

# **PE2093/E: Review and update the Scottish Ministerial Code**

## **First Minister written submission, 4 September 2024**

Further to my letter to you of 26 July 2024 in response to yours of 4 July 2024 about Petition PE2093 on the Scottish Ministerial Code, I am writing to provide you with a further update on my plans for publishing a revised Code.

This afternoon, as part of my statement to Parliament on the Scottish Government's Programme for Government, I announced a number of important changes I will be making to the Ministerial Code to significantly strengthen transparency, accountability and independent scrutiny. You may be interested to note that I have now committed to adopt some of the changes called for in the petition you are currently considering (PE2093).

For instance, the new Ministerial Code I will publish will allow my independent advisers to begin investigations into alleged breaches of the Code without a direct referral from me. It will also make clear that I can seek advice from my independent advisers on the application of sanctions in cases where it is agreed that there has been a breach. My new Code will also invite the independent advisers to play a role in scrutinising Ministers' declarations of interests.

These changes will significantly strengthen the role of my independent advisers, whose Terms of Reference will also be published.

Collectively, the changes I have committed to today represent the most significant updates to the Scottish Ministerial Code since independent advisers to the First Minister were first introduced in June 2008. The changes demonstrate my absolute commitment, and that of my Ministers, to upholding the highest standards of integrity in public life.

I know the great care that my Ministers and I take in observing both the letter and the spirit of the Ministerial Code and of our deep commitment to public service. As Ministers, we will continue to uphold the highest standards of behaviour as we seek to deliver the best outcomes for the people of Scotland.

As I have previously committed to do, I will write again to the Committee when I publish the new Ministerial Code later this year. This will provide more detail about the changes outlined above and others that I intend to make.

I am copying this letter to Martin Whitfield MSP, Convener of the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee for any read across to the MSP Code of Conduct and the MSP Register of Interests.

**JOHN SWINNEY**