



PACAC (Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee)

House of Commons · London SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 3268 Email pacac@parliament.uk Website www.parliament.uk/pacac

Rt Hon Steve Barclay
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
cc Alex Chisholm, Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary,
By email only

1st February 2022

Follow up to evidence session on 20th January 2022

Thank you to both you and the Permanent Secretary for appearing before the Committee to give evidence on the work of the Cabinet Office and the department's annual report and accounts. Further to my letter of 25th January with follow up questions relating to the Cabinet Office Freedom of Information Clearing House, the Committee has the following supplementary questions it would like to raise:

- You stated in your evidence that the Government was looking at the recommendations made in Boardman 3 and the Committee on Standards in Public Life's report together and would respond to them in tandem. Given that the Government received the first of these in July and September last year, and the second in November last year, can you set out a timetable for this response.¹
- The Committee has again reiterated its request for Sue Gray to appear before the Committee to answer its questions regarding her role in the Greensill affair, and you agreed to revert to the Committee to confirm this.² Can you please confirm that she will come before the Committee to give evidence on that matter?
- You committed to informing the Committee as to when additional training has been undertaken by Cabinet Office and Downing Street staff regarding their duties to share information and cooperate with investigations of the Independent Adviser on Ministerial Interests, Lord Geidt.³ Please can you inform us when this is due to take place.
- You Committed to providing the Committee with an update on the planned independent review of the UK Statistics Authority which was mentioned in the job

¹ Q95

² Q107

³ Q118

advertisement for the role of Chair of that body.⁴ Please can you provide the Committee with a timeline for that review, its scope and terms of reference, and the name of the proposed independent reviewer (or a timeline for their recruitment). It would be helpful if the person appointed to Chair that review were to appear before this Committee before undertaking their tasks, to understand and appreciate the views of parliamentarians in that review – can you commit to this?

- Of the 30 action points referred to in the Declaration of Government Reform, you committed to providing an update to the Committee on how many of these had been completed by the end of 2021.⁵
- The Committee also raised the Civil Service training facility referred to in the Declaration on Government Reform, Members requested an update on the timing for bringing that online and I would be grateful if you could provide this to the Committee, or a timeline for doing so.⁶
- When speaking about Non-Executive Directors (NEDs), you mentioned your desire to making them ‘much more integral to the working of the Department’.⁷ This Committee has previously expressed concerns regarding the transparency of the process for appointing NEDs, given they are Ministerial appointments, and their lack of accountability to Parliament. If they are to have an enhanced role, shouldn’t there be changes to their appointment process commensurate with that enhanced role to ensure transparency and accountability? Would you support departmental NEDs being subject to pre-appointment hearings by the relevant Select Committees?

In addition to the above follow ups from our session on Thursday 20th January, I would be grateful if you could respond to the below points on the Declaration on Government Reform from July 2021 which we were unable to turn to during the session due to timing constraints:

- In relation to the Declaration on Government Reform, what does a "smarter" centre of Government entail in practice and how does that commitment impact on the role of the Cabinet Office?
- The Declaration commits to reporting the cost and risks of legacy IT systems. Have you made an estimate of what that total cost is and, if so, what is it? How was the figure reached and is there an estimated cost for replacing these legacy IT systems to enable proper cross-departmental interoperability?

⁴ Q139

⁵ Q167

⁶ Q169

⁷ Q176

- The Declaration announces that reviews will have been completed into Civil Service governance and models of accountability by now. Can you say in more detail what questions these reviews are addressing, who has conducted them, and when the findings will be made public? Or if they have not begun, what is the timescale for them, who will be conducting the reviews, what will the outputs be, and when can we see them?

Lastly, I would like to thank you for your swift response on the important matter of polling mentioned towards the end of the evidence session. I will revert to you with any further questions that I may have on this topic in due course and look forward to being kept apprised of developments in this area that you refer to in your letter of 31st January.

I would be grateful if you could provide a response to these matters by Friday 18th February, unless a separate date is indicated above. A copy of this letter and your response will be placed in the public domain.

William Wragg MP
Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee