



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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Dear Sir Martin,

BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: RACHEL SANDBY-THOMAS CB

You asked the Committee to consider an application under the Business Appointment Rules for Rachel Sandby-Thomas, former shadow CEO, Institute for Apprenticeships. Before taking up this role in April 2016, Ms Sandby-Thomas was DG Skills, Deregulation and Local Growth, and Legal (September 2015 to April 2016) and DG Skills and Enterprise, and Legal (September 2013 to September 2015).

Ms Sandby-Thomas has resigned to take up the position of Registrar at Warwick University and her last day in Crown service was 23 August 2016. Warwick University announced her appointment in May in a press notice that included a quote from Ms Sandby-Thomas.

First, I would like to register the Committee's concern that Ms Sandby-Thomas' application was submitted after her appointment had been announced by Warwick University. The business appointment rules for former Crown servants specify that retrospective applications will not normally be accepted. To fulfil the remit given to it by Government the Committee needs to be able to consider an application fully and freely before offering its advice. It is impossible to do this in a way that will command public confidence if an appointment has already been announced and/or taken up. The Committee is therefore unwilling to give retrospective approval for this appointment.

The Committee would however formally record that:

1. As Registrar, Ms Sandby-Thomas will be responsible for running the non-academic side of the University. She will be head of the professional and administrative services and have responsibility for strategy.
2. She has had no significant prior contact with the University.
3. The Department had no reservations about the appointment.
4. She was appointed following an application process.
5. Ms Sandby-Thomas has advised the Committee that Warwick University is a member of The Russell Group of universities and through The Russell Group is in contact with Government on matters affecting higher education. The Committee would expect Ms Sandby-Thomas to adhere to the usual condition it recommends in business appointment cases, precluding the lobbying of Government.

The Committee would also wish to draw Ms Sandby-Thomas' attention to the normal restrictions it imposes prohibiting the misuse of privileged information obtained while in public office.

We will publish this letter on the Advisory Committee's website, and include the main details in both the regularly consolidated list on the website and in the next annual report.

Yours sincerely,

Nicola Richardson
Committee Secretariat