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Minutes

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CABINET

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

MONDAY 10th May 2021
At 1130 AM

P R E S E N T

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer

The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP
First Secretary of State, and Secretary of State for
Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs

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

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Minister for
the Cabinet Office

The Rt Hon Robert Buckland QC MP
Lord Chancellor, and Secretary of State for Justice

The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP
Secretary of State for Defence

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

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

The Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP
Secretary of State for International Trade, and
President of the Board of Trade, and Minister for
Women and Equalities

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

The Rt Hon Gavin Williamson CBE MP
Secretary of State for Education

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

The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and
Local Government

The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
Secretary of State for Transport

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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 Oliver Dowden CBE MP
Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and
Sport

The Rt Hon Lord Frost of Allenton CMG
Minister of State for the Cabinet Office

The Rt Hon Amanda Milling MP
Minister without Portfolio (and Conservative Party Chair)

ALSO PRESENT

The Rt Hon Stephen Barclay MP
Chief Secretary to the Treasury

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

The Rt Hon Michael Ellis QC MP
Attorney General

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

Sir Patrick Vallance
Government Chief Scientific Adviser

Secretariat

S Case
M Sweeney

Name Redacted

OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE

Covid-19 Roadmap: Step 3

THE PRIME MINISTER said that the results of the previous week's elections showed that it was even more incumbent on the Government to deliver for the people of the UK. There was a moral imperative to cut crime, reform schools, improve skills and unleash potential. People across the UK had started to understand the meaning of the levelling up agenda; from Hartlepool to Cornwall via London and the South East, levelling up meant fulfilling the Government's 'one nation' vision. People across the country would prosper if levelling up was delivered as one United Kingdom.

Continuing, THE PRIME MINISTER said that the Government should continue to the next step of the 'COVID-19 Response - Spring 2021' (roadmap) on 17 May. The tests set out in the roadmap had been met: the vaccination programme continued to be successful; the vaccine was proven to reduce the number of hospitalisations and deaths; infection rates were declining; and, whilst new variants of the virus remained a cause for concern, their presence did not vitiate the Government's ability to proceed. The next step of the roadmap would see a huge amount of restrictions lifted including indoor hospitality, larger outdoor gatherings, overnight accommodation, children's play and indoor sports. While this would be fantastic news, he could not stress enough that the public should not be given the impression that the work to contain the virus was at an end: the country was not out of the woods yet.

Concluding, THE PRIME MINISTER said that the Government would be pressed on individual aspects of guidance or restrictions, such as the guidance about hugging. The Government's line should be for the public to be careful, to take personal responsibility for the social interactions they were taking and be cautious. It was for individuals to consider the risks that might be posed from close contact with elderly relatives in their homes; they should consider factors such as whether a vulnerable person had received two doses of the vaccine and whether there had been enough time for those doses to take effect. People should not forget that there were still millions of people in the country who had not been vaccinated: potential spreaders or victims. Everything that had worked in the Government's response over the previous six months was a result of the judicious application of caution which the public understood and appreciated. He was aware that there was appetite for lifting restrictions further on areas such as the number of people who could attend weddings. However, success required striking the right balance between caution and irreversible progress. He

would be speaking at a press conference later that day about the decision to proceed to the next step.

THE GOVERNMENT'S CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER said that the approach to be taken could be described as 'steady as she goes'. The biggest risks were new variants and overexuberance in response to the easing of restrictions.

Responding, THE GOVERNMENT'S CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER said that the things that could blow the country off course were: a behavioural overreaction to the relaxation of measures, meaning careful messaging was required; the vaccine rollout stalling, of which there was no sign; or new variants of the virus.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE said that the statistics which the Prime Minister would be communicating about the effectiveness of the vaccine would be very reassuring to the public. If anything, the data showed that progress was slightly ahead of the roadmap. It was right to continue the cautious approach to opening up international travel, despite pressure from some in the media. This was a key safeguard against variants, and the public understood this. There would be economic benefits through increased domestic tourism.

Summing up, THE PRIME MINISTER said that he was grateful to the Cabinet for approving the decision to move to the third step of the roadmap.

The Cabinet:

- took note.