

The Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg MP
Leader of the House of Commons

By email

17 March 2021

Dear Mr Rees-Mogg,

Full Fact is a charity focused on improving the quality of information in public life, and we believe that the role of Parliament in upholding the highest possible standards of accuracy is absolutely crucial for democracy.

I am writing to you in your role as the Leader of the House of Commons to ask you to consider recommending a review into the parliamentary corrections process.

Our fact checking and corrections work over the last decade has brought us into frequent contact with Members of the House of Commons over issues of accuracy. This has left us with an evidence base that, despite including some very admirable behaviour by certain Members, ultimately demonstrates that Parliament is not always living up to its role as a provider of trusted, high quality information to the UK public.

In a statement to the House on 11 March¹, the Speaker told MPs:

“All Members of this House are honourable. They must take responsibility for correcting the record if a mistake has been made. It is not dishonourable to make a mistake, but to seek to avoid admitting one is a different matter.

I said when I was elected Speaker that we needed to treat each other and the electorate with respect. What I have talked about today is an important part of that, and I hope all Members will act in that spirit.”

We believe that Members are being hampered in acting in that spirit by the current parliamentary corrections process, which in our view is not fit for purpose.

The existing system is not being used consistently or effectively by Ministers. It is rightly used by some departments to make technical corrections to statements. However, wherever there is even

¹<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-03-11/debates/D8F4BC4C-9DEC-4590-B29C-10026B520E58/Speaker%E2%80%99SStatement>

the quietest public suggestion of inaccuracy, we have found Ministers and their departments are often unwilling to engage. We could provide examples, if that would be helpful.

When the public sees Ministers and even the Prime Minister failing to correct inaccuracies, this can undermine trust and perpetuate the spread of misinformation. During a pandemic this can leave the public confused and at risk of harm.

Correcting the record is perceived by many politicians as a show of political weakness or vulnerability, used only to score party political points. The fact that only Ministers can correct Hansard perpetuates this.

By making it possible for all Members, not just government Ministers, to correct Hansard simply and efficiently, it would become incumbent on all parliamentarians to champion accuracy in public life.

Corrections to Parliament's official record should be made in a way that is in the public interest - where the electorate can clearly see the corrected information alongside the error. Raising a Point of Order does not support this. Thankfully, a UK model for an all-Member corrections process already exists: the Scottish Parliament² has been doing this for some time.

Public debate is increasingly toxic and divided, and the accuracy of information coming from our elected representatives matters. We ask that you consider recommending the Procedure Committee conduct a review into the parliamentary corrections process, with a view to providing a simple and efficient system that allows all Members to submit corrections to Hansard. This is a basic and practical change that could be significant in moving towards a culture of correcting mistakes.

I'd be very happy to discuss this further with you or your officials, and provide further information if that would be helpful.

I have written in similar terms to the Speaker of the House, the Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP and the Chair of the Procedure Committee, the Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP.

Yours sincerely,



Will Moy
Chief Executive

² <http://www.parlamaid-alba.org/OfficialReport/CorrectionsGuidance.pdf>

The Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP
Chair of the Procedure Committee

By email

17 March 2021

Dear Ms Bradley,

Full Fact is a charity focused on improving the quality of information in public life, and we believe that the role of Parliament in upholding the highest possible standards of accuracy is absolutely crucial for democracy.

I am writing to you in your role as Chair of the Procedure Committee to ask you to consider a review into the parliamentary corrections process.

Our fact checking and corrections work over the last decade has brought us into frequent contact with Members of the House of Commons over issues of accuracy. This has left us with an evidence base that, despite including some very admirable behaviour by certain Members, ultimately demonstrates that Parliament is not always living up to its role as a provider of trusted, high quality information to the UK public.

In a statement to the House on 11 March¹, the Speaker told MPs:

“All Members of this House are honourable. They must take responsibility for correcting the record if a mistake has been made. It is not dishonourable to make a mistake, but to seek to avoid admitting one is a different matter.

I said when I was elected Speaker that we needed to treat each other and the electorate with respect. What I have talked about today is an important part of that, and I hope all Members will act in that spirit.”

We believe that Members are being hampered in acting in that spirit by the current parliamentary corrections process, which in our view is not fit for purpose.

The existing system is not being used consistently or effectively by Ministers. It is rightly used by some departments to make technical corrections to statements. However, wherever there is even the quietest public suggestion of inaccuracy, we have found Ministers and their departments are often unwilling to engage. We could provide examples, if that would be helpful.

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When the public sees Ministers and even the Prime Minister failing to correct inaccuracies, this can undermine trust and perpetuate the spread of misinformation. During a pandemic this can leave the public confused and at risk of harm.

Correcting the record is perceived by many politicians as a show of political weakness or vulnerability, used only to score party political points. The fact that only Ministers can correct Hansard perpetuates this.

By making it possible for all Members, not just government Ministers, to correct Hansard simply and efficiently, it would become incumbent on all parliamentarians to champion accuracy in public life.

Corrections to Parliament's official record should be made in a way that is in the public interest - where the electorate can clearly see the corrected information alongside the error. Raising a Point of Order does not support this. Thankfully, a UK model for an all-Member corrections process already exists in the Scottish Parliament².

Public debate is increasingly toxic and divided, and the accuracy of information coming from our elected representatives matters. The Procedure Committee has a role in reviewing and making recommendations that can improve vital processes impacting our democracy. We ask that the Committee consider a review into the parliamentary corrections process, with a view to providing a simple and efficient system that allows all Members to submit corrections to Hansard.

This is a basic and practical change that could be significant in moving towards a culture of correcting mistakes. I appreciate that the Procedure Committee currently has many considerations around evolving House of Commons procedure and practice in relation to coronavirus restrictions, but I hope you agree with this being an easy win for Members and the electorate.

I'd be very happy to discuss this further with you or your officials. I have written in similar terms to the Speaker of the House, the Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP and the Leader of the House of Commons, the Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg MP.

Yours sincerely,



Will Moy
Chief Executive

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The Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP
Speaker of the House of Commons

By email

17 March 2021

Dear Sir Lindsay,

As a charity focused on improving the quality of information in public life, Full Fact watched your comments in the House on 11 March¹ about Members correcting the record with great interest.

Our fact checking and corrections work over the last decade has brought us into frequent contact with Members of the House of Commons over issues of accuracy. This has left us with an evidence base that, despite including some very admirable behaviour by certain Members, ultimately demonstrates that Parliament is not always living up to its role as a provider of trusted, high quality information to the UK public.

In your statement you rightly called on all Members to treat each other and the electorate with respect, and to act in that spirit.

We believe, however, that Members are being hampered in acting in that very spirit by the current parliamentary corrections process which is not fit for purpose.

The existing system is not being used consistently or effectively by Ministers. It is rightly used by some departments to make technical corrections to statements. However, wherever there is even the quietest public suggestion of inaccuracy, we have found Ministers and their departments are often unwilling to engage. We could provide examples, if that would be helpful.

When the public sees Ministers and even the Prime Minister failing to correct inaccuracies, this can undermine trust and perpetuate the spread of misinformation. During a pandemic this can leave the public confused and at risk of harm.

Correcting the record is perceived by many politicians as a show of political weakness or vulnerability, used only to score party political points. The fact that only Ministers can correct Hansard perpetuates this.

By making it possible for all Members, not just government Ministers, to correct Hansard simply and efficiently, it would become incumbent on all parliamentarians to champion accuracy in public life.

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Corrections to Parliament's official record should be made in a way that is in the public interest - where the electorate can clearly see the corrected information alongside the error. Raising a Point of Order does not support this and uses up parliamentary time. Thankfully, a UK model for an all-Member corrections process already exists: the Scottish Parliament² has been doing this for some time.

It is crucial for democracy that the UK Parliament is seen to champion and uphold the very highest standards of accuracy. We ask that in your role as Speaker of the House, you would write to the Procedure Committee to offer your support for a simple and efficient system that allows all Members to submit corrections to Hansard. This is a basic and practical change that could be significant in moving towards a culture of correcting mistakes.

I have written in similar terms to the Chair of the Procedure Committee, the Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, and the Leader of the House of Commons, the Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg MP.

Yours sincerely,



Will Moy
Chief Executive

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