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Minutes

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Minutes of a Meeting of the
Covid-19 -Strategy Ministerial Group
held at Number 10, Downing Street on

Thursday 2nd April 2020
At 0930 AM

P R E S E N T

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP
Foreign Secretary and First Secretary of State

The Rt Hon Michael Gove
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak
Chancellor of the Exchequer

Lord Theodore Agnew
Minister of State for the Cabinet Office and Her
Majesty's Treasury

The Rt Hon Matthew Hancock
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

ALSO PRESENT

Sir Mark Sedwill
Cabinet Secretary

Sir Patrick John Thompson Vallance FRS FMedSci FRCP
Chief Scientific Advisor to the Prime Minister

Professor Chris Whitty CB FRCP FFPH FMedSci
Chief Medical Officer for England and the UK

Sir Simon Stevens
Chief Executive Officer of the NHS

Christopher Wormald
Permanent Secretary of the Department for Health and Social Care

Paul Johnstone
PHE Regional Director, North of England

Alex Aiken

Executive Director for Government Communications

Philip Barton
Director General at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Allan Nixon
Special Advisor to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Wendy Fielder
Director of Communications for the Department of Health and Social Care

James Slack
Official Spokesperson to the Prime Minister

Lee Cain
Chief Communications Advisor to the Prime Minister

Tom Shinner
Senior Adviser to the Prime Minister

Munira Murza
Special Advisor to the Prime Minister

Katharine Howell
Special Advisor to the Prime Minister

NR
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister

Stuart Glassborough
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister

Helen MacNamara
Director General at the Cabinet Office

NR
Director General at the Cabinet Office

Mark Sweeney
Cabinet Secretariat

Emma Payne
Cabinet Secretariat

Katharine Hammond
Director, Civil Contingencies Secretariat

Secretariat
J Garvie

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Covid-19 Dashboard

The DIRECTOR OF THE CIVIL CONTINGENCIES SECRETARIAT FOR THE CABINET OFFICE, set out that death and case figures continued to be in line with expectations; that there had been a downturn in consumer spending on food and drugs, which may indicate a reduction in panic buying; that there had been a drop in the GDP forecast to -4.8% and that there were now 74 cases of COVID-19 in prisons in England and Wales..

The PRIME MINISTER responded that a decision on prisons would need to be taken soon.

In conversation, the following points were made:

- a) The new Scottish data on critical care (CC) beds showed a sharply deteriorating trend in capacity. The trajectory was concerning and at odds with the rest of the UK (specifically London). This would have an adverse impact on current procurement plans, which had been drawn up to meet demand for the whole of the UK¹. (Tom Shinner)
- b) The currently predicted numbers of CC beds and ventilators that would be available for the NHS were acceptable. The capacity for testing and availability of PPE was a more concerning issue. DHSC were supporting the Scottish Government's request for 200 ventilators and there had been further asks for PPE. (Secretary of State for Health and Social Care)

Update on testing and PPE plans for publication (DHSC)

The PRIME MINISTER opened discussion by outlining his concern with the media's reaction to testing, especially at the previous day's press conference. He asked why only 2,000 NHS staff had been tested.

The HEALTH SECRETARY said that the media were characterising testing as the only solution rather than seeing it as part of a broader suite of measures. He confirmed that he would be leading the 17:00 press conference that day and that he intended to provide detailed responses to questions. He said that UKG needed to be robust on setting out the plan for testing. He said that he would set out that the first antibody tests had not worked and that DHSC were testing new options.

Continuing, the HEALTH SECRETARY set out that the testing programme had only just gone live and had already established a daily testing capacity of 12,000. He said that they had tested 10,000 individuals two days previous and were on track to hit capacity that day. The HEALTH SECRETARY explained that the priority for testing had been the patients and to ensure