



'A Discussion on Public Appointments with Sir Gerry Grimstone'

Event Summary

The Public Chairs' Forum's most recent seminar was a private discussion led by Sir Gerry Grimstone, Lead Non-Executive at the Ministry of Defence, to discuss the process of Public Appointments in the UK. Sir Grimstone who will be leading a review of this process at the request of Rt. Hon Matt Hancock, Minister for Cabinet Office, was eager to hear Chairs' opinions on the current process for public appointments and the role of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Sir Grimstone began the seminar by introducing the review itself, which aims to assess whether the 'Nolan principles' that Public Appointments were established with twenty years ago; selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership, are still being upheld today. His aim is to engage with as many stakeholders as possible to meet these standards and establish both public and candidate confidence in the process for public appointments.

The seminar highlighted some important key issues with the current process:

- Inconsistent levels of ministerial oversight
- Lengthy and time-consuming applications with a lack of transparency from the centre in the progress of applications.
- Lack of facetime between Ministers and Chairs to discuss or dismiss potential applicants at the start of the process.
- Diversity
- Lack of support for unsuccessful candidates and succession planning.

There were some positive stories of the appointments process, however the overall consensus was that there was not enough consistency in regards to time, efficiency, pay, ministerial involvement, and many other factors such as the use of a head-hunter, whether or not to advertise the position or whether to go through a Select Committee Hearing. Most members expressed a desire for a more consistent and transparent process subject to an action timeline. Sir Grimstone concluded the seminar with plans to consider all of the key issues identified as a result of this discussion and produce recommendations for improvements within the next six weeks.