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Summary

5 The allegation I investigated was that the Member had used House-provided stationery and the crowned portcullis in a way that was contrary to the published Rules, which put the Member in breach of the requirements of Paragraph 16 of the Code of Conduct.

I upheld the allegation.

10 I considered the timing, tone, and content of the letter and concluded that it was of a party-political nature rather than a communication for parliamentary purposes. This was a finely balanced decision for me. I considered it to be a breach of the House's rules on the use of House-provided stationery and a breach of paragraph 16 of the Code of Conduct for Members.

15 The Member told me that he had believed he was complying with the rules. However, after some discussion, he accepted my decision, acknowledged and apologised for his breach of the Code, and undertook to refund to the House authorities the sum of £132.09 to reimburse the public purse the value of the misused stationery.

I considered the Member's remedial actions to be an appropriate outcome and concluded the matter by way of the rectification procedure available to me under Standing Order 150.

20

Neil Coyle MP: Resolution Letter

Letter from the Commissioner to Complainant, 25 August 2020

5 I wrote to you on 23 October 2019, to tell you that I had begun an inquiry into your allegation that Mr Neil Coyle MP, had breached paragraph 16 of the House of Commons' Code of Conduct for Members by misusing House-provided stationery.

10 Having investigated this matter, I found that Mr Neil Coyle MP acted in breach of the Code. Looking at the mailing as a whole, including the tone, timing, and content of the letter which you had enclosed in your letter of complaint to me, I found that it was party-political rather than parliamentary in nature. I therefore uphold your allegation.

15 My full decision and rationale will be published on my webpages in due course, which will include the correspondence I exchanged with Mr Neil Coyle MP. You requested that your details remain anonymous throughout the inquiry and I will not be publishing any of your details in my final report, save for your letter of complaint omitting any personal information.

20 Mr Neil Coyle has accepted my decision. He has acknowledged his breach of the rules, apologised, and has agreed to refund the value of the misused stationery to the House authorities. I have therefore concluded the matter by way of the rectification procedure available to me under Standing Order No 150. I will notify the Committee on Standards in due course of this outcome. The matter is now closed.

Written evidence

1. Letter to the Commissioner from the Complainant, 18 August 2019

I received an unsolicited letter on 16 August 2019 addressed to me from my constituency Member of Parliament, Mr Neil Coyle MP, dated August 2019.

- 5 The letter is signed by Mr Coyle, uses the crowned portcullis and was posted using a 2nd class House of Commons postage-paid envelope.

I should like to complain about this letter.

- 10 I believe that Mr Coyle's letter breaches the parliamentary standards. In particular, the letter breaches the Rules for MP's for the use of stationery and postage-paid envelopes provided by the House of Commons ('the Rules') and paragraph 15 of the code of conduct for Members of Parliament. I believe that paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 8 and 9 of the Rules are of relevance.

- 15 Mr Coyle uses the letter to voice his political opinions. The survey enclosed to the letter appears simply to be a front to enable Mr Coyle to send out a strongly worded letter for party-political purposes.

- 20 I notice that, alarmingly, this is not the first time that Mr Coyle has been in breach of the standards upon inquiry. In March 2016, Mr Coyle was found to have breached paragraph 3 of the Rules. In April 2018, Mr Coyle was found to have breached, again, paragraph 3 of the Rules for sending what appears to be a very similarly worded letter to another constituent. Mr Coyle's excuse for the letter in 2018 was that an 'over-enthusiastic volunteer' had printed the letter and that it was a first draft. Of course, it is Mr Coyle's responsibility for any such letter, as per paragraph 15 of the code of conduct. Notwithstanding that the 2018 letter was Mr Coyle's responsibility, it must be questioned why, if the letter in 2018 was described as a draft and admitted by Mr Coyle as a breach, does the letter I received share so many similarities with the 2018 letter.

It is hard to believe that Mr Coyle is unaware of the Rules.

- 30 Given the similarities between the letter of August 2019 and letter of April 2018, it would be helpful to know whether Mr Coyle has sent out any other similarly worded letters since the 2018 breach, notwithstanding this letter, which I assume has been posted to other constituents.

I should be grateful if you would raise an inquiry for this matter.

I do ask to remain anonymous throughout the inquiry, if at all possible, but I am willing to provide you with any identification you deem necessary and I am certainly happy for you to provide Mr Coyle with a copy of this letter, so long as you redact any reference to my name and address.

