

20 April 2022

Dear Fabian

Standards in Public Life, Transparency & Anti-Corruption

Thanks for your letter of 7 April 2022.

The fact that you were writing to me had already been sign-posted in your press release in reaction to the *Back on Track* plan we published on 6 April 2022. In some ways we cannot help thinking that the publicity to the invitation you were tendering was simply an attempt to de-fuse what is a major sore for your Government.

Our latest pronouncement is not the first as we have been talking about the same issues of value for money, standards, transparency, financial abuse, waste and corruption for some time. Indeed, while we note your administration has had manifesto commitments in this area for over a decade it is also clear there has been singular failure to meet some of those or to live by those principles. There is, in our view, a need to deal with those issues clearly and put in place long-term solutions that endure.

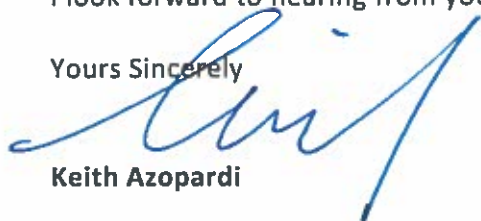
Being candid with you one of my concerns is that this is just an invitation to a talking shop which will result in progress being buried on these issues and any responsibility of the Government for the causes being blurred. We have seen several examples of cross-party Parliamentary Committees that are formed and never meet (the Environment, Constitutional Reform, Special Needs or Parliamentary Reform are stunning examples) and promises of reform that are never kept. I would be concerned that this suggestion ends up in exactly the same place as those. It seems to me that the desire to work together often becomes window-dressing by the Government to play to the gallery and that change does not then follow.

In any event we also think that your administration and the way it has done things is now the problem and principal reason why these changes are needed. In those circumstances we struggle to see how reforms can truly happen under your watch or whether they will be properly carried through. For those additional reasons we would be concerned that your letter is simply a side-step on an issue which is deeply politically uncomfortable to the Government.

As such if you are committed to specific reforms you could write to us with specific proposals. You have the advantage of having already read what our views are on the subject. We would then be able to consider with clear and precise changes in mind on a case-by-case basis.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely



Keith Azopardi