

Procedure Committee

Oral evidence: Should there be a Commons Budget Committee? HC 1482

Wednesday 22 May 2019

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Members present: Mr Charles Walker (Chair); Bob Blackman; Mr Peter Bone; Bambos Charalambous; Sir Edward Leigh; David Linden.

Questions 202 - 221

Witness

[I](#): Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP



Examination of Witness

Witness: Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP

Q202 **Chair:** I'm sorry we're a bit thin on the ground.

Nicky Morgan: I won't take it personally.

Chair: Please don't. With meeting on Wednesdays, there have been a lot of distractions over the past few weeks that have hit this Committee and others hard. It is so good of you to be here, Nicky.

You know what we are looking at. We are obviously looking at whether or not there is a requirement for the House to have a Budget Committee. Most of us think it is not a bad idea, to be perfectly honest. Your predecessor Mr Tyrie, now Lord Tyrie, thought it was a horrible idea. We are at the end, as I say, but we did want to see you.

Sir Edward has been the driving intellectual force behind this for the best part of a decade—you can say nice things in this place with sincerity, and I say that with great sincerity. Sir Edward, with our former colleague, John Pugh, you have been the intellectual driving force behind this, so why don't you start?

Q203 **Sir Edward Leigh:** I have been pushing for this since I was Chair of the PAC. We have always come up against the opposition of the Treasury Committee, although, believe me, there is no desire in any way to clip at your wings. We recognise the fantastic work you do; it is just that you are, obviously, an enormously important Committee and you are hugely concerned with monetary policy. We understand that. You state that scrutiny of departmental spending is a task for departmental Committees. Given all your other very important work, when did your Committee last look at Government spending or fiscal policy rather than monetary policy, and what did you conclude?

Nicky Morgan: Thank you for the opportunity to be here and thank you for the suggestion. I feel as if I am somewhere between Lord Tyrie and this Committee. I do not think it is a horrible idea, but I think we need to be clear about what the problem is that we are trying to solve. I would agree—we might get on to it—there are definitely some aspects of Government spending, and particularly the estimates process, which do not work very well at the moment. We have these rather opaque discussions at the Liaison Committee about estimates and I am not sure anyone is terribly the wiser.

To answer your specific question, obviously we had the Spring Statement evidence sessions and we have started scrutiny of the Comprehensive Spending Review on the assumption there is going to be a CSR this year—of course we do not actually know if that is the process. We look at Government spending, obviously, when it comes to Budgets; so we look at overall Government spending. We also take written evidence; I have



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written several letters now to Sir Thomas Scholar, the Treasury Permanent Secretary, on the Treasury's own departmental spending, and those replies are on the Treasury Select Committee website.

I also come at this as a former Treasury Minister and the former Secretary of State of a spending Department during a spending review period of 2015. I would certainly say that, in my experience as Education Secretary, I do not think the Education Select Committee ever asked me about the spending of the Department.

Sir Edward Leigh: That is the problem, yes.

Nicky Morgan: I think that is an issue. Looking at the remits of the departmental Select Committees, where departmental spending is part of that, I do think there are aspects that need to be improved.

Q204 **Sir Edward Leigh:** The trouble is that the departmental Select Committees are obviously far more interested in policy than they are in the detail and boring bits about spending. The Institute for Government examined the Committees that scrutinise the five highest-spending Government Departments and found that none had taken oral evidence from their Departments on the 2017-18 estimates. It is not a very good place, is it really? I am not criticising the Select Committees, I am just saying they are so overwhelmed, given the limited time, with dealing with policy they simply do not have the time to deal with spending.

The point I am putting to you is that we are not trying to chip away at what your Committee is already doing very well. We are not trying to intrude into what departmental Select Committees are doing. We are just saying that they simply do not have the time to concentrate on spending. Given that spending of our taxpayers' money is at £800 billion this year or something, it is a vitally important area.

Nicky Morgan: Yes.

Sir Edward Leigh: In every other major developed country, they have Budget Committees precisely to do this job. I just put that to you.

Nicky Morgan: As a Member of Parliament or a person, I am not somebody who ever says that, because something has been this way forever, we should never look at it again.

First, I think it is right that the Procedure Committee is looking at this as an issue. I agree with the evidence given, certainly in written form, by the Chair of the Liaison Committee—he will not thank me for this—that there may be an argument, particularly on a spending review, for the Chancellor to appear before the Liaison Committee to talk about spending. A lot of spending is obviously cross-Government, so even if you have each departmental Select Committee interrogating its own departmental spending—I fully take your point, Sir Edward, that that is not done always to the way we would expect at the moment—it is still



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very important for the Liaison Committee to facilitate discussions between Select Committees and the Chancellor.

Of course, we have a unique system in this country where we have both the finance ministry and the economy ministry all in one body, as in the Treasury. I would go back to the fact that, as I say, we have written to the Treasury as a Committee this year about the Department's own estimates.

I checked and looked at the Standing Orders of the House and obviously each departmental Select Committee is responsible for spending. Therefore, I suppose what I would say to this Committee is: what steps could be taken before a new Committee is set up, knowing the cost of a new Committee, the difficulty of getting all Members to attend Committee meetings and to stand for election? I would suggest there are perhaps some steps that could be taken first.

Q205 Sir Edward Leigh: I am very happy if that is your defence, I think we can deal with that because you are not actually going to the absolute core of why we do not need a Budget Committee. There may be a cost.

Lord Macpherson, who obviously has massive experience, put it very well. Lord Macpherson of Earl's Court—that is something to conjure with, isn't it? "I know that there are members of the Treasury Committee sitting here and, theoretically, the Treasury Committee could fulfil this role, but I have found over time that the Treasury Committee has become less and less interested in the details of public spending planning, partly because there have been really sexy things out there like beating up bankers, which is far more fun than getting into the detail of public spending, much of which is quite boring but someone has to do it". That is all we are saying.

Nicky Morgan: I agree that someone has to do it. I cannot remember when Lord Macpherson stood down as Permanent Secretary of the Treasury. He was there when I was a Treasury Minister and has not been there since I have been Treasury Select Committee Chair.

I would just ask this Committee to look at what the Treasury Select Committee has been doing since I took over as Chair. I do not know whether you took evidence from the current Permanent Secretary of the Treasury as to the scrutiny that he has had from our Committee. You may well find that it has been very different, and more searching I would hope, than it might have been under my predecessor as Chair of the Committee.

We are already planning our scrutiny—and have started it—of the Comprehensive Spending Review, both with the Chancellor and also with officials. I think that is a very, very important thing for this Parliament to do.

Q206 Sir Edward Leigh: How many sessions will you have? Do you have the capacity and necessary skills to scrutinise aggregate Government



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spending? You are looking at the whole economy and, in many people's minds, far more important things like how we are going to run the economy after Brexit and all these sorts of things. Do you have the time and the skills? I am not blaming you for this, there is no blame attached.

Nicky Morgan: No, I understand that. I would say the answer is yes. I have some fantastic Committee members. The Treasury Committee is one of those Committees where we have had no vacancies since I have taken over as Chair; people want to be on it. We are obviously busy but that is part of our role, to look at what is going on in terms of public spending.

In the 2010 spending review, the Treasury Committee heard from eight different panels over five sessions. In the 2015 spending review there were three sessions, partly, of course, because a lot of spending was not covered by that review—a lot of the departmental spending was protected. We have already had sessions asking the Chancellor about, obviously, the pre-announced health spending allocations and also the priorities for the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Q207 **Chair:** Nicky, you said that when you started you were not necessarily in the Andrew Tyrie camp but not fully in what might be our camp. Where are you in relation to a Budget Committee?

Nicky Morgan: I have to say I am not keen on the idea, per se, partly probably because of the kind of person I am. I am never entirely keen about inventing new Committees. I would worry about staffing, resources and everything else. Leaving that to one side, I think where I am is accepting that there are some lacunae in parliamentary scrutiny of Government spending. I go back to the estimates process. Of course Committees—mine included—can always ask for specialist advice in terms of looking at the economy.

Also, I feel that the Budget Committee would let the departmental Select Committees off the hook a bit. As a former Secretary of State, first, I think officials and Departments would do all they could to keep their Secretary of State out of the clutches of a Budget Committee. *[Laughter.]* I can see that Mr Blackman appreciates that. I also think at the moment departmental Select Committees find it difficult to get Treasury Ministers to front, so that is another area.

There are other things that could be explored first—getting Treasury Ministers to appear more, looking at the role of the Liaison Committee and accepting the role of departmental Select Committees—before Parliament moves to having a formal Budget Committee.

Q208 **David Linden:** Thank you very much, and thank you for your evidence as well. Ms Morgan, you said that you are not keen on the idea of a Budget Committee. Are you not keen in the same way that the current Chief Secretary to the Treasury is? I do not know if you saw her evidence on how ambivalent the Treasury is. Does that not sound alarm bells, how



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alarmed Her Majesty's Treasury is at this idea?

Nicky Morgan: I am speculating here but my hunch, partly from having spent time there, is that the Treasury is very reluctant to tell Parliament how to do its job and I think that is right for Government. It is not always the case—I am sure they have views themselves. I think how Parliament decides to organise itself in terms of scrutinising is a matter for Parliament. As I say, the fact that we don't have the estimates debates until we start the financial year does not make much sense at all. That is something that could be looked at.

Another issue would be—we might come on to this—how you scrutinise spending without getting into policy. I go back to what Sir Edward said about members of my Committee loving monetary policy and beating up bankers, which I refute, although there is no doubt they like quizzing people. As Members of Parliament, I think it would be really difficult not to get into policy and second-guessing policy very, very quickly when you are looking at budget lines.

Q209 **David Linden:** To be fair, that was a point made by Clive Betts in his evidence as well.

I want to come on now to the scrutiny of Government Ministers and other Departments. I will take as an example the Scotland Office in terms of scrutinising the spending that has rocketed in the Scotland Office in recent years. When was the last time, for example, that Secretary David Mundell appeared before your Committee?

Nicky Morgan: He has not been before my Committee. I expect him to appear before the Scottish Affairs Committee to—

Q210 **David Linden:** To discuss departmental spending?

Nicky Morgan: Yes, it would be one of the places we could do it. We would probably quiz the Chancellor, or potentially the Chief Secretary I guess, if there are Departments that have gone way over. One of the questions we have asked Tom Scholar, which he has replied to, is about the Health and Social Care Department's budget and the changes from capital to revenue spending. We would do that should concerns be raised.

Q211 **David Linden:** The last section I want to ask you about specifically is on resource. In response to Sir Edward, you mentioned the fact that your Committee does not have any vacancies. However, as can be seen here today, I don't think this Committee probably has any vacancies either but there are not lots and lots of people here.

Nicky Morgan: No.

David Linden: Do you feel that the current size of the Treasury Select Committee is adequate to respond to the needs and the demands of Parliament or do you think it should be a bigger Committee?

Nicky Morgan: I would need to go away and look at the numbers. Officials behind me might know but I think we are probably one of the



biggest Committees out there—yes, it used to be 14 and we are now 11. We could always have more. In my experience, there has never been a problem finding new members for Select Committees when our members are promoted, move to the Shadow Front Bench or whatever it might be. That might be another answer.

It is about prioritisation. It is about saying, “These things are important” and—going back to Edward’s point—the chair of the Select Committee saying to the Committee, “This might be a dull but worthy session we are going to do today, as opposed to exciting and newsworthy, but Select Committees have a role and duty to do both”.

Q212 David Linden: The final question I want to ask—which I have asked pretty much every witness—is obviously the Government are proposing to reduce the number of MPs from 650 to 600. Given the pressure that we are under at the moment, do you think that is a good idea from the Government?

Nicky Morgan: Generally or in relation to this particular inquiry?

David Linden: In relation to this particular proposal.

Nicky Morgan: As I say, there are some Committees that struggle at the moment to get sufficient numbers of MPs. Others have been in this House longer than me, but the workload of MPs does not seem to be getting any lighter. One of the reasons—perhaps evidenced by today—we have moved the Treasury Select Committee Wednesday sessions to the mornings is to avoid clashes with House business because we thought people would want to be in the Chamber. Even then, it is still quite difficult and people do get called away at short notice to other things.

Q213 Bob Blackman: Nicky, one of the things that this Committee is considering is different structures. We have obviously looked at the Public Accounts Committee looking at value-for-money studies, the Treasury Select Committee looking more at policy, and then a Budget Committee looking at not day-to-day spending but year-on-year spending and current spending loads. The other solution is potentially a Sub-Committee of the Treasury Committee looking at the Budget in day-to-day detail. What do you think of that suggestion?

Nicky Morgan: It is certainly a suggestion that is worth exploring. We do have a Sub-Committee of the Treasury Committee that is chaired by John Mann. Obviously, we scrutinise the work of the whole Department and some of the sub-Departments underneath. We knew there were various agencies—like the Crown Estate, the Adjudicator’s Office and the Valuation Office—that had not had that scrutiny of being in front of the Committee for a long time. Although people do not necessarily volunteer to go before Committees, if you are running a public body it is an important part to be scrutinised on its work. That is what a lot of John’s Sub-Committee has been doing, as well as looking at the way HMRC conducts inquiries. It will delve into things in a bit more detail. Therefore, I think that would be a very feasible suggestion.



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Implicit in your question as well is how Committees work with each other. I think we are seeing a lot more joint working at the moment. Where things are uncovered by one—by a Sub-Committee, for example—that can be fed back to another departmental Select Committee for it to apply more scrutiny, based on its knowledge of policy and having relevant Ministers in front of them. That is what I mean about how there might be another way to achieve similar ends and to give new structures a trial period to see whether that does improve scrutiny. Also, going back to Mr Linden's point, it does make Treasury Ministers aware that they are being scrutinised even more.

Q214 **Bob Blackman:** I sit on the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee. We have been praised, apparently, for the scrutiny we make of departmental spending.

Nicky Morgan: Yes.

Bob Blackman: We probably hold one session a year, and when the figures are presented, they almost impenetrable to actually establish anything. Of course, the Treasury Ministers refuse to come in front of us at all, saying, "It's departmental responsibility." There is a huge gap here, which I think is the big problem.

My concern is that there is always an attraction to debate policy, there is less of an attraction to get into the nitty-gritty, to put your finger on the figures and challenging those figures.

My thought process is: isn't it better to have a dedicated Committee—and I do not care whether it is a Sub-Committee or a Committee—that as its job has to do that day-to-day, month-on-month, year-on-year scrutiny of expenditure, to really drill into what is being spent and what is not. Irrespective of what policy is? It is about how much money is being spent that is the key. Do you see that that is where there is a gap that we have to examine from a scrutiny process?

Nicky Morgan: As I said when I started my evidence, there is a gap. That is partly the estimates process and also this thing about departmental allocations. Don't forget, we also have the Public Accounts Committee; I think you have had evidence as well from Meg Hillier, the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. That Committee does a fantastic job of scrutinising when money has been spent, whether it has achieved the aims, value for money and everything else.

There is quite a lot in that—it is a multi-layered question. I think it is accepted that there is a gap. The Treasury and HCLG Committees have held a joint session on business rates, which was a way to get the relevant Treasury Minister to come before a joint session of the Committees and we continue to work together on that. I think joint working is the way forward. We get better evidence from witnesses if they do not have to give repeated evidence to different Committees, if you have people with different specialisations grilling one person together.



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Implicit in your question as well is the assumption that we have the Members of Parliament who would want to do that detailed line-by-line scrutiny. It would be interesting to ask—it is not a question that is ever asked, I think—what were Members of Parliament's backgrounds before they came in here? For some people it would be absolutely up their street; for many people, it would be something where they would serve if asked to do so, very reluctantly, and they would get off it as quickly as they possibly could. It is finding the right people. For people who were not comfortable doing that, it would be tempting to get into policy very quickly, so you would need to have a Chair, a secretariat or Clerks who were very focused on what it was.

The other thing we should not forget is the parliamentary Scrutiny Office, which is very small here compared with similar offices in other Parliaments around the world. That may be another area to look at. They are there to serve Select Committees. If there were more of them, they could do the job of serving Members of Parliament in the same way that the House of Commons Library does so excellently. As a Committee, we have benefitted from two former members of the Scrutiny Office coming to work for the Committee. They have both been absolutely excellent in terms of the level of detail they apply to things.

Finally, I draw attention—and the Committee will be aware of this—to the evidence you heard from the OECD, which is that a Budget Committee on its own would not solve the lacuna you identified in your opening question.

Q215 Bob Blackman: The other issue that I will mention is that, obviously, the current Chancellor brought forward the Budget to November in order to allow greater scrutiny over the Budget. How has the Treasury Committee used that time? Could it be a Budget Committee that could look at more of the detail of expenditure?

Nicky Morgan: We probably go back to this issue about policy.

Bob Blackman: I understand.

