



# Treasury Committee

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Rt Hon. Rishi Sunak MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
HM Treasury  
Via email

20 November 2020

Dear Rishi,

In our evidence session with Sir Tom Scholar, Permanent Secretary of HM Treasury, on 11 November, and throughout our inquiry into the economic impact of coronavirus, we have examined reported problems in public sector procurement during the pandemic and the Treasury's role in procurement.

The recent report by the National Audit Office (NAO) - [Investigation into government procurement during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) – was published after our evidence session with HM Treasury. The report identified elements of the procurement process that appear to be of concern including a lack of effective oversight leading to poor value for money.

The NAO report (para 3.6) states that:

New spending proposals above certain thresholds are required to go through the Treasury Approvals Point (TAP) process, under which HM Treasury scrutinises and approves the proposed new spending. Many new COVID-19-related spending commitments have been large and have consequently required HM Treasury approval of this kind.

I would be grateful if you could let us know

- Whether all government procurements during the COVID-19 pandemic went through the Treasury Approvals Point (TAP) process and what did that entail?;
- Were there procedures that the Treasury would usually follow that it did not follow, or were some procedures curtailed, when it considered spending requests from other departments at this time?;
- Why did HM Treasury not participate in the clearance board established by the Cabinet Office and the Department of Health and Social Care to approve new PPE contracts? (paragraph 3.8 of the NAO report)
- The NAO report (p. 19) notes that HM Treasury have entered into 30 contracts, with a contractual value of £25m, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Did HM Treasury follow its own internal procurement procedures in agreeing these contracts? Were any of these procedures curtailed at this time?
- Is HM Treasury considering changes to its procedures for scrutinising new spending in the light of the NAO Report?

We will be placing this letter, and your reply, in the public domain. Due to the urgency of the issue, the Committee would very much appreciate a response by 4 December.

We are grateful for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mel Stride".

**Rt Hon. Mel Stride MP**  
**Chair of the Treasury Committee**