

Committee of Public Accounts

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 5776 Email pubaccom@parliament.uk Website www.parliament.uk/pac

Sarah Healey
Permanent Secretary
Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

26 March 2021

By email only

Dear Permanent Secretary,

RE: Government support for charities during the Covid-19 pandemic

Ahead of our evidence session on 15 April, I am writing to request further information about several areas of the Government's support for the charitable sector mentioned in the National Audit Office's recent report.

Involvement of other parts of Government in decisions

Paragraph 1.7 of the NAO report states:

Departmental officials scored each application, including its own, against assessment criteria including whether charities would be unable to continue to provide services or if they could access other government support, such as the furlough scheme.... The Department's assessments were considered by a panel including special advisers from the Department, HM Treasury and Number 10. The panel made recommendations to the Secretary of State, the Minister for Civil Society and the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury for their approval.

Paragraph 1.8 of the NAO report states:

When considering applications, the panel combined some into projects it then recommended. From 53 applications, the panel selected 42. These included all four that officials had rated in the highest-scoring 'Green' category, but also nine out of 13 in the lowest-scoring 'Red' category (including four of the five lowest-scoring applications). After grouping some applications by theme into projects the panel recommended that ministers approve 21 projects.

The Committee would welcome further detail and documentation regarding:

- The 53 applications and their scores by officials and the list of 42 that were selected to be considered by the panel
- Minutes from the panel in which the Department's assessments were considered and the 42 applications were grouped into 21 projects
- Attendees at the panel, and
- The rationale for the recommendations made to ministers.

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Selection of Community Match Challenge partners

Paragraph 1.16 of the NAO report states:

Thirty-five organisations submitted applications worth £179 million. The Department's officials assessed these against criteria including how quickly they could distribute funds and the fairness of their onward granting processes, and made recommendations to the minister. The minister selected 20 organisations, including seven out of 10 of the highest-scoring applications and all four of the lowest-scoring applications, three of which officials were unsure if they were eligible.

The Committee would welcome further detail regarding:

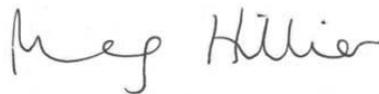
- The 35 applications and their scores per Officials' assessments
- The rationales for the recommendations made to the Minister
- Details of how the 20 successful applicants were chosen for recommendation to the Minister, after the initial scorings were completed.

Update on distribution

The NAO's report includes data up to the 19 February 2021, the most up to date position at the point at which the work was completed; but recognises that funding awards will continue until 31 March 2021. The Committee would welcome an update on the distribution of the package.

I would be grateful for a response by 9 April to allow the Committee to take the information provided into account as we plan for the session. The Committee would expect to publish this letter and your response on its website.

Yours sincerely,



MEG HILLIER MP
CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS