

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 30 October 2013

Present

Lord Lang (Chair)
Mr Mark Addison
Sir Colin Budd
Lord Dholakia
Ms Mary Jo Jacobi
Sir Hugh Stevenson
Lord Walker

Secretariat

Ekpe Attah (Secretary)
Catherine Millington
Dean Ponder
Maggie O'Boyle

Chairman's update

1. Baroness Liddell had been nominated by the Labour Party to replace Lord Macdonald on the Committee. Her appointment was expected to take effect from 1 December.
2. The Chairman had been in correspondence with Bernard Jenkin MP, the Chair of the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC), in relation to the press coverage attracted by Chris Huhne's recent appointment with Zilkha Biomass Energy. The Chairman had stressed to Mr Jenkin that the Committee shared PASC's concerns that some individuals were criticised unfairly in the media, even when they had observed the Government's rules and followed the Committee's advice. This was why the Committee now published its advice - and the basis for it - in the fullest possible terms.
3. The Committee confirmed that it remained content with the circumstances in which the Chairman could take decisions on its behalf without recourse to the other members: where a decision regarding an application did not alter the substance of the final conditions imposed on an appointment; and where the Committee already had an established position on an issue.

Annual Report

4. Members offered their comments on the draft report circulated by the Secretariat. A final draft of the Chairman's covering letter to the Prime Minister would be circulated for final comments before publication.

Update on potential changes to the Rules

5. Sue Gray, Head of Propriety and Ethics in the Cabinet Office, updated the Committee on progress towards issuing revised Business Appointments Rules. Government departments had been consulted at Permanent Secretary and HR-level. Once their comments had been considered, the Cabinet Office would share a near final draft with the Committee.



Case consideration

7. An applicant met the Committee to discuss the provisional recommendation on his case, after which the Committee agreed to return to his former department with a further suggestion as to how the Committee could be reassured that there would be a sufficient gap between his last day in post and taking up his new appointment.
8. The Committee also reconsidered its provisional recommendation on a further case. It agreed to uphold its provisional recommendation, offering to meet the applicant, should he wish.

Compliance update

9. The Committee welcomed the Secretariat's report on the compliance assurance process for 2012-13 and agreed that it should be published on the Committee's website.

Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill

10. David Willis, Head of the Constitutional and Political Reform team in the Cabinet Office, updated the Committee on the progress of the Bill.

Communications

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

Freedom of Information

12. There had been one new FOI request.

Any other business

13. The next meeting would be on 18 December at 2.30pm at 1 Horse Guards Road.

Committee Secretariat
October 2013