IN THE MATTER OF THE INQUIRIES ACT 2005

THE UK COVID-19 INQUIRY – MODULE 1

NOTE FOR THE THIRD PRELIMINARY HEARING

ON BEHALF OF

THE CABINET OFFICE

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1. The Cabinet Office is grateful for Counsel to the Inquiry's note for this hearing, dated 6 April 2023.

2. Further to the submissions made in writing prior to the previous preliminary hearing, the Cabinet Office remains committed to providing full assistance to the Inquiry, and continues to work hard to respond to the requests made of it by the Inquiry Legal Team.

3. Since the last hearing, the Cabinet Office legal team has been employed in obtaining and providing to the Inquiry a number of statements from individuals in response to Rule 9 requests made of them by the Inquiry. It has provided further disclosure. It has also received a further Rule 9 request made of it as a corporate body, dated 24 March 2023 (which refers back to the statement of Roger Hargreaves which the Inquiry Legal Team received on 1 February 2023). The Cabinet Office is concurrently also responding to a large number of requests from the Inquiry Legal Team with regards Module 2.

4. The Cabinet Office has been in discussion with the Inquiry Legal Team as to how to respond to the further request of 24 March 2023. Some of the Inquiry's further questions have already been answered in the individual Rule 9 responses. Others however require more extensive research – the request covers a timeline stretching from before the Module 1 timeframe up to the present day, and cutting across a number of different teams and organisations. So far as some of the questions can only be answered with reference to documents, the Cabinet Office currently has well over 20 million documents on its system which have been transferred from its other databases because they have

potential relevance to the Inquiry: searching those documents is a complex and difficult process. The Cabinet Office continues to deploy significant resource to review this material and is endeavouring to complete a response to the further Rule 9 request as soon as possible, given the above context that all those involved in both Module 1 and Module 2 are working to what all are likely agreed is a very tight timetable. We will continue to work closely with the Inquiry Legal Team to this effect.

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