

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 a part-time, paid appointment with Plumb Partners Group.

The Committee noted that you propose to become a non-executive adviser to Plumb Partners Group, which consists of various companies that are involved in the importation, exportation, design, manufacture, sale and distribution of construction and home products such as underfloor heating and heating control systems. The role would be paid, involving around 2 to 3 days' work per week.

When considering your application, the Committee took into account that your role would be focused on advising the directors on the future direction of the company and on community issues, primarily corporate social responsibility. It will not include any lobbying, or contact with Government. The Committee noted that you encountered the company as a local employer when you were MP for North Cornwall and were invited to officially open their current headquarters in December 2014.

The Committee also took into account information provided by officials in your former department who confirmed that DEFRA does not have a relationship with Plumb Partners Group and that as far as they are aware you had no official meetings with the company while you were a Minister. The Permanent Secretary was consulted and has no reservations about the appointment.

The Committee was also mindful that 22 months have now passed since your last day in Ministerial office.

Taking into account these factors, 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 persons or organisations to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to you 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 Plumb Partners Group or its subsidiaries or make use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts in Government to influence policy or secure business on their behalf.

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 this 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 that 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.

Please also inform us if you propose to extend or otherwise change the nature of your 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

Mr Dan Rogerson