

HOUSE OF LORDS APPOINTMENTS COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE 40TH MEETING HELD ON 4TH OCTOBER 2006

Present: Lord Stevenson (Chairman)
Lord Hurd
Lord Dholakia
Mrs Felicity Huston

Mr Jim Barron – Secretariat
Ms Geraldine Alexander – Secretariat
Mrs Paula Adshead – Secretariat
Ms Louise Blundell – Secretariat
Ms Maggie O’Boyle – Media Adviser
Mr Peter Fish – Treasury Solicitors
[REDACTED] – Treasury Solicitors

Apologies

1. There were apologies from Baroness Dean and Ms Sarkis.

Minutes

2. The minutes of the meeting of 7 June 2006 were agreed.

Chairman’s update

3. The Chairman had met, and subsequently written to, the Leader of the House regarding the Commission members’ terms of appointment and the further reform of the Lords. The Chairman had not yet had a reply to his letter, but would circulate it once one was received.
4. The Public Administration Select Committee had published an interim report on its Propriety and Honours inquiry in July. There were a number of recommendations that were relevant to the Commission’s work, which would be considered later in the meeting. It was understood that the government was not planning to respond to the interim report but was awaiting the full report which was due towards the end of the year.
5. The Chairman had met Lord Laidlaw, who had confirmed that he was not currently resident in the UK for tax purposes. Lord Laidlaw indicated that it was likely to be some time before he would be able to be tax resident. The Commission agreed that it needed to clarify the position with HMRC; it could then come to a decision on how to proceed with the matter. In the meantime the Chairman would write to Lord Laidlaw outlining the Commission’s understanding of his residency position.

Freedom of Information

6. The Secretariat was currently dealing with three Freedom of Information requests in relation to its vetting of party-political nominees. The Commission's legal adviser, Peter Fish, outlined

Mr Fish also outlined

7. The Commission agreed that the foundation of its vetting work was confidentiality. There was an expectation among nominees, political parties and vetting agencies that the Commission carries out its enquiries – and, by extension, holds information - confidentially. While the Commission wished to be as open as possible about its processes - and has released a significant amount of information on its website and annual report - it believed that personal information about individuals' vetting records should remain confidential.

Financial report

8. The Commission noted the financial report for the year 2005/06.

Scrutiny process

9. The Commission considered the paper on proposed changes to the scrutiny process.
10. The Commission would consult with the main political parties on any changes to its vetting process. It agreed that it would not extend its consultation to other bodies.
11. The changes to the scrutiny process would be published on the Commission's website once the review was completed. It was likely that this would not be until after the police enquiry was complete.

Nominees

12. It was agreed that the Commission would seek to recommend between three and six individuals to the Prime Minister towards the end of the year. It would also look to recommend a similar number in the early months of 2007.
13. The Commission considered the circulated lists of nominees. Further details of nominees would be circulated for consideration for both interview and appointment.
14. A number of individual nominees were considered. (The Chairman declared a close friendship with one nominee, [REDACTED], and therefore asked to step aside from any consideration of his nomination. Jim Barron declared that he worked closely with another nominee, [REDACTED], and asked to step aside from any involvement with her nomination.) It was agreed that [REDACTED]

█'s nomination should be considered by a sub-committee of the Commission.

15. It was agreed that the Commission should remain alert to nominees who are in mid-career, as well as those who have reached the top of their chosen field or have recently retired. The Commission had already appointed some individuals who it regarded as being in mid-career, but it was keen to encourage more nominations from people at this stage in their lives.

Commission Secretariat
October 2006