

Press release: Pubs Code Adjudicator publishes statutory advice on MRO tenancy terms

Paul Newby and Fiona Dickie have today published statutory advice to provide clarity on the terms of Market Rent Only (MRO) tenancies following recent arbitration awards.

The PCA and Deputy PCA have reiterated the important point that a MRO proposal does not have to be by way of a new agreement. The advice stresses that it is the content rather than the form that is important.

Whatever the form of the individual MRO proposal, the terms have to be reasonable and consistent with the core principles of the Pubs Code; that there should be fair and lawful dealing and tied pub tenants should be no worse off than they would be if they remained tied.

“MRO is not the same as a negotiation on the open market and the pub-owning business should not take advantage of the fact that a tied pub tenant has limited negotiating power.

“The PCA will be likely to find it unreasonable for the pub-owning business to offer unattractive MRO tenancy terms if the intention is to persuade the tenant to stay tied,” the advice states.

The PCA expects pub-owning businesses to have meaningful negotiations with their tenants seeking a MRO tenancy. Tenants should not need to rely on arbitration by the PCA to get their Code MRO rights. Referrals for arbitration should be the exception and not the norm in the future.

Paul Newby, Pubs Code Adjudicator, said: “I understand that both sides of the industry have been looking for clarity on this issue and I am very pleased that following arbitration awards made by the Deputy PCA and myself we can now provide this statutory advice.

“The ability for a tied tenant to go free of tie is an important right introduced by the Pubs Code. Tenants have been facing high costs in pursuing MRO and we need to ensure these unnecessary barriers are eliminated.

“This advice gives a strong yet simple steer on what pub-owning businesses can reasonably ask from their tenants in a MRO-compliant tenancy and is a major step forward in delivering the MRO rights that Parliament has given tenants. I expect it to lead to meaningful negotiations that mean arbitration becomes the exception in the future.”

Fiona Dickie, Deputy Pubs Code Adjudicator, said: “The Code is legally complex and uncertainty surrounding the meaning of the MRO process has caused frustration. This advice will be a useful tool in clarifying for the benefit of all what the Code requires and how its two core principles should be

applied in practice to the MRO proposal.

“It is designed to support effective, balanced negotiation between tenants and pub-owning businesses, and reduce the number of cases that are referred for arbitration. I am confident that the arbitration process will now more efficiently and proportionately resolve any remaining MRO disputes where the parties cannot reach an agreement.”

Note to editors

The full statutory advice is available on the PCA website www.gov.uk/pca

News story: HMRC services during the cold weather

The adverse weather this week has been affecting our staff and contact centres across the country.

HMRC staff are working hard to keep as many services open as possible, but we have had to close some of our sites.

This means that waiting times on our phones lines may be longer than usual, and we have closed a small number of specialist phone lines.

We expect these services to be up and running again during the weekend and to be fully operational by the start of next week.

Our online services are still available, as is support through Twitter [@HMRCcustomers](https://twitter.com/HMRCcustomers) and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/HMRC).

Thank you for your continued patience.

Press release: Minister Field remarks to media at the February 2018 EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting

Upon arrival at the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels, Minister of State Mark Field said:

We are obviously very interested in playing our part today in the Venezuelan situation which is a dreadful humanitarian, political and diplomatic situation. We are obviously very keen to be supporting the Spanish who are leading on this and we need to move towards a united front to ensure there is a fully participatory, free and fair election in Venezuela.

We are going to talk about the Middle East Peace Plan... I hope that we are going to have an agreement that we need to move ahead and ensure that there is a two-state solution but also above all that America has to be part and parcel of this process.

We are also going to talk a little bit about Moldova. Many of you know obviously in Moldova there is a programme of economic and political reform being supported by all elements of the European Union.

[Minister Mark Field at the FAC](#)

Further information

- Follow Foreign Office Minister Mark Field [@MarkFieldUK](#)
- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
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[**News story: Secretary of State**](#)

Appoints Charity Commission Chair

Baroness Tina Stowell has been appointed by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport as the new Chair of the Charity Commission, for three years from 26 February 2018.

Baroness Stowell will take over from William Shawcross in the role.

Matt Hancock, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said:

Tina Stowell will be a brilliant chair of the Charity Commission and I am delighted she is taking up this role. It is an important time for the Commission, and the sector, and I know that she will work tirelessly to protect and promote the great work that charities do and ensure they uphold the highest standards of integrity. I would also like to thank William Shawcross for his hard work over the past six years.

Baroness Stowell said:

I am delighted to join the Charity Commission, and look forward to leading a strong board and a committed and expert staff through the challenges ahead. I will place the public interest at the heart of everything I do as Chair to build the public's trust in charities and the Commission as their regulator. To that end it is vital that we have a constructive, business-like relationship with all our stakeholders and I look forward to listening to a wide range of voices in the days and weeks ahead.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston was Leader of the House of Lords and the Lord Privy Seal until July 2016.

Tina Stowell was made a peer in January 2011 and joined the Government in September the same year. As a junior minister she led the landmark Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act through the House of Lords in 2013. She was promoted to Leader of the House of Lords and the Lord Privy Seal in 2014 and re-appointed to the same Cabinet post after the 2015 General Election.

Before joining the House of Lords Tina Stowell's career over the previous 25 years crisscrossed government, politics and the media. Until September 2010, she was the BBC's Head of Corporate Affairs.

She was a civil servant for ten years, working at the Ministry of Defence in London, the British Embassy in Washington and 10 Downing Street from 1991 to 1996. She left the Civil Service at the age of 28 and was awarded the MBE in the 1996 Queen's Birthday Honours List.

Notes to editors

- This appointment has been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments
- The Chair of Charity Commission is appointed by the Secretary of State. Remuneration for this role is £62,500 for up to two and a half days per week. The term of appointment will last for three years
- In accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last five years must be declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election. Baroness Tina Stowell has declared that she was leader of the Conservative Party in the House of Lords from 2014-2016; she has spoken on behalf of the Conservative Party and candidates during elections campaigns; and has canvassed on behalf of the Conservative during election campaigns. She has resigned the Conservative Whip in the House of Lords and become an independent, unaffiliated peer.

Statement to Parliament: Armed Forces' Pay Review Body Appointments

The Secretary of State for Defence (Rt Hon. Gavin Williamson CBE MP): I am pleased to announce that the Prime Minister has invited Mr John Steele to continue to serve as Chair of the Armed Forces' Pay Review Body for a further two-month term of office, commencing on 1 March 2018. This allows Mr Steele to draw Pay Round 18 to a conclusion.

I would also like to take this opportunity to announce that the Prime Minister has appointed Mr Peter Maddison as the next Chair of the Armed Forces' Pay Review Body. His appointment will commence on 1 March 2018 and run until 28 February 2021.

Both the extension and the appointment have been conducted in accordance with the guidance of the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments.