

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 6120 website www.parliament.uk/cms

Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport
100 Parliament St, London SW1A 2BQ

22 February 2018

Dear Secretary of State,

Appointment of the Chair of the Charity Commission

Thank you for your letter of 21 February stating that Baroness Stowell remains the Government's preferred candidate for the role of Chair of the Charity Commission. We were disappointed that the concerns raised by the Committee were dismissed so swiftly.

In our letter to you regarding Baroness Stowell's proposed appointment, we set out four points of contention relating to her lack of relevant experience; perceived lack of political neutrality; the recruitment process; and performance in front of the Committee. Your letter does not address the substance of these points. We would ask that you provide a fuller response that addresses each of our points in writing to the Committee.

We would also like to note that in your statement to the press you asserted that 'Select Committee advisory decisions have often been set aside by appointing Ministers.' In fact, such action is unusual, having happened only three times out of nine negative committee reports, following over 100 pre-appointment hearings.

We would also like to put the following additional questions to you, in order to help the Committee better understand the process that led to the selection of Baroness Stowell as the Government's preferred candidate to be Chair of the Charity Commission.

- i. Can you confirm that the role of the interview panel was simply to assess which candidates were appointable, and not to indicate which one should be appointed? Can you confirm that the final decision on who should be appointed was a decision for Ministers to make?
- ii. Did your Department recommend to 10 Downing Street the appointment of any other candidate for the role of Chair of the Charity Commission to succeed Sir William Shawcross, prior to recommending Baroness Stowell - either before or since your appointment as Secretary of State?

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- iii. Since she left the Government in 2016, has Baroness Stowell been offered or recommended for any other public appointments by the Department?
- iv. Were any candidates with regulatory and/or charities experience interviewed? If so, why was the preferred candidate was chosen ahead of them?

We would appreciate answers to these questions by noon on Monday 26 February, following which we will issue a report setting out in further detail our reservations about the appointment.



DAMIAN COLLINS MP, CHAIR, DCMS COMMITTEE