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Summary

5 I opened an investigation after receiving a complaint that Mr Ian Byrne MP had breached paragraph 16 of the Code of Conduct for Members. The complainant alleged that Mr Byrne was using his parliament funded zoom account to organise meetings that were exclusively for his local political party.

My inquiry concluded that in sending an email invitation in December 2020, which included the Member's parliament-provided Zoom link alongside party-political messages and a prominent party-political logo, Mr Byrne breached paragraph 16 of the Code of Conduct.

- 10 The Member acknowledged and apologised for his error and informed me this was the only time his parliament-provided Zoom account had been used in such a way. Mr Byrne also confirmed that he and his team had arranged a briefing session on the rules regarding the use of House-provided IT, in order to avoid any future recurrence of this breach.
- 15 While my investigation found that a breach of the rules had occurred, I considered it to be at the less serious end of the spectrum, and I concluded the matter using the rectification procedure available to me under Standing Order No 150.

Mr Ian Byrne MP: Resolution letter

Letter from the Commissioner to the complainant, 25 March 2021

5 I wrote to you on 13 January 2021, to tell you I had begun an inquiry into your allegation that Mr Ian Byrne MP had breached paragraph 16 of the Code of Conduct for Members.

My investigation has now finished and I have concluded that in sending an email invitation in December 2020, which included the Member's parliament-provided Zoom link alongside party-political messages and a prominent party-political logo, Mr Byrne breached paragraph 16 of the *Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament*.

10 The full rationale for my decision can be found in my letter to Mr Byrne, dated 24 February 2021 (item 4 in the written evidence pack), which you can access once the evidence pack has been published.

15 I consider this breach to be at the less serious end of the spectrum and have decided this inquiry should be concluded through the rectification procedure, available to me through House of Commons' Standing Order No 150.

I will publish my decision and the written evidence pack shortly on my webpages and I will report the outcome to the Standards Committee in due course.

20 <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/parliamentary-commissioner-for-standards/complaints-and-investigations/allegations-the-commissioner-has-rectified/>

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention. I can confirm that the matter is now closed.

25 March 2021

Written evidence

1. Email from the complainant to the Commissioner, 11 December 2020

It has come to my attention that an MP namely Ian Byrne MP is using a parliament funded zoom account to organise meetings exclusively for his local political party.

5 Copy of email showing this below

I suspect this has been going on for some time and demonstrably should not be taxpayer funded.

I trust you will investigate this breach and let me know your findings.



Date 11/12/20

Re: Join us on Wednesday 16th Dec 2020 at 6pm for the Professor from Alder Hey Ian Sinah and Mysercough College Liverpool West Derby Grow Project Conference Zoom.

Great news there will be an interesting and informative zoom on Food Poverty, with Professor from Alder Hey [name redacted] and other experts to address our CLP on the health implications of poverty. This has an impact on the young and old in our community in ways you may not have thought. This is now on the third presentation of this topic and saving the best till last for this year at Ian Byrne MP own LWD CLP. It is now your chance to watch and listen and then join our cause.

Also happening Ian Byrne our MP is building a website that will be a platform for a series of interactive videos from weekly growing videos with Q&A from Myerscough

to nutritional values and cooking, more details soon and a more details too on the Food Plan in the plan attached (bottom of email) .

Join Zoom Meeting

[details redacted]

Meeting ID: [details redacted]

Passcode: [details redacted]

Liverpool West Derby CLP Plan

The aim is to push for the “**Right to Food**” in legislation as outlined in the brief building the link from the CLP to Parliament. This is an opportunity to demonstrate how The Labour Party in action can work from the grassroots and embed the party into the community. Putting a meal on the table for someone in struggle will resonate. Practical ward level community projects to empower people and give them access to food, education and resources. Aim to galvanise the CLP around community mutual aid post-Covid. **We need members involved in community actions across all 6 wards. We have volunteering opportunities and need a Community response lead in each ward to be linking up with all agencies and the office.**

We look forward to seeing you on the 16/12/20 at 6pm!

[Name redacted]

LWD CLP Secretary Email: [details redacted]

- Grow West Derby CLP plan (1).docx



If you'd rather not receive future emails from us, please click here to manage your communication preferences.

Sent by email from the Labour Party, promoted by [name redacted] on behalf of Liverpool West Derby Constituency Labour Party, both at all at 108 Prescott Road

Liverpool L7 0AJ United Kingdom Website: www.labour.org.uk to join or renew call [details redacted].

The Labour Party, 105 Victoria St Westminster, London, SW1E 6QT, United Kingdom

11 December 2021

2. Letter from the Commissioner to Mr Ian Byrne MP, 13 January 2021

5 Following receipt of an allegation I have received from [name redacted], about your compliance with paragraph 16 of the House of Commons Code of Conduct for Members, I have decided to open a formal inquiry. I enclose a copy of [name redacted] submission for your information.

The scope of my inquiry

10 My inquiry will focus on whether you have acted in breach of paragraph 16 of the House of Commons' Code of Conduct for Members, specifically, whether your use of a parliament-provided Zoom account has been used solely in support of your parliamentary duties, or in a way that might, "... confer undue advantage on a political organisation." If the scope of my inquiry changes, I will update you in writing.

The relevant rules of the House

15 The overarching rules are found in the House of Commons' Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament¹. Paragraph 16 of the Code states:

20 *16. Members are personally responsible and accountable for ensuring that their use of any expenses, allowances, facilities and services provided from the public purse is in accordance with the rules laid down on these matters. Members shall ensure that their use of public resources is always in support of their parliamentary duties. It should not confer any undue personal or financial benefit on themselves or anyone else, or confer undue advantage on a political organisation.*

25 Chapter 6 of the *Guide to the rules relating to the conduct of Members*, which is appended to the Code, contains more detail about the *Rules on the use of ITC and stationery*². Under the heading *User Responsibilities* it states:

...

Responsibilities

30 *Each user is individually responsible and accountable for the use of the parliamentary digital services that are assigned to them or made available to them, including their account and parliamentary computer(s)*

¹ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmcode/1882/188201.htm>

² See appendix for a copy of the ITC rules

...

5 *It is acceptable to use parliamentary systems for limited personal use (at the user's own risk) provided it does not contravene any parliamentary policies, rules or instructions, or any applicable legislation. **It is not acceptable to use parliamentary digital services for activities that could be considered party political campaigning** or fundraising, or private business activity, except in those circumstances and for those users where this has been expressly permitted (e.g. House of Commons dissolution guidance; Rules governing the use of facilities in the House of Lords). [My emphasis]*

10 **Next steps**

I would welcome your comments on the allegation that your alleged actions have amounted to a breach of paragraph 16 of the Code of Conduct for Members. I would also be grateful for your answers to the following specific questions:

15 I do not believe the email invitation, including the link for the parliamentary-provided Zoom account, was sent from your parliamentary email address.

1. Were you aware that this email invitation was being sent? If so;

a. How much were you involved with the drafting of this invitation and, if not, did you have sight of the email before it was sent?

20 b. It would be helpful to know whose email account this invitation was sent from and how many people received this email?

2. If you were involved in the sending of this email invitation, did you take advice from the House authorities before sending out this message?

a. If so, please describe the advice given and provide copies of any correspondence you exchanged with House officials on the matter.

25 3. Are you aware of the rules regarding the use of House-provided ICT equipment and services?

4. If you were not involved in writing or sending this email invitation, can you explain how you believe the message came to include a parliament-provided Zoom link for the meeting being advertised.

30 It would be helpful to receive any evidence to support your responses when you reply to this letter. Any other points you wish to make to help me with this inquiry would also be welcome.

Important information

My inquiries are conducted in private. Following the decision taken by the House on 19 July 2018, I will not publish the fact that I am conducting an inquiry into an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct. My office will not comment on any aspect of the inquiry to third parties. They will answer direct factual questions about the processes I follow, and the standards system more generally, but will neither confirm nor deny that I have begun an inquiry.

This letter and any subsequent correspondence between us in connection with this inquiry is protected by parliamentary privilege. It should be kept confidential until the outcome of my inquiry is published. The same requirement extends to [the complainant, name redacted].

Procedure

I enclose a copy of the *Commissioner's Information Note*, which sets out the procedure for inquiries. Please note that this has not yet been updated to reflect the changes flowing from the decision of 19 July 2018.

