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Rt Hon Meg Hillier MP  
Chair, Public Accounts Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

By email: [pubaccomm@parliament.uk](mailto:pubaccomm@parliament.uk)

16 February 2024

Dear Chair,

## **RE: CIVIL SERVICE WORKFORCE SESSION**

Thank you for inviting us to provide evidence at the Public Accounts Committee session regarding the Civil Service Workforce on 5 February 2024.

At the session, members of the Committee requested further information, which we are happy to provide. For ease, we have grouped the Committee's questions into three topics: Civil Service Workforce, Recruitment and Performance Management:

### **1. Civil Service Workforce**

- *Are govt depts measuring contingency staff and consultants on the same basis?*

In September 2022, the Government published the [Consultancy Playbook](#). This was developed by Civil Service HR, the Government Commercial Function and industry, to set HMG expectations on how and when we would use consultants, and provide tangible upskilling to civil servants to be strong commissioners and consultancy assignment managers. The Playbook includes clear and accessible definitions of what constitutes consultancy and contingent labour, which provide a common frame of reference for departments to use when measuring their contingent labour and consultant workforce. Work is underway to update the Playbook to ensure it, and the definitions contained within, remain in line with industry standards and best practice.

- *What proportion of the Civil Service workforce is agency staff?*

In the context of agency staff, departments are responsible for publishing their headcount data. The Cabinet Office collates spend data for management consultants and contingent labour for the Civil Service, this is outlined below in **Annex A**.

- *Do you have more information around the length of stay for agency workers in the Home Office, and whether this complies with relevant agency worker regulations?*

At times we need to adapt our workforce to meet challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, by bringing in specialist skills or additional temporary labour where demand arises.

Home Office agency workers are supplied through Brook Street (via the Public Sector Resourcing framework) and Adecco, both of whom have confirmed that they comply with the Agency Worker Regulations.

Although there is no prescription within Agency Working Regulations regarding maximum duration, regulations do give agency workers entitlement to the same or no less favourable treatment for basic employment and working conditions if they complete a qualifying period of 12 weeks in a particular role, as would be available to permanent employees undertaking the same or a similar role. The average tenure of agency workers supplied across Brook Street and Adecco is 38 weeks and is kept under review in accordance with Home Office policy.

The Cabinet Office manages the contingent labour spend controls, which are in place to ensure such spend is managed appropriately and represents good value for money for the taxpayer. Although departments are now responsible for managing consultancy spend through internal approvals processes, the Cabinet Office has oversight of cross-government consultancy data through monthly returns from His Majesty's Treasury. Data on consultancy and contingent labour spend is published by departments in their Annual Report and Accounts.

## **2. Recruitment**

- *Is there data to explain why a prospective civil servant accepts one Civil Service job offer and not another?*

The Cabinet Office does not collect this information. Prospective candidates, like with any job offer across any sector, are likely to base their decision on a range of factors, such as pay and benefits, job location, the ability to work flexibly and the career prospects the role provides.

- *Do you hold recruitment figures to confirm how many Permanent Secretaries and Directors General have been recruited from the private sector?*

The latest available figures held by the Cabinet Office show that, as of 2022, 45% of Permanent Secretaries and Directors General have been recruited to the Civil Service externally. This means they have either been hired directly into their current role from the wider public sector or private sector, or joined externally as Deputy Directors, Directors or Directors General before being promoted further into their current role.

### 3. Performance Management

- *Does the Cabinet Office monitor the number of people leaving the Civil Service where performance is a significant issue?*

The Cabinet Office produces the Annual Civil Service Employment Statistics (ACSES) which captures the reasons why civil servants leave the Civil Service across all grades, including the number of dismissals across departments. The most recently published report showed that 2,365 civil servants were dismissed in the 2022/23 financial year due to misconduct, attendance and formal poor performance.

- *Is performance related reasons for leaving the Civil Service centralised at the Cabinet Office?*

Across all Civil Service grades, departments monitor their underperforming staff and collect relevant performance management information; performance-related reasons for leaving the Civil Service are not collated centrally by the Cabinet Office.

- *Does the Cabinet Office have insights on whether there are identifiable patterns where dismissal rate is higher in certain departments?*

The Annual Civil Service Employment Statistics (ACSES) produced by the Cabinet Office includes the number of dismissals due to misconduct, attendance and formal poor performance for each department.

Further to the above, our teams have reviewed the draft transcript from the session and we propose the amendments outlined in **Annex B**. We hope these are acceptable and that this letter has been helpful.

Yours sincerely,



**Alex Chisholm**

Civil Service Chief Operating Officer  
and Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary



**Fiona Ryland**

Government Chief People Officer  
Cabinet Office

## **Annex A: Consultancy and Contingent Labour Spend Data**

### **Consultancy Spend**

- Cross government spend on consultancy:
  - Total for 2021/22: £1,596,183,000
  - Total for 2022/23: £1,187,971,000
- Cabinet Office spend on consultancy:
  - Total for 2021/22: £29,409,000
  - Total for 2022/23: £21,331,000

### **Contingent Labour Spend**

- Cross government spend on contingent labour:
  - Total for 2021/22: £7,064,240,000
  - Total for 2022/23: £7,385,389,000
- Cabinet Office spend on contingent labour:
  - Total for 2021/22: £49,316,000
  - Total for 2022/23: £59,138,000

## **Annex B: Proposed amendments to session transcript**

### **Q7 Original text**

‘...the number of people who have a profession has more or less doubled since the time that we started measuring that five or so years ago.’

### **Q7 Proposed text**

...the number of people who have a **function** has more or less doubled since the time that we started measuring that five or so years ago.

Justification: This change reflects the narrative that follows.

### **Q4 Original text** (noting that question numbers repeat in the draft)

‘Every Department now has moved over to the DDaT pay framework’

### **Q4 Proposed text**

**The majority of departments have** now moved over to the DDaT pay framework, **with the remainder due to implement this shortly.**

Justification: Of the 40 departments, 35 departments have adopted the framework with the remainder having had approval to adopt, but not yet implemented.

### **Q40 Original text**

‘Of the current top 220, which is permanent secretaries and directors general, I think 24% came from outside.’

### **Q40 Proposed text**

Of the current top 220, which is permanent secretaries and directors general, I think **45%** came from outside.

Justification: The revised figure is based on the Senior Civil Service (SCS) database held by the Cabinet Office, which is more accurate as a workforce data set when compared to the talent management data that the initial 24% figure was drawn from. The latter does not cover all Directors General and does not include comprehensive data on their employment history prior to this level.