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Dame Meg Hillier
Chair PAC

Dear Dame Meg Hillier

BRIAN ALTMAN'S INDEPENDENT REVIEW INTO THE SERIOUS FRAUD OFFICE'S HANDLING OF THE R v WOODS AND MARSHALL TRIAL

When I met with you in February, I committed to updating you on the outcome of Brian Altman QC's independent review into the Serious Fraud Office's handling of the R v Woods and Marshall trial (often referred to as Serco), which has been published today along with the Serious Fraud Office's formal response.

Brian Altman's findings identify a combination of factors that led to the collapse of the R v Woods and Marshall trial, including failures in the disclosure and quality assurance processes. They also identify other areas, which whilst they conclude did not directly cause or contribute to the collapse of the case are nonetheless of concern. These include resourcing and performance monitoring, as well as the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on collaboration and communication.

The report makes 18 recommendations, which cover resourcing, disclosure management and early defence engagement. The SFO accepts all of these recommendations, and their implementation – along with those from the Calvert-Smith review - is now my top priority. The findings underline areas for improvement that the office has already made good progress on, and I have committed to a clear timetable for action over the coming months to implement change. This is summarised in the response published today.

The full report and response can be found on the SFO website:

Review of R v Woods & Marshall by Brian Altman QC - Serious Fraud Office - Serious Fraud Office ([sfo.gov.uk](https://www.sfo.gov.uk))

Junior officials' names have been redacted from the published review in line with standard government practice. The independent review by Sir David Calvert Smith commissioned by the Attorney-General into what happened with the Unaoil case has also been published today, along with the Government's response. They can be found on GOV.UK:

DCS_report_-_FINAL_-_21_July_08.31_.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Government_response__FINAL_21_July_2022_08.31_.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)

We will make all necessary changes to deliver on the recommendations in the reviews. Also, we will continue to seek improvements in our operating environment to support our successes into the future. This is vitally important to delivering the SFO's mission. Whilst I do not underestimate what we need to do, I am confident that the SFO will learn the lessons from these reviews and move forward with energy and drive to continue the important fight against serious and complex financial crime.

Kind regards,

Lisa Osofsky
Director, Serious Fraud Office