



The Rt Hon Dr Simon Case CVO
Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

By email

14 December 2022

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Communications sent to all civil servants on 12 December

I am writing with regard to the message that appears to have been sent to all civil servants on 12 December entitled “A message from the Cabinet Secretary and Heads of Government Departments”.

Prospect was not consulted on the message, and neither were we treated with common courtesy and provided with a copy. We only became aware of it when members queried its content with us, highlighting its mentions of trade union engagement and the cost-of-living crisis facing our members. The statement made to staff is deeply misleading and simply does not reflect the facts.

Your statement notes that “the higher cost of living has put unprecedented pressure on people”. For the record, Prospect has been raising this issue repeatedly with the Cabinet Office since the middle of last year, expressing concern about predictions of high inflation and its impact on our members subject to the Remit Guidance.

On 16 November 2021 we wrote to the Cabinet Office stating that there needed to be “an absolute focus on protecting the living standards of staff in real terms” that ended “over a decade of decline in living standards”.

At every meeting on the Remit Guidance in advance of its April publication, we consistently raised the need to recognise and address the impact of inflation in the Cabinet Office Pay Remit Guidance.

More recently, in August of this year, we wrote jointly with the FDA to Alex Chisholm arguing for the need to revise the Remit Guidance in the context of double-digit inflation.

At every stage our representations about inflation have been rebuffed or ignored. The Cabinet Office Pay Remit Team directly refused to make any reference to inflation in the Remit Guidance and effectively capped pay increases for those covered by the Guidance

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at 2-3%. The facts are that the 2-3% range was a choice – as were the decisions to ignore what was happening to both inflation and earnings in the broader economy. The responsibility for this rests squarely with the Cabinet Office and your decisions with regards to pay policy.

Against that backdrop, it was galling to read in your statement that “we are working with Ministers and unions as a priority to find ways to improve the situation regarding pay and benefits”.

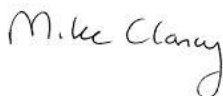
What is the evidence to back this assertion? Our experience was that correspondence on pay frequently went unanswered and needed to be chased. Meetings – when they took place – were cordial but lacked substance in terms of proposals and any sense of urgency. Your statement bears no reality to the world we or our members live in. This is compounded by the fact that we have now received a letter from the Minister dated 13 December confirming there will be no change of position on pay: no change to the Remit Guidance, no change to the 2-3% “cap” and departments remain precluded from spending more money on pay.

The Cabinet Office has fundamentally lost its grip and - as is becoming increasingly obvious - the confidence of staff across the civil service. Your statement to staff gives the impression that matters are being progressed “to improve the situation regarding pay and benefits”. This is evidently not the case, and you should make this clear particularly in light of the letter from the Minister.

The “concern” expressed in the message to staff has no credibility and certainly no tangible content. What is needed now is urgent action. Despite us repeatedly pressing the Minister and the Cabinet Office for concrete proposals on pay to assist our members, that door has now been closed. It is no wonder our members have voted for industrial action in the numbers that they have, and you are leaving them with no option other than to make clear their concerns beyond a survey and into protest.

Given the public interest in this matter, we will be sharing this letter with our members and the media.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mike Clancy".

Mike Clancy
General Secretary