While I do not, at this stage, know whether it will be necessary to interview you about this matter, it would be open to you to be accompanied at any such interview. I am, of course, very happy to meet with you at any stage if you would find that helpful.

I should say now, as a matter of courtesy, that I may seek the advice of the House authorities and others as part of this inquiry. If I do so, I will share that correspondence with you.

Information provided to me during the course of my inquiry will be retained, and disposed of, in accordance with the House of Commons' Authorised Records Disposal Policy.

Potential outcomes

Inquiries are generally concluded in one of three ways. If the evidence does not substantiate the allegation, it will not be upheld. If the evidence demonstrates a breach of the rules, I may, in circumstances defined by Standing Order No. 150, uphold the allegation and conclude the inquiry using the rectification procedure, without making a referral to the Committee on Standards. Where an allegation is not upheld or is rectified, the investigation material, including our correspondence, will be published on the Parliamentary website.

If I uphold the allegation, and it is either unsuitable for the rectification procedure, or you do not accept my decision, I must make a referral to the Committee on Standards. My memorandum to the Committee will be published as an appendix to the Committee's own Report.

Regardless of the outcome of my inquiry, I must emphasise that all the relevant evidence, including our correspondence, will be published when this inquiry is

concluded. I routinely redact the personal data of third parties unless it is relevant to my decision(s). Please tell me if you provide sensitive material that you think I should redact. I will consider carefully any such request.

Action

- 5 I would be grateful to have your response to this letter as soon as possible and no later than 26 January 2021. Please let me know before that date if you require more time to respond.

If you would prefer me to communicate with you by a different email address, please give the details when you reply to this letter. It would also be helpful if you were willing to provide a telephone number through which I might contact you.

10 Due to the Current health crisis, my team are working from home only, so I would be grateful if you could send your response electronically to; standardscommissioner@parliament.uk

Thank you for your cooperation with this matter.

15 *13 January 2021*

3. Letter from Mr Ian Byrne MP to the Commissioner, 27 January 2021

Thank you for your email. I hope you are well during these difficult and uncertain times.

20 Please find below my response to the allegation of breach of paragraph 16 code of conduct.

1. Were you aware that this email invitation was being sent? If so;
 - a. How much were you involved with the drafting of this invitation and, if not, did you have sight of the email before it was sent?
 - b. It would be helpful to know whose email account this invitation was sent from and how many people received this email?

30 I was not involved in drafting the invitation or sending it out and I did not have sight of it before it was sent. I did however set up the zoom link and send it to the CLP secretary to invite people to a discussion on the 'Right to Food' campaign that has been shown on various platforms across the country and is not a party-political project, but a national cross-party campaign. The CLP secretary who then included the link in the email that was sent out to all members. I would like to add that the link was sent out to various groups and to all head teachers in my constituency not just the CLP.

The confusion and the error I have made was that I had my own personal zoom account that I have used for many months and that had recently been changed to a Parliamentary one and I now realise that I should of used the personal one.

5 2. If you were involved in the sending of this email invitation, did you take advice from the House authorities before sending out this message?

a. If so, please describe the advice given and provide copies of any correspondence you exchanged with House officials on the matter.

10 I was not involved in sending the invitation and I did not take any advice as the campaign is not party political and not exclusively for CLP members and I did not have sight of the email that was sent out until receiving this complaint, I now acknowledge that the wrong link was sent out to CLP secretary and CLP members where invited by the secretary.

3. Are you aware of the rules regarding the use of House-provided ICT equipment and services?

15 I am not fully aware of the rules regarding House provided ICT equipment and as a new member of Parliament during a pandemic, I have not received any training nor have my team on the use of the new technology. In light of receiving this complaint I have spoken to my team and they will seek guidance in future from IPSA.

20 4. If you were not involved in writing or sending this email invitation, can you explain how you believe the message came to include a parliament-provided Zoom link for the meeting being advertised.

25 I take full responsibility for setting up the zoom link to organise a meeting for a national campaign on the 'Right to Food' that was sent out to various people including a professor from the local hospital who spoke on the detrimental effects of poverty to people who joined the meeting. The link was sent direct to the CLP secretary who then wrote the email invitation in question and sent it to all members.

30 I now appreciate that I have used the wrong account as the system had recently changed from my personal zoom account to a Parliamentary one and I should of asked the Secretary to set up the zoom.

35 I would like to stress that this meeting was not exclusively for CLP members and other community groups along with head teachers from across the constituency were also sent the link for the meeting that has taken place on various platforms with the same talks given to people across the country as the 'Right to food' is a national cross party campaign.

27 January 2021

4. Letter from the Commissioner to Mr Ian Byrne MP, 24 February 2021

Thank you for your letter of 27 January 2021, and the information you have provided. I'm sorry it has taken a little longer than usual to reply. I now have sufficient information to make a decision on the allegation that you breached paragraph 16 of the House of Commons' Code of Conduct for Members.

My decision

Having considered our correspondence and the published rules, I have decided that in sending out an email invitation, which included your Parliament-provided Zoom link alongside party political messages and branding, you breached paragraph 16 of the Code of Conduct.

Rationale

Paragraph 16 of the Code sets out that a Members' use of public resources should always be in support of their parliamentary duties, and that use of these resources, *"...should not confer undue advantage on a political organisation."* The rules regarding the use of parliamentary provided ICT equipment and services further explains, *"It is not acceptable to use parliamentary digital services for activities that could be considered party political campaigning..."*

In your response of 27 January 2021, you explained that although you were aware an email invitation was being sent out by the secretary of the Constituency Labour Party (CLP), which included your parliament provided Zoom link, you were not involved with the drafting or distribution of the communication. Your letter confirmed that you shared your Zoom link with the CLP secretary, so that it could be included in the invitation, but you also explained you did not have sight of the message ahead of it being sent.

In your letter you also stated you were not aware of the rules on House-provided ICT equipment, and that you and your team have not received any training on the use of the new technology. You also said, *"In light of receiving this complaint I have spoken to my team and they will seek guidance in future from IPSA."* Please be aware that advice regarding the use of House-provided ICT should be sought from the Head of Member Services, [name redacted], and not IPSA. You can contact [details redacted].

Shortly after the last election all Members were provided with up-to-date copies of the *Code of Conduct and related rules of the House*. The Rules on the use of IT, found in Section 6.i state that, *"Each user is individually responsible and accountable for the use of the parliamentary digital services that are assigned to them or made available to them, including their account and parliamentary computer(s)."* It is each Member's responsibility to ensure their parliamentary provided Zoom link is used in line with the rules. Please could both you and your team arrange for a briefing on the rules regarding the use of House-provided ITC and services.

My inquiry has concluded that the email invitation, which included your parliament provided Zoom link alongside party-political messages and a prominent party-

political logo, should not have been sent. I appreciate that in sending out this meeting invitation you were seeking to raise awareness and support for the national campaign for the “Right to Food”, and that this invitation was sent to various organisations and individuals not just to Labour party members. However, this communication should not have included your parliamentary provided Zoom link and, as a result, this put you in breach of paragraph 16 of the *Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament*.

Next Steps

Standing Order No 150 makes provision for me to conclude an inquiry without making a referral to the Committee on Standards in certain circumstances. The Committee would generally expect the Member to have acknowledged and apologised for their breach of the rules, and to have taken any steps necessary to rectify their breach.

I am satisfied that your breach of the rules was inadvertent, and I consider this matter to be at the less serious end of the spectrum. If you accept my decision, I would be willing to conclude this matter by way of rectification. You have already acknowledged and apologised for your breach of the rules in your letter of 27 January 2021, thank you for this. In order to progress through the rectification procedure, I will also require the following from you:

- a) Confirmation of all other events promoted in the same way (the email from the CLP secretary promotes the 16 December 2020 event as the third presentation on this topic).
- b) An assurance there have been no other times when your parliamentary Zoom account has been included in a communication containing party-political messaging or logos.
- c) Details of the steps you have taken to ensure there is no recurrence of this breach.
- d) Confirmation that you have arranged for you and your staff to meet with [name redacted] for a briefing on the relevant rules regarding the use of parliamentary provided IT.

If you are content for me to conclude the inquiry in this way, please write to me with the above information by **10 March 2021**.

