

Lord Blencathra - Restrictions on political activity while serving as a Board member of the Food Standards Agency

As part of a recent review of FSA governance, we are publishing the restrictions in place as to what Lord Blencathra can and cannot say in the House of Lords about Food Standards Agency business.

1. In addition to the general restrictions in Clause 12 of the Terms of Appointment ([footnote 1](#)), I will abide by clause 2.2 in the [Code of Conduct for Members of the Board of the FSA](#) ([footnote 2](#)) and not hold any post nor political office in any political party whether paid or not.

2. I will not attend any party political conference of my own volition. If any party, NGO or other organisation, whether or not at an annual conference, asks for me to attend a meeting as an FSA spokesperson, in accordance with clause 2.3 and 8.1 of the Code of Conduct for Members of the Board of the FSA ([footnote 3](#)) I will only do so if authorised by the Chair or Chief Executive of the FSA.

3. I will take no part whatsoever in any political campaigning of whatever sort in the course of an election or referendum campaign or at any other time.

4. In the House of Lords, I will not speak nor ask questions on any matters relating to the relevant work of the FSA, DHSC or Defra.

5. In attending the Council of Europe I will not make speeches on any matter relating to the relevant work of the FSA, DHSC and which may reflect badly on the FSA, DHSC or Defra.

6. Subject to paragraph 8, I will not undertake any significant political activity but am entitled to vote on any issue. Significant political activity is defined as ([footnote 4](#)) being employed by a political party, holding significant office in a party, standing as a candidate for a party in an election, having publicly spoken on behalf of a political party or having made significant donations or loans to a party. Significant loans and donations are those of a size which are reported to the Electoral Commission, in line with a central party's reporting threshold.

7. I will continue to take the Conservative Whip in the Lords. I will not comment on my voting nor explain it.

8. I will be mindful that potential conflicts of interest may arise other than those enumerated in this document. Should they arise, I will take appropriate advice on how to manage them.

9. With regards to the [Code of Conduct for Board Members of Public Bodies](#), and particularly section 4.1, DHSC is the appointing department, and advice and agreement under that section should be sought from DHSC.

10. DHSC may from time to time revise the terms of this document, including inserting, deleting, modifying, or restating any text, by giving reasonable notice in writing (including electronic correspondence). I will consult the FSA as to any proposals to revise the terms of this document. DHSC will inform the FSA Board of any revisions made.

11. In this document:

a) the phrase “any matters relating to the relevant work of the FSA, DHSC, or Defra” encompasses all of the work of the FSA, and matters relating to or overlapping with the FSA’s work that are within the purview of DHSC or Defra. By way of illustrative example, this is not intended to encompass unrelated matters such as flood defences (within the purview of Defra) or mental health services (within the purview of DHSC)

b) references to DHSC mean the Department of Health and Social Care and any department or public body to whom its functions may be assigned or transferred in the future;

c) references to Defra mean the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and any department or public body to whom its functions may be assigned or transferred in the future.

1. 12. Public speaking and political activity - On matters affecting the work of Food Standards Agency, you should not normally make political speeches or engage in other political activities. In cases of doubt, the guidance of the Food Standards Agency should be sought.
2. Exercise proper discretion when engaging in any political activities –Board Members are expected not to occupy paid party political posts or to hold particularly sensitive or high-profile unpaid roles in a political party, although they are free to engage in political activities other than making political speeches or engaging in similar activities on matters directly affecting the work of the FSA (in case of doubt, Board Members should seek advice from the Chief Executive)
3. 2.3 Board Members must not speak on a public platform or in the media and present themselves as an FSA Board Member unless that has been agreed by the Chair or Chief Executive. Where Board Members speak on a public platform in other capacities, they must ensure that there is no reasonable possibility that their comments could be seen to be attributed to, or represent the view of, the FSA.
4. This wording was used [in recruitment of a Chief Inspector for the CPS](#), which is also a non-ministerial department (like the FSA), as well as for appointments to a variety of other bodies.