

## The Labour Party

**Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP**  
Deputy Leader, Shadow First Secretary of State, Shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Shadow Secretary of State for the Future of Work


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Rt Hon Lord Pickles  
Advisory Committee on Business Appointments  
Room G/8  
1 Horse Guards Road  
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United Kingdom

**Letter sent via email to:**  
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21<sup>st</sup> January 2022

Dear Rt Hon Lord Pickles,

I write following recent reports in *Business Insider* that former Minister Esther McVey MP did not take advice from your Committee before accepting remunerated employment that appears to be in conflict with the Business Appointment Rules.

Ms McVey stepped down as Minister of State for Housing and Planning in February 2020. In October 2021, she was paid to address an event held by the Council for Aluminium in Building (CAB) giving advice on how to lobby government. In a LinkedIn post following the event, CAB summarised McVey's speech as providing "an excellent range of hints, tips and tricks to get an industry message across to government, officials and the press."

She was paid £3,000 through the speakers' agency Speakers Corner. This was subsequently declared on the House of Commons register of members' financial interests but the entry does not specify, as required by the Commons Code of Conduct, that the advice of the Committee was sought, nor is there any record of correspondence on the ACOBA website. It appears, therefore, that Ms McVey sought no advice from your committee ahead of joining the agency in question, or accepting this particular paid engagement.

The Ministerial Code [paragraph 7.25] and the Business Appointment Rules are very clear that former Ministers "must seek advice from the independent Advisory Committee on Business Appointments about any appointments or employment they wish to take up within two years of leaving office".

The Committee's guidance [Guidance on making an application to ACOBA – Ministers, June 2020, para 13] specifically states that former Ministers "joining a speakers' agency ... should submit an application before accepting this work."

Ms McVey's actions are in stark contrast with these requirements.

The Rules apply strict limits on lobbying activity by former Ministers. While in this instance, the paid remuneration was as a speaker, Ms McVey appears to have in effect given paid advice on how to lobby government and officials to a trade body whose interests are clearly related to her former ministerial responsibilities, within two years of leaving office.



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While the Rules are not specific about providing paid *advice* on lobbying, they do address cases where “there may be cause for concern about the appointment in some other particular respect” and the Committee will test whether there is a “specific reason why acceptance of the appointment or employment could give rise to public concern on propriety grounds directly related to his or her former Ministerial role”.

I would appreciate if you could clarify the following points relating to this case:

- Did Ms McVey submit an application before joining the speakers’ agency?
- Did Ms McVey seek advice from the Committee on the propriety of this engagement?
- Had she done so, would you have considered this engagement could cause concern on propriety grounds given the circumstances?
- Will you clarify that giving remunerated advice on lobbying, especially to interests within a former Ministers’ previous responsibilities, would usually provide a cause of concern and that this is not a ‘loophole’ that avoids restrictions on lobbying?
- Ms McVey did not declare whether she had sought the advice of ACOBA in the House of Commons Register, as required by the Code of Conduct. Will you raise this matter with the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards?

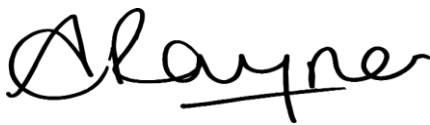
You and I share an understanding that these rules exist to protect our democracy and to ensure that no individual profits from their work in government. For a former cabinet minister to disregard their obligations to you undermines the entire system.

I know that you are aware of the seriousness of this and the very genuine public interest in getting to the truth.

I would also appreciate if you were able to provide any further details on the ongoing work to update the Business Appointment rules, which I understand the Cabinet Office committed to completing before the end of 2021.

I await your swift reply.

Yours sincerely,



**Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP**  
**Shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster**  
**Deputy Leader of the Labour Party**