Dear Kathryn,

As you are aware, the Committee on Standards set-up an informal sub-committee on reviewing the Code of Conduct and Guide to the Rules in March this year. The sub-committee was created in recognition of the fact that the Committee last completed a comprehensive review of the Code in 2011 and the Guide in 2015, and therefore there was a pressing need to assess the current state of the Code and Guide with the view to updating it accordingly.

The sub-committee has held eight meetings to date. In these meetings the sub-committee has discussed: the purpose of the Code of Conduct and its current weaknesses; standards practices in other parliaments, amongst professional standards boards and amongst regulatory authorities to learn lessons and establish best practice; the Committee on Standards in Public Life’s (CSPL) Seven Principles of Public Life, with the view to tailoring the descriptors of these principles to the context of a Member’s work; and the recommendations within the CSPL report on MPs’ Outside Interests. These discussions, which have also drawn upon the valuable work carried out by your predecessor, Kathryn Hudson, in the previous Parliament, have aided the sub-committee in drafting a proposed revised text of the Code of Conduct, which I append (in two versions, one tracking changes and one incorporating the changes).

I must emphasise that this revised text is still in draft form. The full Committee on Standards has not yet commented on or approved the draft. As and when it does so, it plans to issue a final version of the draft revised Code for consultation both within Parliament and with the public and external organisations. As a basis for that consultation, the Committee plans to issue a detailed commentary setting out the rationale for proposed changes. The Committee hopes also to issue proposals for revising the Guide to the Rules. We have not yet reached that stage of the process. However, given the current uncertain political environment and the possibility of an imminent Dissolution of Parliament, the Committee wishes to draw to your attention the sub-committee’s proposed rewrite of the Code of Conduct as well as publishing it on the Committee’s website, to place on the public record the sub-committee’s work to date and form a basis for future work.
The Committee would be grateful to receive your views and any comments you may have on this current revised text (being mindful of my caveat that this is not necessarily the final version). The Committee look forward to working closely with you and your office on this matter.

Yours ever,

KATE GREEN MP
CHAIR, COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS