

Honesty

Objectivity

Openness

Selflessness

Integrity

Accountability

Leadership

**The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer KCB KC MP**

10 Downing Street,  
London, SW1A 2AB

[Sent by email]

3 February 2026

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to update you on the early work of the Ethics and Integrity Commission (EIC) since its establishment on 13 October. From the outset, the Commission has been committed to building on the Committee on Standards in Public Life's reputation for independent, evidence-based work as we have put in place the foundations to deliver our new, wider remit in the standards landscape.

We have appointed a new Chief Executive and are in the process of building up a staff team of around 18, with the capability and expertise necessary - particularly in relation to our new work on codes of conduct and building wider understanding of the standards system and the Nolan Principles.

Our officials have been working with the Cabinet Office team developing the Public Office (Accountability) Bill to ensure that the Commission's role is clear and well aligned. Once staff are in post, we will research and report on what really makes for an effective code of conduct and oversight arrangements so that we are a source of expertise and good practice for public authorities. An important part of this work will be looking at how to better embed codes into the culture and day to day work of public sector organisations.

I have also chaired the first two formal meetings of the Network of Standards Bodies, in October and January, bringing together regulators and advisory bodies operating across a range of contexts within government and in Parliament. The insight and intelligence generated through this network will be central to our first annual report to you on the health of standards in public life this autumn.

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The Commission has decided that the subject of its first review will be on reform of the public sector ombudsman system. You will recall that our predecessor, the Committee on Standards in Public Life, published a report in 2025 called 'Recognising and responding to early warning signs in public sector bodies'. Building on that report, the EIC's first review will look at whether ombudsman schemes in the public sector should play a greater role in investigating systemic issues before they escalate and supporting public bodies to instigate swift and meaningful improvements to public services. We intend to publish our terms of reference and launch a call for evidence for this review in early March when I will write to you again.

Finally, we look forward to the appointment of three new independent members, upon conclusion of the public appointment campaign run by the Cabinet Office. Our new members will bolster the Commission's capacity and will bring additional expertise and breadth to the Commission's considerations.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet in person to discuss the Commission's priorities and our developing programme in more detail.

We will place a copy of this letter on the EIC's website.

Yours sincerely,



Doug Chalmers CB DSO OBE  
Chair, Ethics and Integrity Commission