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Committee on Standards in Public Life

13 December 2017

Dear Matt Tee,

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, should concern everyone who cares about our democracy. There has been persistent, vile and shocking intimidatory behavior, and it is clear that much of this is targeted at certain groups.

We present a full body of evidence showing the extent and seriousness of the problem.

The broadcast and print media have a responsibility to help tackle the intimidatory tone of public life. Journalists, broadcasters and editors should consider how the content they create might incite intimidation through delegitimising someone's engagement in the political process, placing undue influence on their individual characteristics, or using threatening language.

To that end, we recommend that IPSO extends its Editor's Code to prohibit unacceptable language that incites intimidation. This change should be made by December 2018.

Addressing this important issue in our public life will require a committed and concerned approach from a number of individuals and organisations. We will be monitoring progress on the implementation of our recommendations, and will keep in touch with you over the coming months in that regard.

We expect a comprehensive response to this issue. Determined action on the part of all those involved is required, as the cost to our democracy of not engaging constructively to resolve these issues is too high.

Yours sincerely,



Lord Bew
Chair