

## **Ex-Covid – 7 May 2020**

**Perm Sec:** There was a Cabinet Office officials meeting earlier on. PM is speaking to leaders of the opposition and has booked a collective call with the FMs of the devolved administrations this afternoon. Perm Sec is told that UKG keen to have sense of national endeavour. As regards the 21 day review – no specific change to the Regs because R is not at the right level. But marginal changes re guidance and messaging to be discussed later. Messaging will change as regards what people do within the Regs.

Sunday – PM will set out a road map. Cabinet office recognise that R is at different levels in different places. There is a Cobra meeting with the FMs of the devolved administrations on Sunday. FM will set out the future and there will be a need for some differences. Mark Sedwill said that 2 big takeaways on Sunday would be:

- If cannot wfh should be travelling to work. UKG thinks over compliance with Regs. People not working when they should be.
- Outdoor activity – easing some of the restrictions

Our own Ministers – good cabinet meeting today but not conclusive in one area – activity outdoors. Cabinet getting together again at 6pm.

**Andrew Jeffries:** Can you say more about people returning to work please? This is a different message.

**Perm Sec:** View in London is that people are over complying with the message to stay safe and stay home. They haven't heard the message that if you cannot wfh you should go to work and practice social distancing. Which is a little inconsistent. Effectively saying go to work during the week but at the weekend don't go out. Unsurprisingly people have gone to the sharp end of that message. PM wants to correct (as they see it) that message.

Of course the Bank of England announcement this morning about the economic down turn will be the backdrop to the PM's message on Sunday.

**Gareth Williams:** over compliance has got us to the rate we have now. Seems quite worrying development. Scottish FM is very clear that no intention of changing the message from 'stay at home.' Politically we will find ourselves between a rock and a hard place.

**Perm Sec:** certainly the extent of compliance has helped us flatten the curve and WM are aware of that. But PM is very concerned about economic outlook and will want to give a message of hope and opportunity ahead. Probably people's behaviour will have been directly impacted by the media trailing the PM's likely Sunday message already.

Incidentally last week I said we may need to reshape the agenda to ensure it remains relevant and focussed. For now we stick with the updates in 6 areas but we need to focus on blockages and issues we can collectively help on.

**Andrew Goodall:** PPE –still ordering volume. For example yesterday I signed cheque for £27 million order of gloves. Ref to Turkey flight bringing gowns. If kit is not to acceptable standard we will send it back.

**Tim Render:** Shielding. Number of new letters now at 27,000. This is not as a result of changing any criteria. Adds 25% to the number asking to shield. Looking at how we can get an increase in value for money on food offer. MA with Leslie Griffiths and is probably going to Star Chamber.

Where do we go next with this? Do we ask people to continue shielding? Do we extend contracts? Introduce charging? If saying shield for further 12 weeks might need to change support package. How do we turn this into BAU as opposed to special project?

**Perm Sec:** need to keep in touch with what is happening in England

**Tracy Burke:** English number of people shielded ended up at £2.2 million entitled to food parcels. The wider vulnerable from UK perspective is £15 million. Need to be careful as regards what the offer is.

**Andrew Slade:** economic intervention. 9,500 applications made, 5000 offers made, 1000 rejected (so due diligence is working). Paid out on about 2,200, about £32 million. Now have 8 pods working at full strength on SMEs.

**Perm Sec:** Absolutely staggering what has been done so quickly across the piece.

**Albert Heaney:** Social care – this sector is still in respond mode. Care is needed in messaging if talking about easing. Testing is a huge issue. Also other environmental factors go into creating a safe environment.

**Tim Render:** Finance uncertainty – There are a suite of complex and tricky issues here. Local government finance has changed from stable to getting worse. Rents and mortgages are amber and getting more complicated. What we are beginning to see is that some of the terms of the projects are beginning to change as we move into the next phase for some of them.

**Perm Sec:** What should keep us awake at night?

**Tim Render:** The uncertainty of the money and the future demands which are potentially very big on Welsh organisational infrastructure – HE, LG, Transport. Also managing that switch over and how we make space to be thinking about planning whilst managing the pressure of the immediate.

**Toby Mason:** The fundamental question is whether to retain the stay home and save lives messaging. Or move to slightly more nuanced “stay safe”. This absolutely not just messaging but a policy difference. If we say stay home that’s different to England (parks etc). To be resolved by WM in cabinet tonight. Scotland and NI much more reticent but England going ahead. The choreography is really difficult. PM to speak at 7pm on Sunday and will publish guidance and other materials. FM not saying anything today. 12:30 press conference tomorrow which will be our response in full to the May day review. Be clear and reflect the caution about how close we are to the precipice.

CG and another Minister on Sunday. Possibly live BBC after Boris. Maximum exposure for our message to emphasise where similar and where different.