

Liaison Sub-Committee on Scrutiny of Strategic Thinking in Government

Oral evidence: Scrutiny of Strategic Thinking in Government, HC 31

Tuesday 19 March 2024

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Sir Bernard Jenkin (Chair); Harriett Baldwin; Sir Robert Buckland; Liam Byrne; Angus Brendan MacNeil; Iain Stewart.

Questions 76-119

Witnesses

[I](#): Sophie Daud, Co-founder of the Youth Negotiators Academy and Founder of Elect Youth, and Sophie Howe, formerly Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, 2016-2022.

[II](#): The Rt Hon John Glen MP, Minister for the Cabinet Office, and Simon Case CVO, Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Sophie Daud and Sophie Howe.

Q76 Chair: Welcome to this session of the Liaison Sub-Committee, which is looking at the effectiveness of Select Committees in the scrutiny of strategic thinking in Government. We are joined by our two witnesses, Sophie Daud, co-founder of the Youth Negotiators Academy, and Sophie Howe, formerly the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. In this relatively short session, we are particularly interested in how strategic thinking should address future generations' aspirations. We all say we want a country that our children and grandchildren will be pleased to live in, but how do we engage those people in the formation of the strategy that will determine what their country will be like in 10, 20, 30, 40 years' time?

I will kick off the questioning. In our written evidence, our attention has been drawn to how encouraging a longer-term perspective in the current election cycle can enable Governments to do more decision making differently. How can a better balance towards the long term be achieved and what are the risks of not doing so?

Sophie Howe: I think that the risks of not doing so are things that we are seeing and encountering at the moment—*[Interruption.]*

Chair: You have frozen.

Sophie Howe: There is the ecological crisis. There are issues around generational poverty and the challenges we have in terms of health, with life expectancy in particular plateauing and long-term health conditions, and of course whether or not we are prepared for an ageing population. There are also issues around AI and automation. All of those issues are problematic because they require long-term interventions over parliamentary cycles. Perhaps that is why—because we do not have that long-term perspective—there are particular challenges with these issues.

Perhaps there are ways around that. First, there is something around the setting of long-term goals for a country. I know that that sounds like, “How does that work in electoral cycles?”, but it is something that we have done in Wales through the passing of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, where seven long-term goals have been set out in law, so they do not change from one political cycle to the next. They set a vision for the Wales that we want to leave behind to future generations. That vision and those goals were drawn through a national dialogue with citizens.

It is quite unusual for Governments to have open and future-focused dialogue with citizens. We do a lot of consultation and engagement, but that tends to be focused on short-term or quite narrow policy objectives. This was a bigger conversation around the future and what we want to leave behind.

The setting of those long-term goals is important for a number of reasons. First, as I said, it sets the vision for the Wales that we want. I described this to someone the other day and they used an interesting analogy around the use of a satnav: if you want to go somewhere, you programme the address into your satnav and it will take you there eventually. There might be roadblocks, changes or things that your satnav is anticipating—it is clever at doing that now in terms of congestion or whatever—but ultimately it will get you there.

If we do not have a long-term vision of where we want to go, Government policy is only responding in the short term, not knowing whether the things that it is doing will take us as a country to a set of long-term objectives and a long-term vision. That is why I think the long-term vision is really important.

I will wrap up, because I know we are short on time, by saying there are other things that you need to build into a system to enable this to happen—the long-term vision and also the capability and capacity within a system to think about the long term. I am talking about training, development, capability and capacity building among the civil service, for example, on how we do foresight, how we work with communities and experts to do scenario planning, and how well we use future trends in our

policy development. That is also a really important part of embedding long-term thinking into a system.

Sophie Daud: Thank you for having me here, and it is a pleasure to see you again, Sophie. I will quickly introduce myself because perhaps my credentials and background do not speak for themselves in the same way that Sophie's do. I am an intergenerational justice advocate. I have spent the last several years of my career reshaping public spaces to help better involve young people's voices and to achieve more intergenerationally just outcomes, and also supporting and working directly with young people to help them most effectively influence their spaces.

As examples of those, I chaired all the youth engagement into the UK's G7 presidency back in 2021, supporting more than 50,000 young people's voices to input into the decision-making process. More recently, I co-founded the Youth Negotiators Academy, which works with countries around the world and trains young people to become international diplomats. Our first programme has trained more than 200 young people to become climate change negotiators. Effectively, I come to this space as an intergenerational justice advocate.

I would like to do the same thing that Sophie did and start with the risks. Sophie articulately explained some of the bigger-picture risks of not thinking long term, and those bigger policy objectives. Perhaps I can take that down to a slightly more granular level. The Lords inquiry into intergenerational unfairness back in 2019 found that the action and inaction of successive Governments in failing to properly account for intergenerational issues has resulted in some really quite poor outcomes for younger generations today. They tend to do less well than older generations across a range of social measures, including employment and housing. I know that the young people who I work with would definitely want me to talk about the impending climate crisis that we are facing as a good example of how failing to properly think through the long-term consequences of issues really affects them and their everyday lives, in terms of their physical and mental health.

More broadly than that, yes, there are the individual and systemic issues, but I also think they pose a fundamental threat to our democracy. The Apolitical Foundation talks about a vicious cycle of distrust where, when a particular group's views and ideas are not properly represented or supported in policy outcomes, they tend to identify and participate less with political processes. That is exactly what we are seeing with young people in terms of their poorer outcomes. Young people do not feel like the Government act in their interests or on their behalf. They then do not turn out to vote, and then, most appallingly of all, they are most dissatisfied with democracy, more so than any other generation at a similar time in their lives. Alarming, they are more open to authoritarian forms of government and military rule. It is not just a question around social and political outcomes; it is actually about democracy.

To back up and explain what I think you can do about that, Sophie and several other witnesses have given you great examples of the processes



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you can put in place to help drive more long-term strategic thinking. I actually think it is a lot about the people. In the same way that we want to improve women's outcomes or racial disparities in politics and policy by having more representation of those groups, we need to have that for young people today in politics.

The average age of MPs is 50, the average age of councillors is 57.3, and across the pond the two people vying for the top spot are both over the age of 70. Just 3% of our politicians are under the age of 30, despite the fact that more than a third of Britain's population are in that age group. We cannot expect intergenerational equity, nor multiple generations' perspectives and views to be considered in decision making if those generations are not at the decision-making table.

I have got plenty of experience in working to support more young people into decision-making positions in diplomacy, and this year I will be launching a programme to support more young people to stand as politicians in this country. I think that genuinely will drive a systemic shift in how different generations' perspectives are valued in decision making.

Q77 Sir Robert Buckland: Thank you for reminding us, Sophie, that in American terms everyone on this Committee is a mere child. We are extremely grateful to be reminded of our youth.

You make an important point about the generational gap of understanding. The two strands we are hearing are a more integrated approach and a more long-term approach, integrated across national Government, the nations and local government. What can we learn from the nations within the UK and internationally about how we establish that more integrated and long-term approach? Perhaps Sophie Howe should go first.

Sophie Howe: I have referenced briefly the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, so I will give more detail about that. It does a number of things. I have talked about the setting out of the seven long-term wellbeing goals. There are duties on all the main public institutions in Wales—the Welsh Government and Ministers, all our local authorities, our health boards, and our national institutions such as Public Health Wales and Natural Resources Wales—to set objectives that maximise their contribution to all seven of those goals. That runs throughout all decision-making processes: how they spend their money; how they do financial planning; how they procure; risk management; asset planning; and workforce planning. That also means that every decision is working towards that set of long-term goals.

The other principle in the legislation is that public institutions must demonstrate how they are applying five ways of working, or the sustainable development principle as set out in law. That is, they must show: how they consider the long-term impact of the things that they do; how they seek to prevent problems from occurring or getting worse; and how they integrate actions to recognise the connections between each of those wellbeing goals. Such actions could be positive in that the



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institutions should seek to do and prioritise the things that make the biggest contribution to the wellbeing goals—or, the converse of that, they should avoid doing well in one goal at the expense of another goal, for example. They should at least recognise those connections. They should collaborate, and they should involve citizens. Those are five common-sense principles of decision making, which account for the long term and for the fact that everything is connected to everything.

The other important part of the legislation is that it applies from Government right down, in some cases, to some of our larger town and community councils. We are seeing that connection not just in the short term—what a particular Government might have had in their manifesto or programme for Government for the next five years—but in the long term, between what every part of the public system of decision-making infrastructure is doing. We think that that is a sensible model. I do not know whether we have time to go into examples of how that is working, but I can give you some if we do have time.

You asked about other countries. I think it is likely that the next nation globally to pass something like a future generations Act will be Scotland, where the Government are consulting on a Wellbeing and Sustainable Development Bill, a large part of which is likely to be modelled on the Welsh Act.

In other parts of the world, an increasing number of countries are taking an interest in this. Some countries have started from the perspective of wanting to set longer-term wellbeing goals—some describe that as wellbeing indicators, measuring what matters beyond GDP, but there is a range of different ways to describe it—and others have a focus on embedding capacity and capability on foresight scenario planning and so on. For example, the Kenyan Parliament is doing some interesting work in this space. Australia is starting from the perspective of setting longer-term wellbeing goals with a bit more foresight, and future work happening on the side. Norway is starting to embed in legislation long-term wellbeing goals.

A number of countries across the world are starting to do this, and that is being picked up at the multilateral level as well. This year, the UN Secretary-General has proposed that there should be a UN declaration for future generations as well as the appointment of a UN special envoy for future generations, which we are expecting to see at the Summit of the Future, happening in September of this year.

Those are a range of models that you can pick up on and learn from. They have the potential to be embedded. I think it is fair to say that the Welsh model is probably still the most holistic and all-encompassing of the models that we see across the world.

Q78 Chair: I am sorry, but we will have to speed up. Sophie, do you have anything you want to add briefly?



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Sophie Daud: I have very little to add. Sophie has covered comprehensively the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, which is the gold standard for intergenerational justice, and on systematically embedding that across Governments around the world, we are seeing a bit more popping up.

Q79 **Angus Brendan MacNeil:** If things happen without planning—Sophie Daud, you made some good points about intergenerational fairness. On inequality, according to the ONS in 2020, the richest 10% own 43% of the wealth; the poorest 50% own about 9%. In the UK as a whole, the share of wealth of the top 0.1% doubled to 9% between 1984 and 2013, so the top 0.1% hold the same amount of wealth as the bottom 50%. A lack of planning has got us to a certain point.

To the other Sophie's point, she mentioned the Scottish Government, but they do not have the levers to do half the things they might want to do, because any policy could be undermined by DWP change at Westminster.

Chair: Could you ask a question, please?

Angus Brendan MacNeil: First, we have an issue with the overreach of ambition in the devolved countries. Secondly, if we do not plan strategically, are we going to get more of that?

Sophie Daud: I don't pretend to imagine what might happen in the future, but I don't think things will get any better if we don't start to think strategically, no.

Q80 **Liam Byrne:** Sophie Daud, may I just ask what you think are the top two or three methods for engaging the public and indeed younger generations in the formation of long-term policy?

Sophie Daud: I think there are a couple of different methods that work for a variety of different formats and a variety of different outcomes.

One of the methods that I think was talked about by some of the previous witnesses to this inquiry was around having youth boards or youth committees, for example a set of young people who might sit here and grill MPs on their plans and their planning for the future.

We have seen that across a variety of different sectors, including in the corporate sector as well. I think it's very well meaning, but often it doesn't necessarily serve the function that it's intended to, because it tends to be an independent, silo-ed process, where young people go and grill some people and then nothing happens, which isn't a huge degree of help in actually changing things. But I do think it is a good mechanism to get people started, at the very least.

One method that I think is really effective is involving young people in intergenerational dialogues about particular strategies and policies. That means actively involving young people in decision-making processes. This was the approach that I adopted when I chaired one of the youth engagement processes into the UK's G7 presidency. I formulated very strong relationships with Government Departments and I helped young



people to input into policy making throughout the course of the year-long presidency. And what you ended up seeing there was this kind of dialogue, as opposed to there being just an input and then waiting for the black box to spit something out.

I think that approach is really effective, because what you have is really expert young people inputting on really expert issues. To make that work, obviously you need to have very clear project terms. It often works very well for a year-long presidency or a strategy that is about to come out, when you have a clear output and a really clear understanding of how the input is going to affect that. It works really effectively.

For example, the School of International Futures, with their national strategy for next generations, did intergenerational dialogues on what a national strategy would look like that was based on young people's perspectives. Young people got to talk about what they wanted UK foreign policy and values to look like in the future. When there is something really specific and tangible, and you can see the feedback mechanism, it works really, really effectively.

However, for that to work, and I will come back to my original point, you need to have people on the inside who are receptive to supporting young people's positions and priorities. I think that means that we just need more young decision makers who can recognise and understand the value that young people bring to the decision-making table, because it's both about creating space for young people and equipping those young people to input effectively.

Chair: Can we move on to the role of Parliament? Liam, again.

Q81 Liam Byrne: I just want to pursue one thing. In another part of our dialogue, we are having a conversation about the importance of operational experience in setting policy, because in all of my time as a Minister we recognised that you couldn't make policy unless you had operational experience. How do you conquer the lack of operational experience among young people?

