



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: KATHERINE PERRIOR

The Committee has been asked to consider an application from Katherine Perrior, former Special Adviser to the Prime Minister's office, to take up a role as a columnist for The Times.

Appointment details

Ms Perrior stated that her role as a columnist would be paid and part-time. She will write one column each month for the newspaper, as well as appear once a month on The Times Red Box podcast, which offers daily coverage of British politics with analysis and opinion. Ms Perrior advised that she does not expect to have contact with Government within this role and that she had no previous contractual dealings with her prospective employer.

The application was countersigned by Sue Gray, Director General of Propriety and Ethics at Cabinet Office. She advised that this appointment could not be perceived as a reward as Ms Perrior's dealings with the newspaper were routine as part of her role as Director of Communications. The Cabinet Office has no reservations about this appointment.

The Committee's consideration

The Committee noted that Ms Perrior is proposing to take up a more permanent role as a columnist, following the ad hoc work she undertook for the newspaper during the recent General Election (the Committee also advised on this ad-hoc work). The Committee further noted that this role is in keeping with Ms Perrior's career in media and communications.

The Committee considered this appointment poses a low risk of being considered a reward for decisions made during her time in office. Whilst it noted she would certainly have had dealings with The Times, and its competitors, whilst Director of Communications at No.10, this in itself does not suggest the role was offered as a result of decisions made. There is no evidence Ms Perrior was involved in any commercial transactions with The Times whilst at No.10; nor any other evidence to suggest it could have been offered as a reward.

Whilst Ms Perrior had a very senior role at No.10 and would have been privy to sensitive information, the Committee considered that imposing a restriction on using privileged information mitigates against any potential risk here. However, given the contacts that Ms Perrior may have gained whilst in office, there is a potential risk that The Times could be seen to gain an unfair advantage. As such, the Committee decided to impose a lobbying ban which makes clear that use of such contacts in this way would be inappropriate. Further, as with all Special Advisers, Ms Perrior must confirm in writing to her former department that she recognises that she continues to be bound by the provisions of the criminal law (including the Official Secrets Act), which protect certain categories of information, and by his duty of confidentiality owed to the Crown).

Taking into account these factors, in accordance with the Government's Business Appointment Rules, the Committee's advice to the Permanent Secretary is that this work be subject to the following conditions:

- she should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of herself or the organisation to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to her from her time in Crown service; and
- for two years from her last day in service, she should not become personally involved in lobbying Government on behalf of The Times or its holding companies or subsidiaries, nor should she make use, directly or indirectly, of her Government and/or Crown service contacts to influence policy or secure business on behalf of The Times, its holding companies or subsidiaries.

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. (As with all Special Advisers, the Committee makes this recommendation on the understanding that, if she has not already done so, Ms Perrior must confirm in writing to her department that she recognises that she continues to be bound by the provisions of the criminal law (including the Official Secrets Act), which protect certain categories of information, and by her duty of confidentiality owed to the Crown.)

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 let us know whether the Permanent Secretary is content to approve this application in line with the Committee's recommendation, and copy us into the final decision. I should also be grateful if you would ensure that we are informed as soon as Ms Perrior takes up this role, or if it is announced that she 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 that have not been taken up or announced. This could lead to a false assumption being made about whether Ms Perrior complied with the rules.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Parkington
Committee Secretariat