Nicky Morgan: A lot of the Budget is not just about the lines but is about the policy decisions that have been taken, some of which are right for us to ask about and some where the departmental Select Committees will know far more about the trade-offs that have happened. Certainly, that has been the case on the spending review, where there are real trade-offs. Having done it from the other side, there are some big trade-offs that happen within Departments that do not often see the light of day and that would be very interesting to Parliament to find out about.

We held a number of sessions. If you do not already have it, I can write to the Committee setting out exactly what we did post-Budget. We eventually have the Chancellor, but we start off with the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Institute for Government. If there is a particular issue that comes out—it might be housing or local government finance—



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we have experts in that. We heard from the Women's Budget Group and various economists. We can take evidence from whoever says yes to our inquiries—sometimes they are persuaded to come and say yes—for as long as it takes for the Budget. I would say that we probably did at least four, if not five, sessions on the Budget last year and then produced our report.

The difficulty is that the session between the Budget in November and the Spring Statement is not very long and, of course, it is made more difficult by the uncertainty around the dreaded Brexit.

Q216 Bob Blackman: How frequently does the Treasury Committee meet?

Nicky Morgan: Twice a week.

Bob Blackman: Twice a week already?

Nicky Morgan: Yes, we meet twice a week. The John Mann Sub-Committee does not meet every week, but when it does meet it meets on Mondays.

Bob Blackman: Thank you.

Q217 Mr Bone: Leading on from that, it has never struck me that your Committee is light of workload. When I have been on Select Committees—I have never been on the Treasury Select Committee—they never seriously looked at departmental expenditure. I think Sir Edward's case is irrefutable. He makes a case that there is a hole in the scrutiny. It is just not being done. To say that Select Committees should do it is one thing, but they just do not have the time. The Select Committees I am on do not have the time to do it. It seems to me that we have to have a Committee to look into this.

I personally think it should be a stand-alone Committee to give it the power and the authority, and have an elected Chair. I would also have the elected Chair designated as being from the Opposition parties. I do not think any of the arguments I have heard—that it is going to cost money, or MPs are not going to want to do it—really do it. At worst you could pilot this thing for a year and if it did not work, fine.

There is a hole in our scrutiny. It is something Parliament in the past used to do far better than we do today. We all want to talk about policy. I get the impression that—in a way quite rightly—you are trying to defend your Committee, but there is not anything this Committee would do that you are doing so it is not taking a part, or am I missing something here?

Nicky Morgan: I think you are, Mr Bone. You are right that the arguments against this are not really to do with resource or to do with the number of MPs. I am sure people can always be found to serve on Committees and there is no shortage of people signing for election as Chair of a Committee like that.

However, I go back to where I started: what is the problem we are trying to solve? I agree with you, Mr Blackman, the Chair and others that there



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is a lacuna. Various in evidence people have talked about departmental allocations, public spending and estimates. I think Mr Bacon was looking at the granularity of procurement, partly based on his experience on the Public Accounts Committee. That tends to suggest the Budget Committee will be trying to work out exactly what its remit is.

The Standing Orders of the House of Commons are clear on what the role of departmental Select Committees is. It is to, "examine the expenditure plans, outturn and performance of the Department and its arm's length bodies, and the relationships between spending and delivery of outcomes".

Q218 **Mr Bone:** But they don't do it, do they? Can you tell me one Committee that does do that?

Nicky Morgan: We just heard from Mr Blackman that HCLG has done it.

Mr Bone: How many times a year?

Bob Blackman: Once a year.

Mr Bone: Come on.

Nicky Morgan: It probably ran through many other sessions. There may be a case for some analysis of that, but running through many of the Treasury Select Committee sessions is the work of these bodies—looking at what they are spending, how they are spending and how they are being run. We have done reports on the Budget; we have worked on the Spending Review and the work of the Treasury; we have done the Spring Statement as well and the annual Budget. It is question of understanding that the OECD is saying a Budget Committee alone will not solve this; there are other steps that absolutely need to be taken as well.

Q219 **Chair:** Do you think that when you were Secretary of State for the Department of Education, your Department would have benefitted from appearing before a Budget Committee to have your estimates scrutinised, challenged and stress tested? Would it have provided an extra pair of eyes?

Nicky Morgan: I would have benefitted from having that done by a Select Committee. I am not going to necessarily agree a Budget Committee, because the thing is, as we know, at the moment the estimates do not give a huge amount of detail. The better thing is the bid for the spending review and then the departmental plans. The departmental plan is absolutely what sets the priorities for the Department and the amount of money you put against each priority. As I say, in the CSR the work that we did in Education, which went on for months, was looking at the bid we were going to make to the Treasury and the trade-offs there.

You would have to have a Budget Committee with some different departmental specialists on it to know, when somebody is talking about the difference between academies, free schools, capital and all the rest of it,



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what is really going on. There would also have to be quite a lot of specialist evidence, or you would have to bring in people from the departmental Select Committee who would know something about that.

Chair, I go back to what I said, which is that it is very clear what departmental Select Committees should be doing. A trial period of getting them to do it and to fix those sessions is a step to explore whether that is sufficient or not.

Q220 Chair: It is a good idea but the trouble is they do not do it now. There is nothing that we or the House could do. We cannot do anything; only the House can decide to change Standing Orders, so on and so forth, adopt our reports. There is nothing the House could do to require them to do it. It is open for them now to do it and they choose not to. As Bob said, his Committee was congratulated on doing it once in a year.

It strikes me that there are some crashing bores in this place—I say that with great affection—who are forensic and love to plough through complicated spreadsheets, pie charts and to ask searching questions. I think of Richard Bacon, for example, who would be a simply fantastic Chair of such a Committee because he is certainly forensic in his approach. You would get a group of people who actually wanted to do it—who are more interested in getting under the hood of a car than driving it down the motorway, which is what most Select Committees do. They like to put their foot to the pedal, shoot down the motorway and get on camera. What about that as an idea or as a counterproposition to your scepticism?

Nicky Morgan: I am always interested in discussing any counterpropositions. I wonder whether the Select Committee Chairs are advised by their Clerks exactly what the remit is when they become Chairs, and that the spending is part of it. I suspect there is—slightly because, as Mr Blackman said, Treasury Ministers do not want to appear in front of other departmental Select Committees—a sort of reluctance to ask what can we do about that? How do we scrutinise it? I think a reminder about the role and the importance of doing this, particularly around the Comprehensive Spending Review, which we discussed briefly at the Liaison Committee. I go back to my suggestion potentially of a one-off session with the Chancellor in the same way that we do with the Prime Minister. As I understand it that does require Standing Orders to be changed, but that would be something that would allow other Select Committee Chairs to hear how that scrutiny of spending is done.

Q221 Bambos Charalambous: This is about financial opaqueness that so many Members, including myself, still struggle with to get to the bottom of how much is being spent and what the money is being spent on. I think there is an issue with Members fully understanding what they are scrutinising. What are your thoughts on that?

You mentioned the Public Accounts Committee doing a measure of scrutiny and the Treasury Select Committee doing the same, but there is



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also a lacuna. Do you have any ideas on how that would be filled—if you think it is the Select Committees doing their job differently, or just doing their job?

Nicky Morgan: Going back to what I just said to the Chair, I do think that there is already a requirement in Standing Orders and I think an exploration with the current Select Committees about the way they do that might help. When we get to something like a Comprehensive Spending Review, there is a very important role for Parliament, potentially through the Liaison Committee but of course through debates in the House. I said earlier I thought the estimates process—you are absolutely right—is very opaque, even for Members who have been here for some time but certainly for new Members. Also, there is the fact that we do this scrutiny at a time when the House is often not very well attended or after the financial year has started.

The Public Accounts Committee performs a very valuable role, working with the National Audit Office—the Comptroller is part of the Committee—in scrutinising particular key projects. It has always done that very well and, quite rightly, it is always an uncomfortable experience for people appearing in front of it with questions to answer.

I also mentioned—I am not sure if you were here—the role of the parliamentary Scrutiny Office, which I think sits alongside the House of Commons Library. It is not open to all Members; it is open to Select Committees. I have certainly benefitted from members of it coming to work for our Committee. There is probably more that could be done there around briefing Select Committees. It is not a very big team at the moment and I think more experts there to help Select Committees, and potentially Members of Parliament as well in terms of preparing for estimates debates, would be an important step forward.

Chair: Edward, do you want to have any final—

Sir Edward Leigh: No, I think we have had a good discussion. Thank you very much.

Chair: Thank you, Sec—I nearly said Secretary of State; sorry, Chair.

Nicky Morgan: I answer to anything, Mr Walker, as you know.

Chair: Thank you so much for coming to talk to us and for being so generous with your time. Thank you.