If you agree to my proposal, I will share my written evidence pack with you, so that you can check its factual accuracy before publication. I will also report the outcome to the Committee on Standards in due course as a matter of routine.

If you do not accept my decision, you should tell me the reasons for that by reply. After which, I will prepare a Memorandum to the Committee on Standards, so that they may consider the matter. I would give you the opportunity to see and comment

on a draft of the Memorandum, but the content of it would, in the final analysis, be for me alone.

In the meantime, our correspondence remains protected by parliamentary privilege and I must ask that you continue to maintain the strict confidentiality of the inquiry.

- 5 As you know, due to the current pandemic, my team are working from home only, so I would be grateful if you could please send your response electronically to standardscommissioner@parliament.uk.

24 February 2021

5. Email from Mr Ian Byrne MP to the Commissioner, 4 March 2021

- 10 Thank you for your letter dated 24th February, with the decision regarding the allegation of a breach of paragraph 16.

I confirm that any other occasions that I have spoken and offered my presentation on the 'Right To Food' campaign have been by invitation and I have simply attended not set up the meetings.

- 15 All other meetings with members would usually be set up by the secretary and I can assure you that all future ones will be.

We are now aware that we have breached rules and have sought training for my team and I to ensure that there will be no further reoccurrence.

- 20 I can confirm that I have contacted [name redacted] to arrange a briefing session on the rules regarding the use of parliamentary provided IT.

4 March 2021

6. Letter from the Commissioner to Mr Ian Byrne MP, 18 March 2021

- 25 Thank you for your letter of 4 March 2021, agreeing to my proposal to conclude my inquiry by way of the rectification procedure, and in which you confirmed there have been no other occasions when your parliament-provided Zoom link has been used to arrange other campaign meetings. Your letter also informed me that you have contacted the Head of Member Services, to arrange a briefing session on the rules regarding the use of Parliamentary-provided IT. Please could you let me know when your training is due to take place when replying to this letter.

- 30 Please find enclosed a copy of the draft written evidence pack, which includes the correspondence exchanged during my inquiry. In this pack you will also find a draft copy of the letter I plan to send to the complainant; it is the first item in the pack, after the summary. While the content of the letter is a matter for me alone, I would welcome any comments on the factual accuracy of this and the draft written

evidence pack. The complainant's name will be redacted from the published pack; please let me know if there are any further redactions you think should be made, and I will consider your request.

5 I would be pleased to receive any comments you wish to make on these items as soon as possible, and no later than **26 March 2021**.

Once I have any comments you wish to make, I will finalise the pack, which will then be published on my webpages. I will notify you of the publication of the pack and I will also notify the Committee on Standards of the outcome of my inquiry in due course.

10 In the meantime, our correspondence continues to be protected by parliamentary privilege. Until I send you and the complainant letters concluding the inquiry, this matter should remain confidential.

18 March 2021

15 **Appendix**

Chapter 6.i Rules on the Use of House provided ITC



20 **User Responsibilities**

Description

This document sets out the principal responsibilities of all users of parliamentary digital services. Fulfilling these responsibilities helps to reduce the likelihood and impact of cyber-attack, data breach, and other illegal and damaging activity, and
25 contributes to the security and safety of parliamentary users and others, including members of the public.

Scope

These responsibilities apply to everyone who uses parliamentary digital services or who processes parliamentary information, except where these services or
30 information are officially made available to the general public (e.g. via the Parliamentary Website), or where the information is processed under contract to one or both Houses of Parliament. Such arrangements are covered by separate terms of use or contractual terms.

Definitions of 'parliamentary digital services' and 'parliamentary information' appear at the end of this document.

Responsibilities

5 Each user is individually responsible and accountable for the use of the parliamentary digital services that are assigned to them or made available to them, including their account and parliamentary computer(s).

10 Each user is individually responsible and accountable for protecting any parliamentary information to which they have access. Any user processing that information on non-parliamentary systems has additional responsibilities and accountabilities for the technical security of those systems.

15 Each user must ensure that they are aware of their legal responsibilities, especially those under data protection legislation, and of other policies and guidance relevant to them. Staff of both Houses should be aware of the relevant sections of their Staff Handbook. Members and their staff should be aware of the relevant sections of their Codes of Conduct and Members' handbook.

