

19-21 Broad Street | St Helier
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5 December 2021

Deputy Inna Gardiner
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
[By email only]

Dear Deputy Gardiner

PAC Covid-19 Response Review

Thank you for your letter of 5 November on the Public Accounts Committee's review into the Government's response to Covid-19. Please see below my responses to your questions. As you will be aware, Julian Blazeby was Director General for Justice and Home Affairs until 14 October 2021. In my previous role as Group Director in Justice and Home Affairs, I had worked closely with him on some areas of our response to Covid-19, and the impact on the Department, but there are areas where I was not closely involved. I have highlighted where this is the case where relevant and have otherwise given answers which are as comprehensive as possible given the circumstances.

I would like to recognise and highlight the very significant contribution to the Covid-19 response from Justice and Home Affairs colleagues. Across all the Department's Services, there has been a tenacious, resilient and committed response for a sustained period of time, and I cannot thank them enough for their constructive approach and dedication throughout.

I hope this is helpful and of assistance to the Committee and am content for this document to be published.

Yours sincerely



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Cc Paul Martin, Interim Chief Executive

1. How did your responsibilities as Director General change during the COVID-19 Pandemic? What new responsibilities did you take on and what responsibilities did you hand over to other officers?

Julian Blazeby was the lead Director General (DG) for the operational aspects of the Covid-19 response, chairing the Strategic Coordination Group, and being the Accountable Officer (AO) and Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for Covid Operations including the Testing and Tracing Programme. The AO and SRO for the Testing and Tracing programme moved to Tom Walker, Director General for SPPP, from 15 October 2021, coinciding with my appointment as Acting Director General for Justice and Home Affairs (JHA).

Mr Blazeby balanced this with his responsibilities as DG, delegating some meetings and tasks to me as the then Group Director for Public Protection and Law Enforcement. This was done in a dynamic way, responding to the issues arising and taking into account our commitments.

- a. How was this tracked?

This was not actively tracked in documents. We worked closely together, either physically (when we were both located at Broad Street) or virtually (when I was based at the Parade running the One Gov Covid Response Team (1GCT) from mid-March 2020 to the end of June 2020, and then based in a different part of Broad Street when the 1GCT was re-formed from mid-November 2020 to January 2021). We regularly communicated to share information about our changing commitments, ensuring that both Covid matters, and Departmental ones were covered between us, working closely with the JHA Heads of Service.

- b. What new responsibilities did your department take on and what responsibilities did you hand over to other departments? How were these tracked?

Due to the requirement to adopt an 'emergency planning' response to the pandemic and the need to provide central, overall coordination of the government's operational response, Mr Blazeby took on additional responsibilities as an AO of areas not normally associated with JHA as well as the role of SRO on other themes. These included the early lead on the Nightingale Hospital, before handing over to Infrastructure, Housing and Environment, and lead DG for the 1GCT which included Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) sourcing and supply, and the Community Taskforce, along with Testing and Tracing, aspects of the Vaccination programme, and Covid Status Certification. These additional responsibilities meant that there was a requirement to report to other Ministerial portfolios as well as the Minister for Home Affairs. The changes were recognised as necessary and were discussed with colleagues at Treasury and Exchequer (T&E) to ensure compliance and good governance.

These responsibilities, and the associated service delivery, were tracked through regular team meetings comprising partner departments, written updates, reports to Competent Authorities Ministers and Executive Leadership Team, and regular Programme Board meetings.

The JHA Services were involved in a number of ways in the Covid-19 response. This did not generally involve new responsibilities as the activities undertaken were within their normal scope of practice, but on Covid-19 activity. For example, the States of Jersey Police (SoJP) supported Government in 'policing' this public health pandemic. They adopted a public & community policy of continuing to police with consent through an operational model of what was termed the 4 Es; *Engage, Explain, Encourage & Enforce* (as a last resort). They kept records of enforcement action including lower levels words of advice.

- c. How did you work with other departments and key stakeholders to identify new areas of work to mitigate the impact of the pandemic?

Commencing in March 2020, JHA coordinated the Strategic (Gold) and Tactical (Silver) response teams. The 1GCT was led by me, and overseen by Mr Blazeby, to co-ordinate the response and management of all cross departmental activities to support and protect the Jersey community against the threat of Covid-19. We formed operational cells or teams to manage the community response, supplies and supply chain, business continuity and emergency resourcing and worked in partnership with the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and Gold command.

Officers in Justice and Home Affairs, and the 1GCT, worked closely with colleagues in Customer and Local Services (who managed the Covid Helpline), Health and Community Services, Strategic Policy, Planning & Performance, Treasury & Exchequer, Chief Operating Office (People Services, Commercial Services, Communications and Modernisation & Digital) and Office of the Chief Executive, in designing and delivering the Covid pandemic response.

In addition, officers worked across Jersey to engage and partner with stakeholders including, for example, colleagues from the care sector, education and childcare, Ports of Jersey, and Jersey Field Squadron, as well as business and industry representatives.

- 2. We know there has been a huge impact of COVID-19 response measures on departmental business as usual activities, including the secondment of Government staff to other departments to aid the response effort. Do you have a 'back-to-normal' recovery plan for your department?

The Director of Testing and Tracing was seconded from SPPP to JHA for the period of March 2020 – October 2021, when she transferred back to SPPP along with the test, trace and Covid Safe operational responsibilities. In addition, a number of staff from other departments were seconded to JHA, to participate in the 1GCT efforts for various timescales.

We had a number of secondees in, primarily to assist the Ambulance Service, but did not in general second staff out, as those who were available were redeployed within JHA. Some JHA staff assisted 1GCT, and others were deployed to assist other Services.

Each Service put a recovery plan in place in summer 2020, focusing on a return to 'normal' operations (taking into account continuing restrictions in place in some areas at the time (for example the continued wearing of enhanced PPE for the Ambulance Service), whilst also having regard to likely arrangements for winter, in line with the winter strategy. Some Services benefitted from guidance from relevant national bodies, so for example, in accordance with National Policing, the SoJP very quickly adopted a Recovery Plan.

There are some consequential effects which are still being managed. For example, the main change in the prison was splitting the regime to ensure that prisoners could attend activities in self-contained 'bubbles' and reduce the risk of spreading any virus. Although this requirement has recently been lifted as part of the recovery program, there are still some restrictions in place due to staff vacancies while delayed recruitment processes catch up. These restrictions are now an indirect consequence of covid rather than a precaution and anticipated to fully recover by end of March 2022 once trained staff are in place.

- a. In respect of the secondment of Government staff to other departments to aid the response effort, how did you ensure disruptions to certain workstreams were prioritised in an objective and consistent way?

JHA staff were deployed across the Department's activities, including the 1GCT, and Testing and Tracing, in order to ensure that resource needs were met.

Some services saw a reduction in core demand, for example the reduction in border activity for the Jersey Customs and Immigration Service (JCIS), and the SoJP saw a reduction in more core policing demand e.g. Retail, Night Time Economy and Road Traffic matters. This allowed flexibility across JHA and 1GCT in support of the Covid-19 response for some officers to be released. In effect, the disruptions to workstreams were a consequence of Covid-19, not secondment decisions, and therefore presented an opportunity to redeploy staff, rather than a need to prioritise work.

- b. What would you do differently next time?

It is clearly not possible to maintain a fully resourced team for all eventualities of a pandemic or other emergency event but key is the ability to flex and scale resources rapidly. Ensuring colleagues are prepared in other ways is a key objective moving forwards e.g., in emergency planning exercises, business continuity planning, cross-skilling etc. Consideration is being given to widening the training available for people who can lead emergency responses across the Government to provide greater capacity and resilience.

The 1GCT conducted a lessons learnt exercise in June 2020, to create a 'toolkit' for future use in a similar situation. It was used when the 1GCT was formed again in November 2020 and provided a valuable framework to make the set up much swifter and enabled the team to be more effective more quickly.

The SoJP undertook a structured Organisation debrief in August 2020 capturing feedback from rank & file officers and staff. The learning derived was mainly tactical.

3. How have you monitored the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on departmental business as usual activities and the disruptions to it?

Normal departmental processes were used. Regular management meetings, and the involvement of the JHA Heads of Service in the SCG and TCG enabled enhanced communication throughout, both in relation to business-as-usual activities, and Covid-19 activities.

- a. What tools were developed by your departments to monitor this?

Mr Blazeby and I met weekly on a Monday morning to review the week ahead, and then had regular communication throughout each day, especially during the periods of peak Covid-19 activity from March – June 2020 and November 2020 – April 2021. Regular meetings of the JHA Senior Leadership Team (SLT) continued, and this included the seconded Director of Testing and Tracing, who also met with the Director General weekly to review priorities, activities and risks.

Weekly Ministerial meetings provided a structured opportunity to escalate matters, discuss business delivery and add, remove or re-schedule priorities as needed, as steered and directed by the Minister.

JHA Heads of Service continued to meet frequently (weekly, generally) with their senior management teams, to ensure that the Service was responding to the situation and that their operations were adjusted accordingly. For example, The SoJP run a monthly Performance Board in order to track and respond to change/demand. They also built in Power BI a Covid tracking matrix which continues to be used in late 2021 in order to monitor impact on both staff & core business. This is assessed weekly through the Gold group.

The SoJP wrote a Covid Gold Strategy 'Operation Talla' and Covid Plan and staged BCP1, 2 & 3. The Chief Officer tasked the DCO with establishing a Gold Group (including key partners) which met and continues to meet at various intervals – at its peak to daily; currently weekly. All actions & decisions have been recorded (100 meetings to Dec 2021). A Silver Tactical Group was also established.

Good communication proved essential to ensure all areas of the department were up to speed with key activities and requirements. Office 365 tools e.g. Teams were also used to communicate at pace, work collaboratively and ensure that all colleagues had access to role relevant information. The Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) system is now embedded within our business processes and is used within meeting to drive discussions on how to identify, review, and mitigate key areas of concern across all directorates with JHA.

b. How do you minimise the impact on services and key deliveries?

In its most acute form, this was addressed through Business Continuity Plans. The more general position was through regular communication internally (as described above) and regular dialogue with broader stakeholders including arm's length organisations.

Longer-term initiatives have been tracked through PERFORM, our corporate tool for GoJ. We also participated in Emergency Planning groups such as the Strategic Co-ordination Group (and underlying Cells e.g. Scientific & Technical Advisory Cell as needed).

c. What decision making tools/approach did you use to decide on who should be seconded, and to where?

Not applicable as there were no secondees out of JHA. In relation to secondees in, the notable secondment was that of the Director of Testing and Tracing, which was arranged following discussion between the relevant DG's and an informal interview.

d. How did you compensate for staff seconded to other departments to aid the response effort?

Not applicable as there were no secondees out of JHA.

4. Was any departmental authority changed during the Pandemic, including as a result of crisis management efforts, and if so, were they consistent with existing laws and regulations?

In relation to JHA Services, no. From a crisis management perspective, the Services that form the Department are designed to deliver operations in contingent circumstances and, in most

cases, duties and powers of officers are held and delegated in the services. This means that no changes to departmental authority were required.

In relation to Covid-19 operational response activity, Mr Blazeby's appointment as SRO for various Covid-19 functions (as above), and the secondment in of the Director of Testing and Tracing did involve some changes, as for example in 2020 the Test & Trace Programme was split amongst JHA, IHA, HCS and OCE but then brought together into JHA in 2021. Rachel Williams, Director for Test & Trace was added to the JHA scheme of delegation.

There were a limited number of specific changes in the Services, for example the Chief of Police agreed to accredited extensions due to inability to train e.g. Firearms, Driving and Officer Safety Training.

5. Who is responsible for monitoring the performance of services established in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic within your department?

Both the Test and Trace Programme and the Vaccination Programme, have been overseen throughout by Boards, chaired by the SRO and comprising representatives from partner departments, including People & Corporate Services and Treasury & Exchequer. The Boards have met regularly to provide direction and to manage risks, and weekly programme reports have been circulated. Reporting to Competent Authorities Ministers and, in 2020, to the Executive Leadership Team, has ensured Ministerial and Executive oversight.

a. What and how have you documented lessons learnt?

Business Continuity lessons have been captured throughout by Business Continuity leads and have been fed back to the central Business Continuity team.

Operational lessons have been learned throughout the programmes. These have been identified within the services and in discussion with other team members and have been implemented quickly as service delivery has been dynamic and flexible throughout the programmes. Changes have also been made to respond to changing needs and policy decisions. Team functioning has remained under review and has adapted, for example the frequency of team meetings has been amended as appropriate to the pace of change and level of risk applicable at the time. This learning has all moved with the relevant staff from JHA to SPPP and continues to develop.

b. How do you intend to incorporate lessons learned from the performance of these services into the wider performance of your department?

A 'tabletop' exercise was held which identified a number of lessons from the service operation to date, which could be shared across JHA. Participation of JHA staff in 1GCT, early set up of Testing operations, and the development of the Community Task Force means there is embedded learning from the experience of those members of staff.

In addition, the TCG completed an 'after action review' following the first TCG, and standardised documentation was produced which can be used for JHA cross-departmental TCGs in the future.

6. How were self-assessment frameworks and Key Performance Indicators used to ensure that key services continued to operate?

The CEO's response of 11 October explains that departmental performance systems have been maintained, and this is therefore the case for JHA. The JHA SLT continued to meet. Service SLT's continued to meet. Key Performance Indicators were still monitored. The JHA Head of Business Support, having initially been involved in setting up the 1GCT in March 2020, was then focused on maintaining 'business as usual' for JHA, and played a key role, along with the then Project and Programme lead official, in ensuring that 'business-as-usual' was still effective, and effectively monitored.

a. What worked well?

The Key Performance Indicators provided a useful baseline of expected performance standards before COVID. This has enabled us to identify the impact of, for example, travel restrictions on passport applications (and also to monitor their significant increase now that there are less restrictions and there has been an influx of passport applications).

b. What would you do differently?

Improvements for the future need to focus on:

1. The maintenance of effective business continuity plans – we are working closely with the Chief Operating Office on this as part of the migration to the new SharePoint platform in 2022.
2. Review workforce plans to ensure ongoing support of areas within our services most affected by the pandemic
3. Effective emergency planning using the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) and regular training for staff

7. What role did your respective Ministers play in deciding on resource and staff reallocations? What level of consultation was provided to them?

Weekly Ministerial meetings continued throughout, and Ministers were briefed on business-as-usual and Covid-19 activity. Their primary concern was ensuring there was appropriate resource coming into the Department, rather than out of it. At the peak of activity in March – June 2020, the Minister was receiving daily, then twice weekly, situation reports from the JHA Services.

The Chief of Police maintained regular and frequent contact with both the Minister for Home Affairs and the Chair of The Police Authority. The operational deployment of Officers and Staff rests with the Chief of Police.

a. What level of responsibility as the head of your department did you have on how staff should be reallocated and what resources could be taken from your departments and applied to the COVID-19 responses? How was this decision making formalised?

Mr Blazeby had full oversight and responsibility for the reallocation and redeployment of staff within the Department – for example creating (and then reforming) the 1GCT, deploying staff from one JHA function to another, and diverting resource to early activity such as setting up testing operations.

8. Can you update us on how your department has responded to the recommendations made by the C&AG on the response to the COVID-19 Pandemic? Have any recommendations been implemented?

There are not, as yet, specific recommendations for JHA in the C&AG reports on the response to the Covid-19 pandemic published so far. JHA stands ready to be involved in the forthcoming review on the 'effectiveness of governance and decision making processes'.

We are contributing to the formal arrangements introduced to review the effectiveness of Business Continuity (as mentioned elsewhere in this response). We completed the self-assessment audit, undertaken in June 2022, as part of this work.

- a. Have any changes made to the operations or working practices?

Business continuity plans have been refreshed and reviewed. The use of MS Teams means it is now much easier to meet virtually – including out of hours when needed, both for Covid and other responses. This has enabled meetings to continue to be virtual when appropriate, including to ensure the operation of Team A/B within Services, and to ensure that room sizes are not a constraint to work continuing as effectively as possible.

There has also been an increase in the use of technology to deliver some services, for example virtual visits at the Prison, which is also a real benefit for international prisoners or those with families overseas, and greater availability of technology for prisoners to attend court virtually, at the discretion of the court.

Electronic tagging was brought into place to provide an option for medically vulnerable prisoners where offending risk was considered to be manageable to have a curfew at home. The uptake was low but this continues to be a tool that is available to the services in Jersey with a potential new evolution as to how it is deployed.

9. What thought has been given to 'future proofing' services?

The government has invested in a permanent Business Continuity (BC) Consultant to ensure best practice and continuous improvement. Our Head of Business Support has worked closely with BC leads across JHA and the new BC consultant to embed best practice and ensure that the approach is continually improving.

As a department we have upskilled staff within our Business Support Unit to support blue light services in the event of a major incident, via the logist programme led by the Emergency Planning team. These staff supported the major incident exercise held on 1 December 2021.

The SoJP Business Continuity Plans have proved effective and alongside our Recovery Plan we feel we are future proofed. Despite Covid we managed to recruit 30 new officers in 2020 and 10 in 2021. Police Staff recruitment post Staff Review (TOM) continues.

All JHA Services are developing new strategic workforce plans, with help from People & Corporate Services colleagues. This will enable us to properly consider the resource needed for the Services in the future. The plan will also consider talent management and succession planning, and consider what skills are in short supply and how they can best be developed.

10. How did you work with Commercial Services to understand your department's procurement needs during the pandemic?

The Test & Trace and Vaccine Programmes have worked very closely with Commercial Services throughout. Commercial Services colleagues attend the regular team meetings for test and trace, and are represented on Programme Board to secure their involvement in decision making and governance.

We also worked closely with Commercial Services in relation to the establishment of suitable arrangements for the sourcing, supply, storage and distribution of PPE, and in a number of ad hoc situations in relation to supply chain disruption, or the risk of it.

11. How have you measured, monitored, and reported on your performance, financial management (including value for money and cost benefit analyses) and impact on work programmes during the Covid-19 pandemic? What 3 things could be improved?

The departmental service performance measures were included in the 2020 Department Operational Business Plan and reported on in the 2020 Annual Report and Accounts. For 2021 the service performance measure has been reported on quarterly – Q1 and Q2 were published for the first time on 31 August alongside the Mid-Year Review 2021.

Financial management and monitoring process did not change throughout the pandemic, with regular reporting to ELT ad COM, the publication of half-yearly reports and the Annual Report and Accounts. For most additional COVID funding requirements full business cases were prepared and evaluated which considered value for money, costs and benefits. The business cases also set out how projects were monitored including objectives to allow for assessment on delivery.

- 1) Internal reporting of quarterly Departmental Service Performance Measure is now in place and will support the identification of further improvements to service delivery
- 2) Engagement with Investment Appraisal Team to ensure that we maximise the use of the improved business case process to ensure that the cost-benefits case for intervention is fully understood when there are competing delivery options.
- 3) Compliance with CPMO process of reporting which has been adopted across government within 2021 so that programmes and projects are reported in a consistent manner and understood at the portfolio level.

Measuring, monitoring and reporting have, therefore, been as per the Interim Chief Executive's report to the Public Accounts Committee from September 2021.

12. What would you do to improve how your department communicated with the rest of the Government of Jersey and external stakeholders?

Continue to work with Communications Directorate and the Office of the Chief Executive to make sure that there are increased opportunities for Ministers to proactively engage with the public.

Ensure that JHA are suitably represented within appropriate forums by committing resources to engaging with other GoJ departments so that we have a voice at the table and are able to influence all strategic and tactical decisions that relate to JHA services.