

From the Chair



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: The Rt Hon Ranil Jayawardena MP, former Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Department for International Trade. Paid appointment with Ringshall Limited.

1. You sought advice from the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (the Committee) under the government's Business Appointments Rules for former Crown servants (the Rules) on taking up a role with Ringshall Limited as a Senior Adviser. The material information taken into consideration by the Committee is set out in the annex.
2. The purpose of the Rules is to protect the integrity of the government. The Committee has considered the risks associated with the actions and decisions made during your time in office, alongside the information and influence you may offer Ringshall Limited. The material information taken into consideration by the Committee is set out in the annex.
3. The Committee's advice is not an endorsement of the appointment - it imposes a number of conditions to mitigate the potential risks to the government associated with the appointment under the Rules.
4. 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.

The Committee's consideration of the risks present

5. There is no relationship between Ringshall Limited and your former departments, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Department for International Trade (DIT); nor did you make any decisions specific to Ringshall Limited. You said you seek to return to the company, which was set up by the Jayawardena family and where you previously held a similar role as Director, before joining government in May

2020. The Committee therefore considered the risk this appointment could reasonably be perceived as a reward for decisions or actions taken in office as low.

6. As the former Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for DIT and former Secretary of State for Defra, you may have access to sensitive information which could benefit a range of organisations, including Ringshall Limited and its clients. DIT noted you had access to details around the current Free Trade Agreement (FTA) work programme with Turkey, which is not in the public domain. However, it considered that as a result of the changes in Prime Ministers and subsequent policy changes, you are unlikely to have access to privileged accurate information around future policy announcements, outside of the macro-level picture.

7. As a former minister, you will have gained contacts within the UK government and internationally – within other governments and private companies. As such, there is a risk your network and influence gained in office might be used to assist Ringshall Limited unfairly

- particularly as DIT noted your contacts in the Middle East, India and the Gulf.

8. As Ringshall Limited operates as a consultancy/advisory firm with unknown clients, there is a risk you may work on and advise on matters that overlap with your time in office, which would raise risks under the Rules.

The Committee's advice

9. The Committee¹ determined the most significant risk here relates to the unknown nature of the clients you may advise, and if this work was to overlap with your responsibilities in office. As such, the Committee has imposed a condition which makes it clear you should not advise Ringshall Limited on policy matters you were involved in, or where you had a relationship with the client in office.

The other conditions below make it clear you cannot make use of your access to privileged information, contacts or influence gained from your time in ministerial office to the unfair benefit of Ringshall Limited and/or its clients. These conditions appropriately mitigate the risks identified above.

10. The Committee advises, under the government's Business Appointment Rules, that your role with **Ringshall Limited** should be subject to the following conditions:

- a waiting period of 3 months from your last day in office;
- 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 service;

¹ This application for advice was considered by Jonathan Baume; Andrew Cumpsty; Isabel Doverty; Sarah de Gay; The Rt Hon Lord Eric Pickles; Mike Weir and Lord Larry Whitty. Dr Susan Liataud and Richard Thomas were not available.

- for two years from your last day in ministerial service, you should not become personally involved in lobbying the UK government or any of its arm's length bodies on behalf of Ringshall Limited and its clients (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients); nor should you make use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts in government and/or Crown service to influence policy, secure business/funding or otherwise unfairly advantage Ringshall Limited and its clients (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients);
- for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not become personally involved in lobbying contacts you have developed during your time in office and in other governments and organisations for the purpose of securing business for Ringshall Limited and its clients (including parent companies, subsidiaries and partners);
- for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not provide advice to Ringshall Limited and its clients 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; and
- for two years since your last day in office, you should not advise Ringshall Limited or its clients on any work with regard to any policy you had specific involvement in or responsibility for as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for DIT and Secretary of State for Defra, or where you had a relationship with the relevant client during your time as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for DIT and Secretary of State for Defra.

11. 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 they may be subject to in parallel with this Committee's advice.

12. 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 Civil Service Code or otherwise.

13. 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.

14. You must inform us as soon as you take up employment with this organisation, or if it is announced that you will do so, by emailing the office at the above address. 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. You must 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.

15. 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 Eric Pickles

Annex – Material Information

The role

1. You seek to take up a paid role as Senior Adviser with Ringshall Limited. Its description on Companies House listed it as operating in:

- Buying and selling of own real estate
- Other letting and operating of own or leased real estate
- Other business support service activities not elsewhere classified
- General public administration activities

2. You said that *'Ringshall Limited provides business support services to other businesses; it previously supported pharmaceutical, transport and construction standards companies, though it is sector agnostic and has provided advice in the past on business turnaround and growth; reputation management; customer service; domestic and global economics; and domestic and global politics'*.

3. You described your role as providing counsel internally and to Ringshall Limited's clients. You said that the company has provided advice in the past on a number of issues, including reputation management and domestic and global politics and you may be asked to provide advice of this sort. You confirmed the role will not involve contact with government in this role.

4. You said you seek to return to the company, which was set up by the Jayawardena family and where you previously held a similar role as Director, before joining government in May 2020. You confirmed your wife continued to run the business, as Director, whilst you were in government office.

Dealings in office

5. You advised the Committee that you did not meet with Ringshall Limited during your time in government. You said you did not have any involvement in policy, regulatory or commercial decisions that would have been specific to the company.

6. You noted your work as Secretary of State for Defra was at a macro level rather than being involved in the plans of individual business and that you have not had access to *'trade secrets of competitors'*. You said that given the change of Prime Minister, administrations and wholesale changes in policy, you do not have access/knowledge of unannounced policy or privileged information.

Departmental Assessment

7. Both DIT and Defra provided their views on this application. Both departments confirmed you made no policy or regulatory decisions regarding Ringshall Limited.. As for potential competitors, DIT stated that whilst you met with other consultancies during your time as a minister, without knowing who you might advise, it could not determine if they were competitors. However, neither department considered you had access to sensitive commercial information.

8. DIT noted your access to the current Free Trade Agreement (FTA) work programme with Turkey, which is not formally in the public domain. Notwithstanding this, both departments confirmed that due to the changes in the Prime Minister and associated administrations, you are unlikely to have access to privileged, up to date information around future policy announcements, outside of the macro-level picture.

9. DIT noted you had developed a network of contacts outside of government, specifically in the Middle East, the Gulf and India that were gained whilst in office that could unfairly advantage Ringshall Limited. It recommended that this risk is mitigated by preventing improper use of these contacts.