



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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By email

8 August 2022

Thank you for your response to my letter as Chair of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACOBA), dated 3 August. You provided additional context regarding the recent media coverage relating to your involvement with Remedium Partners. This is attached below.

You confirmed that at the time of forwarding on an email from Remedium Partners to the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care you had no reasonable expectation whatsoever of employment or future remuneration with the company. You also stated you did not have any involvement in preparation for, nor did you attend, the meeting between Remedium Partners and the Minister for Immigration.

As such your actions are consistent with the intention of the government's Rules and we do not regard this as a breach of the advice provided to you for your subsequent appointment with Remedium Partners.

In line with ACOBA's policy of transparency, our correspondence on this matter will be published on our website.

*Your ever,
Sue Pickles*

The Rt Hon Lord Pickles

Annex A - response to Lord Eric Pickles, Chair of ACOBA, from Steve Brine, 3 August 2022.

'Dear Lord Pickles,

Thank you for your letter received 3 August 2022.

My clear and unambiguous response to the two questions you have asked is as follows:

As stated in my email of 26 July to ACOBA, at the time I forwarded an email from Remedium Partners to the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care I had no reasonable expectation whatsoever of employment or future remuneration with the company.

I did not have any involvement in preparation for, nor did I attend, the meeting between Remedium Partners and the Minister for Immigration.

Yours,

Steve Brine MP'

Annex B - Letter from Lord Eric Pickles, Chair of ACOBA, to Steve Brine 3 August 2022



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3 August 2022

I am writing to you with reference to recent media articles¹ about your role with Remedium Partners and your subsequent email to ACOBA, received Tuesday 26 July 2022, annexed to this letter.

You approached the Committee for advice in May 2019 on taking up a role as an Advisor with Remedium Partners and received our final advice in July 2019. In June 2020 you informed ACOBA that this appointment '*never really got going before – and then there was a General Election etc – so [you] dropped it*' but that as of July 2020 you would be returning to Remedium '*...in exactly the same terms as before*'. ACOBA advised the restrictions it had advised, previously, still stood from the date this appointment was taken up.

In your recent email dated 26 July 2022 you said you had forwarded an email from Remedium Partners to the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care, on 25 March 2020. At this point you said you were not working with Remedium Partners, as shown by your register of interest. You stated this was in response to the national crisis and the Secretary of State issuing a call to anyone who could help with these challenges as a result of Covid-19. You also told the Committee in August 2020 you suggested and instigated a meeting between Remedium Partners and the Minister for Immigration. This took place while you were working for the company and as such subject to the Government's Business Appointment Rules.

Two clear questions arise from the information you have provided: When you passed on the email from Remedium Partners to the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care, did you have any reasonable expectation of employment or future

¹<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/covid-19-lobbying-of-matt-hancock-didnt-break-rules-says-former-minister-steve-brine-nw80bzhp5>

remuneration from this company? Did you have any involvement in preparation for the meeting between Remedium Partners and the Minister for Immigration?

In line with the Committee's policy of transparency, all correspondence on this matter will be published on our website including your email and attachments; and this letter will be copied to the Cabinet Office, as the owner of the Rules.

Yours ever
Eric Pickles

The Rt Hon Lord Pickles

Annex C - Email from Steve Brine to Lord Eric Pickles, Chair of ACOBA, 26 July 2022.

Dear Lord Pickles,

I am taking the (perhaps) unusual step of writing *to you* further to a press article which appeared Monday 25 July 2022.

It can be accessed here, albeit behind a pay-wall, www.thetimes.co.uk/article/covid-19-lobbying-of-matt-hancock-didnt-break-rules-says-former-minister-steve-brine-nw80bzhp5

Although I do not - at this time - know where this is coming from, the article seeks to damage my reputation and smear my good name as well as that of a much respected company - Remedium Partners – and I am not prepared to let that happen.

This hostile press contact is in respect of some (points 1 and 2 below) historical outside interests I had during the early part of this Parliament.

1. An email (attached) that I forwarded from **Remedium Partners** to the Secretary of State for Health & Social Care, on 25 March 2020

This was sent to matt.hancock@digital.dhsc.gov.uk in the national interest at a time when the NHS was in the midst of a national crisis. The Secretary of State was issuing calls to anyone who could help with the staffing challenge given the service was in very real danger of being overwhelmed by Covid-19 and, as it clearly says,

“now is the time for myself and my team to step up and be part of the solution for the COVID-19 pandemic, for you and our country”.

I was not working with Remedium Partners at the time and, as my Register shows, had only received one half-day fee (£800) prior to this paid to me on 10 September 2019.

At the time, I had no reasonable expectation whatsoever to work with Remedium again but, after a management buy-out later that year, was retained by them from 1 July 2020. ACOBA was, of course, consulted, and my Register updated appropriately.

2. A meeting I suggested **Remedium Partners** have with the Minister for Immigration, on 20 August 2020

As per the attached, this took place (virtually) without my presence. As stated above, the Government was issuing calls to anyone who could help with the staffing challenge facing the NHS and it was very clearly in the national interest for Ministers to understand one barrier to healthcare professionals working here from one of the best informed experts in this area.

I have at no point sought financial or material benefit for any of the external companies I have worked for, nor would I do so. Indeed, I would be mortified if any such inference was made as a result.

Nonetheless, I proactively sought the advice of Kathryn Stone OBE (Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards) and we exchanged letters this month about these two issues.

Her provisional opinion, based on the information provided to her, states that when it comes to paid advocacy (paragraph 12) *“in my opinion, the information you have provided does not show that this rule has been breached.”*

This is because:

- *You did not initiate or participate in Remedium’s approach to Mr Hancock of 25 March 2020, and, in any case, your involvement would have been allowed under paragraph 10 of Chapter 3 of the Guide to the Rules as your last “reward” from Remedium had occurred more than six months earlier (i.e. the payment of 10 September 2019).*

- *Although you initiated Remedium’s approach to Mr Foster on 20 July 2020, and at that time you were under paid contract with Remedium, your approach concerned a general introductory meeting regarding the wider immigration system and does not appear to have been seeking a financial or material benefit for Remedium.”*

On declaration of interests (paragraph 14), the Commissioner states;

- *“You did not speak or write to Mr Hancock about Remedium’s approach, so no declaration was needed.*

- *When approaching to Mr Foster in the House, and later in writing on 20 July 2020, a declaration of your outside interest in Remedium would have been advisable as it is likely that the test of relevance laid down in paragraph 5 of Chapter 2 of the Guide was met i.e. an onlooker might have reasonably considered that your approach to Mr Foster was influenced by your role at Remedium*

Please can I recommend that you review Chapter 2 of the Guide to the Rules and that you take a defensive approach to declaring your interests when approaching Ministers and other officials who have responsibility for matters of public expenditure. Declaring an interest does not mean that your words or actions have been influenced by that outside interest but does mean that the communication with the Minister or official starts on a transparent footing and will safeguard you against future complaints that the rule has been broken.” (1)

I seek merely to bring these matters to your attention in pursuit of the ongoing standards we all expect of *ourselves* as Members of Parliament. I believe I have done that in both these instances, clearly in the national interest at a time of unprecedented national emergency.

I greatly appreciated the professional and supportive way I was able to discuss these matters of concern with Ms Stone and hope you will see this approach in that same spirit of openness and full disclosure.

Yours,

Steve Brine MP

Email attachment – email request from Remedium Partners to Steve Brine, 25 March 2020

‘Dear Steve,

FAO Mr Matt Hancock

With the imminent opening of The Nightingale Hospital and its initial 500 escalation beds, I am duty bound to reach out and offer the resource of my company, Remedium Partners. My team and I are able to help you provide the Clinical Workforce required to ensure the safe functioning of this Hospital, as you lead our Country and The National Health Service through its biggest ever challenge. I founded Remedium in 2013 with a view to Solving the Healthcare Staffing Crisis by recruiting clinicians into permanent roles to reduce Trust’s dependence on agency locum workers. Remedium operates with an industry defining focus on clinical quality and retention of staff as a healthcare recruitment consultancy.

Remedium has an immediate network of over 5,000 clinicians based in the U.K. We have the infrastructure required to resource and onboard the right staff at the

necessary hiring velocity in order to launch Nightingale Hospital with safe staffing levels.

Now is the time for myself and my team to step up and be part of the solution for the COVID-19 pandemic, for you and our country.

We are at your service to help staff the Nightingale Hospital and any hospital that may be struggling with clinical staff shortages. I am ready to take a call at any moment

Email attachment with email exchange in reference to meeting

Email from Steve Brine to the Home Office on 28 July 2020

Thank you so much for this.

I have copied in who will follow this up for August 20th.

It is not necessary for me to attend but seeing as it's virtual, maybe you would keep me copied in.

Regards and thanks again,

Steve Brine

Steve Brine MP

Working hard for Winchester & Chandler's Ford

Email from the Home Office to Steve Brine, 27 July 2020

Dear Steve Brine MP

Thank you for reaching out to the FBI Minister & apologies for not contacting you sooner.

The Minister will be on annual leave for the first two weeks in August, please can you notify if any of the following dates will be convenient. So that you're aware the meeting will be held via skype, please notify me if you have any concerns.

Date: Monday 17th August 11:30 - 12:00

Date: Thursday 20th August 13:30 – 14:00

Kind Regards,

Email from Steve Brine to Home Office, 20 July 2020

Further to our chat outside the tea-room recently, I am following up in an email your kind willingness to meet a company I know.

Remedium Partners are a very interesting business; experts and leaders in the recruitment of permanent healthcare professionals.

<https://remediumpartners.com>

Clearly they have lots (and lots) of experience where our immigration system works (and does not) but, above all, I think they would be a very useful conversation for you. As you know, I don't waste my time with things I don't believe in.

Perhaps you can let me know how it is best to proceed and I will introduce you to the Founder of Remedium, David Green?

With many thanks,

Steve Brine MP

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Working hard for Winchester & Chandler's Ford'