



**The Commissioner for
Public Appointments**

Rt Hon Peter Riddell CBE
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Julian Knight MP
Chair, DCMS Committee
House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA

By email: cmscom@parliament.uk

Dear Julian,

Thank you again for your invitation for me to meet with the DCMS Committee in November. As we discussed, I have been closely monitoring the recruitment process for the new Chair of the BBC, and I note that the Government has announced its preferred candidate today.

DCMS officials have kept me informed about the process and have provided me with a copy of the Advisory Assessment Panel interview report. I have also been in contact with the Senior Independent Panel Member, Sir William Fittall. He has found no points about the conduct of the competition to report to me. It has been a well conducted and thorough process.

The Panel Report is comprehensive and detailed about the recruitment process run by DCMS. It is unfortunate that the applicant field was not particularly diverse, but DCMS have recognised this. The Panel was confident with the calibre of applicants. The recruitment process included a presentation, and a broadcast interview scenario test, and the usual interview. The candidates' potential conflicts of interest were fully explored. I am confident the Panel used the published criteria for the role to assess each candidate fairly. Five candidates were found appointable by the Panel and these names were submitted to Ministers for the final choice. The report goes into great detail about all the interviewed candidates.

The selection of the preferred candidate from amongst those judged appointable is entirely one for ministers to take and to explain. As you know, candidates for public appointments must declare significant political activity at the outset; it is not a bar but neither can it be a reason for appointment. However, as I stated to your Committee last year, it is unfortunate that apparently authoritative briefing to the media about ministers' preferred candidate appeared to pre-empt the outcome of the competition before it began. This risks undermining public confidence in the open competition under the Government's own Governance Code, which stresses the fairness and openness of the process. However, I am confident that the preferred candidate has been assessed fairly and robustly, and I commend DCMS officials for running a proper process in identifying



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appointable candidates. But my assurances now cannot undo the damage done to the Government's own processes, to the preferred candidate and other appointable candidates, and to the wider perception of the integrity of public appointments by such speculative briefing. In the future, it would be helpful if people briefing on or behalf of ministers kept their views to themselves ahead of appointment competitions.

I would be happy to discuss these issues at any stage with you and your committee, either formally or informally.

All best wishes and I look forward to being in touch.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Riddell
Commissioner for Public Appointments