



Department for Levelling Up,
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Clive Betts MP
Chair, Levelling Up, Housing and
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House of Commons
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Dear Clive

15^A December 2023

Final Draft Electoral Commission Strategy and Policy Statement

I had hoped to arrange a meeting for this week where I planned to update you on the work we have been doing regarding the Strategy and Policy Statement for the Electoral Commission ("the Statement"). Regretfully, our mutual diaries made it impossible to find a workable time. Therefore, I write to provide a written update for you, and attach both an embargoed copy of the final draft Statement and an embargoed copy of the Government's response to parliamentary representations on the revised draft Statement of June 2023.

I am grateful for your Committee's letter to the Chair of the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission ("Speaker's Committee") of 26 June 2023, which was considered as a representation regarding the draft Statement that was laid before Parliament on 8 June 2023.

In line with the statutory duties outlined in section 4C(6) of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, the Secretary of State has considered carefully this letter alongside the Report from the Speaker's Committee of 6 September 2023. The Government are grateful for these representations and your Committee's continued engagement throughout the preparation of the Statement.

After careful consideration, the Secretary of State has decided that the draft Statement of June 2023 should remain unamended (save a few minor stylistic changes).¹ The

¹ These changes include changing capital letters for lower case letters in bulleted lists, add the word 'the' before 'accessibility' in paragraph 6, replacing the word 'stamp out' for the word 'remove' in paragraph 7, correcting the reference to the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 in paragraph 7 from section 4B(3)(b) to section 4B(3), add the word 'the' before 'extension' in paragraph 8, remove the repetition of the word 'effective' in paragraph 12(a), change 'Information Commissioner' for 'Information Commissioner's Office' and

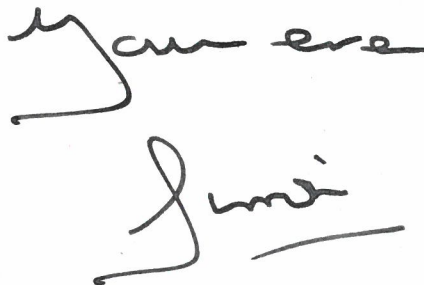
Government feel that we had already made substantive revisions to the Statement after the statutory consultation to provide clarifications and reassurances relating to the operational independence of the Electoral Commission.

In response to previous views expressed by your Committee and others, the revised draft Statement had clarified that the Statement articulated the Government's priorities and not the Commission's, and that Commissioners and the Commission's executive leadership will remain responsible for determining the Commission's priorities and resource allocations. We had also clarified that the Statement articulated the Government's view of factors the Commission should have regard to, but that Commissioners and the Commission's executive leadership would remain responsible for determining how the Commission exercises their functions.

Given that the representations largely restated views articulated during the statutory consultation, the Government are of the view that the remaining objections have either been addressed previously or cannot be satisfied by amending the Statement without compromising significantly its original policy intent.

On 14 December, the Government will lay the Statement and response to the representations before Parliament. The Statement must be approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament within a forty-day period.

It is the Government's view that improving the Electoral Commission's accountability to the UK Parliament will result in greater public confidence in their work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Hoare', with a stylized flourish at the end.

SIMON HOARE MP
Minister for Local Government