

House of Commons
Committee on Standards

Rt Hon Sir Kevin Barron MP
Chair of the Committee on Standards
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

18 July 2018

Dear Sir Kevin,

Confidentiality regarding matters not related to the Behaviour Code

We are writing to you in your position as Chair of the Committee on Standards. As lay members we wish to express our support to the elected members of the Committee on Standards for the amendment being tabled to the House, regarding matters of confidentiality on investigations, conducted by the Parliamentary Commissioner on Standards, relating to the Code of Conduct.

Through our involvement in the work of the Committee we recognise the unusual, and sometimes precarious, nature of the role of MPs, the media interest they deal with on a daily basis and therefore, the importance MPs rightly place on their reputation. We also recognise the importance of the reputation of the House and the impact the actions and behaviours of MPs can have on how this is viewed.

Our experience to date suggests that publication of an announcement that an investigation is taking place does not cause significant damage to an MP's reputation and, on a number of occasions, the matter is already in the public domain through the media. Therefore, in our view, the announcement can provide assurance that concerns are being handled independently and in a fair and impartial manner.

Our view is that the current practice followed by the Parliamentary Commissioner on Standards, and explicitly agreed by the House in 2010, creates the right balance between the individual reputation of MPs and the collective reputation of the House. Any proposals to limit this approach would be a detrimental step in continuing to build the credibility of the reputation of the House.

Lay Members of the Committee on Standards

Tammy Banks, Jane Burgess, Charmaine Burton, Rita Dexter, Dr Arun Midha,

Sir Peter Rubin, Paul Thorogood