

Lord Evans of Weardale*Committee on Standards in Public Life*29th October 2020

Dear Lord Evans,

Thank you for your letter dated 16th September, asking for an update from the Conservative Party following the Committee's report into Intimidation in Public Life and the Government's response.

The levels of abuse that politicians and candidates from all parties still face is unacceptable and the Conservative Party is committed to challenging poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

To ensure activists and elected representatives in the Conservative Party know the standards of conduct they are expected to adhere to, the Conservative Party has a Code of Conduct available online. I reiterate that it remains the Government's recommendation that all political parties put in place their own code of conduct for their representatives to follow. As my predecessor, James Cleverly, wrote to you in November 2019; it remains the Conservative Party's position that political parties are best placed to draw up and oversee their own tailored code of conduct – as recommended by the Government.

Should any party member breach our Code of Conduct, we have a complaints process to ensure appropriate discipline is timely and consistent. The Party is currently undergoing a review led by Professor Swaran Singh, to ensure the rigorousness of our disciplinary process and that everyone is treated with fairness and dignity.

Additionally, we have produced a Candidates Charter, enshrining the high standards that are expected and required by our candidates. Candidates will be required to sign this Charter, and to abide by the Conservative Party Respect Pledge, the Code of Conduct and to behave in accordance with the Nolan principles on public life.

Notwithstanding, it is important not to misconceive the core problem: it is not candidates or official party campaigners who engage in intimidation. The bulk of poor behaviour is from online 'trolls', and stems from the fact that digital means of communication have allowed for anonymous and widespread abuse.

The Party provides social media training, online resources and a network of affiliate groups to help MPs and candidates handle abusive behaviour. To expand this support, we are currently creating a brand-new training platform for all candidates.

These actions are in line with the recommendations that the Government accepted in its response to the Committee's report. Of course, work is always ongoing to challenge and protect against abusive behaviour and intimidation and we are keen to engage with the Government, social media companies and other political parties to further protect those in public life from intimidation.

Yours sincerely,



The Rt Hon Amanda Milling MP
*Co-Chairman of the Conservative Party
& Minister without Portfolio*