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Select Committee on Political Polling and Digital Media

Dear John

As you will be aware, the House of Lords Select Committee on Political Polling and Digital Media produced its report on 17 April 2018 (House of Lords Paper 106, Session 2017–19). The Government response was published on 15 June 2018 and the report was debated by the House of Lords on 3 July 2018. The Committee was grateful, also, for the response to its report published by the British Polling Council on 17 April 2018.

The Committee was an *ad hoc* Select Committee and as such ceased to exist on the agreement of its report in 2018. In recent years, the House of Lords Liaison Committee, which is responsible for committee resources, has therefore carried out some follow up work on the recommendations of such *ad hoc* committee reports.

Accordingly, I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Liaison Committee to request that you provide a written update on the status of the recommendations of the Select Committee on Political Polling and Digital Media. The former Chair of the Committee, Lord Lipsey, whom I understand has kept in touch with you about progress, has been consulted on the terms of this letter.

The Committee made 22 conclusions and recommendations in total. A number of these were made to the Government and focused on tackling the spread of misinformation and the manipulation of political information, including political polls, across social media platforms and other digital media. As some of this work is being taken forward by a new Special Inquiry Committee (formerly known as an *ad hoc* Committee), the Democracy and Digital Technologies Committee, a separate follow up letter embracing its recommendations as well as the ones in the polling report, will be addressed to the Government at a later date.

As you will be aware, the political polling report also made recommendations directed at the British Polling Council, as well as to the Market Research Society, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), IMPRESS, the Society of Editors, Ofcom and the Royal Statistical Society (all copied into this correspondence). I would therefore be grateful for an update on the status of each of the Committee's recommendations, relevant to you, outlined in the report. In particular, I would be grateful for responses on the points raised below.

Media reporting of voting intention

- What progress has been made towards developing the British Polling Council's 'Journalist's Guide to Opinion Polls' to include an authoritative definition of what constitutes a properly conducted poll, and to provide detailed guidance on what should be included within articles that report on polls? (paragraphs 139 and 140)
- Has the British Polling Council taken steps to make public any examples they have found of particularly poor practices of media reporting on polls, and has there been any collaboration between the British Polling Council and the Market Research Society to identify instances of poor reporting of polls and draw them to the attention of IPSO, IMPRESS or Ofcom as appropriate? (paragraph 141)
- What steps have been taken to undertake collaborative working between the British Polling Council, the Market Research Society, IPSO, IMPRESS, the Society of Editors, Ofcom and the Royal Statistical Society to develop training opportunities for journalists on how to read, interpret and report on polling data? (paragraph 142)

Oversight of polling

- The report recognised that the British Polling Council is run on a voluntary basis with limited resources but concluded that expanding the remit of its work could significantly strengthen the current system of self-regulation for polling. What consideration has been given to expanding the remit of the British Polling Council to take on a more substantial oversight function? (paragraph 234)

I would be grateful if you could provide an update on all these points as well as any additional information relevant to the Committee's report.

By way of conclusion, Lord Lipsey has asked me to say how appreciative he has been of the cooperation of the British Polling Council throughout this exercise. He similarly wants to record that, happily, the accuracy of the polls in the 2019 General Election was significantly improved from their performance in the previous two General Elections in 2015 and 2017. We feel sure that you will do all you can to ensure that this is not a one-off.

Kind Regards



The Rt Hon the Lord McFall of Alcluith
Senior Deputy Speaker
Chair of the Liaison Committee

cc. Market Research Society
The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO)
IMPRESS
The Society of Editors
Ofcom
Royal Statistical Society