



Department for Levelling
Housing & Communities

Mr Clive Betts MP
Chair
Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities Committee

Lee Rowley MP
Parliamentary Under
Secretary of State

*Department for Levelling
Up,
Housing and
Communities*

4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

www.gov.uk/dluhc
Tel: 0303 444 0000

27 January 2023

Dear Clive

Thank you for your letter of 18 January and for the Committee's consideration of this recruitment campaign. I will try to respond to each of the points you have raised in turn:

Job description and criteria

In terms of the job description, I do not consider that the requirements and demands of the role of Ombudsman have significantly changed since the incumbent's appointment campaign in 2016. The Department has given the job description and criteria a light refresh, taking account of recruitment campaigns for comparable public sector Ombudsmen positions. We consider the Ombudsman role to be a challenging, multi-faceted role which requires an exceptional individual capable of leading and delivering a vital component of the local government accountability framework, and this job description is reflective of that. Mick King, the current Ombudsman, was consulted during the drafting of the job description.

Proposed indicative timeline

I have noted your views on the proposed timetable. I am keen to conclude the campaign in a timely manner and ensure the interim period is as short as possible. I have instructed my officials to hold the sift as soon as is feasible following the closing date and we will wish to expedite where we can.

Tenure

The Local Government Act 1974 allows for a term of office of up to 7 years, without the option of reappointment for a second term. We believe a term of office can be extended up to the maximum of 7 years prior to the end of the original term. Both Mick King and his predecessor, Dr Jane Martin, were appointed for a term of 7 years. Prior to 2008, Ombudsmen were not appointed for set terms of office and Sir Tony Redmond served for 9 years until his retirement in 2010. The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, Rob Behrens, will finish his 7-year term of office in 2024. Our approach reflects previous practice and given that it has been successful in the past, we are preparing to continue that approach with this appointment.

Interim arrangements

We intend to appoint an interim Ombudsman to bridge the gap between the end of Mick's term of office and the appointment of his permanent successor. I propose to write to the Committee with further details of this appointment in due course.

Advertising strategy

Please accept my apologies for the omission of these details from the first letter; the aim of an effective outreach strategy is to ensure that the search process is open and fair, as well as reaching out to the widest pool of candidates who meet the essential criteria for the Ombudsman role. The appointment will be advertised on the HMG Public Appointments website. In addition to promote the advert through our existing cross-Government and ALB networks and websites, the Department has arrangements with several non-executive channels to promote the role. We will also advertise the role through sector-specific Ombudsmen bodies and local government publications, as well as contacting potentially credible candidates directly.

I hope that my responses have been helpful in addressing the Committee's concerns. The Department intends to open the campaign for applications by 3 February, and would welcome any additional comments you have ahead of this date.

Yours,



Lee Rowley MP