

From the Chair



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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You asked for the Committee's advice about taking up an appointment with SWNS Media Group. SWNS Media Group is an independent news and content provider. The group is comprised of an international press agency, market research company, content creation agency and design studio.

When considering this application, the Committee noted that you are seeking to join SWNS as a member of their advisory board. It is a paid, part time appointment with a time commitment of around 1 day per month. You would advise on developments in the newspaper, audio-visual and online media sectors; in particular, you would advise on business development and regulatory issues.

When considering the application, the Committee took into consideration that you and your former department, DCMS have confirmed that you did not have any contact with SWNS while in office.

The Committee noted that this appointment is related to the area for which you had responsibility as Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. With regard to this in particular, the Committee took into account the following factors:

- DCMS confirmed you have no access to any sensitive information which might provide an unfair advantage to SWNS;
- you told the Committee this role is unlikely to involve contact with Government;
- almost nine months has passed since your last day in Ministerial Office; and
- DCMS have no had no concerns about this appointment.

Taking into account all the factors in this case, in accordance with the Government's Business Appointment Rules, the Committee advises the appointment be subject to the following conditions:

- you should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of yourself or the organisation

to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to you from your time in Ministerial office;

- for two years from your last day in Ministerial office you should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government, or make use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts in Government and/or Crown service to influence policy, or secure business on behalf of SWNS Media Group.

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, the Civil Service Code 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 (Ministers, civil servants, including special advisers, and other relevant officials/public office holders) – wherever it takes place - with a view to influencing a Government decision, policy or contract award/grant in relation to their own interests or the interests of the organisation by which they are employed, or to whom they are contracted or with which they hold office.*"

I should be grateful if you would inform us as soon as you take up employment with this organisation, 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 that have not been taken up or announced. This could lead to a false assumption being made about whether you had complied with the Rules and the Ministerial Code.

Please also inform us if you propose to extend or otherwise change the nature of this role as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for you 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.

The Baroness Browning

Rt Hon John Whittingdale OBE MP

