



Public Chairs' Forum & Association of Chief Executives

Private seminar with John Manzoni, Chief Executive of the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary, Cabinet Office

&

Roz Campion, Director, EU Exit Implementation Team, Cabinet Office

2 April 2019

Event summary

In the midst of a critical period in the Brexit negotiations, members of PCF and ACE were pleased to continue their annual engagement with John Manzoni, Chief Executive of the Civil Service, to discuss Brexit, his priorities in government and the upcoming spending review. Following his presentation and Q&A, members continued the discussion with Roz Campion, Director for EU Exit Implementation Team in the Cabinet Office.

John Manzoni, Chief Executive of the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary

The discussion was open and candid about the dominance of Brexit and the difficulties in making decisions given the uncertainty over whether a deal would be agreed. In the run up to 12 April, the civil service has focused on no deal preparations to responsibly prepare for every eventuality. However, leaving the EU with a deal remains the Government's top priority. Many systems have been developed and work was still underway to ensure appropriate provisions are in place as the UK prepares to leave the EU.

Whilst some outstanding concerns remain over the impact of no-deal, a number of measures have been taken to mitigate impact such as the Government's guarantee on the continuation of grants from the EU. A civil contingency management structure, known as 'Project Yellowhammer', has also been developed to ensure the smooth delivery of operations in the event of no-deal, however the Government remains ready to pivot its planning if a final withdrawal agreement is reached.

The Government's transformational programme remained of central importance, which had been accelerated by new jobs, leadership styles, delivery and project management skills and technologies required for Brexit. It was also noted that there was still work to do to deliver Government's other priorities such as the Apprenticeship Levy, new homes, the long-term health plan, and Universal Credit.



Good progress had been made on the functional agenda. Departments are working in a more agile way, including collaboration through shared hubs. There are now also 800 government services provided online and more complex digital transformations to come. It was stressed that transformation on this scale, alongside Brexit and business-as-usual requires leadership across the system.

John closed his presentation by thanking public body leaders for continuing to deliver high quality services, despite these challenges.

Roz Campion, Director, EU Exit Implementation

Roz, having previously run an arm's-length body herself, was delighted to have the opportunity to engage with public body leaders. Chiefly, she was keen to discuss shaping the Government's long-term 'strategic framework.' This was a new phase of work to consider how the Government should operate in a post-Brexit environment, including lifting the national mood, effectively prioritising, and moving away from silo-culture. Roz confirmed that the



Government is looking across the whole system during conversations on the strategic framework, including engaging with local government, which for most people is the key point of contact with the state. The work to shape the strategic framework is in very early stages, but Roz welcomed input from the leaders of public bodies.

