



CABINET OFFICE

Civil Service Chief Operating Officer & Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary

Catherine Little CB
Civil Service Chief Operating Officer
& Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary

16 February 2026

Prime Minister,

You informed me that Sir Chris Wormald would be stepping down from his role as Cabinet Secretary and asked for my approval of the discretionary elements of a special severance package for him.

As Accounting Officer for the Cabinet Office, I must be satisfied that any such payments meet the Accounting Officer duties of regularity, propriety, value for money and feasibility. I am satisfied that this payment would be regular and feasible.

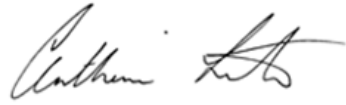
In relation to propriety, Managing Public Money section 3.9 is clear that there should be no doubt that an Accounting Officer meets the standards of propriety that Parliament expects. As such, where there is a conflict of interest, or the appearance of a conflict of interest, an Accounting Officer should have systems in place to manage such conflicts. The precedent for management of such conflicts in relation to the departure of a Cabinet Secretary, given their role in respect of line management of Permanent Secretaries across government, is that the Prime Minister is required to consider and authorise any discretionary special severance payments.

In respect of value for money, I have consulted Civil Service HR and legal advisors and have had due regard to Managing Public Money and the consideration of Sir Chris Wormald's employment rights in the circumstances. The proposed award is greater than what Sir Chris Wormald would be contractually entitled to. However, I am informed that a settlement of this level is necessary given that this is a departure from a high profile, unique role that has been agreed at very short notice. Given the complexity of the legal position and the information to be considered at this time, it is not possible for me to conclude to the level required whether the proposed settlement amount represents value for money or not. However, you as Prime Minister can take into account wider considerations, in particular the public interest in bringing this matter to a conclusion and the prevention of distraction from the effective operation of Government.

As such, in compliance with precedent and my duties, I must seek direction on propriety and value for money grounds. If you are minded to make such a direction I will, in line with Managing Public Money, proceed forthwith.

I am copying this letter to the Comptroller and Auditor General, and the Chairs of the Public Accounts Committee and the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catherine Little', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Catherine Little CB

Civil Service Chief Operating Officer & Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary

Email PSCatherineLittle@cabinetoffice.gov.uk