House of Commons
Committee on Standards

Interests of Committee Chairs: a consultation

Eighth Report of Session 2013–14

Report, together with formal minutes

Ordered by the House of Commons
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The Committee on Standards

The Committee on Standards is appointed by the House of Commons to oversee the work of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards; to examine the arrangements proposed by the Commissioner for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of the Register of Members’ Interests and any other registers of interest established by the House; to review from time to time the form and content of those registers; to consider any specific complaints made in relation to the registering or declaring of interests referred to it by the Commissioner; to consider any matter relating to the conduct of Members, including specific complaints in relation to alleged breaches in the Code of Conduct which have been drawn to the Committee’s attention by the Commissioner; and to recommend any modifications to the Code of Conduct as may from time to time appear to be necessary.

Current membership

Rt Hon Kevin Barron MP (Labour, Rother Valley) (Chair)
Sir Paul Beresford MP (Conservative, Mole Valley)
Mr Robert Buckland MP (Conservative, South Swindon)
Rt Hon Tom Clarke MP (Labour, Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill)
Mr Christopher Chope MP (Conservative, Christchurch)
Mr Geoffrey Cox MP (Conservative, Torridge and West Devon)
Sharon Darcy (Lay Member)
Sir Nick Harvey MP (Liberal Democrat, North Devon)
Mr Peter Jinman (Lay Member)
Fiona O’Donnell MP (Labour, East Lothian)
Mr Walter Rader (Lay Member)
Heather Wheeler MP (Conservative, South Derbyshire)
Dr Alan Whitehead MP (Labour, Southampton Test)

The following were also Members of the Committee during the Parliament:
Annette Brooke MP (Liberal Democrat, Mid Dorset and North Poole)

Powers

The constitution and powers of the Committee are set out in Standing Order No. 149. In particular, the Committee has power to order the attendance of any Member of Parliament before the committee and to require that specific documents or records in the possession of a Member relating to its inquiries, or to the inquiries of the Commissioner, be laid before the Committee. The Committee has power to refuse to allow its public proceedings to be broadcast. The Law Officers, if they are Members of Parliament, may attend and take part in the Committee’s proceedings, but may not vote.

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at: www.parliament.uk/standards.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Eve Samson (Clerk), Danielle Nash (Second Clerk) and Miss Christine McGrane (Committee Assistant).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to The Clerk of the Committee on Standards, Journal Office, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 6615.
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Introduction

1. The Committee on Standards has decided to consult on whether the rules relating to committee Chairs’ interests remain appropriate. Last year, Mr Speaker raised with us the question of whether there might be “an inherent incompatibility between chairing a select committee and having commercial interests, even though fully transparently registered, in the sector covered by that committee”.1 As the Commissioner was then undertaking an investigation into an allegation that a committee Chair had acted improperly, we deferred dealing with this matter until that investigation was concluded. The Committee reported on this matter on 19 November 2013.2

2. In November 2013 the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) published its report *Strengthening Transparency Around Lobbying* which includes the recommendation that:

   Consideration should be given to:

   Whether Chairmanship of a Select Committee brings with it a particular influence on matters of public policy that justifies the imposition of additional restrictions in relation to conflicts of interests.3

The CSPL paper gives no indication that there have been problems, but we agree it is important to consider this issue.

3. The Commissioner set out the dilemma in brief in her memorandum on Mr Tim Yeo:

   While the House takes a very reasonable position that a Member’s knowledge and interests may well enhance his or her ability to contribute to the work of the House and in particular to some of the specialist committees, there is equally a reasonable concern that that Member is then placed in a privileged position which he or she may be able to exploit for their own interests with few checks and balances to control this.4

This succinct statement itself raises a number of questions. To give two examples: how much is committee work enhanced if Members’ have expertise in the topic concerned? What is the nature of the undoubted influence exercised by committee members in general, and Chairs in particular?

