

**25th July 2024**

Dear Chair,

Congratulations on your appointment as Chair of the Modernisation of the House of Commons Committee.

We are pleased that the Labour Party manifesto promised the Modernisation Committee would consider restrictions on MPs' second jobs that would "need to be put in place to prevent MPs from taking up roles that stop them serving their constituents and the country".

The most recent second jobs' scandals - notably Owen Paterson's, Matt Hancock's, Nadine Dorries' and Scott Benton's activities - turned MPs second jobs into a sleaze story and inflicted great damage to the reputation of MPs, Parliament and democracy.

For this reason Unlock Democracy welcomes the debate on second jobs.

### **Immediate action**

There are a number of steps MPs should take immediately to reduce the risk of further reputational damage associated with second jobs. They should:

- Cease any paid parliamentary adviser, strategist or consultancy roles.
- Publish the contracts for any outside employment (with suitable redactions for privacy reasons).

This would demonstrate MPs' commitment to transparency.

We hope party leaders will set an example, both by publishing any relevant contractual details themselves, and by requesting that MPs in their party follow suit.

### **Longer term solution**

Unlock Democracy is not calling for an outright ban on second jobs, as writing the occasional paid column for a newspaper is unlikely to affect an MPs ability to perform their primary role.

Unlock Democracy supports a reasonable compromise, which acknowledges that some MPs may need to work to maintain professional qualifications, or occasionally write articles for newspapers,

and would allow MPs to earn up to the equivalent of half of an MP's salary<sup>1</sup> (£45,000 roughly), and spend up to 20 hours a week, on other interests.

This would ensure that a second job never becomes the first job.

Unlock Democracy believes this level of outside involvement/remuneration would be within the 'reasonable limits' previously considered by the Committee on Standards in Public Life. These limits would set a threshold beyond which the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards could consider whether an MP's ability to perform their public role was being affected by their outside interests.

We would be happy to discuss these proposals with you further.

Yours sincerely,



Tom Brake - Director of Unlock Democracy

P.S Here is our detailed policy <https://unlockdemocracy.org.uk/second-jobs-briefing>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/about/mps-and-lords/members/pay-mps/>