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From the Permanent Secretary

5 June 2020

Dear all

COVID-19 TASK FORCE

I am writing to introduce the new joint Number 10 / Cabinet Office team which will be responsible for supporting the Prime Minister and Cabinet in developing the Government's COVID-19 response and recovery policies, and leading implementation.

First, the Prime Minister has asked me to pass on his thanks to all of you for the phenomenal work you and your departments have done in response to the pandemic so far. There remains a long way to go to secure the country's recovery from COVID-19 and these changes in structure are intended to move us to a more sustainable organisational approach. You will have seen from the Cabinet Secretary's letter of 28th May that we have already established a new structure for COVID-19 Cabinet Committees, and I want to thank you in advance for your support in ensuring these are effective as possible.

I attach an organisational chart showing the new structure for the COVID-19 Taskforce for the next phase of the response. There will be further opportunities for rationalisation and consolidation, but my aim is to organise ourselves for an enduring task as we move beyond the initial short-term crisis response.

The right people in the right places will be essential to the success of the new structure. This will mean, in some cases, extending or putting in place new loans of staff. We will, of course, continue to work with the relevant HR teams to manage this effectively. We will also need to recruit at pace for some roles. We will run a process immediately and I hope that you will be able to support that to make sure we have excellent people with a range of backgrounds in the team.

As the attached chart sets out, we will organise principally by activity rather than by subject area:

- Simon Ridley's team will co-ordinate policy activity with the relevant lead departments; focus on longer-term strategy development and the cross-Whitehall handling of set-piece moments and milestones; and support the new COVID-19 Committee meetings.
- Tom Shinner's team will focus on tracking and driving implementation and delivery activity through a number of lenses, including continuing to track the key metrics and data, international comparators, and the development and delivery of plans.

We will rapidly evolve and communicate clear ways of working. I expect the following principles will apply from the outset:

- We will minimise duplication and gaps in the way that policy and delivery teams work across the key themes, departments and priorities, and ensure that individual roles and accountabilities are clear to all.
- We will take a consistent approach to cross-departmental engagement, including timeliness, clarity of purpose and preparation around meetings and decision-points. We will aim to hold meetings only where necessary to resolve issues.
- We will seek to instil a positive and confident culture within and beyond the core team, with ways of working founded on trust, empowerment, openness and respect.

As this new team beds in, I would welcome your honest feedback on how we are doing – what we are getting right and what we are getting wrong. I am clear that we will not be able to support the Prime Minister and Cabinet as intended if our approach does not work effectively and attract the support of all.

Yours sincerely

Personal Data

SIMON CASE

All Permanent Secretaries