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1 Letter from Mr Speaker to the Chair of the Committee on Standards on select committee Chairs and commercial interests, dated 12 June 2013, www.parliament.uk
2 Committee on Standards, Fifth Report of Session 2013–14, Mr Tim Yeo, HC 849
3 Committee on Standards in Public Life, *Strengthening Transparency Around Lobbying*, November 2013, p 20
4 HC (2013–14) 849, Appendix 1, para 58
Public trust

4. The reputational risk from allowing arrangements which do not command public support to continue should not be underestimated. Many members of the public and commentators undoubtedly think that there should be restrictions on the interests held by committee Chairs. On the other hand, the House has rules to ensure that interests are transparent, and restrictions on what Members with external interests are allowed to do. Complaints are independently investigated. There has been no recent instance in which a complaint that a committee Chair was acting improperly was upheld. It would be counterproductive if measures put in place to secure public confidence reduced committees’ ability to function effectively or were disproportionate, ineffective or unfair.

5. This consultation paper explores some of the many factors which may have a bearing on the rules which govern committee Chairs’ interests. We welcome respondents’ views on these, and other factors they consider relevant.

Members’ interests: general

6. Views on whether or not committee Chairs should be permitted to hold external interests will be conditioned by views on the question of the propriety of individual Members holding external interests. That is not a question for the Committee, but we explore this extremely briefly here, to provide background for the consultation itself.

7. The existing disqualification regime already puts an effective bar on Members having certain types of external interest. Broadly speaking the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 prevents persons who have executive responsibilities or serve the state in other capacities, or who control organisations which rely on the state for income, from also being MPs. So, for example, membership of the civil service, the higher judiciary, of the regular armed forces or the police is a ground for disqualification, as is holding any one of the particular posts listed in the Schedule to the Act (e.g. being chairman, or member receiving remuneration, of the Olympic Delivery Authority).

8. Until relatively recently the possession of private interests was considered uncontroversial, although Members were expected to declare interests where they were relevant. It was not until 1974 that a Register of Members’ interests was introduced.

9. There is now a body of opinion which considers that Members should no longer be permitted to have outside interests. The arguments for and against such interests were summarised by the Committee on Standards in Public Life:

   Many members of the public have argued against MPs holding a second job on the grounds that it compromises their role as representatives of the people, that being an MP is, or should be, a full-time job if done properly and that not having other jobs avoids any conflict of interest and ensures that MPs do the job that the state pays them to do. A large number of others support MPs having paid outside interests. They believe this brings wider experience to the House or argue that if MPs became
detached from the world outside Parliament this would be bad for democracy, and lead to poorer legislation.  

10. There are further arguments which could be made on each side, for example:

- Members can draw on their previous experiences and on contact with others to inform policy-making; they do not need continued active participation in business or employment outside Parliament.

Or that:

- restricting interests would make the House more likely to appeal only to career politicians, and would mean Members depended on the support of the party for their continuing income (since they would lose their seats if deselected) and would be more likely to toe the party line; and

- it is for parties to decide on selection and constituencies to decide on election; if outside interests became unacceptable, candidates with such interests would no longer be selected.

11. Some of these general arguments may also be relevant to the rules for committee Chairs.

**Current rules**

12. The business of the House of Commons is divided between **public business**, that is business which affects the generality of the population, and **private business**, that is business which affects particular localities or persons. Private legislation is brought forward not by the Government or any MP but by promoters such as local authorities seeking particular powers to exercise in their locality, or universities seeking to change their statutes. In private business the House and its committees make decisions affecting individuals or particular bodies which are analogous to those which might be made by a Minister or a planning authority. There are very strict rules about interests, and Members on committees on proposed private bills are required to declare that their constituents have no local interests and they have no personal interests in the bill.

13. The bulk of the business of the House is now public business, and that is what this Report considers. The rules relating to public business are more nuanced than those relating to private business, since public business is concerned with broad policy questions rather than with taking decisions directly in relation to particular localities or organisations.

14. Since 1992, there have been provisions to ensure that Members’ interests are known to those electing the Chair of a select committee relating to public business. As the Committee on Standards and Privileges said:

   The intention of the House was to ensure that, when the members of a select committee choose their chairman, they do so in the knowledge of his or her relevant

   6 Committee on Standards in Public Life, *MPs’ expenses and allowances*, Cm 7724, November 2009, p 86
interests. The presumption is that they will select a member whose effectiveness in that role will not be compromised by his or her outside interests.7

Although when these rules were introduced it was envisaged they would not apply in committees of a purely procedural nature, the practice has been to ensure that interests are declared whatever the nature of the committee.

15. Even where a Member does have interests that could be considered to be related to a committee’s remit, most committee work is concerned with broad topics, rather than with issues where a specific conflict could arise. Members with an interest relating to a particular topic are expected to declare them both in private meetings and in any relevant public evidence session. These declarations are minuted.8 Declarations of interest can be made even when the interest is tangential: for example, a Member has declared an interest in attendance at the UK-Korea forum in the context of an inquiry into China.9

16. It has also been the rule where a Chair or committee member has a conflicting interest in relation to a specific inquiry, he or she should stand aside from it. While it is rare for a Chair or Member to have to stand aside from an inquiry, it is not exceptional. For example, a committee Chair stood aside from part of an inquiry related to driving under the influence of drink and drugs on the grounds that a close relative owned a retail business selling drug testing kits.10 Since, in addition to their publication in the Register, all interests are circulated to committee members and have to be declared when relevant, it is open to Members to challenge one another if they consider there could be a conflict of interest in relation to a particular inquiry.

17. The current detailed guidance dates from 2003 when pay for select committee chairs was introduced. Before the guidance was promulgated, the then Committee on Standards and Privileges considered whether there should be restrictions on Chairs’ interests. Although the Liaison Committee (which is made up of the Chairs of most select committees) noted a majority of its members considered that pay for Chairs should be accompanied by a requirement to relinquish outside interests,11 the Committee on Standards and Privileges concluded:

Receipt by a Member of a salary from public funds has not hitherto been a ground per se for imposing restrictions on their outside interests. We see no reason why a different principle should apply to payments to select committee chairmen.12

Instead, it stipulated that:

no question of, nor any appearance of, any double payment—from both a chairman’s salary and an outside interest—for an outside activity arising primarily as a result of

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7 Committee on Standards and Privileges, Sixth Report of Session 2002 – 03, Pay for Select Committee Chairmen, HC 1150, para 6
8 Declarations made in public evidence sessions will appear in the transcript of that session.
9 Foreign Affairs Committee, Formal Minutes of meeting on 2 July 2013, www.parliament.uk
10 Transport Committee, Formal Minutes of meeting on 24 November 2010, www.parliament.uk
12 HC (2002 – 03) 1150, para 14
Guidance was put in place to implement this recommendation.

_Election of committee Chairs_

18. In 2009 the House agreed that the Chairs of certain committees should be elected not by the committee in question, but by the House as a whole. The list of candidates clearly indicates any relevant interests held by the Members concerned and has also been used to indicate that a candidate had relinquished an interest, or intended to do so if elected. The majority of candidates for committee Chairs in 2010 either had no relevant interests, or unremunerated interests only.

_Types of committees to be covered_

19. There are legislatures in which there is no distinction between the specialist committee which sets its own agenda, and the legislative committee; the same committee will be responsible for considering legislation and for considering policy in general. In the House of Commons there is a broad distinction between select committees which scrutinise policy and general committees which look at primary and secondary legislation.

20. The current discussion of Chairs’ interests is focused on Chairs of select committees, and in particular the subject related committees. The Chairs of such committees are elected, either by the House or by the committee itself, rather than being appointed, and hold office for the entire Parliament. In general such committees have power to determine their own agendas, and the Chair has significant influence on the Committee programme. As Erskine May says: “It is customary for committees to delegate decisions of routine matters, such as adjustments to the timing of meetings and the organisation of oral evidence sessions, to the chair”. Nonetheless the Chair has few formal powers. A committee as a whole will decide on significant matters such as the topics of inquiries, and each Member is free to propose particular witnesses to a committee or to put the questions he or she chooses to committee witnesses.

21. The Chairs of General Committees are appointed by Mr Speaker from the Panel of Chairs, and are appointed in respect of a specific matter, such as a particular Bill or piece of delegated legislation. General Committees deal with legislation, and do not set their own agenda. The role of the Chair is to preside over the conduct of the business and to ensure that the rules of the House are observed. The Chair of such a committee has procedural powers, such as the power to accept a motion for closure of debate, to ensure a committee transacts its business efficiently. His or her influence over the subject matter before a Committee is limited to the selection of amendments, which is governed by reasonably

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13 Ibid., para 16
14 See S.O. No. 122B.
15 House of Commons, Members nominated for election as Select Committee Chairs: Final list of nominations received up to and including close of nominations at 5 pm on Tuesday 8 June 2010, www.parliament.uk
clear rules. Chairs of such committees can only vote if a casting vote is needed and there are strong conventions about the way in which such a vote should be used.

22. There are some select committees in which the committee’s primary role is to scrutinise legislation which is brought before it, such as the Regulatory Reform Committee, or the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments. In these cases, the committee has limited freedom to determine its own agenda, and the Chair does not have the procedural powers of a General Committee chair. More details about the variety of committees in the House of Commons are annexed to this report.

Ministers’ interests

23. There has been a suggestion that Chairs’ interests should be treated in the same way as Ministers’ interests. The Ministerial Code does not prohibit the possession of external financial interests, but puts in place a mechanism for managing them. The procedure is as follows:

7.3 On appointment to each new office, Ministers must provide their Permanent Secretary with a full list in writing of all interests which might be thought to give rise to a conflict. The list should also cover interests of the Minister’s spouse or partner and close family which might be thought to give rise to a conflict.

7.4 Where appropriate, the Minister will meet the Permanent Secretary and the independent adviser on Ministers’ interests to agree action on the handling of interests. Ministers must record in writing what action has been taken, and provide the Permanent Secretary and the independent adviser on Ministers’ interests with a copy of that record.

7.5 The personal information which Ministers disclose to those who advise them is treated in confidence. However, a statement covering relevant Ministers’ interests will be published twice yearly.

7.6 Where it is proper for a Minister to retain a private interest, he or she should declare that interest to Ministerial colleagues if they have to discuss public business which in any way affects it and the Minister should remain entirely detached from the consideration of that business. Similar steps may be necessary in relation to a Minister’s previous interests.

Financial interests

7.7 Ministers must scrupulously avoid any danger of an actual or perceived conflict of interest between their Ministerial position and their private financial interests. They should be guided by the general principle that they should either dispose of the interest giving rise to the conflict or take alternative steps to prevent it. In reaching their decision they should be guided by the advice given to them by their Permanent Secretary and the independent adviser on Ministers’ interests. Ministers’ decisions
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should not be influenced by the hope or expectation of future employment with a particular firm or organisation.¹⁷

24. If Ministers are allowed to maintain an interest the department must put processes in place to ensure they do not have access to “certain papers” and “certain discussions” in relation to that interest.

25. The Ministerial Code also restricts the Ministers’ non-financial interests:

7.13 Ministers should not [...] normally accept invitations to act as patrons of, or otherwise offer support to, pressure groups, or organisations dependent in whole or in part on Government funding. There is normally less objection to a Minister associating him or herself with a charity, subject to the points above, but Ministers should take care to ensure that in participating in any fund-raising activity, they do not place, or appear to place, themselves under an obligation as Ministers to those to whom appeals are directed and for this reason they should not approach individuals or companies personally for this purpose.¹⁸

26. The Committee on Standards and Privileges considered that “special considerations apply to members of the Government, principally because of their need to be seen to have no personal interest in Ministerial decisions, for which all Ministers have collective responsibility”.¹⁹ In addition, Ministers have specific responsibilities within their department, and may hold interests related to their department but which do not conflict with their particular ministerial duties. The List of Ministers’ Interests demonstrates that most Ministers handle conflicts of interests by putting in place blind trust or blind management arrangements. Nonetheless we note that land belonging to one Minister in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs receives grants from the single payment scheme or woodland grant schemes.²⁰

27. Committees, particularly departmental committees, can have a very wide remit. For example, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport’s responsibilities are listed as:

making it easier for everyone to enjoy our national culture, play sport and have access to world-leading mobile and online communications

making it easier for the media, creative, tourism and telecoms industries to grow by reducing restrictions, providing advice and supporting innovation, while protecting the interests of citizens

protecting free access to cultural institutions, art and broadcasting that challenges and provokes, and funding our future elite athletes

the Government Art Collection, which places art in British government buildings and official residences around the world, to promote British art and history while contributing to cultural diplomacy

¹⁷ Cabinet Office, Ministerial Code, May 2010, paras 7.3–7.7
¹⁸ Ibid., para 7.13
¹⁹ HC (2002–03) 1150, para 12
²⁰ Cabinet Office, List of Ministers’ Interests, October 2013
We also lead on issues relating to women, sexual orientation and transgender equality matters through the Government Equalities Office (GEO), which is part of DCMS.21

This is both wide ranging and imprecise. A committee may potentially look at any matter within a department’s remit, so restrictions on the interests held by a committee Chair would potentially be greater than those on a Minister in the department scrutinised by the committee. Whether or not it was easy to define those interests would depend on the committee concerned. It might be relatively simple to decide which sectors fell within the ambit of the Defence Committee, but more taxing to decide whether a particular interest was germane to the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Is restriction on interests proportionate?

28. Committees’ tasks are set down in Standing Orders; departmental select committees generally have the remit of examining “the expenditure, administration and policy” of the Department they monitor. This can be seen as essentially a reactive task. Nonetheless, in practice, committees interpret their remit broadly, and see it as part of their task to identify deficiencies in policy and urge change. But however forceful a chair may be, committee reports have to be agreed by the committee as a whole. Chairs do not have a vote unless a casting vote is needed, although they then have discretion to vote as they wish.

29. In addition, however forceful a committee may be, it is for the Government to drive policy; it puts forward legislation, appoints key public servants, and makes policy changes. Committee proposals can only be implemented if a Minister considers them desirable and his or her colleagues in Government agree.

30. Some professions require continuing validation. The rules for this can be complex and vary between regulators. A ban on external interests could restrict Members’ abilities to retain relevant expertise and use it in service of the committee.

Do interests help committees function more effectively?

31. It can be argued that external interests bring expertise. The House of Lords is widely regarded as an expert House, because it can draw on the experience of its Members. Chairs are increasingly in the public eye, and expected to be expert in their field.

32. The degree to which expertise in a committee’s subject matter is desirable depends on the nature of the committee, and the nature of the task. Committees hear evidence in the course of their inquiries, and base their reports on that evidence. Much of the background work is done by the committee secretariat. Nonetheless, committee members’ work is informed by their wider knowledge and interest. It is likely to assist committee members in evaluating the evidence they receive. Such expertise can influence the choice of inquiries, or lead members to suggest particular witnesses. None of these decisions are made by a single member, but the Chair does have a strong influence on the committee and the committee’s programme. This might be an argument for Chairs to be well-connected and active in the

21 Department for Culture, Media and Sport, What we do, www.dcms.gov.uk
committee subject area. Conversely, it could suggest that active interests are themselves problematic. Nonetheless, other members may have forceful views and may be able to persuade the committee to agree. For this reason consideration might be given to increasing transparency by publishing all committee members’ interests, including those of the Chair, as an addendum to any report.

**Should restrictions apply to Chairs only?**

33. There is a perception that the election of committee Chairs has resulted in more effective committees, in which Chairs have more power to drive the committee agenda. While Chairs may have a higher profile than before, the procedural position remains that Reports are reports from the committee as a whole, and require the agreement of the majority of the committee.

**Parliamentary career structure**

34. In early 2002 the Modernisation Committee recommended that:

> the value of a parliamentary career devoted to scrutiny should be recognised by an additional salary to the chairmen of the principal investigative committees.\(^{22}\)

The Liaison Committee subsequently endorsed that recommendation:

> We fully support the aim of creating an alternative career structure to counterbalance the pull of the prospect of ministerial office. The Report rightly seeks to increase the status of chairmen in order to make committee work more attractive to Members as a long term commitment.\(^{23}\)

The current pay for committee Chairs is set at £14,728, which taken with the basic salary of £66,396 for an MP brings total payment to £81,124. By comparison, the most junior Minister, a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State receives £89,435 in combined parliamentary and Ministerial salaries. The level of pay for committee Chairs is a matter for IPSA, which has said that it will conduct a full review of these arrangements in the first year of the new Parliament.\(^{24}\) In this review, we invite IPSA to reflect on the fact that salaries for Chairs were introduced to recognise the value of a parliamentary career dedicated to scrutiny.

