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**GOVERNMENT REACTION TO THE GSD OPPOSITION'S
STANCE ON GHA COMPLAINTS PANEL**

The GSD Opposition continues to descend to the darkest depths in its desire to undermine good governance. Its latest attack on the integrity of the ordinary citizens appointed onto the panel to deal with appeals to complaint responses by the GHA is probably the worst example.

What the Opposition does not say is that the panel is not one that sits collectively to consider any case. It is simply a list of names from where the Ombudsman selects different boards of three members to hear each appeal. The Ombudsman does this using his discretion to select a balanced board, taking into account every manner of consideration, including age, sex and background.

The panel as it now stands is balanced and contains persons from different backgrounds, ages and philosophies, being a truer reflection of the community, from which the Ombudsman can then choose his boards, without any form of political interference. In trying to discredit the panel what the GSD is doing is in fact questioning the Ombudsman's integrity.

The panels hear cases on their merits, then make independent recommendations and there is no political influence whatsoever involved in this.

Indeed what has changed is that whereas the previous Government systematically ignored the recommendations of the appeals boards, and did not put them into effect, the present Minister ensures that the GHA closely studies all the recommendations and implements them. Indeed, recommendations of the past nine years, since the present system was introduced, are being examined with a view to implementing those that are still relevant.

As the Opposition will be aware, given that the matter has been discussed in Parliament, the panel will serve for a limited time only, as the Government, in keeping with its Manifesto commitment, is reviewing the complaints procedure in order to vest this with the Ombudsman and not with the GHA. More proof of its absolute commitment to fairness.