House of Commons
Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

Appointment of the Housing Ombudsman

Sixteenth Report of Session 2017–19

Report, together with formal minutes relating to the report

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Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

The Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

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Bob Blackman MP (Conservative, Harrow East)
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Publication

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Evidence relating to this report is published on the inquiry publications page of the Committees’ websites.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Mike Winter (Clerk), Jack Dent (Second Clerk), Nick Taylor and Alison Pickard (Committee Specialists), Tony Catinella (Senior Committee Assistant), Eldon Gallagher (Committee Support Assistant) and George Perry (Media Officer).

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1 Appointment of the Housing Ombudsman

Introduction

1. This Report follows the pre-appointment hearing we held with the Secretary of State’s preferred candidate for Housing Ombudsman, one of four posts which are subject to pre-appointment scrutiny by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee.\(^1\)

2. In June 2017, Denise Fowler, the last permanent holder of the office of Housing Ombudsman, resigned from her post. The Ministry conducted a recruitment campaign for a new Ombudsman in the summer of 2017 but received a limited number of applicants.\(^2\) David Connolly was appointed interim Housing Ombudsman for six months, which was eventually extended to the end of August 2018. A second campaign was launched in January 2018 with a new, revised job specification emphasising the increased importance of social housing issues.

3. The Ministry informed us that this second campaign attracted a stronger field of applicants. The Assessment Panel recommended an appointable candidate to the previous Secretary of State in April 2018. Following a Cabinet reshuffle, the new Secretary of State, the Rt Hon James Brokenshire, wrote to our Chair to explain that he would not appoint the candidate and did not consider any of the shortlisted candidates to have the right skills or experience for the role.\(^3\) For the second time, the job specification was revised to include more emphasis on social housing. As a result of no permanent appointment being made, Andrea Kennoy, the then Director of Finance and Corporate Performance at the Housing Ombudsman Service, took over from David Connolly as interim Housing Ombudsman for a year from 31 August 2018.

4. The third campaign to find a new Housing Ombudsman was launched on 4 January 2019. We were not consulted on the proposed selection process before the recruitment campaign began, as advised under Cabinet Office guidance.\(^4\) Kit Malthouse, the Minister of State for Housing, wrote to our Chair on 28 March 2019 to apologise for this oversight and lack of engagement.\(^5\)

5. On 26 June 2019, the Secretary of State wrote to our Chair to inform the Committee of his nomination of Richard Blakeway to be Housing Ombudsman.\(^6\) This information, along with the other required documents, was sent to us three working days before the hearing. Cabinet Office guidance recommends at least seven working days in advance.\(^7\)

6. **We are disappointed that the Department neglected to consult us on the proposed selection process prior to the start of the recruitment campaign and failed to send us**
the information set out in the Cabinet Office guidance within seven working days of the scheduled pre-appointment hearing. We expect the Department to take appropriate measures to ensure it has the required capacity to meet the requirements set out in Liaison Committee and Cabinet Office guidance for pre-appointment hearings.

The Housing Ombudsman Service

7. The Housing Ombudsman Service defines its role as:

   [...] to resolve disputes involving members of the Scheme, including making awards of compensation or other remedies, where appropriate, as well as to support effective landlord-tenant dispute resolution by others.

   The service is independent and impartial.\(^8\)

8. On its website the Housing Ombudsman Service explains its vision:

   We understand the importance of housing to people's lives. We ensure the fair and impartial resolution of housing complaints, locally where possible. When things go wrong we put things right and encourage learning from outcomes. We help improve landlord and resident relationships. We role model the service we expect of others.\(^9\)

9. According to its 2017–18 Annual Report and Accounts, as of 31 March 2018, 2,452 landlords were in membership, representing around 4.8 million housing units.\(^10\) The Housing Ombudsman Service employs an average of 68.2 FTE staff, including the Housing Ombudsman, and has an annual budget of £5.9m.

The role and responsibilities of the Housing Ombudsman

10. The responsibilities of the Housing Ombudsman are set out in full in the candidate information pack.\(^11\) They include the following essential criteria:

   - Evidence of strong strategic leadership skills with the ability to lead an organisation of a similar size and complexity of Housing Ombudsman Services;
   - The ability to deliver organisational change and a proven ability to deliver and work with a number of stakeholders;
   - Evidence of delivering a quality service and the ability to work with senior partners in the housing sector as well as across Government;
   - An understanding of the decision-making process in Government;
   - A proven understanding of the housing sector;
   - Ability to think creatively and solve problems in a high level, challenging environment;

\(^8\) Housing Ombudsman Service, Corporate Plan 2019–22: Making a difference, p4
\(^9\) Housing Ombudsman Service, ‘Our vision’, accessed 1 July 2019
\(^11\) Annex D
• Excellent communication skills, including being able to present issues clearly and confidently to Ministers and Parliament, and to deal effectively with the media.

