

08 June 2026

Dear Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown,

Thank you for your letter and for the Committee's continued interest in the Home Office English Language Test (HOELT) programme.

All contracted services have a start and end date and must be reprocured in line with Cabinet Office guidelines, Procurement Regulations and law where the service is needed. HOELT will replace the existing Secure English Language Test (SELT) concession arrangement, under which test providers retain all revenue generated from approximately 800,000 tests taken annually. The new model moves away from this approach entirely. The Home Office will own the test, collect fees directly from applicants, and pay suppliers for delivery. Early pricing from the market suggests we will be able to deliver meaningful savings for applicants and a net positive return to the department.

The procurement is currently in the technical demonstration and evaluation phase, which will be followed by a negotiation stage ahead of suppliers being invited to submit Best and Final Offers later in the summer. Contract award will be subject to Full Business Case approval.

The sensitivities inherent in a live commercial process necessitate clear boundaries regarding the sharing of information. As the procurement is at such a critical juncture, we would request a private briefing only, with the understanding that where there are questions that we are unable to answer, we will be required to decline these in order to maintain full integrity of the commercial process (this includes but is not limited to: references to any information protected under existing Non-Disclosure Agreements, or questions regarding bidders, and detailed requirements of the procurement). Should you wish to proceed on this basis, we would be happy to accept your invitation to provide a briefing on 25th June at 09:30am.

Alternatively, we could revisit this request once contract award is confirmed, at which point we can speak more candidly and openly about the approach taken, outcomes achieved and value for money secured throughout. We anticipate this will be around December 2026.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SR', with a long, horizontal, wavy line extending to the right.

Simon Ridley

Second Permanent Secretary