

HOUSE OF LORDS APPOINTMENTS COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THE 47TH MEETING HELD ON 7TH FEBRUARY 2008

Present: Lord Stevenson (Chairman)
Baroness Dean
Lord Dholakia
Lord Hurd
Mrs Felicity Huston (by telephone)

Ms Geraldine Alexander - Secretariat
Mr Jim Barron - Secretariat
Mrs Paula Adshead - Secretariat
[REDACTED] - Secretariat

Apologies

1. There were apologies from Ms Angela Sarkis.

Minutes

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 10th December 2007 were agreed.

Chairman's update

3. The Prime Minister had invited the Commission to recommend three names; a letter would be sent to Number 10 in the next day or two.
4. The Chairman had spoken to Sir Gus O'Donnell's office regarding the end of the Commission's term. It was not possible to confirm formally the position on the appointment of a new Commission until the Government had responded to the PASC report. The response should be published by the end of February. The Chairman had been led to believe, however, that the Government intended to advertise the vacancies for independent members shortly after this.
5. The Chairman had intended to speak to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] referees, but it was agreed that as they were unlikely to be appointed this was no longer necessary. He had spoken to [REDACTED] about another nominee, [REDACTED]; she had suggested he speak to [REDACTED]. The Chairman also mentioned that there had been some negative feedback on [REDACTED] from the vetting authorities which the Commission would need to consider if it was minded to recommend him.
6. It had emerged that one of the Commission's nominees, Lord Kamlesh Patel, had decided to join the Labour Party benches. The Commission was disappointed to hear this news and it recalled that he had given his assurance at the time of nomination that he was - and would remain - politically independent. It was agreed that the Chairman would speak to Lord Patel to try to understand his

reasons for joining the Labour Party benches. It was agreed that in future the need to be party politically independent would be given even more emphasis in interviews with nominees.

Data Protection

7. The Commission considered the paper on data handling, and invited the secretariat to discuss the matter with Members individually and develop a draft protocol on the transmission and storage of personal information by the Commission.

Lord Hameed

8. Lord Hameed had met the Secretary to the Commission to discuss the allegations in The Times. It was noted that Lord Hameed was not aware of the donations to the Liberal Democrats and that he played no role in the decision to make them. The Commission agreed that there was no substance to the allegations; first, Lord Hameed was not a director of the company which made the political donations (he was a director of a subsidiary company that would have had no influence over the donation) and further his peerage was not a party-political peerage but a non-party-political one. The making of a donation to political parties was not the way to get a non-party-political peerage. The Commission confirmed that Lord Hameed's nomination followed the correct process and that all its decisions were collective.

Vetting

9. The Commission had received a party-political name for vetting, recommended by Mr David Cameron. It was currently carrying out its standard checks.
10. It was suggested that the Secretariat may wish to make enquiries with Number 10 to see if a list of party-political names was planned in the near future. It may be that any minor parties represented on the list may need a briefing on the Commission's vetting process.

End of terms

11. This item was covered in the Chairman's update.

Future work

12. The Commission considered the paper on prioritising nominees. It was agreed that given the Commission had only 5 months until the end of its term, it should not aim to be interviewing many more nominees. It was noted that recently there had been a number of outstanding interviewees and it was likely that they would take the limited places available in the next list(s). The Chairman would review the nominees remaining and circulate his thoughts on individuals, as well as the number and timings of future lists, for consideration by the Commission.