

Witness Name: Ivan McKee

Statement No.: 1

Exhibits: IM

Dated: 10 November 2023

UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF IVAN McKEE

In relation to the issues raised by the Rule 9 request, reference M2A-IM-01 dated 16 June 2023 in connection with Module 2A, I, Ivan McKee, will say as follows: -

1. I am Ivan McKee of Personal Data Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, Member of the Scottish Parliament for Glasgow Provan since 2016.
2. I have prepared this statement myself by reference to my recollection of events during the relevant period and to records and material provided to me by the Scottish Government. I have also received assistance from the Scottish Government Covid Inquiry Information Governance Division.
3. Unless stated otherwise, the facts stated in this witness statement are within my own knowledge and are true. Where they are not within my own knowledge, they are derived from sources to which I refer and are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

A. Background, Qualifications and Role during the COVID Pandemic.

4. Prior to being elected to the Scottish Parliament I worked for a number of manufacturing businesses in a variety of management roles. From 2005 until 2016 I was a shareholder / Director of a number of manufacturing and consultancy businesses. I hold a B.Sc. B.Eng (Hons) degree in Manufacturing Sciences and Engineering from the University of Strathclyde (1986) and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree from the University of Newcastle (1992)

5. I was previously Scottish Government Minister for Trade, Investment and Innovation (June 2018 until December 2020), Minister for Trade, Innovation and Public Finance (December 2020 until May 2021) and Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise (May 2021 until March 2023). I ceased being a Scottish Government Minister on 29th March 2023.
6. None of my Ministerial roles were Cabinet positions, I was therefore not involved in any Cabinet discussions or decision making around the Scottish Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
7. My Ministerial involvement with regard to the COVID pandemic was limited to:
 - working with the business community to identify ways in which they could support efforts to tackle the pandemic, primarily through the sourcing and manufacturing of PPE and other materials, and to align public sector agencies and others to enable this.
 - Approving allocations of funds to businesses from the Scottish Government's Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund (PERF)
8. With the exception of the activities listed in paragraph 7 above none of my Ministerial roles involved any decision making in connection with the Scottish Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Nor did my roles involve giving information, analysis, data or advice to the Scottish Government in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.
9. I played no role in relation to relationships or joint decision making between the Scottish Government and the UK Government, the devolved administrations in Wales or Northern Ireland or Scottish local authorities. I had calls with UK Government Ministers Lord Agnew on 28th April 2020, Lord Deighton on 30th April 2020 and Lord Bethell on 7th September 2020 to share information on sources of PPE and equipment.
10. Chronology:

- Early March 2020 I contacted the then Cabinet Secretary for Health in the Scottish Government (Jeane Freeman) to offer support in relation to sourcing of PPE and equipment related to the pandemic.
 - 18th March 2020, first daily meeting of the working group to secure PPE and equipment supplies was held.
 - 29th October 2020, final meeting of the working group to secure PPE and equipment supplies was held.
11. I had no involvement in decision making or providing any advice with regards to the Scottish Government's health response, decisions on timing or extent of lockdown or other NPI, or those of the UK Government or local authorities.
12. My involvement with regards to PPE and other material supply was limited to identifying potential sources of materials and facilitating their supply. I had no decision making responsibility with regards to how those materials were deployed, nor over the purchase process for those materials.
13. From the start of the pandemic it became clear that significant quantities of materials and equipment would be required to support the response to COVID and that traditional supply chains were unable to supply those materials in the volumes required. This was as a consequence of significantly increased demand on a global basis, and disrupted manufacturing and logistics operations as a consequence of global lockdowns. I established and chaired meetings of a working group whose role was to identify potential sources of materials and equipment required for the pandemic, with a primary focus on working with Scottish manufacturers to redirect or expand production to supporting national requirements, and, where necessary, to acquire PPE through international supply chains. This included PPE, ventilators and materials for test and vaccination supply chains.
14. As a consequence of this group's work Scotland always had sufficient quantities of PPE available throughout the pandemic and manufacturing capacity was established in Scotland sufficient to supply the majority of Scotland's PPE requirements.

15. The group I chaired met (by phone) on a daily basis from 18th March 2020 in order to identify potential sources of materials and equipment – from international markets and from Scottish suppliers, to identify and seek to resolve barriers to production and supply of those materials, to understand stock levels of materials within NHS Scotland and projected demand for those materials and to match that against volume of supply from suppliers.
16. This group comprised of representatives from Scottish Government, Enterprise Agencies, NHS National Services Scotland and others. The group continued to meet on a less regular basis until 29th October 2020. The frequency of the meetings was reduced from seven days per week to five days per week, then to three days per week, then to once per week.
17. As part of this work I spoke with suppliers and potential suppliers in Scotland and internationally to understand how they were able to supply materials to the Scottish public sector.
18. A process was also put in place to enable manufacturers or others who felt able to supply PPE to contact the Scottish Government in order that their offer could be assessed.
19. I also had responsibility for approval of funds allocated to businesses from the Scottish Government's Pivotal Enterprise Resilience Fund (PERF). This involved approval of fund allocations to specific businesses as recommended by Scottish Government officials based on defined criteria use to assess applications from businesses.

B. Initial understanding and response to COVID-19 (January 202 – March 2020)

Initial Understanding and Readiness

20. My Ministerial role at that time had no responsibility for any aspects of the response to the pandemic other than those listed above in relation to PPE and equipment sourcing and approval of funds. I became aware of the unfolding situation around the COVID pandemic through normal news channels.

21. I was not involved in, nor was I aware of any discussions within Scottish Government concerning, the NIKE conference in Edinburgh on 26/27th February or the Scotland France Six Nations rugby match on 8th March 2020.
22. I contacted the then Cabinet Secretary for Health (Jeane Freeman) in early March 2020 to ask whether, given my professional background and contacts within Scotland's manufacturing sector through my ministerial work, I could support work in sourcing PPE and other equipment (including ventilators). The Cabinet Secretary put me in contact with the relevant personnel in NHS Scotland NSS (National Services Scotland - the division responsible for procurement within NHS Scotland) to take this work forward.

Initial Strategy and Decision Making

23. I had no responsibility for, nor any involvement in the Scottish Government's strategy in relation to its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I provided no advice to the Scottish Government in relation to lockdown, testing strategy, surveillance or discharge. I was not party to any information or discussions that would enable me to take a view as to the Scottish Government's initial strategy for responding to Covid-19.

C. Role in Relation to non-pharmaceutical interventions ("NPIs")

24. I was not part of the decision making process around when and why the Scottish Government adopted a national lockdown strategy in March 2020, nor was I party to any of the advice or information around that decision.
25. I played no role in the provision of information, data, analysis or advice in reaching any decisions concerning the imposition of, easing of, or exceptions to NPIs, with the exception of making the case within Scottish Government for specific businesses, essential to the vaccine, test, PPE or ventilator supply chains, to be allowed to continue to operate during lockdown.

D. Divergence

26. I had no responsibility for any decision making within Scottish Government around divergence between the approach of the Scottish Government and that of the UK Government.

E. Role in relation to medical and scientific expertise, data and modelling.

27. I had no role in facilitating, enabling access to or providing information and advice in relation to medical and scientific expertise, data or modelling in relation to COVID-19.

F. Role in COVID-19 public health communications

28. I played no role in relation to the use of public communications and behavioural management in the response to COVID-19.

G. Role in public health and coronavirus legislation and regulations.

29. I had no role or involvement in decision making or providing advice or briefings on the public health and coronavirus legislation and regulations that were proposed and enacted.

H. Key Challenge and lessons learned

30. The only evidence I submitted to the Scottish Parliament or any of its committees, or any committees of the UK Parliament, was the submission of two update statements to the Scottish Parliament. The first, on the work of Scottish businesses to support the manufacture of PPE during the pandemic, was delivered to the Scottish Parliament on 27th March 2020 [IM/001 INQ000222912 and IM/001a INQ000222913]. The second, on the role of businesses within Scotland's Life Science sector in supporting the development and deployment of technologies around COVID-19 test, vaccines and cures, was delivered to the Scottish Parliament on 27th May 2020 [IM/002 - INQ000222914]. The details of these statements are recorded in the Scottish Parliament Official Report.

31. In terms of lessons learned I consider there is a clear case for the continued support and development of Scottish PPE manufacturing businesses, through the use of procurement contracts and economic development support, to ensure that in the event of any future pandemic Scotland has rapid access to the required levels of PPE.

I. Informal communications and Documents

32. I was not a member of any WhatsApp groups in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic or the Scottish Government's response to it. I was not aware of any such groups. Nor was I aware of, or part of, any discussions using WhatsApp, texts or other messaging platforms concerning decisions around the Scottish Government's response to Covid-19.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Personal Data

Signed: _____

Dated: _____10/11/2023_____