



**Public Administration
and Constitutional Affairs
Committee**

From the Chair
William Wragg MP

Sir Alex Allan KCB
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Via email only

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Appointment of the new Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO)

The term of the existing Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, Rob Behrens, ends on 31 March 2024. The recruitment process to appoint a successor was launched in October 2023 with the final panel interviews taking place on 8 January 2024. I understand the panel's recommendation was submitted to the Prime Minister after that date with a view to the Government tabling the necessary motions in the House of Commons for an Humble Address to his Majesty asking that the proposed candidate be appointed. To date no such motion has been tabled, and the Committee have not been notified whether the panel's recommendation has been accepted.

The delay in the process is such that I understand steps are now being taken to consider the appointment of a temporary Ombudsman to ensure that the PHSO can continue to function effectively as an organisation.

Given the role and statutory duties of the Ombudsman, it would be useful if you could clarify the specific issues raised by a delay in the appointment of a permanent Ombudsman, and any restrictions that might be faced by a temporary Ombudsman. I would be interested to know the likely impact on the organisation and staff, for example, your ability to take on new complaints and make decisions, and any issues arising for Members of Parliament (as the filter for complaints), or more widely for Parliament as the recipient of your reports and the organisation responsible for scrutinising your work. I would also want to understand any likely impact on complainants during this period.

William Wragg MP

Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee