

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 25 June 2014

Present

Sir Hugh Stevenson (Chair)
Mark Addison
Baroness Browning
Lord German
Baroness Liddell
Lord Walker of Aldringham

Secretariat

Carrie Aitken
Deborah De Beukelaer
Catherine Millington
Maggie O'Boyle
Clare Salters

Welcome and apologies for absence

1. Baroness Browning had joined the Committee on 1 June as the new Conservative member and Lord German would be joining from 1 July as the new Liberal Democrat member.
2. Apologies were received from Sir Colin Budd and Mary Jo Jacobi.

Chairman's update

3. Lord Walker's and Sir Colin Budd's terms of appointment would be coming to an end in July [**note:** both appointments were subsequently extended until the end of December 2014]. The Cabinet Office had yet to launch the recruitment exercise to find their replacements, or for the new Chair of the Committee. The Committee noted the Cabinet Office's intention to launch this exercise in the near future.
4. The Committee discussed an application it had considered some time ago where the applicant had sought the Committee's advice around a year before his last day of service. The Committee had felt able to provide only provisional advice such a long time before he left Crown service and agreed that, as a matter of policy, the Committee would only provide final advice three months or less before an applicant's last day of service.

Minutes of last meeting

5. The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 26 March 2014, were agreed.

Update from Cabinet Office on revised business appointments rules and the Government's response to Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) report on the rules

6. Sue Gray, Head of Propriety and Ethics at the Cabinet Office, updated the Committee on progress towards revising the rules and responding to PASC. The Government's proposed revisions were aimed both at increasing transparency around the application of the rules and ensuring they applied in a proportionate way.

7. In discussion, the Committee noted the rules would now refer to a possible payment for any waiting period, but it was agreed that whether or not payment for a waiting period had been, or was likely to be, agreed by an applicant's former department would not form part of the Committee's consideration.
8. The Committee also noted that, where it thought this was appropriate, the rules would permit it to qualify the lobbying ban in future to make clear that the ban need not prevent communications with Government on matters that are an integral part of the normal course of business for the organisation concerned.
9. The Committee noted that the Government's proposals would mean that the Committee would now only consider applications from special advisers at the equivalent of SCS3 level or above. The Committee discussed the need to reflect the advice to more junior special advisers dealt with by departments under the new departmental transparency arrangements.

Report on applications in 2013-14

10. The Committee noted the information in the paper about applications dealt with in the previous financial year, which would form the basis for the Committee's annual report for that year. In discussion, the Committee agreed that, if possible, it would be useful to understand more about the reasons why there had been delays in the processing of a small minority of applications; and in future the annual report should be published before the summer recess.

Communications

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

Any other business

12. Members were asked to check that their registers of interests were up to date.
13. The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 22 October at 2.30pm at 1 Horse Guards Road.

Committee Secretariat
June 2014