



House of Commons

Digital, Culture, Media and
Sport Committee

Appointment of Richard Sharp as Chair of the BBC

Eighth Report of Session 2022–23

*Report, together with formal minutes relating
to the report*

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The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee

The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and its associated public bodies.

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The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No. 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publication

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The current staff of the Committee are Rosie Akeroyd (Committee Specialist), Andy Boyd (Committee Operations Manager), Joe Briggs (Committee Specialist), Dr Conor Durham (Committee Specialist), Ollie Florence (Senior Media and Communications Officer), Seb Newman (Second Clerk), and Ben Sneddon (Clerk).

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1 Appointment Process

Recruitment

1. On 14 October 2020 the Government launched the appointment process for the Chair of the BBC Board, the unitary board responsible for the Governance of the Corporation.¹ Our 2021 report, *Pre-appointment hearing for Chair of the BBC*, sets out details on the role, the remit of the BBC, and information about recruitment process as provided by the then Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS).²

Pre-appointment hearing

2. In line with Cabinet Office Guidelines agreed with the House of Commons Liaison Committee³ and Section 22(5) of the BBC Charter,⁴ the Government's preferred candidate was subject to a pre-appointment hearing with our Committee. On 6 January 2021 the Government announced Richard Sharp as the preferred candidate to Chair the BBC Board and confirmed his attendance before this Committee for a pre-appointment hearing on 14 January 2021.⁵ Ahead of the hearing, we were supplied with written evidence from DCMS about the appointment process and the successful candidate,⁶ and from Mr Sharp⁷ in response to the model questionnaire recommended by the House of Commons Liaison Committee's pre-appointment hearing guidelines.⁸

3. We conducted the hearing to "satisfy Parliament that the post would be filled by someone of sufficient calibre and independence for the role."⁹ While pre-appointment hearings are not binding, Ministers are required to "weigh the views of the committee carefully against the evidence from the appointments procedure to reach a final view."¹⁰

4. Our report of 15 January 2021 sets out detailed conclusions on Mr Sharp's appropriateness for the role, based on the written and oral evidence provided. It included the finding that "[w]e are content to confirm his appointment as Chair of the BBC Board and wish him well with the challenges the Corporation will face in the coming years".¹¹

Appointment

5. Following our conclusions, Mr Sharp met with the then Prime Minister, Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, on 17 January 2021 as chair-designate of the BBC.¹² On 10 February 2021, in

1 [PAA0001](#) (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport)

2 DCMS Committee (15 January 2021), [Pre-appointment hearing for Chair of the BBC](#)

3 Cabinet Office (January 2019), [Cabinet Office Guidance: pre-appointment scrutiny by House of Commons Select Committees](#) Annex D

4 DCMS, *Royal Charter for the Continuance of the British Broadcasting Corporation*, [Cm 9365](#), December 2016, Section 22(5)

5 GOV.UK (6 January 2021) [Government announces preferred candidate for BBC Chair](#)

6 [PAA0001](#) (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport)

7 [PAA0002](#) (Richard Sharp)

8 Cabinet Office (January 2019), [Cabinet Office Guidance: pre-appointment scrutiny by House of Commons Select Committees](#) p11

9 DCMS Committee (15 January 2021), [Pre-appointment hearing for Chair of the BBC](#) para 3

10 Cabinet Office (January 2019), [Cabinet Office Guidance: pre-appointment scrutiny by House of Commons Select Committees](#) para 32

11 DCMS Committee (15 January 2021), [Pre-appointment hearing for Chair of the BBC](#), para 18

12 Cabinet Office, [Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP Meetings, January to March 2021](#)

line with the requirements of the BBC Charter,¹³ Mr Sharp's appointment was approved at a meeting of the Privy Council on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.¹⁴ He formally took up the role on 16 February 2021 and, as specified by the BBC Charter, holds it for a four-year term until 15 February 2025.¹⁵

Concerns

6. On January 18 2023, the Sunday Times reported on Mr Sharp's involvement in the provision of a loan to Boris Johnson during the period in which he was appointed as Chair of the BBC.¹⁶ Following these reports Government ministers, including the Prime Minister, sought to use our 2021 report into Mr Sharp's pre-appointment hearing in order to defend his appointment.¹⁷ We invited Mr Sharp to appear before the Committee on 7 February 2023 to review issues raised in his pre-appointment hearing and developments since then.¹⁸

13 DCMS, *Royal Charter for the Continuance of the British Broadcasting Corporation*, [Cm 9365](#), December 2016, Section 22(1)

14 Privy Council, [Order appointing The Honourable Richard Sharp as the Chair of the Board of the British Broadcasting Corporation](#), 10 February 2021.

15 As above.

16 The Sunday Times (21 January 2023), [The BBC chairman, the Prime Minister and the £800,000 loan guarantee](#) Accessed 31 January 2023

17 HC Deb, 23 January 2023, [col 753](#) and HC Deb, 1 February 2023, [col 336](#)

18 Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Press Notice (24 January 2023) [BBC chair Richard Sharp to appear before DCMS Committee](#)

2 Conflicts of Interests

Declarations of Interest

7. The Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments sets out:

9.1 It is important that all public appointees uphold the standards of conduct set out in the Committee on Standards in Public Life's Seven Principles of Public Life and are expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct for board members of public bodies. The Advisory Assessment Panel must satisfy itself that all candidates for appointment can meet these standards and have no conflicts of interest that would call into question their ability to perform the role. Candidates must be asked to declare potential conflicts of interest in their application. All potential conflicts of interest and how they might be managed must be discussed with an individual at interview. A potential conflict should not preclude a candidate from being shortlisted/appointed provided that appropriate arrangements are made. The departmental official on an Advisory Assessment Panel is responsible for seeking advice within their department and/or the Cabinet Office on handling any conflicts, which should be included in the final advice to Ministers. If the appointment is subject to a Parliamentary pre-appointment hearing, the advice to the Select Committee should cover the handling of any conflicts of interest.

9.2 Political activity should not affect any judgement of merit nor be a bar to appointment or being a member of an Advisory Assessment Panel, with the exception of Senior Independent Panel Members. It should be publicly disclosed however if a panel member, or a successful candidate, has, in the last five years, been employed by a political party, held a significant office in a party, has stood as a candidate for a party in an election, has publicly spoken on behalf of a political party, or has made significant donations or loans to a party.¹⁹

8. The advertisement for the role of Chair of the BBC published on the Cabinet Office Public Appointments site set out:

If you have any interests that might be relevant to the work of the BBC, and which could lead to a real or perceived conflict of interest if you were to be appointed, please provide details in your application. If you have queries about this and would like to discuss further please contact the Public Appointments Team.

Given the nature of public appointments, it is important that those appointed as members of public bodies maintain the confidence of Parliament and the public. If there are any issues in your personal or professional history that could, if you were appointed, be misconstrued, cause embarrassment, or

19 Cabinet Office (December 2016), [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#)

cause public confidence in the appointment to be jeopardised, it is important that you bring them to the attention of the Advisory Assessment Panel and provide details of the issue(s) in the statement supporting your application.²⁰

The additional information published alongside the advertisement also states that an individual cannot be considered for a public appointment if “you fail to declare any conflict of interest”.²¹

9. Applicants for the role were required to complete a declaration of conflict of interest form that required candidates to:

give details of any business or other interests or any personal connections which, if you are appointed, could be misconstrued or cause embarrassment to the public body or DCMS. These could include financial interests or share ownership, active connections with a field of expertise in which the public body works, membership of societies, activities associations or employment of a partner or friend in the particular field in which the public body operates.

Any potential conflicts of interest detailed here will not prevent you going forward to interview but may, if appropriate, be explored with you during your interview to establish how you would address the issue(s) should you be successful in your application.²²

10. The declaration form also signposted candidates to the booklet ‘*Public Appointments, Probity & conflicts of interest, A Guide for candidates*’ included with the application pack. The booklet defines five issues that could lead to real or apparent conflicts of interest:

- Relevant pecuniary or other interests outside the organisation;
- Relationships with other parties/organisations which could lead to perceived or real split loyalties;
- Pending Government Policy could give unfair personal advantage to people with allied business interests—for example access to privileged information—trade secrets;
- Perception of rewards for past contributions or favours;
- Membership of some societies or organisations.²³

11. In evidence to the Public Accounts Committee on 23 January 2023 Sarah Healey, the DCMS Permanent Secretary and chair of the assessment panel for the BBC Chair appointment, explained the role of the panel in relation to conflicts of interest:

We have a standard form of questions that we ask candidates at interview. They are asked to fill in a conflicts form, and then we ask them whether there is any update that they would like to make to that form subsequently

20 Cabinet Office (December 2016), [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#)

21 As above.

22 HM Government Public Appointments, [Chair – British Broadcasting Corporation, Declaration of Conflicts of Interest Form](#)

23 DCMS (undated), [Public Appointments: Probity and Conflicts of Interest - A Guide for Candidates](#)

to application. We then ask them if there is anything else that they have not declared in their conflicts that they would like to raise. Typically, we then ask them about adherence to the Nolan principles and whether there is anything else that we ought to be aware of which, if it came to light, might embarrass either the Government or the organisation responsible. That tends to be the pattern of three questions that we ask candidates in an interview.²⁴

Mr Sharp's Declarations

12. Ahead of Mr Sharp's pre-appointment hearing, the Department provided us with information about Mr Sharp in line with the Cabinet Office guidance, including on declarations made by him:

Declaration of relevant interests made by the candidate:

Mr Sharp declared on his returned 'Declaration of conflict of interest form': All relevant private sector holdings are presently in a blind trust. Should I be selected then I would expect to discuss this matter with the appropriate authority. I am a Non-Executive Director of the Centre for Policy Studies; Mr Sharp is stepping down from this position.

Declaration of relevant political activity made by the candidate required under paragraph 9.2 of the Governance Code on Public Appointments:

As per the paragraph 9.2 of the Governance Code, political activity should not affect any judgement of merit nor be a bar to appointment. Any reportable donations are publicly available on the Electoral Commission website.²⁵

13. In evidence to the Public Accounts Committee last month, Sarah Healey confirmed that when the panel questioned Mr Sharp on conflicts "no other declarations of conflicts were made" other than his "well documented" donations to the Conservative party.²⁶ Mr Sharp subsequently confirmed to us on 7 February 2023 that he recalled being asked "whether there is anything else that we ought to be aware of which, if it came to light, might embarrass either the Government or the organisation responsible" and to answering "no".²⁷

Committee pre-appointment scrutiny of conflicts of interest

14. Following the announcement of Mr Sharp as the Government's preferred candidate and ahead of Mr Sharp's pre-appointment hearing, we sought written responses to questions relating to conflicts of interest and political activity. Invited to disclose any "business, financial or other non-pecuniary interests or commitments, that might give rise to the perception of a conflict of interest", Mr Sharp responded:

I declared on my 'Declaration of conflict of interest form': All relevant private sector holdings are presently in a blind trust. This will be a matter

24 Public Accounts Committee (23 January 2023), [DCMS Recall: Broadband, Gambling and Unboxed Q81](#)

25 [PAA0002](#) (Richard Sharp)

26 Public Accounts Committee (23 January 2023), [DCMS Recall: Broadband, Gambling and Unboxed Q81, Q84](#)

27 [Q330](#)

for discussion with the BBC but it is not currently considered a conflict. I am a Non-Executive Director of the Centre for Policy Studies; I will be stepping down from this position in January 2021, as well as my other position as Special Advisor at the Treasury.²⁸

In response to having “ever held any post or undertaken any activity that might cast doubt on your political impartiality”, Mr Sharp responded:

As per the paragraph 9.2 of the Governance Code, political activity should not affect any judgement of merit nor be a bar to appointment. All reportable donations I have made are publicly available on the Electoral Commission website.

I confirm that I will uphold the standards of conduct set out in the Seven Principles of Public Life and comply with the Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies June 2019 in respect of political activity, as well as the terms and conditions of my appointment (as agreed with DCMS).

I will not donate further to any political party during my tenure as Chair.