20 It is acceptable to use parliamentary systems for limited personal use (at the user's own risk) provided it does not contravene any parliamentary policies, rules or instructions, or any applicable legislation. It is not acceptable to use parliamentary digital services for activities that could be considered party political campaigning or fundraising, or private business activity, except in those circumstances and for those users where this has been expressly permitted (e.g. House of Commons dissolution guidance for Members standing, 2017, para 1.24; Rules governing the use of facilities in the House of Lords, 2010, para 11).

25 The Digital Service Support Desk [number redacted] is the first point of contact for any questions or requests for advice about these responsibilities, to report any breaches of these responsibilities or to report any suspected cyber security incidents.

You MUST...

30 • Ensure that you have an up to date understanding of basic cyber security threats and what you can do to counter them. This is most simply achieved by completing Parliament's online cyber security awareness training (available at parliament.learningpool.com). This training is mandatory for staff and contractors of both Houses, and strongly advised for all.

35 • Use only devices that are logged into those accounts and services for which you are an authorised user. For most people, this will be a single account in their name.

- Ensure that any person you employ or supervise is given access only to those services and information to which they have authorisation from the Digital Service.
- 5 • Notify the Digital Service as soon as possible of any relevant change in circumstance that may require alteration or revocation of your access arrangements, or those of anyone you employ or supervise.
- Use credentials (passwords, biometrics, second factors, etc) to protect your accounts and devices that are unique, strong and available only to you.
- 10 • Protect parliamentary services and information from unauthorised access, loss and theft, for example by always applying password protection when leaving devices unattended.
- Wherever possible log off parliamentary accounts and services when no longer using them.
- 15 • Ensure that all devices and software/apps you use receive security updates in a timely way.
- Use only reputable software and apps.
- 20 • Where working away from the Parliamentary Estate or on non-parliamentary equipment, take reasonable steps to assess and maintain the security of the networks and equipment you use. Avoid using networks and equipment that do not meet basic security standards.
- Use Parliament's Office 365 Cloud storage (OneDrive and SharePoint) or parliamentary shared and personal network drives wherever possible for storing work-related information, especially where it is sensitive.
- 25 • Avoid use of removable media, such as USB memory sticks, except where absolutely necessary. Removeable media are a common source of both cyber-attack and information loss. Secure USB memory sticks are available from the Digital Service where use is unavoidable.
- 30 • If any removeable media are sent in the post, presented as gifts or found (for example in the street), send them to the cyber security team for analysis, without first connecting them to any other device.
- Take security precautions when charging any device, especially from your parliamentary computer. Special USB charging devices are available from the Digital Service to prevent cyber-attack and accidental data transfer.

- Be aware of and follow the Digital Service's cyber security advice and policies for overseas travel, especially if you intend to access parliamentary digital services from your destination. These services are not always available in destinations that present an elevated threat.
- 5
- Store as little as possible non-work-related information on parliamentary systems. The Digital Service is not responsible for the loss of any information unconnected with parliamentary work that is stored on parliamentary systems.
- 10
- Report to the Digital Service any actual or suspected cyber security incidents (including virus infections, loss or theft of devices or information) and any suspected breaches of these responsibilities.
 - Provide full cooperation and support to live incidents and security investigations.

You **MUST** ...

- 15
- **NOT** Share passwords, or allow anyone else to use devices on which you are currently logged on to parliamentary accounts and services.
 - **NOT** Override or undermine any security measures employed on systems.
- 20
- **NOT** Install or uninstall software or apps on parliamentary equipment without authorisation from the Digital Service. Malicious and out of date software and apps are a common means of cyber-attack.
 - **NOT** Connect devices of any kind to parliamentary equipment (including printers, removeable media, keyboards, etc) unless they are provided by the Digital Service, or unless they are required for your work and you are confident they do not present a security risk.
- 25
- **NOT** Attempt to connect non-parliamentary equipment directly to the Parliamentary Network via a network port, Wi-Fi connection (apart from guest Wi-Fi), or VPN.
 - **NOT** Carry out or permit any activity that may reasonably be regarded as unlawful.
- 30
- **NOT** Upload, download, use, retain, create, access, transmit or cause the transmission of any material which could:
 - overload, damage, affect, or have the potential to affect the performance of Parliamentary systems in any way;
 - corrupt, destroy

or cause loss of control of parliamentary or other users' data; o facilitate cyber-attacks or unauthorised access;

o breach copyright and/or licence provisions, or data protection and related obligations;

