

Now what?

Winning a difficult vote will come as an unsurprising relief to the government. They had to rely on the Opposition and on this occasion it worked. It does not however solve the underlying problems.

If the virus continues to spread the government will be told by its ever cautious scientific advisers to lock down more. They are bound to say that as it is the safest thing to say if your one task is to curb the disease. The measures taken this week are unlikely to arrest its progress. Indeed one of the main arguments against the vaccine passports is vaccinated people can get and pass on the virus so how does it help as a device to control Night clubs and large events?

If the virus turns out as some think to be milder so there is no surge in serious cases the governments critics will claim the measures were needless.

More seriously Ministers have to rebuild trust with a large number of MPs who voted against, abstained or wanted to vote against but responded to persuasion or coercion. Ministers need to grasp both the scepticism about some of the forecasts and measures proposed, and the concern that every time a new variant appears there could be more lockdowns.

Government needs to balance freedoms and economic needs against pandemic control. It needs to recognise that anti pandemic rules can cause more mental health problems, loss of jobs, businesses and income and damage to the social life of communities. There needs to be more evidence about which measures do most at least collateral damage to contain the spread of the virus.

We could do with more information on what progress has been made with air extraction and cleansing in public buildings, more information on approved and potential treatments and more on disinfection.

Government also needs to ensure extra resources going into the NHS can be used to tackle the many non covid health problems that do not go away because of the virus.

A non answer to a simple question!

Question:

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, for what reason the total budget allocated to housing illegal migrants in hotels is commercial in confidence when that total would not reveal the contract terms of individual suppliers. (86524)

Tabled on: 03 December 2021

Answer:

Kevin Foster:

The Rt Hon. Gentleman's question appears to relate to a Freedom of Information (FOI) response. Responses to all FOI requests are handled in line with the legislation, including applying relevant exemptions where applicable.

The answer was submitted on 14 Dec 2021 at 10:31.

COMMENT

This was a question further to a previous Parliamentary Question! It has nothing to do with FOI.

[Approval of Funds for Full & Final Settlement for Postmasters with Overturned Criminal Convictions](#)

I have received the enclosed letter regarding the settlement funds for Postmasters:

Approval of Funds for Full & Final Settlement for Postmasters with Overturned Criminal Convictions

This House is aware of the distressing impact that problems with the Post Office's Horizon IT system have had on the lives and livelihoods of many postmasters.

The Court of Appeal handed down a landmark judgment on 23 April 2021 which quashed the convictions of 39 postmasters whose prosecution had relied on Horizon evidence. 72 convictions have now been quashed to date, and several others are in progress. There are potentially hundreds more postmasters whose convictions have relied on Horizon evidence and may seek to have their convictions quashed.

We want to see these postmasters with quashed convictions compensated fairly and swiftly. So far, the vast majority of postmasters who have had their convictions quashed have each received an interim compensation payment of up to £100,000 while they wait for the next steps in the proceedings.

I am pleased to confirm that today the Government is making funding available to facilitate Post Office to make final compensation payments to postmasters whose convictions have been overturned. We are working with Post Office to

finalise the arrangements that will enable the final settlement negotiations to begin as soon as possible. By providing this funding, Government is helping Post Office deliver the fair compensation postmasters deserve.

With the Secretary of State's status as sole shareholder in the Post Office, my Department continues to engage actively with Post Office Limited on this and will maintain strong oversight of the compensation process.

Post office: Compensation Payments for Postmasters with Overturned criminal convictions

I have received the enclosed update from Minister for Small Business, Consumers & Labour Markets about compensation Payments for Postmasters with Overturned criminal convictions.

Dear Colleagues,

I know members across the House are aware of the longstanding Horizon issues whereby postmasters were prosecuted and convicted on the basis of Horizon evidence that we now know to be unreliable. On 23 April 2021, the Court of Appeal handed down a landmark judgment which quashed the convictions of 39 postmasters. To date 72 postmasters have now had their historical convictions quashed.

I have been clear in Parliament that Government wants to see postmasters who were prosecuted and convicted on the basis of Horizon evidence fairly compensated as quickly as possible. I wrote to you in July 2021 to inform you that Government would be providing funding support to Post Office to make interim payments of up to £100,000 to eligible postmasters who have their convictions quashed. These payments are intended to provide postmasters with some financial relief in advance of full and final settlements being reached with them by Post Office.

As of 29 November, the Post Office has received 66 applications for interim payments. Of these, 62 offers have been made and 50 accepted and payments made. Payments made to date have all been for the maximum interim amount of £100,000.

I am also pleased to inform you of the steps Government is taking to facilitate the settlement of claims and the payment of compensation to the postmasters whose criminal convictions were based on Horizon data and have been quashed.

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in

his capacity as sole shareholder in the Post Office, has agreed to make funding available to provide Post Office with the necessary resources to enable it to reach full and final settlements of compensation claims in a timely manner.

We are now working with Post Office to finalise the arrangements that will enable the final settlement negotiations to begin as soon as possible. The final settlement of claims for compensation is for Post Office and individual postmasters or their representatives to agree. It will involve claims being evidenced and quantified so that fair payments can be made providing postmasters with the compensation that they deserve.

My department continues to engage regularly with Post Office regarding its settlement of compensation claims. I am committed to seeing these longstanding Horizon issues resolved, learning what went wrong through the Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry, and ensuring something like this cannot happen again.

I have today notified the House of this decision in a Written Ministerial Statement, which you will find attached.

Yours ever,

PAUL SCULLY MP

Minister for Small Business, Consumers & Labour Markets

Minister for London

[Conservative principles](#)

The government needs to reconsider its policies as we move away from emergency measures to handle the pandemic.

We need a growth policy based on cutting tax rates and backing individuals and small businesses as they innovate, serve customers and expand.

We need a levelling up policy based on making it easier for people to follow their personal journeys through better education and training, scope to work for yourself or build a business, the opportunity and freedom to turn your interests and hobbies into ways of sustaining your life

We need an ownership policy encouraging and helping more people to own their own home, to build their own business, to become shareholders in the company they work for, to accumulate savings for a rainy day and for their retirement.

We need a public sector policy to deliver great education, health and social

care, with choice for the users, free at the point of need.

We need a strong policy for the UK as an important influence for the good in the world, protecting our borders, helping our allies and being proud of our country.

We need to defend everyone's right to democratic debate and challenge to government, preventing those who would stifle our national conversation by self serving wokery.