Sophie Daud: Young people may not be experts in how to deliver a multi-million pound programme, but they are definitely experts in their own lives and they can give you real-world experience and knowledge about how something will land with a particular age group, how it might affect them, or how it might play out in schools or youth settings across the country.

I think it is really challenging to base it on expertise of specific things, whereas young people are experts in their own lived experience and they can very much bring that to the table.

Q82 Liam Byrne: Thank you. Sophie Howe, we have heard a lot about the virtue of collaborative partnership in much of the evidence that we have taken. Do you have any views on how that kind of cross-party discussion is best facilitated/crystallised?



Sophie Howe: Clearly, Select Committees are cross-party by their very nature and I think they have a key role to play in scrutinising the Government about how they are thinking in the long term and considering intergenerational equity. However, from our experience in Wales, there are also some challenges with that, in terms of really getting underneath the skin of what's going on with the official machinery of government.

Select Committees, for example, can and do examine questions like: how is a budget allocated for the long term? How have long-term trends and scenarios been considered in the development of a particular policy? What sort of performance indicators and measures are being used to consider the success of a policy? Are they very short term or are they looking to the long term, and are they looking in an integrated way? Those are things that you can do and are doing.

I think you have less ability look at the things that really drive a particular culture around short-termism in a system. For example, you need to create time, resources and capacity for a system to have foresight and to have participatory conversations in the way that Sophie has described. What is the political pull and pressure, for example, from Ministers saying, "I want this policy developed within the next six months because I need to make a ministerial statement about it happening"? I think that there is a whole range of issues there in terms of the culture. The Commissioner for Wales has the ability, under what we call section 20 review powers, to go into organisations and almost audit the extent to which the conditions are being created to allow for this long-term thinking. That is perhaps something that is more difficult for a Select Committee. If there was a way, I do not quite know how it would work, but almost getting underneath the skin in that way is perhaps what needs to happen. You can produce a law and it can require us to do particular things. As to whether the system then reforms its own culture to truly embed that law, or to just pay lip service to it, I think is a different matter.

Q83 Angus Brendan MacNeil: As we know, Finland has a similar population to Scotland—it is a little bigger than Wales—and it produces an annual report on the future, which inspires and amazes many here. It looks like something that we should be following. How should Parliament here at Westminster organise and undertake the production of that sort of document? What do you see as the benefits of doing that?

Sophie Howe: I think it is an incredibly useful document. It is important that Finland has a Committee of the Future that does that work, and then publicly says, "This is our analysis of the future issues that we should all be considering." However, it should not be a one-hit wonder, if you like. It is a bit like mainstream inequality. Having an Equality Committee is really important to turbocharge a focus on how we take forward equality agendas, but it should not be seen as the domain of just that Equality Committee, just as long-term thinking and intergenerational equity should not be seen as the domain of just a Committee of the Future. I think that the big challenge for Parliament is taking the work and expertise of that Committee of the Future, if one were to be established or a report published, and how that that is woven through every aspect of what all



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other Select Committees are doing. That is so, when the Health Committee is scrutinising the Secretary of State for Health, it is asking questions about long-term trends, scenarios and foresight that are coming from that report, and those are not seen as the domain of just the Committee for the Future.

- Q84 **Angus Brendan MacNeil:** On the Energy Committee, we heard about the fact that cold and damp houses are costing the NHS something like over a £1 billion a year. There are a couple of issues here, and it is a cultural issue. Even stretching back to the '90s, it was not before the 24-hour news cycle that John Major suddenly plucked a cones hotline out of the air, which is one of the few things we remember from his Government. Also, my Committee heard last week of a constant downgrading of investment in wind energy in the UK because of constantly changing Government positions. One speech given by a Government Energy Minister about a decade ago is known as "the speech that cost a thousand jobs".

The point I am driving at here is, while we at the moment can see virtue in what is happening in places like Finland—incidentally, what criticism is there within Finland of its own process in doing this? But the cultural change has got to be very wide, when we have the 24-hour news cycle—that is horrendous. The rush to go off-piste and do a cones hotline can suddenly cause actual downgrades in investment.

Sophie Howe: I totally agree with you. That is why it is really important to have some independent accountability. Of course, Parliament itself is providing that accountability, but in terms of a real focus on—

- Q85 **Angus Brendan MacNeil:** But sometimes Parliament does not, because when a Minister makes a speech, that is it. He might have cost a thousand jobs and that is the end of it—the task is done. There was probably no accountability for that speech, for instance.

Chair: I think you've made your point.

Angus Brendan MacNeil: I hope so.

Sophie Howe: In Wales, if that had happened during my term as commissioner, I would have been intervening in that and asking the Minister to demonstrate how, in making that announcement and that policy direction, she or he had applied the future generations Act. I would be asking for a public explanation around that. The commissioner could not force the Minister to change their mind or stop them doing something—that is not the role of the commissioner—but they can require a public explanation around that. There are statutory duties that Ministers and others then have to publicly explain.

Chair: Last question, Robert Buckland.

- Q86 **Sir Robert Buckland:** Thank you. My question is addressed to Sophie Howe again, with apologies to the other Sophie. Sophie, you have given us a very good insight into ministerial accountability. I have two points



regarding the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. What mechanisms are there to allow accountability of civil servants? Secondly, how is the Senedd itself and its members engaged in strategic scrutiny under that Act?

Sophie Howe: Senedd Members, in the same way that we were just describing now in terms of the role of Select Committees, use the future generations Act as part of their scrutiny through Senedd Committees. They would, for example, take evidence from the Future Generations Commissioner. That is on a range of different topics, but there are set-piece evidence sessions that happen every year, such as scrutiny of the Budget. They would be asking me about my assessment of how well the Budget accounted for the requirements of the future generations Act, and taking lots of evidence about how that was flowing back into recommendations and reports and so on from those Senedd Committees.

In terms of civil servants, the duties in Wales are on Welsh Ministers, but it is also on the whole Government. The Government have to show how their policy development is being done in a way that applies to the future generations Act.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. I am sorry it is a very brief panel, but the quality of the evidence has been excellent. We are very grateful to you both. If you want to send us anything else in writing, then please do.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: John Glen MP and Simon Case.

Chair: We now welcome the Minister for the Cabinet Office, John Glen, and Simon Case, Cabinet Secretary. We will get straight on. Unfortunately, we are expecting a Division at some stage. We will have to suspend for that, so I hope you do not mind just hanging around until we come back. Also, Liam Byrne has got to go back into the debate about trade. I am afraid I am finding that all our Select Committee Chairs are very busy people. He will ask his questions now so he gets the opportunity, and then we will come back to the beginning of the order of questions.

Q87 **Liam Byrne:** Thank you very much, Sir Bernard, and apologies for having to nip off for wind-ups in a moment. John Glen, can I start with you? We have heard lots of evidence about how the Cabinet Office might need to change in its role. Those of us who have served there will have mixed views on that advice. What is your view on whether the Cabinet Office needs to shift from co-ordinating departmental inputs to actually directing strategy in a more active way?

John Glen: What I would say is that the functions of the Cabinet Office have evolved quite substantially over time. I think it does, as you say, play a co-ordinating role, sometimes on a short-term basis if there is a policy area that needs focus and needs different Departments to be brought together. It also holds together quite a number of secretariats,

which have grown considerably. Then, the Maude reforms of 2010 to 2015 have brought about the consolidation of core functions into entities that are sat under the Cabinet Office as well.

I do not think that any one formation is going to be perfect forever. There was a case in 2010-15 that there was a need to say that the things that need to be done, Department by Department, could be provided centrally. So the digital, the property and the commercial functions have evolved. However, I think it is the case that the secretariats have grown in size. If you think of the national security secretariat, that would be a function of the complexity and challenges in the world and some of the innovations in that area.

Obviously, the recent IfG report and the Maude review look at more fundamental suggestions of structural changes related to the relative position of No. 10, the Cabinet Office and the Treasury. Having been a Treasury Minister for several years, I have views about how realistic that would be. As you would know as a former Chief Secretary, the core function of spending control is very important. The question is: what needs to be added to that to assist in the verification of spending and how would that be organised? I do not see any imminent decision around how that is going to change and at this point in the electoral cycle, I do not think we would see any changes there.

My view is that the Cabinet Office needs to be leaner. I think that the core functions always need to be under review. In a world where you have AI as an evolving imperative and opportunity, the configuration of digital, CDDO and how you maximise the avoidance of duplication by Department is at the top of my mind. One of the other things is, if you think about the risk of duplication in a situation where each departmental perm sec is the accounting officer and, in a sense, has discretion over what they take from the centre at the Cabinet Office and what they do independently, there is always a tension there.

Q88 Liam Byrne: In a way that is at the heart of the question. I was obviously Chief Secretary and Minister for public service reform in the Cabinet Office and Gordon Brown deliberately gave me a foot in both camps. To what extent do you actually need to create a stronger hierarchy where you have directional force in the Cabinet Office rather than this kind of negotiated way of life?

John Glen: I would say that the question is more about how you make the control of public spending more effective by using the levers that the Cabinet Office has at the moment within it. I am not saying you should necessarily take them out of the Cabinet Office and put them into the Treasury, but a closer working arrangement, which is the thrust of what the Maude reform is really about, is worth serious consideration. You will know that you sit with different spending teams and they say, "Yes and no to this", but without any understanding of what the challenges are in operationalising some of the expectations of how that money was spent at the time of a spending review.



Q89 **Chair:** Can I offer Simon Case the opportunity to comment on that?

Simon Case: We could be here for months debating this one—it has been widely debated. I have a little thing that I trot out on this. The Cabinet Office was formed during the first world war, and we managed to win that war with dozens of people in the Cabinet Office. We managed to win the second world war with hundreds of people in the Cabinet Office. Now, we are at 10,000 people or so in the Cabinet Office, and there is lots of debate about whether that is right.

The core functions of the Cabinet Office of co-ordinating and directing on behalf of the Prime Minister and Cabinet are there. What has changed over the last decade-plus is that the Cabinet Office has become responsible for delivering services predominantly to other bits of Government, and some directly to the public. The general view is that that delivery is important. Things have been taken away from Departments so that they can be done just once, at the centre of Government—or that was Lord Maude’s original intention.

Over the next period, and for the start of a new Parliament, what is very clear is that we must be focused on delivering excellence in the core tasks of the Cabinet Office—the old-fashioned stuff of secretariats, and basically delivering the Prime Minister and Cabinet’s will through Government—and you want excellence in delivery of those public services to other Government Departments. People will have their own views on quite how you break those up.

Q90 **Liam Byrne:** But having good, strong delivery of shared services, say, which are important in rendering some efficiencies, does not let us escape the question of how to ensure there is a stronger directional force from the Cabinet Office over long-term strategic planning. Contest is a good example of a strategy that is cross-Government; it works quite well and has withstood the test of time and changes in administration, but it both has reasonably collaborative but directive control and is underpinned by a pretty healthy shared culture, where people work together quite effectively around a set of shared outcomes. How do you replicate that kind of model in other long-term strategic policy dilemmas with a stronger Cabinet Office?

Simon Case: Contest is quite a good example—actually, it is one of the very best examples, because, of course, Contest is not driven from the Cabinet Office. When Contest was first drawn up under the leadership of David Omand, for the first few years, there was a bit of a bun fight, to be honest—you may remember that from your time in the Cabinet Office, Chair. I once had to come and brief you on this when you were there. It was just after the Mumbai attacks, I think, and I had to brief you on what had happened. It was a real muddle for the first few years over what was going to be done in the Cabinet Office and the Home Office. A very sensible decision was then taken under the strong leadership in the Home Office that it would be driven under the OSCT, as it was—the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism.



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For me, the lessons on how you replicate that, I'm afraid, are a bit simple. I am sure we will come back to definitions of strategy. In the end, what you need are clearly identified goals, an implementation plan, resources that go with that and some sort of evaluation process that can create that virtual cycle between what you are learning and what your strategy is. Actually, in the Cabinet Office, the right thing to do, wherever a strategy is being held, is to hold people to account—"Here's the framework and here's what good strategy looks like," whether it is being held in the centre or in the Department.

- Q91 **Liam Byrne:** This is an important distinction. You can have directional centres not simply in the Cabinet Office, but in lead Departments.

Simon Case: You definitely can. The vaccines taskforce is a very good recent example. There are other examples over the past few decades. Not everything has to be done from the Cabinet Office. I think Michael Gove famously said that often the Cabinet Office becomes the place to put everything that nobody else wants, and that is not a sensible way of growing a Department.

- Q92 **Liam Byrne:** What did you learn about culture and how we work to foster a more strategic culture?

Simon Case: What, from that? From the culture?

Liam Byrne: From the experiments and innovations that you have been involved in, whether that is Contest or the vaccines taskforce.

Simon Case: Clearly identified goals and the whole team understanding the objective. Another example—I think you have heard evidence from Lord Robertson—is whether the nuclear deterrent is maintaining continuous at-sea deterrence. That is a really good example of where everybody who is working on this, from the latest apprentice joining the BAE Systems academy in Barrow through to the First Sea Lord and the Prime Minister, understands that this is the mission.

One of the things that really matters in terms of successful strategy is that there is continuity. If we are chopping and changing those goals every five minutes, it does not work. If you actually have a culture that genuinely values expertise from a range of different people—take the CASD example. Lots of different people are involved in maintaining CASD, all with their own expertise, from your welders through to your strategic weapons engineer who literally has his or her finger on the trigger.

- Q93 **Liam Byrne:** Forgive the impertinence of the question, but can you foster a genuine culture of inclusiveness while being a member of an all-male club like the Garrick? Is that a good signal to send to the machine?

Simon Case: I have to say, my position on this one is also clear. If you believe profoundly in reform of an institution, by and large it is easier to do if you join it to make the change from within rather than chuck rocks from the outside. By the way, maths is also part of this. Every person in favour of fixing this antediluvian position who leaves means that these institutions don't change. When you want reform, you have to participate.

Sir Robert Buckland: Hear, hear.

Chair: Do you wish to declare an interest?

Sir Robert Buckland: Yes, I do, and I do so.

Chair: As a member of the Garrick Club?

Sir Robert Buckland: Yes.

Simon Case: I am very sure I speak on behalf of all the public servants who have recently joined the Garrick under the banner of trying to make reform happen.

Angus Brendan MacNeil: What is the Garrick Club?

Chair: It doesn't matter. It's not very important.

Simon Case: In the context of strategic thinking in Government, I am not sure it is that important.

Sir Robert Buckland: Exactly.

Liam Byrne: That is reassuring to hear.

Q94 **Chair:** We will go back to the top in terms of what strategic thinking in Government should look like. Cabinet Secretary, you almost echoed what we circulated in writing to you. What do you think of the proposed wording we have given you for a shared understanding across Whitehall? It is primarily for civil servants, rather than Ministers, that they should understand what each other is talking about, particularly when they come from Departments that are so diverse in culture.

Simon Case: With the Minister's agreement, I will take this one. I am not sure we can say today that we totally sign up to it, but it is definitely the starting point we will take for the work. Chair, as you know, over the last year or so, we have been looking at how we improve our capabilities in Government on strategic thinking with you and others—some of your specialist advisers to the Committee. One of the things, as I think some Committee members will know, is that I have asked two of our best directors general, Lucy Smith and Dominic Wilson, to lead some work for us on developing the civil service capability.

There are a few things. The first is trying to generate cross-Government lexicon, and we will take your definitions as a starting point. We recognise that strategy means lots of different things across Government, and we need to try to improve that. The second thing is developing a core syllabus for us on developing strategic capabilities in Government. The third is thinking through the sorts of frameworks we might want to develop on national strategy, should Ministers be interested in developing them.

Q95 **Chair:** Anything to add, Minister?

John Glen: No, I agree with what Simon said. My concern is that the word "strategy" is overused, and therefore creating a common expectation of



what it is defined as and how it is used is critical. It has to get a balance between policy, activities and resourcing, which the definition you have circulated includes. But we have to be realistic about the limitations of strategy as well. You can have a very well-honed strategy that does not meet reality, not necessarily because it has not been formed in the right way, but because the reality of the context of its use meant that it had to be significantly abridged and dealt with, and events intruded. There needs to be a degree of realism in the context of Government strategy. I was a strategy consultant, and strategy at a corporate level is different, so again there needs to be a realistic honing of it for Government use.

- Q96 **Chair:** That is very useful. Thank you very much. Do you have different understandings of the words “policy”, “strategy”, “planning” and “implementation”? Sometimes they are used interchangeably.

Simon Case: I get to do the ones on definitions. “Implementation” is clear: it means to make things happen. “Planning” describes an exercise that is often incredibly valuable. It is about thinking through exercising and developing plans for how things would work. The ones that you really have to be careful about are “policy” and “strategy”, which do mean different things. I think we have gone through the definition of “strategy”. Policy can be part of an implementation plan. Too often, you see “strategy” and “policy” being used interchangeably, but policy is part of implementation, along with the delivery of real-world outcomes, so I think they do mean different things.

John Glen: To add to that, this notion of a strategic cycle, which is captured in the National Security Secretariat’s work, is quite important. On this revisiting of strategic thinking, it is important to convey that iterative need in strategy work.

- Q97 **Chair:** Many of our panel describe “strategy” as an active verb: “strategising”. How would you apply strategising to the challenges of the next 10 or 15 years in a way that will make strategic decisions easier? What examples can you think of that will encourage or require that kind of active strategy?

John Glen: In the evidence we gave in December, we talked about the foreign policy review and the IR refresh. That is an example of where we brought lots of thinking together across Whitehall, which was refreshed over two or three years in the integrated review. That is a good example of where strategic thinking has been meaningfully upgraded along the basis of a cyclical review.

There is a distinction to be made between the capacity that we have in the Cabinet Office secretariats for horizon scanning, looking at data and looking collaboratively through some of the international fora that all Governments participate in, and bringing that home and saying, “So what is for the UK Government?” The evolution of the secretariats in the Cabinet Office speaks to the increasing complexity.

Looking back historically, the challenges of terrorism, public disorder and wildfires are in the national risk register of 89 potential risks. That is a

good example of work that has been done, and translating that into strategic thinking comes down to an evolving assessment of the relative risks, which is a lot of what we do in the Cabinet Office all the time.

- Q98 **Chair:** The Cabinet Secretary made a speech quite early in his term called "The curse of the missed opportunity". Strategy is meant to be about looking for opportunities as well as mitigating risks. We can paralyse Government by mitigating risks. How do we think strategically in order to engage in more opportunities?

John Glen: It comes down to prioritisation. Let us take the examples of devolution and universities. I will start with universities. Tony Blair comes into government and says, "Right. The strategic goal of this Government is to get more people to go to university." Over time, what do we see? We see more people going to university. We see the funding model under stress. We see it then fundamentally changed and we now see a situation where we have reliance on income from foreign students. All of that is an evolution in a policy where the strategic goal was set and future Governments had to receive it and iterate live with it.

If you think about devolution, it was cooked up in opposition and came to pass with legislation in, I think, 1998. You have a very interesting but different context in each nation, in terms of what it actually looks like. This is where the reality of the operationalisation of strategic thinking about the goal of greater devolution hits the reality of politics on the ground.

If we look forward and look at—obviously, these are delicate things to talk about—things that come out of the integrated review refresh, around our foreign policy, they imply the need to have greater strategic thinking. Last week, I was looking at the biological security strategy. That has evolved as a consequence of risks that have evolved. So there is an interplay between the assessment of the horizon and the need of Government to respond to that, but what I am trying to convey is that the outworking of a strategic decision of one Government in time can impose different challenges and policy dilemmas, which necessitate quite a fundamental rethink, potentially, in some ways.

- Q99 **Chair:** One might comment that maybe those decisions weren't so strategic after all, because they weren't in the context of the problems they would create. Cabinet Secretary, have you anything to add in this bit of the conversation?

Simon Case: Perhaps one other lens on it. This is to your point about finding the opportunities and not just dealing with strategy fundamentally as an exercise in risk, even though, when you look through our history, a lot of the strategies that people talk about, and many of the examples that others have mentioned in front of you, are in that national security space of managing risks. One of the things that I have done recently with Angela McLean, who is the Government's chief scientific adviser, is recreate a group that used to exist before, where we bring together permanent secretaries to take big themes and do foresight and horizon scanning. We look at questions like demographics, where you very specifically ask the



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questions about the pressures that that is going to bring, but when you are talking about something like technology—when you are talking about AI, as many people are at the moment—it is actually about trying to identify the opportunities in those things.

Part of being successful and bringing that into strategic thinking has to be talking to people outside Government. I think a terrible mistake in Government would be thinking that strategy is something that needs to be done in secret in Government. For so many of the big challenges—both threats and opportunities—we need to be open to talking to people outside Government.

Chair: Thank you very much. We will move on to the UK's comparative performance.

Q100 Iain Stewart: I would like to follow on from that discussion by inviting you to give some good examples of where the UK Government have had a successful strategy and then it has been implemented. The one that comes to my mind immediately is of making the state pension system more affordable. This is something where we have arrived at a broad political consensus, whether it is in relation to raising the state retirement age or auto-enrolment, and it is a policy that is likely to continue, irrespective of who is in Government. Is that a good example to follow? Are there others? What do we learn from how that decision was reached and then implemented?

John Glen: This goes to the heart of the problem of strategy and political reality. I think Baroness Neville-Rolfe did some work looking at life expectancy and the interaction with the cost of pensions. As life expectancy increases, what is the appropriate interval? Then you have the challenge that, societally, when the pension came in there was an average lifespan of four years when they were being used; in some cases, it is now 15 to 20 years. But that is what we expect. I am not sure that that is a great example, in the sense that there is the theory—the strategic thinking is that, in order to mitigate the ballooning costs of people living longer, we might have to change the pension age—and then there is the reality of what that looks like as you go through the electoral cycle, and what the dynamics are between different parties.

If we really step back, look at the UK as a whole and think about big, strategic decisions, you could say that the decision in the 1980s to privatise a number of industries was something that, though controversial at the time, has stood the test of time. We might now get to a point where we might say, "Look, the regulatory regimes with the different regulators are up for discussion"—over whether they were configured with sufficient teeth or not and whether they have led to the right level of capital investment—but I do think that that was a strategic decision that stood the test of time. I think that the decision, I guess by the Labour Government, that was implemented in the five years between 1945 and 1950 with respect to the NHS—a health service that was free at the point of need, regardless of ability to pay—is something that has also stood the test of time.



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Those are strategic decisions of a UK Government that have endured through subsequent Governments, even if there have been lots of iterations in the nature of the provision, delegation and organisational structures around them. The other one that we were contemplating and that I think is also true is NATO, with the UK putting its security interests firmly within the NATO structure and all that goes with that. Beyond that, there will obviously be other things that people can think of, but those are the ones over multiple generations of Government that stand the test of time.

Q101 Iain Stewart: To take the privatisation example, you could argue that that was a strategy that was developed politically outside the machinery of government. It was an incoming Government—1979 onwards—who said, “This is what we want to do.” What I am trying to get at is, within Government now, what lessons can be learned from an existing or previous strategy that worked well? Is there one that we could use as a template for how you approach these?

Simon Case: I would go back to the example that we talked about with Mr Byrne. Contest, I think, is one. It has lasted between changes of Administration; the fundamental goals have been recognised and adhered to; the core framework—the four P’s as they were designed by David Omand—has lasted, and it is a very effective way of galvanising lots of different bits of Government. For me, I think that the Contest strategy is a really good model to draw on in your thinking.

Q102 Chair: Can we move on? Unfortunately, we are going to have many votes when they come, so I guess that we will have to end the session at that point. But we will rattle through as quickly as we can.

John Glen: Please intervene if I am talking too much.

Chair: We have dealt with the centre of Government—on the role of HM Treasury, Harriett Baldwin.

Q103 Harriett Baldwin: Thank you very much, Sir Bernard. I just want to ask about the role of the Treasury, which obviously, I am sure, still dominates your life, John.

John Glen: Yes, and my memories.

Q104 Harriett Baldwin: I want to start by asking: do you agree with the Maude report—yes or no?

John Glen: I am quite sympathetic to it, but I don’t agree with all of it. I think that Francis Maude, from the day that he tried to shut down the Conservative Research Department, is somebody who likes structural changes. I am not sure structural changes are always necessary. I said to Liam Byrne that I recognise the tension between spending control and having levers around efficiency of spending that should be combined. I have spoken to Francis Maude about it and that I agree with, but I am not here to arbitrate and it is literally above my pay grade to work out what structural changes of Government might ensue from that.



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I have a great respect for the rigour of thinking in the Treasury. I think there is a lot of wisdom in keeping that as a strong institution at the heart of Government but no institution is beyond improvement. I think that is the area that needs to be worked on.

On the point that the Cabinet Secretary made about the evolving size of the Cabinet Office, I do think that the functions that Francis Maude wisely set up, from 2010 to 2015, will have to iterate over time. Their utility, with respect to the different way they interact with arm's length bodies in different Government Departments, needs ongoing scrutiny to see if it is optimised. There is a significant risk that you can have core functions and people sat in the Cabinet Office coming up with strategies and policies for recruitment and so on that are not actually being implemented because an individual Government Department says, "We'll do it our way, thank you very much."

Obviously, there are parts of Whitehall that are quite distinct in their cultures, are very strong at defending their way of doing things and resist some of the core functions' use. That is an area where I see greater need for reform.

Q105 **Harriett Baldwin:** I think I heard you: a very polite and elegant way of saying, "No, we are not going to implement the Maude report."

John Glen: It is not something that we have formally contemplated. What I have tried to do is explore the positive elements of what Francis Maude has said but I think you can recognise the stage we are at in the electoral cycle, in terms of legislative change and the space to do that sort of radical reform now. It is obviously something that he will have socialised across the IfG and across all political parties. I think there is a lot of merit in a lot of it. There are some other elements of it, in terms of—

Simon Case: I think there are a couple of areas, in particular, where the Treasury gets a bad rap and it is unfair. Increasingly, we are seeing the Treasury come up with multi-year spending horizons; you will have seen some examples through your committee of 10-year spending horizons. The Treasury gets a bad rap for somehow not enabling cross-cutting funding for cross-Government programmes. Actually, as you will know very well, in managing public money there are six examples of the different way that the Treasury will work with Departments in a cross-Government way.

