



Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests
The Rt Hon Lord Geidt

The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street

23 December 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

REFURBISHMENT WORKS AT 11 DOWNING STREET

Thank you for your letter of 21 December in response to my initial advice. I set out below my further advice by way of concluding the matter.

I was glad to have your acknowledgment of the significant difficulty that was created once the exchange of missing messages had come to light on 9 December. The new disclosure did not in fact result in change to my original assessment of your interests insofar as they related to the Ministerial Code. It did, however, expose a signal deficiency in the standards upon which the Independent Adviser and, by extension, the Prime Minister have an absolute right to rely in establishing the truth in such matters. Indeed, the episode shook my confidence precisely because potential and real failures of process occurred in more than one part of the apparatus of government. I am very grateful to have your apology for these shortcomings and to know of your determination to prevent such a situation from happening again.

Since my initial advice of 17 December, your office has taken further steps to ensure that all relevant material is available. This work has included briefing on a range of issues that may have interfered with the fullest possible disclosure ahead of my original investigation. In the case of the material which Lord Brownlow separately provided to the Electoral Commission, it emerged that his offer to share this with the Cabinet Office was declined. That decision, which I am assured was taken properly to prevent any risk of collusion in a statutory investigation, was nevertheless not communicated to me. Similarly, I accept that, because of confidentiality constraints, it might not have been straightforward to have alerted the Independent Adviser to the existence of further relevant material. The clear absence of any attempt to do so, however, on this or the other occasions noted in my initial advice, was unwise given the high standards, including of authority, that you have set for the Independent Adviser.

I will wish to count on your offer to fortify what you have described as the Independent Adviser's critical role for effective government. I am therefore glad to have your proposal of immediate measures to support my appointment and help address some of the failures of process evident in this case. An increase in the level of dedicated official assistance, bolstering the small and highly professional team presently supporting my appointment, will be of great assistance. I am also grateful for your confirmation that the Independent Adviser will be afforded the highest standards of openness, including full and prompt responses to requests for information from Ministers, Special Advisers and officials. I look forward to receiving detailed proposals in early January to give this effect.

Thank you also for your early commitment to consider other aspects, both of the remit of the appointment and of the Ministerial Code itself, as recommended in various recent reports. Taking these efforts together, I would expect by the time of my next Annual Report in April to be able to describe the role of Independent Adviser in terms of considerably greater authority, independence and effect, consistent with the ambitions for the office that you have set out.

Yours sincerely,

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The Rt Hon Lord Geidt

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