35. We note the possibility of questions about career expectations: some junior Ministers at least may consider their current posts as potentially leading to more senior positions. Committee Chairs have no such expectation and, indeed, Standing Order No. 122A puts a limit on the term a Chair may serve on a particular committee. We consider that the additional pay for committee Chairs together with the prestige of the position should provide sufficient incentive for expert people to stand, but we recognise there may be other views.

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\(^{22}\) Select Committee on Modernisation of the House of Commons, First Report of Session 2001–02, Select Committees, HC 224-I, para 41

\(^{23}\) Liaison Committee, Second Report of Session 2001–02, Select Committees: Modernisation Proposals, HC 692, para 27

\(^{24}\) Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, MPs’ Pay and Pensions: Final Report, December 2013, page 32
Consultation questions

36. We would welcome any submissions addressing the broad question of whether or not the regime for committee Chairs’ interests needs changing. As well as general arguments addressing the desirability of formal rules to restrict Chair’s interests, we invite respondents to address the following questions:

i. Bearing in mind committees’ scrutiny function, and lack of decision making powers, does possession of relevant interests improve Members’ abilities to scrutinise a particular subject area?

ii. Is it right to restrict consideration of Chairs’ interests to those committees where the committee itself sets the agenda? Should some committees, such as those whose Chairs are elected by the House as a whole, be considered differently from others?

iii. Is it appropriate that an addendum is added to each report stating all committee members’ interests?

iv. If there are to be restrictions on the interests a committee Chair should hold, should there be similar restrictions on the interests of other committee members or are select committee Chairs in a different position to other committee members, e.g. in their ability to influence public policy?

v. What weight should be given to the fact that committee Chairs are generally now elected by the House as a whole? Does that give Chairs greater influence over policy? Or is the fact that interests are widely published before any such election a sufficient safeguard against impropriety?

vi. If Chairs are required to relinquish external interests, should these be all interests, or only those directly related to the subject matter of the committee?

vii. Should any requirement to relinquish interests extend to non-financial interests, such as charity involvement?

viii. Should there be a distinction between financial interests in which an active role is required, such as company directorships, and interests such as shareholdings? Are there other distinctions the committee should make?

ix. Should the rules distinguish between interests known at the time of a Chair’s election, which might be permissible, and those added subsequently? Should there be a ban on a committee Chair adding to his or her interests while in post?

Responses should be sent to the Clerk of the Committee (standards@parliament.uk) by Friday 28 February 2014.
Annex: Types of committees and committee Chair pay

Pay of committee Chairs

1. Select committee Chairs in the House of Commons first received an additional payment for chairing committees in 2003. A Member who chairs more than one committee will only receive a single additional salary.

2. “Members of the Panel of Chairs are appointed by the Speaker to chair Public Bill Committees [, Westminster Hall debates] and other general committees [including Delegated Legislation Committees]”. Members of the Panel receive payment for the additional work they undertake based on length of service as follows:

- £2,940 (less than one year’s service);
- £8,248 (1–3 years service);
- £11,193 (3–5 years service); and
- £14,728 (for five or more years of service).

3. Ministerial entitlements (paid in addition to salary as an MP) are significantly greater than those for Chairs varying from £23,697 (totalling a gross salary of £89,435) for a Parliamentary Under-Secretary to £76,762 (totalling a gross salary of £142,500) for the Prime Minister.

Types of committees

4. Different types of Commons’ committees serve varying functions. Set out below is a description of the roles of these committees, along with an illustrative list of committees which fall within the particular categories. A full list of the committees of the House can be found on Parliament’s website.

