

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25 April 2012

Present

Lord Lang of Monkton (Chairman)
Sir Colin Budd
Lord Dholakia
Lord Macdonald
Sir Hugh Stevenson
Lord Walker

Secretariat

Ms Geraldine Alexander (Secretary)
Ms Kate Campbell
Ms Maggie O'Boyle
Mr Roger Sampson

Apologies

1. There were no apologies.

Case discussion

2. An applicant met with the Committee to discuss the provisional recommendation on his case.

Minutes of last meeting

3. The minutes of the previous meeting on 29 February 2012 were agreed.

Chairman's update

4. The names of the individuals recommended for appointment to the Committee were being put to the Prime Minister. The Secretary was asked to circulate copies of the new Members' biographies once the Prime Minister had agreed the appointments and, if possible, to arrange their induction before the next Committee meeting.
5. The Chairman had given oral evidence to PASC on 26 March. Copies of the transcript of his evidence had been circulated to Members. The Chairman noted that he had agreed at the session that the definition of lobbying should be given more prominence in the Committee's correspondence with applicants. To this end, the secretariat had already begun to include the definition in the body of its letters to applicants, rather than as a footnote.
6. The Chairman of PASC was to visit the Committee's offices and secretariat on 21 May.
7. It was noted that the Committee had improved its performance against its target turnaround times for cases in the financial year 2011/12. It had cleared 77% of its cases within target - for both civil servants and former Ministers - and its average turnaround time was 11 days for former Ministers cases and 18 for civil servants against respective targets of 15 days and 20 days. The Committee agreed that the Chairman should write to PASC to provide it with the most up-to-date information on the Committee's performance.

8. The Committee noted that while it published its final letters to most applicants confirming its advice and any commitments given by the individual, it did not publish the same for most special advisers and for applicants from the foreign and diplomatic service. This was due to the fact that in these cases the department itself writes directly to the applicant and although the Committee is informed of the outcome it does not always receive a copy of the letter. It was agreed that the secretariat should seek to establish a process with all departments to enable it to receive a copy of the final letter and the relevant permissions to publish the letter.
9. The Chairman and Secretary met Sir Bob Kerslake and Sir Jeremy Heywood on 6 March. The Chairman took the opportunity to reinforce the importance the Committee places on applications being timely, and the difficulties that arise from retrospective applications. Both Sir Bob and Sir Jeremy acknowledged this issue and recognised the importance of the Rules being followed.
10. The Committee noted that it had undertaken visits to all the major departments in the last financial year.

The Committee and Human Rights legislation

11. The Committee noted a paper by the Treasury Solicitor.

Compliance update

12. The paper on the Committee's compliance regime was noted. It was suggested that if resources allowed, as many of the large departments as possible be included on an annual basis.

Communications

13. A "frequently asked questions" page on the Committee's website was due to be published shortly.
14. The Press Officer updated the Committee on recent press coverage.

Freedom of Information

15. The secretariat updated the Committee on recent FOI cases.

Any other business

16. The next meeting would be at 3pm on 27 June at 1 Horse Guards Road.

Committee Secretariat
April 2012