



Independent Adviser on Ministerial Standards
Sir Laurie Magnus CBE

Alex Burghart MP
Shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

By email

5 June 2026

Dear Mr Burghart,

Thank you for your letter of 3 June 2026 in the context, inter alia, of provisions in the Ministerial Code and related official guidelines concerning use of non-corporate communication channels for conducting government business and the requirements for record keeping.

You open your letter with a request that I should investigate the “Office of the Prime Minister’s adherence to record keeping guidelines”. You also ask – “if Whatsapp is being routinely used for communications by the Prime Minister, it raises the question whether the guidance on limiting communications to lower security classifications has been followed”.

I note your reference to the concerns expressed by the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) about “how much government business appears to be being conducted over unofficial systems” of communication and over the “lack of proper records on discussions and decisions”. I also note, as you mention, the statement by The Rt Hon Darren Jones MP in Parliament on 19 May 2026 that he shared concerns raised by the ISC and that he had announced a forthcoming review of the use of non-corporate communication channels.

I do not consider, however, that it follows from this that I should undertake an inquiry specifically into the Prime Minister on the supposition that he personally used non-corporate communication channels for substantive exchanges with Lord Mandelson, which were subsequently deleted and/or which should have taken place at a higher classification. My terms of reference enable me to initiate inquiries on the basis of an alleged action by a minister constituting possible misconduct, but the underlying allegation needs to be founded on some element of factual evidence and not supposition alone. This is particularly important in this case given the intensive public commentary and speculation concerning any engagement by ministers with Lord Mandelson before, during and after his tenure as HM Ambassador to the United States.

My terms of reference relate to the individual conduct of ministers in the handling of specific matters with which they have been directly involved. It is not within my remit to investigate the actions or operations of Government more broadly, including the operation of private offices. Accordingly, I am

unable to and, therefore, do not address your comments about the handling of record keeping within No.10 Downing Street or the general approach taken by the Government to the use of Whatsapp.

I do not, in the light of the foregoing, see grounds for the investigation you request in relation to the Prime Minister. Given the public interest in this matter concerning the Prime Minister, I am publishing this letter.

Thank you again for writing to me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Laurie Magnus". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Sir Laurie Magnus CBE

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