



House of Commons  
Committee of Privileges

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# First Special Report from the Committee of Public Accounts

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**First Special Report of Session 2015–16**

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
to be printed 16 November 2015*

## The Committee of Privileges

The Committee of Privileges is appointed by the House of Commons to consider specific matters relating to privilege referred to it by the House.

### Current membership

[Rt Hon Kevin Barron MP](#) (*Labour, Rother Valley*) (Chair)  
[Sir Paul Beresford MP](#) (*Conservative, Mole Valley*)  
[Tom Blenkinsop MP](#) (*Labour, Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland*)  
[Mr Christopher Chope MP](#) (*Conservative, Christchurch*)  
[Mr Dominic Grieve MP](#) (*Conservative, Beaconsfield*)  
[Tommy Sheppard MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, Edinburgh East*)  
[Jo Stevens MP](#) (*Labour, Cardiff Central*)

### Powers

The constitution and powers of the Committee are set out in Standing Order No. 148A. The Law Officers, if they are Members of the House, may attend and take part in the Committee's proceedings, but may not vote.

### Publications

The Reports of the Committee are published on the Committee's website at [www.parliament.uk/privileges](http://www.parliament.uk/privileges).

Other publications of the Committee (including press notices and evidence) are also available on the Committee's website.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Eve Samson (Clerk), Jennifer Burch (Second Clerk), and Cecilia Santi O Desanti (Committee Assistant).

### Contacts

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

## Special report

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1. On 19 October the Committee of Public Accounts (PAC) reported to the House about the unauthorised disclosure of a draft Report by a Committee member in the previous Parliament.<sup>1</sup> When a Committee makes a report of this nature, it stands automatically referred to the Committee of Privileges.

2. This procedure dates from the mid-1980s, when there were separate committees for Members' Interests and for Privileges. In 1995 the House formed the two previous committees into a single Committee on Standards and Privileges, and appointed an independent Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards to conduct investigations into Members' conduct. In 2012 the House introduced further independent elements into the complaints system. The Committee was divided into two. The Committee on Standards deals with breaches of the Code of Conduct and the related rules, and contains three lay members.<sup>2</sup> The Committee of Privileges is made up of MPs alone.

3. The Committee of Privileges has considered the PAC report. It felt that some further investigation was necessary. Since the House has now established the principle that investigations into Members' conduct should be conducted by an impartial investigator and that the Commissioner's memoranda should be considered by a Committee which is not composed of MPs alone, we have asked the Chair of the Committee to refer this to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards, so that she can consider whether to open an investigation. If she does, we expect her to report to the Committee on Standards, as is usual.

4. This decision was taken in the context of this particular matter. It should not be taken to mean that the Committee has come to any view about Mr Tomlinson's conduct or about the handling of future cases.

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1 [First Special Report of Session 2015-16, Unauthorised disclosure of draft Report in the previous Parliament](#), HC 539 (published 20 October)

2 A further four lay members are being recruited.