

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 18 December 2013

Present

Lord Lang (Chair)
Sir Colin Budd
Lord Dholakia
Ms Mary Jo Jacobi
Baroness Liddell
Sir Hugh Stevenson
Lord Walker

Secretariat

Ekpe Attah (Secretary)
Raj Bahia
Catherine Millington
Dean Ponder
Maggie O'Boyle
Clare Salters

Apologies for absence

1. Apologies were received from Mark Addison.

Minutes of last meeting

2. The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 30 October 2013, were agreed.

Chairman's update

3. The Committee had received a request from an applicant for the details of an appointment taken up to remain confidential.
4. Following a discussion, it was agreed that in principle such requests should only be acceded to in exceptional circumstances; and that they would need the approval of the Chairman. It was agreed that the grounds for each approval would then be reviewed at a suitable point in future.

Potential changes to the Business Appointments Rules

5. The Committee considered the update provided by the Cabinet Office, containing the Government's latest thinking on this issue. In discussion, the following points were made.
6. In any new iteration of the Rules, it would still be necessary to consider each application on its merits, and make judgements which were tailored to deal with individuals' circumstances.
7. The centre of government would have a role to play in driving culture change within departments to ensure there was a consistently high level of performance across government.

8. An application could be received by the Committee retrospectively through no fault of the applicant. In such circumstances, it should still be possible for the applicant to have his or her case considered by the Committee; and to have the Committee's advice published.
9. The Committee would welcome steps by departments to publish more details about the business appointments applications, and any conditions imposed, from more junior staff. This would bring departmental practice into line with the Committee's.

Communications

10. The Press Officer updated the Committee on recent press coverage.

Freedom of Information

11. One FOI request was currently the subject of an internal review.

Any other business

12. The next meeting would be on 26 February 2014 at 2.30pm at 1 Horse Guards Road [the meeting was subsequently postponed until 26 March 2014].

Committee Secretariat
December 2013