

Consumer Campaigner calls on the UK Parliamentary Committee on Standards to introduce fundamental Code of Conduct change

The UK Parliament's Committee on Standards launched a Public Consultation into the operation of the Code of Conduct for Members of the UK Parliament.

The Code of Conduct guides MP's on how they should behave in a variety of situations, with an emphasis on financial, sexual and diversity.

Members of Parliament do not have formal contracts of employment; their 'contract' exists between themselves and the people who have elected them. In recent years, the conduct of MP's has created outrage and concern, which led to the introduction of the Recall of MP's Act 2015, enabling constituents to create the conditions whereby a sitting MP can be removed under certain circumstances.

An examination of the Code of Conduct reveals that it is essentially aspirational and simply offers expectations and recommendations as to how MP's should behave. The Code offers a discretionary route for the Parliamentary Commissioner on Standards and indeed the House of Commons, by suggesting that where breaches have been identified, they 'may' investigate or deliver sanctions upon the MP.

In essence, the Code of Conduct is demonstrably 'light-touch' regulation!

Frank Brehany, the Consumer Campaigner & Media Commentator, has spent some 20 years campaigning and lobbying on behalf of Consumers and Victims, bringing their case to the heart of Westminster and other Legislative Bodies.

Frank has come late to this Public Inquiry due to the lack of publicity given to this important topic.

Given the current general public distaste for political life and the changing status of Westminster, as Brexit approaches, Frank considers that it is the interest of Consumers, particularly Victims & Survivors of some Corporate failure, to be confident that their representatives are working to the highest of enforceable standards.

As a result, Frank has submitted brief comments to the Committee on Standards, which represent his experience of Westminster and how Public confidence can be restored in this important institution. He has called for Standards and requirements to be fashioned either into a formal employment contract for MP's, or, for such legal obligations to be given full legal force by amending the Recall of MP's Act 2015. He proposes that the new Act should be called: The Work, Conduct, Enforcement and Recall of MP's (amended) Act 2015.

Frank states:

"I have many years of experience of meeting, listening, speaking, commenting and submitting reports to either Select Committees, within Stakeholder meetings or in private session. On the whole I have found these engagements to be mostly professional".

He concludes:

"Given that Brexit is upon us, it is vital now, more than ever, that our parliamentary representatives are clear about the boundaries of behaviour and indeed how they should work. As the majority of us in the workplace are under some contractual and/or legal obligation, governing our professional lives, it is important that MP's are similarly treated. It is simply not tenable to expect that our relationship with elected Members is governed by an aspirational Code of Conduct. MP's work, and what is expected of them, needs to be placed on a firmer legal footing. If the Committee fails to accept these proposals, then this will not only fail all Consumer/Citizens but will result I suspect in more future Consultations and Inquiries without end".

Media Notes:

1. Frank's website is: www.frankbrehany.com
2. He has extensive experience in meeting with politicians and civil servants, in Brussels, Strasbourg, Westminster and has submitted over 70 reports to those jurisdictions and to the Australian Parliament and the United States FAA. He is currently the Chair of the UK's BSI sub-Committee on Cabin Air Quality and represents UK interests at the CEN TC436 Committee on Cabin Air Quality. He is also a Passenger Representative in the USA and sits as a voting member of the ASHRAE SSPC161 Committee on Cabin Air Quality. Frank works with a number of Campaigners in the UK across Europe and the United States.
3. Frank has never been a member of any political party. He is self-funded and receives no income from any legal or other connected source. He is a fully qualified Solicitor holding a Practising Certificate but currently does not work within any Law Firm. Frank receives occasional fees for media or broadcast work. In relation to his work on European Standards, he simply receives expenses and no other income.
4. Frank has campaigned for many years on Travel-related matters, bringing the Consumer voice to bear on Package Holidays, Flight Rights, Cabin Air Quality and consideration of security issues in holiday destinations and other issues. Frank writes and comments extensively on travel related matters. He will shortly publish a Consumer guide on an Aviation issue and is currently completing a major book on a matter relating to the Magdalene Laundry scandal in the Republic of Ireland.
5. Frank can also be contacted through Twitter via @ConsumerFrank, or through his dedicated media number: 01215460650