

# Toft Newton Parish Council

PO Box 1659

EPWORTH

North Lincolnshire

DN9 1UL

Tel: 07581 146213

E-mail: [clerk@toftnewtonparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@toftnewtonparishcouncil.gov.uk)

21<sup>st</sup> of November 2025

The Rt Hon Sir Edward Leigh MP  
Member of Parliament for Gainsborough  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Sir Edward,

Please find attached a copy of a letter that I have just sent to Chris Ward MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office, who inadvertently mis-lead the House of Commons during a debate on the Nolan Principles on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2025.

While the Minister submitted a written correction to Hansard, he did not apologise or correct the misinformation, that being he stated that "parish councils were to be abolished in the upcoming local government reorganisation".

I wondered if you could ask the Minister to return to the House to correct his statement. Thank you.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

**Michael Lewis, Dip Psy (ICS), CertHE (Glouc), FCMI, MIOEE (He / Him)  
Parish Council Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer and Proper Officer  
(enc).**

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21<sup>st</sup> of November 2025

The Rt Hon Steve Reed MP  
Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Dear Secretary of State,

Please find attached a copy of a letter that I have just sent to Chris Ward MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office, who inadvertently mis-lead the House of Commons during a debate on the Nolan Principles on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2025.

While the Minister submitted a written correction to Hansard, he did not apologise or correct the misinformation, that being he stated that "parish councils were to be abolished in the upcoming local government reorganisation".

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Yours sincerely,

**Michael Lewis, Dip Psy (ICS), CertHE (Glouc), FCMI, MIOEE (He / Him)  
Parish Council Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer and Proper Officer  
(enc).**

Michael Lewis

E-mail: michael75lewis@icloud.com

21<sup>st</sup> of November 2025

Lee Pitcher MP  
Member of Parliament for Doncaster East and the Isle of Axholme  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Lee,

Please find attached a copy of a letter that I have just sent to Chris Ward MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office, who inadvertently mis-lead the House of Commons during a debate on the Nolan Principles on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 2025.

While the Minister submitted a written correction to Hansard, he did not apologise or correct the misinformation, that being he stated that "parish councils were to be abolished in the upcoming local government reorganisation".

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If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

**Michael Lewis, Dip Psy (ICS), CertHE (Glouc), FCMI, MIOEE (He / Him)**  
(enc).

# From The Office of Michael Lewis

**Correspondence Address:** PO Box 1659, EPWORTH, North Lincolnshire, DN9 1UL  
**E-mail:** [michaellewis.work@icloud.com](mailto:michaellewis.work@icloud.com)  
**Tel:** 07581 146213

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> of November, 2025  
**Ref:** Nolan Principles Debate: 12<sup>th</sup> of November

Chris Ward MP  
Parliamentary Secretary for The Cabinet Office  
Member of Parliament for Brighton Kemptown and Peacehaven  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Minister Ward,

## **Nolan Principles Debate: 12th of November 2025**

As a soon to retire Parish Council Clerk, I am concerned by a comment you made during the recent debate on the Seven Principles For Public Life, also known as The Nolan Principles (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>).

My own MP, Lee Pitcher (Doncaster East and the Isle of Axholme) asked you the following question:

“I thank the Minister for giving way; it is much appreciated. Just briefly, those standards are very much welcomed, particularly in my Constituency. Does he agree that they must be applied at parish and town council level too? We want expectations aligned across all public services.”

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-11-12/debates/66382490-D5F1-4ED6-91C4-D4A934B88EF7/NolanPrinciples#contribution-34BF3173-3D3B-4848-876D-B6E8922F0483>

As a former Town Councillor, Lee Pitcher is aware that Town and Parish Councillors in England are unpaid people who want to make a difference to their immediate communities.

They are already covered by stricter qualification and disqualification rules than Members of Parliament, a Code of Conduct, various Standards rules and to some extent the Nolan Principles.

Personally, I believe the stricter selection criteria that applies to this unpaid, statutory role, should apply to all UK elected roles, however, that is another issue.

You replied:

“My hon. Friend raises a very good point, although I should remind him that I think parish councils are about to be abolished in the local government reorganisation so we might have to look at that, but I take his point, which is a fair one.”

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-11-12/debates/66382490-D5F1-4ED6-91C4-D4A934B88EF7/NolanPrinciples#contribution-2E639A96-3A9C-4491-AD01-CA21FA757BA8>

As far as I can tell from Hansard, no MP asked you to clarify your comment that 10,480 English parish councils are about to be abolished.

And this was certainly not the aim of the English Devolution White Paper published in December 2024.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper>.

Indeed, page 100, talks about the role of Parish Councils:

“We know people value the role of governance at the community scale and that can be a concern when local government is reorganised. We will therefore want to see stronger community arrangements when reorganisation happens in the way councils engage at a neighbourhood or area level. We will also rewire the relationship between town and parish councils and principal Local Authorities, strengthening expectations on engagement and community voice.”

While you published a written correction on the 17th of November 2025, you simply removed your erroneous statement from the record, without actually correcting your statement, or apologising for the stress and anguish you caused to Parish Councillors, Clerks, other staff and residents.

Amending your response to:

“My hon. Friend raises a very good and fair point.”

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-11-17/debates/F9007DE1-2802-4FBA-A88A-5C9E53341E9C/CabinetOffice#contribution-0DCE4246-30C3-4F36-ABDE-DDCBAE700D03>

The Ministerial Code states:

“It is of paramount importance that Ministers give accurate and truthful information to Parliament, correcting any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity.”

<https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainer/misleading-parliament-correcting-record>

Therefore, can you please issue a correction, retracting your incorrect statement and apologising for causing unnecessary confusion and anguish?

As Lee Pitcher MP said “We want expectations aligned across all public services”, this is certainly a view held within the parish council sector.

I have copied this letter to:

Lee Pitcher MP as he is both my MP and the MP who you erroneously told parish councils were to be abolished.

The Rt Hon. Sir Edward Leigh MP, who is the MP for Gainsborough, his constituency includes Toft Newton Parish Council, whom I am about to retire from.

The Rt. Hon. Steve Reed MP, Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The copies sent to The Secretary of State and Sir Edward are accompanied by a brief introduction on Toft Newton Parish Council headed note paper.

Minister, I trust you will address this issue forthwith. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,



**Michael Lewis, Dip (Psy), CertHE (Glouc), FCMI, MIOEE (He / Him)**

cc:

Lee Pitcher MP  
Member of Parliament for Doncaster East and the Isle of Axholme  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Sir Edward Leigh MP  
Member of Parliament for Gainsborough  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Steve Reed MP  
Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

From: SAVAGE, Tyler [tyler.savage@parliament.uk](mailto:tyler.savage@parliament.uk)  
Subject: Nolan Principles Debate: 12th of November  
Date: 1 Dec 2025 at 15:47:14  
To: [michaellewis.work@icloud.com](mailto:michaellewis.work@icloud.com)

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Dear Michael,

I am replying on behalf of Chris Ward's office.

Thank you for your letter, it was much appreciated – although you are not Chris' constituent – I thought it right to acknowledge the receipt of your detailed response.

I spoke with the team at the Cabinet Office to confirm – but my understanding is that the record has now been corrected on Hansard, and the inadvertently erroneous statement was removed.

[Cabinet Office - Hansard - UK Parliament](#)

Thank you for writing in – and congratulations on your retirement as Parish Council Clerk.

All best wishes,

Tyler Savage  
Constituency Assistant  
Office of Chris Ward MP

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From: Michael Lewis [michaellewis.work@icloud.com](mailto:michaellewis.work@icloud.com)  
Subject: Re: Nolan Principles Debate: 12th of November  
Date: 3 Dec 2025 at 08:00:09  
To: Tyler SAVAGE [tyler.savage@parliament.uk](mailto:tyler.savage@parliament.uk)

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Hello Tyler,

Thank you for your e-mail, and thank you for your kind wishes regarding my pending retirement.

The "correction" isn't a correction, it just removes the erroneous statement, it would have been better to have had a verbal correction in the House, but at least the incorrect statement has been amended.

Once again, thank you for coming back to me.

Kind regards,

*Michael Lewis*

**Michael Lewis, Dip (Psy), CertHE (Glouc), FCMI, MIOEE.** (He / Him)

<https://bit.ly/EpworthUK>

Sent from my iPhone

On 1 Dec 2025, at 15:47, SAVAGE, Tyler  
<[tyler.savage@parliament.uk](mailto:tyler.savage@parliament.uk)> wrote:

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From: SAVAGE, Tyler [tyler.savage@parliament.uk](mailto:tyler.savage@parliament.uk)  
Subject: Nolan Principles Debate: 12th of November  
Date: 3 Dec 2025 at 10:02:40  
To: Michael Lewis [michaellewis.work@icloud.com](mailto:michaellewis.work@icloud.com)

Dear Michael,

No problem at all my friend, thanks for engaging!

All best,

Tyler

---

**From:** Michael Lewis <[michaellewis.work@icloud.com](mailto:michaellewis.work@icloud.com)>  
**Sent:** 03 December 2025 08:00  
**To:** SAVAGE, Tyler <[tyler.savage@parliament.uk](mailto:tyler.savage@parliament.uk)>  
**Subject:** Re: Nolan Principles Debate: 12th of November

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*Michael Lewis*

**Michael Lewis, Dip (Psy), CertHE (Glouc), FCMI, MIOEE.** (He / Him)

<https://bit.ly/EpworthUK>

Sent from my iPhone

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Tyler Savage  
Constituency Assistant  
Office of Chris Ward MP

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THE RT HON SIR EDWARD LEIGH MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Michael Lewis  
Toft Newton Parish Council Clerk  
PO Box 1659  
Epworth  
DN9 1UL

4<sup>th</sup> December 2025

Dear Mr Lewis,

You may recall that you got in touch with me regarding your concerns relating to statements made by Chris Ward MP on the floor of the House on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November when debating the Nolan Principles.

On your behalf, I have written to Chris Ward MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Cabinet Office, enclosing a copy of your correspondence.

I will be sure to forward you their responses once I have received them.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me and if I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward Leigh".

THE RT HON SIR EDWARD LEIGH MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Michael Lewis  
Toft Newton Parish Council Clerk  
PO Box 1659  
Epworth  
DN9 1UL

20<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Dear Mr Lewis,

You may recall that you got in touch with me regarding your concerns regarding the statement made on the floor of the House by Chris Ward MP on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November. On your behalf I wrote to the member in question and I have now received a response.

In his response, a copy of which I have enclosed, he reassures you that he has respect for parish councillors and their work. He goes on to explain that on said occasion he misspoke and reiterates that he corrected the record in Hansard in line with parliamentary process.

Thank you for taking the time to write to me and if I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward Leigh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'E' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'y'.



Chris Ward MP  
Parliamentary Secretary  
Cabinet Office 70 Whitehall London  
SW1A 2AS

Rt Hon Sir Edward Leigh MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Our reference: MC2025/20271

By email: [edward.leigh.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:edward.leigh.mp@parliament.uk)

08 January 2026

Dear Sir Edward,

Thank you for your letter of 4 December, regarding your constituent's concerns following a recent adjournment debate on the Seven Principles of Public Life.

I agree that the work parish councillors do is very important for making a difference in their local communities, and I have great respect for those that volunteer their time in public service. I would like to reassure your constituent that this was a simple case of me misspeaking during the cut and thrust of a debate, and I have corrected the record on Hansard to reflect this. This is in line with the required parliamentary process

Thank you, once again, for writing.

Yours sincerely,

**Chris Ward MP**  
**PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY**