

The role of the Board of Auditors in progressing UN accountability

The United Kingdom would like to thank the Board of Auditors (BOA), the UN Secretariat and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for their reports, and express its recognition of the indispensable role the BOA plays in progressing accountability across the UN system.

The BOA's independence and technical oversight role are crucial to supporting a culture of continuous improvement in the Organisation, including on transparency, efficiency, compliance and operational effectiveness. The UK is a strong supporter of UN reform and sees the BOA's recommendations and observations as playing an important role in the overall realisation of reforms across the UN system.

The UK welcomes the Board's review on UN peacekeeping and its focus on peacekeeping performance, contingent-owned equipment and the implementation of previous recommendations. We see benefit in it considering matters such as management efficiency, the implementation of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System, and performance failings which could have a critical impact on safety and security, or on mandate delivery.

The UK considers that the Board's independence is of the utmost importance, and ensures the credibility and impartiality of their findings. And while the Secretariat and Member States retain the prerogative to disagree with these recommendations, the BOA's independence must be respected.

The UK delegation looks forward to engaging on these issues in the coming weeks and trusts that the Committee will this year support a consensual outcome.

Supporting UN Peacekeeping

The United Kingdom would like to express its deep recognition to the Fifth Committee Chair and Bureau for their hard work in continuing to service the work of the Fifth Committee in such extraordinary circumstances as we face at the current time, and also to colleagues from the Fifth Committee Secretariat, the ACABQ, and UN Secretariat for their support to our ongoing work.

The UK is committed to successful UN Peacekeeping in support of international peace and security. This requires full delivery of mandates, effective performance, and adequate, cost-effective financing. The UK delegation looks forward to working collaboratively within the Committee in support of our

responsibility to assess and take account of the evidence presented to us with regards to the budgetary and operational elements of Peacekeeping operations. In so doing, the UK will seek to ensure that the proposed resourcing supports full delivery of Peacekeeping mandates in a manner consistent with effective, efficient management of resources.

The Committee will operate against a backdrop of extraordinary circumstances, in which it will continue to negotiate remotely for all or part of the session, and in which many delegates are experiencing concern for the health or livelihoods of friends and loved ones around the world as a result of COVID-19. In this, the UK expects that the Committee will demonstrate the community spirit and strong relationships for which it is well-known.

The UK is conscious that some Peacekeeping operations and their host countries are experiencing impacts from the pandemic, and would like to pay tribute to the dedication of the uniformed and civilian personnel in responding to these difficult situations, as well to the sacrifices made by Peacekeepers in the course of their important duties.

The UK has been a strong advocate for the SG's reforms, and will continue to back effective implementation in pursuit of a high-performing, efficient, accountable, well-managed UN organisation, including through discussions in this session in which we should aim to ensure that our decisions are in the best interests of the Organisation.

The UK will continue to seek progress on priorities which support the full delivery of mandates and effective performance, including gender parity, action to address sexual exploitation & abuse and sexual harassment, gender mainstreaming, human rights, responsible management of the environment, effective use of technology, and protection of civilians. We recognise the important role that the recommendations of bodies such as the OIOS and the BOA play in supporting a culture of continuous improvement within the Organisation.

The UK previously expressed concern that in January we saw the principle of consensus-based decision-making undermined on ACABQ enlargement, on which issue no sincere attempt was made to engage in discussion within the Fifth Committee in pursuit of consensus. We look forward to the discussion this session on improving working methods in the context of enlargement. We trust that we will continue to see a renewed commitment within this Committee to the principle of consensus-based decisions going forward.

The UK expects to make rapid progress this session under the leadership and guidance of the Committee Chair, and looks forward to excellent cooperation with all member states in support of timely agreement of the necessary resources for UN Peacekeeping operations.

Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

The UK would like to express its gratitude to the Secretariat for the important progress it has made on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), which rightly remains one of the top priorities of the Secretary General, and of the UN as a whole.

SEA violates the principles and values of the UN. This is why we must have zero tolerance for this behaviour from UN personnel, its peacekeepers, and from its implementing partners. We must send a collective message that those who are sent to protect people, but instead abuse their power and cause harm, will not be tolerated.

The UK delegation notably welcomes progress made towards a zero-tolerance, victim-centred, system-wide, and accountable approach to SEA, which the work of the Special Coordinator in particular helps to deliver.

The Victims' Rights Advocate and the four Field Victims' Rights Advocates are all doing vital work to support victims from the start of the case to after it is closed, and advocate on their behalf. The UK welcomes the development of the Victim Assistance Protocol and a Statement of Victims' Rights.

The UK welcomes the progress made by the Secretariat on mandatory SEA training, and improving investigations. In particular, we would like to thank OIOS for the work they are doing to reduce the length of time taken to conclude SEA investigations, and deliver training courses for investigations officers. We encourage greater participation in SEA tools and initiatives that lead to greater transparency, such as the Clear Check Tool, and appeal to other Member States to join in the Voluntary Compact and the Circle of Leadership.

While COVID-19 will place a strain on much UN activity, we must ensure that SEA prevention and response continues to be prioritised as the system responds to this pandemic.

SEA will only be prevented if all of us work together to stop it, including by ensuring that victims are supported and perpetrators held accountable. The UK delegation hopes that we can achieve consensus on an SEA resolution this year and looks forward to working cooperatively with all delegations to that end.

Over 1 million food boxes delivered to those most at risk from coronavirus

- Nationwide milestone reached as part of unprecedented government effort to protect the most clinically vulnerable from coronavirus
- In the last week, the government-led programme has delivered 330,000 food boxes to those most at risk across England
- Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick hails the 'astonishing' achievement, thanking everyone involved in the national effort

Over 1 million boxes of essential food have now been delivered to those at highest risk across England, with more than 290,000 boxes being distributed every week and 330,000 delivered in the last week, Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP announced today (6 May 2020).

Speaking this afternoon, the Communities Secretary hailed the efforts of everyone involved in surpassing this milestone for the government-led programme, including national food distributors, Brakes and Bidfood, who have been delivering packages directly to clinically vulnerable people's doorsteps.

The shielding programme, an unprecedented package of support for those most at risk from coronavirus, has seen government partner with the food industry and local councils to deliver a programme on a scale not seen since the Second World War.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

The coronavirus emergency has brought uncertain and difficult times but the willingness of people to pull together and support those most in need is an inspiration to us all.

This week, another significant milestone has been achieved with one million food packages delivered to those most at risk from the virus. This is an incredible achievement from this government programme's standing start of at the end of March.

I could not be prouder and I want to thank everyone involved, from the food box delivery drivers, to volunteers and council officials ensuring local support networks meet the needs of their communities – together, our continued and astonishing effort will provide the support that those most at risk need, for as long as they need it.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

I would like to say a big thank you to Brakes and Bidfood for getting more than one million food parcels onto the doorsteps of

those in need. It is an excellent achievement in such a short space of time.

The food and drink industry is working incredibly hard to support the most vulnerable at this time, but we know there is more to do. We are continuing to work closely with local authorities, charities and industry partners to support those who still need help getting essential food supplies.

There are around 2.1 million people with underlying severe health conditions which make them most at risk from coronavirus who must be protected and have been asked to stay at home and shield.

Many have local family and friends who can get the vital provisions needed. For those without, the government has committed to providing the support they need, for as long as they need it.

There is [further guidance](#) available on how people can access food and other supplies, including those who are not clinically extremely vulnerable.

Who is eligible for a box?

- There are around 2.1 million people in England with underlying severe health conditions who must be protected and have been asked to stay at home.
- These are people of all ages – with extreme respiratory conditions or certain types of cancers, those who have had organ transplants – who are less able to fight off the virus. See the [full list](#).
- People in this group are able to register for a regular food box delivery online or via the dedicated hotline. Instructions on how to do this have been sent to the individual in a letter from the NHS.
- Your information will be also be passed to food retailers to prioritise you for home delivery slots.

How often will you get a food box delivery?

- People who register will receive the delivery on a weekly basis, free of charge, for as long as we are advising the individual to stay at home.
- If a person's circumstances change and they don't need the pack anymore, for example because someone can help them with shopping for basic essentials, they should re-register through the gov.uk website as no longer needing a food delivery.

- Government has partnered with national food distributors – Brakes and Bidfood – to get these supplies delivered to people’s doorsteps.

What’s in the box?

The box contains a week’s worth of essentials for one person. While the contents of the parcels may have slight variation (depending on stock), they contain items such as:

- Tinned vegetables – as well as tinned tomatoes – tinned fruit, multipacks of soup and baked beans, and a jar of cooking sauce. Other tins will contain meat and tuna.
- Store cupboard staples such as pasta, rice or noodles or cous cous, potatoes and cereal.
- Bread and fresh fruit.
- Coffee, tea and biscuits.
- Toilet paper and shower gel.

What other support is being provided?

- Up to 200,000 calls a day have been made to the shielded, and councils are helping to support them in other ways – including organising regular calls from volunteers to those isolated.

[Communities Secretary’s statement on coronavirus \(COVID-19\): 6 May 2020](#)

Good afternoon,

Welcome to the coronavirus press conference from Downing Street.

I’m joined this afternoon by Professor Yvonne Doyle Medical Director for Public Health England and Dr Nikki Kanani Deputy Medical Director of Primary Care for NHS England.

Today’s data shows that:

- 1,448,010 tests for coronavirus have now been carried across Great Britain, including 69,463 tests carried out yesterday
- 201,101 people have tested positive, that's an increase of 6,111 cases since yesterday
- 13,615 people are currently in hospital with coronavirus in Great Britain, down from 13,922 the yesterday
- And sadly, of those tested positive for coronavirus, across all settings, 30,076 have now died. That's an increase of 649 fatalities since yesterday.

Behind that number is a heart-breaking loss for the loved ones of all those who have died, and once again our thoughts and prayers are with their families and friends.

Professor Yvonne Doyle will provide an update on the latest data on coronavirus.

But first, as Communities Secretary I would like to take this opportunity to give an update the work being done locally during the pandemic to keep people safe, to provide support people's jobs and businesses and to prepare for the re-opening and recovery of our local economies.

That's why it is appropriate that today we are joined by regional journalists who are doing so much to keeping people informed about how the national effort is being co-ordinated in their communities.

A free country needs a free press and the national, the regional and the local newspapers are under significant financial pressure.

I'd like to echo the words of the Culture Secretary recently in encouraging those who can, to buy a newspaper.

I have said before that the battle against coronavirus would be won in every city, town and village across the country.

This is a national effort taking place at a local level.

My department, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, has played a vital role in bringing people together to tackle the virus.

We've provided local authorities with over £3.2 billion during this pandemic so that they can continue to support the communities that need it through this most challenging time and respond to the immediate pressures they are facing due to coronavirus, while also protecting and preserving vital public services.

And at the start of March I established a taskforce to support Local Resilience Forums – known as LRFs – standing them up at a local level across the country, to prepare each and every community for a range of scenarios.

There are 38 LRFs in England which are made up of emergency services, a range of government agencies, health bodies and local authorities.

They are headed by the most senior and experienced local leaders of the emergency services, councils, the NHS and others who together are leading their communities through this crisis with the full support of central government.

Recognising the unprecedented challenge that we faced, I took the decision to embed within them some of the finest military planners in the world from our armed forces and I am very grateful for their work.

This combined expertise and leadership is ensuring a comprehensive, co-ordinated and consistent response across the country.

Responding to the urgent need for personal protective equipment to reach the frontline of the care sector, we've mobilised LRFs to help distribute PPE and thus far they have delivered over 67 million items in England alone, since early April.

Together with local councils, they are also assisting us in supporting some of the most vulnerable individuals in their communities and to date they have helped to ensure that a million boxes of food and essentials have now been delivered to those people identified by the NHS as extremely clinically vulnerable to coronavirus, the "shielded".

With more than 290,000 boxes being distributed every week, this has been a huge team effort, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved for the role that they have played and will play in the weeks ahead.

We are also working very closely with Mayors to make sure that we have a coordinated approach to tackling coronavirus at a local level.

The government has also been determined to ensure that the vital work keeping people safe in their homes also continues.

So, with the support of the Mayors for London, the Liverpool City Region, Greater Manchester, Sheffield and the West Midlands, and others, we were able to announce the Building Safety Pledge.

These Mayors have come together because they have a number of high rise buildings with highly flammable cladding in their respective regions, and the pledge that we agreed, sends a very clear message that vital building safety work must continue, despite the coronavirus pandemic.

And we have been joined by 25 local authorities, including 18 in London, have also given their fulsome support.

As work on many of these critical sites was paused early on, it is now slowly starting to reassume as a result of this initiative.

And I would urge any building owner or contractor to do so, as soon as practicable, where it is safe to begin work once again.

Now coronavirus will not stop our mission to level-up, to unite and to unleash the potential of this country.

The Prime Minister will set out on Sunday our approach the second phase of this pandemic.

As we look ahead to supporting businesses as they are able to re-open, my department will lead our work on how our local economies can adapt, evolve, recover and grow.

I will continue to support mayors and local government leaders, who will play critical roles in this work.

Every local economy now needs a plan to re-start and recover.

We will be informing those plans with our own detailed work in areas such as:

1. How workplaces, from factories to construction sites to offices can be adapted.
2. How outdoor spaces, leisure and businesses, from parks, to high streets, to markets can be managed.
3. And how public transport networks, from the tube, to trams, to buses, can operate.

In each case, guided by scientific and medical advice, we want to ensure appropriate and safe social distancing, providing the public with the confidence to return to work, and to return to public spaces, to public transport and to school, knowing that it's always safe to do so.

We are considering how we can create more room in the town centre for pedestrians.

How we can make it easier to cycle or walk to work.

And we will work with towns and places whose economies have been hardest hit intensively as the recovery begins.

And our commitment to infrastructure investment remains undimmed.

For example, over two thirds of HS2 sites are open.

We want infrastructure and construction work to begin again wherever it is safe to do so.

It is clear to everyone that the pandemic is putting huge pressure on economies the world over.

And there is no denying the challenges lie ahead in our own country.

But we cannot, and will not, let this pandemic halt our work to improve connectivity, to provide vital social and cultural infrastructure and to boost economic growth across the regions.

That's is how we will begin to rebuild and recover from this national emergency.

We are working to ensure the right support is available to local businesses.

And last week high street businesses began to receive the £22 million package designed to mitigate some of the effects of coronavirus.

With grants of up to £25,000 being paid into bank accounts of those businesses.

And of course the 100 towns benefiting from our £3.6 billion Towns Fund will continue to receive our support.

And we will be working at pace with them in the months ahead.

Local authorities have now paid out over £8.6 billion in grants to around 700,000 businesses.

As Local Government Secretary I'd like to congratulate those councils that have worked extremely hard sometimes around the clock to get those grants out to the businesses that desperately need them.

I'd like to congratulate Chichester, Ealing and Hyndburn councils who are the three highest performing councils so far in England.

Businesses are also receiving discounts of almost £10 billion on their rates bills in response to COVID-19, with the hardest hit by the pandemic, such as shops, cafes and pubs, paying no business rates whatsoever this financial year.

Together with existing reliefs, this means that 1.1 million ratepayers are no longer paying business rates this year.

This week the Chancellor and I announced an additional 5% uplift – up to £617 million – available to local councils to fund small businesses that rent space in shared offices, industrial units or innovation centres, as well as regular market traders, B&Bs that pay council tax rather than business rates and also to support small charities.

And local councils will now have flexibility to make pragmatic decisions to keep those businesses going so they can bounce back once they are able to do so.

Moving forward, our mission is to do everything we can to help people get back to work safely, to reunite friends and family and reintroduce the things that make life worth living in a safe way, as soon as it is safe to do so.

Finally, on Friday, we will be celebrating as a country the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

My department had been helping to plan some of the public celebrations, but we know that sadly we will now all need to mark this important occasion from home instead.

Cabinet colleagues have been speaking with a veteran organised by The Royal British Legion and I had the pleasure earlier this week of speaking to Leslie, a 98-year-old World War Two veteran, on the phone.

Leslie was full of warmth and wisdom, telling me how he spent VE Day in Siena having fought his way through North Africa and Italy, and how he would be spending Friday, more sedately, celebrating, at home.

As he said to me, that as we rebuilt and recovered then, he is certain we'll do so again this year.