It is worth nothing that during my two terms on the Financial Policy Committee of the Bank of England I complied with their similar code of practice concerning political neutrality.²⁹

15. In Mr Sharp’s pre-appointment hearing on 14 January 2021, we questioned him on his political activity including his donations, past political activity, and relationship with members of the Government, including any encouragement to apply.³⁰ Mr Sharp confirmed that his application was on his own initiative, and he did not raise any further potential conflicts of interests beyond his written declarations.³¹ Our questioning during the pre-appointment hearing assumed that there had been full and accurate disclosure in the information provided during the application process and in written evidence to us, in line with the requirements of the public appointments process and the responsibilities of witnesses appearing before Select Committees.

Reporting by the Sunday Times in 2023

16. On 14 January 2023 the Sunday Times reported on a loan worth up to £800,000 to Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP from Canadian businessman Sam Blyth, a distant cousin of the then Prime Minister.³² On 21 January 2023 the newspaper claimed that in December 2020, shortly before being appointed BBC Chair, Mr Sharp was involved in discussions about the loan.³³

28 [PAA0002](#) (Richard Sharp)

29 [PAA0002](#) (Richard Sharp)

30 DCMS Committee (14 January 2021), [Pre-appointment hearing for Chair of the BBC](#). For example, Qq 1–2, Qq 10–15, Qq 51–58, Qq 80–87

31 As above. Q58

32 The Sunday Times (14 January 2023) [Boris Johnson and the multimillionaire Canadian cousin who lent a hand](#) Accessed 2 February 2023.

33 BBC (24 January 2023), [Richard Sharp: Watchdog review begins into BBC chairman’s hiring - BBC News](#). Accessed 27 January 2023.

17. The Sunday Times reported that Mr Blyth raised with Mr Sharp the idea of Mr Blyth acting as Mr Johnson’s guarantor for a loan during a dinner party “at the end of November [2020]”.³⁴ It was subsequently reported on 28 January 2023 that Mr Sharp “in fact discussed with Blyth his offer to provide financial support to Johnson at a dinner months earlier, in September [2020]” and then “held a subsequent call” with Mr Blyth ahead of a meeting with Simon Case, the Cabinet Secretary, on 4 December [2020] to discuss the loan.³⁵ Mr Sharp confirmed this version of events in his evidence before our Committee on 7 February 2023.³⁶ In an email to BBC staff on 23 January 2023, Mr Sharp set out details of the meeting with the Cabinet Secretary:

I went to see the Cabinet Secretary and explained who Sam was, and that as a cousin of the then Prime Minister he wanted to help him if possible.

I also reminded the Cabinet Secretary that I had submitted my application for the position of BBC Chairman.

We both agreed that to avoid any conflict that I should have nothing further to do with the matter. At that point there was no detail on the proposed arrangements and I had no knowledge of whether any assistance was possible, or could be agreed.

Since that meeting I have had no involvement whatsoever with any process.³⁷

It was subsequently reported that the Cabinet Secretary had warned the then Prime Minister on 22 December 2020 about the conflict of interest in a memo stating “given the imminent announcement of Richard Sharp as the new BBC chair, it is important that you no longer ask his advice about your personal financial matters”.³⁸

18. The Sunday Times also reported that Mr Sharp and Mr Blyth had dinner together with the then Prime Minister at Chequers in “late 2020” at which all deny speaking about Mr Johnson’s finances.³⁹ In his evidence on 7 February 2023 Mr Sharp clarified that this dinner took place in May 2021, following his appointment.⁴⁰ On 28 January 2023, the Sunday Times reported that Mr Sharp also discussed the loan with the then Prime Minister “during a No 10 business meeting.”⁴¹

Reviews into potential conflicts

19. In addition to our review of Mr Sharp’s pre-appointment hearing evidence, two further reviews have been launched since 23 January 2023.

34 The Sunday Times (21 January 2023), [The BBC chairman, the Prime Minister and the £800,000 loan guarantee](#) Accessed 31 January 2023 and The Sunday Times (28 January 2023), [Boris Johnson was told: stop seeking Richard Sharp’s advice on ‘financial matters’](#) Accessed 31 January 2023

35 The Sunday Times (28 January 2023), [Boris Johnson was told: stop seeking Richard Sharp’s advice on ‘financial matters’](#) Accessed 31 January 2023

36 [Qq 235–6](#) and [Qq 240–242](#)

37 New Statesman (23 January 2023), [Richard Sharp Letter BBC staff leaves essential questions unanswered](#). Accessed 6 February 2023.

38 The Sunday Times (28 January 2023), [Boris Johnson was told: stop seeking Richard Sharp’s advice on ‘financial matters’](#) Accessed 31 January 2023.

39 Sky News (24 January 2023), [BBC chairman Richard Sharp confident he was ‘appointed on merit’ after Boris Johnson loan row](#) Accessed 1 February 2023.

40 [Q246](#)

41 The Sunday Times (28 January 2023), [Boris Johnson was told: stop seeking Richard Sharp’s advice on ‘financial matters’](#) Accessed 31 January 2023.

Commissioner for Public Appointments

20. On 23 January 2023 the office for the Commissioner for Public Appointments announced that the Commissioner William Shawcross would be reviewing the competition for the appointment to “ensure it was conducted in line with the Governance Code for Public Appointments”.⁴² The review was welcomed by Mr Sharp,⁴³ and by the previous Commissioner for Public Appointments, Sir Peter Riddell, who noted:

It is clear that there is additional information which wasn’t apparent to anyone involved two years ago, and it is quite right to have a review of the process. My inclination is that being transparent serves everyone’s best interests.⁴⁴

Mr Riddell also expressed the view on BBC Newsnight that the role of Richard Sharp in helping Boris Johnson secure a loan should have been disclosed when he was applying to become BBC Chair and said “it was a material factor that should have been taken into account.”⁴⁵

21. On 30 January 2023 the Commissioner for Public Appointments wrote to inform us that:

As I have met Mr Sharp on previous occasions, I have decided to recuse myself from this particular investigation. I will be delegating my powers as Commissioner under the 2019 Order in Council to an independent person who will be appointed by my office for this one investigation. They will have sole responsibility and will be supported by my officials.⁴⁶

Mr Sharp told us that his last meeting with Mr Shawcross was over a decade ago and did not raise any specific reasons for his recusal.⁴⁷ On 6 February 2023, the Commissioner’s office announced that Adam Heppinstall KC would take over the investigation.⁴⁸ No further details about the investigation have yet been made available.

BBC Review

22. In his email to BBC staff on 23 January 2023, Mr Sharp announced that he had agreed with Sir Nicholas Serota, the senior independent director of the BBC board, that the board’s nominations committee, which is responsible for reviewing board members’ conflicts of interest, would assess whether “all the appropriate guidelines have been

42 Guardian (23 January 2023), [BBC chair Richard Sharp asks for review of potential conflicts of interest Boris Johnson](#). Accessed 30 January 2023.

43 BBC News (24 January 2023), [Richard Sharp: Watchdog review begins into BBC chairman’s hiring](#). Accessed 30 January 2023.

44 Guardian (23 January 2023), [BBC chair Richard Sharp asks for review of potential conflicts of interest Boris Johnson](#). Accessed 30 January 2023.

45 BBC Newsnight, broadcast 23 January 2023.

46 Commissioner for Public Appointments, [Letter to the DCMS Committee](#), (30 January 2023)

47 [. Q283](#)

48 [“The Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments has appointed Adam Heppinstall KC”](#) Commissioner for Public Appointments, 6 February 2023.

followed within the BBC” on conflicts of interest since Mr Sharp joined the board.⁴⁹ The nominations committee is expected to undertake the assessment at its next meeting and report to the BBC board, which Mr Sharp continues to chair.

49 New Statesman (23 January 2023), [Richard Sharp Letter BBC staff leaves essential questions unanswered](#). Accessed 6 February 2023.

3 Review of the Pre-Appointment Process

23. In the Committee’s hearing with Richard Sharp on 7 February 2023, we invited Mr Sharp to explain his role as a “go-between”⁵⁰ in the provision of a loan to the then Prime Minister, Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP. Mr Sharp explained his longstanding friendship with Sam Blyth and established that Mr Blyth’s offer of “help” for Mr Johnson was first communicated to him in September 2020.⁵¹ Mr Sharp told us that he raised potential propriety issues in providing support, telling Mr Blyth that “[t]hings need to be done by the book. There are rules in this country, and these rules exist for a good reason”.⁵² Following the launch of the BBC Chair recruitment, Mr Blyth contacted Mr Sharp by telephone to request an introduction to the Cabinet Secretary to ensure due process was followed.⁵³ Mr Sharp told us that he met with the Prime Minister prior to meeting Simon Case and informed him that he would be telling Mr Case about Mr Blyth’s approach to assist the Prime Minister financially.⁵⁴ Mr Sharp met with the Cabinet Secretary, Simon Case, in December 2020, at which point he “agreed no further participation” in relation to the financial support in order to avoid any conflict of interest or perception of conflict given his application.⁵⁵ Mr Sharp told us that as far he was concerned, that meant “the matter had been resolved”.⁵⁶

24. We asked Mr Sharp why he specifically was approached by Mr Blyth and whether, as a relative and friend of members of the Johnson family, it would have been preferable to have suggested to Mr Blyth an approach either directly to the then Prime Minister or via a member of his family.⁵⁷ Mr Sharp told us that Mr Blyth was apparently unwilling to approach Mr Johnson directly to avoid distracting his work on the Covid-19 pandemic but decided that Mr Sharp’s access to the Cabinet Office—as a result of his work on Covid-19 business support—made him the most appropriate conduit to seek advice from the Civil Service on the propriety of providing financial support to the Prime Minister.⁵⁸

25. Mr Sharp denied that he had ever given financial advice to the then Prime Minister but was unable to account for the decision by the Cabinet Office to issue a note to the Prime Minister advising him not to seek further financial advice from Mr Sharp given his impending appointment as Chair of the BBC.⁵⁹ Mr Sharp acknowledged that he had discussed his wish to Chair the BBC with Mr Johnson prior to submitting his application.⁶⁰ Mr Sharp also confirmed to that he had personally made the Prime Minister aware that he was meeting Mr Case to discuss Mr Blyth’s potential financial support in a meeting with Mr Johnson.⁶¹

50 [Q278](#)

51 [Q301](#)

52 [Q235](#)

53 [Q243](#)

54 [Qq 298–303](#)

55 [Q242](#)

56 [Q276](#)

57 [Qq 318–319](#)

58 [Q266](#)

59 [Q235, Qq 247–254](#)

60 [Qq 261–2](#)

61 [Qq 298–303](#)

26. We raised with Mr Sharp his failure to disclose his involvement with Mr Blyth and Mr Johnson in line with the requirements of the application and pre-appointment processes and the effect that this has had on the reputation of the BBC. While Mr Sharp expressed regret at “the distraction” and “the situation”, he “took comfort” from his meeting with the Cabinet Secretary in December 2020 as removing any conflict or perception or a conflict and satisfied himself that the situation was “resolved”.⁶² Mr Sharp did note that the situation “has caused embarrassment at the BBC” and his involvement “can be mischaracterised and has been mischaracterised”.⁶³ However he remained of the view that he was under no obligation for disclosure, despite the potential to “cause embarrassment” and “be misconstrued” being two specified areas for declaration during the application process.⁶⁴ Invited to reflect on whether he should have approached Mr Case at all, Mr Sharp invited the Committee to form its own judgement.⁶⁵

62 [Q292](#), [Q313](#), [Q309](#), [Q328](#)

63 [Q332](#)

64 Cabinet Office, [HM Government Public Appointments: Chair - British Broadcasting Corporation](#)

65 [Q380](#)

4 Conclusions

27. Mr Sharp recognised the need to be open and transparent over facilitating an introduction of the then Prime Minister to Mr Blyth regarding the £800,000 loan guarantee and brought this to the attention of the Cabinet Secretary. However, he failed to apply the same standards of openness and candour in his decision not to divulge this information during the interview process or to this committee during the pre-appointment hearing.

28. The public appointments process can only work effectively if all those involved are open and transparent. Richard Sharp chose to tell the then Prime Minister both of his application to Chair the BBC and of his involvement in the arrangement of a loan for the Mr Johnson but decided not to tell either the appointment panel or this Committee about his actions. The Prime Minister, the panel and this Committee are all integral to the appointment process for the Chair of the BBC, but only Mr Johnson was fully aware of Mr Sharp's potential conflict at the time the appointment was made. *The Government, and all those involved in the public appointments process must ensure that the future public appointments process is not clouded by partial disclosure.*

29. There remains an unresolved issue about why the Cabinet Secretary believed Mr Sharp had been giving financial advice to the then Prime Minister, which Mr Sharp insists that he had not done. *The Cabinet Office should clear up the confusion relating to the advice given to the Prime Minister immediately.*

30. In deciding not to recuse himself from involvement in Sam Blyth's loan to the then Prime Minister nor to reveal his involvement to either this Committee or the appointments panel, Mr Sharp decided to leave our Committee without the full facts we required to make an informed judgement on his suitability as a candidate. There can be no question that Mr Sharp's decision not to divulge his involvement in the loan guarantee denied this Committee the opportunity to fulfil its scrutiny role when he appeared before it.

31. Mr Sharp has accepted that his failure to disclose this involvement has caused embarrassment to him and the BBC and has potentially been misconstrued, both of which are tests on conflicts that the public appointments process specifically requires candidates to consider. However, he continues to rely on a reassurance from the Cabinet Secretary that the situation was resolved.

32. Richard Sharp's decisions, firstly to become involved in the facilitation of a loan to the then Prime Minister while at the same time applying for a job that was in that same person's gift, and then to fail to disclose this material relationship, were significant errors of judgement, which undermine confidence in the public appointments process and could deter qualified individuals from applying for such posts. Mr Sharp's failure to disclose his actions to the panel and the Committee, although he believed this to be completely proper, constitute a breach of the standards expected of individuals applying for such public appointments. The booklet 'Public Appointments, Probity & conflicts of interest: a guide for candidates', which candidates are signposted to read, specifically cites 'Perception of rewards for past contributions or favours' as one of the issues that could lead to real or apparent conflicts of interest.

33. **The fact that Ministers have cited this Committee's original report on Mr Sharp's appointment as a defence of the process was followed, when we were not in full possession of all the facts that we should have had before us in order to come to our judgement, is highly unsatisfactory. *Mr Sharp should consider the impact his omissions will have on trust in him, the BBC and the public appointments process.***

Formal minutes

Thursday 9 February 2023

Members present:

Kevin Brennan

Clive Efford

Rt Hon Damian Green

Rt Hon Damian Green took the Chair, in accordance with the Resolution of the Committee of 10th January 2023.

Draft Report (*Appointment of Richard Sharp as Chair of the BBC*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 33 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Eighth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No.134.

Adjournment

Adjourned till Tuesday 21 February at 9.30 am.

Witnesses

The following witness gave evidence under the title 'The work of the BBC' (HC 382). Transcripts can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Tuesday 7 February 2023

Richard Sharp, Chair, BBC

[Q235–380](#)

List of Reports from the Committee during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the publications page of the Committee's website.

Session 2022–23

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2nd Special	Influencer Culture: Lights, camera, inaction?: ASA System and CMA Responses to the Committee's Twelfth Report of Session 2021–22	HC 610
3rd Special	Influencer Culture: Lights, camera, inaction?: Government Response to the Committee's Twelfth Report of Session 2021–22	HC 687
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6th	Pre-appointment hearing for Chair of the Charity Commission	HC 261
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8th	The Draft Online Safety Bill and the legal but harmful debate	HC 1039
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2nd Special Report	Economics of music streaming: Government and Competition and Markets Authority Responses to Committee's Second Report	HC 719
3rd Special Report	Sport in our communities: Government Response to Committee's Fourth Report	HC 761
4th Special Report	The future of public service broadcasting: Ofcom Response to Committee's Sixth Report of Session 2019–21	HC 832
5th Special	The Draft Online Safety Bill and the legal but harmful debate: Government Response to the Committee's Eighth	HC 1039

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1st Special Report	BBC Annual Report and Accounts 2018–19: TV licences for over 75s Government and the BBC's Responses to the Committee's Sixteenth Report of Session 2017–19	HC 98
2nd Special Report	The Covid-19 crisis and charities: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2019–21	HC 438
3rd Special Report	Impact of Covid-19 on DCMS sectors: First Report: Government Response to Committee's Third Report of Session 2019–21	HC 885
4th Special Report	Misinformation in the COVID-19 Infodemic: Government Response to the Committee's Second Report	HC 894