

Agenda – Standards of Conduct Committee

Meeting Venue:

via Video Conference – External

Meeting date: 4 May 2020

Meeting time: 10.00

For further information contact:

Meriel Singleton

Committee Clerk

0300 200 6565

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- 1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest**

- 2 Consider report from the Commissioner for Standards in accordance with Standing Order 22.2(i)**
10.00–10.30

- 3 Correspondence on UK Standards issues**
10.30–11.00 (Pages 1 – 3)
SoC(5)–06–20 Paper 1 – Letter from Kate Green MP, Chair of the House of Commons Committee on Standards.



Agenda Item 3

House of Commons Committee on Standards

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From Kate Green MP, Chair of the Committee

Jayne Bryant AM
Chair, Standards of Conduct Committee
National Assembly for Wales
By email

14 April 2020

Dear Ms Bryant,

Committee on Standards inquiry into sanctions against MPs

I am writing on behalf of the House of Commons Committee on Standards to invite your Committee to submit written evidence to our inquiry into sanctions against Members of Parliament found to have breached the House's Code of Conduct.

I attach in an annex the terms of reference of the inquiry, which was commenced by our predecessors in the last Parliament and is now being resumed with the aim of producing an early report to the House.

As will be seen, the inquiry is considering a range of issues, including whether the power to sanction can be delegated by the House (for example, to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards); if and how the current range of sanctions could be extended, for instance to include compulsory training or deprivation of services; the confidentiality of sanctions in cases of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct; and a right of appeal against sanctions.

We are especially interested in the experience of other Parliaments and Assemblies, both in the UK and elsewhere, in relation to the issues we are considering.

I would be grateful if you might send us any submission, if possible, by not later than **Friday 8 May**. Guidelines for written evidence submissions can be found on our website.¹ I am

¹ <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/witnessguide.pdf>

conscious that this deadline may be challenging at the current time. However, the Committee wishes to conclude its inquiry and report back to the House on this issue as soon as possible. We would be very grateful for any submission you are able to send us.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kate Green', is centered on the page.

KATE GREEN MP

**CHAIR, COMMITTEE ON
STANDARDS**



Terms of reference of the inquiry

Purpose of the inquiry

There are currently a range of sanctions that may be imposed on Members who are found to have breached the rules. These include oral or written apologies, suspension of salary, suspension from the service of the House for a specified period, or expulsion.

The Committee will consider the purpose of sanctions, whether the current range of sanctions is satisfactory, how effectively they can be enforced, and if there should be additional options of varying severity, between apology and suspension.

The Committee will also consider how the sanctions it recommends or imposes interact with the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards' rectification procedure.

Parliament's [Behaviour Code](#) ( PDF 440 KB) has been adopted by both the House of Lords and the House of Commons, supported by an [Independent Complaints and Grievances Scheme](#) (ICGS). In light of these developments, the Committee's aim is to ensure that the House has a robust, fair and enforceable system of sanctions which are fit for purpose.

Send us your views

Issues to be considered by the inquiry will include:

- How far does the House have the power to delegate the sanctioning of Members? Should the Commissioner for Standards have the right to impose sanctions, in addition to her existing rectification powers?
- Should there be a right of appeal against sanctions, and if so, who would hear the appeal?
- If sanctions are imposed following a complaint under the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS), i.e. relating to alleged bullying, harassment or sexual misconduct, is it feasible or desirable for that sanction to remain confidential, after the conclusion of the investigation?
- Should new types of remedy or sanction be adopted, such as compulsory training, deprivation of access to services or facilities, a ban on appointment to committees or overseas travel on parliamentary business, or reimbursement of the costs of the investigation? Can any new sanctions on Members be created without disadvantaging constituents or Members' own staff?
- Is a formal tariff of sanctions needed, with 'sentencing guidelines'?
- What lessons can be learned from the practice of other parliaments and assemblies, within the UK and overseas? Or from the practice of professional regulatory bodies?
- What implications would changes to the sanction system to take account of ICGS cases have for other breaches of the rules (e.g. relating to registration and declaration of interests, or misuse of House facilities)?