



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

G/7 Ground Floor, 1 Horse Guards Road SW1A 2HQ

Telephone: 020 7271 0839

Email: acoba@acoba.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.gov.uk/acoba>

February 2024

BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: Lord Darren Mott OBE, former Government Whip in the House of Lords. Paid appointment with Johnson Lubbock Partners Limited.

1. You sought advice from the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (the Committee) under the government's Business Appointments Rules for Former Ministers (the Rules) on taking up an appointment with Johnson Lubbock Partners Limited (JL Partners) as an Advisor.
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 a former Government Whip in the House of Lords may offer JL Partners. 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 presented

5. You did not meet with JL Partners during your time as a minister, nor did you make any decisions specific to the company whilst in office. Therefore, the Committee¹ considered the risk this appointment could reasonably be perceived as a reward for decisions made or actions taken in office is low.

¹ This application for advice was considered by Andrew Cumpsty; Sarah de Gay; Isabel Doverty; Hedley Finn OBE; The Rt Hon Baroness Jones of Whitchurch; The Rt Hon Lord Pickles; Michael Prescott; and Michael Weir.

6. As a former minister who was responsible for discussing and moving the government's legislative programme in the House of Lords, there are inherent risks associated with your access to privileged information. Given that JL Partners operates in the political sphere, there is a risk that some of the information you had access to could be seen to advantage JL Partners or its clients unfairly. The Cabinet Office considered the risk was low given that your role was to work with already agreed policy. It is also relevant information would be in the public domain as a result of legislation or debate in the House of Lords.
7. The lobbying ban that applies to all former ministers prevents you from lobbying government on JL Partner's behalf and you stated you will have no contact with government in your role. Therefore, there remains a risk that you could be seen to offer unfair access to government, especially as the company has an interest in working with governments and political parties.
8. The Committee considered that there are risks associated with the unknown nature of JL Partners clients, should you be asked to advise on matters you were involved with whilst in government; or were you to advise clients you had contact with while in office. The Committee recognised that as you were not generally materially involved in policy development, this risk is limited.
9. It is also significant that you had a long-established political career before you joined government for a short period of time.

The Committee's advice

10. The Committee determined that the risks identified in this application can be appropriately mitigated by the conditions below. These make it clear that you cannot make use of your access to privileged information, contacts or influence gained from your time in ministerial office to the unfair advantage of JL Partners or its clients.
11. In addition, to address the unknown risks associated with JL Partners' clients, the Committee has imposed a further condition. This makes clear that in working with JL Partners, you should not advise on work which conflicts with any matters you had a material role in, should that risk arise.
12. Taking these factors into account, in accordance with the government's Business Appointment Rules, the Committee's advice is this appointment with **Johnson Lubbock Partners 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 Johnson Lubbock Partners Ltd (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 Johnson Lubbock Partners Ltd (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients);

- for two years from your last day in ministerial office you should not undertake any work with Johnson Lubbock Partners 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; and
 - for two years from your last day in Crown service, you should not advise JL Partners or its clients on any work with regard to any policy which you had a material role in developing or determining as Government Whip in the House of Lords, or where you had a relationship with the company or organisation during his time in this role.
13. The advice and the conditions under the government's Business Appointment Rules relate to your previous role in government only; they are separate from rules administered by other bodies such as the Office of the Registrar of Consultant Lobbyists, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards and the Registrar of Lords' Interests.² You are reminded that as a Member of the House of Lords you are prevented from any paid lobbying under the House of Lords Code of Conduct. 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.
14. 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.
15. 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.
16. You must inform us as soon as you take up this role, or if it is announced that you will do so. 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.

² All Peers and Members of Parliament are prevented from paid lobbying under the the House of Commons Code of Conduct and the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords. Advice on your obligations under the Code can be sought from the Parliamentary Commissioners for Standards, in the case of MPs, or the Registrar of Lords' Interests, in the case of peers

17. 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. JL Partners is a firm that specialises in research, insight and strategy, particularly in the political sphere. It aims to gain insight into a client's target audience and develop strategies (campaign design, market engagement etc) to meet the client's end goal. Its products include research and polling, among others. The firm was founded by Prime Minister Theresa May's former Senior Opinion Research and Strategy Advisor.
2. You said in your paid, part-time capacity as an Advisor you will be serving on the board of advisors, and your responsibilities will include:
 - a. Business development through meeting with prospective clients in the commercial, think tank and political (non-governmental) sphere, internationally;
 - b. Providing advice on in its research work, including:
 - i. focus groups
 - ii. Polling
 - iii. Surveys
 - iv. strategic advice
 - v. its offering for the 2024 elections in the UK and USA
 - vi. Business development and promotion of its work in the same areas; and
 - c. Promotion for and advising on JL Partners' research products, including focus groups, polling, surveys, strategic advice, and its offering for the 2024 elections in the UK and USA.
3. You stated that in your role you will not have any contact with government.

Dealings in office

4. You advised the Committee that you did not meet with JL Partners whilst in office. You said you did not have any involvement in policy, regulatory or commercial decisions that would have been specific to the company.

Departmental Assessment

5. The Cabinet Office confirmed the details you provided. It noted the information provided to him for discussion in the Lords would be based on departmental policy - with little access to sensitive or privileged information.
6. It also noted that your network of contacts within the Conservative Party predates your time in government.
7. The Cabinet Office had no concerns with the appointment subject to the standard conditions.