5 *18 August 2019*

Enclosure: Letter from Neil Coyle MP to constituents, dated August 2019 with a survey on the reverse¹

Brexit survey

10 It is over three years since the EU referendum, when our community in Southwark voted overwhelmingly to remain in the EU. As your MP, I want to hear your view on this crucial issue affecting us all and, I believe, in the most negative ways.

15 In 2016 I campaigned for the UK to remain in the EU and in Parliament I voted against triggering Article 50, voted against Theresa May's Brexit proposals three times and support holding a new public vote, with Remain on the ballot, as the best way to get us out of this mess. I have voted against the Labour whip to stand up for Southwark and stand by my promise to never vote for something which will harm our community.

20 It's extremely worrying that the new Prime Minister appears to support a 'No Deal' Brexit which would have a catastrophic impact on our country. I will continue to work with MPs from all parties and use all mechanisms to prevent No Deal and I'm supporting a legal challenge against No Deal. We know Brexit has already cost jobs and investment in the UK, but the UK Trade Policy Observatory report says No Deal would cost over 6,000 jobs in Southwark. It would further undermine the UK's international standing and must be avoided.

25 I support Article 50 being revoked and holding a new public vote. I know 25,000 local people supported the online petition to revoke which gained 6 million signatures nationally, but would welcome your view. I am keen to hear practical examples of how Brexit has already, or could impact your work or family life and I aim to ensure your voice and views are heard in Parliament as Brexit debates
30 continue.

Please complete the survey on the reverse of this letter or fill in your answers online at:

¹ Survey not included as I did not consider it relevant to my investigation

<https://neilcovle.laboursites.org/brexit-survey/ Thank you in advance for letting me know your view.>

2. Letter from the Commissioner to Mr Neil Coyle MP, 23 October 2019

I would be grateful for your help with a complaint I have received about you.

- 5 The complaint I have accepted for investigation concerns your use of House of Commons pre-paid envelopes and stationery for what appear to be party political purposes.

10 I enclose a copy of the Complainant's letter dated 11 August 2019. I also enclose a copy of the letter to the Complainant and another dated August 2019 which prompted the complaint.

The Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament in paragraph 16 provides that

15 *'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'*

20 Rules on the use of House of Commons stationery and postage-paid envelopes provided by the House of Commons, and for the use of the crowned portcullis

These rules are not expected to cover every eventuality, however,

25 *"Members should always behave with probity and integrity when using House-provided stationery and postage. Members should regard themselves as personally responsible and accountable for the use of House-provided stationery and postage. They must not exploit the system for personal financial advantage, nor (by breaching the rules in paragraph 3 below) to confer an undue advantage on a political organisation."*

30 Paragraph 3 of the rules lists examples for which House-provided stationery should not be used. Although not exhaustive, it does prohibit the use of stationery and pre-paid envelopes

"In connection with work for or at the behest of a political party (including fund-raising for a political party, advocating membership of

a political party or supporting the return of any person to public office)”

Paragraph 8 of the rules lists examples of the proper use of stationery and pre-paid envelopes, including

- 5 *“Correspondence with constituents, including contact by Members about a specific issue with people who have not previously contacted them and questionnaires and surveys (but not newsletters, annual reports or general updates on a range of issues)”*

10 As you will see the Complainant alleges that your letter containing a link to a survey is simply a front to enable you to send out a letter containing your political opinions for party political purposes. I note that the survey itself is contained on a political party website. I would be grateful for your response to this allegation, taking into account the Rules for the use of Stationery and postage-paid envelopes provided by the House of Commons, and for the Use of the Crowned Portcullis (a hard copy of which I enclose). and, in particular, those rules quoted in this letter.

15

Next steps

I would also appreciate your comments on the following questions:

1. Were you aware of the Rules regarding stationery?
- 20 2. Did you take advice from the House authorities before using House-provided stationery for the purpose of sending out a letter containing a link to a party political website?
 - a) If you did, please describe the advice given and provide copies of any correspondence you exchanged with house officials on that matter.
- 25 3. It would also help to know whether the headed notepaper and envelope used was part of your House-provided allocation of stationery?
 - a) If the paper was not, please can you provide supporting evidence of this.
4. How many letters were sent as part of this mailshot?
5. How and by whom were these letters drafted?
- 30 6. What was the reason for including a link to a survey on a website of the Labour Party?

7. On reflection, do you consider it appropriate to have used stationery bearing the crowned portcullis in a way that could be construed as an undue advantage on a political party?

8. If not, please explain the reasons for that belief.

5 Any other points you wish to make would be most welcome.

I enclose a note which sets out the procedure I follow. I am writing to the Complainant to let them know that I have accepted this complaint for inquiry.

I would be grateful if you would provide a response by 7 November 2019.

23 October 2019

10 **3. Letter to the Commissioner from Mr Neil Coyle MP, 10 January 2020**

Thank you for your letter dated 6th November 2019 regarding a complaint you have received from one of my constituents.

15 I am disappointed that you have decided to open an investigation into my use of House of Commons stationery in relation to a survey on Brexit that I sent to constituents in August. I believe that this letter complies with the rules for stationery and postage-paid envelopes provided by the House of Commons, as surveys on single issues are listed in paragraph 8 of the rules as an example of the 'proper use of stationery'.

20 I do not accept that the stationery has been used in a way that could be construed as providing 'an undue advantage for a political party'. The website link that has been referred to as a 'website of the Labour Party' is no such thing. It is my own personal website used exclusively for my work as the Member of Parliament for Bermondsey and Old Southwark. The link in the letter directs people to a page that contains exactly the same survey questions as those which are printed on the reverse of the letter and nothing else. Nor did the survey relate to a party political position or policy.

25 You have asked eight questions in your letter and I have provided answers to each of them below. I hope this gives you enough information to conclude your investigation but please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further details:

30

1. Were you aware of the Rules regarding stationery? Yes

2. Did you take advice from the House authorities before using House-provided stationery for the purpose of sending out a letter containing a link to a party political website?

No and the link is not to a party political website.

- 5 a) If you did, please describe the advice given and provide copies of any correspondence you exchanged with house officials on that matter?

N/A

3. It would also help to know whether the headed notepaper and envelope used was part of your House-provided allocation of stationery?

10 Yes, the notepaper and envelope came from my 2019/20 allowance.

- a) If the paper was not, please can you provide supporting evidence of this.

N/A

4. How many letters were sent as part of this mailshot?

192 households.

- 15 5. How and by whom were these letters drafted?

I drafted the letter on my desktop in my Portcullis House office.

6. What was the reason for including a link to a survey on a website of the Labour Party?

20 The question is erroneous. There was no link to 'a website of the Labour Party'. The Labour Party do not fund or own it. The link directs to my own personal website as the Member of Parliament for Bermondsey and Old Southwark. It is my only website and contains work relating to the constituency. The link directed solely to a page containing a survey about Brexit—the purpose of the letter and nothing to do with Labour policy or party politics. The page does not
25 contain any other material apart from the survey, which I believe falls within the rules as set out in Paragraph 8.

7. On reflection, do you consider it appropriate to have used stationery bearing the crowned portcullis in a way that could be construed as an undue advantage on a political party?

I do not believe that the stationery has been used in a way that could construe an undue advantage to a political party. The survey was not about Labour, party policy or party politics.

8. If not, please explain the reasons for that belief.

5 Paragraph 8 of the rules sets out examples of the proper use of stationery
bearing the portcullis logo and the fourth bullet point states: 'correspondence
with constituents, including contact by Members about a specific issue with
people who have not previously contacted them and questionnaires and
10 surveys (but not newsletters, annual reports or general updates on a range of
issues)'. The letter about which this allegation has been made is precisely
that—a survey about a specific issue, in this case Brexit, that has been sent to
some constituents.

15 As stated, the website link in the letter leads to a webpage that contains the
survey questions exactly as they are printed on the reverse of the letter. No
other content is visible on that page and trying to claim that it sends people to
a 'political party website' is beyond tenuous. The website is my own and is
used in my capacity as the Member of Parliament for Bermondsey and Old
Southwark. I do not accept that the stationery has been used in a way that
could be construed as an undue advantage on a political party.

20 I hope the above answers all of your queries.

10 January 2020

4. Letter from the Commissioner to the House of Commons Director of Customer Experience and Service Delivery, 21 January 2020

25 I would like to ask for your advice on a complaint that I have received regarding Neil
Coyle MP who is currently the Member of Parliament for Bermondsey and Old
Southwark.

30 The complaint is that Mr Coyle used House of Commons stationery and pre-paid
envelopes to send out a letter, which allegedly was in connection with work for a
political party that was intended to confer an undue personal benefit and/or an
undue advantage on a political organisation, and which therefore put him
potentially in breach of paragraph 16 of the House of Commons Code of Conduct for
Members.

35 I enclose a copy of the relevant correspondence, including Mr Coyle's response
(dated 10 January 2020) to my initiation of this inquiry. I would be grateful if you
would tell me how you would have advised Mr Coyle at the time, had he sought your
advice about using House-provided stationery and postage pre-paid envelopes for
this mailing.

I appreciate that the published guidance regarding the use of stationery cannot cover every eventuality, and it would be useful to have your observations on the factors you have taken into account in reaching a view in this instance.

5 It would be very helpful to have your response to this letter as soon as possible please and ideally no later than 6 February 2020 please.

Thank you for your continued assistance with these matters.

21 January 2020

5. Letter from the Commissioner to Mr Neil Coyle MP, 23 January 2020

10 Thank you for your helpful letter of 10 January 2020, in response to my initiation of the inquiry into the complaints regarding your use of the House provided stationery.

In accordance with my usual practice regarding inquiries into the use of House provided stationery, I have today written to the Director of Customer Service and Delivery, Mr James Turner, seeking his advice. I enclose a copy of that letter for your information.

15 I will write to you again when I have the Director's advice and to give you an opportunity to comment. 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.

Thank you for your continued co-operation with this matter.

20 *23 January 2020*

6. Letter from House of Commons Director of Customer Experience and Service Delivery to the Commissioner, 19 February 2020

Thank you for your letter dated 10 January 2020, regarding the complaint made against Mr. Neil Coyle MP.

25 I can confirm that Neil Coyle did not seek advice regarding this letter.

If we had been approached in advance, the following advice would have been given:

30 The House provides the stationery budget to assist Members in performing their parliamentary duties but the rules cannot be expected to cover every eventuality; ultimately it is incumbent on the Member to always behave with probity and integrity when using House-provided stationery and postage and they should regard themselves as personally responsible and accountable for the use of it.

Although we can provide guidance on usage, if a complaint were made, it is the Commissioner for Standards who rules on individual cases, and our guidance cannot bind the Commissioner's ability to come to a different conclusion. Please see the stationery rules for more details.

- 5 The specific link <https://neilcoyle.laboursites.org/brexit-survey/> that is referred to is no longer available so I cannot comment on this, (and I have not seen a copy of the specific survey) but the site <https://neilcoyle.laboursites.org/> does seem to point to Mr. Coyle's campaigning website.

10 I would also have advised on removing some of the content of the cover letter to avoid this being construed as party political or campaigning, particularly the wording:

- "I believe, in the most negative ways. "
 - "as the best way to get us out of this mess"
 - "would have a catastrophic impact on our country"
- 15 • "It would further undermine the UK's international standing and must be avoided. "

I would have advised that this letter and survey should not be sent out on House of Commons stationery or using pre-paid envelopes unless it was changed considerably.

20 Should you wish any further information on this please do not hesitate to contact me.

19 February 2020

7. Letter from the Commissioner to Mr Neil Coyle MP, 24 February 2020

25 When I wrote to you on 23 January 2020, I said that I was seeking the advice of the House authorities and that I would give you the opportunity to comment on that advice before I reach any decision.

I have now received a response from the Director of Customer Experience, Mr James Turner. I have included a copy of the advice I have received.

30 I would be grateful to receive any observations that you may care to make about Mr Turner's advice by return and no later than Monday 9 March 2020 please.

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

Thank you for your continued assistance with this matter.

5 *24 February 2020*

8. Email from Mr Neil Coyle MP to the Commissioner, 10 March 2020

Thank you for your letter dated 24th February but somehow only received 2nd March. For the record, I am very happy to have all future correspondence by email to avoid any delays and to do our bit to cut paper use.

10 You asked me to reply by Monday 9th March – a deadline I have missed due to the delay in receiving the correspondence in the post.

15 Regarding the attachment, I note that James Turner suggests that some of the wording of my survey could have been changed to ‘avoid being construed’ as what he suggests is ‘party political campaigning’. There is of course some subjectivity to how things can be read as James Turner infers. However, there is no party political view expressed in the survey as my personal views on Europe have differed from the Labour Party for some time and certainly differed at the time of this survey. My survey did not present Labour’s position, it sought to ascertain the views of constituents. The wording listed in James Turner’s letter is clearly personal and not party political. The wording selected would not be found on any Labour Party material from that time and cannot be construed as party political.

I believe I have acted in accordance with the rules and with the aim of better using online correspondence with constituents as previously mentioned.

10 March 2020

25 9. Letter to House of Commons Director of Customer Experience and Service Delivery from the Commissioner, 12 March 2020

Thank you for your letter of 19 February 2020. Mr Coyle has sent an e-mail responding in part to the advice you have provided.

30 I thought it was fair to give you an opportunity to add any further comments or responses you would wish me or Mr Coyle to consider before I reach my decision on the allegation that he has acted in breach of the Rules for the use of stationery and postage-paid envelopes provided by the House of Commons. In the event you have no further comments please advise me accordingly. I would be grateful to receive a response by 20 March 2020.

Thank you for your continued assistance with this matter.

12 March 2020

10. E-mail from the Commissioner to Mr Neil Coyle MP, 12 March 2020

5 I am writing on behalf of Kathryn who has advised that in view of your comments on the Director's advice, it would be appropriate to allow the Director of Service Delivery to respond before making a decision.

We will write to you again once a response has been received.

12 March 2020

11. Letter from the Commissioner to Mr Neil Coyle MP, 15 April 2020

10 Thank you for your e-mail of 10 March 2020, providing your comments on the advice of the Director of Customer Experience and Service Delivery. I have sent this to Mr James Turner for any further responses and his office have responded as follows:

15 *I note that Mr Coyle says in his email to the Commissioner of 10 March that there is 'no party political view expressed in the survey' and that the wording he used 'is clearly personal and not party political' and as I said previously the specific link to the survey in question was no longer available for me to view so I cannot comment on the wording on the survey. However the site the survey was on, <https://neilcoyle.laboursites.org/> did seem to point to Mr Coyle's party political website.*

20 *The wording I previously described in Mr Coyle's cover letter to the survey could be construed as political campaigning, whether or not he meant it to be and whether or not it was in opposition to the party view, it appeared to have a political rather than a parliamentary tone. Additionally, he says these were his personal views, and I would argue that he could still send a survey asking for constituents' views without making*
25 *reference to his personal opinion, which I do not think the House provided stationery should be used for.*

My decision

30 I have considered very carefully the content of the correspondence in question, the published rules concerning the use of House provided stationery, the Director's advice, and your comments before coming to a decision. I have also had regard to the outcome of earlier inquiries into similar matters. I have decided that in using House-provided stationery and envelopes for this correspondence you have acted in breach of the House's Rules for the use of stationery and postage-paid envelopes provided by the House of Commons, and for the use of the crowned portcullis.

I have decided that a breach of the stationery rules has occurred and that this breach is contrary to paragraph 16 of the Code of Conduct for Members of Parliament.

Rationale

5 Paragraph 2 of those rules make clear that they cannot cover every eventuality and that it is for each Member always to behave with probity and integrity when using House-provided stationery and postage. Although the rules do not attempt to define the boundary between parliamentary activity and party-political activity, the rules do ask Members to distinguish between the two. In the absence of a neatly and easily defined boundary, each piece of correspondence must be carefully considered
10 on its own merit.

When making a judgement about whether a particular mailing should have been posted at public expense, I must look at the communication as a whole and make my own independent finding about its aims, tone and content. The inclusion of a web address <https://neilcoyle.laboursites.org/brexit-survey/> in your letter is also
15 relevant to my decision. You state that 'The website link that has been referred to as a 'website of the Labour Party' is no such thing.' I have looked at this website and I cannot agree with your assertion. The hyperlink in your letter took the reader directly to a website which enables a visitor to the site to join, get involved and donate to the Labour Party. The Labour Party logo is clearly displayed on every page
20 of the site. At the bottom of each page the following words appear, 'Promoted by and on behalf of the Labour Party at.....'. The survey was hosted on a site which was explicitly published and promoted by the party and on which financial support for the party was solicited.

The Director is clear that, had he been consulted, he would have advised against
25 sending the letter at public expense without some modification. I think that would have been sound advice. The tone of your letter goes beyond explaining your position on matters before Parliament and eliciting the views of your constituents. I agree with the Director that it strays into political campaigning.

Taking the above factors into account I have concluded that the letter of August 2019
30 crossed the boundary from parliamentary to party political activity. In reaching this conclusion I do, of course, acknowledge that the rules do not give neat definitions of correspondence connected to parliamentary activity and correspondence connected to work for or at the behest of a political party. However, I also note that this is the third occasion on which your use of House-provided stationery has been
35 investigated, and that on previous occasions it has been drawn to your attention that the House authorities are able to provide day-to-day advice on the proper use of House-provided resources, including stationery.

Next Steps

As you may be aware, having decided that a breach of the Rules has occurred, I can, with the co-operation of the Member concerned, rectify less serious breaches. Under Standing Order 150, I am able to rectify a complaint in these circumstances without submitting a full and formal memorandum to the Committee on Standards. I inform the Committee of the outcome and the relevant correspondence is in due course published on my webpages.

In order for me to implement the rectification procedure, it would be necessary for you to accept that you were in breach of paragraph 16 of the Code of Conduct for Members and the rules of the House as set out in the Rules for the use of stationery and postage-paid envelopes provided by the House of Commons, and for use of the crowned portcullis. The Committee would normally expect the Member to acknowledge and apologise for their breach of the Code, and this can be done by way of your response to this letter.

To help avoid another recurrence, I will require you and one or more of your staff members to meet with the Director of Customer Experience and Service Delivery or one of his staff members to go through the rules. Please contact Caroline Nicholls, Head of Customer Relationship Management, who can be contacted by email nichollsc@parliament.uk or 020 7219 3080 to set this up. Please advise me once this appointment has been set up and attended.

Paragraph 16 of chapter 4 of the Guide to the Rules relating to the conduct of Members says that “In cases involving parliamentary facilities or resources, the rectification procedure normally requires the Member to make any repayment or other relevant rectification.” In this instance, I think it is appropriate to ask you to refund to the House authorities the cost of the paper, envelopes and second-class postage used for sending out the 192 letters. I should emphasise that this is not a “sanction”; it is simply reimbursement to the House authorities of a sum equivalent to the value of the misused stationery; a “rectification” of the breach.

If you feel you are unable to accept rectification, I would refer the matter to the Committee on Standards.

Therefore, before I can decide how to conclude this inquiry, I need first to ask you to consider my decision and to tell me whether you accept it. I understand that you will be disappointed by it but would ask you to reflect carefully on my reasoning before replying. Please let me have your comments by 6 May 2020.

15 April 2020

12. Letter from Mr Neil Coyle MP to the Commissioner, 4 May 2020

Thank you for your letter dated 15 April 2020 outlining the decision you have come to in relation to the complaint you received from one of my constituents asking me to respond by 6th May 2020.

- 5 Whilst I am disappointed to hear you have decided that a breach of the stationery rules has occurred, I note that you accept there is an absence of defined boundaries within the rules, I would like these rules updated and improved but accept that the rules as they currently stand appear to have been breached and apologise unreservedly.
- 10 In line with the request set out in your decision letter, my office has made contact with the Director of Customer Experience and Service Delivery to set up a meeting and go through the rules. As I have stated previously, I honestly believed that the survey complied with the rules for House of Commons stationery and I will use this meeting to discuss how to avoid any further breaches, as well as how I believe the
- 15 rules could be made clearer and fit for modern, greener and more digital correspondence.

I am more than happy to refund the cost of the paper, envelopes and postage used for sending out the 192 letters and will make arrangements to do so as soon as possible.

- 20 I accept your decision and I hope this will enable you to conclude your inquiry.

4 May 2020

13. Letter from the Commissioner to Mr Neil Coyle MP, 15 May 2020

- 25 Please find attached a copy of the written evidence pack that I intend to publish, which includes our correspondence exchanged during the investigation and the outcome letter that I plan to send to the complainant (please see page 3 of the pack). While the content of the letter to the complainant is a matter for me alone, I would welcome any comments on the factual accuracy of this letter and the written evidence pack as a whole.

- 30 I would be pleased to receive any comments you wish to make on these items as soon as possible, and no later than 22 May 2020 please.

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

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

15 May 2020²

5

² Exchange of further unpublished emails/letters seeking clarification of certain points between 15 May and 25 August 2020