



Public Administration Select Committee (PASC)

Committee Office · House of Commons · 7 Millbank · London SW1P 3JA
Tel 020 7219 3268 Fax 020 7219 2681 Email pasc@parliament.uk Website www.parliament.uk/pasc

The Rt Hon Francis Maude MP
Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General
The Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

16 October 2012

Dear Francis

I am writing to you following the *Sunday Times* Insight Team's report this weekend that certain senior retired military officers apparently showed a willingness to ignore or circumvent the Business Appointment Rules and the ACoBA process by lobbying Government on behalf of defence equipment suppliers. We do not wish to prejudge the individuals in this case, but, much as we anticipated, such stories are inevitable. They undermine public and press trust in ACoBA and prove the validity of the recommendation that the Government should "establish clear, statutory, conflict of interest and business appointment rules for former Ministers, civil servants and special advisers".

This case reinforces the need for a statutory conflicts of interest commissioner, backed by statutory rules, which will establish a culture in which people respect both the rules and also respect the spirit which should underlie the rules. Such rules will need to be general in nature as well as specific so that the individuals concerned are encouraged to apply the rules to themselves before they embark on behaviour which may bring them, or the Government, into disrepute. This would promote not only public confidence but also create a stable framework to protect the increasing interchange between the public and private sectors, which the Government is encouraging.

In oral evidence, you said that "We would need to be persuaded that the current system, which involves quite detailed scrutiny of potential appointments, does not provide sufficient protection. If there is compelling evidence that that does not work effectively or command confidence, we will look at it." The case highlighted has led to coverage that is deeply corrosive to public trust in politics and the public service. It is exactly the kind of scenario that our Report warned against, and it demands a change of Government policy.

When you reply to our Report, please take this case into consideration.

Bernard Jenkin

Bernard Jenkin MP
Chairman of PASC