

**RPC meeting 8 November 2021 - minutes**

**Attendees**

<p><b>The Committee</b>  Stephen Gibson – Chair  Jonathan Cave (Session 2 only)  Laura Cox  Sheila Drew Smith  Jeremy Mayhew  Brian Morgan  Andrew Williams-Fry</p>	<p><b>RPC Secretariat</b>  Stuart Sarson – Head of Secretariat  RPC Secretariat staff</p> <p><b>Better Regulation Executive</b>  Chris Carr – Director  BRE staff</p> <p><b>Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals</b>  David Bowles</p>
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**A. Introduction and matters arising**

1. The **minutes of the September committee meeting** were agreed, noting the correct title of the Penrose Report: *Power to the People*. The minutes have now been published on the RPC website.
2. **Register of Interests:** committee members confirmed the accuracy of the register. The register has been updated on the RPC website.
3. **Gifts and Hospitality Register:** no new gifts or hospitality were declared. The register is available on the RPC website.

**B. BRE update**

**Business impact target report**

4. BRE reported that the next business impact target (BIT) report is due to be published by 16 January 2022. Departments are being asked to send their QRPs to enable it to be finalised to meet that timescale.

**BRF consultation**

5. Chris Carr explained that the paper is still a work in progress. He summarised the current position to the Committee .

**C. Engagement updates**

6. The Chair reported on the following engagements since the previous meeting:
  - **14th Sept – John Penrose MP** - the meeting covered the RPC response to the BRF consultation; discussion of business groups being very supportive of independent scrutiny and their concerns on the importance of preserving it, and the burden on business of the regulatory stock.
  - **15th Sept – Lord Hodgson, Chair of the Lords’ Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee** - discussed ideas for the improved provision, and use, of IAs in the legislative process. Lord H invited SG to speak to the SLSC in the new year.

- **20th Sept – Mark Pawsey MP (member of the BEIS select committee)** – discussed the role and remit of the RPC and how to improve awareness in the House of Commons.
7. Andrew Williams-Fry reported that he and a member of the secretariat attended **the annual competition & regulation conference on re-thinking regulation** run by the Regulatory Policy Institute on 21-22 September. It was attended by many leading regulators and energy companies.

#### D. RSPCA presentation

8. David Bowles (DB), head of public affairs for the RSPCA, gave a presentation on the background and role of the RSPCA and the impact of regulation on its operation.
9. The RSPCA is now 197 years old and was the first animal welfare charity in the world. 18 years after its formation, Queen Victoria became its patron and since then it has been under the patronage of the monarch. The RSPCA now has a £120 million turnover, 1500 employees and 150 rescue officers. It has a unique role in enforcing animal welfare legislation. The RSPCA covers England and Wales: animal welfare is devolved and so Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own bodies.
10. The RSPCA has a good and highly recognised brand: it is No 2 in the brand recognition index and in the top five charities in media/television. The RSPCA sets the standards for animal welfare in farms and provides assurance on 50% of eggs and 31% of pigs produced in England and Wales. It works with organisations in over 20 countries worldwide.
11. While it picks up enforcement of some aspects of regulation on animal welfare on behalf of government, the RSPCA has no statutory powers. It has no right of access to people or animals and so has to operate very carefully in its enforcement role. It works with the governments in England and Wales to advise on amending animal welfare laws, providing data and information and works closely with statutory authorities such as the police, local authorities, and *UK Border Force*.
12. About 90% of the enforcement work is under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 although there are 40 different laws covering animal welfare (some EU legacy). The UK has some of the highest animal welfare standards in the world and the RSPCA is now involved in advising government on the content of trade agreements, as standards in this space and rules on what is allowed into the UK are now relevant to these negotiations.
13. Gathering data and other evidence is difficult as data on animal welfare is not collected centrally and many areas are badly covered. While there is collection of robust data on farm animals, there is little on companion animals. It is also difficult to put figures on the value of welfare of pets for example. Pressure on local authority budgets is making this worse not better as it is costly to gather data. DB concluded the presentation by saying that the RSPCA value the work of the RPC and would be keen to engage with the RPC on future legislation.
14. The following points were discussed:

- On the difficulty of assessing animal life and welfare, was there any read across from the work of DHSC and DFT on assessing the impact of regulation based on quantified values of human lives? It is easier to put an economic value on farm animals, but it is not so easy with companion animals. It is hoped that this would change with the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Bill before Parliament.
- There was discussion of alternative options to regulation. Codes of conduct may be useful, but adherence is a problem.
- The importance of working collaboratively with DEFRA, local authorities, and trading standards. This is critical in enforcing animal welfare and standards.

15. The chair thanked DB for his presentation.

**E. AOB**

16. None