



Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Pre-appointment Hearing: Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public life, HC 243

Wednesday 29 November 2023

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Members present: Mr William Wragg (Chair); Ronnie Cowan; Jo Gideon; John McDonnell; Damien Moore; Tom Randall; Lloyd Russell-Moyle.

Questions 1 - 29

Witness

I: Douglas Chalmers, the Government's preferred candidate, Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

Examination of witness

Witness: Douglas Chalmers.

Q1 **Chair:** Good afternoon and welcome to the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee. Today the Committee is holding a pre-appointment hearing for the Government's preferred candidate for the role of Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, Mr Douglas Chalmers.

The committee was established by John Major in 1994 to advise Prime Ministers on ethical standards in public life, and continues to be a cornerstone of the framework governing the behaviour of those in public life. The Committee would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to the previous chair of the committee, Lord Evans, for his hard work and dedication in the role, and to wish him well for the future.

Good afternoon, Mr Chalmers. Please introduce yourself for the record.

Douglas Chalmers: Douglas McKenzie Chalmers, currently Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

Q2 **Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. The first question comes from me. You have confirmed, Mr Chalmers, that you were encouraged to apply for the role by the Cabinet Office. Who specifically made that approach?



Douglas Chalmers: I will take a step back a little bit. I think I was entering my third year in the college, and many had advised me that around that time I should look for a second string—something to take me outside the college bubble, so that I can keep creativity and bring something else to the college community. I had not started looking actively at that stage.

I received a pretty anodyne, staff-level email from the Cabinet Office that had some numbers on it. That brought the committee to my attention. I was aware of the committee from my time in Whitehall before, and of the Nolan principles. I started to look a bit further. I saw the advert in things like LinkedIn. I then spoke to a number of others, such as the secretariat, to confirm that the two appointments might work together. Then I decided that this was something I cared deeply about, and decided to volunteer, and I entered the application process.

Q3 **Chair:** Were you given any indication as to why you particularly were encouraged to apply for that role?

Douglas Chalmers: I don't know for sure, but I think, as you will have seen, there was an extension to the pull to get candidates in at that point. I believe that it was Jeremy Quin in the Cabinet Office, who I had worked alongside in the Ministry of Defence—not in the same area, but he was aware of me—and he was the Minister for the Cabinet Office, I think, at that stage. I am guessing that he put my hat in the ring when they were looking for people to email.

Q4 **Chair:** Other than those you have mentioned, was there anybody else in Government who you spoke with before applying?

Douglas Chalmers: Not before applying.

Q5 **Chair:** As you said in your introduction, you are currently Master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, having previously spent your career in the British Army. What experience have you had of standards in public life and of the Nolan principles?

Douglas Chalmers: I will start with the Nolan principles. As I mentioned, I was aware of them, because I had a sabbatical year in which I did an Mphil, and my thesis topic was on the problems of co-ordinating Government Departments. In the process of that research, I came across the Nolan principles and the committee. It resonated because my research took place at the time when the Army was reviewing its values and standards—in about 2007, 2008. That is what brought me to it.

As I started to move through my career and worked more with civil servants, the awareness of the Nolan principles in particular struck more. There was that alignment. For example, there are values of selflessness and integrity in both sets of values and standards. I was very fortunate to be part of a national leaders cohort that went through the National Leadership Centre. That allowed me to have a better look at those



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principles, and the committee's work as it applies to other parts of public life, in the main. That is how I became aware of the values and principles of public life.

On my own understanding of them, as I mentioned, I had 37 years in the services, and the importance of values and standards has been taught to me from the beginning. As I have gone through my service, particularly after they were refreshed in about 2008, I found them really helpful. I would write them down at the front of my notebooks. Particularly in some pretty turbulent and chaotic times, I found them really helpful to refer back to, mainly because they allowed me to attain perspective; they pulled me out of the moment. Also, setting standards around them, and talking about them regularly, allowed me to set a good framework for empowering commanders in other units that were working with me.

All of that is on top of what I passionately believe, which is that the consistent application of values and standards is the bedrock of trust and confidence. For any unit I have been in, that is absolutely critical if innovation and initiative is to be allowed to go further forward.

That is my military service. I am now obviously in a very different world, but I have found that the need for values and standards, among students and academics, still remains very strong. In particular, students today care deeply about the standards of behaviour they expect around them and within themselves. That has given me another feel for why these really matter. The students feel it is one of the foundation stones of our democracy going forward.

Q6 **Chair:** Thank you. Can you confirm that other than your post at Emmanuel College, you don't hold any other remunerated appointments?

Douglas Chalmers: I do the very odd lecture that might have a small fee attached to it, but nothing more than that.

Q7 **Chair:** The expectation is that you will dedicate, on average, five to six days a month to the role of Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, but it can be more demanding, depending on the work of the committee. Assuming master of the college is a full-time role—is that correct?

Douglas Chalmers: It is, yes.

Chair: Can you reassure us that you will be able to commit sufficient time to the role for which you are before us today?

Douglas Chalmers: This is something I was very clear about as I went through the process, and the subject of one of the early conversations I had with the secretariat, just to see if my way of working would work with the committee going forward. I will start off by saying that I think that the two roles slightly overlap, in that by being in the Cambridge ecosystem, my ability to access some of the academics and researchers who are inside that, which I think will have some utility, will be of great



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use. As importantly, the student body, who are curious about this appointment, will hold me to account. I think that will give me a really good perspective for how that generation perceives some of the elements going forward. I think there is an overlap, in that they are not going to be neatly compartmentalised. As the committee's work is public, there will be interest from the people I am with day to day, which I think will be useful and will bring their perspectives and insights to it.

Since Covid, we have learned about Zoom and remote conference calls, and indeed the committee operated that way for quite some time, even in taking evidence over that period. I am sure that with careful diary management between the two, we will be able to make that work during the day.

The other bit you will have seen from my questionnaire is that I can allocate a working day a week during term time to being physically here in London. I think that does matter, because unlike my predecessors, I don't have the side-conversations, or the moving through Parliament regularly, that would allow me to build relationships with some of the people I will need to build them with to do this role well. I will allocate a working day a week during term time to be physically in London to start to build those relationships.

Out of term time, the pressure is less intense. I can be here more, and we will just be careful about when we start reports, reviews, or a heavy load of evidence taking, and when we are launching and media might be required, but I think all of that is manageable.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed.

Q8 Damien Moore: Good afternoon. In the most recent annual report, Lord Evans complained that too many CSPL reports were going without response from the Government, and major recommendations have often been rejected. You said that you will be auditing the uptake of recommendations by Government. Is that to elicit outstanding responses to recommendations and, if not, what do you propose to do about these?

Douglas Chalmers: In the run-up to this, I have read a lot of the reports going back over many years, and there is quite a canon of reports to go back to now. I believe in continuity, and not rewriting something that has already been written, but carrying on. The audit's first purpose is to give me a better understanding of what has been done, what has been actioned, and how reports and recommendations that were accepted a long time ago have been actioned and then evolved by Government since. As you know, for some of the more recent reports, the Government made commitments, but may not have accepted recommendations directly. In fact, I think some of them very neatly overlap with reports that have come out of this Committee. I have no authority to action, follow up or hold to account, but I think the committee can play a useful role as a sort of nagging conscience when a commitment is made and there is a need to follow up on it.



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Q9 **Damien Moore:** What about any future recommendations? How do you propose to deal with those?

Douglas Chalmers: In very much the same way, I think. We are an independent body. We will take our evidence where we can, test that evidence, come up with a recommendation, and present that recommendation. Then, over time, as the Government respond to it, we will add it to the list, noting whether it was accepted, or why it was not accepted. Trying to get an understanding of why it was not accepted will be quite important, so that we know how, in the years to come, we might revisit it. Often the Government say, "Will keep under review", and therefore at the back of my mind is that we will keep it under review as we go forward.

Q10 **Ronnie Cowan:** I want to pursue that a little bit further. As you just said, you have no authority. You come from a distinguished career in the military, where you had authority. It is a structure, necessarily; you give an order, and you expect it to be taken. How will you adapt that experience to this situation, where you could be saying quite clearly, "This report has not been followed up on," and it isn't followed up on? Westminster is the place where reports go to die.

