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*Dear Kevin*

Thank you for your letter of 27 February about the Working Group Report on an Independent Complaints and Grievance Policy. I welcome your comments about the importance of the report and the commitment to zero tolerance of sexual harassment, bullying and harassment that it demonstrates.

The Committee's identification of the issues it would like to see addressed during the implementation phase is also very helpful. As I said in the debate last week, I would like to assure the Committee that consultation with the parliamentary commissioners and the Standards Committees is imperative and will form a key part of the next stage of our work.

I look forward to addressing the specifics of the proposed process, some of which you have outlined in your letter to me, with the Committee in greater detail. I note that your specific point relating to anonymity has attracted a degree of media interest, so I would like to take this opportunity to provide clarity on this issue in particular before we meet next week.

The report is consistent in recommending confidentiality, not anonymity, throughout. The only reference to anonymity is in the case of the complainant, who may or may not choose to waive that right. This is in line with best practice in other internal HR procedures and mediation services such as those provided by ACAS. We have been clear that the complainant has to be at the centre of this process, and that confidentiality is critical to protecting their interests.

The Working Group heard a great deal of evidence to the "effect" that the existing process makes it too easy to identify the complainant and this often prevents complainants coming forward.

The Working Group referred frequently to the Nolan Principles. Transparency in the work of MPs is absolutely crucial to the decisions we take, but that is very different to how an internal, independent complaints procedure is expected to be conducted.

The need for confidentiality is driven by the need of the complainant - a core requirement to a fair investigation. It is incredibly important to note that following the passage of the motion, the House Authorities will continue to work on the new procedure over the coming months. The intention is that the new system is fit for purpose, fair to all involved, complies with best practice in other workplaces and is consistent with the Nolan Principles.

I welcome the opportunity to meet with Committee members and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards next Monday to discuss this and the other matters raised in your letter. I propose that I also invite Tom Goldsmith, who the House Authorities have appointed as the Senior Responsible Owner for the implementation programme.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any further questions or issues that you would like to raise with me.

*Best*

*Andrea*

**RT HON ANDREA LEADSOM MP  
LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS**