

Witness Name: Robert Jenrick

Statement No.: 1

Exhibits: RJ/01-RJ/26

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involvement. Part of that stems from a general unfamiliarity with LAs, how they operate, or the quality of their staff. I did not share that view, and believed that LAs were capable and valuable partners.

79. Turning to the specific questions raised by the Inquiry in relation to particular Cohort One and Cohort Two grant schemes, I am asked for my views in relation to a league table produced by BEIS in April 2020 identifying levels of grant funding paid out by LAs to eligible businesses in their areas.
80. My view is that a league table was both appropriate and helpful. The grant schemes were of little use if they did not find their way quickly to the business which needed their support. As above, there was a real risk that without support businesses would simply disappear from local communities, taking jobs and livelihoods with them. That would have been disastrous for those directly involved, and if at sufficient scale for LAs as well.
81. It is hard to overemphasise the degree of pressure from such businesses. As a constituency MP for example, my office was deluged with emails and calls from local small business owners who were worried and seeking urgent assistance and for good reason. Speed was key and where there were councils which failed to rise to the occasion, they needed to be called out and incentivised to act swiftly.
82. Most LAs performed their roles exceptionally well, and distributed funds efficiently. One of the benefits of a league table in this respect is that it identified those LAs who were deserving of recognition and praise for the speed of their delivery to their local communities. But equally important was that it provided transparency in relation to a small number that were slower to do so, and so was intended to operate as an incentive to speed up delivery where possible and to demonstrate (by reference to other LA performance) that this was feasible to achieve.
83. I do not consider that this would have caused LAs to prioritise speed over proper controls; nor do I recollect being advised by LAs that the reason for delayed dispersal of funds in