

The Labour Party

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Lord Jonathan Evans
Chair
Committee on Standards in Public Life
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ
London

1st April 2021

Dear Jonathan,

I am writing today to ask the Committee to look into reports of a possible breach of the Ministerial Code, with the Prime Minister failing to declare legal costs.

These legal costs occurred when the now Prime Minister, then Mayor of London, faced watchdog inquiries on whether he influenced the payment of public funds to Jennifer Arcuri.

It has been reported this week that the Conservative Party paid over £10,000 to Boris Johnson's lawyers to fund these legal fees.^[1]

It also appears the Conservative Party co-chairman, Ben Elliot, approved the payments to the Prime Minister's lawyers in July 2019. This was just weeks after Boris Johnson became Prime Minister.

The Conservative Party has not revealed exactly how much was spent from party funds to cover the Prime Minister's legal fees in this case, claiming it to be a "party political decision".

However, the failure to declare the funding of the Prime Minister's legal fees in the case is a clear breach of the Ministerial Code, which states in paragraph 7.1 that "Ministers must ensure that no conflict arises, or could reasonably be perceived to arise, between their public duties and their private interests, financial or otherwise."^[2]

The Seven Principles of Public Life, annexed in the Ministerial Code also states that Ministers "must declare and resolve any interests and relationships."^[3]

As the Committee on Standards in Public Life advises "the Prime Minister on arrangements for upholding ethical standards of conduct across public life"^[4], I know this potential breach of the Ministerial Code will be of concern.

These revelations follow recent reports about possible unknown Conservative Party donors paying for the refurbishment of the Prime Minister's Downing Street Flat,^[5] and the fact that details of Ministers' Interests haven't been published since July 2020.

The absence of an Independent Advisor on Ministerial Standards, who would normally oversee and sign off the twice-yearly report of Ministers' Interests, suggests the government will not fulfil its Ministerial Code obligations on this soon.

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Not only does this come weeks after the government was found to have acted unlawfully on contracts, but it is now also four months since the Prime Minister's Independent Advisor on Ministerial Standards resigned in protest at the lack of action following the alleged bullying by the Home Secretary.

Against this backdrop, and these new revelations that the Prime Minister may have breached another part of the Ministerial Code, I hope you will consider looking into and advising on this possible breach.

Yours sincerely,



Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP
Deputy Leader and Chair of the Labour Party

^[1] [Tories used party funds to cover Boris Johnson's legal bills over Jennifer Arcuri affair | Daily Mail Online](#)

^[2] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/82692/0/August-2019-MINISTERIAL-CODE-FINAL-FORMATTED-2.pdf

^[3] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/82692/0/August-2019-MINISTERIAL-CODE-FINAL-FORMATTED-2.pdf

^[4] [Committee on Standards in Public Life - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/committees/standards-in-public-life)

^[5] [Tories used party funds to cover Boris Johnson's legal bills over Jennifer Arcuri affair | Daily Mail Online](#)