

RPC (Regulatory Policy Committee) meeting 14 March 2022 - minutes	
Attendees	
<p><b>The Committee</b>            Chair: Stephen Gibson (Chair)            Jonathan Cave - remotely            Daniel Dalton            Stephen Gifford            Hilary Jennings            John Longworth            Jeremy Mayhew            Derek Ridyard            Andrew Williams-Fry</p>	<p><b>Minister</b>            Lord Callanan (item B)</p> <p><b>Better Regulation Executive</b>            Chris Carr – Director (CC)            Sarah Montgomery – Deputy Director</p> <p><b>NAO (National Audit Office)</b>            Charles Nancarrow            Peter Langham</p> <p><b>RPC Secretariat</b>            Stuart Sarson – Head of Secretariat</p>

#### A. Welcome and introductions

1. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting – the first in-person for some two years.

#### B. Meeting the minister

2. The Chair welcomed Lord Callanan to the meeting. The committee members introduced themselves to Lord Callanan. Lord Callanan congratulated the new committee members on their appointments and thanked Jeremy Mayhew, whose term of office will expire in April, for his services to the RPC.
3. Lord Callanan commented that, although the future Better Regulation Framework was still under consideration, he was clear of the importance of the role of the committee in providing independent scrutiny of the costs of regulation. He looked forward to continuing to work with, and support, the committee in the future.

#### C. Minutes of committee meeting (17 January) and matters arising

4. The **minutes of the January committee meeting** were agreed [and have now been published on the RPC website].
5. **Register of interests:** committee members confirmed the accuracy of their entries in the RPC register of interests, [again now updated on the RPC Website].
6. **Gifts and hospitality register:** committee members confirmed the accuracy of their entries in the gifts and hospitality register [also published on the RPC website].

#### D. BRE (Better Regulation Executive) update

7. Chris Carr summarised developments with a revised Better Regulation Framework (BRF). He said that it was still work in progress.

8. The proposals remain as set out in the 31 January “Benefits of Brexit” document – to bring mandatory scrutiny of impact assessments to an earlier point in the policy development process and use them in a new process to ensure that alternative options to regulation have been considered and that regulation is proposed only where it is clearly seen as the best solution to the policy problem.
9. The Chair thanked CC for providing an update on the progress being made on developing a new BRF and looked forward to seeing more-definitive proposals soon.

#### **E. Engagement update**

10. The Chair reported that, since the last committee meeting in January, he had represented the RPC on a panel for an event organised by the *Hansard Society* and had met Angus MacNeil, Chair of the International Trade Select Committee.
11. Hillary Jennings reported on her meeting with NSPCC, which had focused primarily on the proposed legislation on online safety. The NSPCC is keen to continue to engage.
12. Andrew Williams-Fry mentioned that he had joined a roundtable with the Federation of Small Businesses, where participants shared generic findings from a survey on lessons from Covid-19.

#### **F. Methodology sub-group**

13. Jonathan Cave provided a report on the February MSG (Methodology Subgroup) meeting. There were two main items. The first was a review of RPC documents relating to the scrutiny of free trade agreements (FTA) impact assessments. The discussion raised issues both specific to FTA assessments, such as aspects of trade models, and of wider relevance, such as treatment of uncertainty. The second item was a discussion on the classification of the impacts of labour shortages related to the introduction of regulation, in the context of recent DHSC (Department for Health and Social Care) and HO (Home Office) cases. Further comments were invited by 18 March on the draft updated FTA checklist, template, and guidance documents.

#### **G. NAO**

14. Charles Nancarrow (CN) and Peter Langham from the NAO gave a presentation on the role and work of the NAO regarding regulation.
15. The fundamental role of the NAO is to hold government departments and regulators to account for the public money they spend. NAO colleagues’ approach this by building both formal and informal relationships with their client departments. They do not question government policy decisions but focus their reviews on implementation and how well policy stated is delivered. Their work on regulation and regulators covers several different sectors, client organisations and other stakeholders and they structure their approach using three categories of markets: private markets, private regulated markets, and public service markets.

16. The NAO has a model for “what good looks like,” which underpins how it frames its studies and other interventions. The NAO’s overall aim is to help protect taxpayers from risk and improve outcomes for citizens and consumers by scrutinising government’s use of regulation. Depending on the focus of a study, the NAO can look at the overall regulatory framework, the performance of institutions, or thematic cross-sector issues. Regulation is usually an area of low spend, but extremely high impact. The NAO focus much of its work on the extent to which risk is managed, and the outcomes are achieved.
  
17. The committee asked how the NAO gets its authority. CN stated that the NAO is the UK’s independent public spending watchdog and supports Parliament in holding government to account, to help improve public services. It reports to, and works closely with, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). It is the expectation that any PAC recommendations for departments will have to be complied with. More generally, the NAO certifies the accounts of all government departments and many other public sector bodies. It has statutory authority to examine accounts and report to Parliament on whether departments and the bodies they fund have used their resources efficiently, effectively and with economy.
  
18. The Chair concluded the discussion saying that there is a lot for the RPC to learn from the NAO and that we should continue to engage at a strategic level on how we can learn from each other, both on influencing government and on how to ensure it regulates well. Once things were clearer on the new Better Regulation Framework, there might be mileage in engaging on how we might work together to encourage better monitoring and evaluation of regulation.

**End of meeting**

<b>Methodology Sub-Group</b>	Further committee comments were invited on the draft updated FTA checklist, template, and guidance documents.	Nilum Patel has written to the committee asking for comments	<b>18 February</b>

Key Actions completed	Actions to be discussed at meeting	Work in progress	Actions not completed
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