

REPORT BY THE INDEPENDENT ADVISER ON MINISTERS' INTERESTS

The Government published an updated version of the Ministerial Code in October 2015.¹ The Code is the Prime Minister's document, setting out the standards and behaviour he expects of his ministerial colleagues. It sets out my role but I was not involved in its preparation.

I have been fully engaged with the Cabinet Office in the preparation of the list of Ministers' interests published today. As part of the process of drawing up the list, all Ministers are required to complete a form giving information about:

- their financial interests, including both assets and liabilities
- any blind trusts they have set up
- their tax affairs
- directorships and shareholdings
- investment properties
- any public appointments
- any links with charities as a patron, trustee or member
- any other relevant interests
- interests of their spouse, partner or close family members

I have gone through the individual returns made by Ministers and raised queries where I thought that was appropriate. The Cabinet Office has also drawn particular issues to my attention, which I have discussed with them. The Cabinet Office has then gone back to the Ministers concerned, and any issues have been resolved to my satisfaction.

The bulk of the issues have concerned:

- whether it was appropriate for Ministers to hold shares in particular companies where there might be thought to be a connection to their portfolio. In some cases this has been resolved by Ministers placing their holdings under a blind management arrangement; in others by disposing of their shareholding; or by rearranging Ministerial portfolios;
- whether it was appropriate for ministers to continue as trustees or members of particular organisations – primarily charities or interest groups. In some cases, Ministers have resigned from their role; in others, the Cabinet Office and I have accepted that there is no conflict with their ministerial role and the details have been published in the register;
- which of the interests of a minister's spouse, partner or close family member were relevant to the minister's interests and should be published in the register.

I have not felt it necessary in the circumstances to request individual meetings with the Prime Minister or other ministers.

The General Election in May 2015 resulted in a large number of Ministers coming into Government for the first time and this required new requests for information from the ministers concerned to be submitted and considered.

I am pleased we are able to publish this list today and will work with the Cabinet Office to produce twice yearly updates going forward.

¹ See

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/468255/Final_draft_ministerial_code_No_AMENDS_14_Oct.pdf

Investigations

The Ministerial Code provides that:

“If there is an allegation about a breach of the Code, and the Prime Minister, having consulted the Cabinet Secretary feels that it warrants further investigation, he will refer the matter to the independent adviser on Ministers’ interests.” (*Para 1.3*)

I was asked to carry out an investigation in 2012 into allegation of a breach of the Code.² I have not been asked to carry out any further investigations since then. I am consulted by the Cabinet Office from time to time about issues arising out of the Code. For example, when the Cabinet Secretary set up an inquiry to investigate the leak of a Scotland Office memorandum, the former Secretary of State, Mr Alistair Carmichael, accepted responsibility for what had occurred and there would have been nothing further for the Prime Minister to ask me to investigate.

² See https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/62352/Alex-Allan-report.pdf