

From the Chair



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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October 2015

You asked for the Committee's advice about taking up a paid, part-time appointment with BISL Ltd, which operates under the trading name of Comparethemarket.com, as a Panel Member on the board of a research institute. In collaboration with the University of Sheffield, you would examine what motivates people to act, or not act, in ways that could improve their money management and household finances. You expect that you would be asked to meet with the panel approximately 6 days a year.

The Committee took into account that you did not have any official dealings with Comparethemarket.com while in ministerial office. They also noted that you had some involvement in the midata project, and attended related meetings about encouraging consumer switching. However, these were in the normal course of your ministerial duties and your former department did not have any concerns regarding the propriety of this appointment.

Taking into account all of the circumstances, the Committee sees no reason why you should not take up the appointment, subject to the following conditions:

- You should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of yourself or the organisations or persons to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to you in your time as a Minister; and
- For two years from your last day in ministerial office you should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government on behalf of BISL Ltd (Comparethemarket.com), its parent company or any of its subsidiaries, customers and clients.

By 'privileged information' we mean official information to which a minister has had access as a consequence of his or her office or employment and which has not been made publicly available. Applicants are also reminded that they may be subject to other duties of confidentiality, whether under the Official Secrets Act, the Civil Service Code or otherwise.

Also, It might be helpful if I add that the Business Appointment Rules explain that the restriction on lobbying means that former Ministers "should not engage in communication with Government – including Ministers, special advisers and officials – with a view to influencing a Government decision or policy [including applications for awards or grants] in relation to their own interests, or the interests of the organisation by which they are employed, or to whom they are contracted”.

Members:

Mark Addison, Sir Alex Allan KCB, Baroness Browning (Chair), Lord German OBE, Mary Jo Jacobi, Terence Jagger CBE,
Rt Hon Baroness Liddell of Coatdyke, John Wood

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I should be grateful if you would inform us as soon as you take up the appointment, or if it is announced that you will do so, either by returning the enclosed form or by emailing the office at the above address. We shall otherwise not be able to deal with any enquiries, since we do not release information about appointments which have not been taken up or announced. This could lead to a false assumption being made about whether you had complied with the Ministerial Code. Similarly, I should be grateful if you would inform us if you propose to extend or otherwise change your role with Comparethemarket.com as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for you to seek fresh advice.

Once the appointment has been publicly announced or taken up, we will publish this letter on the Committee's website and include the main details of the application, together with the Advisory Committee's advice, in the regularly updated consolidated list on our website and in the next annual report.

Baroness Browning

Jo Swinson

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