

Unit A, Brook Park East, Shirebrook, NG20 8RY

Tel: 0870 333 9400

Fax: 0870 333 9401

VAT: GB 898 4397 43

Iain Wright MP,
House of Commons,
London SW1 0AA.

16 May 2016

Dear Mr. Wright,

Treatment of employees by Sports Direct

Thank you for your letter dated 28th April 2016, in response to my letter to you dated 22nd April 2016.

Failure to address points raised

It is regrettable that you have failed to address (in substance at least) most if not all of the questions that I raised in that letter.

The points that you have failed to address and which I would now ask you to confirm (in each case in express terms and for the public record), are as follows:

- (i) I asked you whether your Committee claims a power to ask me questions on pain of sanction even if I agreed to attend before the Committee. Your response was that the decision as to whether I answered questions was a matter for me. This necessarily implies that your Committee does not claim any power to ask me questions on pain of sanction if I decide not to answer any questions that may be asked.

Please confirm (a) that you do not claim such a power and that I am at liberty not to answer any of your Committee's questions without the threat of contempt of Parliament being made if I do not answer; and (b) why, if the Committee does not claim such a power and if I have the choice as to whether to answer questions put to me, it is considered necessary to summon me to attend before the Committee at all. As already made clear I have agreed to answer questions at the company premises and have explained why I do not wish to appear before the Committee, at least initially, at Westminster.

- (ii) I asked you whether I would be entitled to legal representation before both your Committee and the full House of Commons. Your answer only covered legal representation before the Committee of Privileges and did not address the position as to legal representation both before your Committee and also before the full House of Commons.

Please confirm that I am entitled to be legally assisted (a) before your Committee; and (b) before the House of Commons, as well as before the Committee for Privileges (in the event of it being alleged or considered that I am or may be in contempt of Parliament).

- (iii) I asked you whether I would be entitled to call witnesses in the event of it being alleged that I am in contempt of Parliament. You have not even attempted to address that question. However, it appears from your letter that it would be necessary for your Committee to consider that there was a potential contempt before making a report to the House; for the House to consider that there was a potential contempt; before referring to the Committee of Privileges and then if the Committee of Privileges recommended that there was a contempt (and recommended a sanction) for the full House to consider whether to adopt the recommendation in whole or part.

Please, therefore, confirm whether it is accepted that I may call witnesses if necessary so as to establish, amongst other things, that there is no potential or actual contempt of Parliament and that I may call such witnesses before (as may be necessary): (a) your Committee; (b) the Committee of Privileges; and (c) the House.

Your reliance on the very general statement in Erskine May cannot exclude the possibility that there is a reasonable excuse for failing to attend before a Committee when formally summoned.

But please confirm whether you are saying that irrespective of the question of reasonable excuse you would automatically report my case to the House if I failed to attend following a formal summons.

- (iv) I asked you what safeguards would be provided in order to ensure that my fundamental rights were respected. You have not attempted to answer this question which is of obvious relevance to your inquiry both in terms of the Committee's questions to me and also with regard to any processes that you may set in train if you consider that I am in contempt.

Please confirm what provision is made to ensure that fundamental rights are respected throughout your Committee's processes (including what follows if you were to report matters to the House) including in terms of (a) the questions allowed to be put to witnesses and (b) the content of the Committee's final report.

You will note that I have referred specifically to the fundamental rights of due process, property and privacy.

- (v) I asked you whether there would be a right of appeal in respect of the processes referred to above and again you have failed to answer this.

Please confirm whether or not I may appeal against any decisions made or processes undertaken and if so to which tribunal or court.

Publication of only a selection of our correspondence

Apart from the above questions that you have failed to address, my second concern is that you have selectively published correspondence between us on your web site. This seems to have been intended to apply pressure on me. However, I note that you have not published my letter to you of 22nd April 2016 or your response of 28th April 2016.

Please confirm in express terms and for the public record that you will publish: (i) my letter to you of 22nd April 2016, (ii) your response of 28th April 2016, (iii) this letter and (iv) any further letters between us relating to the summons on your web site.

Publication of correspondence with other parties summoned to the hearing

My third concern is that you have only (and then only selectively) published correspondence between myself and your Committee. You have not published correspondence with other witnesses/parties from, for example, UNITE.

As a matter of fairness and consistency with your avowed '*commitment to transparency*' (see your letter to me dated 3rd March 2016) please confirm in express terms and for the public record that you will publish all correspondence with all witnesses to this Inquiry on your web site.

As a matter of extreme urgency, please provide in full and in the manner requested all the information requested above.

Offer of meeting

Finally, my offer to have the Committee attend the Sports Direct premises at Shirebrook remains open on the same basis as before, in that we would arrange the most convenient form of transport for you, including if helpful by helicopter. This will have the clear benefit of (i) allowing the Committee to see the working conditions at Shirebrook first hand; and (ii) in the event of me being unable to answer any questions your Committee may have, making available others in real time who are in a better position to assist you.

I am available 24/7 to facilitate this meeting at Shirebrook.

If the Committee visits Shirebrook on the basis set out above before 6th June 2016, then I would agree to attend before your Committee at Westminster on 7th June 2016 at a time to be agreed.

Yours sincerely

Mike Ashley