



PACAC (Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee)

House of Commons · London SW1A 0AA

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Rob Behrens CBE

Chair and Ombudsman, Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

By email only

Dear RB,

22nd July 2021

Extension of term as Chair and Ombudsman of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

As you are aware, the Committee has been approached regarding the extension of your term as Chair and Ombudsman of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO). The Committee has valued the contribution you have made to furthering the aims of the PHSO and noted your achievements in exercising the functions of the position of Ombudsman. It is clear that your vision and leadership have allowed the PHSO to weather difficult times and continue to provide such a vital service in the face of numerous challenges.

The Committee understands the discrepancy in the length of your term – being five years instead of the usual seven envisaged under the relevant legislation – due to the prevailing situation at the time of your appointment and the failure of the Government to bring forward relevant legislation in the intervening period. This anomaly has been noted by the Committee, and we lament the Government's lack of action in this space. The Committee also fully understands and appreciates the need to provide clarity, certainty, and stability to the organisation as it launches its future strategy following the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nevertheless, the Committee has a responsibility to ensure that public appointments are carried out properly and correctly, maximising transparency and ensuring public confidence in appointees, I am sure that you can understand the Committee's desire to approach this matter in the same vein. While the Committee recognises that this is an unprecedented and unusual situation, we feel obliged to act with the same level of propriety as would be expected in relation to all public appointments. The Committee will therefore examine this matter in a public session at the earliest convenience this Autumn, alongside the Committee's annual scrutiny session.

As always, I am at your disposal to discuss any questions you may have.

Yours

William Wragg MP

Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee