

Justice Committee

Oral evidence: Pre-appointment scrutiny hearing: Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints, HC 916

Tuesday 10 December 2013

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Members present: Sir Alan Beith (Chair), Jeremy Corbyn, Mr Elfyn Llwyd, Andy McDonald, John McDonnell

Questions 1–28

Witness: **Stephen Green**, preferred candidate for Chair of the Office for Legal Complaints, gave evidence.

Q1 Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith (Chair): Mr Green, welcome. You come to us as the preferred candidate for the chair of the Office for Legal Complaints and we are glad to have you with us this morning. It is the second time in our history that we have carried out interviews for this particular post. We did so for the previous post-holder, who did two terms of office in that position. You have had a very interesting and varied career. What aspects of your previous career do you think are relevant to the role that you now propose to take up?

Stephen Green: I will pick out three things, if I may, Chair. First, while chairing a board—

Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith (Chair: I am sorry, but I have been reminded that I have failed to do one thing. I should have asked members to declare any interests they might have. I apologise.

Stephen Green: Indeed.

Andy McDonald: I should perhaps declare that I am a solicitor, and until November last year I was a partner with Thompsons.

Mr Llwyd: I was a solicitor for 16 years and I have been a member of the Bar for 16 years.

Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith (Chair: I have no such interests.

John McDonnell: Thank God I was not a solicitor.

Mr Llwyd: You just solicit!

Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith (Chair: I do apologise.

Stephen Green: I am pleased to see there is a lay majority, Chair. That does feel healthy.

Q2 Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith (Chair): You were about to tell us what aspects of your previous career are relevant.

Stephen Green: Indeed. At the heart of chairing any board is leadership. The first thing I would put forward is that most of my professional life has been as a leader of some sort or another. I started at the age of 19 as a second lieutenant in the Army. When I became a police officer, I went on to the fast-track scheme and progressed, ultimately, to become a chief constable. I believe that I have done leadership in all of its many forms and guises, and I think nothing could faze me in this role. That would be my first point.

Secondly, in my senior police role I was involved in a range of national policy issues. Most notably in the roads policing area, I was involved in the creation, development and implementation of a number of significant initiatives. So I believe that I am very well acquainted with working at the national level and delivering something real and tangible that makes a difference to people's lives.

The third thing is that when I retired from the police service I wanted to do some different things and, out of, I have to say, curiosity more than anything else, I applied to become a board member of the Legal Services Board and I have been drawn into it by inches. I have become fascinated at an intellectual level by the challenge of being an effective member on that board, but I believe that the board has made a difference in the work that it has done over the last five years. I am very proud of the things it has done, but certainly, in terms of this role, it has given me a really good understanding and insight into the legal services reform agenda of the last few years, what it is trying to achieve, and what has and perhaps has not worked so well. So I feel I would come into this role with a really good knowledge of the environment in which the legal ombudsman operates.

Q3 Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith (Chair): What is it that you are proud of that the board has done?

Stephen Green: There are a number of things. The first thing I would pick out is bringing into effect independent regulation by the front-line regulators. The old representative bodies wanted it to happen in practice but found it difficult to achieve on the ground. Because of the work the board has done, we now have lay majorities on all of the oversight boards of the regulators. We have regulation taking place independently of practice. We are policing that boundary as well. We conducted an investigation recently into one of the front-line regulators and their representative arm around our guidance rules. So I think we have really brought independent regulation into effect.

The second thing that I would highlight is that we have now created the regulatory structure for alternative business structures. They have perhaps not come into being as quickly as we would have liked, but we are now seeing innovative creative businesses establishing themselves, providing a service to people in different and hopefully more affordable ways.

The third thing I would pick out would undoubtedly be linking to what we are talking about now—the establishment of the legal ombudsman. I believe I understand now that effective redress was at the heart of setting up the Legal Services Act. I think that the ombudsman, from a standing start of not existing at all to where it is now, has done a fantastic job and again is providing a real service to the public.

Q4 Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith (Chair): But are you sure this is a real job—the job that you have applied for and for which you are the preferred candidate? You are not the ombudsman.

Stephen Green: No, but, equally, there is a need—and I think it does happen in practice—for a sort of filter through which the ombudsman's wider policy issues need to pass. To me, the most important feature of an ombudsman—particularly in the legal world, where I think there were those with a perception that it was being regulated in the interests of the profession rather than in the public interest—is independence, which is critical to their success and their commanding public confidence. If you like, the role of the Office for Legal Complaints—in effect, the board of the legal ombudsman—is to defend that independence, to work in the wider policy environment in

which it operates, and also to set a strategy, some sort of way forward, to say, “This is the way in which the service has to develop from hereon in.”

Q5 Mr Llwyd: Good morning, Mr Green. Time was when regulation was undertaken by the Law Society and the Bar Council—full stop. We now have the Law Society, the Bar Council, the Master of the Faculties, the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives, the Council for Licensed Conveyancers, the Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys, the Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys, the Association of Costs Lawyers, the Legal Services Board, the legal services ombudsman and your good self. What is your view of the overall system of services regulation established under the 2007 Act, and how could that be improved?

Stephen Green: Where does one start? The regulatory maze that David Clementi spoke of when he wrote his report in the early noughties has not gone away. Your list—I am sure they were all there, but I did not check them off as you were saying them—demonstrates that. If you were to ask a member of the public if they understood any of that, I think they would be utterly baffled, and, to some degree, that has to be the test of whether where we are now is where we need to be. I hold to the view that, along the way, a single regulator doing all of the strands of the profession with the representative arms delineating the different strands would probably be a better and more sensible structure than the one that we have now. When the Act was being passed, my eyes were on other things and I did not really witness the debate, but my understanding is that where we have reached now shows the necessary compromises that had to be made at the time the Act was passed to get us to this stage. I personally do not see it as the final destination. I would be amazed if it does not develop from there.

Q6 Mr Llwyd: Two points arise, I think. First—and I was reminded of this by the Chair in a private conversation a few minutes ago—solicitors who undertake financial services, and chartered accountants who undertake financial services, are regulated by different boards, so we have not quite finished fragmenting yet, it seems to me, but is not part of your function trying to simplify all this and making it accessible to the public? Given this information, I think most members of the public would say, “Hang it, I’m not getting involved in this. There are so many different avenues.” I am not saying that the average member of the public is not intelligent—clearly, they are—but, with all these bodies ranged across the spectrum, it is extremely complicated and confusing, is it not?

Stephen Green: It is incredibly complicated and I have to say, until I started doing my research to apply for this job, I had no idea of the vast maze of ombudsman schemes that exist in this country—schemes that exist under different statutory bases, where some people are public sector and others are private sector. I have no idea how on earth the public navigate their way through it. I do not think that any single ombudsman, board or scheme could in some way, shape or form take sole responsibility for rationalising it. That is just not going to happen. Equally—and in fact there is a load of them sat next door because I have just seen them go in—if you sit all the ombudsmen in the country together and say, “Let’s all arrive at a consensus about how to go forward,” they are never going to do it. To me, ultimately, rationalising the landscape is a central Government policy challenge rather than an individual ombudsman scheme challenge. I believe, however, that the Office for Legal Complaints and the legal ombudsman can and should at least describe clearly what it is that they do and where those overlaps and confusions are so that they can help to spell out the nature of the challenge. But I cannot sit here and say to you, “I am going to go to this job and make sense of all that, and I am going to make it rational.” I cannot do that. No one can do that sitting in one ombudsman scheme.

Q7 Mr Llwyd: It is not inconceivable that there is a rationale behind all of it, but do you see part of your function as educating, in the proper sense, the public about the kind of territory we are in?

Stephen Green: Yes. If I am stepping out of where you want to be please stop me, but I think this is relevant. Looking at the complaints landscape of legal services at the moment, I have real concerns about the number of people who—as best we know from the figures—having been dissatisfied by a legal service, do not complain at all, and also about the number of people who do

complain formally and get some kind of resolution but are not happy with it and who then go to the legal ombudsman. We have a firm, clear duty to address those numbers and to start saying, “What can we do to make sure that, if people are unhappy with a legal service, they do something about it first with the firm from whom they have had the service, and, if they are not happy with that resolution, they then come to the legal ombudsman?” That is clearly our function. Where those overlaps are concerned, there are a number of things we can do. In the short term—and I know that the legal ombudsman does this already—where people come to the legal ombudsman but it is found that what they are complaining about would better be dealt with by a different ombudsman, they are signposted to where they should go. They are not just told, “No, it is not us. Go away.” They are given a direction in which to travel to get their problem resolved.

Again, I hear talk of creating a common ombudsman portal on the internet, but I also hear that people have been discussing that for 10 years and it has not happened yet. What is desperately required—and hopefully, perhaps, through the alternative dispute resolution requirement from the European Union it might happen—is some clear central Government guidance about how this landscape might be rationalised.

Mr Llwyd: Thank you.

Q8 Andy McDonald: Good morning, Mr Green. Your CV says that you have been the lead member of the Legal Services Board with responsibility for monitoring the performance of the OLC.

Stephen Green: Indeed.

Q9 Andy McDonald: The OLC chair’s job description includes setting performance standards. Can I ask you a question in two parts?

Stephen Green: Yes.

Q10 Andy McDonald: What do you think have been the main areas of strength and weakness in the handling of complaints by the legal ombudsman? Secondly, what proposals have you for improving the operational performance of the ombudsman?

Stephen Green: Let us start with the strength and then talk about the weakness. The strength undoubtedly, it seems to me, is this. If you set up a new service for the public and you open the phone lines and say, “Ring us up,” that is an incredibly risky thing to do because you have no idea how many people are going to ring and what problems they are going to bring. The fact, as the Chair said, that the last time you saw anyone from the OLC was when you did this for the current chair is a testament to the fact that they have handled that set-up and launch and got the service running to a very good standard without any of the kinds of problems that other services of that nature perhaps have had in the past. So their responsiveness and their ability to deal with cases in a timely manner is impressive and improving, and certainly it has been an area that I have taken great pleasure from in seeing how well they have done it.

Their weakness has been that they worked from the outset—forgive me for going round the houses, but it is important to set this background—with the sort of budgetary envelope that was assumed for them by the MOJ planners. If you look at the figures, although they have consistently reduced their costs year on year and are still reducing them, our view—I am talking about my view as an LSB board member now, not as the potential chair of the OLC—is that their cost per case is still too expensive.

What we would like to see—and what I would like to do if I were made chairman—first would be to capitalise on their strength of dealing with cases promptly and moving them through the system quickly, because I think they can get even better at that. Secondly, it would be looking at ways in which the cost per case of the system can come down. At the moment their cost per case is in the region of £1,900 per case. If you were to look at the Financial Ombudsman Service, which we did through our consumer panel in a recent benchmarking survey—and I realise they have much

greater volumes—it has a cost of somewhere in the region of £700 per case. As to the Ombudsman Services, a private company doing lots of utility-type services, their cost per case is somewhere in the region of £400 per case. While I am not saying that there is an absolute definite benchmark to work to, it indicates that the cost per case has to come down.

How that might happen would be the next question to answer. First, you have to look carefully at, in effect, the ombudsman system as a conveyor belt: things start at one end, travel along it and, hopefully, there is an outcome at the end. Are there ways in which that conveyor belt can be made more efficient? Are there processes in there that have been duplicated and things that could happen more quickly than they are doing now? If you can take time out, you can take cost out as well.

Secondly, I believe that there are better uses that could be made of technology. The predominant way of interfacing with the legal ombudsman service is by telephone and then somehow you have to get any documentation through the post or whatever. In these modern days, it must be possible to have more web-based transactions so that people can interface with the legal ombudsman, on the internet if they prefer it that way, and use that to move documents around or whatever. There are significant opportunities to be able to improve their efficiency by using IT in a smarter way that reflects modern consumer life. Would you like more or has that answered your question?

Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith (Chair): I think we will probably cover some more of the ground as we go through the questions.

Q11 Andy McDonald: You have placed stress on the benchmarking and the processing, but I do not know whether you have addressed the improving of the overall operational performance issues. Would you like to tell us more about that?

Stephen Green: In reality, what is overall operational performance? I think it is, “Does it happen fast enough?” By the time they get to the ombudsman, consumers have already been through the complaints system of the law firm and they want things to happen. The first thing is, “Does it happen fast enough?” The second thing is, “Is the quality of what is done acceptable? Does it meet the expectations of the member of the public who complains?” Thirdly, “Is the overall cost of it reasonable, bearing in mind that whatever it is that the legal ombudsman costs is a cost to your profession?” If we are working to the regulatory objectives, we would have a duty to keep that cost down as low as possible.

I believe that, by making the overall system more efficient, you will make it faster, improve the quality and make it cheaper. Certainly, one of the things that I would want to do as the chair of the OLC board is lose the narrative that has been pursued by the legal ombudsman so far, which has been, “We are better and cheaper than what went before.” Memories of what went before are increasingly fading, and certainly the lead I would want to give would be to say—this is why the benchmarking is important—we now need to be seen as best in class, we need to understand what that means and chart a course towards achieving that, so that when this rationalisation takes place, as one would hope it would, people say, “Whatever we do, we need to keep the legal ombudsman because they are the best.”

Q12 John McDonnell: I am interested in your analysis about the way forward in terms of improvement, but to start the improvement process we need to be clear about what our assessment of trends is at the moment. What is your assessment of the trends with regard to the numbers and types of cases? In the reports we have received there have been predictions about quite an increase in cases, but there has actually been a decline recently.

Stephen Green: I could not go to the level of detail of trends in types of complaints, but certainly the trend in overall complaints is pretty flat. That has been something of a mystery to the OLC board and the legal ombudsman. This time last year they were just approving a change in their scheme rules that they believed would let more complaints in. It did not seem to have any massive, huge impact on the numbers.

In my current role I have challenged about that on a number of occasions and not received a satisfactory answer. Ultimately, if I could not get a satisfactory answer, then some research would need to be done to understand that better. It has not been done yet. When you look at the numbers around the lack of willingness of people out there to complain and look at the fact that the complaints levels are flat, it does leave you wondering what is happening out there. One of the things that the OLC board can take on is to say, “Let’s see what influence we can bring to bear on people’s willingness to complain in the first place,” and I think there are a number of things they can or could do to be able to improve that.

Q13 John McDonnell: The legal ombudsman has undertaken some thematic reports.

Stephen Green: Yes.

Q14 John McDonnell: Do you think the legal ombudsman can be more proactive and work in that sort of way, developing more thematic reports, and in what sort of area?

Stephen Green: Yes. Again, I would not like to try and fire from the hip and specify an area, but my view is this. They have put three of those reports out and they have been of good quality, founded on the evidence of their experience as an ombudsman at this stage. It is a feature of their service that they should do as much as possible of that, and try to make it programmed and systematic, so that people know what areas are being looked at in the course of a year and published reports are coming out.

In addition to that, I wonder if, once they are doing that, they can capitalise on two things. One is that the Act allows the Legal Services Board to make requirements on the front-line regulators about the arrangements they make for the handling of complaints by the legal entities—the regulated entities. Are there synergies that can be achieved, where we can bring together the knowledge of the legal ombudsman and the Office for Legal Complaints with the powers that the LSB have to try and make some of the use of that power more focused than it currently is?

John McDonnell: At the front end.

Stephen Green: In addition to that, again—and I know that the OLC do work with the front-line regulators—are there ways that the information that the legal ombudsman produces can be shared more proactively with the front-line regulators and used so that they can fulfil their duties to oversee the effectiveness of first-tier complaints handling in a more risk and problem-focused way than they have hitherto been able to do?

Q15 John McDonnell: What is your assessment of the desirability of extending the remit of the legal ombudsman in a voluntary scheme to cover alternative dispute resolution providers, as proposed by the OLC report?

Stephen Green: If you start from the premise that the point of the legal ombudsman service is to make the market work better for legal services consumers, the fact that there is a proportion of those consumers who are receiving legal services from non-regulated providers and are unable to get redress from the legal ombudsman cannot be right. In terms of a policy direction, it clearly has to be a desirable thing to do. It can never be—and I want to make this clear—seen as a means of addressing the cost issue that we talked about before. We have to deal with cost independently of that, although undoubtedly it would dilute some of the overheads and things like that. The OLC and LeO need to develop a proposition that they can put to the unregulated legal services to demonstrate the economic and business benefits of having access to redress, the legal ombudsman scheme, and then test that to destruction. If it is a voluntary scheme, people have to volunteer. Certainly, if you look at the work that has been done in will writing, there is ample evidence of consumer detriment there. There must be an argument that says the world would be a better place if that could be achieved.

Another area that interests me—and perhaps it is a nod back to my former life—is a whole tranche of people who are not lawyers but immigration advisers who are regulated by the Home Office, but there is no right of redress into the legal ombudsman. Again, their clients are probably among some of the most vulnerable consumers that are dealt with in legal services. Finding a way of bringing those people into a voluntary scheme would be a good thing in the interests of society.

Q16 Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith (Chair): Would you apply the same logic to claims management companies and say that they should be brought within the same framework then? Technically, they are—

Stephen Green: Yes, Chair. This might be naive optimism on my part—and I grovellingly apologise if it is—but it is my understanding that the legislative mechanism to overcome the difficulties in bringing in claims management companies was being overcome last week. I was certainly hearing optimistic messages in the other place. If that happens, I am hoping—and I have to say it was kind of an assumption of what I was saying earlier—that what we are then left with is an implementation project rather than a design of “How do we make this happen?” project. I think it is desirable that it should happen. There is clearly some turbulence in that market now caused by the referral fees ban, and how big it will be in a couple of years’ time remains to be seen. But for the time being it seems to me that, first, given what LeO have done so far, I would feel confident about their capability to set this thing up and make it work in a relatively short time. Hopefully, touch wood, the legislative mechanisms are now in place to enable that to happen, and certainly I would hope that, were you happy with what I had to say today, by the time I arrive there, things would be starting to happen to bring that into being.

Q17 John McDonnell: You are a “glass half full” man, Mr Green, are you not?

Stephen Green: It is the only way to live, sir.

Q18 Mr Llwyd: Following on the last point from the Chair, do you have a view on the growth of what can only be called professional McKenzie friends who appear in family cases and seem to be making a living with no regulation whatsoever?

Stephen Green: It is not an area in which I have had any experience or study whatsoever and I am reluctant to just fire a view from the hip.

Q19 Mr Llwyd: I was not trying to trip you up. I would just like to flag it up.

Stephen Green: I have to say it is not an area that I am aware has raised any cases with the legal ombudsman, but it is certainly a question that, now you have asked me, I will go and ask about it because I am interested in it.

Q20 Mr Llwyd: That is exactly what I was hoping you would say. In a response to Mr McDonnell earlier you said, basically, that there is a flatlining in numbers of complaints. Could it be—God forbid—that legal services are improving in terms of quality?

Stephen Green: Absolutely.

Q21 Mr Llwyd: Over the last five to 10 years there has been far more concentration on client care and quality of service, with checks on firms regularly.

Stephen Green: Yes.

Mr Llwyd: Could that be part of the answer?

Stephen Green: I think it absolutely could, and certainly I am aware, through my Legal Services Board work, that there is some evidence—I think it is out with the SRA—of falls in the numbers of complaints that have been recorded in law firms. I think it is still quite fragile evidence, but there is some indication. I wonder, quite honestly, if one of the most significant things in the changes in

arrangements made by the OLC last year was the more proactive imposition of a case fee. There has been a change in the way that funding works so that in certain circumstances the law firm concerned is charged a case fee. I know this certainly because—even though up until this I have had no direct involvement in the running of the legal ombudsman—lawyers who know me from my former life have bent my ear considerably about the likelihood of getting a case fee. I think that that has hopefully, in a right and ethical way, incentivised people as well to resolve their cases at first instance. That can only be a good thing. That tells me the extent to which, by taking measures from the legal ombudsman, you can change the way the world works down at the coal face, as it were, where the client and the lawyer actually meet.

Q22 Mr Llwyd: What would be your priorities for the Office for Legal Complaints in the next few years?

Stephen Green: I have touched on them to some degree, but let me go through them one by one. No. 1 would be to say what more can be done to influence the wider complaints system in general? We have just touched upon one thing, but if you look, as I say, at the unwillingness of people either to complain in the first place or pursue their complaint right the way to the legal ombudsman, there must be steps that can be taken to try and improve that. I will enlarge on that in a second if you want, but I will just go on to the other two, if I may.

The second would be to cover the areas that we talked about before about what we can do to make the existing system work more efficiently. Improving the efficiency of the conveyor belt—by looking at the things that fall off it in the course of its journey and looking at ways of making it travel through faster, cheaper and quicker—is, again, an important priority.

The third priority would be to touch again upon what we have discussed already, which is trying to chart a course through the wider environment of how people who cannot get redress because they get their legal services from a non-regulated provider be served. That is all about voluntary schemes. How can people who get bundled services get redress? The famous example that is always quoted by the Legal Services Consumer Panel is a house purchase and the people you have to deal with because you go through the jurisdiction of several different ombudsmen on that journey. How do you know which one to deal with? How can we make sure that people with bundled services get some kind of joined-up redress? Then, also in that environment, as I said, the Government have to respond to the EU directive on alternative dispute resolution. We need to understand how that is moving ahead.

I think that, in reality, along the way, the ombudsman service and ombudsmen in general will change over the coming years. I cannot paint you a vision. I think it would be foolish to say, “It needs to look like this,” but I certainly would see it as a priority making sure that I am in a position to lead the board to face those challenges and provide the most appropriate response from the Office for Legal Complaints.

Q23 Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith (Chair): There have been quite a few issues between the Legal Services Board and some of the front-line regulators. Do you think the front-line regulators might see you as the LSB’s man?

Stephen Green: I would be foolish not to think it is a risk. All I would say, Chair, is this. Anybody who thinks that I will not be independent in my role is sadly mistaken. If you look at my professional background, my culture and the way I have been brought up is to act independently—and I find that very easy to do. For me, while I think I offer great benefits because I understand the Legal Services Board, I understand how they tick, I know what buttons to push and levers to pull—so I think that helps—I would have no difficulty in acting independently and establishing my independence as soon as I took this role on. Hopefully, you can tell that this was not a question that was unexpected to me, but I understand the importance, if I were to take up this role, of establishing the fact that I am independent and working accordingly.

Q24 John McDonnell: There are two other roles we see in the job description, one of which is acting as ambassador for the OLC and the ombudsman, and the other is in regard to dealing with the media. On the ambassadorial role, will you do anything differently from Elizabeth France? On the media role, what experience do you have of that and will you do that somewhat differently in this role? The Chair is concerned that we have a Paxman-proof person appointed in this role or it will go pear-shaped.

Stephen Green: Can I take that one first?

John McDonnell: Yes, you better had.

Stephen Green: I am pleased you have asked me that question because it probably shows that you have never googled me. Because I was a chief constable, I lived my life in the media and I am very well acquainted with dealing with them. I have played the part of hero and I have played the part of villain. I feel very comfortable in dealing with the media. I understand that you never control them. Every now and again you have an unholy alliance to achieve a particular end, but they are there to do a service; they are not there to be our bosom buddies and I am well used to that.

Q25 John McDonnell: You had a relationship with motorway demonstrations and other things.

Stephen Green: Yes, I did.

Q26 John McDonnell: How was that?

Stephen Green: It was very interesting. My determination at that time was to do things differently. I was concerned when I looked at what had happened in the past that the tactics of the demonstrators were causing huge danger to themselves and those who were there to rescue them, because, in effect, they were digging holes in the ground, concreting themselves in and defying the world to get them out. I thought that that was madness, and so I worked very closely with Ministers and the Highways Agency to create a means of foreshortening it all. In reality, other than one set-piece eviction, we turned what had been hitherto seen as the way that environmental protests then happened completely on its head and we tried to allow lawful, peaceful protest; but, where people wanted to dig dangerous tunnels and lay their concrete and so on, we put a stop to it quickly. I felt at that time that I had no difficulty standing up in the press and making the moral, legal and professional case for doing what I was doing. While it did not make the protestors happy, the people of the west Midlands, who were paying for all of this, were very happy with what I did and we got a lot of positive feedback.

Q27 Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith (Chair): What about the ambassadorial role?

Stephen Green: As to the ambassadorial role, I have known Elizabeth a long time—she is sitting behind me now so I will make sure I say nice things about her—and I think she does that well, but I firmly believe that it is not the job of the chair of the OLC in any way, shape or form to eclipse the legal ombudsman. The legal ombudsman is the person who is there to be at the front end of commanding public confidence and demonstrating independence. I would do anything required to be an ambassador, but I would do it on the principle that, if the legal ombudsman looks good, then I look good. But it does not work vice versa, and certainly I would want to ensure that the legal ombudsman is seen in the best possible public light.

Q28 Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith (Chair): Have you anything else that you think ought to be drawn to our attention that is relevant to this appointment?

Stephen Green: I do not think so, Chair. You have drawn out of me everything that I came to say, though I am sure when I walk out of this room I will think of a thousand things that I would like to have said. I am grateful for the way that you have heard me and drawn these things out of me, and I am very happy with what has taken place.

Rt Hon Sir Alan Beith (Chair): Thank you very much. We will very quickly reach conclusions and communicate them to the Minister, so we hope it will not be very long before you know whether you really are in this job or not. Thank you very much.

Stephen Green: Thank you.