



Public Accounts Committee

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3 November 2022

Treasury Minute response- Government preparedness for the COVID-19 pandemic (46th
Report Session 2021-22)

Dear Mr Chisholm & Mr Bowler,

Thank you for the [Government's response](#) to the Committee's 46th Report of Session 2021-22 entitled, [Government preparedness for the COVID-19 pandemic: lessons for government on risk](#).

We are grateful for some of the comments made, in particular for the ongoing efforts to develop a training programme for risk professionals and non-experts and for the commitments to drive greater international collaboration on risks and to evaluate options for improving the sharing of lessons from exercises and incidents. However, we are not satisfied with the response to two of the recommendations.

Our specific concerns are:

- Recommendation 1: we recommended that government establish a Chief Risk Officer to consider cross-cutting risks and manage the identification and resolution of system-wide concerns. Government stated that it implemented this recommendation by appointing the Head of the Government Risk Profession. This is an entirely different role from the one we recommended, as our report had already made clear. The remit of a Government Chief Risk Officer would go beyond the professionalisation and standardisation of risk management and would involve many of the functions of a private sector Group Chief Risk Officer, adapted for government. The role holder would be responsible for leadership and oversight of cross-government risks and would have the requisite qualifications, experience and skillset to engage at the highest level of government, navigate the complex government risk landscape and provide relevant risk advice. The role holder would also possess a strong understanding of the political context in which government operates.



Public Accounts Committee

- Recommendation 6: we recommended that the Cabinet Office should set out its assessment of the areas in which the data collected by the National Situation Centre are in greatest need of improvement. The Treasury Minute response did not set out this assessment.

I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with further information on how you will address these concerns by the end of the month.

I am copying this letter to the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Treasury Officer of Accounts.

Yours sincerely,

DAME MEG HILLIER MP
CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS