

HOUSE OF LORDS APPOINTMENTS COMMISSION

MINUTES OF COMMISSION MEETING

Wednesday 10 October 2018 at the House of Lords, London

Commissioners present:

Lord Kakkar (Chairman), Baroness Browning, Lord Clark of Windermere, Baroness Scott of Needham Market, Lord Low of Dalston, Professor Gillian Peele.

Honours and Appointments Secretariat:

Helen Ewen, Alison Bennett.

Press officer:

Maggie O'Boyle.

Apologies

1. Sir Malcolm Ross gave his apologies.

Introduction of the new chair

2. The Chair introduced the proposed chair-elect, Lord Bew. It was hoped he would start in post from 1 November. He had a distinguished record of public service, most recently as the outgoing chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. Lord Bew thanked Commissioners for their welcome and spoke of his ambition to ensure that HOLAC retained its reputation for integrity in the exercise of its duties.

3. The Chair paid tribute to the three outgoing independent members of the Commission - Lord Low, Professor Peele and Sir Malcolm - all of whom were reaching the end of their terms of appointment. A timetable for the recruitment of new members via a public appointments process would be announced once the new chair had been confirmed by the Prime Minister.

Minutes of the last meeting - HOLAC(18)(2)(1st)

4. The Commission approved the minutes for publication.

Chairman's update

5. The Chair recounted the Commission's work over the last year, including vetting of the political list and the announcement of three new crossbench peers, all of whom had been introduced to the Lords. They had already become involved in the work of the House; their commitment and active contribution reflected well on the appointment process.

6. The Chair spoke about recent debates in the House about the process for appointing hereditary peers. The Grocott Bill had an amendment suggesting that HOLAC should be placed on a statutory footing and adopt a role in vetting hereditary peerage applicants. Neither

hereditary peers nor the Lords Spiritual were currently vetted prior to appointment to the House. However, unless the Grocott Bill were to pass, HOLAC had no vires to adopt a wider vetting role. HOLAC reported to the Prime Minister, who had no role in elections of new hereditary peers. It was unclear who would have authority to commission such checks. There were also practical questions of at what stage vetting would be carried out and how/to whom the results would be reported.

7. The Commission had a new website, which Commissioners agreed was a vast improvement. The Secretariat was thanked for its work.

8. Commissioners discussed the Lord Speaker's Committee's ("Burns report") recommendations on reducing the size of the House of Lords. Baroness Browning declared an interest, as a member of the Lord Speaker's Committee. The Chair noted that, were Burns' "two out for every one in" recommendation adopted, the Commission's scope for new appointments over the remainder of the Parliament would be greatly reduced. Commissioners agreed that the June 2018 crossbench peers should be accounted for in the last Parliament, as should the May 2018 political list. Both had been announced later than originally intended as a result of the snap election in June 2017. Three of the Prime Minister's exceptional appointments for public service should also fall under the previous Parliament. All further HOLAC recommendations, any new political lists and two of the public service peerages already announced should be allocated to the current Parliament. Commissioners were content for the Commission to adopt the role of keeping track of numbers.

9. Commissioners discussed the recommendation that HOLAC should take responsibility for ensuring that all new peers, via whichever route appointed, understood their responsibilities to the House. Commissioners raised logistical considerations about how this might work in practice. Commitment and active contribution to the work of the House was a matter of suitability rather than propriety. It was therefore outside HOLAC's current remit, except in respect of crossbench applicants. The Chair would write to the Lord Speaker to explain the Commission's position.

HOLAC's future direction - HOLAC18(3)(2nd)

10. Commissioners agreed that HOLAC's two current functions remained appropriate. Despite the likely future limits on crossbench vacancies, Commissioners thought it right that the application process remained open. Further thought should be given by the new Commissioners to how HOLAC ensured that it attracted and fairly assessed a broad range of applicants. The forthcoming further report by Burns would provide useful context for such discussions.

Nominations - HOLAC18(3)(3rd)

11. The Commission carried out its assessment duties.

Communications update

12. The press officer noted the new website and the smooth announcement of three new crossbench peers. She also noted that the Commission was due to publish a governance report and the Secretariat undertook to circulate it for comments ahead of publication.

Final thoughts

13. In conclusion, the Chair offered his thanks to Commissioners, the press officer and the Secretariat for their work during his tenure.

HOLAC Secretariat
October 2018