

PACAC (Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee)

House of Commons · London SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 3268 Email pacac@parliament.uk Website www.parliament.uk/pacac

Rt Hon Lord Geidt
Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests
C/O Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London, SW1A 2AS

14 December 2021

Dear Rt Hon Lord Geidt,

Follow up to PACAC Evidence Session and Queries Around Scope of Role

Further to the evidence you gave to the Committee on 13th May this year, I wanted to follow up on some of the points that you made in that session, and to ask for your reflections on several points given the events of the last few weeks:

1. The Electoral Commission's investigation into the refurbishment of the Prime Minister's Downing Street residence appears to have had access to information you did not when your own investigation found that Ministerial Code had not been broken. What investigatory powers do you have available to you? Are you satisfied that they are adequate and, if so, how do you explain the discrepancy between your findings and those of the Electoral Commission? What steps are open to you if you feel that, in the course of an investigation, you may have been misled?
2. The CSPL recommends that the Independent Adviser be given the authority to initiate inquiries without the need for the Prime Minister's instruction. The Prime Minister has rejected this. Given you have now been in post for over six months, are you of the opinion that Independent Advisers should be able to initiate their own inquiries?
3. In lieu of the power to initiate your own inquiries, you noted in your oral evidence to us that under your Terms of Reference you have a 'right of audience' to advise the Prime Minister in confidence that an investigation is needed. Since taking office, how many times have you exercised that 'right' and have you been satisfied by the outcome? Have you used that 'right' in relation to the Electoral Commission's investigation? How satisfied are you that the processes you have followed are sufficient to maintain public confidence that ethical standards are complied with?
4. At your appearance, you indicated that you wanted an opportunity to work with the recently revised Terms of Reference before advising the Prime Minister on the need for further changes. In the light of your experience of the office and of events of

recent weeks, have you now, or will you be, advising the Prime Minister that the role of the Independent Adviser needs strengthening and, if so, in what ways?

I look forward to hearing back from you on the points raised in this letter, and to having you appear before the Committee again at an appropriate juncture. I am placing a copy of this letter, and your response, in the public domain.

Yours sincerely,
William Wragg MP

William Wragg MP
Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee