

Message

From: Rob Harrison [rob.harrison@cabinetoffice.gov.uk]
on behalf of Rob Harrison <rob.harrison@cabinetoffice.gov.uk> [rob.harrison@cabinetoffice.gov.uk]
Sent: 27/10/2020 17:38:34
To: Ben Warner [BWarner@no10.gov.uk]
CC: Steffan Jones [steffan.jones@cabinetoffice.gov.uk]; Ben Cropper [ben.cropper@cabinetoffice.gov.uk]; Ben Angell [ben.angell@cabinetoffice.gov.uk]
Subject: Re: Consensus statements

Great stuff. Irrelevant & Sensitive

I promised to do a short note outlining the JIC process, which I think provides a decent model to work from. Its virtues are that it (a) produces a XWH consensus which (b) carries authority. The PM described it as "our best people's best guess" which agitated the purists ('we don't guess') but I think captures what he needs.

JIC papers are max 5 pages in length. I don't love the format, esp. for data-heavy analysis, but I would think we should keep at least three things:

- One page of Key Judgements;
- Confidence statements, or some other way of communicating uncertainty and strength of the evidence base;
- No policy recommendations, to ensure analysis and the policy resting on it are clearly distinguished.

The process is fairly simple:

- EQs are agreed with a sponsor. As ever, getting these right is critical.
- JIO usually (but not always) produces the draft assessment, with input from other analytical teams.
- This goes through working-level WXH challenge (via a CIG, current intelligence group) and the revised paper is put to JIC.
- The JIC meets weekly. It has a core membership who are there at every meeting, with others invited depending on the subject. Mix of assessment community and policy departments.
- JIC discussion focuses on agreeing the KJs. The aim is consensus but not at any cost and dissenting views are recorded.
- JIC judgements are the building blocks for policy. They can be amended, but only by the JIC.

If we applied this model:

- We need to agree and prioritise the EQs. No 10 input will be important. We've already started work on this.
- I think CTF/ADD should often write the papers, integrating analysis from others. In some cases the work might be better done elsewhere, and we shouldn't be prescriptive about format, but there should be some basic common standards (along the lines above).
- We need a means to get XWH comment/challenge at working level, so some of the issues have been resolved or at least surfaced before it goes to the senior group. Also externally where possible.
- We need to agree membership of the senior group. Ben suggested GCSA, CMO, HMT (Claire), CTF. I think it would be good to have No 10 represented, but we need to be clear about the groups analytical independence. Ben W, what do you think? How about DHSC? JBC? DAs? Who else?
- We should perform the secretariat function.
- We'd need a reasonable amount of time: say 2 weeks from commission to final result.

Ben, the only point where I differ slightly is how we amend judgements. I think that these should go back to the senior group (by write-round if urgent) rather than being made by the relevant analytical subgroup. This is to ensure that load-bearing judgements all carry the authority of that group. Let's discuss.

Look forward to discussing when I'm back next week.

Rob

On Mon, 26 Oct 2020 at 19:37, Ben Warner <BWerner@no10.gov.uk> wrote:

Hi All,

Just to let know that Clare Lombardelli agreed to be part of this, so I think we are off to the races.

Steffan – I talked to Name Redacted and he nominated you to be the point person for now in the taskforce.

Rob – Irrelevant & Sensitive Name Redacted will represent you in the initial meeting if it takes place before you are back.

Regards,

Ben

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