



Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee

Lee Rowley MP

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Local Government and Building
Safety)**

Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

28 September 2023

Dear Lee,

Appointment of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Chair of the Commission for Local Administration in England

We held a pre-appointment hearing on 18 September 2023 with Amerdeep Somal, who was the Government's preferred candidate for the role of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Chair of the Commission for Local Administration in England. We have endorsed the appointment of Ms Somal.¹

Prior to the pre-appointment hearing, we issued a questionnaire to Ms Somal, as is standard practice. In her questionnaire response, Ms Somal said:

I intend to take on Chair of the Law Society from January 2024, which are 6 board meetings a year and reading/preparatory work. I intend to retain my judicial appointment, although I will not be sitting other than on an infrequent basis to maintain my continuous professional development.²

In the pre-appointment hearing, we raised concerns with Ms Somal about the possibility of a perceived conflict of interest. In her oral evidence to the Committee, Ms Somal said:

The chair of the Law Society is the chair of the board of the Law Society. It is not the president of the Law Society. The chair of the Law Society is responsible for overseeing the board [...] I do not see a perceived conflict. [...] My judicial sittings, I have put into abeyance until my term comes to an end.³

¹ Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2022-23, [Pre-appointment hearing for the role of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Chair of the Commission for Local Administration in England](#), HC 1819

² Ibid., Appendix 2

³ Oral evidence: Pre-appointment hearing for the role of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, HC 1819, [Qq.48-67](#) (Amerdeep Somal)



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Given the quasi-judicial functions of the Ombudsman service, there is a risk of a perceived or actual conflict of interest which could arise from Ms Somal holding a role at the Law Society or continuing to work as a judge whilst being the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. We would therefore appreciate clarification on the following questions:

- What is the exact nature of the role Ms Somal intends to begin at the Law Society in January 2024? What is the time commitment and what is the remuneration for this role?
- What is the Government's assessment of the potential that this role could give rise to a perceived conflict of interest?
- If this role does result in a perceived conflict of interest, what action will Ms Somal and/or the Government take?
- Does Ms Somal intend to sit as judge at any point during her term in office as Ombudsman?

Without clarity on these questions, we would be concerned about Ms Somal's credibility in the role. However, we have endorsed Ms Somal because we are confident that you will be able to provide sufficient clarity in your response.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Amerdeep Somal, the successful candidate.

I would be grateful for your response by 16 October 2023.

Best wishes,

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