

**Committee on
Standards in
Public Life**

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Mr Bernard Jenkin MP
Chair
Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

26 September 2016

Dear Bernard,

**PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE
(PACAC) INQUIRY INTO LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE EU REFERENDUM**

I am writing on behalf of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) in response to your Committee's inquiry into lessons learned from this year's Referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union. We are grateful to PACAC for calling this inquiry which is clearly very timely.

May I draw your Committee's attention to CSPL's previous evidence on the issue of referendums which we submitted to [your inquiry](#) into purdah and impartiality in July 2015, and which remains

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valid. May I also take this opportunity to reiterate that the recommendations of this Committee's Fifth report of October 1998 on the funding of political parties made a number of recommendations concerning the conduct of referendums. The Committee, then under the chairmanship of Lord Neill, drew on the experience of the 1975 European Communities referendum and more recent referendums including on the Good Friday Agreement. Both written and oral evidence to the inquiry stressed the importance of fairness and consistency in the conduct of referendums. The Committee recommended a new regulatory framework with the aim of ensuring that both sides in a campaign had an adequate and fair opportunity to put their views to the public.

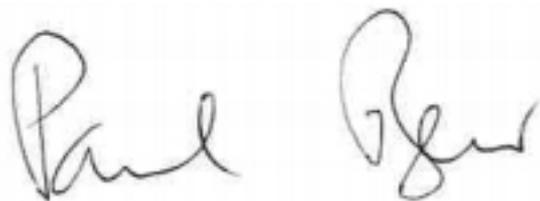
Specific issues have been raised in relation to the most recent referendum on the EU Referendum. We received a number of complaints from members of the public in the days following 23 June regarding the conduct of the both the Leave and Remain campaigns. It is clear that there are lessons to be learned and my Committee believes it is important to consider again key principles around the conduct of referendums and explore possible solutions to perceived and actual problems. To that end, we have announced our intention to host a joint seminar in the autumn with the UCL Constitution Unit looking at the operation of referenda.

Although the agenda is yet to be finalised, one issue that has been raised is the matter of misinformation from both sides during the course of the campaign. We intend to draw on people with differing perspectives to get a range of opinions and experience of different referendum systems and campaigns in the UK and other countries. On this issue I had a productive meeting in Dublin with the Referendum Commission earlier this month.

Of course we would be delighted for you or a colleague to attend and share your insights. Equally we would be happy to share the evidence gained from that event with the Committee if the timescales work for your inquiry.

Should you have any queries regarding this matter please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Bew". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lord Bew
Chair, Committee on Standards in Public Life