



CABINET OFFICE
LONDON SW1A 2AS

Meg Hillier MP
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
By email

1 July 2020

Dear Chair,

Response to recommendations in the PAC report EU Exit: Get ready for Brexit campaign

Following the publication of the Public Accounts Committee report on the 'Get Ready for Brexit' campaign on 3 June 2020, I am writing, as requested by the Committee, to respond more fully to recommendations 4 and 5.

Recommendation 4

Recommendation: The Cabinet Office should write to the Committee within three months of this report to provide clear and specific assurance that in future it will use the analysis of options in business cases to drive decision making and deliver better value for the taxpayer.

We recognise that a business case written to the 'Green Book' five case model standard is an important tool for evidence based and transparent decision making, and also provides the framework for the delivery and performance monitoring of the project it is providing justification for.

We are constantly reviewing our business case writing and analysis and looking for opportunities to improve. Since the Get ready for Brexit campaign business case we have:

- established a dedicated PMO function within the campaign team responsible for overseeing project delivery and financial governance
- increased our drafting capacity and capability by bringing in PMO resources with proven experience of writing five case model business cases
- increased the robustness of our financial modelling by ensuring that this is overseen by an accountant
- worked with government economists from the early inception of a business case and ensured that there is a systematic economic appraisal with rigorous options analysis and vfm considerations

I am confident that with these changes will ensure that spending and investment decisions are based on highly competent professionally developed proposals.

Recommendation 5

Recommendation: The Cabinet Office should write to the Committee within one month of this report setting out how it plans to act upon the lessons learned.

Following the end of the campaign, an internal evaluation was conducted in January 2020. It identified the key lessons learned from the campaign and made a number of recommendations for future transition period communication and for other cross-government campaigns. Areas where successes were highlighted included the following:

- The unified cross-government campaign model was successful in breaking down departmental silos, building collaboration and making it easier to deliver efficiencies while focusing on prioritising audience needs. This approach is being replicated for both the coronavirus and transition period campaigns.
- The Cabinet Office delivered an extremely complex campaign within a very short timeframe which involved more than 1,250 activities and 120,000 TV, radio and print adverts to five audiences covering 26 priority messages, in 30 countries across 2,800 creative executions.
- There is clear evidence that the campaign succeeded in prompting citizens to take action to achieve desired outcomes.

Recommendations for transition period communications included:

- Retaining a central Communication Centre to establish audience-led campaigns that deliver through departmentally owned channels alongside a central advertising campaign for all cross-government campaigns.
- Aligning ground and air programmes more closely based on an audience-led approach.
- Focusing ground activity onto priority and immediate actions where citizens and businesses can receive specifically targeted advice and support.
- Considering increased use of low/no cost PR and media management in order to secure media coverage in target sectors, geographic titles and trade titles at lower cost to paid advertising.

We have accepted all of these recommendations and taken them into the establishment of the transition period communication hub ensuring efficiency of public spending and providing maximum value for money. As part of sharing good practice, we have also circulated the lessons learned across the Government comms profession - this is key to continuing to develop and improve the quality of government campaigns. Additionally, we have a process of continual identification and implementation of new lessons learned, so that we gain incremental improvements.

We have also re-established the independently chaired assurance panel which meets regularly to provide a fresh perspective and challenge on delivery. A new independent media auditing agency ensures that our professional standards are followed, campaign objectives are measurable and value is optimised.

I hope this letter satisfies your requests.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Alex Chisholm', with a stylized, cursive script.

Alex Chisholm

Civil Service Chief Operating Officer & Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary