

PM press conference opening remarks: 25 May 2022

Earlier today Sue Gray published her final report,

which I commissioned to get to the bottom of things and set the record straight,

and I'm grateful to her for her work.

She has identified a number of failings,

some official,

some political,

– and some that I accept are entirely my own, for which I take full responsibility.

I want to start by saying that I am humbled by what happened,

and I renew my wholehearted apology for the gathering in the Cabinet Room on the 19th June 2020 – my birthday,

for which I received a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Now that Sue Gray has completed her inquiry and everyone can read her report,

I want in all humility and without mitigating what has happened to offer a few points of context.

10 Downing Street is not just my official residence but the headquarters of the Government,

where hundreds of people work,

and because they directly support the Prime Minister,

the regulations allowed them to continue attending their offices for work purposes throughout the lockdowns.

Sue Gray describes them as “tight knit groups of officials and advisers” who “worked long hours under difficult conditions”.

These were the public servants who secured the PPE that saved many lives,

established the biggest testing programme in Europe,

and enabled the development and distribution of the vaccines that succeeded in protecting so many people.

When some of these officials and advisers were leaving their jobs, I briefly attended gatherings to thank them for everything they had done

because I believe that recognising achievement and preserving morale are essential duties of leadership.

The police did not find my attendance at these occasions to be in breach of the rules,

but they found otherwise in respect of some of those gatherings after I had left,

or when I was not in the building.

Downing Street and the Cabinet Office together have hundreds of rooms,

and again I say this not in any way to extenuate my personal responsibility, but to give the context of these events.

And I was appalled to learn that there have been “multiple examples” in Sue Gray’s phrase of disrespectful and poor treatment of cleaning and security personnel,

and this afternoon, I personally apologised to those dedicated members of staff for what happened.

and I expect anyone who behaved in that way to do the same.

As Sue Gray acknowledges,

I have acted on her recommendations to make a series of changes.

10 Downing Street now has its own Permanent Secretary charged with upholding the highest standards.

I have appointed a new leadership team, including a new Chief of Staff and a new Principal Private Secretary

and I have made it easier for any member of staff to voice any worries they may have

and Sue Gray writes that she is “reassured” by this reform.

And it is precisely because I have learned this lesson

that I feel an even greater weight of responsibility

to deliver on the priorities of the British people,

and lead our country through some of the most challenging times in recent history.

I will work every hour to ease the hardship caused by the rising cost of

living,

To protect our nation from the aftershocks of Covid,

stand firm against Putin's aggression,

and to unite and level up across our United Kingdom,

that is the mission that drives this government and that is the mission that I will continue to pursue.