Douglas Chalmers: I found as a senior officer, and particularly in my last role in the military as the Deputy Chief of Defence Staff, I had no real authority over other Departments. To create policy, we had to align with the Foreign Office and DFID, as they were before it became the FCDO. That was on the power of argument and negotiation. For the last two and a bit years, I have been in a Cambridge college, where I can assure you my authority is very limited. I think that the power of the argument, doing your homework, building relationships with individuals and having a persuasive argument is the key. From what I have seen, the real core of the committee's work is to take an area that needs evolving or adaptation, research it thoroughly and then build a very credible case that is difficult to ignore.

Q11 **Ronnie Cowan:** Do you believe you have the soft skills to make that happen?

Douglas Chalmers: I believe I do, and it is one of the things that I factored in when I was coming here, because your point is very well made: how is one to be independent, which is slightly different from being in a fixed hierarchy, while using that to ensure that recommendations from the committee, which I believe are a public good, resonate with the Government of the day?

Q12 **Ronnie Cowan:** Lord Evans has expressed a concern that we might have entered a post-Nolan age. What are your views on that? Have we?

Douglas Chalmers: In the process of preparing for this, I have read over quite a few lectures. My takeaway from that lecture is that Lord Evans was not saying that we were entering a post-Nolan age. He was responding to an assertion in a series of articles that claimed we were



moving into that. I think in his lecture he defends the fact that the principles remain valid, and can be seen to be deeply embedded in many of our public sector institutions today. My personal belief is that that is very true. I think that these principles remain valid, and they matter. I mentioned before that they are the foundation of our democracy; they are linked to our economic success and the example that we present externally on the global field, and also add weight to our foreign policy. Why do I say that? I touched on it in one of my earlier answers. They provide a framework for navigating many of the challenges that face us today, enable us to retain perspective, and ensure that when decisions are made on behalf of the public, using the public purse, they are made in the best of ways going forward.

The principles still guard against entitlement or hubris, both of which I think can grow over time. That is one of the reasons why this needs constant vigilance. I have seen in many walks of life that the longer people stay, the more complacency starts to build in. There was a report recently by the Constitution Unit, based on quite a large survey, made over a number of years. What comes out from it is that the public feel very strongly that these principles still matter, particularly honesty and integrity in how the Government goes forward.

I think your point is quite right: the words are the same, and I think the principles have stood the test of time. It is 27-odd years since they were first put out. However, the definition beneath them has evolved and probably will continue to evolve. Most recently, under the leadership one, respect for others was added in as part of the descriptor, and I think those descriptors will continue to evolve and adapt to what the public expectation is.

Q13 **Ronnie Cowan:** Lord Evans may have flagged up what he thought might be a problem, but do you believe that we are moving towards a post-Nolan age? I am asking this on the back of what we heard recently through the Covid inquiry. I am not putting words in your mouth, but I am watching that and thinking, "These people have not acted with accountability, openness or honesty, or shown great leadership."

Douglas Chalmers: I don't think we are.

Q14 **Ronnie Cowan:** How can you say that when we have all seen the evidence coming out of the Covid inquiry?

Douglas Chalmers: I think that the Covid inquiry does not necessarily reflect the public's reaction to some of the stuff that we are seeing. The post-Nolan element, if I use that phrase, would more reflect how the public view these things. I think there is very clear evidence that the public still view these principles and standards as being very, very important to go forward. What I think is a challenge is to make sure that we continue to talk about them, evolve them and learn from them as best as possible throughout all aspects of public life. They are not something that can just be put on a piece of paper and stuck on a noticeboard in the



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back of an area. I think that is the body of work, and that is one of the reasons why the committee was formed in the beginning: to run those running repairs, and keep the conversation and dialogue about the principles live, so that they are discussed and used, rather than just tick-boxed.

Q15 Ronnie Cowan: If the public continue to believe in them, as I believe they should, but the politicians are not believing in them, what can you do about that?

Douglas Chalmers: Very much what the committee has been doing over time. If you go down the list of recommendations that have gone through, the different regulators and systems that have been brought in over the last 27 or 28 years, and the structure for safeguarding and support those principles, there has been good work. The committee is a key element—alongside this Committee, I can say, having read some of your reports—in safeguarding principles going into the future.

Q16 Ronnie Cowan: With all respect, isn't it lacking?

Douglas Chalmers: From some of what we see in the media daily, that would be true in some respects, but I have seen, from my time in Whitehall and everywhere else I have been, that the vast majority of people are still trying to do the right thing on behalf of the public. They still believe in service. It has always been the case, if you go all the way back to the classics. People will deviate from the standards. That goes back to the need for vigilance to things like hubris and entitlement creeping in. It is why we need to keep this conversation alive.

Q17 John McDonnell: I completely agree with you about the public support for the principles. I think what the Covid inquiry demonstrates is the public's concern about the lack of adherence by politicians to the principles themselves. Therefore, you are in a really difficult role: you have to ensure not just that the principles are known, but that they are adhered to. What would bring about your resignation?

Douglas Chalmers: If we had a routine of putting in recommendations that were ignored, that is probably something that would factor in my mind. You will have seen my questionnaire. You asked me to list how I think my tenure should be judged. One point is my relationship with the other regulators, because I a key part of the role for me, if appointed, is chairing an advisory body, but there are many other regulators doing the casework and the hard yards day to day. The first thing is how I connect with them, and how I get a feel for the challenges they are facing. What help or change might they feel is needed to enable them to do their job better? That is the first thing. The second is the quality of the reports.

The third thing I put down, which is not in my gift, is the level of acceptance of the recommendations that we put in. If the answer to that last one was zero, I am probably not doing a very good job to some degree, and that would make me question things. Context is all, but this



is going to absorb a lot of energy and time on my part, so that would make me question: "Is it a good use of my time?"

- Q18 **Jo Gideon:** We have talked a lot about the Nolan principles, and you have said that they are as relevant today as they ever were, but do you think they are due for revision after so long?

Douglas Chalmers: As I sit here now, I don't think so. As I say, I think the descriptors of the principles are something to keep an eye on as we go forward. Most recently, respect for others was brought into leadership. Making sure that the descriptors still resonate with the public is key. They seem sound now, and that is why I mentioned the report that talks about them. As I sit here today I don't, but I think we need to keep an eye on the descriptors, particularly over the length of my tenure. We will see things like machine learning tools grow in the next five years quite exponentially, and that might be something that we will have to factor in.

- Q19 **Jo Gideon:** The public profile of some of those holding public appointments has risen, and some have attracted unwarranted public attention, and even threats. How much of a concern is this to you, and how will you respond if you are subject to this?

Douglas Chalmers: I think public attention is right. I am not someone who has sought public attention, but also I am not one who has avoided it. I have been a coalition spokesman, for example, in the past, and I do some stuff in the university and within the college, so I won't avoid it. If it needs to be done to advance the case, I will speak on behalf of the committee, either through the principles, carrying on the discussion we have just been having, or in launching a report after it has been considered, right through to making sure others pick up on the work that the committee is doing. Transparent debate with the media and other think-tanks—bodies such as the Institute for Government or the Constitution Unit—will be really helpful in ensuring that our proposals are robust, and are challenged as they go further.

Your question links to intimidation. Not surprisingly, that is not completely absent from my background. It is something that is there; I will do my best to avoid it, but I won't shy away from it. Generally speaking, it does not work well with me.

- Q20 **Tom Randall:** Mr Chalmers, how important do you think it is to build a consensus about the role of standards in public life? Given that we have had over the last few years you might say quite a volatile political environment, how would you go about building a consensus across the board as to the role of standards in public life?

Douglas Chalmers: I will deal with the partisan question first, because I think consensus is really important. I will try to explain why. I think the structure of the committee, which has three political members and independent members, is very strong. By having the political members there, we will have the party political conversations inside the committee, which avoids us trying to negotiate from the committee into outside of it,



which I think would be very difficult. By having it inside the committee, I think we should be able to test those arguments. I don't underestimate the challenges as chair, but I think we will be able to do good work within the committee as a result of the structure of it.

I think that consensus is really important. Don't forget, this is all for public life; there are elected and unelected people who serve the public generally. This must not become that dusty sheet stuck away in a corner. People have to agree to the principles, and must want to use them, rather than just ticking the box and then moving on to the next area. Achieving a consensus gives a greater chance of them being adopted and used, rather than them being nodded through but then ignored. I also think that if there is strong consensus—this touches on the conversation we were having earlier—there is a greater chance of the recommendations being picked up and taken on by the Government themselves. I think that consensus is really important.

Q21 Tom Randall: In trying to build that consensus, there may also be moments when you have to deliver unpalatable truth to Government. How would you balance that sort of scenario where you are trying to build consensus and speak truth to power?

Douglas Chalmers: I touched on it earlier. The other bit that I am very alive to with this is that the committee is independent. That is fairly new for me in Government service, because I have been within an hierarchy before. Navigating the independent nature of it, while still having some form of internal influence, is tricky, but I think it is important, because we do form a public good. If we have picked it up, and it has resonated through all of the research that we have done and been voiced by a large number of voices, I have to carry forward what we have heard, and what the research has identified.

Q22 Tom Randall: On a slightly separate note, what are your priorities for new inquiries that the committee should undertake? Why have you decided what you think they should be doing?

Douglas Chalmers: You saw that in my questionnaire. I am smiling because I knew this one would come. My first element very much is to highlight that I know that I am going to be a chair; I am not becoming a director. My first priority, as you have seen in my statement, is very much to listen, and to get to know the committee—the individuals. That is one of the reasons for auditing what has been done before—so I know what the canon of literature that has been building up over time is saying to us, and what the committee effectively has as its foundation. I will get to know all the various committee members, and also build relationships with the other regulators outside that are doing the work daily. No. 1 for me is building that relationship. If I, as chair, listen to them, that will feed back to me areas in which attention might be required if we are to go forward. Out of that, I think I should be able to set parameters for the next inquiry. I am also aware, of course, that the Prime Minister could direct us to look at a specific area at any time.



I know that you are going to ask me about what is in my mind as I take over at this point. I put in the questionnaire there are three issues that, as I have those conversations, I will sow the seed into people's minds to see whether they resonate with the committee members and the other regulators. On the first one, I put that the committee did a really good report on artificial intelligence and public standards back in 2020. It was quite prescient, but that whole world is moving pretty fast, so at some time in my tenure, a return to it would be wise. I have been involved in this in my old life, and a little bit since I was at Cambridge, where I paid attention to lectures and so on. There is the issue of how some of these machine learning tools are steered to learn, and the foundation models that govern them. Can they be coded in such a way that things like the Nolan principles can be put in there, so that when they bounce across, they know they have to revert back? It can be done elsewhere. That is an area I think I would not mind exploring.

Another area is the trustworthiness of the data that is fed into the machines, and identifying where there are gaps of data where the machines will then be going. I think over our tenure we will see more and more aspects of public life using machine learning tools to help with decision making. These principles need to govern decision making, and I don't see any reason why we should not make sure that these tools are governed in a similar manner. The committee's report mentioned setting procurement requirements, and there might be something in there of interest. That is the first one.

The second one is a return to local government. A really good report was presented back in 2019, and it took a while for the Government to respond. The world has moved on pretty fast since then, and that was one of the areas where the Government's response was, "We will keep this under review." That might be something to come back to. That is my second area where I want to test and resonate.

The last one is the very large social care and health services environment. You can pick up public concern over that. There might be something for us to look at there. Those are three issues of interest, before I have even moved into the role or had any conversations. That is why I return to my final caveat: I am a chair, not a director, and I will be steered by what I hear, but those are the three issues that I would have in mind, going into this job, as being worthy of a scratch.

Q23 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** Following the last round of appointments, Lord Evans wrote to the then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to register concern about the lack of diversity on the committee. How important is it that the committee is diverse? How can you ensure that diversity? Underlying all that, what is your understanding of diversity in the context of the Nolan principles?

Douglas Chalmers: I do think that diversity is very important. I have been through the journey in which that has been brought in over life. Having diverse teams on operations, here in Whitehall, and, as



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importantly, on many of the committees I sit on in the university and the college, makes for much better, sustainable decisions. Diversity for me in a Cambridge environment runs across disciplines, but also runs across age, from the 18-year-old undergraduates through to the 80 or 90-year-old fellows, as does gender, ethnicity and, as importantly, background. I think that diversity really does matter.

The structure of the committee, as set, with its political members and its independent members, points in that direction. It brings in the political dynamic that we spoke about, so that it can be held inside. The make-up of the independent members obviously then would be a way of getting after the other aspects of diversity. My understanding of my role in ensuring that is that I would chair the advisory assessment panel, which points towards Ministers' selections; I think that was recently done. I would have influence at that stage, but I would not own the final decision. What I would have quite a heavy stamp on—and there is authority within the committee to do this—is the diversity of people that we speak to when we are doing our research, in bringing something together. The committee has a very good track record of speaking to a wide range of experts and communities that are affected by the early look. That is a line of approach and inquiry that I wish to continue.

Q24 **Lloyd Russell-Moyle:** CSPL will have only a small budget and very limited resources. How do you propose, first of all, to work within that constraint? More importantly, you have just mentioned trying to reach out to communities that are affected. Real reach-out, and true consultation with diverse communities, is not usually a cheap or quick process.

Douglas Chalmers: No. I don't know the figures involved, but having worked in Government, I don't expect them to be comfortable reading as and when I do.

On what to do about it, if appointed, once I have gained a granular feel for how the budget is and where the areas are, I think this will manifest itself in two ways. One is what I call regular running of the committee—the committee doing its business of advancing the Nolan principles and running itself. That is about making sure that the budget is sufficient for regular running of our core. When we have decided on an area of inquiry and research, the issue will be refining what that research programme will be, and the costs required to do it. One would be an annual budget; I can see myself pitching for funds to ensure that a line of inquiry is done. It is very much as you said: if we are to reach out across those bids, and get access, things like surveys or travel to meet communities does not come without cost, and I would need a plan for that.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle: Good luck.

Douglas Chalmers: I will do my best.

Q25 **John McDonnell:** The committee has carried quite a few vacancies for



quite a while, and there is a vacancy for an independent member at the moment. What do you propose to do to resolve that problem?

Douglas Chalmers: My Google check showed that the process for selecting that independent member is pretty far advanced, if I understand it right, looking at the timelines. I wouldn't, therefore, be surprised if the Ministers are waiting to settle on the chair, and then make a judgment on the shortlist. Indeed, I hope that is what they are doing, because that points back to the diversity question—to trying to make sure that the balance is right.

I am very keen that we have a full suite of independent members, because that balances out the committee as a whole, but also reflects the load. You mentioned that it is not a huge committee, and the budget is not huge, but the work is a lot, and the independent members carry quite a lot of that load, so I would be very keen to get full representation.

Q26 **John McDonnell:** You mentioned this earlier: there is quite an alphabet soup of different bodies involved. For the record, I will run through them. The watchdogs include the Civil Service Commissioner, the Commissioner for Public Appointments, the Chair of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments, and the Independent Adviser on Ministers' Interests. It is about the relationship you establish with these different bodies, all of whom play important roles. Do you think there is a role for the chair in attempting co-ordination of these bodies?

Douglas Chalmers: I think having a relationship, as we touched on before, will be critical for me. Through them, I will get a feel for the pressures and tensions, and for the things that are not working for them, that they need help with. As we are advisory and they are regulatory, and from where I sit today and from what I understand, I don't see a co-ordinating role, but I do see a convening role. I think we can bring people together, and in fact I think Lord Evans did it quite successfully, so that we can share best practice in areas. I see a convening role at this stage, yes.

Q27 **John McDonnell:** Being a host who brings this together would be worth while.

Douglas Chalmers: Yes.

Q28 **Chair:** You will be relieved to know that this is the final question in this relatively brief session, Mr Chalmers. You have suggested that in your term as Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, you will be judged on whether awareness of the Nolan principles has been deepened, the strength of the relationships built across the standards landscape, which Mr McDonnell referred to, and the extent, importantly, to which your recommendations are accepted. What do you see as the biggest challenges in achieving those laudable aims?

Douglas Chalmers: We have sort of covered it. The first one is ensuring that when we have an inquiry that we wish to follow up on, there is a



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budget to make sure that we do it properly. I will make my best pitch, and will do my best to ensure that. That is within the manageable areas.

The harder one is the adoption rate of the committee's recommendations. I put in the questionnaire that that is not within our full control, and our independence does matter, which is something we talked about before. We are talking about a public good, and I will do my best to do this in the way you described earlier: by ensuring that our recommendations are the result of full and tested research, and that the argument is as persuasive as possible.

Q29 **Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr Chalmers. If there are no further questions from members of the Committee, I thank you very much indeed for attending this afternoon. You will be hearing very, very soon from the Committee.

Douglas Chalmers: Thank you very much for giving your time today. I am very alive to the fact that the committees overlap, so if appointed, I look forward to continuing these conversations going into the future.

Chair: As do we. Thank you.