Constitution Committee seeks new legal adviser

The House of Lords Select Committee on the Constitution is inviting applications for the vacant post of one of its legal advisers.

The role is part-time, remunerated by daily fee. The successful candidate will demonstrate established expertise in the fields of public law generally and constitutional law in particular. The primary task is to help the Committee fulfil its role examining the constitutional implications of public bills, but the adviser may help the Committee with other aspects of its work.

The legal adviser will work closely with the Committee’s other legal adviser, Professor Stephen Tierney, under the direction of the clerk.

Role of the adviser

Working with the other legal adviser, the successful candidate will be expected to:

- prepare a written analysis for the Committee of the constitutional implications of Government bills (and some private members’ bills), with the normal aim of the Committee considering the note before the bill’s second reading or committee stage in the Lords;
- brief the Chairman and the Committee orally and in writing;
- prepare draft reports on bills as appropriate;
- prepare draft letters to ministers as appropriate;
- attend the Committee as appropriate to assist its deliberation; and
- undertake other work to assist the Committee with inquiries or other constitutional issues as required.

In addition to the legal advisers and the clerk, the Constitution Committee has a policy analyst and a committee assistant.

Skills

The successful candidate will demonstrate established expertise in the fields of public law generally and constitutional law in particular. The successful candidate will demonstrate a strong understanding of how legislation is drafted, and the ability to advise on the effects of legislation clearly and concisely, setting provisions in their legal and constitutional contexts. The adviser must be incisive, articulate and able to draft quickly and clearly for both a specialist and a non-specialist audience.

The adviser will be expected to offer the Committee impartial advice, regardless of any personal or professional interest in the outcome, and should avoid being seen to favour a particular viewpoint when dealing with contentious issues.

The appointment is likely to be suited to a senior academic lawyer or to a person with experience of working as a senior lawyer in government.

Time

The number of days a week the adviser will need to spend on the work of the Committee will vary over the parliamentary session. A peak of activity may be expected following the Queen’s speech opening a session. The workload is divided up flexibly between the two legal advisers. The commitment should not average more than one day a week when the House is sitting. A fast pace of working is required: a note on a bill will often need to be prepared within days of the bill being introduced.
The legal adviser would normally work away from Westminster, communicating with the clerk and other staff by email and telephone. The legal adviser would normally attend Committee meetings at which notes on bills, or reports on them, which the adviser has drafted are being discussed.

**Conditions of appointment**

The appointment will attract a daily fee of £375 (based on an eight-hour day exclusive of breaks), payable monthly, either for attendance on the committee or for time spent on the work of the Committee. A half-day rate is payable. Travel expenses are payable within specified limits and there is provision for a modest subsistence allowance. Amounts received by way of fees and expenses are potentially liable to income tax (or VAT) and the House of Lords may seek formal assurance that income tax and national insurance obligations are being met. The Committee’s legal advisers are not employees of the House of Lords.

**Applications**

Interested candidates should send a CV and short covering letter setting out their suitability for the post to the Clerk of the Constitution Committee, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW and/or to korrism@parliament.uk by 12 noon on Tuesday 2 July 2019. Interviews are likely to take place in mid-July. The appointment is subject to the approval of the Committee, with the adviser likely to begin work after the House returns from the summer recess, in September or early October.

The House of Lords welcomes applications from all qualified candidates regardless of their ethnicity, race, gender, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, age, marital status or whether or not they have a disability. Requests for flexible working arrangements and reasonable adjustments will be considered. Applications are particularly welcome from sections of the community which are currently under-represented among House of Lords specialist advisers, including applicants who identify as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME).

**About the Committee**

The House of Lords Select Committee on the Constitution was appointed in 2001 to fulfil a recommendation of the Royal Commission on reform of the House of Lords that:

“The second chamber should establish an authoritative constitutional committee to act as a focus for its interest in and concern for constitutional matters.”

The Committee’s terms of reference are:

“To examine the constitutional implications of all public bills coming before the House; and to keep under review the operation of the constitution.”

The Committee set out its approach to this task in its first report, which is available via the parliamentary website www.parliament.uk (as are the Committee’s other reports).

The current Chairman of the Committee is Baroness Taylor of Bolton. The vacancy is created by one of the present legal advisers, Professor Mark Elliott, standing down. The Committee usually meets weekly when the House is sitting, on Wednesdays at 10.15am (though the meeting time or day may be subject to change).

For more information about the Committee or the post of legal adviser please contact the Clerk of the Committee (Matt Korris) at korrism@parliament.uk or on 020 7219 1228.