



## Public Accounts Committee

**Alex Chisholm**  
**Permanent Secretary & Chief Operating Officer of the Civil Service**  
**Cabinet Office**  
**70 Whitehall**  
**London**  
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**By email:**

28 June 2022

### **Challenges in implementing digital change**

Dear Mr Chisholm,

Ahead of your next appearance before the Public Accounts Committee on Monday 18 July, the committee wishes to raise some points with you concerning our past report into the *Challenges in implementing digital change* and comments you made during your previous PAC evidence session on Monday 23 May.

In our report, we recommended that the Cabinet Office and other Whitehall departments should introduce a structured way of deciding whether changes being introduced represents incremental improvements to existing systems, or a more transformational redesign. In your Treasury Minute response to our report in February 2022, you accepted our recommendation and told us that the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) was working with HM Treasury, the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA) and colleagues across government to introduce the systemic reforms needed and ensure that funding, business and governance model were in place to drive digital change.

Given recent reports of proposals to reduce the size of the civil service by 90,000 staff, and that much of this would be made possible by the use of new technology, we asked you how much of this new technology would be incremental changes or improvements to existing systems, and how much would rely on complete transformational change. You told us that Departments have been asked to come forward with their plans to achieve the target within the next five weeks. You also confirmed that this would include the use of digital technology, digital challenges, the use of automation, better use of data for targeting services as part of the overall plan, but you were unable to anticipate what proportion of this would be incremental or transformational change.



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In addition, we asked whether it was still your intention to have the new structures outlined in your Treasury Minute response in place by the end of December 2022. You confirmed that this was the case, and that you would need to consider whether you would need to bring this forward to deliver the 90,000-headcount reduction.

Now that Departments should have presented their plans, I would be grateful if you could provide a response before Monday 18 July. I am copying this letter to the Treasury Officer of Accounts and the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Yours sincerely

Dame Meg Hillier MP  
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts