



Lord Speaker

THE RT HON. THE LORD FOWLER

House of Lords

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Thursday 12 November 2020

Dear Lord Mance,

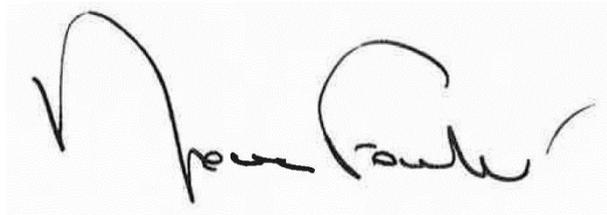
The Code of Conduct for Members and its associated Guide overseen by the Conduct Committee, which you chair, provides Members with guidance on the standards of conduct expected of them in the discharge of their parliamentary duties and activities. The Code also provides openness and accountability to the public and is intended to reinforce public confidence in the way in which Members of the House perform their parliamentary duties and activities. I know that you keep the contents and operation of the Code under constant review and so on behalf of the House of Lords Commission I would like to make a suggestion for change.

At present, the Code covers standards of conduct expected of Members in the discharge of their parliamentary duties and activities and, with the exception of the clauses related to imprisonment, does not extend to their actions unrelated to Parliamentary duties and activities. The scope of the Code is clear, but its interpretation is more complicated and the judgement exercised by the independent Commissioner for Standards and your Committee will not always be easy. I would like to make it clear that the House of Lords Commission is in no way criticising the judgement exercised by the Commissioner or your Committee with regards to any cases to date.

At the meeting of the House of Lords Commission on Tuesday 10 November, a discussion took place about the scope of the Code and its limitations. You will be well aware of a number of widely-reported incidents in recent months that have involved Members whose conduct in the public realm (including on social media) has fallen short of the standards we would expect. That conduct, despite having occurred outside of the discharge of their parliamentary duties or activities, could be regarded as having brought the House into disrepute, as could the Code's inability to deal with such conduct. In the light of this, I would, on behalf of the Commission, ask you to review the scope of the Code as soon as possible. I appreciate that the issue of disrepute has been considered previously, but I feel it is appropriate that this issue now be revisited.

I am copying this letter to Lucy Scott-Moncrieff, the House of Lords Commissioner for Standards, Ed Ollard, the Clerk of the Parliaments, and Chloe Mawson, the Clerk of the Journals.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lord Fowler', written in a cursive style.

FOWLER

Lord Speaker and Chairman of the House of Lords Commission