



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: LIEUTENANT GENERAL THOMAS BECKETT CBE

The Committee has been asked to consider an application from Lt Gen Thomas Beckett, former Defence Senior Adviser Middle East (DSAME) for advice on becoming an Advisory Board Member at Immerse, a British technology company providing industry with the platform and tools to create and distribute their own virtual reality content and solutions.

Lt Gen Beckett informed the Committee that Advisory Board Members provide insight into the company's future growth strategy in key sectors and geographies.

He has confirmed the appointment is not likely to include contact with the MOD or government more generally and he will not be making introductions to contacts that he made while in Crown service.

Lt Gen Beckett explained this is an unpaid role and is likely to involve a commitment of approximately 4 days per year.

He confirmed he did not have any official dealings with Immerse while in office (contractual or otherwise) or involvement in any decisions that might affect the business of the organisation. Neither has he had access to commercially sensitive information about competitors.

The MOD Business Appointments Panel made the following observations:

- Lt Gen Beckett had no contact with Immerse while at the MOD so the risk of perception of reward is low.
- The MOD holds no contracts with Immerse and has made no spend to them. He has not had recent contact with companies, so the risk of perception of access to information that would give an unfair competitive advantage to Immerse is low.
- Conditions on using privileged information, lobbying and on doing business with the MOD for a period of time are required to mitigate the potential for Immerse to unfairly benefit from Lt Gen Beckett's expertise to help them break into the Defence market.

The Committee's consideration

As Immerse advertises its product as having application to the Defence sector, the Committee¹ has considered the potential for the company to obtain an unfair advantage over its competitors through Lt Gen Beckett's appointment.

The Committee has concluded that it is unlikely that Lt Gen Beckett would have access to privileged information that could give Immerse an unfair advantage, particularly given the MOD has confirmed that he has not had recent contact with companies and six months have passed since his last day in post.

The Committee noted Lt Gen Beckett's assurance that his role will not involve making introductions to contacts that he made while in Crown service. However, the lobbying conditions, set out below, mitigate the risk that Immerse might unfairly benefit from the contacts Lt Gen Beckett made through his role as DSAME, both inside Government and externally.

There is a risk that Lt Gen Beckett could provide an unfair advantage, should Immerse seek to do business with the MOD. The Committee has addressed this by imposing a condition which restricts him from providing advice on the terms of, or with regard to the subject matter of, a bid or contract relating directly to the work of the MOD or its trading funds.

The Committee assessed the potential for this appointment to be seen as a reward for decisions made in post is also low given that Lt Gen Beckett had no contact with Immerse while in office, the MOD has no contracts with the company and the role is unpaid.

The Secretary of State for Defence accepted the Committee's advice that the appointment be subject to the following conditions:

- he should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of himself or the organisations to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to him from his time in Crown service;
- for two years from his last day in Crown service, he should not provide advice to any company or organisation on the terms of, or with regard to the subject matter of, a bid or contract relating directly to the work of the MOD or its trading funds;
- for two years from his last day in Crown service, he should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government on behalf of Immerse or its clients; nor should he make use, directly or indirectly, of his Government and/or Crown service contacts to influence policy or secure funding or business on their behalf; and
- for two years from his last day in Crown service, he should not become personally involved in lobbying contacts developed during Crown service in other Governments or organisations, for the purpose of securing business for Immerse or its clients.

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

¹ This application for advice was considered by Sir Alex Allan; Baroness Angela Browning; Lord Michael German; Terence Jagger; Dr Susan Liautaud; Richard Thomas and John Wood. Jonathan Baume and Baroness Helen Liddell were unavailable.

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 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 ensure that we are informed as soon as Lt Gen Beckett takes up this position, or if it is announced that he 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, and this could lead to a false assumption being made about whether he had complied with the Rules.

I should also be grateful if you would ask that Lt Gen Beckett informs us if he proposes to extend or otherwise change the nature of his role as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for him to make a fresh application.

Once Lt Gen Beckett has announced or taken up this appointment, we will publish this letter on the Committee's website and, if appropriate, refer to it in the relevant annual report.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Richardson
Committee Secretariat

