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Minutes

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CABINET

Minutes of a Meeting of the Cabinet
held by video conference on

WEDNESDAY 5th January 2022
At 0930 AM

P R E S E N T

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP
Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor, and
Secretary of State for Justice

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer

The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State for the Foreign, Commonwealth
and Development Office, and Minister for Women
and Equalities

The Rt Hon Priti Patel MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department

The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP
Secretary of State for Defence

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities; Minister for Intergovernmental
Relations

The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

The Rt Hon Stephen Barclay MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Minister for
the Cabinet Office

The Rt Hon Kwasi Kwarteng MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy and
Industrial Strategy

The Rt Hon Alok Sharma MP
COP26 President

The Rt Hon Anne-Marie Trevelyan MP
Secretary of State for International Trade, and
President of the Board of Trade

The Rt Hon Dr Thérèse Coffey MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

The Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State for Education

The Rt Hon George Eustice MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs

The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport

The Rt Hon Brandon Lewis CBE MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

The Rt Hon Alister Jack MP
Secretary of State for Scotland

The Rt Hon Simon Hart MP
Secretary of State for Wales

The Rt Hon Baroness Evans of Bowes Park
Lord Privy Seal, and Leader of the House of Lords

The Rt Hon Nadine Dorries MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

The Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Minister without Portfolio (and Conservative Party Chair)

ALSO PRESENT

The Rt Hon Mark Spencer MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury (Chief Whip)

The Rt Hon Simon Clarke MP
Chief Secretary to the Treasury

The Rt Hon Jacob Rees-Mogg MP
Lord President of the Council, and Leader of the House of Commons

The Rt Hon Suella Braverman QC MP
Attorney General

The Rt Hon Kit Malthouse MP
Minister of State (Minister for Crime and Policing)

The Rt Hon Michelle Donelan MP
Minister of State (Minister for Higher and Further Education)

The Rt Hon Nigel Adams MP
Minister of State (Minister without Portfolio)

Professor Chris Whitty KCB
Chief Medical Officer for England and the UK

Sir Patrick Vallance KCB
Government Chief Scientific Adviser

Dr Emily Lawson DBE
National Director and Senior Responsible Officer for the Vaccination Programme and Flu Deployment Programme, NHS England and NHS Improvement

Steffan Jones
Director for Data and Analysis, Covid-19 Taskforce

Covid-19 Response

THE PRIME MINISTER said it was time to grip the handlebars tightly, as the next few weeks would be bumpy. Omicron was capable of sending large numbers of people into hospital and that was happening. The NHS was reporting pressures and must be thanked for their efforts over the winter period. The coming month would be very tough for those on the front line of health care delivery, but the single best option for the country was to get through this period without going back to restrictions that had a large negative impact on the way of life of millions.

Continuing, THE PRIME MINISTER said that it was not the moment to slam on the brakes. Omicron was less severe and was sending fewer people to hospital. Introducing restrictions was not the right thing to do, although it was necessary to remain flexible to adapt if the circumstances changed. The right action was to maintain the current course. There were 420,000 more employees than at the beginning of the pandemic and more was invested in UK tech in 2020 than the rest of Europe combined. This was as a consequence of the UK being the most vaccinated society as a result of the incredible booster campaign.

Concluding, THE PRIME MINISTER said that Covid was hard to control among the population of the UK. The Government's approach had been to innovate and vaccinate, and by that yardstick the Government had achieved a great deal. The Government needed to bring the same levels of energy, focus and determination shown in the vaccine roll out to the rest of the people's priorities in particular: reducing NHS backlogs, tackling small boat crossings, reducing crime rates, increasing home ownership, and tackling the cost of living. The Government needed to pursue the plan to increase funding for the NHS through the rise in National Insurance, and maintain its focus on creating high wage and high skills jobs.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that many measures had already been taken to address the cost. These included the Universal Credit taper reduction which came into force in December, and the National Living Wage increase in the spring to £9.50 an hour for workers aged 23 and over - a 6.6 per cent increase that would mean individuals working full time on the National Living Wage would see a £1,000 annual pay rise per year. They also included the freezing of fuel duty, and, in relation to energy bills, a set of existing schemes and mechanisms to provide support to consumers, in particular those on lower incomes.