



**OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS**

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**BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: Stephen McPartland MP, former Minister of State (Minister for Security) at the Home Office. Paid appointment with Furniture Village Ltd.**

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 an appointment as Non Executive Director for Furniture Village Ltd (Furniture Village). The material information taken into consideration by the Committee is set out in the annex below.
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 Furniture Village.
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 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 risks presented

5. The Committee<sup>1</sup> noted that you did not meet with Furniture Village and there is no overlap in policy, nor did you make any decisions at the Home Office specific to Furniture Village. Importantly you are returning to the same role you held with Furniture Village before joining the government. The risk you were offered this role as a reward for decisions or actions taken in post is low.

6. The Committee took into account there is no overlap in relation to this proposed role and your time in office, but noted there are inherent risks regarding your general access to information. The risks are limited given you were in government for a short period and the department considered any risk associated with your access to information is low.

### The Committee's advice

7. The Committee did not consider this appointment raises any particular proprietary concerns under the government's Business Appointment Rules. The standard conditions below will sufficiently mitigate the risks in this case. These prevent you from lobbying the UK government and from drawing on your privileged access to information and contacts to the unfair advantage of Furniture Village.

8. Taking into account these factors, in accordance with the government's Business Appointment Rules, the Committee advises this appointment with Furniture Village Ltd be subject to the following conditions:

- you should not draw on (disclose or use for the benefit of yourself or the persons or organisations to which this advice refers) any privileged information available to you from your time in ministerial office;
- for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK government or its arm's length bodies on behalf of Furniture Village Ltd (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients); nor should you make use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts in the government and/or ministerial office to influence policy, secure business/funding or otherwise unfairly advantage Furniture Village Ltd (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients); and
- for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not undertake any work with Furniture Village Ltd (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients) that involves providing advice 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 its arm's length bodies.

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<sup>1</sup> This application for advice was considered by Jonathan Baume; Andrew Cumpsty; Isabel Doverty; Sarah de Gay; Dr Susan Liautaud; The Rt Hon Lord Pickles; Richard Thomas; and Mike Weir. Lord Larry Whitty was unavailable

9. The advice and the conditions under the government's Business Appointment Rules relate to your previous roles 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 your personal responsibility to understand any other rules and regulations you may be subject to in parallel with this Committee's advice.

10. 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 or otherwise.

11. 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*'. This Rule is separate and not a replacement for the Rules in the House.

12. You must inform us as soon as you take up employment with this organisation, 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 Rules and the Ministerial Code.

13. Please also inform us if you propose to extend or otherwise change the nature of your role as, depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary for you to make a fresh application.

14. Once the 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 Lord Pickles

## **Annex - Material information**

### The role

1. You seek to join Furniture Village Ltd in a paid, part-time role as Non Executive Director for Furniture Village Ltd.
2. Furniture Village is a Furniture retailer. The website states it is the largest privately owned furniture chain in the United Kingdom.
3. In this role you said you will have no contact with government.
4. You informed the Committee you were a non-executive director of the board for 7 years, before you became an unpaid minister in the interim government for 2 months. The understanding was you would return when the new government was formed and you stepped aside from this role to allow you to step in as a minister for a couple of months to help with national security during the interim government

#### Dealings in office

5. You advised the Committee you did not meet with Furniture Village Ltd whilst in office. Further, you said you did not have any involvement in any policy development or decisions that would have been specific to Furniture Village Ltd; you had no relevant commercial or contractual responsibilities relating to them; nor did you have access to sensitive information.

#### Department Assessment

6. The Home Office confirmed the details you provided, stating they have no concerns with this appointment.