• In addition, the following criteria and experience were considered desirable:

• A track record of ensuring effective governance in the management of organisations;

• Experience of working within the housing sector or other related service;

• Experience of complex casework and/or complaint handling.

The candidate

11. Richard Blakeway, the Government’s preferred candidate, was Deputy Mayor of London for Housing, Land and Property during Boris Johnson’s mayoralty and Chair of Homes for London from 2012 to 2016. Following this, he was a policy adviser for 10 Downing Street in 2016, before setting up his own consultancy firm which has advised a range of companies, including real estate developers. He is also currently Chair of BexleyCo Ltd, the housing company for the London Borough of Bexley, and a Non-executive Director for Homes England. Mr Blakeway’s CV is appended to this report.12

12. We held a pre-appointment hearing with Richard Blakeway on 1 July 2019. In line with the guidance drawn up by the Liaison Committee on the conduct of pre-appointment hearings, our questioning sought to test Mr Blakeway’s professional competence and personal independence. We explored the following areas:

• Role of the Housing Ombudsman and the candidate’s priorities

• His experience of complaints handling

• His political impartiality and potential conflicts of interests

• Planned changes to social housing redress

• Reducing determination times

• Subscription fees

Conclusion

13. We endorse Mr Blakeway’s appointment to the position of Housing Ombudsman, subject to him resigning from his roles at Home England and BexleyCo Ltd, and ensuring that Tudor Blakeway Consultants Ltd is not active for the duration of his appointment.

14. We intend to evaluate Mr Blakeway’s performance against his ambitions as stated to us. We will conduct a follow-up evidence session six months after his appointment.
Annex A: Posts which are subject to pre-appointment hearings before the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

 Commissioner for Local Administration England (known as Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman)
 Chair of Homes England
 Chair of the Regulator of Social Housing
 Housing Ombudsman
Annex B: Ministerial correspondence between the Department and the Chair

Letter dated 4 July 2018 from Rt Hon James Brokenshire, Secretary of State, to the Chair

Appointment of the new Housing Ombudsman

I am writing to notify you that I have not appointed a new permanent Housing Ombudsman following my Department’s recruitment campaign for this post.

The Housing Ombudsman is responsible for resolving complaints by tenants, leaseholders and other individuals against social landlords as well as supporting effective landlord and tenant dispute resolution. Given the increasing profile of social housing issues over the past year, this role has become even more important and we are considering measures to further strengthen the complaints process through the Social Housing Green Paper.

I considered the Assessment Panel’s recommendations carefully but, in the light of the increasing importance of the Housing Ombudsman, I did not consider that that any of the shortlisted candidates had sufficiently strong skills sets and experience to fulfil all the criteria for this role. Given the policy development that is being taken forward through the work on the Social Housing Green Paper, I would like to refresh the specification for this post to reflect my priorities for social housing, and to attract the best possible candidate.

With regard to the interim arrangements, Oliver Dowden has confirmed that he is content with my approach to appoint Andrea Keenoy, the current Director of Finance and Corporate Performance at the Housing Ombudsman Service, to this position on an interim basis once David Connolly steps down at the end of August. I consider that Andrea’s skills and experience will provide the necessary continuity until I appoint a permanent Housing Ombudsman.

My officials will be in touch with your offices regarding the new campaign in due course.

Letter dated 28 March 2019 from Kit Malthouse, Minister of State for Housing, to the Chair

Public Appointments: Engagement with the Committee

I am writing to apologise that we did not consult you on the proposed selection processes for the Housing Ombudsman and the Chair of the Regulator of Social Housing before the recruitment campaigns began, and to assure you that measures have been taken to ensure this does not happen again. This letter provides updates on progress with both recruitment campaigns and sets out next steps, including the provisional timings for pre-appointment hearings with the Select Committee, as discussed with the Clerks to your Committee.

The Department has made a number of changes in personnel over the last year, both in the Public Appointments, ensuring that our processes and appointments are compliant with
the Governance Code. The Department is also ensuring that our Public Appointments Team has the expertise and capacity to deliver the pipeline of appointments needed over the coming years.

As officials seek to progress these campaigns, I will also ensure that regular updates are provided to the Clerks of your committee. The latest position is summarised below, and fuller descriptions of progress and timetables are set out in the attached annexes:

**The Housing Ombudsman**

- After a short extension, the application stage of the recruitment process for a new Housing Ombudsman closed on 7 February. The Department received 19 applications.
- The recruitment is currently in the selection stage, with interviews provisionally scheduled for 11 April. Five candidates have been shortlisted for interview.
- A decision on appointable candidates is expected following the Easter Recess. Once a decision has been taken officials will consult the Cabinet Office and other stakeholders on the appointment.
- With the assistance of the Clerks officials have provisionally scheduled the pre-appointment scrutiny hearing of the Committee for 24 June.

**The Chair of the Regulator of Social Housing**

- The application stage of the recruitment process for a new Chair of the Regulator of Social Housing closed on 3 March. The Department received 10 applications.
- The recruitment is currently in the selection stage.
- With the assistance of the Clerks officials have provisionally scheduled a pre-appointment scrutiny hearing of the Committee for 15 July.

Officials will keep the Clerks advised of progress towards these key milestones.

The updates above touched on the pre-appointment scrutiny hearings. The Applicant Packs for both campaigns advised candidates of the possibility of a pre-appointment hearing with the Committee. This was stated clearly in the Packs and officials have repeated the advice in the letters that have issued to the shortlisted candidates for the Housing Ombudsman role. Officials have also offered to brief and support the preferred candidate before they attend the hearing. Officials will also ensure that our communications to those shortlisted for the Chair of the Regulator of Social Housing make clear that the preferred candidate will need to attend a pre-appointment hearing with the Committee, and officials will also offer the preferred candidate briefing and support.

I hope you find this letter useful. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with any further questions.
Letter dated 26 June 2019 from Rt Hon James Brokenshire, Secretary of State, to the Chair

The Housing Ombudsman: Pre-Appointment Hearing

I am writing to inform you that my Department recently concluded a recruitment campaign for a permanent Housing Ombudsman. Upon the consideration of the Assessment Panel’s recommendations, I have selected Richard Blakeway as my preferred candidate for the role.

The Housing Ombudsman is responsible for resolving complaints by tenants, leaseholders and other individuals against social landlords, as well as supporting effective landlord and tenant dispute resolution. Richard’s policy knowledge and understanding of the context in which the Housing Ombudsman will operate within was the strongest of the appointable candidates. He demonstrates strong commitment to the importance as Housing Ombudsman, of improving redress in response to the issues raised by Grenfell, the Social Housing Green Paper and the Hackitt Review.

In line with Cabinet Office guidance to Departments, the Housing Ombudsman role is subject to a pre-appointment hearing. A hearing date has been scheduled by officials for 1 July 2018. As the necessary approvals have now been received I can confirm Richard’s attendance at the hearing.

As stipulated in the Cabinet Office guidance, information in relation to Richard and the wider campaign will be provided to the Clerk by my officials.
Annex C: Housing Ombudsman recruitment timeline

1. The last permanent Housing Ombudsman, Denise Fowler, resigned from the role in June 2017. The Department ran a campaign for a new Ombudsman in summer 2017 but it generated a limited field of applicants.

2. David Connolly, who was on secondment from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, was appointed as the interim Housing Ombudsman on 5 June 2017, initially on a six-month contract which was subsequently extended to end August 2018.

3. A further campaign was launched in January 2018 with a revised job specification to take account of the increasing profile of social housing issues and work on the Green Paper. This campaign attracted a stronger calibre of applicant and the Assessment Panel recommended an appointable candidate to the then Secretary of State for his decision in April 2018. However, in May 2018, following a Cabinet reshuffle the new Secretary of State, decided not to appoint the candidate. The Secretary of State wrote to you and the Commissioner for Public Appointments on 4 July 2018, to explain that he did not consider any of the shortlisted candidates would sufficiently fulfil the role and he wanted to refresh the specification to take account of his priorities for social housing. Given the significance of the role, the Secretary of State additionally requested an executive search agency be engaged during a re-run of a permanent Housing Ombudsman campaign.

4. With the approval of the Minister for Implementation at the Cabinet Office, Andrea Keeney, the then Director of Finance and Corporate Performance at the Housing Ombudsman Service, was appointed to act as an interim Housing Ombudsman from 31 August 2018. Her term expires on 31 August 2019.

5. The latest campaign was launched on 4 January 2019 and a copy of the Candidate Information Pack which provides the background to this campaign and details of the role and recruitment process is enclosed with this letter.

6. The main difference between this and the previous pack sent to you in December 2017 is a greater emphasis on social housing. The selection criteria are the same, but the introductory section focusses on greater redress for social housing tenants and includes links to the published Dame Hackitt Review, the summary of the ‘Strengthening consumer redress in housing’ consultation and the Social Housing Green Paper ‘A New Deal for Social Housing’. The role also includes ‘ensuring effective relationships with Government Ministers and with Parliament in carrying out the independent role of the Housing Ombudsman’ and ‘ensuring overarching targets and milestones are progressed and achieved’.

7. Further, the format of the candidate pack has changed stylistically from a word document to a slide pack. The Nolan Principles are set out in the candidate pack, with annexes for completion (along with a new Privacy Notice as required by the Data Protection Act/GDPR) are separate documents. The new candidate pack also includes a section on the key responsibilities of public sector non-executives generally and incorporates more detailed information on conflicts of interest and due diligence following updated Cabinet Office guidance.
8. In light of the historical, unsuccessful Housing Ombudsman recruitment campaigns, and at my request, an executive search agency, Moloney Search was engaged to ensure a diverse and strong candidate field. Moloney Search generated candidates via active headhunting and word of mouth as the search progressed. They reached out to over 300 individuals.

9. In addition, the post was advertised on the Cabinet Office public appointments website, on Non-Executive Director recruitment websites (NED on Board and Women on Boards) and was circulated via stakeholder networks and social media. Officials also contacted various diversity networks to encourage a diverse applicant field, including Civil Service Race Forum and the Equality and Diversity Forum.

10. The key milestones for the remainder of the campaign are set out below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage/Activity</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>11 April 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panel recommendations on appointable candidates considered and decision on preferred candidate</td>
<td>23 April 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO complete consideration of preferred candidate</td>
<td>23 May 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-appointment scrutiny hearing</td>
<td>24 June 2019</td>
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</tbody>
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The Housing Ombudsman

The Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is seeking to appoint a proven senior leader as Housing Ombudsman. MHCLG performs a critical role in delivering the Government’s housing agenda, and this is an exciting opportunity for the post holder to be part of that agenda and make a pivotal impact on the social housing landscape.

The Housing Ombudsman delivers an essential service in providing redress for social housing residents, both tenants and leaseholders, and for private tenants where their landlords have chosen to join the scheme. The Housing Ombudsman has a critical role to play in delivering an independent, fair and impartial service, improving complaint handling throughout the process, and in supporting and advising tenants, landlords, and designated persons to achieve quicker and more effective dispute resolution locally.

This is a significant period for housing with the publication of the Social Housing Green Paper, Dame Judith Hackitt’s Review on Building Regulations and the Public Inquiry into the Grenfell Fire. Delivering effective redress has been identified as a key issue by social housing residents and is one of the main challenges the Government is taking forward through the Social Housing Green Paper. The Housing Ombudsman plays a key role in ensuring that tenants and leaseholders are able to have quick, appropriate and effective redress.

The Housing Ombudsman must be able to provide high quality senior leadership to the Housing Ombudsman Service. They must ensure that the Housing Ombudsman Service provides:

- An excellent quality of service;
- Lead the organisation in the formation and delivery of its strategy and business plan in line with the Housing Ombudsman Scheme;
- Ensure that robust and effective governance arrangements are in place.

About MHCLG

MHCLG is responsible for the delivery of Government policy relating to housing, planning and building, local growth, local government, integration and community cohesion. Our job is to create great places to live and work right across the country.

More information about the work of the department can be found in the Annual Report, the Single Departmental Plan and on our website.

"Thank you for your interest in this role. This is an exciting opportunity to impart your knowledge and have pivotal impact on social housing."
The Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman (THO) is a prominent, senior figure in housing, often dealing with sensitive and challenging issues. As well as being skilled in complex decision making, the post requires an individual who is resilient, and can command public confidence and the respect of tenants, leaseholders and landlords.

This is a critical time for reviewing how wider consumer redress is delivered across all forms of housing, whether for social housing residents, for private renters, or for home owners. The Government has consulted on how to strengthen redress when things go wrong with people’s housing across all tenures in our ‘Strengthening consumer redress in the housing market’. This included exploring the option of whether access to redress across housing could simplified. We are seeking a candidate keen to lead the organisation through this period and contribute to this exciting reform agenda. The post is offered on a three year basis to reflect that this is a senior, transitional leadership role.

