



Justice Committee

Dominic Raab MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Lord Chancellor & Secretary of State for Justice

21 June 2022

By email only

Dear Dominic,

Thank you for your letter, dated 9 June, regarding the outstanding Government response to the Committee's report Covid-19 and the criminal law.

We recognise that the recommendations in our report deal with issues across several departments. However, this fact alone does not justify a delay of over 6 months. I would be grateful if you could let us know which departments are responsible for the delay.

We note that the issue of Covid-19 and the criminal law has become highly politicised; however, it is concerning that it appears that the Government has decided to delay its response to our report because of the political controversy surrounding the Downing Street parties during the pandemic.

We are concerned that this delay sets a troubling precedent: that Government responses to balanced reports by cross-party select committees can simply be delayed until the political circumstances are more convenient. That precedent sends a damaging message to Parliament, and to the public, over the value that the Government places on parliamentary scrutiny and the select committee system. Our constitutional arrangements depend, as you know, on the strength of the Government's commitment to upholding conventions, including the expectation that Government responses to Committee reports will be provided within the two months. Given the recent controversies over the Government's commitment to constitutional principles, it is a real shame that the Government could not manage a prompt response to our report.

If there is a reasonable alternative explanation for this delay, beyond requiring the input of several departments, please do set it out in your response.

I am copying in the Leader of House, Mark Spencer, and the Chair of the Liaison Committee, Sir Bernard Jenkin.

Your sincerely,

Sir Robert Neill MP
Chair
Justice Committee