

March 9th 2025

Dear Lord Pickles and the ACOBA Committee,

I write, in reference to my appointment as a Trustee of the Hestercombe Gardens Trust. This is an unpaid, voluntary role for a local charity which does invaluable work in terms of its unique garden history. I was closely involved with this charity for many years prior to entering Parliament.

I apologise if any actions I have taken have been deemed to be in contravention of the correct practice in terms of taking on such a role, this was certainly not intentional. As soon as I realised that taking on voluntary, unpaid roles such as this for a local charity, was subject to the approval of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointment (ACOBA) and that therefore I was in breach of the code I duly acquired the relevant application forms and submitted my application on January 28th 2025 in a bid to urgently correct the situation.

Whilst I had been listed on the charity commission register in October 2024, I had not publicised my role as a Trustee on any platform. Once I had submitted the forms I also alerted the Chair of the Trustees to my actions informing him that that ACOBA may be in touch. Also as soon as Policy and Caseworker Dougie Thronton drew my attention to the potential breach of the Code I requested and subsequently had a zoom call with him so that I might fully understand the process, taking advice on how to rectify the situation forthwith. He was most helpful and agreed that I submit my explanation regarding my actions by Monday March 10th 2025.

Through my nine years as a Member of Parliament, I have always sought to follow the rules and have never had any action called into question by those responsible for standards and codes. I fully acknowledge that I should have sought your approval prior to accepting this role. As I have already highlighted, I am not receiving any payment for the role or any expenses and I trust that taking on this Trustee role will remain within the ACOBA guidance which states that 'Generally, ACOBA's experience is that the risks related to unpaid roles are limited ... These cases will normally be subject to the standard conditions after confirming the details of your application with the relevant department'. I would very much like to continue in my voluntary role as a Trustee of the Hestercombe Gardens Trust, a charity which I am passionate about, which makes a significant contribution to the local area and which requires support and having left Parliament it is the kind of public service I remain committed to. I don't believe this appointment will in any way contravene the terms of the ACOBA guidance.

I would appreciate and be grateful if you would kindly accept my heartfelt apology for inadvertently being out of line with the due process regarding this position and very much hope you will be willing to approve the application.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Pow