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Committee on Standards in Public Life

13 December 2017

Dear Mr Speaker,

Intimidation in Public Life: A Review by the Committee on Standards in Public Life

I enclose a copy of the Committee on Standards in Public Life's report, Intimidation in Public Life, which was published today.

The increasing prevalence of intimidation in our public life, including of Parliamentary candidates at elections, concerns us all. There has been persistent, vile and shocking intimidatory behaviour, and it is clear that much of this is targeted at certain groups.

This behaviour is shaping the tone of public debate and discourse. We agree with your observation that those in positions of power and leadership have a particular responsibility to consider how their tone is likely to shape political debate, and must not engage in debate in a derogatory, dehumanising, or abusive way. We make a number of recommendations in this regard and would welcome your support in this area.

We present a full body of evidence showing the extent and seriousness of the problem. We have found intimidation takes place across the political spectrum, both in terms of those engaging in intimidation and those receiving it. We have also found that the public's lack of trust in politics and the political system creates an environment where intimidation in public life is more likely.

We recommend that the parties come together to develop a joint code of conduct on intimidatory behaviour during election campaigns, which should be agreed by December 2018. The parties may seek your assistance in this. The code should be jointly enforced during election campaigns.

Addressing this important issue in our public life will require a committed and concerted approach from a number of individuals and organisations, and we look forward to a comprehensive response to this issue.

Thank you again for your contribution to our review, we welcome any further discussions and engagement on this issue. If you would like to meet again to discuss the Committee's findings and recommendations, I am at your disposal.

Yours sincerely,

Lord Bew
Chair

