

GOVERNANCE PROJECT



FOREWORD

Current opinion polling shows with stark clarity the extent to which public confidence in our democratic processes is at a low point. Unless this issue is addressed, the risk exists of the public progressively turning away from them and placing their faith in alternatives that are incompatible with the maintenance of our freedoms. It is our shared concern about this that has brought this Commission together.

We are, however, blessed in our country in having long standing institutions that provide a solid bedrock on which parliamentary democracy has thrived and can thrive. In carrying out this review and coming up with our recommendations, this Commission believes that much can be done to restore public confidence by relatively small changes, that are easily deliverable. If implemented, they are also capable of improving Government and making the work of Ministers, Parliamentarians and Civil Servants easier, by providing a sounder framework of ethics and standards within which politics and Government are conducted. This, of course, does not preclude other possibilities of greater constitutional change in future, which are a legitimate subject of debate. But we have chosen here to focus on how existing principles and structures of governance can be improved rather than look to other solutions. If our proposed reforms were to be implemented, then we also think that any debate on further change could be conducted under much better conditions as a result.

We are very grateful to the many who are serving or have served in public life who have helped us with this work. We have also freely used of the expertise and previous work of others in this field who we acknowledge. This report would, of course, not have been produced without the assistance of a dedicated team to help with research and drafting. We wish to thank Oussama El Fatihi, Tom Fieldhouse and Sophie Stowers for their work, along with Andrew McClean who, as Director, has driven forward this project and made it possible. As its promoter, Paul Lomas has also made an important contribution throughout. We have been most fortunate to have the financial support of the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust and the Cobalt Trust.

As a Commission, we have been encouraged by the fact that, drawn as we are from a variety of backgrounds, we have found ourselves in agreement on what can and should be done. Similarly, we have found that, regardless of political affiliation or lack of it, many of the interlocutors with whom we have engaged are of a like mind. We believe that a great opportunity now exists to achieve positive change if there is the will to do it.

Rt Hon Dominic Grieve KC

Chair

1 February 2024

The Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust and the Cobalt Trust have supported this work in recognition of the importance of the issues. The facts presented and the views expressed in this report are, however, those of the Commissioners and not necessarily those of the Reform Trust (www.jrrt.org.uk) or the Cobalt Trust.