

**The Rt Hon Baroness Gisela Stuart of Edgbastor
First Civil Service Commissioner**

G/08, 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ
E-Mail first.commissioner@csc.gov.uk



Rt. Hon. Nick Thomas-Symonds MP
Minister for the Cabinet Office
His Majesty's Paymaster General

Friday 11 July 2025

Dear Nick,

Thank you for your letter inviting the Civil Service Commission to take on a new role providing independent advice on, and scrutiny of, the application of the Business Appointment Rules (BARs) for civil servants and special advisers. I have carefully considered your proposal and today discussed it with the Board of Civil Service Commissioners.

The Board is in agreement that the proposed changes offer the Commission an important opportunity to achieve its objectives by providing oversight of departures from the civil service, in addition to its existing functions. The Commission's statutory responsibility is to ensure appointments to the civil service are made on merit on the basis of fair and open competition. Our activity seeks to ensure departments bring in the best skills and capabilities to deliver for UK citizens and the government of the day, including by encouraging greater porosity with other sectors. We are aware that the best talent can be reluctant to pursue a civil service career due to uncertainty around their exit requirements – and would welcome the opportunity to provide much needed clarity by establishing end-to-end oversight of an appointee's experience. This is to our mutual benefit.

The Commission is well established as a predictable and proportionate regulator that operates at pace. We are therefore optimally placed to deliver this change in line with the reforms and expectations you set out in your letter. Our risk-based departmental audit programme has provided assurance that Departments are meeting their statutory requirements while collaboratively driving improvements in practice. Our process to consider applications to appoint by exception to the legal requirement considers and issues clear expectations promptly and proportionately. Our strictly monitored service levels ensure a routinely swift processing of large caseloads. We would expect to use these operating models, and the learning from them, to support the delivery of any new function successfully.

The Commission's Board welcomes and approves your proposal. We agree that sensible reforms can be undertaken to deliver a system with proportionality, collaborative regulation, retrospection and robust transparency. In order to achieve this, the Board has agreed that there are three areas where we will need to reach agreement with you and your officials prior to transition taking effect in October. We must also ensure that there is no dilution to the Commission's existing responsibilities or strategic priorities.

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1. **BARs.** We appreciate your proposals for, and continued commitment to, changes to the Business Appointments Rules as set out in the Annex to your letter. These are most welcome, as would be timely publication of the revised Rules before we assume these responsibilities this autumn. This will ensure clarity of expectations for applicants and the wider system and ensure that the Commission is able promptly to deliver this new function in line with your expressed priorities.
2. **Resources.** We will work with your officials to design an organisational structure which makes effective use of resources and draws on existing systems and good practice. We anticipate that the new functions will require two teams: one fundamentally to redesign and deliver a process to provide timely advice in relation to applications, and another to deliver the new robust and timely audit function. The Commission and the Commissioners will also require the associated budget to deliver these roles effectively.
3. **Transparency.** Now that the Commission's website is to be the entry point for these applications, additional funding will be required to enable this to be brought up to the required standard. We would welcome discussion on how the development of digital functions can also be used to drive efficiencies and an improved applicant experience.

We look forward to working with your officials to implement the proposed arrangements. As you rightly indicate, these reforms will be impactful. We would suggest a published quarterly review of these arrangements over the next year, which should include our assessment of progress on the necessary cultural and structural changes and a review of our performance to date.

The Commission will publish this letter upon the announcement of the changes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gisela Stuart".

Gisela Stuart
First Civil Service Commissioner