



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: The Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP, former Secretary of State for Wales and Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice. Unpaid appointment with Business West, Swindon Futures Commission.

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 a Commissioner for the Swindon Futures Commission.
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 Swindon Futures Commission. 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 risk presented

5. When considering this application, the Committee¹ took into account this role as Commissioner for the Swindon Futures Commission is unpaid². Generally, the Committee's experience is that the risks related to unpaid roles are limited. The purpose of the Rules is to protect the integrity of government by considering the real and perceived risks associated with former ministers joining outside organisations. Those risks include: using privileged access to contacts and information to the benefit of themselves or those they represent. The Rules also seek to mitigate the risks that individuals may make decisions or take action in office to in expectation of rewards, on leaving government. These risks are significantly limited in unpaid cases due to the lack of financial gain to the individual.

The Committee's advice

6. The Committee did not consider this appointment raises any particular proprietary concerns under the government's Business Appointment Rules. There are inherent risks associated with access to sensitive information and contacts. The standard conditions below, which seek to prevent you from drawing on your privileged information and using your contacts to the unfair advantage of Business West/ Swindon Futures Commission, will sufficiently mitigate these risks.

7. Taking into account these factors, in accordance with the government's Business Appointment Rules, the Committee advises this appointment with the **Business West, Swindon Futures Commission** 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 Business West, Swindon Futures Commission (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients); nor should you make use, directly or indirectly, of your contacts in the government and/or Crown service to influence policy, secure business/funding or otherwise unfairly advantage Business West, Swindon Futures Commission (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 Business West, Swindon Futures Commission

¹ This application for advice was considered by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch; Andrew Cumpsty; Isabel Doverty; The Rt Hon Lord Eric Pickles; and Mike Weir. Richard Thomas; Jonathan Baume and Sarah de Gay were unavailable.

² By unpaid the Committee means that no remuneration of any kind is received for the role. Applicants must declare where it is agreed or anticipated they may receive remuneration or some other compensation at some stage in the future.

(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.

8. 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 an applicant's personal responsibility to understand any other rules and regulations they may be subject to in parallel with this Committee's advice.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. You must inform us as soon as you take up this role. 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.

12. 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

The role

1. The website states Business West is a certified B Corp with 200 staff and a turnover of £10 million. Its aim is '*...to make Gloucestershire, West of England, Swindon and Wiltshire, Somert, Dorset, Devon, and Cornwall the best places to live and work*'. It helps businesses of all sizes in these areas take advantage of the opportunities and address the problems created by this new world so they may successfully start, grow, export and innovate. Business West is establishing the Swindon Futures Commission to develop what Swindon might look like in 2050 in terms of economy, development and opportunity, in order to inform, promote, inspire and potentially shape the future of the town, its future growth and development.
2. It will bring business leaders in partnership with cross party political leadership to debate and promote the future growth strategy of the town, including how growth sectors of the future can be supported and attracted. The Commission will produce: A vision for the future of Swindon in the form of a report on Swindon's future economic strategy by an independent national expert, Professor Martin Boddy. You said the new organisation aims to promote Swindon as a place for businesses to invest.

Dealings in office

3. You confirmed you attended their 65th anniversary dinner on 12 October 2022. You confirmed you had no other contact with them other than this.
4. You also informed the Committee you did not meet with competitors of the Business West or the Swindon Futures Commission and do not have access to sensitive information relevant to Business West or the Swindon Futures Commission .

Department Assessment

5. The department confirmed the details you provided and confirmed it has no concerns regarding this application.