



Public Accounts Committee



Home Affairs Committee

Sir Matthew Rycroft KCMG CBE
Permanent Secretary
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
By email

8 December 2023

UK-Rwanda Migration and Economic Development Partnership

Dear Permanent Secretary,

We were surprised and disappointed that after refusing to answer questions about spending on the Rwanda scheme in response to direct questions on 29th November and 4th December from both our respective committees, you published a letter at 9.45pm which had been sent to us at 9.16pm on 7th December. Not only did you give us no notice that such an important letter, containing some of the answers to the information we had requested, was coming, but you published the letter before our committees had time to consider it. This shows an extreme lack of respect for our committees. Moreover, the information provided does not answer our questions in full.

In response to questions from our committees you were not willing to reveal how much additional taxpayers' money had been spent on the Rwanda scheme. You told the Public Accounts Committee on 4th December that "the Government will announce the payments to the Government of Rwanda annually in our annual report and accounts". On 29th November, you told the Home Affairs Committee that, "Ministers have decided that the way to keep you and other colleagues in Parliament updated is, once a year, to set out the total additional payments to the Government of Rwanda, and we will do that in the annual report and accounts".

In your letter of 7th December, you have now informed us that an additional £100m was paid to the Rwandan Government in April 2023. The accounts are normally laid in Parliament in July following the end of the accounting year – in this case we would not have seen this figure until July 2024, 15 months after the money was spent. We can see no reason why you could not have shared this information with our committees when giving evidence over the last couple of weeks.

As Accounting Officer you are responsible for managing public money under Treasury guidelines. As such you have specific duties to Parliament relating to the propriety of public spending and a key element of propriety is meeting Parliamentary expectations, especially transparency. This scheme was delivered only after you requested a Ministerial Direction on 13th April 2022. In light of the concerns around value for money that led you to issue that direction we would have expected more transparency than you have chosen to provide. Given the high profile of this scheme which is now subject to a major piece of legislation we expect quarterly updates to be provided to Parliament from now on.



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We request your presence at the Public Accounts Committee on Monday 11th December. Dame Diana, as Chair of the Home Affairs select committee, will be joining the meeting.

We have also asked the National Audit Office to look into the scheme costs.

With a vote in Parliament due on 12th December on legislation which was only unveiled on 7th December we expect full and frank answers on this matter at the public hearing. Parliament needs full information ahead of a vote on such a significant issue and we look forward to you providing that on Monday.

This letter, and any response, will be placed in the public domain.

Yours Sincerely

Dame Meg Hillier
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts

Dame Diana Johnson
Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee