

the Group had a chance to review and comment on them if they did not think they were reflective.

130 As I did not give advice directly to the First Minister, any cabinet secretaries, ministers, seniors civil servants or special advisors between January 2020 and April 2022, I cannot comment on whether they understood the medical and scientific advice. I cannot comment on their performance.

131 I am not aware of how my counterpart in the UK Government performed.

Initial understanding and responses to Covid-19 in the period from January to March 2020

Initial Understanding of the nature and extent of the threat

132 I first learnt about COVID-19 from the media in early January 2020. I had my immediate personal views but these were not sought by Scottish Government in this period. (My personal view was that I was very concerned – other corona viruses had given rise to very serious illnesses). It was only with my coming forward myself with an offer to help in relation to a testing strategy (covered elsewhere in this document) that I had any input into Scottish Government's response to COVID-19 during this period. I was not aware of who the Scottish Government were consulting with at this time, only becoming aware that Andrew Morris had been asked to Chair the Group in March 2020 as stated elsewhere in my responses. I was not aware of reasons for the delay in setting up the Group after the invitation to Andrew Morris to chair the group.

133 As an academic and appreciating the seriousness of the situation I read widely from my own source material and spoke to colleagues but this was not initiated by Scottish Government and no material was supplied by them to me. My view was that this illness presented a serious threat to the UK and Scotland. I am asked if advisers reacted appropriately to the news in January 2020. Looking back I think I could have been more vocal to those I had contact with about my concerns. Should I have put myself forward before I did in mid -March 2020 with regard testing strategy? Perhaps I should but I don't know if I would have had much traction.

134 The only contribution I made during this time was in testing and this is covered elsewhere in my response.