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26 Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, Reviewing MPs’ Pay and Pensions: A First Report, January 2013, Annex A
27 Votes and Proceedings, 19 March 2013, pp 977–978
29 Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, Reviewing MPs’ Pay and Pensions: A First Report, January 2013, Annex A
30 There has been a Ministerial pay freeze since 2010; see Members’ pay and expenses – current rates from 1 April 2013, House of Commons Library Research Paper 13/33 31 May 2013
**Departmental select committees**

5. Departmental select committees are those which “examine the expenditure, administration and policy of each of the main government departments and associated public bodies”. Such committees hold inquiries on particular policies and issues, take evidence, both oral and written, and make recommendations to the Government and others on where proposals and implemented policies are succeeding and where they are found wanting.

6. Examples of committees in this category include the Business Innovation and Skills Committee, the Defence Committee and the Treasury Committee.

**Other scrutiny based committees**

7. Some committees function in ways similar to the departmental committees but have a remit which is not related to a particular department. They may be linked to organisations such as the National Audit Office. So for example, the Public Administration Select Committee examines:

   the quality and standards of administration within the Civil Service and scrutinises the reports of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.33

and the Public Accounts Committee examines:

   the accounts showing the appropriation of the sums granted to Parliament to meet the public expenditure, and of such other accounts laid before Parliament as the Committee may think fit.34

**Quasi-legislative select committees**

8. Quasi-legislative committees assess legislative proposals, including those made at the European level. These committees assess different types of legislation, including delegated legislation, Legislative Reform Orders and European legislation and policies. If these committees are not satisfied that relevant criteria have been met, they can refer the legislative proposal before them for consideration on the floor of the House which may result in a department having to withdraw, redraft and relay the legislative proposal. Although the business before such committees is largely determined by legislative proposals from Government or the European Union, they may also issue reports on wider issues, or on their own powers.

9. Examples of committees in this category include the European Scrutiny Committee, the Regulatory Reform Committee and the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments.

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33 Parliament, “Public Administration Select Committee–role”, available at: www.parliament.uk
34 Standing Order No. 148
**Internal select committees**

10. There are a number of committees which scrutinise the workings of the House and its Members. They ensure that the rules of the House are complied with, look for ways in which processes can be improved and made more efficient and effective, and make recommendations to organisations outside the House, which play a role in the regulation and support of Members.

11. This Committee, the Committee on Standards, falls within the internal committees category. Other examples include the Administration Committee, the Finance and Services Committee, the Liaison Committee, the Committee of Privileges, and the Procedure Committee.

**General committees**

12. General committees include:

- Delegated Legislation Committees: these committees debate delegated or secondary legislation before it goes to the floor of the House, where the decision is taken on whether or not it should become law. Such committees are appointed by the Committee of Selection; they are constituted afresh for each item of business and meet for a maximum of one and a half hours.

- Public Bill Committees: consider Bills which are before Parliament, after they have received their Second Reading on the floor of the House. A new committee is established for each Bill. Public Bill Committees carry out clause by clause scrutiny of the Bill and amend it.35 Such committees are appointed by the Committee of Selection, and are whipped. After Committee stage, the Bill is considered on the floor of the House.

- Grand Committees: there are three Grand Committees in the House of Commons: Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Their membership comprises of “all MPs who represent constituencies in that part of the country together [with] some additional Members”.36 These committees debate matters relating to their respective areas, and may put questions to Ministers, hear Ministerial statements, or consider Bills and other legislative proposals before they are debated on the floor of the House. (There is also provision for a Regional Affairs Committee to consider matters relating to regional affairs in England.)

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35 They are also empowered to take written and oral evidence at such meetings as they see fit.

Formal Minutes

Tuesday 14 January 2014

Members present:

Kevin Barron, in the Chair

Sir Paul Beresford  Sir Nick Harvey
Mr Robert Buckland  Mr Peter Jinman
Mr Tom Clarke  Mr Walter Rader
Mr Christopher Chope  Heather Wheeler
Sharon Darcy

Draft Report (Interests of Committee Chairs: a consultation), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 36 read and agreed to.

Annex agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Eighth Report of the Committee to the House.

None of the lay members present wished to submit an opinion on the Report (Standing Order No. 149 (9)).

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

[Adjourned till a date and time to be fixed by the Chair]