

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 23 March 2011

Present

Lord Lang of Monkton (Chairman) – by phone
Sir Colin Budd
Lord Dholakia
Lord Macdonald of Tradeston
Sir Hugh Stevenson
General The Lord Walker of Aldringham
Dame Juliet Wheldon

Secretariat

Ms Sue Pither (Secretary)
Ms Geraldine Alexander
Mr Richard Jarvis
Ms Maggie O'Boyle (Press officer)
Mr Roger Sampson
Mrs Navita Seedhar
Ms Beth Watson

Chairman's update

1. The Chairman thanked Sue Pither for her help and expertise in her time as Secretary to the Committee and he welcomed Geraldine Alexander, the new Secretary. It was noted that the Secretariat of the Committee was to be merged with that of the House of Lords Appointments Commission but that this should not have an impact on the level or quality of support to the Committee.
2. The new Rules, which came into effect on 2 February, had been published on the Committee's website. The Secretariat was now engaged in a series of visits to Departments to explain the impact of changes. A focus group of representatives from different Departments had been set up to discuss any issues that might arise from the introduction of the new Rules. The Committee invited the Secretariat to report regularly on the impact of the new Rules at future meetings.
3. Lord Lang had given evidence to PASC on 8 February and had subsequently written to the Chairman to provide some figures concerning MOD cases. A copy of the letter had been circulated to members. It was agreed that the Secretariat should brief PASC further on the new Rules, if a suitable opportunity arose in the future.

Minutes of last meeting / Matters arising

4. The minutes of the previous meeting on 26 January were agreed.

Media update

5. The press officer reported that the new Rules had received no mainstream publicity, although there was coverage in some specialist magazines such as PR Week.
6. The Committee was disappointed that the Cabinet Office's announcement of the new Rules had not been given a higher profile, particularly within government and departments.

Freedom of Information

7. The Committee was updated on recent requests for information.

Any other business / Outstanding Cases

8. The Committee considered its current code of practice and invited the Secretariat to review it and draft a paper for the next Committee meeting.
9. The Secretariat was invited to review the arrangements for communication with Committee members and to introduce improvements as soon as was practicable.
10. It was noted that the new Rules included the issue of compliance. The Secretariat was invited to draft a paper on the implementation of the compliance regime for the next Committee meeting.

Date of next meeting

11. The next meeting will be held on 24 May.

Committee Secretariat
March 2011