5 o be threatening, defamatory, abusive, indecent, obscene, offensive, discriminatory or harassing, or intended to commit a criminal offence;

o cause annoyance, inconvenience or anxiety, including unsolicited bulk or marketing material;

o put the reputation of Parliament at risk.

10 • **NOT** Hold sensitive parliamentary information on or transfer it to:

o any form of unencrypted removable media (CD/DVD, USB memory sticks, etc.);

o non-parliamentary email accounts, e.g. Gmail, Hotmail etc;

15 o platforms, services or systems that are not parliamentary digital services. E.g. Dropbox, iCloud, Google Drive, etc;

o local storage on non-parliamentary devices, except temporarily where essential for work.

• **NOT** Hold or process any information that is classified at government SECRET or above.

20 **Compliance**

All users will be made aware of their responsibilities for acceptable use when they are issued with their account. An introductory email will be sent to each account holder. This document can be found on the parliamentary Intranet, together with other relevant policies and guidance. Users will be reminded of their responsibilities in regular parliamentary communications, and kept informed of any changes to these responsibilities. All users are expected to adhere to these responsibilities, and to contact the Digital Service if they have any difficulty in doing so.

25

Compliance with these responsibilities will be audited. For example, cyber security awareness training will be audited to monitor completion.

30 All users are reminded that parliamentary systems are monitored and audited for protective purposes. The Digital Service continuously monitors networks and services for abnormal activity, including events that may occur as a result of users breaching security policies or their acceptable use responsibilities. These protective

5 measures do not normally include human inspection of the content of communications, such as voice conversations, emails and documents. Any such inspection would take place under strictly controlled conditions, and only where necessary to prevent or contain a suspected cyber attack, or as part of a formally commissioned investigation.

Any digital systems, including software or equipment, that interfere with or put at risk the security or normal working of parliamentary digital services, will be investigated and may be removed, deleted, blocked or quarantined.

10 Unintentional non-compliance with no criminal implications will normally be addressed informally in the first instance, with a view to amicable resolution. For more serious breaches, action taken in respect of non-compliant users could include:

- Temporary or permanent restriction or loss of access to parliamentary digital services, at the discretion of the Director of the Digital Service.
- 15 • Disciplinary sanctions, at the discretion of a user's employer (or the relevant political channels, in the case of a Member of either House).
- Civil action through the courts against the user and / or their employer.
- Notification to the appropriate authorities (such as the police or Information Commissioner's Office) that a crime has been committed or regulatory
20 requirement not complied with.

Definitions

'Parliamentary digital services' include but are not limited to:

- 25 • Digital networks, including the Parliamentary Network, that are supplied by or under contract to the House of Commons and/or the House of Lords, including wired and wireless and remote connections to these networks.
- Parliamentary digital equipment, including computers, telephones, mobile devices, printers, other networked appliances, and peripherals. This encompasses any digital equipment owned by the House of Commons and / or House of Lords, and includes equipment loaned to Members of either
30 House or their staff.
- Irrespective of ownership, any digital equipment used to connect to the Parliamentary Network, or used to connect to that equipment (e.g. printers, USB/Bluetooth devices).
- Digital services provided via the Internet (e.g. Office 365), however accessed.

5 **‘Parliamentary information’** means data or information belonging to the House of Commons, the House of Lords or both Houses. It covers most business information provided by and most business communications involving staff of either House, as well as some communications between Members relating to the core business of either House or its Committees.

Examples of types of information that may be processed on parliamentary systems, but which are not normally ‘parliamentary information’ are:

- Communications by Members of the Commons and their staff with or about constituents.
- 10 • Communications between a Member as an employer and their staff.
- Communications as part of trade union, political party, or All Party Parliamentary Group activities.
- Personal communications unrelated to work.

End

15 File Ref: [details redacted]

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