



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: PROFESSOR VERNON GIBSON

The Committee has been asked to consider an application from Professor Gibson, former Chief Scientific Adviser at the Ministry of Defence, who proposes to take up a role with the University of Sheffield.

Professor Gibson was the Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) at the MOD from 2 July 2012 to 29 June 2016 (which was also his last day in Crown service). The Committee understands that the CSA is the MOD's principal adviser on science and technology. The CSA reports to the Permanent Secretary, is a member of the Defence Council and the Investment Approvals Committee and is Deputy Chair of the Defence Research and Development Board.

Professor Gibson is seeking approval to take up the position of Distinguished Professor and Vice-Chancellor's Senior Fellow at the University of Sheffield. This is a paid, part-time role, involving two days' work per week.

When considering this application the Committee took into account that neither he nor those whom he was responsible for over the last two years of service have dealt with the receipt of tenders or awarding of contracts, nor administered or advised on contracts between his prospective employer and the MOD. He has had no official but non-contractual dealings with the organisation or been involved in any policy decisions that have affected or could affect his proposed employer or its competitors.

The Committee took into account that the MOD Business Appointments Panel expressed no concerns about Professor Gibson taking up this position, subject to a two-year lobbying ban. The Committee noted that the role would not require him to have any dealings with government.

The Secretary of State for Defence accepted the Committee's advice that there was no reason why Professor Gibson should not take up this appointment, subject to the following conditions:

- He should not draw on any privileged information available to him from his time in Crown service; and
- For two years from his last day in service, he should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government on behalf of the University of Sheffield or its students.

By 'privileged information' we mean official information to which a Minister or Crown servant 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 or otherwise.

The Business Appointment Rules explain that the restriction on lobbying means that the former Crown servant/Minister "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".

I should be grateful if you would ensure that we are informed as soon as Professor Gibson takes up this appointment, or if it is announced that he will do so (I enclose a form for this purpose). 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, and this could lead to a false assumption being made about whether he had complied with the rules.

I should also be grateful if you would ask that Professor Gibson informs us if he proposes to extend or otherwise change the nature of his role as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for him to make a fresh application.

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.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Richardson
Committee Secretariat