

From the Chairman



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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You asked for the Committee's advice about accepting a role as an Adviser to Essential Living, having left your ministerial position in October 2013. You would be providing advice on current and upcoming housing legislation, offering wider strategic advice on the housing and planning market, supporting progress on individual sites and assisting in establishing a recognisable brand for the company.

When considering your application, the Committee noted that Essential Living is a private property developer which manages rental homes in the UK. It aims to deliver 5,000 units of private rented stock over the next decade, and is currently working on seven sites within Greater London.

The Committee noted that, whilst in office, you had contact with several housing providers in order to promote your department's Build to Rent Fund, and that there have been two rounds of funding. The Homes and Communities Agency, which manages the fund on behalf of the department, have confirmed that Essential Living did not bid in the first round but, as a result of it, the company will be acquiring a site in Croydon, the funding for which was awarded to the development partnership, John Laing and Croydon Council. The Committee noted that, during the first round, you did not have direct sight of the bids, nor were you involved in the bid assessment process. Essential Living did bid, and have been successful, in the second round. However, you were no longer a Minister by this time.

The Committee took into account that this is a paid position, for one day per month; and that you are a chartered surveyor by profession who has previously worked in the property and economic development markets and run your own business. The Committee also took into account that it is now over six months since you left ministerial office.

The Committee further noted that the Permanent Secretary at the Department for Communities and Local Government did not see any propriety issues with this application.

Taking into account all the circumstances, the Committee is content to approve the appointment subject to the following conditions:

- that you should not draw on any privileged information available to you as a Minister; and
- for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not become personally involved in lobbying the Government on behalf of your new employer, its parent company or its clients.

It might be helpful if I add that lobbying is defined in the Business Appointment Rules in the following way: "Lobbying in this context means that the former Minister should not engage in communication with Government – including Ministers, special advisers and officials – with a view to influencing a Government decision or policy in relation to their own interests, or the interests of the organisation by which they are employed, or to whom they are contracted."

I should be grateful if you would inform us as soon as you take up the appointment, or if it is announced that you will do so, either by returning the enclosed form or by emailing the office at the above address. We shall otherwise not be able to deal with any enquiries, since we do not release information about appointments which have not been taken up or announced. This could lead to a false assumption being made about whether you had complied with the Ministerial Code. Similarly, I should be grateful if you would inform us if you propose to extend or otherwise change your role with Essential Living as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for you to seek fresh advice.

Once the appointment has been publicly announced or taken up, we will publish this letter on the Committee's website and include the main details of the applications, together with the Advisory Committee's advice, in the regularly updated consolidated list on our website and in the next annual report.

Mark Prisk MP

Sir Hugh Stevenson