

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

6 August 2021

Dear Lord Evans,

I would like to request that the Committee on Standards in Public Life launches an immediate inquiry into the fundraising activities of the Co-Chair of the Conservative Party Ben Elliot.

Mr Elliot has been subject of a series of troubling media revelations in recent days:

- On Friday 30 July, [the Financial Times reported](#) that he had developed a “secretive club” for elite Conservative donors known as the ‘Advisory Board’ that held regular meetings with the Prime Minister and the Chancellor.
- On Sunday 1 August, [The Sunday Times reported](#) allegations from a major Conservative donor that Mr Elliot’s inducements to donate to the Conservative Party or become a client of his concierge company Quintessentially also included professing to offer privileged access to the Royal Family.
- On Wednesday 4 August, [The Guardian reported](#) that Hawthorn Advisors, a PR firm founded by Mr Elliot in which he continues to hold a minority stake, lobbied the UK Government on behalf of its private clients, which include subprime lender Amigo, Chinese telecoms company Huawei, and health firm Icen Diagnostics.
- Also on Wednesday 4 August, [The Times reported](#) that Hod Hill, a shell company directed by Mr Elliot, was involved in the organisation of a “virtual summer party” for donors to the Conservative Party, and that the co-director of that company also appears to work for Elliot at Conservative headquarters.

As the Co-Chair of the Conservative Party, Mr Elliot is directly responsible for soliciting donations and raising funds for his Party. His actions in this role therefore fall within the remit of your Committee, and I would urge you to investigate the allegations outlined against Mr Elliot above without delay.

I am sure you agree that any suggestion of cash for access to senior ministers in government cannot conform with the ethical standards promoted by your Committee. The public urgently need to understand where Mr Elliot’s private business interests end and where his responsibilities as Co-Chair of the Conservative Party begin.

Specifically, Mr Elliot must clarify:


- Which ministers met with the secret group of elite donors known as the ‘Advisory Board’, when meetings took place and what was discussed at them.
- Which ministers met with the clients of Hawthorn Advisors, when meetings took place and what was discussed at them.

- The full extent of the activities and arrangements that his shell company Hod Hill made for Conservative donors, what services it has provided to the Conservative Party, and how much, if anything, it was paid for doing so.
- A full explanation as to what role Mr Elliot's co-director at Hod Hill Jakob Widecki fulfils at Conservative headquarters and what remuneration, if any, he is getting in return for it.

In your recent report, ['Regulating Election Finance'](#), you outlined the principles that should underpin that work: fairness, transparency and accountability. All three principles are in question when it comes to the allegations levelled against Mr Elliot – and by association the Conservative Party.

That is why I am confident that you will take immediate action to ensure that, when it comes to upholding ethical standards in public life, there cannot be one rule for high-ranking members of the Conservative Party and another rule for everyone else.

Yours sincerely,

A photograph of a handwritten signature in blue ink on a white background. The signature reads "Anneliese Dodds".

Anneliese Dodds

Chair of the Labour Party