



HM Government

JOHN PENROSE MP

PRIME MINISTER'S ANTI CORRUPTION CHAMPION

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

5th June 2022

Dear Prime Minister,

I'm writing, with huge regret, to tender my resignation as your Anti-Corruption Champion. Not because I have ceased to care about the role – the issue is more important now than ever. Nor am I unhappy with what the Government is doing on the topic either: the recent Economic Crime Act and sanctioning of Russian oligarchs; plus the measures to make it harder for organised criminals and kleptocrats to hide dirty money in the UK through tighter rules on shell companies; more transparent Public Procurement; and the plans for a second Anti-Corruption Strategy when the existing one completes its 5-year term at the end of this year, are all welcome and needed. I'm proud to have been able to contribute to all of them.

My reason for stepping down is your public letter last week, replying to your Independent Adviser on the Ministerial Code about the recent Sue Gray Report into 'partygate'. In it you addressed the concerns over the Fixed Penalty Notice you paid, but not the broader and very serious criticisms of what the Report called 'failures of leadership and judgment' and its' conclusion that 'senior leadership at the centre, both political and official, must bear responsibility for this culture'. You will know (and your letter to your Adviser on the Ministerial Code explicitly says) that the Nolan Principles of Public Life are absolutely central to the Ministerial Code, and that the seventh of them is 'Leadership'. So the only fair conclusion to draw from the Sue Gray Report is that you have breached a fundamental principle of the Ministerial Code – a clear resigning matter. But your letter to your Independent Adviser on the Ministerial Code ignores this absolutely central, non-negotiable issue completely. And, if it had addressed it, it is hard to see how it could have reached any other conclusion than that you had broken the code.

I will always be grateful to you for getting Brexit done after the country voted to leave in the EU Referendum, for leading us to victory in the 2019 General Election, and for getting the country out of covid lockdown as early as was safely possible last year. But I hope you will understand that none of these can excuse or justify a fundamental breach of the Ministerial Code. As a result, I'm afraid it wouldn't be honourable or right for me to remain as your Anti-Corruption Champion after reaching this conclusion, nor for you to remain as Prime Minister either. I hope you will now stand aside so we can look to the future and choose your successor.

Yours sincerely,

John Penrose

MP for Weston-super-Mare