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Simon Hoare MP
Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
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Dear Simon,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee on 21 April 2026 as part of the Committee's Inquiry into 'Propriety, Ethics and the Wider Standards Landscape in the UK'. I committed to write to the Committee on a number of points raised in the and this letter sets out my response.

How the Government is addressing known issues with standards

The Committee were interested in how the Government is addressing issues in the standards landscape which were previously identified in Opposition. As the Committee will be aware, in 2023, the then Shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Angela Rayner, delivered a speech outlining some of the reforms to the standards system that the then Opposition were considering to bring in following the general election. The Labour Party's policy on standards was confirmed ahead of the election, in the party's manifesto, and this is the driving document of our approach in the standards landscape, which stated that:

> *Labour will restore confidence in government and ensure ministers are held to the highest standards. We will establish a new independent Ethics and Integrity Commission, with its own independent Chair, to ensure probity in government.*
>
> *Labour will review and update post-government employment rules to end flagrant abuses seen under the Conservatives. This includes enforcing restrictions on ministers lobbying for the companies they used to regulate, with meaningful sanctions for breaching the rules.*

We will give the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests the powers to start investigations into misconduct and ensure they have access to the evidence they need.

As the Government set out when announcing the reforms to the standards landscape in July 2025, upon entering office, the Government gave careful consideration to ensuring the right structures and arrangements are in place for upholding integrity in public life. As a result of those considerations, the Government decided to establish the independent Ethics and Integrity Commission through reform of the Committee on Standards in Public Life and the Commission was duly established on 13 October 2025.

The EIC has now announced its first review on ombudsman reform, and is due to deliver findings to the Prime Minister on its review into lobbying, disclosure and access to government before summer recess. In keeping with the manifesto commitment, the Commission has a responsibility to engage and inform the wider public on the values, rules and oversight mechanisms that govern standards in public life, and to convene the leaders of ethics and standards bodies in central government and Parliament to identify and address areas of common concern. The Commission will also report annually to the Prime Minister on the overall health of our standards system.

In the session, I set out my commitment that EIC reports would be responded to in the same time frame as Select Committee reports, and a target of six weeks was mentioned. The MPs' Guide to Procedure sets out that *'The Government are expected to reply to the recommendations in a select committee report within two months of publication. This deadline is not always met.'* This will guide us as we seek to respond to EIC reports in a timely manner, whilst acknowledging that there are some occasions when it can take slightly longer.

The Government also issued a new Ministerial Code and updated terms of reference for the Independent Adviser, reflecting the commitment to give the Independent Adviser the ability to initiate an investigation without requiring the Prime Minister's consent. There have also been reforms to the business appointment rules system, including introducing financial sanctions for former Ministers who are found to be in breach of the rules.

It is important not to lose sight of the reforms to the system that have been made since this Government came to power. At the same time, and as I set out to the Committee in my opening remarks, I consider this to be a once-in-a-generation moment for a stocktake and an opportunity to reflect on the distance travelled in the 31 years since the Nolan Principles were established, and to see what is unfinished business and what we need to take forward, building on the significant things that the

Government have done already in the standards space since we came into office in 2024.

Metrics and public perception

I also undertook to take away the point made in Committee about tracking public opinion. The last published research on trust in public life in the UK was conducted back in 2023 by the OECD as part of a global study. A new wave of research was completed at the end of 2025, and it is expected that the OECD will publish this data in summer 2026. The findings and the detailed analysis and recommendations will need to be taken on board in considering any additional research that might be commissioned before the expected next wave of the study in 2028/9.

Yours sincerely,

Baroness Anderson of Stoke-on-Trent
Parliamentary Secretary in the Cabinet Office