

**Committee on Standards in Public Life
Room G07
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Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Deputy Prime Minister and
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

Sent by email

**Committee on
Standards in
Public Life**

20 July 2023

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

Thank you for your letter of 20 July 2023 in which you enclosed the government's response to my Committee's report, Upholding Standards in Public Life which was published in November 2021. Thank you too for your kind words about the work of the Committee.

We were grateful for the full and considered response by the government to each of our recommendations.

We welcome the government's intention to reform the Business Appointment Rules and the move to make adherence to the Business Appointment Rules an enforceable legal requirement, including for ministers. To protect government integrity, those joining and leaving public service must have greater clarity about what is expected of them and there must be clear sanctions for those who fail to comply. We look forward to seeing the detail of how these changes will work in practice.

We were pleased too to note progress on public appointments, including the commitment to publish a list of direct ministerial appointments, and that ministers will be obliged to write to their Select Committee, and appear before it if requested by the Select Committee Chair, in the event of the minister deciding to appoint a candidate not deemed appointable by an Advisory Assessment Panel. We also welcome the decision that future appointments of Non Executive Directors to government departments will be regulated by the appointments process laid out in the Governance Code.

Transparency is an important lever in upholding public standards. The Cabinet Office's development of a single database to collate departmental transparency returns and the promise of new government guidance giving stricter minimum standards for descriptions of

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meetings, and extending transparency obligations to all Directors General, Finance and Commercial Directors and Senior Responsible Owners in the Government's Major Projects Portfolio is a welcome step. We hope that the new database can be developed quickly to help deal with concerns about lobbying.

We regret that not all our recommendations have been accepted, particularly that the government is not moving forward with stronger safeguards for the appointment of ethical regulators.

We would encourage the government to keep these issues under review. It is clear to us that whilst most in public office genuinely wish to uphold high standards, standards do require constant attention and rules require regular review to withstand new challenges and meet public expectations.

I am copying this letter to William Wragg MP, Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Select Committee; Rt Hon Lord Pickles, Chair, Advisory Committee on Business Appointments; and Sir Nigel Boardman.

I will place a copy of this letter on the Committee's website.

Yours sincerely,



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