



PACAC (Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee)

House of Commons · London SW1A 0AA

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Lord O'Donnell

By email

7 April 2020

Dear Lord O'Donnell,

The Committee is looking forward to speaking with you after Easter in our first meeting covering the Fixed-term Parliaments Act. As we are likely to be pressed for time covering that subject, I would be grateful if you could respond to some questions relating to the Government's civil contingency planning and response. The Committee would be interested in your views based on your experience during your career, culminating as Cabinet Secretary.

1. As Cabinet Secretary, how much of your time was spent discussing civil contingency planning?
2. The remit of the Cabinet Office's Civil Contingency Secretariat (CCS) includes assessing risks over the medium and long term. In your experience, was it equipped to perform this task effectively? If not, where was it lacking capability?
3. The CCS mainly plays a coordinating role. As Cabinet Secretary, did you feel it communicated effectively with the relevant Government departments and agencies? Was its advice sufficiently taken into account when their priorities were being set?
4. To what extent did civil contingency planning extend to actors in the private sector? What was their input in contingency planning?
5. You were Cabinet Secretary during the H1N1 ("Swine Flu") epidemic in 2009.
 - a. Did you feel Government was sufficiently prepared for it?
 - b. What sources of advice were available to Government, both from within Government and from outside?
 - c. What mechanisms were there to ensure that lessons were learnt from it and integrated into future planning?

Ideally, we would have put these questions to you in person, but the opportunity to do this is limited in the current circumstances. Nonetheless, the Committee would greatly value your input into its consideration of these matters and would welcome any other thoughts you have on civil contingency planning within Government.

William Wragg MP
Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee
(approved by the Chair and sent by email)