



House of Commons  
Public Administration Select  
Committee

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**Selection of a new  
Chair of the Advisory  
Committee on Business  
Appointments:  
Government Response  
to the Committee's  
Third Report of Session  
2009-10**

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**Second Special Report of Session  
2009–10**

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## The Public Administration Select Committee

The Public Administration Select Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the reports of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration and the Health Service Commissioner for England, which are laid before this House, and matters in connection therewith, and to consider matters relating to the quality and standards of administration provided by civil service departments, and other matters relating to the civil service.

### Current membership

Dr Tony Wright MP (*Labour, Cannock Chase*) (*Chairman*)  
Mr David Burrowes MP (*Conservative, Enfield Southgate*)  
Paul Flynn MP (*Labour, Newport West*)  
David Heyes MP (*Labour, Ashton under Lyne*)  
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Paul Rowen MP (*Liberal Democrats, Rochdale*)  
Mr Charles Walker MP (*Conservative, Broxbourne*)  
Jenny Willott MP (*Liberal Democrats, Cardiff Central*)

### Powers

The powers of the Committee are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 146. These are available on the Internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)

### Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at <http://www.parliament.uk/pasc>

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Steven Mark (Clerk), David Slater (Second Clerk), Pauline Ngan (Committee Specialist), Louise Glen (Senior Committee Assistant) and Su Panchanathan (Committee Assistant)

### Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Public Administration Select Committee, Committee Office, First Floor, 7 Millbank, House of Commons, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 5730; the Committee's email address is [pasc@parliament.uk](mailto:pasc@parliament.uk)

## Second Special Report

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The Public Administration Select Committee reported to the House on *Selection of a new Chair of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments* in its Third Report of Session 2009-10, published 26 November 2009 as HC 42-I. The Government Response was received 30 November 2009 and is published below as Appendix 1. Also appended to this Report is a letter from the Chairman of the Committee to the Minister of the Cabinet Office commenting on the Government Response.

## Appendix 1 - Government Response

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### **Letter from Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP, Minister for the Cabinet Office, to the Chairman of the Committee, 30 November 2009**

I am writing in response to the report you published on 27 November following your pre-appointment hearing with Rt Hon Lord Lang of Monkton in relation to the post of Chair of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments.

I welcome your conclusion that Lord Lang has the professional competence and personal independence required for the post of Chair of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (ACoBA). He was asked to take on the role on the basis of his experience, gravitas and credibility, a role in which he has the full support and confidence of the other members of the Committee and of the Government. I very much welcome the initiatives that Lord Lang has already introduced in relation to the Committee's working methods and governance arrangements.

In relation to the appointments process, it is clear that the Committee has concerns about the method used to appoint chairs of this Committee. These have been in force, as you point out, for many years under successive Governments. Whilst the Government is happy to look at this again, working with the Commissioner for Public Appointments, I would point out some particular circumstances pertaining to the Committee. Its remit is narrow and confined to individual casework for a relatively small number of people. It is for this reason that we believe that the membership must have experience and understanding of the Business Appointment rules and procedures to have credibility in the areas in which they are advising. This must be taken into account when considering the cost of recruitment processes and the added burden on candidates that the full process involves.

I also believe your concerns about a former Cabinet Minister with business appointments of his own taking on this role to be unfounded. If we were to exclude from this sort of appointment anyone in this position we would be severely limiting our potential appointees, and excluding people who have significant knowledge and experience to offer to such a role and to public life. The Cabinet Office followed the established process and practice which has been used before by making the appointment of the Chairman from

within the existing members. This does not make it irregular, but we will be looking at this again with the Commissioner.

I also note that in your three reports published during this Parliament about, or touching on, the Advisory Committee, you have not made any recommendations about the membership process. However, we have always been clear that we would use the current process to refresh the Committee to work with the Commissioner for Public Appointments on an appropriate process in the future. We are fully committed to doing so. I have also asked that the points made by you in this Report also be taken into account.

## Appendix 2 – Reply from the Chairman

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### **Letter from Chairman of the Committee to Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP, Minister for the Cabinet Office, 10 December 2009**

Thank you for your letter of 30 November, and in particular for taking on board the Committee's concerns in your consideration, together with the Commissioner for Public Appointments, of the process to be followed in the future for appointments to the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments.

You note in your letter that you have not found any recommendations about the appointment process in our previous Reports published during this Parliament. I would point you to the recommendation in our report on lobbying, published in January 2009:

“There would be benefit to having an Advisory Committee that was more representative of society at large. Under these circumstances, the Government should consider providing some remuneration to members of the Advisory Committee, and should seek a wider field of applicants than might have been the case in the past.”

Our recent recommendations also reflect the effect of the events of the last twelve months on public trust in politicians and those in public life more generally. For obvious reasons, these were not reflected in our earlier reports.