



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: PETER WATKINS CBE

The Committee has been asked to consider an application from Peter Watkins, former Director General of Strategy within the Security and Policy Operations for the Ministry of Defence (MOD) on taking up a role as an Associate Fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House).

Mr Watkins informed the Committee this is a part-time unpaid role involving 15 days of work per year. His role is to involve undertaking personal research on international security policy themes and provide support to seminars as required, for example by chairing panels.

He has informed the Committee this appointment is likely to involve some limited contact with his former department which he describes as '*primarily offering opportunities to speak at conferences and/or influence the agenda of seminars*'. Mr Watkins said this post arose through a proposal by Dr Patricia Lewis (Research Director) at Chatham House on behalf of the Director General, Dr Robin Niblett.

Mr Watkins informed the Committee he had some contact with Chatham House within the last 5 years through participation in occasional conferences organised by Chatham House (1 or 2 per year). However, he had no involvement in any decisions/ policy decisions which might have affected Chatham House. He also advised the Committee he had no dealings with awarding of contracts between his prospective employer and the MOD.

The MOD confirmed Mr Watkins had some contact with Chatham House during his time at the MOD but this was limited to occasional attendance at seminars and events. It advised there is no contractual relationship with Chatham House and therefore the risk of this appointment being seen as a reward is low. The department confirmed it is not aware of Mr Watkins being involved in any procurement exercises; having knowledge of any contracts nor information on impending government policy.

The department raised no objections to this appointment, and recommended it be subject to conditions which prevent Mr Watkins from using privileged information; lobbying government; and advising on bids and contracts with the MOD.

The Committee's consideration

The Committee¹ noted Mr Watkins had some contact with Chatham House by way of occasional attendance at seminars and events. However, the MOD have confirmed he had no involvement in any procurement exercises or have knowledge of any contracts. The Committee therefore considered the risk this appointment could be seen as a reward for decisions made in office is low.

The Committee considered there could be a risk of unfair advantage in relation to the contacts he gained whilst in post. The lobbying ban imposed makes clear that it would be inappropriate for Mr Watkins to use his contacts across Government/Crown service to the unfair advantage of Chatham House. Further, the Committee has imposed a specific ban on providing advice on the terms, or with regard to the subject matter of, a bid or contract relating directly to the work of the MOD, to mitigate the risk here.

He has stated this role may involve limited contact with officials and Chatham House will undoubtedly benefit from employing him as an experienced MOD employee. The MOD have no concerns with this contact, and given the restrictions above, the Committee agrees that such contacts within the confined scope of his role would not be inappropriate.

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

- he should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of himself or the organisation 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 become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government on behalf of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, its partners or subsidiaries,
- for two years from his last day in Crown service he should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK Government on behalf of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, Chatham House, its partners or subsidiaries, nor should he make use, directly or indirectly, of his contacts in Government and/or Crown service to influence decisions or policy on behalf of Chatham House, its partners or subsidiaries. This does not preclude routine contact on matters relating to his duties as Associate Fellow at Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs as described above; and

¹ This application for advice was considered by Sir Alex Allan; Jonathan Baume; Baroness Angela Browning; Lord Michael German; Baroness Helen Liddell; Richard Thomas and John Wood. Dr Susan Liataud was unavailable. Terence Jagger recused himself from this application in line with ACOBA's published Code of Practice.

- for two years from his last day in Crown service, he should not provide advice on the terms, or with regard to the subject matter of, a bid or contract with, or relating directly to the work of the UK Ministry of Defence or its trading funds.

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 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 Mr Watkins 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 which 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 Mr Watkins 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 this appointment has been publicly announced or taken up, we will publish this letter on the Committee's website, and where appropriate, refer to it in the relevant annual report.

Yours sincerely

Tiffany Amusu
Committee Secretariat

