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Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Cat Smith MP
Chair of the Procedure Committee
House of Commons
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Dear Cat,

Thank you for inviting me to appear before your Committee on 24th June to discuss Written Parliamentary Questions (WPQs). As I committed to, I am writing to provide an update on the cost of WPQs.

Firstly, the average cost of WPQs. The last time a government formally published the average cost of answering a WPQ was in 2012, when it was calculated at £164. Reflecting public sector wage and price changes over the intervening years, we estimate the current 2026 equivalent cost to be £230. However, the 2012 estimate is calculated on the basis of a cost exercise from 1991. Therefore, as I said to the Committee, the Government will be conducting a more thorough, comprehensive exercise to establish the full modern average cost of answering a WPQ. I will ensure the Committee is updated as soon as that work has been completed.

Secondly, on the annual cost of WPQs for the Government. Using the updated figure of £230, an estimated cost on the Government of answering WPQs in 2025 would come to £18.5 million. As of 7th July, the estimated cost on the Government of answering WPQs so far in 2026 would come to £9.8 million.

I should note that these costs do not cover Parliament's own costs as part of the overall WPQ process.

I hope you find this information helpful, and I look forward to seeing your Committee's report and recommendations in due course.

Alan
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