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**Committee on
Standards in
Public Life**

13 December 2017

Dear Rachel Tuffin,

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 behaviour, 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. We have found intimidation takes place across the political spectrum, both in terms of those engaging in intimidation and those receiving it.

The Committee has found that there is a lack of policing guidance on offences which constitute intimidation during election periods. We have also heard evidence that local police sometimes conflate personal threats and public order offences. We note that the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice (APP) guidelines for policing elections includes public order offences alongside electoral law offences, but these are generally framed in expectation of public protests, not the intimidation of Parliamentary candidates by whatever means. In particular, the APP makes no reference to harassment or offences that may be committed via social media during elections. Given the seriousness and frequency of intimidatory behaviour particularly at the 2017 general election, and the need for sensitive and effective policing during election periods, we recommend that the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice for elections should be updated to include offences relating to intimidation, including offences committed through social media. We suggest that this should be done before the next general election.

Our review also concluded that greater clarity among Parliamentary candidates as to what behaviour is and is not illegal, and what Parliamentary candidates can expect from their local police force, would assist Parliamentary candidates during election periods and would result in more effective policing. We recommend that the National Police Chiefs Council should work with the Crown Prosecution Service and the College of Policing to produce accessible guidance for Parliamentary candidates giving clear advice on the behaviour which they may experience during a campaign which is likely to constitute a criminal offence and what they should do in the face of such intimidation.

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.

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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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Bew". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

Lord Bew
Chair