

From the Chair



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

G/7 Ground Floor, 1 Horse Guards Road SW1A 2HQ

Telephone: 020 7271 0839

Email: acoba@acoba.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.gov.uk/acoba>

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You asked for the Committee's advice about accepting part-time roles with Cogent Elliot Group Ltd, GPW and Covington & Burling LLP.

The Committee noted that you would like to become Chairman of Cogent Elliot, an advertising agency. This would involve providing strategic leadership to the company and dealing with clients as and when appropriate. It would be a part time, paid role, involving around 20 days a year.

With GPW, a business intelligence organisation, you would become a member of their advisory board, attending advisory board meetings, potentially introducing new clients to GPW and providing advice to the executives of GPW and possibly its clients.

With Covington & Burling LLP you would like to become a Senior Adviser, providing advice to the firm and its clients on policy and regulatory issues, including on Brexit.

The Committee noted that none of these roles would involve contact with Government, you had no contact with any of them while in office, and are unaware of them having any relationship with your former department.

When determining its advice, the Committee sought and took into account views from your former departments. Given some of the sensitivities surrounding trade, and given your former role as Minister for Trade and Investment, it was felt that there should be a gap between your time in Government and your new advisory roles with GPW and Covington & Burling LLP. However, the Committee noted that a gap of over six months had already occurred since your last day in ministerial office.

Taking into account all these circumstances, the Committee sees no reason why you should not take up these appointments, subject to the following conditions:

- You should not draw on any privileged information available to you as a Minister;
- For two years from your last day in service, you should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government on behalf of Cogent Elliot, GPW, Covington & Burling LLP or their partners or clients. Nor should you make use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts within Government and/or Crown service to influence

policy or secure business on behalf of Cogent Elliot, GPW, Covington & Burling LLP or their partners or clients.

Digital Leaders

The Committee noted with concern that, in addition to these roles, you also sought advice on an appointment with Digital Leaders, which you have already started. Although this is an unpaid role with a not-for-profit organisation, which your former departments had no concerns about, the Committee is unable to offer retrospective advice on appointments that have already been taken up. However, it would draw your attention to the normal restrictions imposed prohibiting lobbying and the misuse of privileged information obtained while in public office. The Committee would also remind you that advice should be sought on all appointments, paid or unpaid, before they are taken up or announced.

Further information

By 'privileged information' we mean official information to which a Minister 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 former Ministers 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 inform us as soon as you take up any of the three new appointments, 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. Similarly, I should be grateful if you would inform us if you propose to extend or otherwise change any of these roles as, depending on the circumstances, it might be necessary for you to seek fresh advice.

Once the appointments have been publicly announced or taken up, we will publish this letter on the Committee's website and include the main details of the applications, together with the Advisory Committee's advice, in the regularly updated consolidated list on our website and in the next annual report.

The Rt Hon Lord Maude of Horsham

The Baroness Browning