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Damian Collins MP
Chair
DCMS Committee
House of Commons
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21 February 2018

Dear Damian

Thank you for your letter of 20 February following on from Baroness Tina Stowell's pre-appointment hearing as the preferred candidate for the Chair of the Charity Commission.

I have considered your response and the reasoning for the Committee's recommendation very carefully but remain convinced that the best candidate has been selected for the role.

Baroness Stowell was selected as the preferred candidate following a fair, open and transparent competition - a process which is regulated by the Office for the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA) and is in line with the Cabinet Office Governance Code for Public Appointments.

The advisory assessment panel included two independent members, one of whom is a respected charity sector expert. The panel assessed all candidates against the criteria as set out in the role specification. I confirm that the panel unanimously agreed the outcome that Baroness Stowell was not just the most qualified candidate, but is an exceptionally strong candidate for this role. They noted that she delivered an excellent presentation which was well structured and spanned a wide range of issues, evidencing an ability for clear strategic oversight. They were also impressed by the high degree of emotional intelligence and personal integrity that Baroness Stowell displayed.

You will be aware that this is a critical time for the Charity Commission and the charity sector as a whole. There is evidence of declining public trust in the face of recent revelations, and strong leadership from the Charity Commission is an urgent imperative. Like her predecessor, who was an exceptional Chairman, Baroness Stowell does not have strong connections to the charity sector. But there is no evidence that this is a weakness. After all this is a crucial regulatory role and a fresh perspective is very valuable. The Commission itself is packed with sector expertise.

Baroness Stowell set out a clear vision of how she plans to build upon the excellent progress made at the Commission by William Shawcross, by ensuring a robust approach as a regulator while encouraging and supporting charities to deliver their services to high standards. This firm but collaborative approach is critical to supporting charities to deliver, and ensuring that any problems, where discovered, are properly dealt with. I am confident that Baroness Stowell will build on this by working with charities to restore public trust.

Baroness Stowell is absolutely clear about the need to be seen as impartial leader and the need to demonstrate a commitment to working only in the public interest. I have every confidence that she will work tirelessly to protect and promote the great work that charities do and ensure they uphold the highest standards of integrity.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt Hancock". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP