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## Summary

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5 The allegation I investigated was that the Member had failed to register an interest, specifically a directorship of the UK Obstacle Sports Federation, under the relevant registration category, in line with the requirements of Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct.

I did not uphold the allegation.

10 I found no evidence that the Member does, or did, hold such a directorship, or other registerable interest, in the UK Obstacle Sports Federation. I accepted the evidence submitted by the UK Obstacle Sports Federation that the Member's initial inclusion on the UK Obstacle Sports Federation website as a Director was an error that has now been rectified.

## Mr Chris Evans MP: Resolution Letter

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### Letter from the Commissioner to the Complainant, 5 February 2020

I wrote to you on 6 January 2020 to say that I was beginning an inquiry into your allegation of a breach of House of Commons rules by Mr Chris Evans MP. I am  
5 writing now to let you know the outcome.

I have corresponded with Mr Evans and I have received correspondence from the President of the UK Obstacle Sports Federation. Having considered carefully the evidence that I have obtained, I do not uphold the allegation.

The allegation that Mr Evans holds, or did hold, a directorship of the UK Obstacle  
10 Sports Federation, which should have been registered as an interest in the Register of Members' Financial Interests under Paragraph 14 of the Code of Conduct, is refuted by the UK Obstacle Sports Federation. Their position is that Mr Evans was recorded in error on their original website as a director of the Federation. This is also the position taken by Mr Evans who reports although he was asked to consider  
15 an unpaid directorship, he did not confirm acceptance of that role. I have no basis to refute this information and, having reviewed the Federation's new website, the initial error made by the Federation has been rectified and Mr Evans' name no longer appears anywhere on their site. I have also cross referenced the information submitted by the Federation and Mr Evans against the details held by Companies  
20 House and can find no evidence that Mr Evans has at any time been listed as a director.

I have notified Mr Evans of my decision and the matter is now closed.

I will update my webpages and post the evidence pack here  
25 <https://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-financial-interests/parliamentary-commissioner-for-standards/complaints-and-investigations/allegations-the-commissioner-has-not-upheld/> on the Parliament website.

I will report briefly on the outcome to the Committee on Standards in due course.

Thank you for having brought this matter to my attention.

## Written evidence

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### 1. Letter from the Complainant to the Commissioner, 26 September 2019

Thank you for your letter of 08 October 2018 and Rectification document in which you inform me that you have concluded your investigation into Mr Chris Evans MP.  
5 I apologise for my delay in responding to you but I have been preoccupied with personal matters.

You state that you have "closed" the matter. However, I have not been given an opportunity to respond to your report. Your report has raised serious issues which must be addressed.

10 You have upheld my complaint and concluded that Mr Evans breached APPG rules by failing to meet the requirements for transparency and by publicising his book on the APPG website. Having read your Rectification document, it appears that Mr Evans has failed to provide accurate and honest responses to the questions asked of him by you in the course of your investigation. You may, in the circumstances, wish  
15 to conduct further enquiries.

I would like to bring the following matters from the Rectification document to your attention.

[Text irrelevant to the inquiry redacted]

20 This may have something to do with the relationship Mr Evans and [name redacted] enjoy with EB. Mr Evans and [name redacted] are Directors of fitness company UKOSF - along with an EB Director who also sits on the Board of that company. The President of UKOSF is an EB Consultant and member of the APPG. Please see attached link: <https://ukosf.org/commissions/#>

[Text irrelevant to the inquiry redacted]

### 25 2. Letter from the Commissioner to the Complainant, 6 January 2020

Thank you for your letter of 26 September 2019, which arrived here on 1 October 2019. Further to our updates of 12 November 2019 and 16 December 2019, I am writing to let you know that I have opened an investigation into a concern that Mr Evans may have failed to appropriately register his directorship of the UK Obstacle  
30 Sports Federation (UKOSF) on the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

I have decided that the other matters raised in your letter of 26 September will not be investigated for the following reasons.

[Text irrelevant to the inquiry redacted]

I enclose the Commissioner's Information Note, which sets out the procedure I follow. I am writing to the Member to let him know that I have opened this inquiry. Please note that, following the approval by the House of the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Delivery Report, I no longer routinely publish a list of current inquiries.

Your correspondence with my office, including this letter, is now part of the evidence for this inquiry and is protected by parliamentary privilege. You must not discuss this matter, or share the contents of our correspondence, with any third party.

I will contact you again when the inquiry is finished. I do not give progress reports during an inquiry. However, when the matter has been concluded my decision, the reasons for it and all the relevant evidence will be put into the public domain.

### 3. Letter from the Commissioner to Mr Chris Evans MP, 6 January 2020

You will recall that during 2018 you assisted me in resolving an inquiry concerning the administration of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Boxing. I have now received a belated follow-up complaint from the same complainant, [name redacted], which I enclose for your information.

I have informed [named redacted] that I do not intend to investigate all the allegations made in his letter of 26 September 2019. However, I do intend to proceed with an investigation into whether your directorship of the UK Obstacle Sports Federation (UKOSF) can be fairly viewed as a registerable interest.

I am writing to you now to seek your assistance with my inquiry.

#### **My inquiry**

My inquiry will focus on whether you have acted in breach of paragraph 14 of the House of Commons' Code of Conduct for Members through a potential failure to register your directorship of UKOSF on the Register of Member's financial interests.

#### **The Code of Conduct**

Paragraph 14 of the current Code states:

Members shall fulfil conscientiously the requirements of the House in respect of the registration of interests in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. They shall always be open and frank in drawing attention to any relevant interest in any proceeding of the House or

its Committees, and in any communications with Ministers, Members, public officials or public office holders.

Further to this, Chapter 1 of the Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members states at paragraphs 6 and 7:

5           Category 1: Employment and earnings

Threshold for registration

10           6. Members must register, subject to the paragraphs below, individual payments of more than £100 which they receive for any employment outside the House. They must also register individual payments of £100 or less once they have received a total of over £300 in payments of whatever size from the same source in a calendar year.

Requirements for registration

7. Under this category Members must register:

15           Any of the following received as a director or employee or earned in any other capacity:

a)       Salaries, fees and payments in kind; gifts received in recognition of services performed;

20           b)       Taxable expenses, allowances and benefits such as company cars;

c)       Redundancy and ex gratia payments;

d)       Income as a member of Lloyd's; and<sup>13</sup>

e)       Payments for opinion surveys (unless they fall below the registration threshold).

25       However, paragraph 8 of the same chapter and category goes on to state:

8. Members should not register under this category:

b) Unremunerated directorships (unless associated with, or a subsidiary of, a company or group of which the Member is a remunerated director)

5 Chapter 1 of the Guide to the Rules relating to the Conduct of Members later states at paragraph 55:

Category 8: Miscellaneous

Requirements for registration

55. Under this category Members must register:

10 a) Any relevant financial interest or material benefit which does not clearly fall into one of the other categories, including any shareholding which falls below the relevant threshold, or any other financial asset, including an asset held in trust, if the Member nevertheless considers that it meets the test of relevance; in other words, that it might reasonably be thought by others to influence his or her actions or words as a Member; and

15 b) Any other interest, if the Member considers that it might reasonably be thought by others to influence his or her actions or words as a Member in the same way as a financial interest. This might include an unpaid employment or directorship, or directorship of a company not currently trading, non-practising membership of a profession, or a fund established to defray legal costs arising out of the Member's work, but from which no benefit has yet been received.

I would be grateful to have your comments on this matter. In particular, please let me know:

- 25 1. Whether your directorship of UKOSF is a paid or unpaid position,
2. Whether in light of your response to question 1 and taking into account the relevant paragraphs of the Guide highlighted above, you wish to update your entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

It would be helpful to have evidence to support your responses.

30 **Important information**

As you will be aware, my inquiries are conducted in private. Following the decision taken by the House on 19 July 2018, I will not publish the fact that I am conducting

an inquiry into an allegation of an alleged breach of the Code of Conduct. My office will not comment on any aspect of the inquiry to third parties. They will answer direct factual questions about the processes I follow and the standards system more generally but will neither confirm nor deny that I have begun an inquiry.

## 5 Procedure

I enclose a copy of the Commissioner's Information Note, which sets out the procedure for inquiries. Please note that this has not yet been updated to reflect the changes flowing from the decision of 19 July 2018.

10 This letter and any subsequent correspondence between us in connection with this inquiry is protected by parliamentary privilege. It should be kept confidential until the outcome of my inquiry is published. All the relevant evidence, including our correspondence, will be published when I have concluded my work.

15 While I do not, at this stage, know whether it will be necessary to interview you about this matter, it would be open to you to be accompanied at any such interview. I am, of course, very happy to meet with you at any stage if you would find that helpful.

I should say now, as a matter of courtesy, that I may seek the advice of the House authorities and others as part of this inquiry.

## Action

20 I would be grateful to have your response to this letter as soon as possible and no later than Monday 20 January 2020.

Thank you for your cooperation with this matter.

## 4. Letter from Mr Chris Evans MP to the Commissioner, 10 January 2020

25 I write with reference to your letter dated 6th January about a potential breach of the parliamentary rules for failing to declare a directorship of the UK Obstacles Sports Federation.

I feel it would be helpful if I set out my involvement with the federation. In May 2019 I attended a meeting where it was agreed to set up an organisation to govern obstacles sports.

30 At that meeting I was asked to act as an unpaid director which I said I would consider. I heard no more about this matter until your letter. At no point did I agree to anything, sign any paperwork nor register as a director with Companies House.



Therefore, I do not believe I was ever a director of the organisation.

This is demonstrated in the organisation's entry at Companies House which can be viewed at <https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/11977123/officers> which shows I am not and have never been a director.

- 5 It is my understanding that my name was listed on their website as a director in error. I was not aware of this website until receipt of your letter.

10 After speaking to the organisation they have removed my name from their website and have confirmed I was not a director. They have also given me an assurance they will refrain from referring to me as having any official capacity in the organisation in future.

Since the initial meeting in May 2019, I have not attended another meeting with the UK Obstacles Sports Federation nor taken part in any of their events including their official launch. I have not received any remuneration from them whatsoever at any time.

- 15 As a Member of Parliament I have always been conscious of the need for transparency and honesty. I am often asked to participate in organisations, therefore when in doubt I have always sought advice. In this instance as I was never a director I believe there was never any need to register anything now or in the future.

- 20 Therefore, in answer to your two questions for the reasons outlined I can confirm I have not registered an interest nor do I intend to register one in future. I trust this explanation is acceptable and will help your investigation.

I am happy to meet with you in person to talk over any concerns you may have. However, I have to tell I am disappointed by the contents of [named redacted] email.

- 25 I care passionately about the sport of boxing and the good it does in some of the most deprived communities in this country. It seems to me the spurious claims [named redacted] keeps making about me, England Boxing and the Boxing APPG is undermining the hard work of the boxing community.

#### **5. Letter from the Commissioner to Mr Chris Evans MP, 15 January 2020**

- 30 Thank you for your thorough and prompt reply to my letter of 6 January 2020.

In your reply, you state that the UK Obstacles Sports Federation have confirmed that you have not been at any time a director of the federation. To assist in the completion of my inquiry, please could you send me a copy of that written confirmation.

Thank you for your continued assistance with this matter.

**6. Letter from Mr Chris Evans MP to the Commissioner, 24 January 2020**

Thank you for your reply to my letter of 6 January. You ask in your letter for confirmation that I have not been a director of the UK Obstacles Sports Federation.

- 5 Please find enclosed a letter I have received from Oner Avara who is the President of the organisation, stating that I am not a director and my listing on the website was an error which has now been removed.

I trust this will help your enquiry

10 **Enclosure: Letter dated 20 January 2020 from Oner Avara, President of the UK Obstacle Sport Federation**

This letter confirms that Chris Evans MP is not a director at UK Obstacle Sports Federation and has no official status within the organisation.

Any reference to Mr Evans as a director on our website was an error which has now been removed.

- 15 Please do not hesitate to contact Venessa Moffat, CEO, [email redacted] for further information.