

From the Chair



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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You asked for the Committee's advice about accepting a part time, unpaid appointment as a member of the Advisory Council of New Schools Network, a charity that supports individuals and organisations to develop proposals for Free Schools.

When considering your application, the Committee took into account that the Department for Education (DfE) funds New Schools Network through grants but that the work of the New Schools Network was not part of your responsibilities while you were a DfE Minister. It also noted that the role would not involve any contact or dealings with your former departments or with government more generally.

The Committee also took into account that neither DfE nor the Cabinet Office had any concerns about the propriety of the appointment, and that it is now over 12 months since you left ministerial office.

Taking into account the specific facts in this case, the Committee sees no reason why you should not take up the appointment, subject to the following conditions:

- That you should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of yourself or the organisation to which this advice refers) 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 UK Government on behalf of New Schools Network or make use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts in Government and/or Crown Service to influence policy or secure funding on behalf of New Schools Network.

The Business Appointment Rules explain that the restriction on lobbying means that former Ministers should not engage in communication with Government – including Ministers,

special advisers and officials – with a view to influencing a Government decision or policy [including applications for awards or grants] 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 New Schools Network, 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.

The Baroness Browning

Rt Hon David Laws