



# An Intro to 'Private Office'

Ministers, 'the box', and the day job

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER

# What is 'Private Office'?

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- Every Minister and Permanent Secretary (and other senior officials) has a 'private office' - a team of civil servants to support them in their work.
- Each one of these 'private secretaries' looks after a bit of the overall job and is responsible for helping their boss with the work, getting information on time, setting up meetings etc.
- ...And yes, fetching the coffee and holding the papers.



# What are the challenges?

- Sorting through 250+ emails a day, working out whose problem they are...
- Sitting in meetings, taking notes of what is discussed and decided; drawing out what needs to happen as a result and who needs to do it; keeping track to make sure that is *actually happening*...
- Keeping track of everything - what's happening when, who should you be talking to, what are you expecting to be sent over, what do you need to send back...
- Getting teams across Government to produce the 'right' thing for your boss...
- And getting your boss to do the things they don't want to!

# ‘The Box’: an example

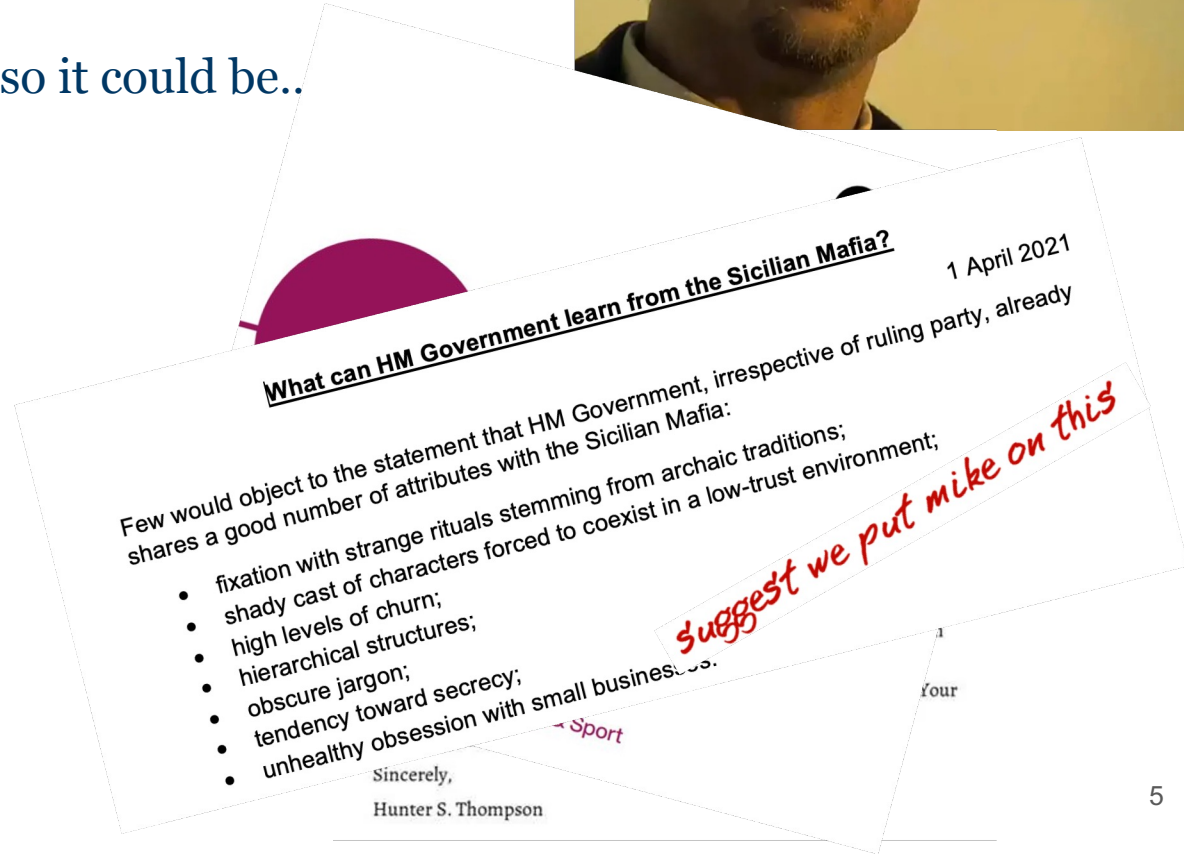
- The ‘box’ contains all the papers etc. that act as homework for a Minister or senior official.
- For most, these are physical stacks of paper, taken home at the end of each day!
- Private secretaries prepare the papers, including summaries / notes on the content and a suggestion for how to respond.



# What's in the box?

- Anything that we get sent - so it could be..
  - A letter;
  - A report; or
  - A 'submission'

Each of which needs a note!





# What do you do with them?

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- **Correspondence** - Most if not all letters need a response. Whether they are sharing or requesting information, seeking a meeting or making a complaint, we need to identify the issue and check in with the right person on how to respond.
- **Reports** - Mostly these are external and offer a different perspective on existing Government policy. Ideally, we'd summarise the issues and pass on any interesting points to our boss / the responsible team.
- **Submissions** - These are specific asks for your boss - normally they contain a recommendation and some background information to help make the decision, which then needs to be communicated back.