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Convenor – Committee on the Scottish
Government Handling of Harassment Complaints
c/o Clerk to the Committee
Room T1.03
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

3 August 2020

Dear Linda

Scottish Government Review of its Handling of Harassment Complaints Procedure

In your letter of 30 June to the Permanent Secretary you asked for an update on the review of the the Scottish Government's procedure for the Handling of Harassment Complaints Involving Current or Former Ministers.

I am writing to inform you that we will be announcing today, in response to a Parliamentary Question, that Laura Dunlop QC will be appointed to lead that review. A copy of my answer is attached at Annex A.

JOHN SWINNEY

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See www.lobbying.scot

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S5W-31055

Clare Adamson MSP:

To ask the Scottish Government for an update on progress with the review of its procedure for the handling of harassment complaints involving current or former Ministers.

John Swinney MSP:

In my response to S5W-21344 on 31 January 2019, I advised Parliament that we would not be progressing the review of the application of the Scottish Government's procedure for handling complaints about Ministers or former Ministers at that time to avoid any risk of prejudice to live criminal proceedings. Since the conclusion of those proceedings, the attention of the Government has been focussed on leading Scotland's response to the global health emergency.

I am now however able to advise that Laura Dunlop QC has agreed to lead this review, which will commence this month.

The remit of the review is to:

1. Draw out the lessons from the first application of the procedure as followed through to decision. In particular, this will include the application of paragraph 10, and provide advice on any changes required to strengthen the content and future operation of the procedure.
2. Identify how best to support complainers in future without undermining the integrity of the process.
3. Consider what further steps could be taken to improve the procedure to meet its intention, including maintaining the confidence of Scottish Government staff in the approach which will be taken to handling such issues in future.

The findings and recommendations will be published by the Scottish Government in due course.