

Lord Bew
Chair
Committee on Standards in Public Life
Room GC.07
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

5 September 2018

Dear Lord Bew

Thank you for your letter of 16 August.

The Standards Code IPSO oversees is, in fact, not IPSO's code, but is overseen by the Editors' Code of Practice Committee, a committee of editors, IPSO representatives and members of the public. I have copied this letter to Jonathan Grun, the secretary of the committee.

Unfortunately, your report was issued just after the most recent formal public consultation on changes to the code, although it is, of course, under constant review. The Code Committee is, for example, currently considering issues around the clause on discrimination, which raise some similar issues to your report.

I understand and share your concern that parliamentarians and other public servants should not be subjected to abuse, both because it is wrong in itself, and because it could act as a deterrent to potential future aspirants to public office. However, in our discussions at IPSO on your recommendation it has proved difficult to come up with a form of words that are clear about what is permitted and not, while protecting freedom of expression. This is particularly so in that partisanship, campaigning and advocacy are never more important than when they are used to scrutinise figures – particularly those exercising the power of the state.

It would be most helpful if the committee had a possible wording for such a clause or examples of articles the committee would feel might breach such a provision.

As you recognise in the report, many of the things the committee is concerned about would already be a breach of our code anyway.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Tee". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Matt Tee
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