



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 Michael Gove MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office

5th May 2020

Dear Michael,

Thank you for appearing before the Committee last week. It is an important part of our inquiry into the Coronavirus Act and we were grateful for your time.

During the session, you committed to write on several issues and I thought, for the sake of transparency and to get some additional detail in some areas, I should write to you with the full list. It is important to get some of this information very quickly, so I would be grateful if you could reply on individual issues, rather than wait until you have all the information to send one letter.

- You answered my question about how the Covid-19 pandemic response has been organised within Government and explained the Cabinet sub-committees and officials groups. It would be very useful if you could set that out in writing, perhaps with an organisational chart to illustrate the relationships between the groups (Q172-3).
- The Committee asked for details about what information on the Daily Dashboard is already shared publicly, what information is shared beyond Government and what information is restricted. You committed to consider whether the whole document could be shared and if not, what more information could be published, including the information on PPE stocks (Q178-82).
- I asked about what “teeth” the Civil Contingencies Secretariat has – it would be useful to have a more detailed response to that question in writing, including pointing to legislation where appropriate (Q204).
- You and I had an exchange about why the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) was not used and instead the Government chose to bring forward a bespoke piece of legislation for this crisis. I accept the point that you made, that Governments rarely published legal advice. Your answer was spread across several questions and for the sake of transparency, it would be helpful for you to bring that together and provide the full explanation of why the CCA was not used (Q215-9).
- The Committee would be grateful for a copy of the published 2019 National Risk Register which we have not been able to locate on the Cabinet Office website (Q222-4).
- You agreed to confirm whether, or not, the Cabinet Office had carried out checks on whether different Departments had robust plans for the contingency (Q233-4).



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- You committed to talk to colleagues about whether the lessons learned report from Exercise Cygnus could be put into the public domain. I would be grateful for an update on those discussions. If you are unable to share this document with the Committee, we would be grateful for a redacted version of the report. You offered that members of the Committee could come into Cabinet Office to read the document; this is sub-optimum as not all members are able to come to Westminster at the moment. However, I would be happy to take up this offer, with my clerk, at your earliest convenience (Q235-7).
- You agreed to report back on the exact status of the Clipper service (Q254).
- You committed to write before the end of the current lockdown period on how the “5 tests” will be measured and about the progress towards them (Q279). There was a wider discussion about the 5 tests in the context of the reviews required under the Coronavirus act itself. It would be helpful to know whether there is any overlap between the requirements of the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations and the assessment that the Government will carry out before deciding whether the Coronavirus Act should be extended (Q272-3).
- You agreed to look back at the NERVTAG minutes, and DHSC procurement, to check whether the NERVTAG recommendations had been achieved and implemented (that gowns needing to be purchased would fully meet infection control guidance and also be body-fluid repellent as a minimum standard) (Q286).

In addition, you agreed to take forward two issues with Cabinet colleagues:

- Discussing with the Secretaries of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and for Housing, Communities and Local Government how the Government can make sure that it is properly “rural proofing” its response to Covid-19 (Q199); and
- Checking in with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care about what the two-monthly report required under s97 of the Coronavirus Act (Q269).

I would be grateful if you could either include this information in your letter or arrange for colleagues to write directly to the Committee.

I shall place this letter, and your reply, in the public domain.

Yours ever,

William Wragg MP

Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee