



Baroness Parminter
House of Lords
London, SW1A 0PW

Our reference: LY/00006

3rd October 2019

Dear Lady Parminter,

Thank you for your contributions during the repeated Urgent Question on the use of language and creating a safe environment both in our country and our country's Parliament. Members of both Houses are rightly concerned about the rising levels of intimidation in public life. This is especially important as it can stop talented people, particularly women and those from minority backgrounds, from standing for public office.

I am writing with regard to part of my response during this debate, when I answered your concern highlighting the importance of tone, language, respect and common decency in both Houses, I outlined some of the significant work that the Government is doing to combat this issue. I said 'consulting on our Internet Safety Strategy Green Paper—we will publish a DCMS-Home Office White Paper shortly'. I should have said that we had already consulted on our Internet Safety Strategy and published the Online Harms White Paper.

The Online Harms White Paper was published in April 2019 and sets out the Government's plans for a world-leading package of measures to keep UK users safe online. Following publication, a full 12 week public consultation was conducted, which closed in July. We are currently analysing consultation responses and will publish the Government Response in the coming months.

I am extremely proud to live in such a vibrant democracy, which is a cornerstone of our British values. A key part of this is having a respectful, vibrant, and open debate. However, this freedom cannot be an excuse to cause harm or spread hatred, and a line is crossed when disagreement mutates into intimidation, violence or abuse.

I hope this letter serves to clarify any misunderstanding and I will place a copy of this letter in the Library.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Howarth

The Earl Howe
Deputy Leader of the House of Lords