complaints-statistics/>

Description of the process for investigating complaints can be found at

<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/parliamentary-commissioner-for-standards/complaints-and-investigations/>

The latest edition of the Register of Members' Financial Interests can be found at

<http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/parliamentary-commissioner-for-standards/registers-of-interests/register-of-members-financial-interests/>

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