

PRESS NOTICE

Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards Annual Report April 2012 - March 2013

The Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, Kathryn Hudson, today publishes her annual report for 2012–13. This is her first report since she took up her post on 1 January 2013.

The Report covers the work of the Commissioner and her predecessor, John Lyon, during the year. This includes inquiries into individual Members' conduct, the preparation of the four registers of interests and a review of the Guide to the Rules relating to the conduct of Members.

During the year, 117 formal complaints were received, of which seven were accepted for inquiry. Nine inquiries were resolved during the year. Both Commissioners continued to ensure that confidential advice was available to Members and their staff, including briefings and seminars about the registration requirements. The report also describes the developments in the House's standards framework, in particular the appointment of lay members to sit on the Committee on Standards.

The report highlights the previous Commissioner's review of the Guide to the Rules. The Committee on Standards and Privileges considered the Commissioner's recommendations and made recommendations to the House in December 2012. The House has not yet had an opportunity to debate these proposals. The new Commissioner says:

“I am concerned that the House has not yet considered the revisions to the Guide to the Rules relating to the conduct of Members which were proposed by the Committee on Standards and Privileges in December 2012.[...] [The proposed new Guide] both clarifies and simplifies the expectations on Members. I believe it will support Members in their day to day work if these can be introduced in the near future.”

The Commissioner also hopes that the House will have an opportunity to consider the Committee's proposal for an amendment to the Code of Conduct. She says:

“I hope the House will also soon have a chance to reconsider its decision to prevent the Commissioner from investigating the conduct of any Member in his or her private and personal lives, when that conduct has significantly damaged the reputation and integrity of the House or its Members generally. Such conduct is rare [...] [but] if the House accepts this change, it will bring clarity to the rules in this area and to my remit.”

In conclusion, Kathryn Hudson says:

“I look forward to serving the Committee and the House in the coming year and to helping to ensure that the House has a standards system in which the public, and Members themselves, can have confidence. By ensuring that such a system is in place the House will assist in regaining public confidence and trust in the Members elected to represent their constituents and in democracy itself.”

Notes for Editors

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/pdfs/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 1883.