HOUSE OF COMMONS

Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: The work of the Cabinet Office, HC 118

Tuesday 12 January 2021

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Mr William Wragg (Chair); Ronnie Cowan; Jackie Doyle-Price; Rachel Hopkins; Mr David Jones; David Mundell; Tom Randall; Karin Smyth; John Stevenson.

Questions 625 - 665

Witness

I: Rt Hon Lord Maude of Horsham.

Examination of Witness

Witness: Rt Hon Lord Maude of Horsham.

Q625 **Chair:** Good morning and welcome to a hybrid public meeting of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee. I am in a Committee Room in Portcullis House with a small number of staff required to facilitate the meeting, suitably socially distanced from one another of course. The witness and my other colleagues are in their homes and offices across the country.

Lord Maude, I am very grateful to you for taking the time to appear before the Committee this morning. I will begin on a matter of clarification. Could you clarify the terms of reference for your review and how widely you range from them?

Lord Maude of Horsham: Thank you, and very good to be with you all this morning. I do not have the exact terms of reference in front of me, but basically there are three elements: to examine the operation of the Cabinet Office spend controls; to examine the condition and operation of the Cabinet Office headquartered cross-cutting horizontal functions; and to examine progress on Civil Service reform since the 2012 "Civil Service Reform" paper. I have submitted the reports on parts 1 and 2. On the third part, on broader Civil Service reform, because Ministers were in the throes of undertaking a review of potential Civil Service reform, we agreed that

the way for me to discharge that part of the remit was to feed in directly as the work was progressing.

Q626 **Chair:** Why do you think a review of those areas was necessary?

Lord Maude of Horsham: Because this is a never-ending process. There is no organisation where you put it all in place and you assume it is good for all time. All organisations are either getting better or they are getting worse. If you think you are staying the same, you are actually getting worse. There is no such thing these days as steady state, business as usual. You are either improving or deteriorating, so constant review is essential. When I was in office in the coalition Government, people sometimes used to say, "Francis, when is all this reform coming to an end?" and the answer is never. If you are not continuously improving, then you are accepting decline and that is obviously not acceptable.

Q627 **Chair:** How particularly have you conducted your review?

Lord Maude of Horsham: It has been pretty brisk. I have focused on discussions at the centre of Government, some in the line Departments, but not extensively, simply because there has not been time and bandwidth to do that, and also that has been exhaustively covered elsewhere. McKinsey, for example, in 2018 did a review in a similar area, where it exhaustively interviewed Permanent Secretaries in the line Departments. What that report disclosed, nobody suggested that things had particularly changed since those inputs were—

Q628 **Chair:** By what criteria have you judged the effectiveness of those changes in different areas?

Lord Maude of Horsham: These changes, the British Government started to move towards the functional model during the coalition Government and did so because things were not working well. We had a fiscal crisis. The Government had run out of money, as the outgoing Chief Secretary vividly described, and a process of fiscal consolidation was necessary. You can do that through a number of routes: through raising taxes, and there was some of that; through cutting benefits, and there was some benefit reform, welfare reform; and through cutting programmes, and some of that was essential.

But to the maximum extent possible, a Government should look, in the first instance, to cut their own running costs, their overhead costs, and any normal organisation would do that to cut the costs, to cut those things that have no benefit for the citizen but are simply an overhead. That is what we focused on doing, and the Cabinet Office spend controls were intended and did help to do that. The functional model helped as well. It is not very hard to see why that was necessary, nor how it delivered cumulatively over those five years more than £52 billion-worth of savings, largely from the running costs of Government.

Our Treasury is no different, but finance ministries the world over tend to look at what the budget is for a particular spending entity—ministry,

Department, agency, whatever—and if a particular piece of expenditure comes within a particular budget line, then it gets a tick and is okay. We thought that was not okay, but there was benefit at a time of financial stringency, and it was worth looking to see whether that particular item was necessary or, if it was necessary, whether it was being bought in the best way. The answer in many cases to both questions was no, which is how we started to make the savings.

Q629 **Mr David Jones:** The Civil Service reform plan was published in 2012. You have just observed that change is a never-ending process, so to what extent would you say that the landscape within the Civil Service has changed since the plan was published?

Lord Maude of Horsham: Good question. Some things have changed for the better. There is better technical capability in some of those cross-cutting functions and a much wider recognition that it is necessary to have that technical capability. I think some of the things that have not changed enough is in building up basic capability across the system.

One of the things I was delighted to find had changed was that there is now a cross-cutting analysis function headed by the national statistician. It covers economists, actuaries, statisticians, all those kinds of essentially analytical functions, but it caused the reflection, "What is it that policy officials do that is other than being a store of knowledge and the ability to provide very high grade analysis of data and evidence?" and yet that ability to do very high quality analysis, I think, is not built into the training of mainstream policy civil servants.

I hope it is better now, but I was shocked when I was in the Cabinet Office in the coalition Government when a fast streamer—a clever, bright graduate trainee—said how some of her colleagues were surprised that she had opted to take a course in using Excel spreadsheets. When I picked my jaw up off the ground at discovering that it was not an absolutely basic part of the first two weeks of training to ensure that fast-stream graduate entrants into the Civil Service knew how to use spreadsheets, knew how to do basic data modelling and financial modelling, we tried to put in place requirements that those kinds of things that ought to be 101 were put in place. I do not know the extent to which those kinds of things have changed.

If you walk around the Civil Service College in Singapore, you will see on the door of classrooms a class in speed reading, a class in drafting, a class in touch typing. These are essential tools for anyone to be effective, particularly in the world of Government administration that we are talking about, yet it is not clear to me that that is universal in the way that it should be, this basic groundwork.

Q630 **Mr David Jones:** Given those remarks, how true would it be to say that you consider your current review to be an exercise in completing unfinished business?

Lord Maude of Horsham: It will always be unfinished business, as I say. There should never be an end to it. The moment any organisation thinks it has done it all is the moment it is starting to decline. One of the things I got concerned about was what I first interpreted as institutional complacency in the Civil Service. Every draft article or draft speech I was given always started with either, "The British Civil Service is the envy of the world," or, "The British Civil Service is the best in the world." We enquired what evidence there was for this. The only proxy for it was World Bank rankings for Government effectiveness, in which the UK ranked number 16.

Since then new indexes have been created, supported by the British Civil Service, in which the British Civil Service has eventually come out top, but I am slightly sceptical about the rigour with which that is being conducted. This whole idea that the British Civil Service is a Rolls-Royce smoothly purring along will be a mystery to most people who have been Ministers, though I have always said that we have some of the very best civil servants in the world, but the Civil Service as an institution continues to have some deep institutional flaws.

What I interpreted as complacency I have since come to think is a bit different from that. There is some complacency in there, but it is also defensiveness, born of insecurity and wanting to protect itself from outside influence. That is an absolutely well-understood phenomenon, but also from comparison with organisations that are not public sector organisations. When I tried to get some current and future leaders of the Civil Service going through top leadership courses in some of the best, most prestigious business schools in the world—Harvard, Stanford, INSEAD and so on—we planned before the 2015 election that 10 should have gone through the three-month courses. By the time the election came around, having constantly been told, "Yes, it is happening. Yes, it is happening" one Permanent Secretary had been to a one-week course at IMD, I think it is, in Lausanne. He said, "Francis, it was very good, but it was not what you had in mind."

I thought we were doing something that was extremely positive about investing in the leadership capabilities of the people we were about to be putting in charge of huge, multi-billion pound budgets, yet it just did not happen. I was very distressed and puzzled by this and still struggle to understand why this was, as I now understand it, deliberately obstructed. I think it can only have been this anxiety/insecurity of not wanting leading civil servants to be put in an environment where they are in a different kind of peer group, but it is a big wasted opportunity.

Q631 **Mr David Jones:** That is extremely disturbing. You described, on the one hand, resistance in the upper echelons of the Civil Service to encourage the next generation of leaders to be challenged in world-class schools. On the other hand, you have described the reluctance of the Civil Service to embrace basic training, such as that that is applied in Singapore. This strikes me as being something that should be a matter of great alarm to

anybody who is concerned about public administration in this country. Is it really as bad as that?

Lord Maude of Horsham: Look, I am not saying that nobody can do touch typing. Obviously most people can because people of my children's generation do it automatically, and most of us have just worked out how to do it. But it is not clear to me that this is systematically being solved. When Sir John Kingman, former Second Permanent Secretary in the Treasury, spoke a little before Christmas at the IFG, he talked again about this reluctance to invest in these kinds of analytical skills, but I do not have his exact words.

We are more than 50 years on from the Fulton Report, which talked about the cult of gifted amateur. I remember that, when we were developing the Civil Service Reform Plan in 2012, a Permanent Secretary was meant to be looking at capability and so on, and she said to me, "Well, of course we don't have generalists anymore." That seemed like the right thing, so I nodded gravely, but when I thought about it, first, it is not true, and secondly, it should not be true. You do not need all that many of them, but what you do need in any Administration is people whose skillset is marshalling and analysing evidence and data and being able to apply those skills to different knowledge bases. They should be very, very good, and the best of them are very, very good—you think of Jeremy Heywood, Olly Robbins and so on—and these are top-of-the-range intellects and capabilities. All of them, as they go through their career, will develop as they do a particular role some pretty deep knowledge in those areas.

But in most of the Civil Service, you need a knowledge bank. I think that is not anywhere near as good as it used to be. Part of that is the rotation. Again, this was before the 2010 election when we were in Opposition, I was talking to one of the big consultancy firms, who said to me, "It is very much against our interests to tell you this, but there is one Department we are working in where we have been there so long and the civil servants rotate so fast that we are now the institutional memory of the Department." Deeply shocking.

One of the things that has changed since I was first in Government in the 1980s and early 1990s is this odd idea that it is completely acceptable for any civil servant to apply for any job anywhere else in the Civil Service and just go and move, regardless of the needs of the Government and the Department, the business need. There is no other organisation that would dream of allowing that. Obviously you consult people's preferences, but at the end of it, business need is what has to trump everything else.

Q632 **David Mundell:** It is a follow-on to that point, Francis. One of the issues that I recall you addressing in the review when you were in situ initially was this issue, which I think is a surprise to people from outside, that the same civil servants, depending what Department they are in, can be on hugely different terms and conditions because each Department has its own terms and conditions, which is just not something that you would now generally find in external organisations. What I found, for example, at the

Scotland Office is that somebody could have been seconded from one Department and be paid a very significantly different sum and have different terms and conditions. Is there any progress in the attempt to rationalise that across the Civil Service?

Lord Maude of Horsham: We tried a bit. I don't know how much further it has got. It is certainly not resolved. It goes back to the 1990s. I think it was Michael Heseltine, when he was Deputy Prime Minister, who broke the monolith, which had uniform terms and conditions across the Civil Service. I think it was breaking the monolith in the wrong direction, on the wrong axis, if you like. The better one to have broken is the one that sets national pay rates regardless of what the costs of living are. If you were going to introduce market ideas into the pay of civil servants, that would have been a better place to start, but I am very well aware that there are huge sensitivities around that and it probably will never happen.

We found that, for example, some Departments had progression pay, so your pay automatically increased just by inertia, by staying there; in others that was not the case. There were huge disparities, which created all sorts of difficulties and perverse incentives for people to move to jobs. This idea that you can never get promoted within the same job is one of the things that promotes this fast rotation and people moving to new jobs in order to get promoted and paid more, but sometimes within the same grade they would be able to move to another Department, without anyone being able to control that at all, and get paid more for working at the same level. Yes, you are quite right to identify it as a problem. It is a very difficult one to resolve, but I believe it should be. It will take time; it is not an overnight thing at all.

Q633 **Rachel Hopkins:** Do you think a return to national pay bargaining would resolve that issue?

Lord Maude of Horsham: I do not think national pay bargaining is necessarily the right answer here. I think the right answer is to operate as we do, with consultation with the unions, and set pay in that way. As I say, the thing I think is wrong—but is probably insoluble—is the fact that there are national pay rates, but they are national within each entity.

Q634 **Rachel Hopkins:** There are plenty of bargaining units, a couple of hundred, so I am trying to think of a way to address the issue you raised.

I will move on. You talked about how you did the original review. Many would say that, as the Minister responsible for introducing the measures that you reviewed, you are now coming back and basically being asked to mark your own homework.

Lord Maude of Horsham: It is not so much my own homework, which was extensively marked at the time by others, but it is to see what has happened since. One of the good things that enabled us to make the progress we did during the coalition Government was that so much of what we did was commanded by tripartisan support, because we were in that very unusual position where all three major UK parties had either current

or recent experience of Government. Obviously the Lib Dems were in Government with us in the coalition, Labour had recently been in Government and obviously hoped to be in Government again after the 2015 election.

I made sure that we consulted a lot with my Labour counterparts, who strongly supported nearly everything we did. That was very advantageous because I was often accused of trying to politicise the Civil Service, though the reverse was the case. We were trying to make it more effective, and my Labour counterparts strongly supported it.

Q635 **Rachel Hopkins:** The points you make about continual improvement are very important. What I was trying to get at is that continual improvement often helps with having that objective view rather than the same person reviewing, so that is why I asked that question.

Cabinet Office spend controls cut across Departments, which are accountable for the use of their own budgets. Do you feel that the existing systems of accountability did not work? Do you think they needed to change to reflect Cabinet Office oversight?

Lord Maude of Horsham: No, I absolutely know they did not work. There is very little real-time accountability for how Permanent Secretaries spend money. The Treasury is a slave to what I regard as an archaic 19th-century Gladstonian principle of there being an indivisible line of accountability of Permanent Secretaries, accounting officers, to the Public Accounts Committee. I am a big supporter of what the PAC does. Again, Margaret Hodge, who was Chair of it when we were doing this stuff in the coalition Government, strongly supported what we were doing, but that accountability is always inevitably in arrears. It is stable doors and bolted horses, and often the accounting officer involved has moved on at that stage. On real-time accountability, why would you assume it is okay only to find out a long time afterwards that money has been wasted? That is not good accountability.

Spend controls and the functional model with these cross-cutting functions of procurement, property, major projects and ideally financial management, although we never really achieved that, and internal audit, which has made some progress but is not there yet, IT and digital, these are areas of very high technical need. There is a requirement to have real, high quality capability there, and if you simply say, "We will let every Department just get on with it" what you are doing is committing to the capability being scattered and dispersed. There is no single place in Government where there is a hard core of cutting-edge credibility.

In a Government like ours, which is spending whatever it is, high 30s, low 40s of national income, you want the head of procurement or the head of IT and digital to be one of the top six people in the country. You are not going to get that if you are saying, "We are going to have this capability spread around the whole Government." You are not going to get that; you cannot possibly. The functional model, with those functions being strongly

led from the centre—not trying to do everything at the centre by any means, but a strong capability, a strong mandate and a strong leader of that function with real technical credibility—is essential these days. There is no single big, complex organisation outside Government that would contemplate working in the silo model that most Governments, as a matter of history, are in.

Q636 **Mr David Jones:** I am just pursuing the same point. Of course it is the Treasury that has overall responsibility for Government expenditure, so why should the Cabinet Office be the Department that exerts spending control?

Lord Maude of Horsham: It could be the Treasury, but the Treasury does not do that. It does not have the capability and it is not its culture. As I say, the Treasury's culture is, "We set a budget. We let Departments get on with it," and so it is not set up to do it but there is no reason why, in other circumstances, it could not be done there. There is an argument for bringing together the spending side of the Treasury with what the Cabinet Office does on spend controls and the leadership of the cross-cutting functions to create a sort of office of management and budget. This is what some budget ministries in other countries do, and there are lots of different ways of doing it.

It is a second order question where it should be done from. The important thing is that it should be done, and it should be done bringing to the exercise of those spend controls that detailed and high-end technical capability that is able to look at a particular piece of spending and say, "First, you probably don't need it, or not in that quantity. If this is what you are trying to achieve, there is a better way of doing it." When we started in 2010, because the central capability in most of these functions was pretty thin, we did not have the ability to do much more than say no to Departments.

As we built up the capability with GDS, for example, and the central procurement function, the Government Property Unit and these other quite small but strong and capable centres, we were able to say, "No, we won't let you do that," so when a Department came along and said, "We need to take on a new building," because by that stage we had oversight of the whole of the Government's estate, we were able to say, "No, we are not going to let you take on that new building because we know there is unoccupied or underoccupied space in another building, and that is where you are going to go."

We ended up with Government property much more intensively occupied. What we still think of as the Treasury building now houses the Treasury, the headquarters of the Revenue, much of the Cabinet Office, the Northern Ireland Office and, I think, DCMS. These buildings were designed for that. The Foreign Office building was designed to house four Departments of State originally. Without that sort of mandate at the centre and the ability to exercise control through the spend controls, you could never have achieved those kinds of efficiencies, which had all sorts of uncovenanted

benefits, big financial benefits for sure, but also much more effective real-time collaboration because you had people from different entities sitting in the same physical building. There were lots of uncovenanted, unexpected benefits that came from this approach.

Q637 **David Mundell:** The operation of spend controls became quite adversarial at times, as you will recall, particularly in relation to digital projects. Do you have any reflections on that, in hindsight?

Lord Maude of Horsham: I don't remember it being particularly adversarial. Maybe I have just blanked all that out of my mind, but what was interesting was how little opposition there was from Ministers to what we were doing because we operated in a pretty collegiate way and we had a Cabinet Committee. You may recall we had a specific Cabinet Committee on efficiency and reform, which Danny Alexander and I co-chaired, so we were able to get collective agreement on these policy approaches. Ministers, by and large, were fine with it. They were not jealously protecting the desire to be able to do their IT or procurement in a particular way; they just wanted it to work and to be effective. Not all Permanent Secretaries by any means, but some Permanent Secretaries did violently object because they were very defensive of the kind of autonomy and sovereignty of their Departments, but these are Departments. The clue is in the name.

Q638 **David Mundell:** Do you think one of the reasons that perhaps there was not a degree of resistance is that, ultimately, Ministers and probably Permanent Secretaries, too, knew there was a lot of slack in the system and considerable scope for reform?

Lord Maude of Horsham: Yes. I think that is certainly true, but when you are looking at cutting public spending, if you cut spending by changing policy and closing down a programme or reducing the scope of a spending programme, that is relatively easy for a Permanent Secretary and not that easy for the Minister, because the Minister has to go out there and defend it. If you are taking cost out of the running costs of Government, then that is pretty easy for the Minister because it is politically quite popular. You are doing what the public hope Governments will do, but it is not that easy for Permanent Secretaries because they have to make difficult management decisions, and I totally understand.

It goes back to what I was saying earlier, I think we woefully underprepare Permanent Secretaries for the roles we expect them to carry out. It is shocking how reckless we have been, as a nation, if you like, or the Government—not this Government, but every Government—and the Civil Service, in putting bright, capable people into positions where they are responsible for huge budgets with terribly inadequate preparation and then we complain when they fail, when the fault is ours for not preparing them sufficiently.

Q639 **David Mundell:** Do you think there was ever essentially a conflict of interest between Ministers and Permanent Secretaries in the sense that

Ministers had signed up to a policy objective, but individual Permanent Secretaries might not have felt that was in their interests or what they perceived their Department's interests to be?

Lord Maude of Horsham: That is certainly right. I remember sometime after this Cabinet Committee had made a decision that commodity goods should be procured centrally for the whole of Government, using the buying power of Government to drive down cost and price, I had a meeting of some of the commercial directors across Whitehall asking for an update on this. It soon became clear that literally nothing had happened, so I asked why, when there had been a Cabinet Committee decision that this should happen, it had not happened. One of them said, "Well, Minister, we did not think it was a very strong mandate," and I thought, "What do you need? Do you need a papal encyclical?" A Cabinet Committee decision, which is the way in which policies get made in Government, why is that not a sufficient mandate for civil servants to go and carry it out?

But your point about the perceived conflict between what Ministers want to do and the interests of the Department, that was interestingly illustrated when we discovered this document that had been produced by consultants, in fact before the coalition, about how you select potential Permanent Secretaries, how you sort out those who have the right stuff in them to become capable Permanent Secretaries. Basically, one of the things it contained was—I do not have the exact document in front of me, I do not have the exact words, but it is in the public domain—when to decide to ignore what the Minister wants in favour of the interests of the Department. That is not okay. It was rather marvellous that somebody had written all this down, because we kind of knew that, as *Yes Minister* illustrated, this kind of thing is normally passed down from one leather armchair in the Athenaeum to the next but is never written down. Splendidly, it had been written down, but it was shocking none the less that this was being made so overt.

Q640 **David Mundell:** Yes, along with the practice of presenting all the ideas that had been rejected by the previous Minister to the new incoming Minister as being fresh, new initiatives that can be pursued.

In relation to the spending that was tightened in some areas after you introduced controls, did that come with, in retrospect, an additional bureaucracy that prevented Departments from spending, or did the controls drive more effective use of public money and efficiencies?

Lord Maude of Horsham: Both, to be blunt. A bit more bureaucracy, yes, a bit more process. Nobody believed when we introduced the spend controls that they would continue. It was meant to be a bit of tokenism. I think the way David Laws put it—he was Chief Secretary when we introduced it—is that it was to send a shockwave through the system, but then everyone assumed that we would pack up because, as we know, politicians have short attention spans and they get bored and move on to something else. We did not get bored and we carried on.

There was an attempt to make this fail by underresourcing the people managing the spend controls in the Cabinet Office. That has been the same case, and it is one of the things we discovered in the course of this review. You need to resource it properly. You have no difficulty justifying spend and deploying resources on it, because it is saving massive amounts of money, so you need to make sure it runs efficiently and that you do not have complaints, or you minimise the complaints. Yes, in the early days there was benefit in just slowing down the spending. Stopping money going out of the door has some merit but, when you get into the swing of it, you want this to be as smooth a process as it can be.

Often delays were because Departments submit spend requests very late and they have already done a lot of work on it. One of the things I have discovered in the course of this review is a tendency to have spent two years preparing a particular approach to a project and then submitting it to spend controls at the last minute, when it is very hard for Ministers at the centre of Government to turn it down because there are already all the sunk costs. You have to be quite robust about that. When you have the functional model working well and you have strong, cutting-edge, high-end technical capability at the centre of Government, these individual Departments, which cannot possibly—except in their very specialist areas—have the best knowledge and capability, need to have engaged with the centre early on, and on a continuing basis, so that when the spend control moment happens, the centre knows and is comfortable with what has been done because they have been involved with it and have helped to shape it.

Q641 **John Stevenson:** Lord Maude, you have touched quite a bit on functions. Functions have become an established part of the Government, or they are meant to be, but you have suggested that the Departments have reasserted themselves. I would be interested in the evidence of this in your review.

Lord Maude of Horsham: The mandates for the centre have weakened in some respects. Some of that is changing even as we speak. For example, when we set up the Major Projects Authority it was the Chief Secretary and I who decided which projects were to be part of the major projects portfolio, and there were 200 or so of them. That became much less clear, so Departments themselves felt they were able to decide which projects they would submit for the consistent oversight that the Major Projects Authority—now the Infrastructure and Projects Authority—can provide. That is changing now, happily.

There are three elements to make the functional model work well. You need to have the right leader for the function, who must have powers of leadership, the ability to inspire and take people with them and generate, you hope, goodwill and all of that, plus real technical authority. They clearly need to be people who are absolutely on top of the brief and carry that kind of authority.

The second element is that you need to have a hard core, a critical mass at the centre, of technical capability. It does not need to be huge, but it

does need to be very good. The third element is the mandate. It is a circular thing. If the mandate is not sufficiently strong, you will not get or keep the right leader; if you do not have the right leader, you will not get or keep the right capability; if you do not have the right capability, the mandate gets eroded and attacked and you get into a downward spiral. You have to be on the case to make sure all those elements remain in place.

Some of it has worked pretty well, such as some parts of the commercial function. The senior commercial people across the whole of Government are now directly employed by the Government commercial function. They have been through a kind of uniform assessment process, and certification and accreditation, so that the commercial capability in the Departments is now much better and much more consistent than it was.

The digital capability in some Departments is much better than it was. Gov.uk is still extremely good, and there is a very strong team on that. Much of the rest of what GDS did in terms of leading digital transformation, which became a world leader—Britain was ranked best in the world for e-government in 2016—was very much due to the leadership of the Government Digital Service then. I discovered in the course of this review that there is now an automation taskforce. Governments do not do manufacturing. Automation is digital transformation in Government. I said, "Why does this exist separately from GDS?" and I was told, "GDS got out of the business of digital transformation." It became literally a global brand for being the best at Government digital transformation. How was that allowed to happen?

Q642 **John Stevenson:** Do you think that, in the long run, the responsibility for policy and the function responsibility for delivery can coexist in practice?

Lord Maude of Horsham: Say that again, John, sorry.

John Stevenson: Within a Department, the distinction between departmental responsibility for policy and then obviously the function responsibility for delivery, can they coexist in the way that you are suggesting?

Lord Maude of Horsham: Yes, absolutely. Look at how the Scottish Government work, for example, where they have a strong functional model and they don't expect every individual part of the Scottish Government to have its own fully independent capability. It can certainly be made to work. Sophisticated organisations operate matrix models of management. Nothing I have seen about the British Civil Service suggests to me that it is insufficiently sophisticated to be able to operate with a matrix management approach.

Q643 **John Stevenson:** A final question. We have had Brexit and the Covid pandemic, do you think that has helped or hindered the development of functions within Government?

Lord Maude of Horsham: That is a good question. I am not sure what the answer is because both of them have imposed massive demands and

both have required the centre to operate more effectively. I do not know. Because these are both big and disruptive things, it probably stood in the way of the steady enhancement of the functions but, without strong oversight, that might not have happened anyway. I do not know what the answer is.

