



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: The Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP, former Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice. Appointment with Chambers UK.

1. You approached the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (the Committee) under the government's Business Appointments Rules for former ministers (the Rules) seeking advice on taking up a paid role as a panel member with Chambers UK to assist with the particular project referred to below. The material information taken into consideration by the Committee is set out in the below annex.
2. The purpose of the Rules is to protect the integrity of the government. Under the Rules, the Committee's remit is to consider the risks associated with the actions and decisions made during time in office, alongside the information and influence a former minister may offer Chambers UK.
3. The Ministerial Code sets out that ministers must abide by the Committee's advice. It is an applicant's personal responsibility to manage the propriety of any appointment. Former ministers of the Crown, and Members of Parliament, are expected to uphold the highest standards of propriety and act in accordance with the 7 Principles of Public Life.
4. It should also be noted that in addition to the conditions imposed on this appointment under the government's Business Appointment Rules, there are separate rules in place with regard to your role as a member of the House of Commons.

The Committee's consideration of the risk presented

5. The Committee¹ took into consideration that you did not have any official contact with Chambers UK whilst in office and you did not make any policy or

¹ This application for advice was considered by Jonathan Baume; Andrew Cumptsy; Sarah de Gay; Isabel Doverty; The Rt Hon Lord Pickles; Dr Susan Liataud; Mike Weir; Lord Larry Whitty. Richard Thomas was unavailable

contractual decisions that would have specifically affected Chambers UK. The risk that this appointment is perceived as a reward for actions taken in office is therefore low.

6. The Committee noted that as the former Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice there is an inherent risk you could be perceived as having access to relevant privileged information and knowledge, which could unfairly benefit Chambers UK. However, the Committee noted the nature of the organisation and the aims of the project is helping the government deliver its Levelling Up agenda. This limits the real and perceived risk of you making improper use of information you had access to while in office for your personal benefit and you have an ongoing duty of confidentiality.

7. The Committee also noted there are risks associated with your contacts and influence within government, this is especially relevant as the panel looks to present its recommendations to government. The Committee noted that while your role will involve contact with local governments and agencies, it will not include any contact with your former department or central government more widely.

The Committee's advice

8. The Committee did not consider this appointment raises any particular proprietary concerns under the government's Business Appointment Rules. Whilst there are inherent risks associated with your access to sensitive information and contacts, the standard conditions below, preventing you from drawing on your privileged information and using your contacts to the unfair advantage of your new employer, will sufficiently mitigate the risks presented in this case.

9. In accordance with the government's Business Appointment Rules, the Committee advises this role with **Chambers UK** be subject to the following conditions:

- that you should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of yourself or the organisations to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to you from your time in office;
- for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not become personally involved in lobbying the government or any of its Arm's Length Bodies on behalf of Chambers UK (including clients, parent companies, subsidiaries and partners). Nor should you make use, directly or indirectly, of your government and/or ministerial contacts to influence policy, secure funding/business or otherwise unfairly benefit Chambers UK (including clients, parent companies, subsidiaries and partners); and

- for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not provide advice to Chambers UK (including clients, parent companies, subsidiaries and partners) on the terms of, or with regard to the subject matter of, a bid with, or contract relating directly to the work of the UK government or any of its Arm's Length Bodies.

10. The advice and the conditions under the government's Business Appointment Rules relate to your previous role in government only; they are separate to rules administered by other bodies such as the Office of the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists or the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. It is an applicant's personal responsibility to understand any other rules and regulations you may be subject to in parallel with this Committee's advice.

11. 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 Ministerial Code/Civil Service Code or otherwise.

12. 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.*"

13. I should be grateful if you would inform us as soon as you take up this work or if it is announced that you will do so. 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 your role with the organisation as depending on the circumstances, it might be necessary for you to seek fresh advice.

14. 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.

The Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP

Annex

The role

1. You wish to take up a paid part time role as a panel Member with Chambers UK. The website states Chamber UK provides regional broadcasting events aimed at connecting communities across the UK. From its social media and events page it appears that it sets up a number of commissions or conversations with experts and officials to answer questions posed by the public and help government.
2. You said Chambers UK is forming a commission on government's plan on Levelling Up which will gather evidence, conduct research and hold inquiry sessions with the aim of presenting recommendations to government as to how to ensure the delivery of levelling up plans at a local level.
3. You informed the Committee you do not propose to contact ministers or officials but will instead be helping to gather information and evidence from local government and other agencies in order to present a paper containing suggestions as to how the Levelling Up policy can be implemented on the ground. This is an outward-facing exercise that does not involve engagement between him and the government.

Dealings in office

4. You stated you did not have contact with Chambers UK while you were in office. Also, you had no involvement in policy or contractual decisions whilst in office that would have specifically impacted Chambers UK. You further confirmed you did not meet with competitors of Chambers UK or have access to sensitive information about competitors of Chambers UK.

Department Assessment

5. The Ministry of Justice was consulted on this appointment and confirmed the details you provided. It has no concerns about you taking up this role.