

**ETHICS &
INTEGRITY**
Commission
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**MINUTES OF THE SIXTH MEETING OF
THE ETHICS AND INTEGRITY COMMISSION**

14:00 - 16:00, 19 MARCH 2026

ATTENDEES

Members

1. Doug Chalmers CB DSO OBE (Chair)
2. Rt Hon Ian Blackford
3. Councillor Ruth Dombey OBE
4. Ewen Fergusson
5. Professor Gillian Peele
6. The Rt Hon Lady Arden of Heswall DBE

EIC Officials

7. Stuart Sterling OBE, Chief Executive
8. Nicola Iles MBE, Chief of Staff
9. Natasha Seward, Head of Reviews
10. Sarah Yarwood, Head of Public Engagement
11. Nicola Richardson, Senior Policy Adviser
12. Harri Norris, Senior Policy Adviser
13. Peter Kelleher, Head of Corporate Support
14. Hannah O'Donoghue, Executive Support Assistant

External Advisers

15. Professor Mark Philp, Senior Academic Adviser
16. Maggie O'Boyle, Press Officer

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1. APOLOGIES

Rt Hon Michael Tomlinson KC

2. REGISTERS

The Chair invited Members, and those providing external advice in the areas of media and academia, to review the Register of Interests and consider if any additional interests require declaration. No additional interests were declared at the meeting.

The Chair advised members to contact the Corporate Support Team with any updates to the register.

3. MINUTES

The minutes from the February commission meeting were agreed with minor amendments. The minutes from the extraordinary meeting held on 13 March were also agreed.

4. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS AND CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair formally welcomed two new members to the officials team.

The Chair updated members on the meetings he had attended with Baroness Anderson, Minister Ward, and the Minister for the Cabinet Office, Nick Thomas-Symonds, prior to the meeting that day. The discussions centred on the Ombudsman review, the EIC's new review into Lobbying, Disclosure and Access to Government, alongside a general progress report on the work of the Commission.

The Chair announced that we expect a Labour member to be appointed to the Commission in the near future.

The Chair expected the Government to announce the appointment of three new independent members to the EIC before summer recess.

The Chair provided an update on all other recent and forthcoming engagements.

5. EIC OFFICIALS UPDATE

The CEO confirmed that external recruitment is underway for a Grade 7 Codes of Conduct Lead. The expectation is that the EIC Officials team will be made up of 17 Officials by mid April.

The Chief of Staff provided an update on procedures for sharing information within EIC.

6. WORKSTREAM DISCUSSION: LOBBYING/BARS/FINANCIAL INTERESTS REVIEW

On 11 March 2026, the Prime Minister asked the Ethics and Integrity Commission (the Commission) to conduct a review to look at, *“how ministers declare and publish their financial interests; at how the government ensures transparency around lobbying; and at how we ensure the rules that govern post employment activity are fit for purpose, in respect of managing potentially improper access to, and influence within, government.”*¹

The Commission agreed that it will publish its own Terms of Reference in response to the Government’s request. The focus will be on making recommendations for changes to existing Lobbying rules, drawing on previous work of CSPL and others and on the Business Appointment Rules.

A four week call for written evidence will be announced shortly to accord with the rapid pace of the review.

Ian Blackford and Michael Tomlinson have agreed to support the Chair on leading the evidence sessions for the review.

7. WORKSTREAM DISCUSSION: NETWORK OF STANDARDS BODIES AND LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER

A paper by Dr. Rebecca Dobson Phillips mapping the various standards bodies in public life, commissioned by the EIC, was approved for publication.

At the April Commission meeting Members will be invited to discuss themes for inclusion within the letter to the Prime Minister on the health of standards in public life, which will be sent later in the year.

Lobbying has been considered a key theme for the letter to the Prime Minister since the EIC was created in October. Given the plan for the Commission to publish the final report of the review into Lobbying, Disclosure and Access to Government before the summer recess, the letter to the Prime Minister, which we intend to publish in the autumn, will provide a second opportunity to draw attention to the key recommendations in the report.

8. WORKSTREAM DISCUSSION: OMBUDSMAN REVIEW

Ewen Fergusson updated the group that the review officially commenced on 3rd March. The window for the Call for Evidence remains open until 30th April. Both Ewen and the Chair will lead the upcoming Verbal Evidence Sessions, which will run between May and July.

¹ Gov.UK, Cabinet Office, [Letter from the Prime Minister to Doug Chalmers](#), 11 March 2026

9. WORKSTREAM DISCUSSION: CODES OF CONDUCT

The Chair updated members on the Codes of Conduct work and how it would approach producing high-quality guidance for Public Authorities to adopt a code of ethical conduct in line with the requirements set out in Clause 9 of the Public Accountability Bill.

The CEO updated on the commissioning of three research projects: a piece delivered already, which looked the approach to writing codes of conduct in the context of the Nolan principles; a mapping of the public authorities covered by the Bill; and a literature review to support EIC to develop guidance on effectively embedding codes of conduct to drive cultural change.

Terms of Reference for the codes of conduct workstream will be published once an approach has been finalised. Public consultations will take place once a Grade 7 has been appointed to lead the workstream.

10. WORKSTREAM DISCUSSION: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

A proposal for a three year engagement strategy was presented by Sarah Yarwood at the commission meeting. Members agreed to the three year strategy, noting that timescales could be an issue.

Educational outreach with schools will be a key part of the EIC's engagement strategy. Other components include raising the profile of the standards landscape and the work of the Commission more generally

11. CURRENT STANDARDS ISSUES

Members discussed current standards issues.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members agreed on the date of the next meeting.