



The Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP
Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Chris Bryant MP, Chair of the Standards Committee

Our Ref: PM/NMP2863
8th December 2022

Thank you for meeting with me yesterday regarding the motion to approve the new Code of Conduct changes; following that discussion, the Government tabled the motion attached.

As the Government's response to the Committee's reports outlined, we are in agreement on the vast majority of the measures although do continue to have reservations on two of the Committee's proposals. However, I would like to reassure you that the Government is committed to taking serious steps to develop solutions to the underlying issues that the Committee has identified.

The Cabinet Office will, in the Spring, issue updated guidance to improve the timeliness and clarity of Ministerial returns and data.

Our goal will be to firstly ensure that all departments are complying with their obligations as reflected in the new guidance as soon as this comes into effect. We will then look to move to a system of reporting that will provide the parity the Standards Committee is seeking in terms of transparency and timeliness. The Cabinet Office will also consider the alignment of ministerial returns with the House's system and the frequency of publication as part of the wider Government consideration of the Boardman and CSPL recommendations. The Cabinet Office will keep the House updated.

Since the Government responded to the Committee's report, I have continued to reflect on two of the recommendations which the Government now accepts. These are:

- 1) The 'serious wrong' exemption: we now agree with the Committee that the proposed tightening of the circumstances in which the exemption can be invoked seem sensible safeguards on use of the exemption as a 'loophole' without impeding the ability of Members to raise issues of concern.

- 2) Written contracts: we previously had reservations about regulating contractual arrangements between an MP and their outside employer. We now accept this proposal which will make clear, from the outset, what is permissible activity under the Code of Conduct. We are further assured by the rule that such contracts would not be provided to the Registrar as a matter of course and would only need to be provided to the Commissioner if requested during an investigation.

I hope these changes reflect my commitment to seeking consensus. I look forward to a debate on these proposals and hope that the changes and motion will receive cross-party support. Thank you for all the work this Committee has done on this.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "PM Mordant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "P" and "M".