MHCLG is at the heart of the Prime Minister’s objective of making the UK a country that works for everyone. THO is one of the Department’s 11 Arm’s Length Bodies which deliver key areas of our agenda on the ground. THO has 54 staff (all based in London) and running costs of £5.2 million.

THO has responsibility for investigating complaints against social landlords in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman Scheme. In 2015-16 there were 3.9 million households living in social housing. Housing is an important part of everyone’s lives and issues relating to our homes can have a huge emotional impact. THO acts independently to ensure the fair resolution of disputes, aiming to resolve problems quickly and efficiently.

Rented housing plays a vital role in the nation’s housing and we expect tenants to experience good standards of service regardless of whether their landlord is a local authority, housing association or private landlord. The Housing White Paper Fixing Our Broken Housing Market makes clear the Government’s ambitions to make renting fairer for tenants and THO has a vital role to play in making this happen.

Following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the importance of providing redress to social housing has been underlined. The Social Housing Green Paper, A New Deal for Social Housing, seeks to rebalance the relationships between landlord and tenant, address stigma and ensures social housing can be both a safety net for those who need help with their housing and a base for people to meet their aspirations on ownership. Ensuring that complaints can be made easily and resolved quickly when things go wrong and that people have access to effective redress will be key issues to address and in which THO has a key role. The consultation closed on 6 November and we are currently analysing responses. The Housing Ombudsman’s responses to the consultation can be found on their website.

The Housing Ombudsman Service is also currently consulted on their draft 2019-2022 corporate plan and supporting plan for the first year. The Ombudsman’s plans have been developed based on the themes of increased accessibility, hearing the resident voice, fast and effective redress and greater transparency that emerged from the social housing green paper.
About the role

Key responsibilities of public sector Non-Executives

Information about the role of Non-Executives in Government departments is provided in the Corporate governance in central government departments: code of good practice and guidance. NEDs are expected to contribute to the work of Departments in the following areas:

- Independence: provide an independent perspective and assurance, including advice to the Permanent Secretary, on the capability of the Department. Provide independent support, guidance and challenge on the progress and implementation of the business plan;

- Strategy: constructively challenge and contribute to the development of strategy and business planning, including the setting and development of key objectives and targets;

- Performance: scrutinise the performance of the organisation in meeting agreed goals and objectives, and monitor the reporting of performance, including financial targets;

- People: develop and encourage appropriate behaviours to maintain or improve the departmental people strategy, including ethical and directional issues such as diversity and senior jobholder moves;

- Governance: satisfy themselves that governance, internal control and risk management systems are effective and capable of delivering relevant, accurate and timely management and financial information to the Board;

- Support: the Board in developing skills and tools to help it engage with strategic issues in ways which have practical resonance;

- Connect: the Board to people and organisations who can provide different perspectives, opinions and expertise which will assist in furthering the business of the Department; and

- Specialist Responsibility: underpin, support and specialise in one or more areas of work, supplementing skills and experience already in place across Human Resources, Digital, Finance, Operations, Commercial, Risk and Policy.
About the role

The Housing Ombudsman Service and the Housing Ombudsman Scheme

The role of the Housing Ombudsman is to resolve disputes involving members of the Scheme, including making awards of compensation or other remedies when appropriate, and supporting effective landlord-tenant dispute resolution by others. The Housing Ombudsman provides an independent, fair and impartial service and aims to achieve improvement in complaint handling in the sector throughout the process, supporting and advising landlords, tenants and designated persons to achieve more effective dispute resolution within their local procedures.

The Housing Ombudsman Scheme is approved by the Secretary of State under Section 51 of and Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1996. Membership of the Scheme is compulsory for social landlords (primarily housing associations who are or have been registered with the social housing regulator) and local authority landlords. Additionally, a number of private landlords are voluntary members. The Localism Act 2011 also gave 'designated persons' a role in dealing with disputes between members of the Scheme and their residents, and in referring complaints that have not been resolved through the landlord’s procedures to the Housing Ombudsman.

The purpose of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme is to enable tenants and other individuals to have complaints about members investigated by the Housing Ombudsman. The Scheme came into effect on 1 April 2013 and replaced the Independent Housing Ombudsman Scheme that had been in operation since 1996.

The Housing Ombudsman Scheme is financed entirely on a membership subscription basis.

Further information on the work of the Housing Ombudsman can be found at:
http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/
About the role

The role of the Housing Ombudsman is complex and challenging. At the highest level, the Housing Ombudsman's role is to:

- Ensure high quality services to residents and landlords using the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, and that all enquiries and complaints are dealt with appropriate consideration, fairness and to agreed timelines;
- Ensure that the organisation provides an excellent quality of service;
- Lead the organisation in the formulation and delivery of its strategy and business plan and in line with the Housing Ombudsman Scheme; and
- Ensure that strong governance is in place that meets best practice and government requirements;
- Ensure effective relationships with Government Ministers and with Parliament in carrying out the independent role of Housing Ombudsman;
- Act as a high profile advocate for independent complaints handling;
- Ensuring overarching targets and milestones are progressed and achieved.

Other responsibilities of the Ombudsman include:

- Leading the senior team in the execution of Housing Ombudsman Services' corporate objectives, taking advice from the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee and the Panel of Advisors.
- Developing the annual budget and subscription rate in partnership with MHCLG.
- Being the ambassador for Housing Ombudsman Services, influencing and networking with key decision makers and stakeholders.
- Working collaboratively with landlords, MHCLG, tenant and leaseholder representative organisations and other stakeholders.
- Holding the senior team to account for the effective use of public funds and driving value for money.
- Ensuring that Housing Ombudsman Services' affairs are conducted with probity, and that high standards of corporate governance are observed at all times.
- Ensuring that the Service operates within the limits of its statutory authority and in accordance with the authority delegated from its sponsoring Department (MHCLG) and with guidance issued by it (embodied in the Framework Agreement, Accounting Officer delegation letter, and annual budget delegation letter).
- Fulfilling Accounting Officer responsibilities by ensuring public funds and assets are utilised effectively and that high standards of financial administration are adhered to in line with Managing Public Money and the Cabinet Office spending controls guidance and avoiding conflicts of interest.
- Acting in accordance with the seven principles of public life.
Person Specification

Essential criteria and experience for this role

- Evidence of strong strategic leadership skills with the ability to lead an organisation of a similar size and complexity of Housing Ombudsman Services.
- The ability to deliver organisational change and a proven ability to deliver and work with a number of stakeholders.
- Evidence of delivering a quality service and the ability to work with senior partners in the housing sector as well as across Government.
- An understanding of the decision-making process in Government.
- A proven understanding of the housing sector.
- Ability to think creatively and solve problems in a high level, challenging environment.
- Excellent communication skills, including being able to present issues clearly and confidently to Ministers and Parliament, and to deal effectively with the media.

Desirable criteria and experience for this role

- A track record of ensuring effective governance in the management of organisations.
- Experience of working within the housing sector or other related service.
- Experience of complex casework and / or complaint handling.

To be successful in this role you will use your experience of:

- Leading an organisation strategically
- Strong stakeholder engagement
- Strong knowledge of decision-making process in Government

This is a full-time post and as this is a statutory office appointment you will not be an employee of the Crown or the Housing Ombudsman Service. The preferred candidate, selected by the Secretary of State, will be required to appear before a Parliamentary Select Committee as part of the appointment process.

If you wish to discuss this role in more detail please contact Moloney Search via housing@moloneysearch.com
Outline Terms and Conditions

Remuneration:
For this full time role, the remuneration is up to £120,000 per annum.

Expenses and Subsistence:
You will be entitled to reimbursement of reasonable travel and subsistence costs at the same rate as members of Corporation staff.

Period of appointment:
Appointments will be made by Ministers, for a fixed initial period of up to 3 years. Appointments may be extended, subject to Ministerial approval.

Location:
The post is located in London, with travel around England as appropriate.

Eligibility: These posts are 'non-reserved' and are open to UK Nationals, British Nationals (Overseas), British Protected Persons, Commonwealth Citizens, EEA Nationals of other member states and certain non-EEA family members and Swiss nationals under the Swiss EU agreement. There must be no employment restriction or time limit on your permitted stay in the UK. You should normally have been resident in the United Kingdom for five years preceding your application.

Diversity: MHCLG is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and that all our systems and processes are fair, open and objective. We endeavour to promote this approach in those with whom we come into contact. We are responsible for ensuring that the highest principles of equal opportunities policy are put into effect.

As an equal opportunities employer we make no distinction between people on grounds of their race, ethnic or national origin, age, religion or belief, sex, marital status, disability, part-time status or sexual orientation.

We would particularly welcome applications from diverse individuals / individuals from different backgrounds.

Conflicts of interest: Candidates must note the requirement to declare any interests they may have that might cause questions to be raised about their approach to the business of the Department or the Housing Ombudsman Service. These include any relevant business interests, share holdings, positions of authority, retainers, consultancy arrangements or other connections with commercial, public or voluntary bodies, both for themselves and for their spouses/partners.

If you have any interests which might be relevant to the work of the or the Housing Ombudsman Service, and which could lead to a real or perceived conflict of interest if you were to be appointed, please provide details in your supporting letter and the standard form at Annex C.

If appointed, you will be expected to act in accordance with the Cabinet Office Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies.
Annex E: Candidate’s CV and questionnaire

Candidate’s CV

Chair, BexleyCo Ltd, London Borough of Bexley (2017- current)

- LB Bexley’s housing company was set up two years ago. To deliver its business plan the company has agreed a £120m funding facility with the council, an initial tranche of sites for 500 homes (primarily through direct delivery) and is identifying a pipeline for a further 2,000 homes.

Non-executive Director, Homes England (2017- current)

- Member of the main board during a period of significant growth and change at the agency.

Director, Tudor Blakeway Consultants Ltd (2016- current)

- Providing strategic advice to the senior leadership of a range of organisations, including EcoWorld London and Jones Lang LaSalle.

Policy Adviser, No10 Policy Unit, 10 Downing Street (2016)

- Adviser on planning and devolution until EU Referendum.

Trustee, Chartered Institute of Housing (2011–16)

- Member of the Institute’s first governing board.

Deputy Mayor for Housing, Land and Property, Greater London Authority (2008–16) and Chair of Homes for London (2012–16)

- Led the Mayor of London’s housing and land initiatives, with the Localism Act devolving funding and land assets to the Greater London Authority.

- Outcomes included the first statutory housing strategy for the GLA, funding programmes (primarily for affordable housing) and a major land plan across 630 hectares including large-scale regeneration at Greenwich Peninsula and the Royal Docks.

- Other initiatives included designating thirty Housing Zones supported by £600m of capital funding, the introduction of the London Rental Standard and new commissioning responsibilities for rough sleeping with schemes like No Second Night Out and the first homelessness Social Impact Bond.
Candidate’s pre-appointment hearing questionnaire

Motivation

What motivated you to apply for this role, and what specific experiences would you bring to it?

There is an increasing focus on consumer redress. This is an exciting opportunity to support consumer redress during an important period of significant policy development, build on the substantial improvements of the Ombudsman to date and deliver an ambitious new corporate plan. I have significant experience of housing policy and of developing and implementing a strategic vision for a major organisation.

If appointed are there specific areas within your new responsibilities where you will need to acquire new skills or knowledge?

Whilst I have much experience and knowledge to bring to the Ombudsman, I would expect accounting officer training.

How were you recruited? Were you encouraged to apply, and if so, by whom?

The position was publicly advertised. I was shortlisted and recommended following a panel interview including an independent assessor.

Personal Background

Do you currently or potentially have any business, financial or other non-pecuniary interests or commitments, that might give rise to the perception of a conflict of interest if you are appointed? How do you intend to resolve any potential conflicts of interests if you are appointed?

The Ministry consider my non-executive role with Homes England as a conflict of interest, therefore I will step down from the board were I appointed. In addition, if appointed, I would resign as chair of BexleyCo Ltd, as well as my commercial interests through my consultancy.

If appointed what professional or voluntary work commitments will you continue to undertake, or do you intend to take on, alongside your new role? How will you reconcile these with your new role?

None at present.

Have you ever held any post or undertaken any activity that might cast doubt on your political impartiality? If so how will you demonstrate your political impartiality in the role if appointed?

I am not politically active in any party. Whilst I was an adviser in the No10 Policy Unit and Mayoral appointee at the Greater London Authority, both posts had political restrictions.

Do you intend to serve your full term of office? [if appropriate] Do you intend to seek re-appointment?

Yes.
The Housing Ombudsman

If appointed what will be your main priorities on taking up the role?

The Ombudsman has delivered substantial service improvements notwithstanding increasing demand, for which its staff deserve considerable credit. The Ombudsman has published an exciting and ambitious corporate plan which must be delivered. Priorities include faster and effective redress, promoting positive change in the sector and increased transparency.

What criteria should the Committee use to judge the Housing Ombudsman performance over your term of office?

The four strategic objectives set out in the Ombudsman's corporate plan: delivering a fair and impartial service, resolving complaints at the earliest opportunity; promoting positive change in the sector; providing a service that is professional, accessible and simple to use; and ensuring the service is open and transparent.

How will you protect and enhance your personal independence and the institutional independence of the Housing Ombudsman from the Government/Ministers?

It is critical for the Ombudsman to be fair and impartial. It has a newly formed Panel of Advisors which will play an important role in overseeing the development of the service.

How do you assess the public profile and reputation of the Housing Ombudsman?

The Ombudsman has continued to deliver substantial service improvements. When asked 91% of customers said the Ombudsman had treated them well and 75% that it had helped resolve their case, which is a testament to the hard work of its staff. The corporate plan identifies areas for continued improvement and awareness of the service could be raised.

What risks do you think the Housing Ombudsman will face over your term of office? How do you intend to manage them?

Demand for its services continues to grow which will put pressure on its resources and performance. Therefore it is important the Ombudsman supports local resolution by landlords as well as reviewing its systems to ensure the service can meet expectations.
Annex F: Information on the candidate and the recruitment campaign put forward by the Secretary of State

Pre-Appointment Scrutiny Hearing

Date: 1 July 2019

Role: The Housing Ombudsman

Information about the preferred candidate

Following a recruitment campaign, the Secretary of State has selected Richard Blakeway as his preferred candidate for the role of the Housing Ombudsman.

The following information on the candidate is attached:

- Annex A: A redacted CV
- Annex B: Declaration of relevant interests
- Annex C: Declaration of political activity
- Annex D: Proposed terms of appointment and remuneration
- Annex E: Proforma

Declarations:

Richard Blakeway did not consider himself to have a real or perceived conflict of interest in relation to the Housing Ombudsman role upon application.

He is currently Chair, BexleyCo Ltd; Director, Tudor Blakeway Consultants Ltd and Board Member, Homes England.

- He is now aware of the risk of an actual, perceived or potential conflict of interest between these 3 roles and the role of THO, and has advised that if successful, he would be willing to resign from these roles.
- Officials are content to proceed with the appointment of Richard Blakeway on the basis that he resigns from all three roles.

Annex D

Proposed terms / remuneration:

- The Housing Ombudsman is a full time role. The remuneration for the role is £120,000 per annum
- The period of appointment is for a fixed initial period of up to 3 years
- The post is located in London, with travel around England as appropriate / required
Annex E

Proforma:

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<th>Campaign Launch Date</th>
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<td>Reason for any changes in timetable to that originally published</td>
<td>Original closing date 04/02/2019 – kept open to encourage further applications.</td>
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<td>Advertising strategy</td>
<td>The Secretary of State agreed that an executive search agency should support the appointment. Moloney Search were appointed to ensure we developed and attracted a diverse and strong candidate field. The role was advertised on the Cabinet Office Public Appointments website. Listed below are the additional channels via which we shared the advert: Women on Boards Government Equalities Office KPMG Connect on Board In Touch Networks NEDonBoard Public Chair Forum Environment Agency Women’s Network Chartered Institute of Housing Lime Legal – Housing Law Week Campbell Tickell Newsletter Diversity in Public Appointments Ombudsman Association Fortnightly Cabinet Office Public Appointments Newsletter LinkedIn Stonewall MummyJobs</td>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Senior Independent Panel Member: Amderdeep Somal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Other: Andy Hobart, Commercial Director, MHCLG</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of applicants</td>
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<td>Number of candidates found appointable</td>
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**Diversity Data:**

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<th>% Female</th>
<th>% identify another way</th>
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<td>&lt;5</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>(applicants invited to interview)</td>
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**Disability**

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\(^{13}\) Statistical disclosure control – where there are fewer than 5 candidates in any category, diversity data must not be shared as this potentially identifiable.
Draft Report (Appointment of Housing Ombudsman) proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 14 read and agreed to.

Six papers were appended to the Report.

Resolved, That the Report be the Sixteenth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

[Adjourned until Monday 8 July at 3.30 p.m.]
Witness

The following witnesses gave evidence. Transcripts can be viewed on the inquiry publications page of the Committee’s website.

Monday 1 July 2019

Richard Blakeway, The Government’s preferred candidate for Housing Ombudsman
List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the publications page of the Committee’s website. The reference number of the Government’s response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2017–19

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<td>First Report</td>
<td>Effectiveness of local authority overview and scrutiny committees</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>(Cm 9569)</td>
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<td>Second Report</td>
<td>Housing for older people</td>
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