

From the Chair



OFFICE OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS APPOINTMENTS

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BUSINESS APPOINTMENT APPLICATION: Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon KCMG, former Minister of State for the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia, United Nations, and the Commonwealth. Paid appointment with the Arab Ambassadors Council.

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 your role as Advisor with the Arab Ambassadors Council (AAC), which is also known as the Council of Arab Ambassadors.
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 you made during your time in office, alongside the information and influence you may offer AAC. 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 Rules¹ set out that former ministers must abide by the Committee's advice. It is an applicant's personal responsibility to manage the propriety of any appointment. Former ministers are expected to uphold the highest standards of propriety and act in accordance with the 7 Principles of Public Life.

¹ Which apply by virtue of the Civil Service Management Code, The Code of Conduct for Special Advisers, The King's Regulations and the Diplomatic Service Code.

The Committee's consideration of the risks presented

5. There is a broad overlap between your time as a minister and this work given you had dealings with various external organisations, foreign governments, and their officials whilst in office. You had some contact with the AAC as part of your ministerial duties, attending the AAC's annual meeting. You did not have involvement in decisions specific to the AAC during your time in office. Therefore, the Committee² considered the risk this appointment could reasonably be perceived as a reward for decisions made, or actions taken, in office is low.
6. You had oversight over the Middle East and North Africa in office, which could be seen to offer unfair insight to any organisation working in this context. Your proposed role includes providing advice on the political landscape in the UK and facilitating community engagement. The risk is limited considering the FCDO does not consider you to possess sensitive information that may confer an unfair advantage to the AAC. It would not be improper for you to draw on your breadth of experience, general political skills and sources available in the public domain; the risks arise should you draw on provided insight which is prohibited.
7. As with any former minister, there are risks associated with your contacts and influence within government and the potential for the AAC to gain unfair access or influence as a result. The Committee considered it significant that you confirmed your role as Advisor excludes any dealings with government, reducing the risk you could be perceived to be lobbying government - which all former ministers are prevented from doing for two years after leaving office.
8. There are also risks associated with your influence and network of contacts gained whilst in ministerial office. Given the AAC aims to promote cultural understanding and UK-Arab trade and investment and your role as Advisor involves promoting and facilitating community engagement and attending various meetings and events, this may require building relationships with various stakeholders. Were you to draw specifically on external contacts that you only gained as a result of your role in office to garner support for trade/investment and the AAC's community engagement efforts, this could give rise to a risk, or a perception thereof, of unfair advantage to the AAC.

The Committee's advice

² This application for advice was considered by Andrew Cumpsty; Hedley Finn OBE; Sarah de Gay; Isabel Doverty; Dawid Konotey-Ahulu CBE DL; The Rt Hon Lord Pickles; Michael Prescott; and Mike Weir. The Baroness Thornton was unavailable.

9. The Committee determined the risks identified can be appropriately mitigated by the conditions below. These make it clear that you cannot make use of privileged information, contacts or influence gained from your time in ministerial service to the unfair advantage of the AAC.
10. In accordance with the government's Business Appointment Rules, the Committee advises this appointment with the **Arab Ambassadors Council** 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 the Arab Ambassadors Council (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 the Arab Ambassadors Council (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients);
 - for two years from your last day in ministerial office, you should not provide advice to the Arab Ambassadors Council 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 from your last day in ministerial office, you should not become personally involved in lobbying contacts you have developed during your time in ministerial office in external governments and organisations for the purpose of securing business and investment for the Arab Ambassadors Council (including parent companies, subsidiaries, partners and clients).
11. 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' Interests³. 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.

³ All Peers and Members of Parliament are prevented from paid lobbying under the House of Commons Code of Conduct and the Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Lords. Advice on 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.

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 Ministerial Code or otherwise.
13. The Business Appointment Rules explain that the restriction on lobbying means that you "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".
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. Please 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 Pickles

Annex – Material Information

The role

1. You said you have been offered a paid, part-time appointment with the Arab Ambassadors Council (AAC) as an Advisor, which is composed of ambassadors from the Arab League aiming to promote UK-Arab trade, investment and cultural understanding, through community engagement and diplomacy.
2. You have stated that the AAC is involved in community engagement and diplomacy.
3. According to its website, the AAC is composed of a group of ambassadors from member states of the Arab League. The Council of the Arab League is the diplomatic mission of the Arab League in the United Kingdom, with the Office also serving as a forum for the AAC in London to coordinate policy positions and to jointly consider all matters of common concern in the United

Kingdom. The AAC in particular aims to promote UK-Arab trade, investment and cultural understanding.

4. In your paid role as Advisor, you stated it involves advising the AAC on issues related to the UK's relations with the Arab world, with specific duties to include:
 - Providing advice and briefings on the position of the major UK political parties on Arab issues and on Arab-UK relations.
 - Advising on engaging with Islamic and Arab-heritage communities in the UK to highlight the role of Arab countries and their UK Embassies.
 - Advising on engagement with the wider UK community to deepen understanding of the Arab world, Arab interests, and the value of Arab-UK cooperation.
 - Proposing and advising on community activities and initiatives to promote such engagement, including format, venue and list(s) of possible invitees and speakers.
 - Providing other advice and briefings as requested by the Council.
 - Attending monthly meetings in London of the AAC.
 - Attending other meetings, receptions, lunches or other engagements related to your area(s) of expertise.
 - No contact with or lobbying of the UK government.

Dealings in office

5. You stated you had contact with the AAC during your time in office, as part of your regular ministerial duties, whereby you attended the AAC's annual meeting. You stated that you had no involvement in policy development, contractual and/or commercial decisions specific to the AAC, nor do you possess sensitive information that may provide the AAC an unfair advantage. You stated that there is a departmental relationship through regular ambassadorial engagement.

Departmental assessment

6. The FCDO was consulted on your appointment. The department confirmed the information you provided above, stating:

- You were not involved in any regulatory, commercial, funding or policy decisions that would have affected the AAC.
- It does not hold a relationship with the AAC.
- It does not consider you to possess sensitive information that would confer an unfair advantage to the AAC.

7. The FCDO recommended the standard conditions.