

24 April 2026

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Cabinet Office responses to Foreign Affairs Select Committee

[by email]

Q740 Chair [Dame Emily Thornberry]

Narrowing it down to the point that, let's say, the red boxes had been ticked and yet the Foreign Office had given clearance, that narrow point, without divulging any further details, was known by quite a wide number of people, wasn't it, before the PM was told?

Cabinet Office written response

Between 25 March and 14 April, seven individuals (in addition to 'must know' security officials) were made aware of, through the compliance with the Humble Address process in the CO, the outcome of the vetting summary document.

Q746 Alex Ballinger

What is the penalty under the Official Secrets Act for sharing such information?

Cabinet Office written response

Our legal advisers advise that the maximum penalty on conviction is 2 years' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.

Q804 Alan Gemmell

The Committee is seeing Morgan McSweeney next week. Is there any Cabinet Office advice in relation to the decision to use him and others to have follow-up questions to Peter Mandelson about the Epstein issues?

Cabinet Office written response

We have not been able to identify any Cabinet Office advice proposing that the former PM's Chief of Staff should ask questions of Peter Mandelson.

Qq820-821 Alan Gemmell

Is there FCDO guidance on how it takes vetting decisions? If so, have you seen that?

[...]

Would it be possible for us to see that and to come to our own conclusions about whether the actions of Sir Olly were in line with that guidance, if it were to exist?

Cabinet Office written response

We understand you are in touch with FCDO on this matter who will take forward the action, given FCDO own the guidance you have requested.