

Committee on Standards in Public Life
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**Committee on
Standards in
Public Life**

Chris Bryant MP
Chair, Committee on Standards
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Sent by email: standards@parliament.uk

21 January 2022

Dear Chris,

Thank you for inviting the Committee on Standards in Public Life to contribute to your second consultation on the MPs' Code of Conduct.

Our first submission of written and oral evidence in autumn 2020 concentrated on the recommendations made in our 2018 report, *MPs' Outside Interests*. I am grateful for the time and consideration your Committee has given to these proposals.

In light of events since then, and your report published November 2021, my Committee has revisited our proposals before responding to this consultation. In line with how we conducted our *MPs' Outside Interests* review, our political members contributed to our discussions but had no vote on final decisions. Our new, updated proposals are outlined under items 1-7 in our response.

I would like to draw two matters to your attention:

First, we are now proposing that the regulation of MPs' conduct should be entirely independent of MPs, save for a final vote without debate where there is a sanction of suspension or expulsion. This can be achieved by bringing non-ICGS cases under the same process as ICGS cases, utilising the Independent Expert Panel, and would grant MPs formal rights of appeal on both the Commissioner's findings and the IEP's decision on sanction. As we argued in our recent report *Upholding Standards in Public Life*, the need for independence in standards regulation is paramount, and MPs should no longer have the ability to intervene in ongoing cases.

Second, we believe the principle of "reasonable limits" remains the best way to manage MPs' paid outside employment. However, we understand that this principle alone may leave too great a degree of subjectivity in its enforcement. We therefore propose a more objective means of setting reasonable limits on paid outside employment. Specifically, we believe the Standards Committee and the House should set an indicative limit of hours and remuneration, with a rebuttable presumption that paid outside employment exceeding those limits would be considered unreasonable. We set out a number of suggested criteria against which the Commissioner can consider rebuttals to the limits set.

We believe that the status quo is no longer sustainable amid high levels of public concern on MPs' second jobs, and a reasonable limits rule of this nature is fair, proportionate, and enforceable. Our reasoning, including further detail on the operation of this rule, are in the attached submission.

I look forward to appearing before your Committee to discuss these matters on the 25 January.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lord Evans of Weardale".

Lord Evans of Weardale KCB DL
Chair, Committee on Standards in Public Life