

**Written evidence submitted by Alicia Kearns MP, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee  
(CSL 07)**

I am writing on behalf of the Committee with regards to your Committee's current inquiry into Commons scrutiny of Secretaries of State in the House of Lords.

Shortly after the appointment of Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton as Foreign Secretary I wrote to him to set out our expectations regarding his appearances before the Foreign Affairs Committee. We requested that he appear before the Committee every six sitting weeks, to reflect the pattern of oral questions for departments in the Chamber. Some of these appearances would be for around an hour rather than our usual two hour select committee slot and might largely focus on particular topical issues. In practice, with recesses and overseas travel, this arrangement would likely amount to four appearances over the course of the year. This would seem an appropriate level of scrutiny, given the lack of opportunity for members of this House to question the Foreign Secretary.

I know that your inquiry will consider scrutiny arrangements in the round, for the whole House. In doing so, I am sure that you will consider the value of the type of robust and detailed discussion that the relevant departmental select committees can provide in a way that questions on the floor of the House, or even in Westminster Hall, cannot. I hope that our evidence session yesterday with Lord Cameron - when we gained new policy insights on several issues - demonstrated the importance of this type of scrutiny, to complement any other arrangements.

I have not yet received a reply from the Foreign Secretary to my letter of 16 November; I understand that he is awaiting proposals from your Committee before responding. In drawing up your report, I would ask that you take into account our position regarding the provision of adequate scrutiny of the Foreign Secretary in the House. I am content for this letter to be published as evidence to your inquiry.

*10 January 2024*