The final thing is: I think a lot of focus ends up going on the Treasury, which is just a consequence of politics. The Treasury can be harnessed, with all of its capabilities, with a strong political direction. A good example is the coalition years—2010 to 2015—when you had a programme for government that had been agreed up front. Because of the dynamics of the coalition, you had to have very close co-ordination, which meant you actually had long-term horizons. That was a great example of the Treasury working in harness over those years, with really strong political direction that had been set at the outset. I am afraid that I think the Treasury gets a bad rap: it is unfair.



Q106 Harriett Baldwin: It sounds like you agree, Cabinet Secretary, with your predecessor, Lord Sedwill, who said that he did not find the Treasury to be the obstacle that some others have described. How could the Treasury support strategic approaches to challenges more effectively? We have heard from the Office for Budget Responsibility recently about some of the challenges: the fact that the spending review expires next year after an election and that they have had to sort of put in some fudge numbers of real-plus-one across the whole spending review. That does not sound like that is particularly inherently helpful to strategic thinking across Government.

John Glen: I think it would be desirable to move to a situation where you could have longer-term horizons, like we had with defence spending between 2020 and 2024. That is highly desirable as a direction of travel when you have multi-year, complex programmes to deliver.

I can also say that there are lots of things around Government that do not fit in one Department. Think about the problems—I have some good examples that I have dug out around addiction, diversion, disruption, enforcement and recovery. There is the better outcomes through linked data—BOLD—programme that MOJ is doing to better support complex needs and improve the data around that. They need to be configured in a multi-departmental way, but that is often complicated by the way in which they are reviewed and evaluated. Going back 10 or 12 years to when we came into Parliament, we had the troubled families programme, which I think became the supporting families programme. That was a multi-dimensional programme dealing with the most vulnerable in society, looking at DWP, Health and Education.

The first thing has got to be: what do you put in that? What are the different Government Departments, and how do you create meaningful accountability? Do you have a lead Department, or do you have what happened with the shared outcome fund in the 2019 spending review and the £600 million around 60 pilot projects? We have got to learn from those and apply that. If you are really going to deal with those sorts of problems, they will not just be funded by separate line items in one three-year spending review. We need to move to multi-year spending reviews, and we need to be more adept at creating lead Departments to manage a combination of work across Whitehall to deliver better outcomes in some of these more complicated policy areas.

Harriett Baldwin: Can I just ask one last question?

Chair: Very briefly.

Q107 Harriett Baldwin: Do fiscal rules help strategic implementation?

John Glen: They provide accountability and a framework for fiscal events, and they provide clarity too.

Harriett Baldwin: Does that help strategic implementation?



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John Glen: It provides some parameters. The point is that fiscal rules change—they changed over covid, for obvious reasons. Again, it is a bit like strategy iterating. Fiscal rules will have to be justified when they change. If you did not have fiscal rules, you would create a problem where there was little accountability. They can be a frustrating constraint when you would prefer more latitude at the margins. The interaction with the OBR also creates another complexity.

Simon Case: On the fiscal rules, the other thing that they are obviously vital in is creating a sense of stability and long-term planning for the economy. Obviously, bad fiscal rules would be a problem, but good fiscal rules actually give markets confidence about the debt that we are trying to raise that we need to fund a lot of Government programmes, capital and what have you. Without them, if you went to a world where the Government were saying nothing about their long-term borrowing horizon, our colleagues in the Debt Management Office and the OBR would have quite a lot of problem getting our debt away.

Q108 **Chair:** Pressing on, we have some examples of successful strategic thinking—we have seen the output in contest in one or two other contexts. Where is that analysed and then taught, so that we can translate the positive lessons of good strategy to the rest of the civil service and Whitehall?

John Glen: That's your bag, Simon.

Simon Case: Honestly, the real answer is: not well enough. I would like us to have something like the example, going back to Defence, of the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, which I have worked with. There are examples where we run lessons learned exercises—obviously we did that for covid, and we are doing it on Ukraine—but it is not consistent enough. One of the things I mentioned earlier was having a stronger syllabus in the civil service on our learning, which I would love to be housed for the long term in a physical location for a national school of government. I would like that to be the guardian of best practice for how to do this.

Q109 **Chair:** I am told that the present Prime Minister and the last two Prime Ministers have all been very positive about this in principle. When will it get translated into a Government programme to re-implement a National School of Government?

John Glen: I would imagine that it is a question of prioritisation around the next spending review.

Simon Case: A priority for the next spending review.

John Glen: To be honest with you, I see the value of such an institution, although I think lessons need to be learned about the way it is configured—I am not sure it was optimally configured in 2012. I did the Royal College of Defence Studies course in 2014-15 as an MP and, at the time, a PPS; that is accommodatable alongside service in Parliament.



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We need to look at things that are realistic. When it comes to some of the criticisms that you read by the IfG and in the Maude report around ministerial training—we have corresponded on this subject—we have to be realistic. During a recess, you could have Ministers, senior civil servants and private office working on a programme that would give suitable training for Ministers at different levels of their career and professionalise things in a helpful way. But we should not try to do something that is unrealistic, given the lifetime of ministerial service.

Q110 Chair: But if you are going to implement a personal development and training programme that is going to change the culture of the civil service, does it not have to include everybody? You have to start with the new recruits, imbuing them with the right attitude. If you just sprinkle it over the top, it is not going to have much effect.

John Glen: I think it is a question of priorities. Some of the previous evidence you have had, I think from Lord Sedwill, was that Ministers have no training whatsoever. Let's be realistic. I remember that Liam Byrne and I are both alumni of Anderson Consulting, which did some work on a pro bono basis in the run-up to '97 to prepare the then shadow Cabinet for Government. Those sorts of ad hoc arrangements do not work, but I think it is unrealistic to expect all the civil service to go through a single level of training. Let's prioritise Ministers' private office and some of the senior levels, to try to improve those dynamics.

Q111 Chair: What about fast streamers? Do we still have them?

John Glen: We do have fast streamers.

Simon Case: We do, and we have revamped training for fast streamers and our apprentices. Like painting the Forth bridge, this job is never done. Do we need to do more to bring in the strategic thinking? The other thing is that I want more of our training to be in person and multidisciplinary, because all of today's complex problems are multidisciplinary in nature, so training people in their own silos does not work. Right from the very beginning of your civil service career, you need to be training alongside local government, emergency services, armed forces colleagues, the NHS, other public service providers and the private sector—learning from one another. When it comes to pandemics or Putin's illegal war in Ukraine, these things have all required a total effort from all those different sectors.

Chair: It is a terrific vision.

Q112 Sir Robert Buckland: Very briefly, a lot of us did the Oxford Business School online course on project management. You did. It really helped me with the prison building programme, probation reform and all the big Government projects that I had to deal with.

Can I move on to questions about the next generation? We have heard evidence from Wales about the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. How can the Government engage the public, and particularly the next generation, in the formation of long-term strategy?



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John Glen: This is a very difficult one, Robert. There is a way that we as MPs engage with the next generation: you and I, in Swindon and Wiltshire, visit schools and try to be part of the whole dialogue across multiple generations. That is really important. There is the Education Centre here, where MPs have engaged in the past few weeks. I think it is important that we have a system where MPs and most of our Ministers—obviously there are those in the Lords—are engaged in the real challenges of the communities that we represent. That helps quite considerably.

But we have to be realistic about the appetite of the general public for deep strategic thinking. We, talking about this subject here, are an unusual bunch, and we have to be realistic about what that looks like. But the other thing I would say about engaging people in the business of Parliament and government is that there is a distinction between the mechanics of government and politics, and I think the two have become unhelpfully divorced.

Q113 **Sir Robert Buckland:** I want to press you on that. You can divorce the two. If you talk about issues like climate change, or whatever it might be, that is current affairs. That is away from the process world that you, like me, identify with.

John Glen: I think we have got to somehow do a better job of meshing the intolerance for jargon and complexity—and the impatience with that—with the reality of government. We often find ourselves as Ministers in Parliament—it was the same for you—asked direct questions that you try your best to answer, but it is difficult to convey the complexity. If you do not convey it suitably, you know that there will be a reaction out there. I think that is part of life as a Minister and a politician, but I don't think it means that we edify the public. The days of having our speeches fully reported in newspapers are long gone. I think the challenge is on Ministers to think about how we convey that in a way that does not oversimplify and lead to the transactional expectation of, "What are you going to do for me?" rather than being about how we are getting on delivering X programme in Government. Some of the things I am working on in the Cabinet Office at the moment—for example, infected blood—are incredibly emotive, difficult to get right and difficult to give a running commentary on. These are real challenges. I am not sure if I have really answered your question; I think I have described the problem that we face. We have got to open up about the complexity of government, and some of the trade-offs that need to be made.

Q114 **Sir Robert Buckland:** In short, I am asking whether you have considered the Welsh model, because it is seen as a world leader in terms of intergenerational engagement. A lot of other jurisdictions are looking at it.

John Glen: I have not actively considered it.

Q115 **Chair:** The reason why this inquiry is happening is that Committee Chairs want to be engaged in long-term strategic thinking in Government, and yet, in the day-to-day discourse between Government and Select



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Committees, the right atmosphere does not seem to be generated to promote strategic thinking and decision making in Government. One way the public are engaged is through Parliament. How should Parliament be more engaged in the oversight of long-term strategic decisions?

John Glen: If you look back to 2010 and 2012 when we did the defence and security review, there was an active dialogue. I was on the Defence Committee and there was a dialogue with generals, RUSI and different think-tanks, and there were also a number of debates in Parliament on those themes. The necessity of Government means that the strategy had to develop quite quickly in the context of the strained fiscal situation and at the same time as fundamental threats facing the UK. I thought there was a reasonable iterative process by which there was dialogue throughout the formation of that strategy, and then the Select Committees scrutinised that and made recommendations on how it could be done better subsequently. I left that Committee in 2012 and obviously there have been subsequent reviews of different genres.

I suppose I am quite sympathetic to the status quo with respect to this. I think you have to be realistic that, in the context of what I said about strategies that span multiple Departments, there are mechanisms. I was on a Select Committee in 2015-16—the DWP and BEIS combined Committee—which looked at certain aspects of cross-governmental activity. More of that is possibly necessary.

You cite the Finland model, but I would be a bit wary. There are a number of horizon-scanning activities across Whitehall that probably feed into Select Committee, ministerial and civil service deliberations. I worry with some of the functions in the Cabinet Office that there can be a risk that there are multiple scanning evaluation exercises going on and there is overlap and duplication. That is a risk, because it is not efficient, and it is not going to drive the best analysis.

Q116 **Chair:** The difficulty with the existing Select Committees is that they mirror the silos of Government. The future generations Committee, as they have in Finland, scrutinises a cross-Government strategic document for the future—it looks at the future.

John Glen: If you look at the OBR's fiscal risks report, it looks at some of the fundamental risks.

Q117 **Chair:** It is very much siloed to one Committee. Cabinet Secretary, what thoughts do you have about engaging future generations or Parliament?

Simon Case: I would like to look at the Welsh model. I would underline one of the points that Ministers make, which is that, unlike many of our counterparts across G7, one of the strengths of our model is that many of our Ministers also have constituencies, which gives them that very direct connection on a weekly basis to the things that are going on and the issues that matter. I think that is one of the strengths of our system.

On the Select Committees, this is probably an unpopular thing to say when there are ever challenges on the cost of politics and the cost of



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Government, but I suspect that Select Committees are under-resourced for the long-term views that you desire. Let me give you an example. Just by chance earlier today, I was talking to an American colleague who is a deep expert. I think you might know him, Chair; his name is Frank Miller. He left me with a copy—I will send one on to you to look at—of “America’s Strategic Posture”, which he and a group of unbelievably qualified people reported on to Congress last autumn and the US Administration is now responding. This is a very serious piece of work that is challenging Congress, but you have to put the effort into the resource to get those groups of people together to deliver. I think there is something about how you can bring in high-quality resource to support you.

Q118 **Chair:** How is that scrutiny more forward looking, more supportive and less adversarial than what is done on, say, the Public Accounts Committee?

Simon Case: You have sort of touched on it already. It is up to Parliament to decide how it scrutinises the Executive and actually trying a fuller dialogue than just the knockabout of a Select Committee and what are the long-term questions. Who is it in Parliament who is asking the long-term questions about the demographic changes in this country and the consequences? That will touch every aspect of Government and society. Ask that question.

John Glen: I will add another one from my time in the Treasury: financial services. We have legislated to have more scrutiny of the FCA and PRA by Parliament, but the work to look at what would be the long-term direction of the culture and nature of wholesale and retail financial services regulation would be something complementary. It would not necessarily sit within the Treasury Committee but would necessitate a commissioning of some additional piece of work. If you had that flexibility to do some of that you could get to better outcomes, but it would require more resourcing.

Q119 **Chair:** We will have to draw stumps. Is there anything in particular that you want to say before we do so?

Simon Case: Thanks very much for doing this.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed.