



William Shawcross CVO
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Julian Knight MP,
Chair, Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

By email: dcmcom@parliament.uk; *cc:* McGinnessS@parliament.uk

Dear Mr Knight

Thank you again for your invitation to meet with your Committee on Tuesday. I would like to give you more detail on some of the matters we discussed.

My office began its investigation into the recent Charity Commission Chair competition on 21 December 2021, with relevant completed paperwork received from DCMS officials on 7 January 2022. My powers of investigation, and their purpose, are set out in the Order in Council 2019 which sets out my remit.¹

As Commissioner for Public Appointments, I share your disappointment about recent events and that your time was wasted. This appointment failed when allegations about the successful candidate, Martin Thomas, came to light in the media. Mr Thomas resigned days later and has apologised for his error in not informing the Panel of these issues. I would like to reassure the Committee that I have not prejudged the actions of the DCMS in this incident. I have not yet looked at the paperwork.

In my evidence I wanted also to provide some wider context of appointments carried out by DCMS. I was referring to what my office has learned of the department's performance more broadly through our recent audit work, looking at appointments and reappointments made under the Government's Code in the last year. We believe that overall, the Department has done well and has good processes and practices.

I note your questions to DCMS' Permanent Secretary Sarah Healey, following my evidence session, about the practices that you feel should be introduced to avoid such an incident happening again. My review will consider these matters and I will keep in touch with you and publish our findings.

Lastly, I would also like to reiterate my agreement with your committee that pre-briefing on potential appointees in the media is quite unacceptable and very detrimental to

¹<https://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Public-Appointments-No.-2-Order-in-Council-2019.pdf>



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wider public perception that there is a fair and open process for these appointments. My office will keep a watching brief on this, and I will not hesitate to speak out if it happens again.

I will be in touch with you again shortly and I would be delighted to come and speak to you any time you wish. In the meantime, I will place a copy of this letter on my website.

Best wishes,

William Shawcross
Commissioner for Public Appointments