



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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Alex Chisholm
Permanent Secretary and Chief Operating Officer for the Civil Service
By email

14 May 2021

Dear Mr Chisholm,

Thank you for your reply to my letter of 13 April 2021.

I found the response helpful, particularly your confirmation that civil servants must seek permission before accepting any outside employment which might affect their work either directly or indirectly as set out in the Civil Service Management Code; and applying the principles set out in government's Business Appointment Rules.

The Cabinet Secretary, in his letter to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, also helpfully summarised the process around managing conflicts of interest and identified several areas of improvement. I support much of this work.

However, the lack of transparency remains a significant concern here. Mr Crothers was advised that he could take up an outside role whilst he remained in office - in line with the process set out in your letter and by the Cabinet Secretary¹. Yet, neither the appointment, nor the process for managing conflicts was transparent. This means there was no publicly available information to demonstrate:

- if potential conflicts were considered and if any action was taken to mitigate any potential risks to the integrity of government; nor
- why an application to ACOBA was not considered necessary.

The critical question is whether the government will introduce the transparency necessary to provide assurance around this process:

¹ And therefore in line with the Civil Service Management Code; and applying the principles set out in government's Business Appointment Rules and the Civil Service Code.

- a clear, published, policy demonstrating how the integrity of decision making in office and any access to sensitive information (whether commercial/regulatory or policy related) in government service is protected in such cases; and
- publication of an appropriate register of interests for senior civil servants, and special advisers in line with the approach taken for departmental board members?

I am copying this letter to other relevant parties at the Cabinet Office and Mr Boardman².

In line with the Committee's policy of transparency, we will be publishing correspondence on this matter.

The Rt Hon Lord Pickles

Alex Chisholm

Copied to: Darren Tierney, Director general, Propriety and Ethics, Cabinet Office; The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for Cabinet Office; and Chloe Smith MP, Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution.

²Nigel Boardman who is leading a review into the Development and Use of Supply Chain Finance in Government - with terms of reference including - 'the relationship between current and former Ministers and officials and Greensill Capital (including associated companies or companies in its group), including processes for consideration and management of conflicts of interest during and following Crown Service'