

Open letter from the Committee on Standards in Public Life to all public office holders

The Committee has published an open letter to all public office holders on the importance of maintaining high standards and implementing the Nolan Principles.

OPEN LETTER FROM JONATHAN EVANS, CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE, TO ALL PUBLIC OFFICE HOLDERS

Standards in public life have rarely been more in the spotlight than they are today. Both as a Committee and as individual members we are frequently asked what can be done to maintain high standards and implement the Nolan Principles in the current political situation, which is causing real concern to many people who care about how our public life is conducted.

At one level, the key institutions of our democracy are doing their job providing important constitutional checks and balances. The long running and fierce dispute over Brexit is being played out largely in Parliament, the courts and the media, including social media. Such openness is itself a key principle in our public life.

But behaviour matters as much as formal structures. Leadership of standards needs to come from the top: from Government and from Parliament. In the current political situation, it is the view of our Committee that it is even more important that high standards are not only consistently observed but also demonstrably valued.

It is also vital that the tone of public debate should avoid abuse and intimidation, which have become increasingly widespread. Parliamentary democracy is under threat if those in public life and public office cannot express their views freely and without fear.

These long-established principles of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership are a personal responsibility and set the tone for leadership across the whole of public service. They are what the public expect of us.

Lord (Jonathan) Evans of Weardale Chair, Committee on Standards in Public Life