On Covid, I think some of the functions have had to operate—on procurement particularly—to bring in the best procurement capability. Particularly in the early days on PPE and when very quick decisions were needed on ventilators and so on, that clearly did require a higher level of capability than existed within the overall NHS.

Q644 **Mr David Jones:** To what extent would you say there is a risk that prioritising functions run from the Cabinet Office may undermine the ability of individual Departments to make and implement policy in which those Departments are—or at least should be—expert?

Lord Maude of Horsham: Yes, I don't think it runs counter to it at all because, for example, without suggesting that the Ministry of Defence is perfect in the way it does procurement, it is very specialised. No one is going to suggest that the centre should override how the Ministry of Defence does military and defence procurement. However, there is a lot of stuff that gets done where the Ministry of Defence spends huge amounts of money on things that are not specifically military, but which are similar to the kind of procurement that gets done in other Departments. It is better to do those things collectively. We found in the early days that, buying something as basic as toner cartridges for printers, one Department was paying literally seven times as much as another Department. That is just a crass waste of money, but get some central oversight into it and some central purchasing capability and you can start to drive value in the way that money is spent.

One of the things that has emerged from the reviews that are being carried out, both mine and the one carried out into the digital function in parallel, is that there is still a massive backlog of antique, legacy technology in a load of Departments. They have been given money in spending rounds to replace it and it has not happened. Partly the money has just been taken and spent on other things, which should not be allowed to happen. In an effective system, spend controls would prevent that.

I think a lot of it is that, frankly, the Departments do not know how to do it. This is difficult. In some cases you have technology going back to the 1960s that is mission critical to important things being delivered. Replacing that is like brain surgery, and you don't expect to have top-end brain surgeons in every GP practice across the country. You need one place where you have the best capability you can get in Government, and one place where it is managed and led from. You do not let everybody learn on the job, it seems to me.

Q645 **Mr David Jones:** Should all officials be part of a function?

Lord Maude of Horsham: Most are. It is an interesting question: people who are policy civil servants, is policy a function? It is certainly not a profession, which it has sometimes been claimed to be. A profession generally implies that you have been through some process of qualification and accreditation, and policy civil servants do not do that. Maybe they should, arguably they should, but that is not the case at the moment. I am not obsessed by it, but there are clear functions, horizontal functions, which are all about implementation and delivery, making things happen, not about just producing a lovely policy, where the skills needed are common. They are the same broad disciplines, the same broad technical skills, knowledge, experience and capability wherever you find them in Government, with different orientation for sure, but the same skills. To have those functions strongly led from the centre cannot but make Government work more effectively.

Of course one of the things that I am concerned about is that the civil servants in those technical functions tend to occupy a sort of lower status. I have sometimes commented on what I call the class divide in our Civil Service, where you have white-collar policy civil servants, who tend to get the top jobs, and then blue-collar people who do operational delivery—finance, procurement, technology, property, projects—and they are a bit below the salt and, by and large, they do not get the top jobs. That has to change. I think you must find some way of creating genuine parity of esteem across the Civil Service. It is difficult to do that. There are some ways you can do it, but it certainly has not been accomplished.

Q646 **Mr David Jones:** Would it be fair to infer from that answer that you feel that, on balance, there should be a policy function?

Lord Maude of Horsham: I am almost tempted to say I do not think there should be. Apart from the relatively small number of generalists, you want a way for there to be proper institutional memory, with people staying in the same area for longer and us being much more careful about curating that knowledge bank and building it so that every part of Government has a proper institutional memory. It is quite shocking, the extent to which we do not have that. Then you want people with real, hard analytical capability, data and evidence. It is surprising how often we make policy without evidence, without using data. Sometimes that is fine, but you should say so, you should be absolutely clear.

One of the things I sought in vain to put in place was a requirement that, when any announcement of policy was made, we should also publish the evidence and the data on which it is based. It seemed kind of obvious. Sometimes there will not be evidence, in which case you should say so. Sometimes it is completely legitimate to make a policy decision based on argument and assertion, but you need to be able to justify it on that basis.

I remember my colleague, Oliver Letwin, who was very much my sort of equivalent in relation to the policy part of the Civil Service, saying subsequently how often he found that he was looking at submissions that

were based either on no evidence or on a factual basis that was simply incorrect.

Q647 **David Mundell:** You have already touched on it, but why is it so important that the centre of Government be strengthened?

Lord Maude of Horsham: Because we do not have anything that feels like a headquarters function. There is no sense that you have anything like a head office. You have No. 10, you have the Cabinet Office, you have the Treasury, but I think you need to have something that feels much more like a head office function. In any big, complicated organisation there is never a perfect balance between the power of the centre and the devolution to individual departments. In good times you relax and devolve more and the reins are loosened, and in difficult times they are tightened up. This is the way things work in well-run organisations.

Maybe in 2012, we got McKinsey to do a very quick piece of work on how our centre of Government looked compared with other comparable Governments, and it found that the UK is extraordinarily weak. We have this slightly odd phenomenon in the UK where, until relatively recently, national Government compared with local government was very strong, so we were very centralised in that sense, but in central Government, the centre was very weak. Part of what we were doing by starting to create the functional model was to create a stronger centre. There was a lot of support for this.

I think it was in 2014, it was quite late on, that the Public Accounts Committee wrote to three senior Permanent Secretaries at the centre of Government urging that they should be creating a much stronger centre of Government. Without Danny Alexander or I knowing about this or having been involved in any way, a letter was sent by the Permanent Secretaries saying, "No, no, no. That is not the way we do things. It is not the policy of the Government to have a strong centre of Government."

Margaret Hodge asked me about this on the Floor of the House, and I was somewhat taken aback because it was the first I had heard of it. When I saw what the Permanent Secretaries had written off their own bat, Danny and I wrote a letter to supplement what they had said, where we said, "It is the policy of the Government to have a stronger centre." That is a very interesting example of how it is not Ministers who are resisting having a stronger centre for these technical areas, and then allowing Departments to focus on the things that are absolutely their unique business. But on those things that are cross-cutting, which are common across Government, it has to make sense to have those properly led from the centre to reduce duplication and to have stronger capability and all those other benefits that come from it. Also, it creates much more real-time accountability for what happens.

Q648 **David Mundell:** Are there things that you can specifically identify that should be dealt with by the centre of Government that, even in the current arrangement, might not be within the Cabinet Office or No. 10?

Lord Maude of Horsham: How do you mean?

David Mundell: You are talking about headquarters functions effectively. What sorts of things do you envisage being dealt with in that way?

Lord Maude of Horsham: In relation to what I am concerned with, which is improving implementation, improving delivery of what Governments are there to do, it is the technical functions that are most important. For that to operate effectively, you should have these functions being strongly led from the centre in the way that I have described, not a huge centre by any means, but with strong leadership and capability.

Q649 **David Mundell:** You have also alluded to accountability structures remaining based around vertical Departments. If the centre of Government is to be strengthened, how important is it that the corresponding horizontal accountability structures are established? What do they look like? That is a reference to the sort of matrix you described previously.

Lord Maude of Horsham: The heads of the functions should report into the Government's COO, who is accountable to the Minister for the Cabinet Office. For the Treasury functions, financial management and internal audit, those report up through the Treasury. The Ministers in those Departments should be accountable for them. You might say, "Well, they will all blame each other." Part of life is working out who is responsible for things and making sure they work well. It is not impossible to make these things work.

Q650 **David Mundell:** One of the things that we have struggled to find out how it works is the accountability in relation to the Permanent Secretaries in the devolved Administrations. We are still waiting to hear from Mr Case about exactly who has line management responsibility for the Permanent Secretary in the Scottish Government.[1] Are the arrangements that have flowed from devolution and the impact they are having on the Civil Service part of what you are looking at, or of what needs to be looked at?

Lord Maude of Horsham: It is not something I have focused on. Obviously it is different in Northern Ireland because, for historical reasons, the Northern Ireland Civil Service is separate. You can argue in different ways whether the Civil Service in the Scottish and Welsh devolved Governments should be institutionally separate. I do not have a very strong view on that, but you can obviously argue it either way.

Q651 **Karin Smyth:** Morning, Lord Maude. If we can stick on this theme about the centre of Government—you have touched on it, but just to flesh it out a little bit—and this relationship between the central units, functions and Departments and how we manage that relationship. You said earlier that

[1] Line management responsibility for Permanent Secretaries, including those in the devolved administrations, was set out in correspondence by the Cabinet Secretary, 16 November 20

https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/3626/documents/35258/default/

many large organisations operate a matrix model and make it work. Is it an issue of egos or career development in Departments? Do you want to say anything more about how those relationships should be better managed?

Lord Maude of Horsham: The idea of egos in Government is obviously a completely alien one. No one has ever come across that. Do you mean in the Civil Service or among Ministers?

Q652 **Karin Smyth:** Both. The relationship has to be managed by both, doesn't it? Ideally the civil servants would take their lead from Ministers, making sure that that relationship worked. That is important. You alluded earlier to things where perhaps people did not feel that they were properly guided. It is different to a commercial company. I guess that is behind it, isn't it?

Lord Maude of Horsham: No, it is, for sure. It is different. Sometimes people say, "Why can't you just run Government like a business?" and of course you can't because, you are exactly right, it is different, but you can run Government in a more businesslike way. That is all we were seeking to do.

I think it is a cultural and behavioural thing. When I was being asked, "What do you mean by creating a sort of head office?" I think it is a mindset change, which is saying we are in a different world now, where the exchange of information is instantaneous. As the last year—for terrible reasons—has beneficially shown, the way we work should not be governed by physical infrastructure, yet the way Governments are organised is essentially around the historical accident of buildings. We now know we do not need that to be the case; we can operate things in a much more virtual way. We should see parts of Government as being much more fungible than they have been.

We just need to think of these things in a different way and not think of being the head of procurement in a big line Department, having a line of accountability to the centre of Government. You should not see that as a threat; you should see it as a support. Why would you not want the way you do procurement in your Department to have the benefit of access to a hard core of cutting-edge capability? Why would you not want that? I think it is a mindset change as much as anything. As I say, certainly in my time, and I do not see much difference now, Ministers were pretty relaxed about this. It was that sense that too many senior civil servants were protective of the autonomy. Part of it is a resistance to accountability, real-time accountability. I think the Civil Service isn't as accountable as it can be.

Some of that has changed. The introduction of five-year fixed terms for Permanent Secretaries has introduced a greater degree of accountability. Tony Blair thought he had introduced this in 2004. He made a speech on Civil Service reform, where he said that in future all senior civil servants would be appointed for a four-year fixed term and, guess what, nothing happened. When we introduced a five-year fixed term for Permanent

Secretaries, this was putting into effect, very belatedly, what a Prime Minister thought he had introduced eight years previously.

Q653 **Karin Smyth:** Interesting. On that note, a lot of discussion around a stronger centre of Government focuses on the need for greater resources for the Prime Minister and supporting No. 10. We are looking at this in a separate inquiry, but do you think a stronger No. 10 would be beneficial?

Lord Maude of Horsham: I think you should have a strong No. 10, but I don't think that means a big Department. When I was first a Minister in the mid to late 1980s under Margaret Thatcher, No. 10 was pretty small. Nobody thought it was not a strong No. 10 with strong leadership, but it focused very much on the big strategic things. I remember once on a European issue that I was dealing with, which had potentially significant political controversy attached, I wrote what I thought was a very elegant minute to her. Basically it said, "We can have war on this or I can duck and dive and negotiate a deal, which will not be perfect, but it will be workable. Which do you want me to do?" and the reply came back from her private secretary to mine saying, "The Prime Minister has read the Minister's note with interest and agrees that it is a very difficult issue" and that was it, which was a bit scary—I was in my early 30s at the time—but rather empowering. Basically she was saying, "That is what we have Ministers for. Go sort it out."

Karin Smyth: Do it.

Lord Maude of Horsham: "This is not something that is central to what the Government are doing or of strategic importance. We only deal with the stuff that is strategic." I thought that was a very interesting approach. It was a bit scary at the time, because there was a bit of an element of, "Oh, and if it goes wrong, you're on your own."

Q654 **Karin Smyth:** Yes. Would that still be your view now, that the Government may have changed in intervening times but that there would be no need to strengthen the central structures?

Lord Maude of Horsham: The formal institutional structure matters less. The centre of Government is always second order. The way the centre of Government has changed is essentially in relation to the people. In the Cabinet Office, there are some things that are core to what the Cabinet Office does, the Cabinet Secretariat and so on, some of the intelligence staff. A lot of the stuff that I was doing had not been done by the Cabinet Office before—procurement, for example. It was being done by something that was attached to the Treasury. The institutional architecture matters less.

No. 10 operates in a much more holistic way than most Ministers' offices do, with a lot more special adviser-type appointments. One of the ways in which we have some way to go in this country is that Ministers' offices in the UK are pretty underpowered compared with their counterparts in Canada, Australia and New Zealand—the comparable Westminster-type systems with a permanent Civil Service—where you are likely to have a

much more holistic and integrated office that is a lot stronger, with more people, and more people who are directly appointed by the Minister and have their own accountability to the Minister.

Q655 **Karin Smyth:** The current Government have committed to taking more policymakers out of London, as indeed have others, and closer to communities. Does that run counter to your desire to see more functions consolidated at the centre of Government?

Lord Maude of Horsham: No, not a bit because, again, one of the things we have learned so much in this period is that location matters much less. You can absolutely have dispersal. In fact, quite apart from—*[Inaudible.]*

Karin Smyth: Sorry, we have lost you a little.

Lord Maude of Horsham: I think there is too much tendency in the way we work at the moment for Ministers to be surrounded by policy civil servants, and there is too little ability for the officials who are charged with implementation to be able to interact directly with Ministers. That is where a lot of things go wrong. I remember that, in the early days of developing universal credit, the policy was being developed in Victoria Street or Tothill Street or wherever, implementation was being done in Sheffield and IT was being developed in Warrington. Not surprisingly, it did not go brilliantly.

Then when we were asked by Iain Duncan Smith to second people over when it was going horribly, horribly wrong to get it sorted out—and we had a digital team working with DWP, some excellent DWP people, and they were operating in Victoria Street—Iain would, once a fortnight, go and spend some time with them and they would do a show and tell, "This is what we have done. These are the issues that have arisen in creating the system that is going to deliver universal credit. These are the problems that have come up. These are the ways we think you can solve them, but it will mean some changes to policy, to the detail of policy." That is a good way to operate.

Again, it comes back to the point I was making about the class divide and the lack of parity of esteem. Too often policy is beautifully crafted by clever people and Ministers at the centre of Government or in Whitehall and it is then carried away carefully on a velvet cushion to the people below the salt who are told, "Go and implement this." That is not a good way to run things.

Q656 **Karin Smyth:** Sorry to interrupt, but do you think, with the pandemic and the fact that we have fast-tracked this way of working, there will be the capability, the desire, the energy—I am not sure exactly what the right word is—to move more quickly and to use this experience to do that better?

Lord Maude of Horsham: I do not know. It is a very good question. Probably, but again it will require a different mindset. I remember during the London Olympics in 2012, one of the things we were doing was trying to stop too many civil servants working in the centre of London because London was going to get clogged up and so on. In fact, we massively

overdid it and, for the first week of the Olympics, central London was like a morgue.

Karin Smyth: It was very quiet, yes.

Lord Maude of Horsham: There was nothing happening at all. We were trying to find ways to support civil servants working remotely and in some remote hubs. There was one in Croydon, for example, to avoid them having to come into central London. There was lots of resistance from managers in the Civil Service, who said, "How will we know that they are working?" The answer of course is, as we have all had to learn during this period, you don't manage people by watching them; you manage them by what they are producing, by their output. The Civil Service has historically had a presenteeism type of culture and that has to change. We have all had to adapt to that in this last period, and that means we are much better equipped to move to different ways of working, with much more dispersal, much less need to commute, and people operating some of the time out of their locality. I think there is a real opportunity for this to happen with less institutional resistance than would have been the case before the pandemic.

Q657 **Karin Smyth:** Finally from me, the Cabinet Office has operated, some would say, as a bit of a dustbin for roles that might not have a home elsewhere in Whitehall. Do you think that stops it becoming a kind of corporate HQ? Is that problematic?

Lord Maude of Horsham: No, I do not think it ought to be the corporate HQ. I didn't mean that you create something that is called a headquarters. It is about the mindset; it is about thinking about Government in a different way, where you have the Prime Minister's Office, Treasury and the Cabinet Office and probably the Government Legal Department, or the headquarters of it, as part of the Government head office. Yes, in any big organisation, there is no perfect steady state here.

Karin Smyth: You need somewhere.

Lord Maude of Horsham: Yes, and sometimes the Cabinet Office has been used as a place from which new things are incubated and then dispersed out into line Departments. I would not say it is a dustbin. It is a convenient place to locate some things where people do not always know where else they should go, but it is also a place where you can start things.

Q658 **Tom Randall:** During this discussion you have touched on the cult of the generalist and the skills of civil servants. There has been a considerable focus on developing skills in key areas such as project management, digital and commercial, and you identified shortfalls in those areas when you were a Minister. Did you think there had been significant improvement in those areas when you were doing your review?

Lord Maude of Horsham: Yes, there is a mixed picture. Commercial, absolutely. Not perfect by any means, but much better. Digital has

continued to develop in the individual Departments, but the centre has deteriorated in the ways I have described. It is a mixed picture.

The IPA is now being very strongly led and is being given a stronger and more robust mandate. In terms of actual project management in the Departments, there is still far too much rotation of SROs. My view is that you should not be able to change the SRO of big, major, important projects unless you absolutely have to—because the person has left the Civil Service—without the consent of the IPA, because there is far too much rotation and far too little consistency.

But the capabilities have certainly improved. One of the things we did was create the Major Projects Leadership Academy. I took part recently in part of the programme for Ministers being delivered by the Major Projects Leadership Academy, and I was delighted that that was happening. One of the things we need to do—we talk about Civil Service reform and the need for skills in the Civil Service to be increased—is see a much more professional approach taken to the selection, preparation and induction of Ministers.

Q659 **Tom Randall:** I will come on to that in a moment, but in terms of the class divide you have spoken about throughout between policy and technical expertise, the cult of the generalist has been talked about since the 1960s. Is this something that remains a significant problem, or is there a direction of travel where it is improving in terms of bridging that divide?

Lord Maude of Horsham: No, I do not think it is particularly improving. Until you get the Departments that are heavy on operational delivery having Permanent Secretaries who are operational or technical, or whatever, people, that is not going to change. If it is consistently the case that the people that get the top jobs are the clever policy mandarins, then that is not going to change. The only way you can do this, because the system responds to signals, is to say that in every Department there is a duopoly leadership, there is someone who is the head policy civil servant and an operational head. In the policy-heavy Departments, the policy person would be the Permanent Secretary, and vice versa in the operation-heavy Departments. This would be about 50:50, and it would start to send a signal.

You should also always have a Cabinet Secretary and a full-time chief operating officer of the Civil Service, as there now is, but I would make the difference that the COO should not be the Permanent Secretary in the Cabinet Office, which is frankly a distraction from the crucial role of leading and driving the cross-cutting functions across the Civil Service. You should always have those two people at the top of the Civil Service, but the role of head of the Civil Service should rotate between them, it should alternate, so at one time it should be the Cabinet Secretary, as it is—and frankly, with one exception, has been for a long, long time—but the next time it should be the COO. Again, you are sending a signal, and Whitehall is acutely sensitive to those kinds of signals, that holding one of those technical and functional roles is not a bar to getting to the top.

Q660 **Tom Randall:** Do you think that the efforts to professionalise policymaking have been helpful?

Lord Maude of Horsham: What sort of things are you thinking of?

Tom Randall: The better training on the policy side of it, has that been—

Lord Maude of Horsham: I have not seen enough of it to know whether that has changed. One of the things I tried to do was to get fast-stream graduate entrants into the policy stream. One of the good things that has happened since my time is that the technical functions mostly now have their own professional fast-stream graduate entry, which is a good thing. I was trying to get it to operate much more like a graduate training scheme that any professional services firm would operate. So you have a two-year training period where, in that two-year period, you would have four six-month postings in different places where you are doing proper work and contributing, but the primary thing is being trained and getting the skills.

That is absolutely not how the fast stream was operating. When I proposed this change, I had no fewer than four Permanent Secretaries form up to me in my office to tell me that the world would come to a juddering halt if this were to be introduced. We did introduce it. I have not explored the extent to which it has remained the case. The Treasury objected to it, and the Treasury typically set up its own separate fast-stream entry. But having very rigorous training, particularly in those kinds of basic things, such as analytical skills, is important.

Q661 **Tom Randall:** Finally from me, do you think that the historical dominance of policy generalists may have been a result of Ministers' preferences, that a person who can smooth over short-term political problems might be more highly regarded by some Ministers than someone with well-founded technical expertise?

Lord Maude of Horsham: That is what I was always told. I was always told when yet another white-collar mandarin was appointed departmental Permanent Secretary, "That is what the Minister wanted" and often when I checked with the Minister, it was not what the Minister had wanted. The Minister wanted someone who could get the job done. Of course, having the role as a sort of policy consigliere, exactly as you put it, to help sort a political or interdepartmental problem. Of course you want that and need to have that, but it does not need to be the Permanent Secretary.

Tom Randall: That is interesting, thank you.

Q662 **Jackie Doyle-Price:** You will be pleased to know, Lord Maude, we have reached the end, but thank you for your time today. I wanted to come back on a couple of themes that you have already mentioned. Coming back to the issue of the fixed term for Permanent Secretaries, obviously there was resistance and you managed to succeed where Tony Blair failed but, in view of the amount of churn we have had in Permanent Secretaries over the last 12 months, would you still see that five-year fixed term as the right approach to have?

Lord Maude of Horsham: Yes, totally, because again, if you look at the three other countries with similar systems to ours—Canada, Australia and New Zealand—they did this decades ago. It does not mean you cannot extend it, you totally can, and that has just happened with the head of the Treasury. It does not need to be done for another five-year term, you can extend for a shorter period, but the key thing is that you no longer have a presumption that you will be reappointed, that it will be a longer term. That is where you start to get better accountability coming in. Four years would have been better but, being a mild and compromising sort of person, I settled on five.

Q663 **Jackie Doyle-Price:** Do you think the fact there has only been one who has had their term extended, is that an indicator of success or just—

Lord Maude of Horsham: I don't think it is an indication of success or otherwise. Might one have made different decisions on individuals? It is obviously invidious to get into the case of individuals, but I think it is absolutely right that the Prime Minister had the option. In the Foreign Office, for example, where they manage diplomats' careers much more proactively than the rest of the Civil Service, it is perfectly common in the senior ranks for someone to have a gap between the appointment you want them to take up and basically to create a non-job or send them on sabbatical or something. You want to keep them, but there is no real, substantive job for them to do for that six months or year, or whatever period.

When a Permanent Secretary comes in for five years and you want to make a change in that Department, and you don't necessarily want to lose them, but there isn't somewhere for them to move on to straightaway, then I think we need to be a bit more creative about finding ways to keep capable people in the system but, none the less, not lose the ability to make the changes after a long period of incumbency that this system now allows.

Q664 **Jackie Doyle-Price:** Excellent. My final question is about the extended ministerial office, which has largely been dropped. What are your views about that? Is it a missed opportunity? Is it something that is worth revisiting? I can see advantages from the perspective of applying real ministerial direction. Particularly where you have programmes of reform, I can see advantages to it but, frankly, they are only going to be as good as the Ministers who are driving them. Your reflections?

Lord Maude of Horsham: None of them happened. Not a single extended ministerial office was created before the experiment was disbanded, to the great relief of the leadership of the Civil Service. But it remains the case that, as I was saying before, Ministers in the UK are woefully underpowered in terms of their offices compared with Ministers in any similar country. You look at what a Minister in France has by way of infrastructure and an extended office, a cabinet and all of that. It is chalk and cheese compared with how we treat Ministers in the UK. Maybe what we came up with was not perfect, and so it never got tried in practice. Some Ministers have created something similar, not using that exact format, but something

similar. Whether or not that is exactly the right way to do it, we absolutely need to address the issue of how we support Ministers.

Q665 **Jackie Doyle-Price:** Yes. I guess it comes back to how you enable Ministers to strengthen their leadership. It is not necessarily about personnel. It is about the dynamics of the Civil Service, to which personnel can be an answer, but it is not the only answer. I suppose it is not a one size fits all.

Lord Maude of Horsham: No, absolutely. As I was saying about the centre of Government, how it operates will vary according to the people. When we were doing the work on preparing for Government before the 2010 election, one of the bits of feedback we got from the Civil Service was, "It would be very useful if incoming Ministers could tell us what their working style is" and the truth is that everybody thinks their working style is completely normal. Most of us could not describe what our working style is; it is just the way we work, and we assume it is the way everyone works. It is quite difficult. You need to be able to have the support that suits how you work. Some people are very organised; others are not. I am not very organised, so I need to have people who do the organising for me and around me.

But I go back to the point I made earlier, there is a need for us to take the appointment and preparation of Ministers much more seriously. One of the things that makes civil servants—and it is an unconscious thing—more ready to treat lightly what Ministers have said and decided is the sense that Ministers get appointed not necessarily on the basis of capability or aptitude for that particular role but to tick a particular political box. There will always be some of that, but when you see very capable hardworking Ministers being booted because you need to give someone else a try, and all that kind of stuff, civil servants then say, "If the politicians aren't taking capability, preparation and training seriously for themselves, why should we take them seriously?" I think there is a real gap there.

Jackie Doyle-Price: Excellent, thank you very much.

Chair: Lord Maude, can I thank you very much indeed for your time and contribution to the Committee this morning? It was extremely insightful and helpful for our understanding of the work you have been doing and, indeed, for our wider inquiry. On behalf of the Committee, can I thank you very much indeed?

Lord Maude of Horsham: Thank you. I enjoyed it.