1	Tuesday, 12 November 2024	1	I should therefore set out the process that we intend to
2	(10.07 am)	2	adopt when asking questions of the witnesses and indeed,
3	MR BEER: Good morning, sir. May I call Professor Dame	3	please, when Core Participants ask their questions,
4	Sandra Dawson and Dr Katy Steward, please.	4	which is going to be tomorrow.
5	PROFESSOR DAME SANDRA JUNE NOBLE DAWSON (affirmed)	5	The purpose, sir, of setting out these ground rules
6	DR KATY MARY STEWARD (affirmed)	6	now is to ensure the orderly and efficient receipt of
7	Questioned by MR BEER	7	evidence from the witnesses in circumstances where the
8	MR BEER: Good morning, Dame Sandra and Dr Steward. My name	8	witnesses are giving evidence currently.
9	is Jason Beer, as you know, and I ask questions on	9	So the ground rules, if I may. Firstly, the
10	behalf of the Inquiry. Can you each tell us your full	10	questions that I will ask you, Dame Sandra and
11	names, please?	11	Dr Steward, in a moment, about the signing of your
12	DAME SANDRA: Sandra June Noble Dawson.	12	reports and whether the contents are true will be asked
13	DR STEWARD: Katie Mary Steward.	13	of you individually.
14	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: I should say before you start, Mr Beer,	14	Secondly, the questions that I shall ask in a moment
15	that nothing ever surprises me in this life, it's taken	15	about your qualifications will be addressed to you
16	more than 50 years in the law to see two persons in the	16	individually.
17	witness box at the same time.	17	But third, however, questions that will be addressed
18	MR BEER: I was about to say that trained observers will	18	to you collectively thereafter, it has been agreed that
19	notice that there are two witnesses.	19	you, Dame Sandra will, in the first instance address
20	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Well, I'm on the ball this morning, as	20	each of them either by an answer, or inviting Dr Steward
21	you can see!	21	to answer.
22	MR BEER: Unusually	22	Fourthly, we'll work on the basis that Dr Steward
23	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Thank you!	23	agrees with Dame Sandra's answers, unless she agrees
24	MR BEER: There was another part to that sentence:	24	otherwise or wishes to intervene.
25	unusually, we have two witnesses in the witness box.	25	The aim of that approach, sir, is to reduce the
1	possibility of discussion in the witness box and also to	1	MR BEER: Are the contents of that first report true to the
2	ensure that we've got a clear record of the evidence	2	best of your knowledge and belief?
3	that the witnesses give collectively.	3	DAME SANDRA: They are.
4	So the reports: you've prepared two reports.	4	MR BEER: Dr Steward is that your signature?
5	I think, the first, dated 26 March 2024, is 133 pages	5	DR STEWARD: It is.
6	long, including its appendices; and the second is dated	6	MR BEER: Are the contents of that first report true to the
7	29 October 2024, and is 154 pages long, including its	7	best of your knowledge and belief?
8	appendices.	8	DR STEWARD: They are.
9	You updated both reports recently in large measure	9	MR BEER: Thank you very much. Can we turn to the second
10	to correct formatting and referencing issues and both	10	report, please, EXPG0000010_R.
11	reports were reissued yesterday. It those reissued	11	You'll see this is headed Report 2, it's dated
12	reports that we're going to use in the Inquiry today and	12	29 October 2024, and it was again updated yesterday,
13	tomorrow.	13	11 November.
14	So the first report. Can we have it on the screen,	14	I think there are some corrections to make, even to
15	please. EXPG0000006_R. You should have a copy of that	15	that. Can we look, please, to start with at page 33.
16	in front of you as well in hard copy.	16	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: I think I'd better stop you there because
17	DAME SANDRA: I do.	17	neither assessor is having these things on their screen
18	MR BEER: You'll see from the title page, 26 March 2024.	18	at the moment. I've got it but they haven't. So that
19	It's the first report, Report 1, updated 11 November,	19	needs to be fixed before we go any further, I think.
20	ie yesterday. Can we go to page 133, please.	20	MR BEER: Yes, I'll just pause and usually somebody from RTS
21	This is the expert witness declaration and the	21	appears.
22	statement of truth. Those are redacted in the copies	22	That's not going to happen on this occasion, sir.
23	that we have, but to start with, Dame Sandra, is that	23	We need a five-minute break to correct the position. So
24	your signature?	24	could I ask you to rise for five minutes, and we'll all
25	DAME SANDRA: It is.	25	wait here.

1	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: I'll go out but if you'll all sit here to	1	MR BEER: Thank you very much. Then lastly, page 99,
2	save us coming backwards and forwards, I'd be grateful.	2	paragraph 370. In the second line, should we insert the
3	MR BEER: Thank you, sir.	3	word "are" between the words "there" and "no", so that
4	(10.15 am)	4	I reads "and consistently be done" sorry, "if there
5	(A short break)	5	are no decisions"?
6	(10.20 am)	6	DAME SANDRA: Correct.
7	MR BEER: Thank you, sir. Take 2.	7	MR BEER: Thank you. Can we go to page 154, please, and
8	Can we go to the second report. We were making some	8	scroll to the bottom. Firstly, is that your signature,
9	amendments. Page 33, please, if that can come up on the	9	Dame Sandra?
10	screen. In paragraph 114, in the second line, should we	10	DAME SANDRA: It is.
11	cross through the words, "and" and then into the third	11	MR BEER: With those corrections brought into account, are
12	line, "investigations"; is that right, Dame Sandra?	12	the contents of the report true to the best of your
13	DAME SANDRA: That is correct. Now, it's correct.	13	knowledge and belief?
14	MR BEER: Page 48, paragraph 176, two corrections. In the	14	DAME SANDRA: They are.
15	third line, into the fourth line, should we omit the	15	MR BEER: Thank you. Dr Steward, is that your signature?
16	words "and investigations", which are being highlighted	16	DR STEWARD: It is.
17	on the screen, and should we omit the words	17	MR BEER: Are the contents with those corrections brought
18	"investigation and", after the acronym "SPM"; is that	18	into account true to the best of your knowledge and
19	right?	19	belief?
20	DAME SANDRA: That is correct.	20	DR STEWARD: They are.
21	MR BEER: Thank you very much. Page 60, paragraph 222, in	21	MR BEER: Thank you very much. Can we go back to the first
22	the quotation in italics, three lines from the bottom,	22	report please, and turn to your qualifications,
23	should we replace the word "about" with the word "that";	23	expertise and experience. It's the first report at
23 24	is that correct?	24	page 131.
2 <del>4</del> 25	DAME SANDRA: Correct.	25	
23	5	25	Starting with you, Dame Sandra, I think on the first 6
1	two-thirds of that page your qualifications, experience	1	highlights, I think you've been the chair of an NHS
2	and expertise are set out?	2	Trust?
3	DAME SANDRA: Yes.	3	DAME SANDRA: Correct.
4	MR BEER: Can I summarise the important parts, tell me if	4	MR BEER: You have been a Senior Independent Director,
5	you agree. Firstly, you have taught, researched,	5	a SID, and chair of a Remuneration Committee?
6	written and consulted, on organisational behaviour,	6	DAME SANDRA: Correct.
7	leadership and governance?	7	MR BEER: That was at TSB. You have been a NED,
8	DAME SANDRA: Correct.	8	a Non-Executive Director, and a member of an Audit
9	MR BEER: Secondly, you held academic posts at Imperial	9	Committee, that was at both Barclays Plc and JPMorgan.
10	College London in the University of London before moving	10	DAME SANDRA: JPMorgan Claverhouse Investment Trust, yes
11	to Cambridge?	11	MR BEER: You were a member of the Senior Salaries Review
12	DAME SANDRA: Indeed.	12	Body?
13	MR BEER: At Cambridge you were the master of Sidney Sussex	13	DAME SANDRA: Correct.
14	College, a Deputy Vice Chancellor and, most relevantly	14	MR BEER: You have been a Non-Executive Director and
15	for us, the Director of the Judge Business School for	15	a Senior Independent Director at a public body, namely
	<del>-</del>		

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17 **DAME SANDRA:** Correct.

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18 MR BEER: You're now Professor Emerita at the university?

11 years between 1995 and 2006?

19 DAME SANDRA: Correct.

20 MR BEER: In addition to your academic interests and the

positions that you have held, you have personal and

22 practical experience of organisational behaviour,

23 leadership and governance, and you set that out in that

24 substantial paragraph that's at the foot of the page

25 that we're looking at now. Just picking out some

8

culture and governance for 30 years?

Dr Steward, staying with page 131, if we scroll

down, please, and this goes over to page 132, this sets

out your qualifications, experience and expertise, and

can I summarise. Firstly you have taught, advised,

coached and consulted in leadership, organisational

the Financial Services Authority?

DAME SANDRA: Correct.

MR BEER: Thank you.

DR STEWARD: Correct.

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1	MR BEER: You were the head of the National Culture and
2	Leadership Programme for NHS England?
3	DR STEWARD: Correct.
4	MR BEER: Thereafter, a visiting fellow at the Cambridge
5	Judge Business School and now a visiting scholar at
6	Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge?
7	DR STEWARD: Correct.
8	MR BEER: You have also served on the boards of public
9	sector bodies and charities, including an NHS Trust and
10	the UNHCR.
11	DR STEWARD: That's right.
12	MR BEER: Thank you very much. That can come down.
13	Can I turn to the third topic, then: the methodology

that you deployed in approaching your task and the purpose of each of your reports. If we can turn to page 6 of Report 1.

17 Thank you. Does this set out a summary of your 18 instructions?

19 DAME SANDRA: It does.

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20 MR BEER: Thank you. In summary, this report, Report 1, was 21 prepared and completed, remembering it's dated 26 March 22 2024, before we commenced hearing any evidence in 23 Phases 5 and 6 of the Inquiry; that evidence started on 24 9 April 2024. So it's unaffected by any of the evidence 25 that we were subsequently to hear about what actually

> presented chronologically, split into columns: the left-hand side are the requirements and guidance which apply to companies, special attention paid to publicly listed companies; the right hand requirements are the public companies or entities which are wholly owned or controlled by the Government. You say, and we're going to look at Annex A, in a moment:

"Whilst there are differences between publicly listed and publicly owned companies, it is notable that in matters of governance during the relevant period, one finds the requirements and expectations for all organisations in the UK have tended, and tended to be encouraging by governments and regulators, to follow the approach adopted in law and guidance for publicly listed companies."

DAME SANDRA: That's correct. 16

17 MR BEER: If we can look at Annex A, I am not going to go 18 through the detail but just want to establish how it 19 works. It begins on page 93.

> In we scroll down after the preamble, we can see the two columns you mention, one is headed "Formal Legal Requirements for Corporate Governance", and on the right-hand side "Formal Legal Requirements that would apply to Public Corporations/Companies in Government".

25 DAME SANDRA: Correct.

2 exchanges between the Post Office and UKGI, and what 3 happened involving UKGI, and before it the Shareholder 4 Executive, and central government, from 2000 onwards; is 5 6 DAME SANDRA: That's correct. 7 MR BEER: Thank you. In paragraph 1, in (i) there, you say: 8 "We are instructed to provide a report which sets 9 out what might typically be expected/best practice ..." 10 In paragraph (ii), in the second line, you say that 11 the report deals with "generally expected standards". 12 Do I understand correctly that the standards which 13 you say ought to have been achieved in this period do 14 not represent, in your view, a counsel of perfection? DAME SANDRA: That's exactly right. The standards are ones 15 16 which are generally expected. They're not the highest 17 level or the lowest level. 18 MR BEER: So they're, is this right, the standards 19 reasonably to be expected from a company in the position 20 of the Post Office? 21 DAME SANDRA: Indeed 22 MR BEER: Thank you. Looking at (iii) and (iv), you tell us

happened at the Post Office, what happened in the

1 MR BEER: You essentially track across time, we can see on 2 this page 1998 and 2006, and if we go over the page and 3 keep scrolling, and keep scrolling, nothing relevant in 4 '93 and '94, for example. So that's the way the thing 5 works. 6 If we can go back, please, to page 93 and look at

that Annex A to your first report provides a chronology

of the laws and guidance on governance of companies

which applied during the relevant period, 1999 to 2019,

box 1.1 and 2.1. Thank you. Here you note some of the requirements of the Companies Acts in 1995 and 2006, on the left-hand side, that applied to companies. Then on 10 the right side, public corporations or companies 11 essentially in Government ownership; is that right?

DAME SANDRA: That's correct. 12

13 MR BEER: You note that the Companies Act, on the right-hand 14 side, covers companies in Government ownership, 15 ie incorporated companies in which the Government is 16 a large or sole shareholder.

17 DAME SANDRA: Indeed.

MR BEER: So you're essentially suggesting that we should 18 19 read what we read in the left-hand box into the right 20 hand box; is that right?

DAME SANDRA: Indeed. 21

22 MR BEER: Thank you. Can we look at another example of how 23 this works at page 100, and scroll to the foot of the

24 page, please, and look at paragraph 1.8 and 2.3. 1.8,

25 the left-hand column, normal companies; right-hand side,

1	companies in Government ownership. You point out there
2	that in relation to ordinary companies in 2005, there
3	was revised guidance on the Combined Code
4	DAME SANDRA: Indeed.
5	MR BEER: in the same year, issued by the Treasury and
6	the Cabinet Office, a Corporate Governance Code in
7	central government departments?
8	DAME SANDRA: That's correct.
9	MR BEER: Is, just by way of detail, that what's recorded
10	in box 2.3 the first occasion on which Government
11	issued a Corporate Governance Code?
12	DAME SANDRA: Yeah.
13	MR BEER: So the first time that there was a formal document
14	issued by Government about government-owned companies
15	was that issued by Treasury and the Cabinet Office in
16	2005?
17	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> Yes. You'll note that there was in 2001,
18	we've noted the "Management of Risk a Strategic
19	Overview", rapidly became known as The Orange Book,
20	which had, we thought, some relevance.
21	MR BEER: If we go back
22	DAME SANDRA: It was in 2001.
23	MR BEER: If we go back to that, that's on the top of
24	page 99. You're referring to The Orange Book. Was that

1 please. Essentially new headings, maintaining the same 2 approach: left-hand side companies; right-hand side 3 companies in Government ownership, here dealing with 4 other instruments, codes, guidance, and similar 5 documents

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6 DAME SANDRA: That's correct.

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7 MR BEER: Thank you very much.

> Can we go back to page 6 of your first report, please. You'll see in (vi), at the foot of the page, you say:

"Beyond identifying specific requirements and guidance for governance [as summarised in that table we've just looked at], we have commented on what might normally be regarded as known reasonable practice in governance, management and leadership. [That commentary] is based on our experience and expertise."

Just so that I understand what you're saying there: you're saying that part of your report is founded on law or one of the other instruments summarised in Annex A, but other parts of your report are not founded on such instruments: they are based upon your experience and expertise?

23 DAME SANDRA: That's correct.

24 MR BEER: You then set out, if we go over the page, please, over eight chapters, the headings of which are set out 25

15

Officers? 1

2 DAME SANDRA: It was, yes. It was about the management of 3

4 MR BEER: Rather than the broader subject of corporate

5 governance?

6 DAME SANDRA: Indeed, indeed.

7 MR BEER: Thank you. So that's how Annex A works, and that will be an important source of material for the Inquiry 8 9 in due course. I'm not going to go through it. It

10 speaks for itself.

DAME SANDRA: May I add that on page 94, we've moved from 11 formal legal requirements into codes and guidance, which 12

13 I think you didn't directly --

MR BEER: I skipped over. 14

DAME SANDRA: Yes. 15

16 MR BEER: Thank you, you're right to pick me up, the second 17 person that's done that this morning. Page 93, just so 18 we can all understand what you're speaking about. The

19 two headings there are both about formal legal

20 requirements, they both start in that way and address

21 law --

22 DAME SANDRA: Mm-hm.

23 MR BEER: -- ie primary legislation and Act of Parliament.

DAME SANDRA: Mm. 24

MR BEER: Then, over the page to 94, and scroll down,

1 there, your views on what might reasonably be expected 2 of a company in the position of the Post Office between 3 1999 and 2019? 4 DAME SANDRA: That's correct. 5 MR BEER: Thank you. This does not comment, Report 1, upon

6 the extent to which those standards reasonably to be 7

expected of the Post Office were, in fact, realised.

8 DAME SANDRA: Makes no comment.

9 MR BEER: Thank you.

10 Can we go to Report 2, please -- I apologise for the 11 delay, the system is taking a little while today -- and 12 turn to page 6. Here you've set out your approach, your 13 methodology, in relation to Report 2, and this report, 14 is it right, was prepared in the course of, and then 15 after, the evidence was heard in Phases 5 and 6?

MR BEER: You tell us in paragraph 2 that it wasn't your

DAME SANDRA: That's correct. 16

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18 intention, nor indeed were you instructed to establish any matters of fact. In paragraph 3, you tell us that 19 20 you have applied, you have been mindful of, the 21 standards of expected behaviour that you set out in 22 Report 1. That is -- I've used the language within the 23 Inquiry in the past -- Report 1 as being essentially the 24 Highway Code of corporate governance; is that an unfair 25 description of it?

1	DAME SANDRA: That's entirely right and, in relation to	1	witness statements and transcripts of oral evidence and,
2	Report 1, the concluding section 8, as we identify	2	I think, reading some of the underlying material
3	there, also includes a commentary on what it's like to	3	DAME SANDRA: That's correct.
4	experience organisations, particularly in relation to	4	MR BEER: the primary documents.
5	authority, power, leadership, culture and communication.	5	You tell us in paragraph 7 that you reviewed that
6	MR BEER: You tell us in paragraph 4, by way of a reminder,	6	evidence and yourself chose three case studies for
		7	
7	what Annex A, an important document of Report 1 consists		analysis?  DAME SANDRA: Correct.
8	of. In paragraph 5 you say the instruments you mention	8	
9	provide the foundation for considerable consensus	9	MR BEER: Am I right in believing that those case studies
10	reflected in the large volume of written and broadcast	10	chosen for Report 2 do not represent the entirety of any
11	advice on what makes good board governance and executive	11	view on the propriety of the Post Office's governance,
12	management. What was the point you were making there,	12	over the time period relevant to this Inquiry?
13	that the volume of material	13	DAME SANDRA: That's correct.
14	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> Yes, one might have expected expert evidence	14	MR BEER: Instead, they are prepared to assist the Inquiry
15	from an academic to be replete with references. The	15	but do not reflect any conclusion of the entirety of any
16	truth of the matter is that there is an enormous amount	16	good or bad practice in the governance of the Post
17	which is written and expressed about management,	17	Office between 1999 and 2019?
18	leadership and Government, there is a general consensus	18	DAME SANDRA: That's correct.
19	which may be available at any book stall or advice from	19	MR BEER: You tell us that in being selective the third
20	a professional services organisation, and we felt that	20	line of paragraph 8, of themes and evidence you:
21	that consensus was sufficiently strong for us to rely	21	" appreciate there may be additional or
22	upon it.	22	alternative constructions based on the body of evidence
23	MR BEER: Thank you. You tell us in paragraph 6 that in	23	before the Inquiry which we have not considered."
24	preparing this second report you drew on your reading of	24	Can you explain what lay behind that evidence?
25	your selection of the evidence, including excerpts from 17	25	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> The vast body of material before the Inquiry 18
1	was such that we made selection but there may be people who think, "Well, they should have looked at this", or,	1 2	MR BEER: Then if we go back to page 8, please. You say in paragraph 13 that:
3	"They should have looked at that", which we didn't do.	3	" the Overview, provides a thematic summary of
4	MR BEER: So you're telling us that, even in the case of the	4	[your] observations on [the Post Office's] Board
5	case studies, the examination of the material has not	5	Governance and Executive Management and
6	been exhaustive, ie looking at every document?	6	Organisation, which are based largely on the description
7	DAME SANDRA: We cannot know.	7	and analysis of the three selected case studies,
8	MR BEER: Can we turn, please, to pages 8 and 9. This sets	8	informed by a wider reading of a selection of evidence
9	out the scheme of your report. Is this a fair summary	9	before the Inquiry."
10	if we look at page 9 first. You looked at three case	10	Then you identify your themes. If we just scroll
11	studies: the Wolstenholme case in 1994; the	11	down, are they split between themes that relate to,
12	consideration of the Second Sight Interim Report by the	12	essentially, governance by the Board and then themes
13	Post Office Board in 2013; and the handling of Simon	13	that relate to the executive, for its part?
14	Clarke's Advice, or one of them, by the Post Office	14	DAME SANDRA: That's correct.
15	Executive in 2013?	15	MR BEER: So the first six relate to the Board and then, if
16	DAME SANDRA: Indeed.	16	we scroll down, please, the remaining three relate to
17	MR BEER: Those are the three case studies. Can you help	17	the Executive?
18	us: why did you pick those three case studies?	18	DAME SANDRA: That's correct.
19	DAME SANDRA: We reviewed in general the material that we	19	MR BEER: So just pausing there: approaches three case
20	had before us. We considered the our instructions,	20	studies across time. We've seen one in 2024 and two in 2013.
21	and we thought, as illustrations, those case studies	21	
22	were ones that we would wish to go into some depth with.	22	DAME SANDRA: Yes.
23	At the beginning of our work, we were more optimistic	23	MR BEER: Using those as your evidential base, you've
24	and we thought there may be indeed other case studies,	24	identified or isolated nine themes
25	but we did we were only able to do three. 19	25	DAME SANDRA: Correct.
	• •		

1	MR BEER: six which relate to board level governance and	1	of course, is a series of processes, structures, systems
2	three of which relate to management and organisation by	2	and rules, underpinned by behaviour and culture. And,
3	the executive?	3	therefore, where the failure exactly occurs in that
4	DAME SANDRA: Indeed, correct.	4	overall network of structures, systems, processes,
5	MR BEER: While there are no case studies picked up by you	5	behaviour and control, we hope we've indicated. But
6	between 2004 and 2013, that does not mean that there are	6	failures of governance could be many things.
7	no questions of governance arising for you; is that	7	MR BEER: What does "failure", "governance failure" or
8	right?	8	"failure of governance" mean?
9	DAME SANDRA: Neither before 2004 nor between 2004 and 2013,	9	DAME SANDRA: When one is concerned with the governance of
10	nor subsequent to 2013.	10	organisations, you're concerned with the structure,
11	MR BEER: So we shouldn't take from that that there are no	11	systems, processes, behaviour and culture which will
12	questions of governance arising which the Inquiry	12	secure the governance and management of the organisation
13	therefore shouldn't look at? The Inquiry should look at	13	in the best interests of that organisation and,
14	those by reference to the firstly, the principles	14	therefore, if one identifies a failure, it is that it
15	that are derived from your first report but, secondly,	15	does not appear to be, to us, to be in the best
16	from your analysis of the three case studies and the	16	interests of that organisation to pursue its purposes.
17	themes in your second report?	17	MR BEER: And also a failure to meet the reasonably expected
18	DAME SANDRA: That is exactly the case.	18	standards of good governance identified in Report 1?
19	MR BEER: Thank you. That can come down.	19	DAME SANDRA: And that was the basis on which I made my
20	Throughout this second report, you identify actions	20	prior comment.
21	on the part of the Executive, the Chief Executive, the	21	MR BEER: So where, in each case in Report 2, a failure is
22	Chair and the Board, which amount in your view to	22	identified by you and Dr Steward, that would have been
23	a failure of governance?	23	a failure according to the standards in play at the
24	DAME SANDRA: We'd identified a number of things which we	24	time?
25	believe are indeed a failure of governance. Governance, 21	25	DAME SANDRA: Indeed, in our belief. 22
1	MR BEER: So to take an example, if there were facts on	1	could be a failure to adhere to reasonably accepted
2	which it might reasonably be concluded that the Chief	2	standards in a Corporate Governance Code?
3	Executive or the Chair or members of the Executive had	3	DAME SANDRA: Indeed

4 critical information about risk that was not provided to 5 the Board, you could break down by reference to the law, the policy or the guidance identified in Report 1 how 6 7 that would, in fact, be a governance failure? 8 DAME SANDRA: Indeed. 9 MR BEER: I think it's right to say you don't do that on 10 every occasion --

DAME SANDRA: We don't. 11 MR BEER: -- because you've already identified in Report 1 12

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what the relevant standards are?

14 DAME SANDRA: Indeed.

MR BEER: So where we read "failure of governance", 15

"governance failure" or "failure", that's to be taken as

17 a reference back to the standards in Report 1?

**DAME SANDRA:** It does, absolutely. 18

MR BEER: So in the scenario I've just described, the 19

failure to provide relevant information about risk by

a member of ExCo or the CEO to the Board, there could be

22 a possible breach of Directors' duties in the Companies

23 Act?

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24 DAME SANDRA: It could be.

MR BEER: It could be a breach of duties of common law or it 25 23

4 MR BEER: It might indicate a possible failure in the 5 relationship between one of the individuals and the

Board? 6

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7 DAME SANDRA: Indeed.

8 MR BEER: Can we turn, please, to Report 1, then. I want to 9

try to deal with this briefly if we can, and start by

looking at paragraph 1.2 on page 8. 10

DAME SANDRA: 1.2? 11

12 MR BEER: On page 8. So just to remember, Report 1 has

eight topics and this is topic 1: Governance, Principles

14 and Codes. We see that from the top of the page. It

15 might be helpful if you just -- this chapter runs for,

I think, 12 or 13 pages up to page 20. Could you, in

17 a paragraph or two, describe sort of the purpose or

18 coverage of this chapter?

DAME SANDRA: We were eager to lay out the historical 19

20 context and how that had then developed into codes of

21 practice. We identify that, in a way, the roots of

22 governance were around protecting the rights of

23 shareholders, which became very important when you got

24 a split between ownership and control, and the question

25 was: how were the executive, who no longer owned the

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1 business, going to be held to account and who was going 2 to hold them to account? And that led to the formation 3 of boards and, in time, particularly in relation to the 4 development of the contemporary governance, the work 5 that followed the Cadbury Committee, which then 6 became -- that was in 1992, and then together with Greenbury in '95 and Hampel in '98 became enshrined in 7 8 the Combined Code on Corporate Governance, which really 9 is the first time that these matters have been brought 10 together, which dealt with the need to separate the 11 Chief Executive and the Chair and which identified 12 roles, specific roles, for Non-Executive Directors. 13

In the subsequent 25 years, that Combined Code, from 2010, understood as the UK Corporate Governance Code, has increasingly identified areas beyond roles and responsibilities dealing, for example, with audit; dealing with risk; dealing with the need to disclose certain matters with relation to conflicts of interest; and then latterly, matters to do with diversity, equality and inclusion, and other societal aspects.

What can be seen, I believe, from Annex A is that this is an evolving story and I'm mindful that the Inquiry is dealing with 20 years of that evolving story, and we've tried to be careful to look at what would have been contemporarily expected at the time.

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MR BEER: In what sense was it combined?DAME SANDRA: I've often wondered that. It was combined in

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the sense that it amalgamated these different reports from different committees and these different expectations of governance, and that word "combined" is just asserted.

MR BEER: Thank you. If we go over the page to page 9, you tell us that that code in 1.2.4, through its principles and provisions, gives a well established base set of regulations and guidance on the two things that you mention there:

"The structure and operation of Boards of Directors, including roles and responsibilities of Chairs and Chief Executives; and

"Roles and responsibilities of Shareholders (particularly institutional shareholders, with relatively large shareholdings)."

So is the point you're making there that this code, across the entirety of the period that we're looking at, was an easy-to-find instrument which set out detailed and a well-established base of guidance?

DAME SANDRA: I am afraid I didn't hear the word you said
 before "set out something" --

24 MR BEER: Detailed and well established set of guidance on25 the two things that you mentioned?

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MR BEER: Thank you. If we just scroll down on this page, just some terminology. You tell us in 1.2.1 that UK practice is to have a unitary board of executive and non-executive directors. That is opposed to what?

DAME SANDRA: That is opposed particularly, if one looks to organisations in Continental Europe, where there is often a two-tier board: the overseeing board, which will

have a representative of a larger number of

for running the business.

In the UK, the custom has been for the executives and the non-executives to sit together and it's normal that the Chief Executive and often the Chief Finance Director or Finance Director will sit as board members, as well as having their executive responsibility and, in that sense, it's called a unitary board.

stakeholders; and executive board, which is responsible

that sense, it's called a unitary board.

MR BEER: Thank you. In 1.2.3 at the foot of the page, you
tell us what you have just mentioned about Cadbury,
Greenbury, and the Hampel Committees becoming enshrined
in the Combined Code, which you told us was called the
Combined Code, up until 2010 --

22 DAME SANDRA: Correct.

23 MR BEER: -- after which time it was known as the UK
 24 Governance Code or the Code of Governance.

25 **DAME SANDRA**: Yeah.

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1 DAME SANDRA: Indeed. That's correct.

MR BEER: So the point, is this right, that you're making,
 is that one doesn't have to search very far? It's not
 a voyage of discovery to find out what corporate
 governance standards and principles were in this period?
 DAME SANDRA: No, absolutely not and I think the coming of
 Cadbury was really a very momentous period for UK

governance and, as we've seen in relation to Appendix A,
Government itself looked back and looked at commercial
organisations and said, "Ah, these standards, they
should indeed apply as best as they can to those
organisations". Charities similarly looked at them and
thought they should apply, and other private

organisations began to think, "Oh, these criteria, these recommendations, these principles, are basic and sound, and we should apply them".

to and we should apply them

17 MR BEER: In terms of the duties to comply, you tell us inparagraph 1.25 that:

"Boards in their ... annual reports have either to
'[complain] or explain' why, in their
'special/individual circumstances', the Code's
requirements are not in their view appropriate or

23 advisable in the circumstances."

24 **DAME SANDRA:** They may indeed "complain" but they are

25 required to "comply or explain". And so if, for

1	example, it says the chair and the chief executive	1	frequently asserted, when looking at different public
2	should have separate should be separated, no one man	2	bodies, that the expectation was that, insofar as was
3	or woman should hold them both, there were some	3	appropriate for their circumstances, these codes and
4	organisations where it was felt by the board that it was	4	principles should apply.
5	appropriate in their circumstances that they should be	5	MR BEER: Thank you. Can we look at the foot of the page
6	combined, in which case, in their annual report, they	6	please, which, I think, is the point you have just
7	would have to explain why it was in their particular	7	mentioned. You say in 1.4.1:
8	circumstances they were not complying.	8	"The government has drawn on corporate governance
9	MR BEER: Thank you. Can we go over to page 10, please, and	9	for publicly listed companies to provide a framework for
10	look at paragraph 1.3.1. You say that:	10	how the governance of an array of public bodies should
11	"It has become increasingly accepted that Corporate	11	be governed."
12	Governance codes for commercial companies offer guidance	12	Then I think you quote from the Treasury publication
13	to other forms of ownership, notably"	13	that we looked at in Appendix A:
14	Then (c), which concerns us:	14	"Good corporate governance is fundamental to any
15	"Publicly owned assets, where the owner is the	15	effective and well managed organisation and is the
16	national government (or local authority) and a major	16	hallmark of an entity that is run accountably and with
17	element of funding comes from the taxpayer, sometimes in	17	the long-term interest clearly in mind."
18	combination with revenue from commercial activity. The	18	Is that right: that's one of the pronouncements that
19	governance of such publicly owned companies is central	19	you rely on to support the assertion that our Government
20	to our instructions."	20	has suggested compliance with the corporate governance
21	So is the point that you're making there that, what	21	codes for companies in public ownership?
22	we read in the Combined Code and then the UK governance	22	DAME SANDRA: That is correct.
23	codes, should be something which is applied to a company	23	MR BEER: Thank you. Can we go forward, please, to page 15
24	which has publicly-owned assets?	24	You start off here dealing with what you describe in the
25	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> That is indeed the case, and Government 29	25	cross-heading above, 1.6.2, with "Four Levels of 30
1	Accountability".	1	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> They are our design for this problem.
2	DAME SANDRA: Yes.	2	MR BEER: Okay. If you then just talk us through. Level 1,
3	<b>MR BEER:</b> I find this a little complicating (sic). Can you	3	POB, the Post Office Business. Here you start appealing
4	explain: firstly, the four levels of accountability, are	4	to lawyers by using these acronyms. But the Post Office
5	they levels that you have designed or thought of	5	Business, just explain what that level is, please?
6	DAME SANDRA: Yes.	6	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> That is the level which is running the Post
7	MR BEER: in connection with the Post Office?	7	Office Business, including, for example, the
8	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> They are our invention of trying to make sense	8	subpostmasters network and matters connected with
9	of who is accountable to whom at different stages of the	9	Horizon. They had okay.
10	period, the relevant period. And that's why, in	10	MR BEER: Then if we scroll down, please, to 1.6.4, the
11	Appendix B, we identify each of the levels. So I'll	11	second level of accountability. OPOD, the intermediate
12	explain each of the levels. The first level is who was	12	ownership of Post Office Business. Can you summarise
13	accountable for running the Post Office business,	13	that for us, please?
14	which	14	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> This the level above the Post Office Business
15	MR BEER: Sorry to speak across you there, Dame Sandra, I'm	15	so, very initially, the Post Office Authority, and then
16	going to come to Appendix B in a moment.	16	in that period when the Post Office was owned was
17	DAME SANDRA: Right.	17	a subsidiary of variously called Royal Mail Holdings and
18	MR BEER: I just want to work out, at the moment	18	other holding companies, this was that intermediately
19	DAME SANDRA: Okay.	19	ownership level, so it was the ownership of the Post
20	MR BEER: what these levels of accountability are. So,	20	Office Business.
21	firstly, they're not a concept from corporate	21	MR BEER: Thank you. Then level 3, AGS, Active Governmen
22	governance, academic research that everyone in the	22	Shareholder. Can you briefly summarise this for us?
23	corporate governance world would know, "Ah, the four	23	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> Yes, that is where the Government, as
24	levels of accountability"; they're your design for this	24	shareholder, identified its role and required some

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problem?

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accountability from both the Post Office Business and

	The Fost Office	11011201111	iniquity 12 November 202-
1	the intermediate currently of the Poet Office to that	1	DAME SANDRA: Indeed.
1	the intermediate ownership of the Post Office to that shareholder.	1 2	MR BEER: Then if we scroll down, please, and over the page.
3	MR BEER: Thank you. Then over the page, level 4: the	3	Then in (b) at the top of the page, "Level 2 and its
4	Government, the fourth level, if you can briefly explain	4	relationship with Level 4", that's because there was no
5	that for us?	5	level 3 at that stage?
6	DAME SANDRA: Ministers and senior civil servants in the	6	DAME SANDRA: Indeed.
7	relevant sponsoring Department on whose behalf investors	7	MR BEER: Then Phase 2, again, you're essentially applying
8	were providing oversight.	8	these two dimensions/levels, across time.
9	MR BEER: Thank you very much.	9	DAME SANDRA: Indeed.
10	Then the next part of your report deals with what	10	MR BEER: Tell us in 1.6.9(a) what level 1 and its
11	you describe as three phases in accountability. So this	11	relationship to level 2 was in this 11 or 12-year period
12	is essentially a chronological account	12	and in (b) the relationship of levels 1 and 2 to 4, and
	DAME SANDRA: Yes.	13	the relationship of levels 1 and 2 to 3.
13		14	DAME SANDRA: Indeed.
14	MR BEER: across time, between 1999, right up until 2019,	• •	
15 16	which is your relevant 20-year period. So if I can	15 16	MR BEER: Then over the page, please. The last phase, the
	understand what's going on here, is it right to say that	17	six or seven-year period between 2013 and 2019, in (a) you tell us about level 1's relationship to 2, the
17	you then looked chronologically at how the four levels	18	relationship of 1 and 2 to 3 in (b), and then, over the
18	of accountability applied across time and split that	19	page and scroll down, please, level 3's relationship to
19	broadly into three periods, three phases?	20	level 4?
20	DAME SANDRA: That's correct, and the periodicity was our		
21	construction again.	21	DAME SANDRA: Indeed.
22	MR BEER: Thank you. So Phase 1 is between 1999 and 2001.	22	MR BEER: So what you were trying to do, is this right, is
23	What you do is then you narrate for us in 1.6.8(a) what	23	bring some sense to a changing picture of corporate
24	level 1 was and its relationship to level 2, taking us	24	structures with either more or less intermediate levels
25	back to your concepts. 33	25	between level 1 and level 4 across time? 34
1	DAME SANDRA: That's exactly correct.	1	across time from the year 2000 on that page, 2001 into
2	MR BEER: Is that represented in more detail in Annex B of	2	Phase 2, the second period, from the following page, and
3	your report, starting at page 112?	3	so on.
4	DAME SANDRA: That was our intention.	4	DAME SANDRA: That's correct.
5	MR BEER: If we turn that up please, page 112. So, rather	5	MR BEER: So this is a two-dimensional representation in
6	than setting out essentially in narrative format, which	6	tabular format of the concepts that you have isolated,
7	is what you did in the body of the report, the phases	7	ie what is the overall corporate structure at four
8	and the levels, this seeks to combine the pair of them	8	levels, and how did it change across time?
9	in a table; is that right?	9	DAME SANDRA: That's correct.
10	DAME SANDRA: That is correct.	10	MR BEER: Thank you very much.
11	MR BEER: This is for real aficionados, if we look, for	11	Was there any relevance or significance to these
12	example, in Phase 1, 1999 to 2000, we can see in 1999	12	what might be described as shifting sands of corporate
13	the existence of levels 1, 2 and 4, but not level 3, as	13	identity across time?
14	you've just described. You have described the nature of	14	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> The relevance for us was that the essential
15	the entity at levels 1, 2 and 4, as respectively Post	15	part of governance is accountability: to whom am
16	Office Counters Limited, and you've put the company's	16	I accountable for what? And therefore, it was very
17	number, it's how it was incorporated and the fact that	17	important to understand that accountability in overall
18	it was a subsidiary of the Post Office Authority, which	18	terms that was based on the corporate structure.

was a statutory corporation. You tell us in about the fifth column along, a statutory corporation with power to issue directions to the Post Office. The sponsoring

MR BEER: Thank you. Well, that's very valuable work, if 19 I may say so, and will be of use to the Inquiry in due 20

21 course. I am not going to go through the many pages of

22 the table because we've got --

23 DAME SANDRA: Thank you.

24 MR BEER: Can we go back to page 20 in the body of the

25 report, at 1.6.11, at the top of the page there, you 36

MR BEER: If we just scroll down we see you track that 35

DAME SANDRA: That's correct.

DTI, and the Secretary of State was Stephen Byers.

Department was the Department of Trade and Industry, the

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1	summarise this exercise by saying:	1	your first report, that starts at page 21. This chapter
2	"In conclusion, based on the guidance (Annex A)	2	runs from pages 21 to 35 of the first report. It's
3	[which we've looked at in summary to see how it works],	3	under the heading of "Accountability"; can you describe
4	and the information available to the authors as	4	for us in a paragraph or two the purpose and coverage of
5	summarised in Annex B [which we've looked at in	5	this chapter of your report?
6	summary], from 2001, one would expect governance	6	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> Accountability is at the heart of governance.
7	structures in [levels 1 and 2] to be modelled on the	7	It explains to whom am I accountable for what?
8	corporate governance of commercial companies with [a]	8	Governance is about relationships and responsibilities.
9	fully functioning executive and (where applicable) board	9	So if I am responsible for doing A, who is going to see
10	structures including NEDs, board committees etc, whilst	10	that I exercised that responsibility; to whom am
11	also paying regard to aspects derived from their public	11	I accountable for doing that?
12	ownership by government."	12	Accountability is formal obligation: it can be
13	DAME SANDRA: That's correct.	13	specified in job descriptions, it can be specified
14	MR BEER: Thank you very much.	14	indeed in the codes of governance. But it's also
15	Sir, we've been going for 1 hour and 15 now, even	15	informal expectation. Since those to whom I am
16	despite the break. Might we take the morning break now	16	accountable or who are accountable to me will be
17	until 11.30?	17	understand their accountability by the way in which our
18	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, certainly.	18	relationship develops.
19	MR BEER: Thank you very much.	19	There is also a voluntary choice exercise which is
20	(11.15 am)	20	that one may emphasise one's accountability, for
21	(A short break)	21	example, to the sense of public interest, or one might
22	(11.30 am)	22	emphasise one's accountability for ensuring the
23	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Just give them a second or two.	23	corporate success of the organisation, which is beyond
24	MR BEER: Will do, sir.	24	the formal obligation. And the importance of accepting
25	Can I turn, Dame Sandra, Dr Steward, to Chapter 2 of 37	25	responsibility and understanding that one has to account 38
1	for one's actions to a third party is a fundamental	1	example, because they wouldn't necessarily be on the
2	aspect of accountability.	2	board but if they were, as an executive director, this
3	MR BEER: Thank you. Then from paragraph 2.2 onwards, that	3	would be their duties and accountability.
4	big bold heading "Board Accountabilities Arising from	4	MR BEER: Does it follow that, in the pages we've just
5	the Corporate Code", do you set out, right up until	5	looked at, that is essentially not you speaking, ie the
6	page 30, the elements of a corporation arising from the	6	pair of you speaking: this is you explaining the
7	corporate code and describing the accountability	7	elements of the Corporate Code speaking?
8	responsibilities of each of them?	8	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> This is indeed that basis. We haven't
9	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> Indeed we do and so we begin there with the	9	invented these.
10	board as a whole.	10	MR BEER: No, exactly. So these are references to the
11	MR BEER: Then if we go over the page, please, at the foot	11	accountabilities of each of the organisations or things,
12	of the page 22, you deal with board committees.	12	or individuals by reference to an instrument, which the
13	DAME SANDRA: Indeed.	13	Post Office ought to have abided by or explained why
14	<b>MR BEER:</b> Then if we go on to page 24, you address the	14	not.
15	accountabilities of and to a chair of a board.	15	DAME SANDRA: Yes.
16	DAME SANDRA: Correct.	16	MR BEER: Just one question on the detail of what you have
17	<b>MR BEER:</b> Then page 27, non-executive directors.	17	narrated there then, page 27, under the heading
18	DAME SANDRA: Correct.	18	"Non-Executive Directors", and you divide into (a) and
19	MR BEER: Over the page, SIDs or senior independent	19	(b) two groups of NEDs
20	directors, then halfway down the page the chief	20	DAME SANDRA: Yes.
21	executive and then to page 29, other executive board	21	MR BEER: what you describe as INEDs and NINEDs.
22	members, the chief finance officer, et cetera, and then	22	DAME SANDRA: Yes.
23	at the foot of the page, the company secretary.	23	MR BEER: I think this is a distinction we may not have come
24	DAME SANDRA: That's correct. And with regard to the other	24	across in the Inquiry, can you explain please between
25	executive board members, it particularly says, for	25	INEDs and NINEDs, in simple terms, if you could?

**DAME SANDRA:** Yes, INEDs are independent non-executive directors. They are appointed for the purposes of the fact that they are independent and they will bring that independent perspective as well as their specialist relevant expertise to the board.

Some non-executive directors, that is they are not executives responsible for running the company, are not in fact independent NEDs, INEDs, they are NINEDs, that is they're non-independent non-executive directors, and non-independent non-executive directors have already got some link to the company or the corporation. They can be nominated by the shareholders because they've got a special relationship with the shareholders. And, in the case before the Inquiry, there are examples of the shareholder appointing non-executive directors, and they would be NINEDs, or they may have had a previous executive position in the organisation and they move from an executive position to a non-executive position but they're not independent because they're utterly steeped in the company.

They may, indeed, have been responsible for developing various aspects of its strategy or operation, so they cannot be seen to be independent but they are thought by the board of those companies to have such special expertise that they wish to retain them as

1 a difference.

**MR BEER:** Do they fall to be treated any differently by the balance of the board?

DAME SANDRA: The way any board operates is very much open to the interpretation within the bounds of the guidance by the chair and the board collectively. In my personal experience, occasionally there will be matters where it is thought that their particular shareholder interest may make it inappropriate for them to continue with the discussion, and they may feel a conflict or their particular position requires them to absent themselves or they may indeed be asked to absent themselves.

In my experience, that's comparatively rare, but the very fact that they have a particular relationship with the shareholder may mean that there are times when they are not party to certain board discussions. Apart from that, they are fully members of the board.

MR BEER: Thank you. Can we go on, please, after checking that point of detail, to page 30. This is the next big heading in the report, concerning "The Role of the Shareholder". Then if we look over the page to paragraph 2.4, "The Role of the Executive", and then over the page to paragraph 2.5, "Strategy".

Can I just check the status of those big paragraphs. That's essentially the pair of you speaking; is that

1 a non-executive director.

MR BEER: So within that subcategorisation of NINEDs we're
 concerned with the first of them --

4 DAME SANDRA: We are.

MR BEER: -- as you've explained, namely nomination by
 shareholders, in this case the shareholder, the
 Government. Did that nomination occur both when ShEx
 and then UKGI were the level 3 intermediary?

9 DAME SANDRA: That is correct.

MR BEER: Are there any different duties that apply to
 a non-independent NED as opposed to an independent NED.

DAME SANDRA: All directors of the board are governed by
 their individual and collective responsibility as
 directors and they share that responsibility as

directors.

Ordinary, one might say, non-executive directors are there for the reasons given above. Non-independent non-executive directors are there for the reason of being a director, but also to keep the shareholder regularly informed about matters of concern, to keep the shareholder in touch with what's going on with the business, to consult with the shareholder on major decisions, and to ensure a two-way channel of communication between the board and the shareholder.

They also bring their specialist expertise. So there is

right?

DAME SANDRA: With regard to the role of the shareholder and
 the role of the executive, is that the question?

**MR BEER:** Yes, and strategy, as opposed to being drawn from codes?

DAME SANDRA: Well, the role of shareholder is implicit in the whole of Corporate Governance Codes and one would say that's not entirely us speaking because the role of the shareholder is a driver, as we say, a quiet driver, of governance to hold the company to account for what they're doing with their asset. Hence, the reasons that one has annual reports, one has annual general meetings, and so on, in order to see -- allow the shareholder to question.

I think that in the mind, for example, of Adrian Cadbury, going back to the beginning, there was a feeling that shareholders should be more active in holding companies to account and so, in many of the codes and their revisions, the role of the shareholder is identified as an area of expectation. So the role of the shareholder is both our view, plus informed by the way the codes have developed.

way the codes have developed.MR BEER: Thank you. Can we move o

**MR BEER:** Thank you. Can we move on from Chapter 2 to Chapter 3, which starts at page 36. This addresses monitoring and audit. Again, can you help us, please,

by summarising the purpose and coverage of this chapter. 2 DAME SANDRA: Throughout the development of corporate governance it's been understood that the way information is sought about what is going on in the company means that there should be appropriate means of auditing and 6 monitoring that activity. And executives are required to and expected to monitor and report on finance flows 8 in and out of the company, including verifiable data to 9 show such things as tax liabilities and payments, 10 turnover, expenses of profit, so expected to show what they're doing with the finances. 11

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Executives need to be held to account and these are the processes by which executives are held to account for the using of the assets. It then developed in terms of requirements for boards and executives to assess risks to the company and risk -- specific relations to risk arose out of audit and then, as it were, assumed a role of its own.

19 MR BEER: Thank you I've got no more questions on Chapter 3, 20 can we move to Chapter 4 please, page 47, where you 21 address the topic of risk and, again, can you help us by 22 summarising the purpose and coverage of that chapter, 23 which runs up to page 54.

24 DAME SANDRA: Well, as we indicate there risk is a necessary 25 part of executive and responsibilities. Historically,

therefore, it would have been wise to pay regard to what

the financial services authority was actually saying about risk but, beyond that, the FSA became a leader for

4 identifying risk, which then was taken into the 5

Corporate Governance Code and the FRC, the Financial

Reporting Council, then took up some of those ideas. So

7 this is relevant both in terms of it being a leader, in

terms of it identifying risk but also bearing in mind

that the Post Office itself was in financial services.

9 MR BEER: Thank you very much. Can we move to Chapter 5 10

please, page 55, "Governance and Management of 12 Technically Complex Major Projects".

> I think you explain here, in 5.1.2, that you classified the introduction of rollout of the Horizon computer system as such a project?

DAME SANDRA: Indeed. 16

17 MR BEER: Can you again help us with a broad description of 18 the purpose and coverage of this section of your report,

19 Chapter 5?

20 DAME SANDRA: We first of all felt that it would be wise to

identify three characteristics of major project

22 management: uncertainty, complexity and scale, which can

23 be found in relation to nearly all such projects, and

24 that, inevitably, there are tensions and trade-offs

25 which need to be made and one can think simply in terms 47

1 it was really designated as something specifically

2 identifiable because it was simply seen as a key part of

3 running the business. One couldn't run the business

4 without awareness of risk. What has happened in

5 corporate governance is that the requirement for

6 executives and the board to look very carefully at the

7 identification of risks to their business, and the way

8 in which, once identified, those risks are monitored,

9 evaluated and proposals for their mitigation has become

10 an essential part of both governance and management.

11 MR BEER: Thank you, just one question arising from

12 Chapter 4, if we can go to page 48, please, at the foot

13 of the page. The text there in 4.2.9 and 4.2.10 seems

14 to arise from an FSA statement of 2003, FSA being the

15 Financial Services Authority.

16 DAME SANDRA: Yes, yes.

17 MR BEER: I think that was an agency that regulated

financial services in the UK between 2001 and 2013. 18

19 DAME SANDRA: Yes.

20 MR BEER: It then was split and part of it became the

Financial Conduct Authority, the FCA. To what extent

22 should a company like the Post Office from, 2003

onwards, have regard to statements like these emanating

24 from the FSA?

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**DAME SANDRA:** Post Office handled financial services and,

of three groups: time, cost and quality, or delivery.

And it is, in our experience, the case that there are always these trade-offs because there's never enough resource, there's never enough time, and you always want a better quality than you're going to get. So that's

an inherent part of, as it were, their management.

7 Another part of their management is the use of 8 third-party suppliers, both in assurance and in 9 provision, and we thought that was relevant. We then go 10 into the role of the Executive and the role of the Board

11 in relation to what we see as critical aspects to be 12 expected of their management.

13 MR BEER: You divide that up essentially into what you

14 describe as pre-go ahead --

15 DAME SANDRA: Yes.

MR BEER: -- and then part of go ahead. 16

17 DAME SANDRA: Yes.

MR BEER: Then, once the project is under way? 18

DAME SANDRA: Indeed. 19

20 MR BEER: Thank you. Can we turn to Chapter 6, please,

21 which is page 63, this relates to "Governance and

22 Management of Whistleblowing". Although I've no

23 questions about this, can you explain why you included

24 a chapter concerning the governance and management of

25 whistleblowing?

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(12) Pages 45 - 48

DAME SANDRA: It's become a fundamentally important part of 1 2 governance that boards should make sure that they are 3 enabling people who wish to speak up, to speak up without fear of discrimination and to speak up in ways 4 5 that will be honest and transparent. And this has been 6 something which has been significantly developed in 7 terms of board responsibilities. And we felt that it 8 was appropriate to look at both the role of the 9 executive and the role of the board in relation to 10 whistleblowing, as it is called. 11

We relate that also to the behaviour and cultural requirements for effective whistleblowing. This is, for example, how one handles the communication, how one looks at the lived experience of whistleblowers and whether they do in fact enable assumptions about what is accepted to be challenged.

17 MR BEER: Thank you. Can we turn to Chapter 7, Stakeholder18 Management.

SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Before we do, just as a citizen, the word
 "whistleblowing" has come to my notice more recently,

shall we say, than, say, the year 2000.

22 DAME SANDRA: Oh, indeed, and I think --

23 SIR WYN WILLIAMS: So in the period we're talking about, has

the whole -- how can I put it? The concept of

25 whistleblowing seems to me, as a citizen, to have been

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- 1 Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 amended the
- 2 Employment Rights Act 1996, and we can see that from
- 3 page 93 of your report. Just scroll down, under
- 4 identical sections in 1.0 and 2.0 that, in '98, the 1998
- 5 Act, introduced a law had protected what you've
- 6 described as whistleblowers -- it doesn't use those
- 7 words in the Act itself -- from negative treatment or
- 8 unfair dismissal.

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- 9 DAME SANDRA: Yes, correct.
- 10 MR BEER: So the protection was there from at least before
- 11 the relevant period --
- 12 DAME SANDRA: Yeah.
- 13 MR BEER: -- that we're considering.
- 14 DAME SANDRA: Correct.
- 15 MR BEER: But the nomenclature may have changed.
- 16 **DAME SANDRA:** The nomenclature has changed and also the very
- 17 specific requirements, for example, on boards to have
- 18 a whistleblowing champion, which does come later.
- 19 MR BEER: Thank you. If we go back, please, to where we
- were, which is Chapter 7 we were about to turn to, which
- 21 is page 70. In this chapter you deal with what's
- 22 described as "Stakeholder Management", which again may
- be a word or words that didn't exist in the late 1990s.
- 24 Can you describe the purpose and coverage of this part
- 25 of your report, please?

1 developing over this period, can I put it in that way,

2 so that those responsible in 2000 might not have the

3 same perception of those responsible now; is that

4 reasonable?

DAME SANDRA: Sir Wyn, that is exactly the case. As is the
 case for quite a number of things that we are looking

at. The concept of speaking up, and the arrangements
 for ensuring that those who wish to speak up can do so

9 freely, has been very significantly developed over this

10 time.

11 SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Fine. Thank you.

12 MR BEER: Albeit, I think, if you look at the foot of

page 63, you note in paragraph 6.2.2 that the concept of

14 whistleblowing, even though it might not have been

15 called that, was embedded from at least the mid-1990s in

16 the Employment Rights Act 1996.

17 **DAME SANDRA:** Yes, and I'm very grateful to you for pointing

that out because I was thinking in my mind the Public
 Disclosure Act is very important in protecting workers.

20 So workers that the right from that period. The

21 response and what was seen to be the responsibilities by

the executive and the board developed later, one might

23 say. So the right was there; the arrangements were not

24 always in place.

25 **MR BEER:** So, essentially, I think, what happened was the

1 **DAME SANDRA:** Yes, I think "stakeholders" would have been

very well understood in 1999.

3 MR BEER: Okay.

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4 **DAME SANDRA:** These are people, groups of people, who both

5 believe and also in fact they have a stake or interest

in what the organisation does, how it does it, and what

7 it may do in the future.

These may be internal stakeholders, employees, or elected internal representatives, for example in trade unions; or they may be external stakeholders, customers, clients, suppliers, distributors. We give a whole list

And the development of governance, that I think was very clearly there in 1999, is that boards of directors should, if they are interested, as they should be, in serving the best interests of their company, must have an understanding of what these key stakeholder groups are.

Now, what and who is a key stakeholder group would be a matter for the board to decide and, sometimes, their gaze falls perhaps more one stakeholder, rather than another

The one stakeholder that definitely has a direct impact is, of course, the shareholder but we have used this chapter to talk about stakeholders beyond

1	shareholders.	1	communication.
2	MR BEER: I think you identified in addition to the	2	Now, various elements of those are identified in
3	Government and its representatives, as owner, as a key	3	governance codes, for example culture becomes something
4	stakeholder	4	which is very important in governance codes, but we in
5	DAME SANDRA: Yes.	5	this section look at its experience.
6	MR BEER: Fujitsu as a key supplier	6	MR BEER: Thank you. I have got no more questions on
7	DAME SANDRA: Yes.	7	Report 1. Can we turn to Report 2, please.
8	MR BEER: and subpostmasters.	8	You remember the approach that we discussed at the
9	DAME SANDRA: Indeed, and we did that because we felt there	9	beginning of your evidence session, namely you
10	were three stakeholders that were perhaps of particular	10	identified three case studies and, through those case
11	interest to the Inquiry.	11	studies, identified nine themes, and in the first part
12	MR BEER: Thank you. Lastly, Chapter 8, which begins on	12	of this report you addressed the nine themes and then
13	page 77. This runs from pages 77 to 92, and is headed	13	you turn to the case studies. I'm going to invert that
14	"Experiencing Governance and Management". Again, can	14	order, ie consider matters the other way round, by
15	you explain the purpose and coverage of this chapter?	15	looking at the case studies first then looking at the
16	DAME SANDRA: Yes, Chapter 8 is different to Chapters 1 to	16	schemes and then, thirdly, by exploring some very
17	7, which have been constructed around the scaffolding	17	specific topics with you.
18	provided by Annex A, paying particular attention to	18	So can we turn, please, to Case Study 1, that starts
19	Annex B. In section A we take a different perspective	19	at page 42.
20	and we take a different perspective more informed from	20	Out of the pair of you, are either of you more
21	our expertise in organisational behaviour than in the	21	expert or across the detail of any of the three case
22	specific requirements of governance, and this is, well,	22	studies?
23	what is it like to experience governance and management?	23	DAME SANDRA: The way in which we approached these has been
24	And we do there look at authority, power, interest,	24	to work entirely together. We've discussed everything,
25	interest and conflict together, leadership, culture and 53	25	we have come to our conclusions together. With regard 54
1	to the first drafts of Mrs Wolstenholme's case and the	1	down but she pursued the Post Office for £180k."
2	Simon Clarke Advice case, Dr Steward did the first draft	2	DAME SANDRA: Correct.
3	of those, which we then discussed entirely together, and	3	MR BEER: Then paragraphs 155, starting on page 44, right
4	I did the first draft of the second case on Second	4	through to 160 on 45. They set out, do they, your
5	Sight. I think we're happy to proceed under option C,	5	references to some of the underlying material that you
6	which is that you address questions to me but that is	6	have considered in formulating a view on this case?

7 the way in which we have constructed the cases. 8 MR BEER: Thank you very much.

> So can we look at Case Study 1, please. Your analysis runs between page 42, right up until page 54. The way that you deal with each of the case studies is you set out an approach which sometimes involves a description of the facts. You then break down issues, or isolate issues that arise in the case study and then you ask a question at then answer it in a subheading "Conclusion" under each issue. Have I got that right?

DAME SANDRA: Yes. 17

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MR BEER: Thank you. So if we start, please, with paragraph 150 on page 43. There's a very nice, pithy summary in paragraph 150 of the case:

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"... Julie Wolstenholme was a subpostmistress who ran a branch in Cleveleys, Lancashire. The Post Office pursued her for a £25,000 shortfall in the civil courts. During her case, a report by Jason Coyne into her system found Horizon was defective. Her branch had been closed have considered in formulating a view on this case?

7 DAME SANDRA: That is correct.

8 MR BEER: Then if we move to 161 on page 45, we set out your 9 conclusions.

DAME SANDRA: Indeed. 10

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MR BEER: I'm going to take these in some detail in relation 11 12 to each of the cases.

13 You say, in your view the Royal Mail Group General 14 Counsel and the Post Office Chief Executive Officer must 15 have understood from the exchange about 16 Mrs Wolstenholme's case that the Horizon system posed 17 a risk to the validity of subpostmaster branches and 18 therefore the safety of prosecutions on Horizon data, 19 yet they did not act.

> Do I take correctly from that that that you have sought to draw a wider conclusion arising from the facts in Mrs Wolstenholme's case about the impact that it ought to have had on criminal proceedings, even though this was a civil case?

25 DAME SANDRA: That is correct, since the problems identified

1	with Horizon were being used in prosecutions and,	1	should have done anyway."
2	therefore, that understanding should have been seen to	2	DAME SANDRA: That's correct. He should have done it
3	be relevant.	3	anyway, but the very fact that there was this prior
4	MR BEER: In the spectrum of failures or criticisms, how	4	knowledge should have alerted him to bring it into the
5	serious a failure is this?	5	executive discussion.
6	DAME SANDRA: It's a failure to connect what was going on in	6	MR BEER: Over the page, please, to paragraph 163. You say
7	the civil proceedings with read across to prosecutions,	7	that it seemed to the pair of you that ExCo: who were
8	and it was a failure to understand that here was	8	you referring to as ExCo there? Not by name, but by
9	material which suggested that Horizon was not bug free,	9	description.
10	which could impact the use of that Horizon data in both	10	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> No, that is the senior leadership team that
11	civil and prosecution cases. The connections weren't	11	the chief executive or managing director chooses to have
12	made and action wasn't taken. So, in this specific	12	as their most senior team.
13	thing, one would have expected that the connection to	13	MR BEER: "[They] did not pool their piecemeal knowledge of
14	have been made.	14	emergent issues and so opportunities to share and create
15	MR BEER: In 162, you tell us that:	15	a collective understanding of the risks were lost."
16	"The Chief Executive Officer should have talked	16	What risks were you referring to there?
17	immediately to the Chief Operating Officer and the IT	17	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> We were referring to the risk that the use of
18	Director about the concerns brought into sharp focus by	18	Horizon data in civil and prosecution cases posed risks
19	the risk of £1 million that was sitting on the risk	19	for the Post Office Business.
20	register. Had he [that's the CEO] talked to the Chief	20	MR BEER: You tell us in
21	Operating Officer in May [I think that's 2004] about the	21	DAME SANDRA: (To Dr Steward) Do you want to add anything to
22	risk, it's likely that when the Chief Operating Officer	22	that?
23	was asked to sign off the significant settlement to	23	DR STEWARD: No.
24	Mrs Wolstenholme in July 2004, he would have brought	24	MR BEER: You tell us in paragraph 164 that this was not
25	this to the attention of the CEO, something which he	25	escalated to the Post Office Board, according to the
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1	evidence of Sir Michael Hodgkinson but I think it's your	1	Chair or to the Royal Mail Group Chief Executive
2	view that it ought to have been.	2	Officer, and that, so far as you were aware, none of
3	DAME SANDRA: Indeed it is.	3	them were told about the case or its settlement.
4	MR BEER: That was a failure, have I got this right, of the	4	DAME SANDRA: That was our belief.
5	Executive to do so?	5	MR BEER: In 168 you described the questions that might have
6	DAME SANDRA: Yes, to escalate.	6	arisen and, over to 169, you say you've looked at the
7	MR BEER: Yes.	7	board minutes and meetings of the Post Office Limited
8	You tell us in 165 that the independent expert	8	Board.
9	evidence relating to the civil case against	9	DAME SANDRA: Yes.
10	Mrs Wolstenholme, ie Jason Coyne's report, should have	10	MR BEER: " there was always a majority of Executives
11	been brought to the attention of the Chief Operating	11	over Non-Executives. Although there was movement to
12	Officer when asked to approve the settlement, if he	12	a point Independent NEDs they were out numbered by
13	hadn't asked for it, and it should have been discussed	13	Executives and therefore a relatively weak base for
14	at a Board Risk Committee.	14	independent challenge by way of viewing the business."
15	DAME SANDRA: Correct.	15	Is this a linked point or is this is an independent
16	MR BEER: These 'should haves', are they formulated on the	16	point concerning the Wolstenholme case?
17	basis of the reasonably expected principles of good	17	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> I think it's both linked and independent.
18	governance that you've identified in Report 1?	18	It's linked because the lack of scrutiny which we have
19	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> They are, and they are also based, as we have	19	identified, one might have expected to have been greater
20	said, on our experience. But they are based in the	20	if there were more NEDs available. The fact that there
21	expectations that we've laid out in Report 1.	21	weren't NEDs available was not a failure of governance
22	MR BEER: You say that both the £1 million risk on the	22	because they weren't required at the time for this
23	register and Jason Coyne's report should have been	23	subsidiary organisation, which was subsidiary to Royal

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escalated to the Chair, and that, if he had known about

these matters, he should have escalated to the Group

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Mail Holdings. So there wasn't a deficit in governance

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terms that there were no NEDs but there was a practical

of these forum.

1	result of there being few NEDs, that there was less
2	challenge being made. I'm not sure if that answers your
3	question of whether it was linked or separate.
4	MR BEER: It does, thank you.
5	DAME SANDRA: Thank you.
6	MR BEER: In paragraphs 170 and 171, you tell us about what
7	the Post Office Board's focus was at this time.
8	DAME SANDRA: Yes.
9	MR BEER: Do I understand you to say that, in these
10	paragraphs, it was because of the focus that this may
11	have been missed, or you simply don't know?
12	DAME SANDRA: We're pointing out that these matters did
13	not get an airing and we are also pointing out that
14	there was a strong emphasis upon survival, on new
15	products and growth, and that, it seems to us, led other
16	matters which could be seen to be operational as not
17	being the subject of interrogation at the Board.
18	MR BEER: So I think you come to a conclusion at 172 in the
19	first sentence:
20	" if the Chief Executive Officer had acted
21	differently then a collective understanding within the
22	Post Office Executive could have been developed."
23	Then the following things that you identify you
24	think ought reasonably to have followed?
25	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> Indeed. And we also identify that these risks 61

civil cases were taken actually lay formally with Royal Mail Group.

Nonetheless, Post Office understood that they were -- they had some responsibility because it was conducted in their name. But, nonetheless, Royal Mail, as the parent holding company, was the overall group responsible for prosecutions and civil cases, and their General Counsel -- the Post Office didn't have a General Counsel at that time, it was the RMG General Counsel who was, as it were, responsible here.

**MR BEER:** Thank you. Can we turn to your conclusions on this issue, which are on page 50.

You say:

"The way in which Post Office related to RMG added to a situation in which matters concerned with prosecutions went without challenge at the Post Office Board. By the time Sir Michael Hodgkinson, the Chair, left in 2007, ownership for reporting to the Post Office Board on prosecutions was not established and processes for monitoring (Horizon risks, prosecutions policies and practice, whistleblowing, subpostmaster feedback) do not appear to us have been in place.

"The Board of Royal Mail Group paid little attention to Post Office Business operations, even though their group functions, for example, Legal and HR, were  could have been made explicit in a whole different way
of -- a whole variety of ways. It could have been the
one-to-one conversation; it could have been the Board
risk register. It could have been the Risk and
Compliance Committee. It could have been discussed with
the Chair, the truth is that it did not feature in any

**MR BEER:** That's issue 1 under Wolstenholme: what in particular should the CEO have done when receiving the email relating to Mrs Wolstenholme.

You then turn, if you go to page 48, to the second issue you isolate as arising of the Wolstenholme case, namely the relationship between the Post Office as subsidiary and the Royal Mail Group as a parent holding company.

Can you help us: why did you address this issue in relation to the Wolstenholme case?

DAME SANDRA: Because we were making the relationship earlier between what was going on in the civil cases and what was going on in the criminal cases. And the legal function for the Post Office was not independent. It was a centrally held function by Royal Mail Group -- or however it was addressed at that point, I mean in terms of its name. And, therefore, the responsibility for interrogating the way in which prosecutions and indeed

responsible for functional management in some areas of [Post Office].

"The [Post Office] Chair should have been told of the IT risk facing [Post Office] of £1 million. This risk ... should also have been escalated to the RMG Board directly or via the Risk and Audit Committee. The link between Horizon risk and prosecutions is very clear in the Wolstenholme case, even though not a criminal case because of the Coyne review. This link should have been discussed by both the POL Executive and the Board and should have raised enough concerns about the inherent risks in concerning prosecutions based on Horizon data to warrant discussion between the [Post Office] Chair and the Royal Mail Group Board directly or via the Royal Mail Group CEO."

Those are your conclusions on issue 2.

Collectively, how serious a failing are you describing here?

DAME SANDRA: I think it is a failure of accountability because there is no doubt, as far as we can see, that RMG had this overall responsibility and therefore they should have ensured that what was going on in POL enabled that to be -- that responsibility to be secured. It was in a way their choice: they had a central function, they could have said to POL, "Down to you, you

1 make sure that you are monitoring these risks, that 2 you're understanding them, and so on, because we want 3 you as a subsidiary to do that". 4 It seems to us had that was not done. That doesn't 5 excuse the POL Board and Executive from not picking them 6 up, but one might think that they would have thought, 7 "Well, this function doesn't lie with us; it lies up 8 9 So with regard to how serious, it is a serious 10 failure to understand the responsibilities of a holding company, the responsibilities of the subsidiary company 11 12 and, above all, for those two to sort out appropriate 13 arrangements for risk and for monitoring. 14 MR BEER: You mention in that last answer that it doesn't 15 absolve the Post Office Board of responsibility, the 16 failures you described. You turn to that in issue 3. 17 Can we turn to that, it's page 51. 18 This is the third of three issues you identify in 19 the Wolstenholme case. You tell us in paragraph 187: 20 "The Board and Executive should understand their 21 role in creating culture in the business and in the 22 boardroom. This includes challenge, curiosity and 23 looking for 'the bigger picture'." 24 188: 25 "The Board at the time of Mrs Wolstenholme's case

1 that? 2 DR STEWARD: I mean, we heard numerous times during the 3 testimony that people weren't aware that POL -- that RMG 4 did prosecutions. So I think that's the basis of the 5 finding that it was deep in the culture, that POL 6 wasn't, if you like -- had a clear sense of ownership, 7 if you like, over the prosecutions. 8 MR BEER: It was just something that happened? 9 DAME SANDRA: Exactly. **DR STEWARD:** It appears to be something that happened. 10 11 MR BEER: In 194, I'd like you, if you could, to explain the 12 first sentence that "Post Office Executives failed to 13 conceptualise the operational problem of faults in 14 Horizon as a risk factor". 15 What do you mean, "failed to conceptualise"? DAME SANDRA: Well, they didn't imagine it, they didn't 16 17 think about it. They thought they were dealing with 18 a technology system, and were there problems -- as far 19 as we could tell -- and were there problems with that technology system? That relationship to what was going 20 21 on in the routine business of prosecutions defending

public money was not connected.
MR BEER: I see, so meaning they failed properly even to think about it?

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**DAME SANDRA:** Yes, they failed to conceptualise; they failed 67

1 was not a full Board", for reasons you had identified, 2 ie because the absence of a strong non-executive 3 presence. 4 DAME SANDRA: Mm, mm. 5 MR BEER: Then if we go over the page, please, to 193, you 6 set out your conclusions between paragraphs 193 and 196, in relation to the POL Board culture when addressing the 7 8 Wolstenholme case. You say: 9 "There was a lack of focus on prosecutions at the 10 Post Office Board, which was in [your] view a reflection 11 of the embedded [Post Office] culture." 12 Can you tell us what the foundation for that is, 13 please?

14 DAME SANDRA: It is from both transcripts and witness 15 statements that we have read, which talk about the fact 16 that prosecutions was seen as something that the Post 17 Office did. It didn't feature, for example, in the 18 induction to new Board members; it was not -- it was 19 seen to be non-problematic and, indeed, a very important 20 part of the Post Office defending its public duty and 21 its public right to defend Post Office monies, which 22 were the public's monies. So there was an embedded view 23 that it was an accepted part and it appears to us to 24 have been accepted that it was done in a due process. 25 (To Dr Steward): Would you like to add anything to

1 to think about it.

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there were, in the Executive Team, at least four functions who were aware of or could have been aware of the Coyne Report: finance function; the IT, it was on the IT risk register; the operator -- Chief Operating Officer; the Chief Executive. And had, at that point, there been a conversation between those four functional leads about "What do you know about the Coyne Report? What's this telling us? Is this telling us that we have an issue with technology or is this telling us that we have an issue with prosecutions?", then you can see how that conversation would have developed into a broader conceptualisation of the role that POL had in conducting prosecutions and the technology is that -- being at the heart of that.

DR STEWARD: If I might, I mean, the way I see that is that

17 MR BEER: Thank you.

Paragraph 195 you say:

"... it [I think they're the failures you mentioned in the previous paragraphs] was exacerbated by a lack of challenge to the Post Office Executive. The governance of Post Office was in embryonic form ..."

Can you explain what you mean by that and why you say it?

DAME SANDRA: In embryonic form, we mean that there were --

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as we've seen, there was the Non-Executive Chair and there was the first Non-Executive, by this time, appointed, they were getting their feet under the table understanding Post Office Business and they did not challenge what was accepted, taken for granted and they didn't say, "Well, what's the real problem beneath this information we're getting about Horizon? Does it have implications outside the civil context?", because this of course was a civil case, such as for prosecutions.

Now, one might say well how could they do that if they weren't told about it? And that is a recurring theme, we've found, in the cases that we've looked at. Nonetheless, the POL -- the Post Office Chief Executive was a member of the Board the Post Office Chief Executive did have a relationship with the independent, the Non-Executive Chair, and the -- it could have been challenged, and it wasn't.

18 MR BEER: Can I ask you, Dame Sandra, just to move the 19 microphone. As you've moved to the screen, you've moved 20 away from the microphone --

21 DAME SANDRA: Ah, right.

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22 MR BEER: -- and, as you've warmed to your theme, you've 23 sped up a little bit. If you could slow down your answers, we would be grateful. That's my fault for not 24 25 properly controlling your evidence.

1 we see as being germane to the interests of the Inquiry. 2 Many of these matters are individual issues -- not 3 issues, individual events, which, if you add them all 4 up, you would say that's a failure to know something to 5 connect with something that we already know, and for us 6 to take a view on. This is one such matter.

> If it was alone, then the governance system, one could say, was quite robust, but because this, as we will see in relation to other things, this neglect of seeing the risk inherent in prosecutions in relation to Horizon, this is part of what we see to be a general failure

13 MR BEER: You set out your overall conclusions on the 14 Wolstenholme case study in paragraphs 198 to 205. Here, 15 are you essentially drawing the threads together in 16 relation to the Wolstenholme case?

17 **DAME SANDRA:** We are trying to do so.

MR BEER: Thank you. Could you talk us through, then, your 18 19 views when drawing the threads together in the 20 Wolstenholme case?

21 DAME SANDRA: Yes. Firstly, that POL prosecutions, policies 22 and practices didn't have priority for either the RMG or 23 for POL. Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity about 24 if they had looked at it, who was really responsible.

In paragraph 195, you set out some questions at the end of the paragraph, as to questions that might have been asked and you identify in paragraph 196 that, although Royal Mail Group acted as a challenge to the Post Office in some areas, prosecutions was not one of them?

7 DAME SANDRA: Correct.

MR BEER: Looking at this issue, the third issue, the 9 culture of the Board and the failure properly to 10 challenge by the Group, how serious are the series of 11 failings that you identify here?

DAME SANDRA: I'm sorry, can you repeat? 12

13 MR BEER: Yes, looking at paragraphs 193 to 196, in the 14 scheme of things, in the spectrum of seriousness of 15 failings, where does this sit? I realise I'm asking you 16 on every occasion to pitch on a spectrum --

17 DAME SANDRA: Yes.

MR BEER: -- and that's because you don't do so in the 18 19 report.

20 DAME SANDRA: No.

21 MR BEER: That may be because you're unwilling to do so, but 22 I'm asking nonetheless.

23 **DAME SANDRA:** We're willing to help the Inquiry in any way 24 we can. We haven't come here with a sort of measure of 25 failure. What we've done is identified failures which

1 the lack of clarity probably exacerbated this matter, 2 the lack of clarity on who had oversight of 3 prosecutions. 4

The POL Board was largely made up of executives, as we've talked about. There was little independent challenge. It's not unusual for there to be little independent challenge at subsidiary boards because it puts then greater responsibility on the holding company to challenge. But that would have required, if I can elaborate on this, as I said earlier, that would have required there to be a clear agreement about, well, with regard to POL -- Post Office prosecutions, who is really going to monitor and oversee this? And there wasn't that clarity.

The Coyne Report, an independent specialist, was neglected but, what's more, we haven't seen any evidence that there were independent specialists to advise the Post Office Board on key areas of technology and legal. That was especially important because of the lack of independent challenge and advice one might get from non-executives

We then go on in 201, the risk wasn't elevated, as we've already talked about, and it should have been. There was a lack of focus on -- prosecutions on the POL Board and the whole risk system seems to us to have

1	lacked a coherent framework for risk identification,	1	kind of thing?
2	evaluation and escalation, particularly in the	2	DAME SANDRA: Yes.
3	connections that could be made between Horizon and	3	MR BEER: This is particularly in relation to the conduct of
4	prosecutions.	4	prosecutions?
5	MR BEER: Just stopping there on that, the sentence or the	5	DAME SANDRA: Yes, and I guess that relates to the opening
6	part of the sentence which says, "the whole risk system	6	of that sentence: there was a lack of focus at the POL
7	seems to have lacked a coherent framework for risk	7	Board, so lack of focus on prosecutions.
8	identification, evaluation and escalation", that's in	8	MR BEER: Thank you very much, then over the page, please,
9	a sentence, which you've just spoken about. You said in	9	you tell us about a missed opportunity about by both the
10	particular in relation to prosecutions. Does that	10	Executive and the Board in 203.
11	conclusion apply more generally?	11	DAME SANDRA: I think this is exactly the point you were
12	DAME SANDRA: We have looked particularly at the aspect of	12	making earlier. Do you want to add anything to it?
13	prosecutions and Horizon, and we haven't looked at risk	13	DR STEWARD: I think we've made the point that actually
14	identification in relation to other areas. I think	14	there was an initial moment when things could have
15	l'm	15	turned out very differently, perhaps, had the
16	DR STEWARD: Not specifically.	16	conversation happened in the Executive Team, had that
17	DAME SANDRA: Not specifically.	17	then been elevated to the Board, had that then been
18	MR BEER: No, there could be all sorts of other things	18	discussed with the Chair, had the Chair then discussed
19	like	19	it with RMG or the routes through to the RMG, Audit and
20	DAME SANDRA: There could be	20	Risk, used.
21	MR BEER: manual	21	MR BEER: Thank you. Then skipping to paragraph 205, you
22	DAME SANDRA: Insolvency.	22	set out your views on the attribution of responsibility,
23	MR BEER: Insolvency or manual handling by employees	23	and, really, it's a two-pronged conclusion
24	DAME SANDRA: There could have been.	24	DAME SANDRA: Yes.
25	<b>MR BEER:</b> or injury to members of staff on duty, or that 73	25	<b>MR BEER:</b> that it's the responsibility of RMG to identify 74
1	and manage these risks; is that right?	1	page 55. This is a much longer analysis; it runs right
2	DAME SANDRA: Indeed.	2	through until page 108 of your report.
3	MR BEER: Because it was the parent holding company that, in	3	DAME SANDRA: Yes.
4	fact, functionally had carried out the conduct of	4	MR BEER: Can we read, please, paragraphs 212 to 214, on
5	prosecutions?	5	pages 56 and 57, which are essentially a short summary
6	DAME SANDRA: Yes, and had they wanted it to be held at the	6	of the episode. You call it a context of the case but
7	level of the Post Office, that should have that could	7	it is a good primer.
8	have happened and it could have been clear in delegated	8	DAME SANDRA: Yes.
9	duties that that was the case. But that did not, as far	9	MR BEER: "Second Sight was appointed by Post Office in
10	as we know, happen.	10	mid-2012 to carry out a review into the alleged problems
11	MR BEER: Overall, how significant was the relatively early	11	with the Horizon IT system. The Inquiry has heard that
12	episode of the Wolstenholme case being in 2004 to the	12	the appointment was in part a response to increasing
13	issues which you examined?	13	pressure from James Arbuthnot and other MPs, persistent
14	A. I think it was it's significant, in retrospect, as we	14	critical questions from investigative journalists and
15	look at it, because it seems to be that this pattern is	15	ministerial interest. The appointment of Second Sight

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repeated. At the time, I would say it showed, with

regard to prosecutions, that we had an Executive Team

posed in prosecutions, dependent upon Horizon data, and

and a Board that were not paying attention to the risks

that is a neglected risk throughout the story of this is

MR BEER: Thank you. Can we turn to the second case study,

then, please, which is the Second Sight Interim Report

and the consideration of it by the Post Office Board in

July 2013. That starts, thank you very much, on

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17 little Board involvement, apart from that of the Chair.
18 The Inquiry has heard that the terms of reference were
19 subject to several iterations between the parties and
20 'no formal letter of engagement' was ever signed.
21 "Second Sight summarised their appointment as
22 follows", and you set that out.

was handled by the Post Office Executive with very

Then 214:

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"The Board met via conference call on 1 July and
 received their first, very brief account of the work

from the Post Office Chief Executive Officer. They were told of the imminent publication of the Second Sight Report. The report was published on 8 July when it was made available to the Board. The Board received an update paper in the light of the report at their meeting on 16 July."

Were you essentially, therefore, considering the period up until but not after 16 July?

DAME SANDRA: That was our focus. Our focus was very much on the preparation for publication, the publication of Second Sight, and its consideration at that Board. As we'll see, there were a few matters that we felt we should extend our concerns with but, in the main, that was it. It's a case of the Board's handling of the Interim Report of Second Sight, at that time.

Interim Report of Second Sight, at that time.
MR BEER: If we could look at the top of page 56, please.
I think, if we just pan out a little bit on the screen,
to the top half of the page, thank you, we can see that
you isolated nine issues arising from this episode; is
that right?

21 DAME SANDRA: That's correct.

22 MR BEER: They're listed there as issues 1 to 9.

23 DAME SANDRA: That's correct.

MR BEER: What I'd like to do, if I may, is go to the
 conclusions which you reach in relation to each of the

was falling on securing Government agreement for ongoing funding, it was securing on -- it was focused on getting Government support for the strategic plan, which was connected to funding. It was helping RMG prepare for privatisation, and it was continuing to create the Post Office, an independent business, separate from RMG, in which they had to build their own standalone governance structures and central functions. All good priorities.

But, at the same time, there was the, as we've indicated, media, ministerial, Parliamentary interest and identity of what, on the face of it, appeared to be serious problems in the use of Horizon data in prosecutions. This, as far as we could see, was not a priority for the Board at all.

MR BEER: Issue 2, please, over the page at the top.

Perceptions of the Horizon IT system, Second Sight and post Office Prosecution Policy and practices and of subpostmasters. Can we look at your conclusion, please, on that issue, at page 65, paragraph 238 onwards. You tell us in 238 -- it goes right up to 242 -- that:

"The dependence of prosecutions on Horizon data was not articulated as a concern by either the Executive or the Board as they approached the discussions of the report on 16 July. So taken were the Executive with their sense of mission, their distrust of Second Sight,

nine issues, rather than examining the run-up to thoseconclusions in each case.

3 DAME SANDRA: Absolutely.

**MR BEER:** So in relation to issue 1, can we look, please, at page 58, paragraph 217. It should identify what issue one was, just look at page 57, please, at the foot of the page. Issue 1, the priorities of the Board in July 2013. Then if we go forwards, please, to paragraph 217 on page 58, you say:

"... the findings of the report contain sufficient information to warrant the Board giving priority to getting a stronger grip on Post Office's investigations and prosecutions policy and practice, particularly, but not solely, when Horizon data was used. The Board should also have been paying attention to what they were being told by Second Sight about Post Office's attitudes and approach to subpostmasters, particularly as it had resonance with what was becoming a familiar refrain from investigative journalists and MPs. [You] had not seen evidence that either the Executive or the Board saw those issues as priorities."

So can you expand upon or explain the conclusion that you reached there? This is about prioritisation. **DAME SANDRA:** It's about, yes, where the gaze of the Board

was falling. It was falling on brand and reputation, it

they did not take the advantage of handling an 'independent' reviewer in their midst, who was offering various bits of evidence which could have shaken their firmly held perceptions. Not surprisingly then, they did nothing to alert the Board that serious issues were being raised in the Second Sight Report."

I'll ask the question that I've asked number of times: in the spectrum of importance or significance, where does this sit?

DAME SANDRA: I think it's a serious failing. Here was an independent reviewer that they had deliberately brought in, and yet they were approaching it from a position of fairly fixed views that Horizon was robust; that they -- they formed the view that Second Sight weren't really independent and were partisan; they had fixed views about subpostmasters; and they had fixed views about the importance of their prosecutions which they thought were being conducted, one assumes, appropriately.

This meant that when these bits of information came in from the Second Sight review and, as we'll see later, they don't come in in a sort of well capsulated way but they come in, nonetheless, but they simply aren't identified.

MR BEER: Do you expand upon that in 239? I think you

1	largely covered that in your previous answer.	1	coming forward.
2	DAME SANDRA: Yes.	2	MR BEER: Is that the basis on which you form the conclusion
3	MR BEER: In 240 you explain that there was no challenge in	3	at 241, the last sentence, that the Board did nothing to
4	July 2013 to the accepted view that any problems with	4	provide a corrective challenge to the Executive's
5	the operations of Horizon lay with the people rather	5	defensive position?
6	than the technology?	6	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> Yes, I see we did encapsulate what I was
7	DAME SANDRA: Yes, correct.	7	trying to say, that
8	MR BEER: Could you ascertain why that was, ie there was no	8	MR BEER: In 241?
9	challenge?	9	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> the belief of Horizon was robust, Second
10	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> What was the first part of your question?	10	Sight's independence was questionable, policies and
11	Could we	11	practices of investigations and prosecutions didn't
12	MR BEER: You say there wasn't a challenge to the accepted	12	warrant urgent investigations and a tiny minority of
13	view	13	subpostmasters, as before the introduction, were guilty
14	DAME SANDRA: Yes.	14	of misappropriating public funds. The Board, as we
15	MR BEER: yet here was a report that arrived that did	15	shall see, many of them did not appear to appreciate how
16	challenge it	16	the Post Office was approaching investigations and
17	DAME SANDRA: Yes.	17	prosecutions and, although they asked questions when
18	MR BEER: why was there no escalation by the Executive or	18	pieces of Private Eye came out, or so on, when told that
19	mere acceptance by the Board of the Executive's	19	"There's nothing in this, Horizon is robust", they did
20	perceptions?	20	nothing further to question. And I think we go on later
21	DAME SANDRA: I think that's a \$50,000 question. Why was	21	to show how they might have questioned it.
22	there no challenge? There was no challenge and we in	22	MR BEER: Thank you.
23	this part tie it to the fact that they were	23	Lastly on this issue, paragraph 242, you make the
24	concentrating on and looking at things in a way that	24	point that the Horizon System and Post Office
25	made them blind to the pieces of information that were	25	prosecutions were seen as operational matters to be left
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1	to the Executive.	1	and prosecuting subpostmasters, if I regard that as
2	DAME SANDRA: Mm.	2	a matter that's always been done, that's part of regular
3	MR BEER: Is that seen by the Board as operational matters?	3	operations, that doesn't excite any particular mention,
4	DAME SANDRA: It is, and probably by the Executive too, and	4	then its legitimate for me, as a board, to leave the
5	perhaps this is relevant to make the general point that,	5	executive to run that.
6	in Governance Codes, inspected understandings of	6	MR BEER: You say the irony is that what was seen by the
7	Government, the role of the executive is to run the	7	NEDs as operational matters were, in fact, the basis of
8	company: if they're a building company, to do the	8	existential risk.
9	building; if they're and to ensure safety	9	DAME SANDRA: Yes.
10	precautions if they're a financial services company,	10	MR BEER: When you say "irony", what do you mean?
11	to offer financial services. They run the company and,	11	DAME SANDRA: I mean that they got it wrong, that they saw
12	in operational matters, to do with running the company,	12	that it's operational and, therefore, nothing to do with them, but in fact it contained existential risk to the
13	are the executive responsibility.	13	,
14 15	The board has a responsibility to oversee those	14	company and therefore and, I'm told, suffering to
15	operational matters, to ensure that they are being	15	subpostmasters and, therefore, if only they had said,
16 17	appropriately undertaken but, if you assume that they	16 17	"Perhaps these aren't regular operational matters,
17	are everything is going fine, then it would be	17	perhaps we should have enquired into that", they would
18	inappropriate for the board to enquire into operations.	18	have revealed the extent of the risk that was there.
19	I don't know if you'd like me to go on to	19	MR BEER: You say that "more such curiosity and challenge
20	circumstances, it might come later, where the board	20	may have dislodged the blindfold". Who was wearing the
21	would be expected to delve into those operational	21	metaphoric blindfold?
22	matters. But I guess what I'm saying is, if I'm sitting	22	DAME SANDRA: I think both the Executive and the Board were
23	at a boardroom and I'm a non-executive director and	23	wearing a blindfold

24 MR BEER: Thank you.

25 **DAME SANDRA:** -- and that blindfold we relate here to the 84

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I regard a particular aspect of the company's

operations, in this case prosecuting -- investigating

1	perceptions we have just identified.	1	I don't mean a high level in terms of height of
2	MR BEER: Thank you.	2	standard; I mean in terms of generality, such a level of
3	Sir, that's a convenient moment. May we break now	3	generality, that it's possible to be an effective chief
4	until 1.45.	4	executive and adopt different styles.
5	SIR WYN WILLIAMS: Yes, 1.45.	5	MR BEER: You go on to explain and remembering this is in
6	(12.45 pm)	6	connection with the treatment and administration and
7	(The Short Adjournment)	7	response to the Second Sight Report you would have
8	(1.45 pm)	8	expected the Chief Executive, that's Paula Vennells, to
9	MR BEER: Good afternoon, sir.	9	be well aware of all issues which were covered in the
10	Good afternoon, Dame Sandra and Dr Steward.	10	report, insofar as they significantly impact Post
11	We were in the middle of Case Study 2, we had dealt	11	Office.
12	with two issues and we were turning to the third issue	12	By that, do you mean you would have expected her to
13	you had identified. Can we turn up in the second	13	have been well aware of issues before receipt of the
14	report, please, page 70. Here you express your	14	report, or upon receipt of the report?
15	conclusions on the third issue, which is the roles of	15	DAME SANDRA: That we would expect her to be aware of the
16	the Chief Executive Officer and her Executive	16	issues of which she was aware before receiving the
17	colleagues, and between paragraphs 262 and 271, you set	17	report but, upon receiving the report, we would have
18	out your conclusions on this issue.	18	expected her to be aware of those issues that were
19	You make the point that how a CEO leads his or her	19	within the report.
20	team is not an exact science. Do you mean that, within	20	MR BEER: Okay, so she should have been across the detail of
21	the Governance Codes and other similar instruments,	21	the report upon receipt?
22	there is a reasonable body of divergence in how you	22	DAME SANDRA: Across the particular aspects which we pick
23	discharge the obligations?	23	out in the report, which we see to have been
24	DAME SANDRA: I believe that the principles are set at such	24	significant.
25	a high level that how one fulfils those principles	25	MR BEER: You say you would have expected her to be leading
1	her Executive Team, so that she would have been well	1	to be disproportionately focused on public relations and
2	aware of the significant views and actions of each of	2	communications?
3	her Executive Directors, so she could bring all	3	DAME SANDRA: Because from the evidence that we saw, there
4	significant relevant information into her decisions.	4	was a great deal of communication about how the
5	Can you assist us with what you're referring to	5	positioning of the publication of the Second Sight
6	there?	6	Interim Report should be put, how communication should
7	DAME SANDRA: I'm referring to the fact that, as Chief	7	go to James Arbuthnot and other MPs and what the media
8	Executive, she naturally delegates and expects her	8	statement would say. Looking beneath what the Second
9	different Executive Directors, her members of her top	9	Sight Interim Report said, where, as we shall see, they
10	team, to be more in touch with details of their	10	identified a number of issues to do with Horizon, to do
11	particular areas than she is but, nonetheless, we would	11	with prosecutions, to do with the impact of current
12	expect that the way in which she operated that team,	12	processes on subpostmasters, that they didn't seem so
13	that if there were significant areas identified within	13	concerned with those things.
14	individual Executive Directors' areas, that they would	14	MR BEER: Do you accept that a board owes a fiduciary
15	be brought to her attention.	15	obligation to protect a company's reputation?
16	MR BEER: You say that, in dealing with the report, in	16	DAME SANDRA: Do I accept that the board has that
17	paragraph 264, she and some of her Executive colleagues,	17	responsibility?
18	appear to be disproportionately focused on	18	MR BEER: Yeah, fiduciary
19	communications and public relations. That whilst	19	DAME SANDRA: Yes.
20	messaging and communication are vital parts of executive	20	MR BEER: Do you accept that a general counsel has
21	responsibility, the executive responsibilities in	21	a fiduciary obligation to protect a company's
22	matters covered by the report extend to many areas;	22	reputation?
23	including or especially technology, business operations,	23	DAME SANDRA: Well, a general counsel has many different
	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·		roles. Would you like me to expand upon that? The

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conclusion that she and some to her colleagues appeared

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general counsel has a role as an independent adviser to

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the board, to bring her expertise to the board and to the company on a legal basis.

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If the general counsel is a director of the company, then she or he also has duties as a director, which, as we covered earlier, relate to director's duties. If -that's the second role she may have, although in relation to the Post Office the general counsel didn't have that role.

If she also has functional responsibilities for areas of work, for example the legal area of work, or the risk area of work, or aspects of the operations area of work, for example, security, she also has duties in relation to her functional leadership. This means that she can be both a member of the executive team and an independent adviser, and general counsels are often put in the position of holding those dual roles.

MR BEER: If it is the case that members of the Board, and they say this, received assurances from within the business that Horizon was a robust system, and that any and all allegations about it were unfounded, would it be appropriate or inappropriate for a Board to respond to those allegations in a way that sought to protect the company's reputation?

24 **DAME SANDRA:** One would expect the Board to enquire into any matters which suggested that the assurances that they

> we've got to do with regard to training and support, and we'll do them". But what was really understood about the nature of the technology? What was really understood about the meaning of bugs and defects? What was really understood about the experiences of subpostmasters, as related in the Second Sight Interim Report?

We were looking for a broader sense of contribution from the Executive Team into the meaning behind the Second Sight Interim Report.

MR BEER: You say in the fifth line:

"It is as if specialist functions are in different 'black boxes' which non-experts cannot assess and do not feature as part of their shared executive responsibility"?

You cross reference to some sections of Ms Vennells' oral evidence where she says she's not an expert in this or an expert in that. Then, over the page to paragraph 266, you say that she appears to have left the preparation of the Horizon Update paper to the General Counsel, Susan Crichton:

"The Inquiry heard that [Ms Crichton] discussed a draft with the Company Secretary and made amendments ... for example to refer to 'defects' rather than 'bugs' ... [You] do not know if the CEO and General Counsel

had been given were not as foolproof as they had been 2 led to believe. And, if we look at the particular 3 instance of the Second Sight Interim Report, whilst 4 there was the general conclusion of no systemic problems so far discovered, there was discovery of 5 6 bugs/anomalies, whatever one wishes to call, and 7 therefore that might have been a basis for saying, 8 "Well, given that we've been told on the one hand it's 9 robust, and yet, given on the other hand we've been told 10 that there are bugs and defects, should we not think 11 about what is the connection between those two pieces of 12 information, and should we not then enquire further into 13 what it means that this is robust?" 14

MR BEER: Thank you, at 265 you say you haven't seen evidence that the CEO, Paula Vennells:

"... ensured broad collective executive discussions about the findings of [the report] which included contributions from, or challenges to, all functions and aspects of the business."

Can you explain what you mean by what you were looking for in the evidence there?

22 **DAME SANDRA:** We were looking for something more than what 23 are the top-level messages we can give, namely the 24 top-level messages were "Horizon is robust, there's no 25 systemic problems with it, there are a number of things

> discussed the contents of the paper ... [We] heard that the CEO felt uncomfortable and ill equipped when she was suddenly required to present the paper at the Board meeting", which to you suggested:

"... an Executive Team which is fragmented where a sense of shared collective responsibility for all aspects of the business is feint; a mindset which has grown within an organisation where functional silos, certainly in Legal and IT, extend from the top to the bottom."

Can you expand in any way on conclusions which you drew there?

DAME SANDRA: I think we then have to look at the role of the chief executive. The chief executive cannot be an expert in all matters of running the business. That's very, very well understood, which is why the chief executive needs to delegate to a number of her executive team specialist responsibility. But that very action of delegation does not absolve the chief executive from seeking to understand the whole picture.

So whilst there is delegation, there is also inclusion of bringing these matters up into the chief executive's mind so that she is sufficiently aware of all the aspects which impact the consideration of any particular issue.

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So that's the chief executive role. The chief executive's role is also to ensure that the -- her executive directors, to which she delegates -- imagine them all in their little functional boxes -- that they not only communicate upwards and downwards to her, but she ensures that they communicate across each other and that they bring to bear areas of their specialist expertise, to their collective understanding.

And that's what we did not see evidence of. Of course, we're very happy to look at evidence which suggests something different to that, but we did not see any evidence of that. And we understand that that sense of both delegation, and yet bringing together that sense of individual responsibility and yet collective responsibility, was something which we did not see in relation to consideration of the Interim Report of Second Sight.

18 MR BEER: I think it's right that you have not examined, and 19 do not opine on the motives for that approach.

20 DAME SANDRA: We do not.

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21 MR BEER: In paragraph 268, in the second line, you say in your view the Chief Executive Officer, Paula Vennells: 22

> "... did not ensure that the Board, before the meeting [that's the meeting of 16 July], was fully briefed on important matters, particularly those

Can we go over the page please, to 270. You say it would have been more appropriate to accompany notification to the non-executives of publication of the report with an executive summary of the key points, rather than to do what the memo did, which was to focus on inaccuracies, and that did nothing to dent the important messages which could be discerned from the

9 DAME SANDRA: Exactly. That was the point I anticipated 10 when I spoke earlier.

11 MR BEER: Thank you. Is there anything else you want to say 12 in relation to this sub-issue?

DAME SANDRA: Well, we'll probably come onto it but the lack 13 14 of an executive summary of the key points, either from 15 the Second Sight Interim Report or in the Board Update 16 paper meant that the job of the Board in interrogating 17 that paper was made, to an extent, more difficult.

MR BEER: Thank you. Can we turn to issue 4, the role of the Chair, which we can see starts at the bottom of that page, and go to your conclusions on page 75, please. You make a similar point, as you did in relation to the

22 CEO, as regards the Chair, in paragraph 284 and I think

23 you make a similar point in 285 as you had in relation 24 to the CEO; is that right?

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DAME SANDRA: That's exactly right. 95

relating to Post Office policy and practice on prosecutions ... It was reasonable that she should flag her immediate concerns about communications. But they were concerning how the story was being told, not about the nature of the story itself."

Is there anything you wish to expand upon that? DAME SANDRA: I believe that is quite clear, unless there were further questions you'd like to ask.

9 MR BEER: No, thank you.

10 You develop that theme in 269 by saying 11 communications to the non-executives in between 1 and 12 16 July were focusing on PR rather than substance; is 13 that right?

14 DAME SANDRA: That is correct.

MR BEER: Then over the page --15

16 DAME SANDRA: Perhaps I should just add, that's relevant to 17 that, there's this memo, three-page memorandum that went 18 with the circulation of the Second Sight Interim Report, 19 it was a very detailed analysis of where the Executive 20 felt there were factual inaccuracies, which didn't 21 really affect the substance of the report, and it meant 22 that the concentration was on those factual

23 inaccuracies, not the substance of the report.

24 MR BEER: Would it be fair -- no, I think that's probably 25 a bridge too far.

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MR BEER: You say you would have expected the Chair, that's Alice Perkins, to have interrogated the report to see for herself if there were any issues or problems flagged in the findings beyond those identified by the CEO:

"... we would have expected her to give careful consideration to: how she wished the Board to engage with all the findings of the Second Sight Interim Report; and the purpose and expected outcome of the Board discussion."

10 Why would you have those expectations of the Chair? DAME SANDRA: Because I believe and we believe, based on the 11 12 role of the chair in governance, that her responsibility 13 is to ensure that any paper or any matter which is 14 brought to the Board, that she understand what the 15 issues and problems are which it is being suggested.

MR BEER: Over the page to paragraph 287. Is this 16 17 essentially your view or your counterpoint, setting out 18 what should have happened in the Board meeting itself, 19 as opposed to what did happen? 20

DAME SANDRA: Yes, indeed, and I perhaps should say that, in relation to each of these case studies, we are using the base of Report 1, as we described. If we feel there is need for additional background information, then we have provided it in the introduction to the cases. Here, where we talk about the chair at an administrative level

1	to agree how the paper is to be presented, and so on, we	1	Perkins to make it a priority that Susan Crichton was
2	felt perhaps we hadn't put enough information in	2	present at the meeting, and that Alice Perkins had been
3	Report 1, so we added it here.	3	fully briefed by Susan Crichton, despite the apparent
4	MR BEER: Okay, so here you're saying there needed to be	4	strain in their relationship. Why is it that you pick
5	agreement or direction as to who was going to present	5	this topic, the Horizon report by Second Sight, for such
6	this important paper is that right	6	treatment?
7	DAME SANDRA: Exactly.	7	DAME SANDRA: Why did we choose Second Sight?
8	MR BEER: whether they were to be invited into the	8	MR BEER: Yes, so on the occasion of the Board meeting there
9	meeting and involved in both presentation and	9	were a number of papers before the Board.
10	discussion, and then carry those directions into	10	DAME SANDRA: Yes.
11	effect	11	MR BEER: Not just this one.
12	DAME SANDRA: That's correct.	12	DAME SANDRA: No, but we were our case study is about the
13	MR BEER: is that right?	13	handling of the Second Sight Interim Report
14	DAME SANDRA: That's correct.	14	MR BEER: Yes.
15	MR BEER: What view, if any, did you form of the evidence as	15	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> and therefore that is what we addressed.
16	to what, in fact, happened at 16 July?	16	MR BEER: Yes. I am asking you indirectly, and I'll make it
17	DAME SANDRA: I believe we come to that later, which we can	17	more direct: would you expect this kind of liaison and
18	take now or we can take later.	18	prior agreement to occur in relation to all papers
19	MR BEER: Can you discuss it now in the context of this	19	tabled before a board.
20	expectation?	20	DAME SANDRA: I would expect the chair to be fully aware of
21	DAME SANDRA: Well, the expectation, as we'll see, was, as	21	the agenda that she has either proposed or agreed with
22	we understood, that the General Counsel would present	22	the company secretary, and to know how that agenda was
23	would be present and would present the report. That did	23	going to unfold, who was going to present what, who was
24	not happen.	24	going to prepare what. She herself, as the chair, would
25	MR BEER: You say in 288 that you would have expected Alice 97	25	have views on that, and it would be ultimately her 98
1	decision, but she would probably discuss these with the	1	that Second Sight would be reporting on 'Alleged
2	chief executive and the company secretary.	2	problems with the Horizon system', [you] would that have
3	So the idea that the chair has responsibility for	3	expected the CEO to keep the NEDs sufficiently apprised
4	the agenda is absolutely the case, whatever the item	4	at a high summary level, of any emerging issues from the
5	which is there before the board.	5	work. The minutes of the Board meeting of 23 January
6	MR BEER: So you're not picking out the Second Sight Report	6	2013 record the Chair, [rather than] the CEO, giving
7	here for special treatment?	7	a brief update on the work being undertaken by Second
8	DAME SANDRA: No, no.	8	Sight including 'to date there was no evidence to
9	MR BEER: Okay, got it.	9	suggest fault'. Had the NEDs had a hint of any major
10	DAME SANDRA: If that's the question the answer is no.	10	issues, they may have been alerted to questions they may
11	MR BEER: Got it. You say that you found no evidence that	11	wish to raise. However, they received no such
12	Alice Perkins prepared in this way and that, once in the	12	information until the Board call on 1 July [was
13	Board, that she chaired the meeting in such a way as to	13	received]."

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1 1 12 13 Board, that she chaired the meeting in such a way as to 14 ensure that the full import of the findings of the 15 report were appreciated and discussed with decisions on 16 follow-up actions agreed.

17 DAME SANDRA: And we'll come to it in more detail, 18 I believe, in subsequent issues.

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19 MR BEER: Yes, can we turn to sub-issue 5, then. That set 20 out what the issue is on page 76, the role of the NEDs, 21 and your conclusions are expressed in paragraphs 302 to 22 304 on pages 75 and 80, if we can turn to those, please. 23 302, just scroll down, thank you. You say:

"Given the amount of external interest in Horizon, its role in prosecution of [subpostmasters] and the fact 99

ay received].' So are you speaking essentially about priming the

15 NEDs here in the run-up to the delivery of the Second 16 Sight Report? 17 DAME SANDRA: Yeah, yeah. I'm talking about the fact that 18

when you're a non-executive director, and there is a matter going on for over a year, and the board have specifically asked for some updates, probably after January, that, if there was anything emerging, of course there may not have been anything emerging, but if there was anything emerging we'd expect a brief update so that the NEDs are aware, a hint of any major issues, they'll be alerted to questions they may wish to raise. If what

1	they're told which may have been all there was to	1	MR BEER: You say, I think, drawing those threads together
2	tell, I don't know if they're told to date there is	2	in 304, the Non-Executive Directors were, in your view,
3	no evidence to suggest fault, that is an indication that	3	inadequately briefed. This was exactly the time when
4	we can relax, all things going well.	4	they were expected to exert their independence, and that
5	MR BEER: I think you point to a second aspect in which the	5	the circumstances prevented them from doing so.
			DAME SANDRA: Yeah.
6	NEDs were not properly briefed in paragraph 303. This	6	
7	focuses on the Board call on 1 July 2013.	7	MR BEER: Is that right?
8	DAME SANDRA: Yes.	8	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> I believe that to be the case. And the reason
9	MR BEER: You say, the limited time for the call, the fact	9	why you might say "Well, how is it that it would be
10	that the report wasn't listed as an agenda item or	10	exactly the time they should exert their independence if
11	flagged in advance by email, there was no briefing paper	11	they knew nothing of it?" But they knew nothing of it
12	that related to it before the call, created	12	from within the Post Office but they were however aware
13	circumstances in which the NEDs could not begin to	13	of the large-scale media influence and the influence and
14	exercise their role in scrutiny or challenge?	14	the interest of MPs into the matters that Second Sight
15	DAME SANDRA: Yes.	15	were enquiring into.
16	MR BEER: Essentially, are you saying here that this was an	16	So one might have thought they'd be alert to say,
17	item that was just dropped in?	17	"Well, let's try and understand this a bit better", but
18	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> It was entirely dropped in, the Board call was	18	they couldn't do that on the basis of the 1 July call
19	about strategy, we believe, or we're led to believe, and	19	because they didn't know that they were going to hear
20	it opened with the Chief Executive saying, "We're	20	about it.
21	expecting the interim report to be published on 8 July",	21	Q. Thank you. Turning to sub-issue 6 within this case
22	and that they would get a copy of it then. But they	22	study, it's set out there:
23	didn't know this was what was going to be the subject of	23	"What could the Board have taken from the contents
24	the call. They got no briefing paper, and so it was in	24	of the report published on 8 July?"
25	a way the first they'd heard of the publication. 101	25	You set your conclusions out on page 82. On to 83, 102
1	paragraphs 310 to 312, and you say it, the report,	1	the report for themselves. You say:
2	contained much information which should have attracted	2	"The messages identified above are evident."
3	the attention of the NEDs, warranted serious discussion	3	By that, do you mean obvious when one reads the
4	by the Board because it raised issues about Post Office	4	document?
5	Investigations and prosecutions policy and practice, the	5	DAME SANDRA: A careful read, particularly against the
6	attitudes of the Post Office to subpostmasters, the	6	background that we have described, would have meant tha
7	impact of their contracts and contested evidence about	7	these matters were obvious, in our view.
8	the robustness of Horizon. Much of the information does	8	MR BEER: Likely to be seen as highly significant by
9	not feature in the conclusions or in some easily	9	a careful reader, but without executive signpost, they
10	accessible summary form in the Second Sight report.	10	needed to be drawn out from a reading of the report and
11	Are you there pointing out that you have to read the	11	fully interrogated and that's what the NEDs should have
12	report carefully and slowly in order to extract the	12	done?
13	important issues that you have there identified?	13	DAME SANDRA: Yeah.
14	DAME SANDRA: I am. It's not handed on a plate. It's	14	MR BEER: Can we turn, please, to the Board meeting itself,
15	hardly handled in any way but, within the report, very	15	on 16 July, and this is where you deal with issues 7, 8

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important matters are raised.

17 MR BEER: Not handed on a plate in terms of a good executive 18 summary.

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**DAME SANDRA:** Exactly. 20 MR BEER: You say in 311 that it would have been good 21 practice for Post Office to require Second Sight to write such a summary, and for the Post Office to have 22 23 written their own executive summary for the Board, and 24 that, in the absence of both of those things, it was 25 even more important that the Non-Executives interrogated

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20 DAME SANDRA: Yes. 21 MR BEER: Your conclusions are set out at paragraph 323, 22 which start on page 86. You refer us back to the first 23 time that the Board had seen anything of substance or 24 heard anything of substance was the Board call on 1 July 25 when they were given a brief and partial introduction to

paper received by the Board"?

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and 9. Issue 7, you identify as "What were the contents

meeting on 16 July -- "prepared, and how was the Board

of the Board paper" -- that's for the purposes of the

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1 the report. When they got the Second Sight Report, it 2 wasn't accompanied or followed by a note from either 3 Paula Vennells or Susan Crichton, summarising the major issues. The report isn't identified as a subject for 4 5 Board discussion on 16 July. Do you mean in the Board 6 papers? 7 DAME SANDRA: I mean, yes, the paper is called "Update", 8 "Following on", or I can't remember the exact words, but 9 it's an update subsequent to the Second Sight Interim 10 Report. So the Second Sight Interim Report is never as 11 such laid before the Board meeting. It has been made 12 available to the Board on 8 July, when it is published, 13 and then this is an update consequent upon that. In 14 a way, it's implied, as a presence in the board, but it 15 is not expressly put in the board papers. 16 MR BEER: So you're identifying the absence of a note which 17 says, for example, "Discussion of the contents of the 18 Second Sigh report of 8 July"? 19 **DAME SANDRA:** Yes, or a summary of the contents.

20 MR BEER: You say the update paper covers some but not all 21 of the issues identified in the report but does so in 22 a structure which makes some of them somewhat opaque. 23 What were you referring to there, if you can recall?

24 DAME SANDRA: What I was referring to was the fact that, as 25 I've indicated, the Second Sight Interim Report had lots 105

MR BEER: And that it is a departure from the reasonably

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expected standards that you set out in Report 1. DAME SANDRA: Also, if we look at paragraph 325, we had a checklist of normal expectations of a board. Now you wouldn't find this in the code of conduct for -- on the code of governance. This is more drawing upon our own experience, and also the experience that you can find in many board evaluation processes, where one of the subjects for discussion is usually about how your board paper is presented; do you have any areas where you think they should be improved; what's the normal

So this summary is our summary based on our experience on the experience of other experts in board governance, and in thinking about the way in which one can run effective boards.

MR BEER: In summary, you find that out, of the eight-items on the nominal checklist, four were non-existent, two were partially existent, and two were in existence?

DAME SANDRA: Indeed. 21

standard you expect?

22 MR BEER: If we go over the page, please, to 327, and 8 you 23 say that Paula Vennells should have ensured 24 a comprehensive summary of the major issues was 25

explicitly and comprehensively drawn to the Board's 107

of bits of information which were highly germane to the issue of POL's -- the Post Office's prosecutions and investigations, attitudes to subpostmasters, the use of Horizon data in prosecutions, and the robustness of Horizon. They were peppered around, and that, as I've said before, wasn't handed on a plate.

And that, then -- the update report, deals with what's happened after the publication, and that update report addresses a number of matters which are, I hope, in this section, identified, but which -- the fact that there wasn't an executive summary meant that the significance of some of the point had to be extracted by the reader, rather than, again, being given on a plate of an executive summary.

15 MR BEER: Again, in your examination of the issues, I don't 16 think you attribute motive or intention --

17 DAME SANDRA: We do not.

18 MR BEER: -- to the relevant actors here, ie why this was 19 done.

20 DAME SANDRA: Didn't hear.

21 MR BEER: You don't attribute motive or intention to the

22 relevant actors --

23 DAME SANDRA: We don't.

24 MR BEER: -- ie why this was done in this way.

DAME SANDRA: We don't. We note that that was what 106

1 attention. However, there was, nonetheless, sufficient 2 information in the report and the Update paper to alert 3 an engaged NED that the Board should fully interrogate 4 the issues and require the CEO urgently to report back 5 on whether there were major risks in the three things 6 you mentioned, and that wasn't done according to the 7 evidence you have seen.

8 DAME SANDRA: That's correct.

9 MR BEER: Is there anything else you want to speak to or 10 identify in relation to this sub-issue 7?

DAME SANDRA: We're dealing with an expectation that NEDs 11 12 should be informed of major issues, and we're dealing 13 with an expectation that the Chief Executive will gather 14 together all the information that she has to been to the 15 attention of the Board. Little bits of that process may 16 not happen, and they may not happen in many boards, but 17 when you have the confluence of those various aspects 18 coming together, particularly given that this is 19 known -- we're now in 2013, this is known to be -- to 20 address a number of very serious issues for the Post 21 Office, then we would expect there to have been more 22 attention paid to the areas that we've identified.

23 MR BEER: Thank you can we turn to issue 8, the quality of 24 the discussion and the quality of the decisions made at 25 the Board meeting on 16 July, issue 8. Now, you've set 108

out a series of conclusions here. They begin at page 92. Within this subtheme you identify, if we scroll down to paragraph 346, some subsubthemes or conclusions, and there are six of them. I'm not going to ask you to speak to each of those six points that arise from the discussion at, and the decision making of, the Board on 16 July, but instead turn to your overarching conclusions about them. That's page 100, paragraph 375 and following.

So in the light of the six subpoints you've examined, you say:

"In [your] view, the Board's receipt and discussion of the Update paper was a missed opportunity for the Board. Notwithstanding their annoyance with the management of the process, the Board knew that [the Post Office's] present unresolved situation with [subpostmasters] and [its] defence of the Horizon system was consuming large amounts of time and energy in the business and threatening that which the Board held dear, namely the public reputation of the [Post Office]. It knew of the accounts of human hardship and suffering from [subpostmasters] which were current in the press and media and of great concern amongst some MPs."

So you were saying, notwithstanding the manner in which the issue and the materials were presented to the

operational matters, which are matters for the Executive to run. However, if the Board believes, and believes there is evidence to suggest that those operations are not proceeding within the reasonable bounds of expected performance, or if they believe there are other questions or matters that they should consider, then they should enquire of the executive, "Well, what really is going on here?" And that doesn't mean they would be overstepping and interfering, rather it means that they would be exercising their due responsibility in relation to the matters.

MR BEER: Thank you. Can we turn to the last issue, in this case study, number 9, which is the behaviour by relevant actors, in fact before the Board, ie in a pre-meet, and in the Board itself. Your conclusions start at paragraph 389 on page 103. You're addressing two things there: the pre-meeting of the NEDs and then the exclusion of Susan Crichton from the Board meeting itself. You say:

"It's relevant to ask if such a series of events is unusual in the conduct of board affairs."

How did you answer that question?

**DAME SANDRA:** We answered the question to say non-executive directors getting very exercised and angry about something that is in their board papers is not totally

Board, there was a failure by the Board?

DAME SANDRA: To look above their annoyance, to look above
 the irritations, the lack of immediate evidence, the
 lack of evidence on a plate: to look above and also then
 to go into the detail, that is what we would have
 expected.

MR BEER: In paragraph 377, you say that:

"The Executive did not help the Board to see the bigger picture, or take a longer time perspective, but the Board could itself still have required more focused coordinated and sustained work which is likely to have revealed the magnitude and interconnectedness of the risks in front of them."

Then over to 378:

"... if the NEDs had made such challenges ... it would not have crossed the line between business and Board, or mean that the NEDs were necessarily not supportive of the Executive. NED challenge to the executive is a fundamental part of their role."

Can you explain what you meant by that paragraph, please?

DAME SANDRA: Yes, well, it's often said in governance terms that NEDs shouldn't interfere with the running of the business. It goes back to the earlier point we had this morning about the Board not involving itself in 110

unusual in pre-meets. In pre-meets of non-executive directors, there's often expressions of unhappiness in relation to certain things that are being done. So, a NED pre-meet, which is exercised by what they see to be failings of the executive, is not totally unusual. I think in both our experiences, we've come across them.

And, indeed, it's often said that one of the reasons for a NED pre-meet is that they can get together and share their experiences without totally voicing them in the board. So annoyed non-executives meeting before a board meeting is not totally unusual.

Excluding people who expected to be at a board meeting is also not totally unusual. I mean, sometimes because of pressure of time, sometimes because at the pre-meet people have decided that the board paper isn't yet ready to be considered, people may be stood down. Perhaps we'll go on to the manner of standing down in a minute. So excluding executive members from a board meeting is again, not outside our experience.

The general counsel, one could argue, is in a special case because, as we addressed her responsibilities earlier, she has both responsibilities as an executive director and she has responsibilities as the general counsel. And I have never personally come across, nor have I ever seen it written about, where

1 a general counsel was expected to be before a board and 2 was then subsequently excluded. So the exclusion of 3 executive directors because there's not time or because 4 their paper isn't ready, is not that unusual; excluding 5 a general counsel is pretty unusual and I've never come 6 across it. MR BEER: Can I ask, unusually, Dr Steward, whether you 7 8 have? 9

DR STEWARD: I have never come across it, no. 10 MR BEER: Thank you. What view did you form of the reasons 11 given or what the reactions ought to have been for the 12 reasons given for excluding the General Counsel on this 13 occasion, ie that there were concerns over how she had

14 managed the product?

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15 **DAME SANDRA:** The question to me is?

16 MR BEER: Did you form a view as to the reasons given for 17 excluding Susan Crichton from the Board?

DAME SANDRA: It appeared to be -- and this is our reading of the evidence we've seen -- it appeared to be that the Non-Executives were so exercised with their irritation with how the Second Sight work and the conclusions in the interim report have been raised, they were so annoyed about that that they were expressing a lot of criticism of the General Counsel. And that appears to have, insofar as she speaks about this, have caused the

general counsel in boards has developed over time, and I am mindful of the fact that we're dealing here with 2013, not with 2024.

Nonetheless, as it happens, I can remember facilitating a discussion of general counsels around this time, about their role in the board, and I can say that in general -- and these may be larger businesses rather than smaller businesses -- in general, a Board would have had a general counsel who was either -probably not a member of the Board but who was a routine attendee.

But, in this case, they had no one who was a regular attendee, Susan Crichton only came in if she was specifically requiring. That, in our sense -- view is er ... probably in 2013, most general counsels would have been regularly in attendance, probably, but not

But she was the most important senior lawyer in the organisation. There were important legal matters on the agenda, not simply this update but also there was this Significant Litigation Report for noting.

So what was happening, by her not being at that Board, was that Board was denied its own legal specialist, who appeared to be the only person who understood the legal matters raised by claims for

1 Chair to think, "Well, the best thing is that we have 2 this discussion in the Board without the presence of the 3 General Counsel".

4 We go on to consider other matters, I think, later.

5 MR BEER: Page 105, paragraph 396, is that you essentially 6 setting out your proposed solution, if the facts are as 7 described by the Chair --

8 DAME SANDRA: Indeed.

9 MR BEER: -- ie there were two issues: one said to be about 10 the General Counsel's performance, in relation to the 11 project --

DAME SANDRA: Yes. 12

13 MR BEER: -- but, nonetheless, there was a remaining issue 14 as to the substance of the report. The substance needs 15 a discussion, she's the person who knows most about it?

16 DAME SANDRA: Exactly.

17 MR BEER: You draw, I think, a wider conclusion in paragraph 397, that takes us outside the case study. 18

19 DAME SANDRA: Mm-hm.

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20 MR BEER: Can you explain that, please?

21 DAME SANDRA: It comes -- arises from our analysis of the 22 case study. The Board had no senior lawyer, either as 23 a member of the Board or as a routine attendee. Perhaps 24

I should say, in context, the generally accepted

25 standards -- and I should also say that the role of the 114

1 wrongful prosecution because, as we've seen earlier, the 2 Chief Executive, who ended up presenting this report, 3 herself asserted on many occasions or several occasions 4 that she herself was not a lawyer and did not altogether 5 understand these matters.

MR BEER: Can we go over the page please to paragraphs 399 and 400. You draw a third point from this episode, and you mention the impersonal, public and, some might say, humiliating treatment of Susan Crichton which implies a disrespect for colleagues and lack of human sympathy.

You say in 400 that this appears to give you strong signals about the culture of the Boardroom. You can be sure that, even as this was happening, rumours, speculation, et cetera, would have been rife within HQ. It suggests a disrespect for colleagues, a Board which doesn't care about people, a rift between the General Counsel, the Chair and the Board and a silence in the face of consideration for others.

How serious a state of affairs are you describing

DAME SANDRA: I'm describing there something which both reflects and then becomes instantiated within the culture of the boardroom and has wider ramifications for the culture of the organisation. cultures are made up of stories, of accounts of things that have happened,

sometimes they're mythical, sometimes substantive. And I think this, leaving a General Counsel, a very senior member of the Executive Team, sitting outside a boardroom which she is expecting to go into is a very -- a significant matter, and it would have been a subject for great, I imagine, discussion and speculation within the organisation.

I don't know if you want add to anything to that?

DR STEWARD: Only the general point, I think, which is that cultures are exactly that. They morph and they change, cultures are made up of what you see going on around you and what you experience. And if you see going on around you people being excluded from meetings, then the culture becomes one in which it is easier to accept that this is the way we do things around here.

MR BEER: Thank you. Can we turn to Case Study 3, please.

That begins on page 109, and concerns, Case Study 3, the handling of Simon Clarke's Advice by the Executive in 2013. You set out this case study over a large number of pages, over 30 pages, from page 109 onwards. Again, there's a crisp summary of the facts from paragraph 412.

You say:

"Susan Crichton received legal advice from Cartwright King, Post Office's prosecuting solicitors, because preliminary conclusions from the Second Sight

to be conducted by Cartwright King.

"When the General Counsel received the written advice on 17 July she shared it with members of the Legal Team (Hugh Flemington and Rodric Williams). She doesn't remember reading it herself, she says in her witness statement.

"By this time actions on the Sift Review were well under way."

Then over the page to 4.16:

"The Clarke Advice outlines the duties of an expert witness. It shows how the evidence relied on by the expert witness, Mr Jenkins, was tainted. It concludes that Post Office will need to conduct a disclosure exercise for subpostmasters where convictions have been secured on the basis of Horizon evidence and that those grounds for appeal will be able to go to the Court of Appeal. It says emphatically that the existing witness, Mr Jenkins, cannot be used again."

You then set out over the following pages, I think six issues, the first of which is who should have received the advice. Your conclusions on that appear between paragraphs 438 and 448 and they start on page 116. You say, if it is found that neither Susan Crichton, from July to November '13, nor her successor Chris Aujard, until 2015, informed the Board of the

Report were showing that there were bugs in the system which impacted branches. Mr Clarke realised this finding might call into question the integrity of some prosecutions, and might have resulted in some miscarriages of justice, and volunteered the advice. Ms Crichton understood from Mr Clarke that some sort of review of cases may be needed to establish the size of the problem and to enable some sort of disclosure to defendants, if there was a risk their convictions were unsafe.

"Susan Crichton met Cartwright King and received a summary oral report of what would become known as the Simon Clarke Advice on 3 July.

You say you've assumed that the oral summary would have been explicit about the serious problems of Fujitsu's Gareth Jenkins as a witness, which were at the centre of the Simon Clarke Advice. This was five days before the publication of the interim report on 8 July 2013:

"Although the written advice was received by the Post Office Legal Team on 17 July, it was sufficiently clear from the face-to-face meeting on 3 July that immediate action was needed. A review of cases and requirements for disclosure, which became known as the Sift Review was instituted on Ms Crichton's instructions

Clarke Advice, specifically that criminal prosecutions may have been undermined by the failure of Gareth Jenkins to disclose evidence of bugs in the system, then this is a failure of governance, in so much as governance is a combination of formal roles, competence, formal and informal relationships. It is not a failure which can be laid simply on those two General Counsel.

The general counsel must be able to speak their mind, represent their professional responsibilities in the sure confidence they will be listened to.

the sure confidence they will be listened to.

What were you implying there, if anything?

DAME SANDRA: One could say simply that the General Counsels did not give explicitly the information contained in the Simon Clarke Advice in all its elements. They did give bits of the evidence, even as early as the Board Update paper, written by Susan Crichton, where she said that the -- they had a legal duty to review some prosecutions, which is informed by the Simon Clarke Advice but, even if they didn't let it all out, as appears to us, then whether or not someone speaks, whether or not someone presents information, is a matter of how they think both it will be received, and what they believe other people to know, and so, in that sense, we would say that it's not simply on them that

they didn't speak it in total.

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They gave out bits of it, and perhaps they -- we have no idea, but it's possible that they just thought they should get on with doing the bits that they could do, namely, in Susan Crichton's way, she had immediately started the Sift Review, which was a direct response to the Simon Clarke.

Do you want to add?

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DR STEWARD: Yes, I think there are number of different routes to Board for the Simon Clarke Advice. There was Susan Crichton talking to the Chief Executive, the Chief Executive said she -- apparently said she didn't understand it and didn't communicate it to the Chair. Susan Crichton could have escalated it to the Chair. There is the opportunity that was missed, if you like, when Susan Crichton was in the Boardroom on 16 June for her to communicate face-to-face the contents of the Simon Clarke Advice.

So this 439, what we're trying to pull out is that actually the communication of this advice, getting into the Boardroom needed a collective effort, it needed -it's about the relationships, it's about the social processes, which mean that the information gets to the place where it needs to be got to.

24 DAME SANDRA: I think there's also an indication -- there's 25 an email, I think, from Alwen Lyons to Paula Vennells

> Report, we have evidence of bugs and defects in the system, what are we doing to understand the implications of that for us?" And that the general counsel would have legal knowledge, but it wouldn't just sit with the general counsel; it would sit within the general counsel and the chief executive in communication, because this is a significant risk to the business, and the chief executive has -- is ultimately pivotal in terms of taking that risk to the board.

So it's not something which sits just within a legal silo, and I think that's what we're trying to pull out here, is the extent to which it sat within a legal silo, or it was seen as a collective appreciation of the risk to the business.

15 MR BEER: Thank you.

> Sir, that's a convenient moment for the afternoon break. Can we break until 3.00, please, before we turn

18 19 (2.47 pm)

20 (A short break)

21 (3.00 pm)

MR BEER: Thank you, sir. 22

Dame Sandra, Dr Steward, we were in the middle of Case Study 3, looking at the ending of issue 1 and moving to issue 2. Can we turn up page 117, please, of 123

relating the fact that she has spoken to Susan Crichton, shortly after Susan Crichton's exclusion from the Board in, which Susan Crichton says she would have talked about the criminal cases, had she been in there. Whether or not she would have included specifically the

Simon Clarke Advices, we do not know.

MR BEER: Can we look, please, at paragraphs 447 and 448 on the next page. You refer back to some of the evidence given by Paula Vennells to the effect that this is a legal matter, this is an issue for Legal, implying a failure to integrate legal knowledge into collective executive discussions and decisions and, if it's the case that legal knowledge is in a black box, which the CEO and others do not need to or cannot understand, you

"This implies that Legal is almost semi-detached from the business and Paula Vennells is happy for issues of a legal nature to remain the responsibility wholly of the General Counsel and legal advisers."

20 Can you explain, please, how this relates to the 21 distribution of the Clarke Advice?

DR STEWARD: The distribution of the Clarke Advice, I think if you have a -- what I imagine happening, in those circumstances, would be that a chief executive would say to her general counsel, "We have got the Second Sight

the second report. You're dealing with the question from this paragraph onwards: what should have been done with the Simon Clarke Advice of July 2013?

Can we look at your conclusions on that issue, please, page 128, paragraph 483 at the foot of the page. You say:

"When looking at what should have been done with the Advice, we make the following observations:

"On receipt, the Post Office Executive, led by the General Counsel, needed to take immediate action to review past and present criminal cases and start the disclosure exercise using the process agreed with Post Office's lawyers, Cartwright King. Susan Crichton recognised that immediate action was needed and acted on the advice of the lawyers so that the Sift Review was under way by the time of 16 July Board meeting.

"It was a broad Executive, not just a legal, responsibility to review the conclusions of the Simon Clarke Advice and make recommendations. Initially, discussed and agreed with the ExCo to the Board all functional heads share responsibility for briefing the CEO and their team colleagues, but the CEO's role, in focusing the team on the issues for the business, is crucial.

"The prosecution policies would almost certainly 124

have been thought a priority by ExCo had they considered it, it should have been addressed as a matter of great urgency. Any member of ExCo who were Board directors have an ultimate duty to the Board to bring any matters of consequence to the Board.

"The General Counsel should have been in regular contact with the CEO throughout the week before the Board meeting conveying to the CEO the lawyers' proposals and initial work and they should have been jointly discussing any implications for the business in assessing risk.

"The general counsel generally has a duty to fully inform the Audit and Risk Committee and the Board, in order to protect the business in situations where the CEO may not be doing this.

"The General Counsel has a direct duty to the Board if they felt at any time, when the Board was making important decisions of policy, the Board was being given incomplete or inaccurate information. Whilst obviously in a difficult situation, they must inform the Chair of their concerns and express their opinion at the Audit and Risk Committee, even when it differs with that of the CEO. They should discuss or continue to discuss differences of opinion with the CEO.

"The Post Office was slow to react to breaches in 125

DAME SANDRA: You will know I didn't have that spectrum in my mind, but I'm happy to respond to your spectrum. But before I do that, I think a very strong element of that conclusion is that elements of the Advice were known.

All the Advice was known to the General Counsel.

Elements of it were known to the Board, who knew that they had to review all criminal cases. Elements of it were known by the CEO, who knew that they had to review all criminal cases, and also, who quite quickly knew there was a problem with the witness, but as she says, she didn't fully understand what that problem was.

So it's not a question that this is the Simon Clarke Advice, coherently bound up, and it was kept from people. Bits of it had come off and were held by various people. And the first point, I think, of our conclusions, taking them, as you're wanting us to do, as a sum, is that there was no -- nobody apparently thought to draw all those together. All the players had bits, and they were bits which were related to the -- to Post Office's prosecutions of subpostmasters, which was a major issue for MPs, the media, and so on.

And as such, you would have expected -- we would have expected, that they would have been pooled together, and that one would have taken this coherently. So what should have been done with the Simon Clarke

their duties as a prosecutor because the CEO and ExCo collectively did not acknowledge that the Simon Clarke Advice (or the substance of it) revealed a problem with prosecutions, nor did they take them as a coherent picture to the Board. The Board also has a duty to challenge the small issues before they become big ones. The Board knew about the need for disclosures, about the possibility of some miscarriages of justice and about the problems with bugs. These were either explicit or implicit in the content of, and subsequent Board Update on, the report.

"The Board should have had frank discussion with the CEO about what the Board must understand in relation to miscarriages of justice in order to be able to recognise the problem before it got out of hand. Had they done so, management might have shown that they knew much more about the issues associated with disclosures than was revealed."

That's quite a list of issues and problems.

20 DAME SANDRA: Mm.

MR BEER: Can you help us, the series of issues that you
list there, in relation to the, essentially, consequence
management, as a result of the advice, in the spectrum
that I have notionally got in my mind of seriousness,
where does this sit?

Advice, in -- it would have been wonderful, had it been bundled up and immediately distributed. It wasn't done that. Nonetheless, elements were known and those elements should have been brought together by the various people and interrogated. That is what I think we are concluding.

I'm going to find out from Dr Steward if she wants to add any more.

DR STEWARD: I think there is a serious, if you like, dropping of the ball or slipping between the cracks here as well, that this was an opportunity to review Post Office's policy on prosecutions, and the seriousness of not having that conversation, either at the Audit and Risk Committee, until later on, and even then, with information that was not unambiguously clear, meant that there was a material decision, if you like, which was delayed as a result of the handling of this case.

MR BEER: So, if I've understood both of you correctly,
 you're saying, although the Advice or the substance of
 the Advice should unequivocally have been passing to the
 Board, there were nonetheless fragments of it that both
 the CEO and the Board knew about, which was sufficient
 basis for each of them to have taken the further action
 that you recommend?

**DAME SANDRA:** That is exactly of the case and we do see some 128

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1	parallels between that and the previous case that we
2	have looked at, where similarly important fragments were
3	known.
4	MR BEER: Can we turn to issue 3, please, which is in fact
5	identified on the screen here: internal and external
6	conflicts of interest.
7	You set out your conclusions here on page 131, which
8	is just over the page, at the foot of the page at 490,
9	in this paragraph and 491. Can you summarise for us, at
10	490 and 491, this issue that you're addressing here,
11	internal and external conflicts of interest?
12	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> You would like us to summarise?
13	MR BEER: Yes.
14	DAME SANDRA: Right back in the Companies Act and in
15	throughout the Codes of Corporate Governance for the UK,
16	the identification of conflicts of there are always
17	present. It's understood that in governance and in
18	management, conflicts/divergent interests can inevitably
19	emerge. Their existence isn't the problem; the problem
20	is how you address them.
21	And what we identified here is that well, and
22	I should say that if the conflicts exist within the

23 Executive, then it's the chief executive's ultimate 24 responsible to identify them and to handle them, 25 although one would expect members of her organisation to

1 they would be handled. 2 MR BEER: So to summarise on internal conflicts, you're 3 saying that the Second Sight Report, the Clarke Advice 4 and the work thereafter, highlighted or potentially 5 highlighted the existence of failings on the part of the 6 prosecution function, or risked the revelation of such 7 problems, and that it might be in the interests of the

general counsel that the full extent of such failings did not come to light or minimised --

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DAME SANDRA: That can be argued. We're not making conclusions on that whatsoever but the very fact that these structures were such as you've described and I described, means that the conflict was potentially there and should have been addressed.

14 MR BEER: Can we go over the page to 491, please. Here 15 you're dealing with external conflicts. Is the summary 16 17 of it this: that, in respect of Cartwright King, the 18 potential conflict was stark. They were reviewing cases that they had previously had conduct of? 19

20 DAME SANDRA: Indeed.

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MR BEER: Is that the long and short of it? 21

22 **DAME SANDRA:** That is the long and the short of it.

23 MR BEER: You pose some questions: what was put in place to 24 ensure that the firm were not overly concerned to make 25

sure their own part in the prosecutions historically was

1 represent them to her, but she is ultimately responsible 2 for the structures over any conflicts that occur there. 3

In the Board, if the conflicts exist, it's the Chair's responsibility to call them out and to say, "Well, how are we handling these?" So if someone has a conflict of interest, they should have been discussed.

It seemed to us that the General Counsel, as we've said, had multiple hats, she had the hat of being the General Counsel, with her independent advice, she had the hat of being Head of Legal, which embraced and included the conduct of prosecutions, and she was a member of the Executive Team.

Elements to do with prosecutions which required enquiry meant that, in a way, she was enquiring into aspects for which she was responsible and one would normally expect that at least to be acknowledged and consider how that should be handled. With regard to the previous case study that we've looked at, she was also asked to enquire into what had gone wrong with the management for which she had been responsible.

So our conclusion is that there were conflicts there. They may not have had any impact. We're not saying they had an #impact, but we're saying they existed. They should have been addressed and they should have been discussed on how they would be -- how 130

protected? Did the Board and the CEO ask these questions about whether Cartwright King could ever be truly independent?

You say it was a question the Board should have addressed with the CEO. Did you see any evidence that those questions were addressed with the CEO?

DR STEWARD: I think I'm right in saying that Brian Altman did review or was asked to review, in one of his advices, the independence of Cartwright King.

MR BEER: That's right. 10

11 DR STEWARD: It is -- to be absolutely frank, I think that was legally privileged information, so it's quite 12 13 difficult to tell where that went to and who saw that. 14 So we -- that's the

15 DAME SANDRA: But there was reference to the fact that they -- it was understood. I think it was, indeed, the 16 17 General Counsel who felt that it would be appropriate, and probably others as well, that they should be somehow 18 19 assured that this conflict did not, in any way, 20 influence what they were doing, and the advice was that

21 the sift was very well conducted.

22 MR BEER: You're essentially saying that the Board ought to 23 have become involved in probing that?

24 DAME SANDRA: I believe that would have been appropriate, 25 given the conflicts that we have described, and, given 132

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1 the spotlight which should have been upon the way in 2 which the Post Office was conducting its prosecutions, 3 it would have been appropriate for the Board to assure 4 itself that that -- those conflicts were not in 5 6 MR BEER: You turn underneath these paragraphs to issue 4, 7

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in Case Study 3, communicating risk, and set out your conclusions on page 134 in paragraphs 500 to 503.

Is there anything you wish to add to those paragraphs about communication in this episode?

DR STEWARD: I mean, the only thing I would add, to sort of sum all this together, is that, across number of these case studies, there seems to be a common theme of the communication being -- of shying away from confronting where there has been wrongdoing or fault. So the partial telling of the stories, the leaving of half the story, but not the full story.

DAME SANDRA: I think if you look earlier on, before the conclusions, you'll see a number of examples of that.

This, again, as it says in 502, or as we say in 502, there was opportunities, perhaps, for the Non-Executives in our words, leaning in, being curious, challenging the case for future prosecutions, and what should be done about past prosecutions within a more holistic risk framework, in which we took account of the risks which

are posed for the organisation, then it's extremely difficult for those lower down in the organisation to see what that bigger picture is and then begin to contribute in their information which will be held lower down in the organisation towards constructing a richer framework

MR BEER: You turn to issue 6, immediately underneath these paragraphs, which is Post Office culture, and give us your conclusions on page 141 at the bottom, in paragraph 535, and you tell us that it seems to you that:

"... Post Office culture, with its underlying taken for granted assumptions, was so strong that the CEO and ExCo did not see any link between persistent underlying flaws in the prosecutorial process and the evidence that [the Post Office] had not taken the concerns of [subpostmasters] seriously. They lived, without question, within their accepted beliefs. It was as if miscarriages of justice were a mirage, not quite real and the Sift Review was required because of the

disclosure about bugs, not an unsafe witness." Is there anything you wish to add to that? DAME SANDRA: No, I believe we have laid out earlier on the prevailing views about the robustness of Horizon, the public duty to prosecute to protect public money, the 135

were not to crystallise until several years later about the way in which POL was conducting its prosecutions, the way it which it had conducted its prosecutions, and its reliance upon Horizon data.

MR BEER: Thank you. Can we turn to the executive understanding of risk, page 135, and then your conclusion, please, on page 137. You say that:

"The role of the CEO is critical in creating an executive and management focus on risk discussions. The CEO was not able to bring prosecutions risk to the attention of [the Post Office Executive] because, at a minimum, she did not understand it.

"Without the risks relating to the Simon Clarke Advice being clearly framed in the Executive, it was impossible for managers to go back to their functions and start building governance around risks. Good governance of risks requires the risk to be fully shared and agreed in ExCo, cascaded into the teams where it is discussed and plans and mitigations formulated for consideration within the risk framework."

So here you're essentially looking down rather than up; is that right?

DAME SANDRA: Exactly, and we're saying, at this sort of pivotal point of the executive, if you don't have a coherent understanding of what the risks are, how they

approach to subpostmasters, and that these gave a set of taken for granted assumptions, which meant that information which was readily available and indeed, in the case of the Simon Clarke Advice, explicit in a piece of advice, was not taken into as we've said, a holistic view of what was going on in the business.

Do you want add to anything?

DR STEWARD: No.

MR BEER: Over the page to 537. You say that:

"It seems odd to [you] that the Chief Executive and her ExCo did not seriously challenge the assumption that Post Office had historically been right to pursue prosecutions on the basis of Horizon evidence, even though both General Counsels in the period 2013-14 held personal views that Post Office should not be conducting private prosecutions and at least some members of the team were aware that Post Office had breached its duties from the Simon Clarke Advice."

Can you explain or expand upon the oddity which you discovered or the oddity about which you speak?

DAME SANDRA: Trying to put ourselves into the position, we find it very, very difficult to understand that with all these pieces of information, it didn't lead someone to say "Should we immediately agree to stop private prosecutions", even though, as we've said, both General

Counsels have said that, in their view, they don't feel that this is something that should continue. The fact that they didn't continue because they were looking for another witness, the fact that they were ceased or paused is neither here nor there with regard to should we be doing this in this manner, and we find it odd that that assumption wasn't challenged.

Do you want to add?

9 DR STEWARD: No, thank you.

MR BEER: Thank you. Can we turn to your overall conclusions on Case Study 3. They're at the foot of page 143. You tell us that:

"[Case Study 3] provides [your] description, analysis and conclusions on six issues which are important in evaluating the way in which the Post Office Executive handled the Clarke Advice. It should have been escalated to the Board. However, if it is found that there was a failure to do so, in our view it's not a failure that can simply be laid on the General

"It was a responsibility of the CEO and the Executive, not just the General Counsel, to have reviewed the conclusions of the Clarke Advice and made recommendations to the Board and, ultimately, a responsible of the Chief Executive to ensure there's 137

page 13, you set out your conclusions.

Essentially, is what you're doing from paragraph 31 onwards, identify material from each of the three case studies that's relevant to the theme that you have identified?

DR STEWARD: Indeed, that's the case.

MR BEER: To take this as an example, you say in 31, the Second Sight case, that's our second case study, illustrates the Board did not see the major problems in prosecutions, investigations and culture that had been included in the report.

"All three cases, (Second Sight, Simon Clarke and Wolstenholme) illustrate that the Executive did not systematically identify the key risks in prosecutions or in their approach to [subpostmasters] or propose how they should be mitigated. They didn't challenge the executive approach, even though they had information before them that suggested serious risks. In 2013, the Board did not take the opportunity to open a window to see the bigger picture ...

"In our view, events and discussions during July 2013 reinforced, rather than challenged, the prevailing view of the nature of the problems. The approach that all things to do with Horizon were operational, and therefore an Executive responsibility, regardless of

a focus on all top level risks in the business, so that all members of the Executive Team feel part of a shared endeavour, in which they will identify, communicate and mitigate risks in their areas and escalate them with urgency when needed."

6 Is there anything you wish to add to that overall 7 conclusion on Case Study 3?

8 DAME SANDRA: No, thank you.

9 DR STEWARD: No.

MR BEER: Thank you, that's the end of the case studies.
Can we go back briefly, then, to look at the nine themes
that you identified, in the light of them, at page 13 of
the report -- I should have started at page 11,
actually.

I'm not going to adduce each of these in evidence in the same way, the report speaks for itself and others can ask you questions if necessary about them, but just work out what's going on in the report, so we can all understand it. This is the first of the nine themes, "Board Level Governance".

If we go on that page, you identify what the issue is or what the importance of the issue is. Here, it's about strategy and risk. Then over the page, in paragraph 23, and right through to 30, you identify evidence relevant to that issue. Then at the foot of

indications of serious risk, particularly in prosecution policies and practices, was a governance failure."

3 You do that in relation to each of the nine themes;

4 is that right?

5 DAME SANDRA: That's correct.

6 MR BEER: Essentially, the structure that I've outlined?

7 DAME SANDRA: Yes.

8 MR BEER: So in relation to this one, for example, and
 9 perhaps building on what you say, would you agree that
 10 the way in which the Post Office exercised its powers of

11 private prosecution as a routine part of the business,

12 for example the creation of an investigations

department, a prosecutorial department, was

14 a significant risk across the period that you've

15 examined?

DAME SANDRA: When you say the creation, that of course goesback hundreds of years or decades.

18 MR BEER: Yes, maintenance of.

19 DAME SANDRA: Thank you, so the maintenance, the

20 continuation of that.

21 MR BEER: Yes.

**DAME SANDRA**: The question is: do we see that as a serious

23 risk?

24 MR BEER: Yes.

25 DAME SANDRA: Yes.

1	DR STEWARD: Yes, if unless there is very, very good	1	the executive is doing in running the business. So it's
2	governance in place, for prosecutions.	2	an element of the business it should be duly understood
3	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> Ah, sorry, that's certainly the case.	3	and managed by the executive.
4	DR STEWARD: It is a serious risk and there needs to be	4	In this particular case, there was a lot of external
5	proportionate levels of governance in order to ensure	5	evidence that there were problems in this area, and so
6	that the risk of prosecutions is	6	we would be expecting them to be particularly focused
7	MR BEER: Let's look at it another way round, rather than	7	upon it.
8	through the prism of whether there was a risk or not.	8	MR BEER: I'm focusing on the area in between those two
9	Would you have expected the Executive Team and the Post	9	things, a Board should be aware of all of the activities
10	Office Board to have had a clear understanding that the	10	that the company undertakes, I think it was the first
11	Post Office routinely conducted its own prosecutions of	11	part of your answer, and then the last part of the
12	subpostmasters on a very significant scale?	12	answer was: but here, there was evidence of problems
13	DAME SANDRA: We would have had that expectation that they	13	with discharge of this function.
14	would have understood that.	14	DAME SANDRA: Yes.
15	MR BEER: That they were engaged in that activity?	15	MR BEER: I'm asking about the part in the middle, perhaps:
16	DAME SANDRA: Yes, that they that they understood that	16	was the nature of the activity being undertaken one
17	the Post Office was engaged in that activity.	17	which you would reasonably expect a Board to have paid
18	MR BEER: Is that because the exercise of a private	18	particular attention to, irrespective of whether it was
19	prosecution function is an exceptional activity on the	19	problematic, in fact, ie bringing employees or
20	part of a company?	20	quasi-employees before the criminal courts?
21	DAME SANDRA: Well, first of all, it's because all business,	21	DAME SANDRA: I'm going to slightly step back and say
22	which is undertaken in the name of the company, the	22	still addressing the first point, which you say is
23	executive, who is running the company, has	23	between the first and the third point, as a board
24	a responsibility to understand what they're doing, and	24	member, when you join the board of an organisation, it
25	the board has a responsibility to have oversight of what	25	is important that you understand what that organisation
	141		142
1	does, what its purpose is and what its various	1	to, and it would also have because of that, it would
2	activities are and how those activities are organised.	2	have had a special interest, if I'd been on the Board
3	So I would expect a board member to have that general	3	and understood that, it would have had a special
4	understanding.	4	interest to me to understand what governance and
5	If I then was in this Board and I understood that	5	safeguards were being employed in that aspect of the
6	part of those activities were to bring exceptionally and	6	business.
7	perhaps anachronistically, as I believe Brian Altman	7	MR BEER: Would you have wanted to know, for example, the
8	says, prosecutions under the private route, I would have	8	extent to which there was any external oversight of
9	expected them to be particularly interested in that, had	9	those functions by, for example, a regulator?
10	they known it, yes.	10	<b>DAME SANDRA:</b> I imagine that that would be a question that
11	Is that	11	I would have wished to ask.
12	DR STEWARD: Yes.	12	MR BEER: Thank you. Can we go back to your themes. If we

13 can turn to the second theme, please, which begins on 14 page 14. Halfway down, we've got it at the top there 15 "Accountability and Clarity in Board Roles, with special 16 reference to the identification and escalation of 17 serious problems". 18 I think you set your conclusions out about this at 19 the foot of page 17 and, in fact, it's just a heading on 20 page 17. The substance begins on page 18. From 21 paragraph 49, right through to 56, you address the issue 22 of accountability and clarity in board roles with

of serious problems.

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Without going through the each of those eight or 144

special reference to the identification and escalation

MR BEER: What about if we add this into the equation: that

the Post Office was in perhaps an unusual position

the investigator of an alleged crime, it was the

the evidence about the alleged crime, it was the

prosecutor for the alleged crime, and it was the

because it was the alleged victim of any crime, it was

decision maker as to whether or not to bring proceedings

or not about the alleged crime, it was the generator of

potential beneficiary of a Proceeds of Crime order for

the payment of money back to the Post Office. Would

that series of roles have added to the risk register?

DAME SANDRA: I think it would have both added to the risk

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nine paragraphs, can you help us overall with what you found, what your conclusions were?

AME SANDRA: Yes I think at the hearinging of this report

DAME SANDRA: Yes. I think at the beginning of this report we talk about the fact that board governance and executive management are separate, and yet entirely interdependent activities to ensure appropriate governance of an organisation. The executive have a responsibility to bring information to the board; the board have a responsibility to look into the organisation and see what they think they should know in addition to that which the executive is bringing.

And accepting that the executive does the operational running of the business, the board does the oversight and the determination of strategy and the other things that we've managed. So accepting that there are differences, nonetheless, the two elements need to work together. And we have found, I believe, that these two elements didn't work effectively together in order to bring relevant information into the Board, and it's the responsibility of both of those sides. That's the first thing.

The second thing concerns the separation between operational, which is the executive's role, and oversight, which is the board role. And we've -- I believe -- is it here that we say that that

You set out your conclusions on page 22 at paragraph 66. You say:

"The identification of, or change in, a major risk should quickly lead to a communication to the Board about the risk, ideally accompanied by proposals for Board discussion and decision about how it will be tackled, including an outline programme of work which would enable ongoing Board oversight. We have seen no evidence that this was done in any of the three cases, as information was surfacing about major risks arising from [Post Office] past and current investigations and prosecutions.

"The Execs did not do this either before or at the board meeting of 16 July, on receipt of the Clarke Advice in 2013 or in 2004 when Mrs Wolstenholme's brought a counterclaim against the Post Office for £180.000 ..."

Then 68:

"Relevant information in each of our three cases was neither offered nor elicited in ways which in our view would have represented effective communication between the Executives and the Board ..."

**DAME SANDRA:** This goes back to the point I made earlier, which is about the requirement to offer and the requirement to elicit, and we find no evidence of that

distinction is good, and it prevents the Board overly interfering with what's going on in the business, because that's the Executive job, but it does depend upon the Board believing that performance is within accepted bounds of acceptable, and that they've got a good and strong Executive Team.

If they've got doubts about either of those matters, then they need to enquire further and deeper into what's going on. And we don't feel that, as is often -- as is asserted in the evidence where people have said, "Well, it was an operational matter so we weren't concerned with that from the Board". We don't think that's a robust enough defence for what happens because it was an operational matter in which there were clearly problems.

In prosecutions there were problems as was being evidenced by -- as we said, all the external evidence and, with regard to Horizon, there was also evidence that there were indeed bugs, defects and anomalies which could call into question the robustness of the system.

Do you want add?

DR STEWARD: (The witness shook her head)
 MR BEER: Can we turn to the third theme please, page 20,
 the heading above paragraph 57, "Effective
 communications in and around the Board".

being thoroughly and effectively done with regard to the matters before the Inquiry.

MR BEER: Can we turn, please, to theme 4. The heading is
 set out there above paragraph 69, "Expected experience,
 development and competence of the Board and its
 members". You set out your conclusions on page 26.
 A series of conclusions right up until paragraph 90 on
 page 27.

You address a range of things: experience of individual Board members; composition of the Board; role that the NEDs played; the NEDs' understanding of what their role was

You say in paragraph 90, on page 27, that you haven't seen evidence that sufficient thought was given to the development and operation of a unitary Board in circumstances in which Post Office ownership changed several times and problems with Horizon, prosecutions and culture were surfacing in many places, but not in the Board.

Can you expand upon or explain your conclusions here, please?

DAME SANDRA: In the transcripts and witness statements that
 we have reviewed, Non-Executives joining the Board, more
 or less to a man and woman, I think, said that they were
 not given explicit induction into the Post Office's

approach to prosecutions or to any problems in relation to Horizon. That's the first point.

The second point is that, given the changes in ownership over this period, the issue of accountability on who had the locus for doing what needed to be very clearly explained, going back to very much where we began this morning in understanding who was accountable to whom for what in those different structures. And it's not clear to us that that was really thought through.

The third element is that the appointment of non-executives was mainly, it seems to us, driven by the need, as was seen at the time, to introduce people with commercial experience of how to run a successful commercial business, which would be mindful of cutting costs, of making profit, of running it in a way in which people understood private companies run.

The very fact that it was a commercial enterprise, and yet with a very strong public service requirement, indeed in the entrustment, how that was to be played out within the Board and where the attention of the Non-Executives was to go in relation to all those aspects doesn't seem to have been confronted in induction or, indeed, in the way in which particularly the Non-Executives saw their role, which they saw as

mainly offering commercial expertise and advice and,
 indeed, their backgrounds were very much from that - from that background.

(To Dr Steward) Do you want to add?

5 DR STEWARD: No.

**MR BEER:** Can I ask you about the role of the company secretary in this regard. Can we just go back to your first report, please, and page 29. It'll come up.

At the foot of the page, paragraph 2.2.33, you tell us that:

"[The] company secretary is an officer who is appointed by the directors to advise the board on all governance matters and codes. They will normally seek to ensure compliance with company's legal obligations. Accountability is to the Board and to the Chair to ensure that all appropriate governance measures are brought to the board's attention. As regards functioning of the Board, they are technically independent of the CEO and accountable to the Chair. As an executive colleague (and in a sense subordinate to the CEO) they need a very good working relationship with the CEO, who is likely to be very influential in their relationship."

Then you set out a company secretary's accountabilities over the remaining five paragraphs.

1 DAME SANDRA: Mm.

**MR BEER:** Is the overall responsibility for the handling of a company's legal obligations and regulatory compliance normally dealt with by the company secretary?

**DAME SANDRA:** At an administrative level, that is certainly the case. That is keeping all the records, maintaining, as is said there.

You'll note that it says "working with the chair to ensure that all board members are aware of their duties and powers", and working with the chair on the board agendas. So the relationship -- the company secretary cannot be said to be solely and singly responsible for all that compliance, that is ensuring the compliance, but if he or she were to notice that the board was non-compliant, then she would have a duty to identify that.

MR BEER: Where, as between a company secretary and, if the
 company has one, a general counsel, does overall
 responsible for regulatory compliance sit?

DAME SANDRA: Well, the general counsel, as I think I said
 this morning, is not formally identified in the Codes of
 Governance, as we've identified here.

MR BEER: Just stopping you there. It's right, is it, that
 there is not any legal requirement for a company such as
 the Post Office, whether under the Companies Act or the

1 Code, to have a general counsel?

2 DAME SANDRA: There is no requirement.

3 MR BEER: Sorry, I interrupted you. I probably interrupted4 your chain of thought.

DAME SANDRA: So as there isn't that requirement, you can't
 say, well, what is that split between the company
 secretary and the general counsel?

8 MR BEER: If the company does have one, as this one did,
 9 where does responsibility for regulatory compliance
 10 reside as between those individuals.

DAME SANDRA: I think that the role of the company secretary can be kept separately from the role of the General Counsel. I think the fact that you may have a general counsel does not alter the requirements of the Company Secretary, unless there was some specific agreement about the way in which these relationships and duties were to be performed, which would be very formally laid down and may therefore lead to some change. But I don't think that an occasional "Do we have a general counsel or not" can impact on the duties of the company secretary. That's my view, although -- yes, that's my view.

MR BEER: In terms of the role of the general counsel, is
 the general counsel normally accountable to the board or
 to the CEO?

DAME SANDRA: I think, again, you might find particular arrangements. It's normally the case that the general counsel for what one might say, sort of, pay and rations administratively is going to work to the chief executive, especially if the general counsel also has other responsibilities, which are to do with their functional responsibilities for -- in the case of the Post Office, for the legal teams, and for other elements.

Indeed, as you will be aware, the General Counsel, until the day after the Board meeting of 16 July, also had responsibility for HR, which would mean that she was definitely working to the Chief Executive.

Having said all that, the normal expectation is that the general counsel would have at least an informal dotted line to the chair and to the board, so that if he or she felt that they had a matter which was germane to their legal position, which the chief executive either didn't understand or wasn't interested in, that they would be able to take that indeed to the board and to the chair

So how these relationships actually work out is going to depend upon the way in which the organisation works. What one can't do, and although I'm not an expert on it, one can't take away from the general 153

consistent in their views. Their main rule was to instil commercial disciplines to improve performance.

Your analysis of those two cases in 2013 illustrates situations where the culture and conduct of the Board did not encourage the Board in effective prioritisation, discussion and decision making about what Post Office should do with regard to past prosecutions and with future prosecutions, policy and practice.

This is under the heading of I think "Culture". Why is this relating to culture or board culture?

DAME SANDRA: I think it goes back to the earlier questions of what were the -- culturally, what were the things that were pre-occupying the Board and how did the Board also behave? So, culturally, we have seen these dominance ideas of Horizon's robust; prosecutions are in the public interest; subpostmasters occasionally are subject -- are guilty of wrongdoing; and we must defend our public position.

And that prior -- that set a context in which one approached or they approached past prosecutions and future prosecutions policy and practice. And even though there were indications that this was an area which needed their strong attention, they didn't focus

We've also seen how, in the particular Board meeting 155

1 counsel's requirements as a qualified lawyer to meet 2 certain professional obligations.

MR BEER: Do you know, in fact, whether there is
 a requirement for general counsel to hold a practising
 certificate or even for a general counsel to be
 a qualified lawyer?

7 DAME SANDRA: I personally do not. I'm not aware of that.
 8 It's not an area of my expertise.

9 MR BEER: Thank you. I won't ask you the questions that10 follow from that.

Can we go back to theme 5, please, in Report 2, which is page 29 in Report 2.

Your conclusions here are addressing theme 5, which is whether there was a Board culture supportive of effective discussion and decision making.

You say that you have seen how Post Office's governance structures were still developing in 2013.

The Executives were inexperienced in working with NEDs and running an independent company.

Earlier in 2004, the Post Office was still a subsidiary of Royal Mail Group and had only one-year experience of working with a Non-Executive Chair. The first NED to join the Chair was only appointed in that year.

The NEDs appointed at different times were 154

of 16 July, issues that were available to the Board were clouded over by the Non-Executive irritation with the way in which the Second Sight work had been handled, and they were not then brought into a focused discussion by the Chair. That's why we have identified that in terms of conduct and culture.

**MR BEER:** Thank you. You address theme 6, "Policy and practice for handling conflicts of interest", from paragraph 98 onwards, and set out your conclusions at paragraph 108, at the foot of page 31.

I think there is nothing additional in that paragraph beyond which you leave mentioned already; is that right?

14 DAME SANDRA: Yes.

MR BEER: Thank you. Theme 7 starts over the page, and thisis moving from Board to Executive; is that right?

17 DAME SANDRA: Yes.

18 MR BEER: The last three themes, 7, 8 and 9, are all to do
 19 with the Executive, the first of which is "Structures
 20 and relationships", and you set out your conclusions on
 21 this issue at paragraph 116 at the foot of page 33. You
 22 say:

"The case studies featured in the report suggest a number of obstacles to effective Executive teamworking and collective accountability."

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Over the page, thank you: 2 "It is the CEO's responsibility to make appointments 3 to senior exec positions of individuals who have the experience and skills to enable the CEO to delegate responsibility ... the CEO cannot absolve themselves 6 from responsibility on the basis they have delegated or they are not an expert in any field. They have 8 a responsibility to create relationships with their 9 executive colleagues so that, whilst not an expert in 10 every field, they can rely on and invite their 11 colleagues to keep them informed of major matters. This 12 is especially important if the colleague is not a Board 13 member nor is regularly in attendance at the Board." 14 Are you referring there to the General Counsel? DAME SANDRA: I am. 15 16 MR BEER: You say, if we scroll down, please, at 120, that 17

you found very little evidence that the group of Senior Executives in Post Office felt they were working as a team in any of the three cases featured in the report. So that's across the three case studies; is that

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22 DAME SANDRA: Yes.

> MR BEER: Then over the page, please, at 123, you say: "The Second Sight and Simon Clarke cases suggest a strained relationship between the CEO and the General 157

we think we have illustrated in relation to the case studies -- and of course the case studies are only illustrations, and as we've said, we've selected them but there may be other evidence of which we're not -which we did not review -- but it seems to us that that compound effect -- there were strained relationships, there were structural silos asserted. There was a CEO who said sometimes that she was not an expert in that, or that she was not aware of certain matters, and yet she could have been, had she asked the Executives responsible for them, to contribute in a stronger way to a collective Executive understanding.

That's especially difficult if any member is not a member of the Board, then it's the CEO's special responsibility to be able to understand sufficient about that area to be able to represent it to the Board.

So a combination of these effects meant that the effective role of Executive management and organisation, that one part of the governance which interrelates with the Board, worked suboptimally.

20 21 MR BEER: Thank you. Can we turn to theme 8, which is 22 identified in the heading that's on the page there 23 "Performance and capability", and turn to your 24 conclusions on page 36 at paragraphs 128 and 129. You 25 say:

Counsel, as well as between the Chair and the General Counsel

"... problems and dysfunctions in the way the CEO operated with some of their Senior Executive colleagues, and the apparent lack of an effective Executive Team taking collective responsibility, which were revealed in [those two cases] are a reflection of the compound impact of strained relationships, structural silos, a CEO who did not see her role as needing to be closely in touch with the all areas of the business and the fact that the GC was not a member of the Board."

Again, that's quite the list.

DAME SANDRA: Mm-hm.

14 MR BEER: On my imaginary spectrum -- and you and perhaps 15 even me don't know the beginning and the end of it --16 where does the list of issues that you have identified 17 there sit in the spectrum of seriousness? If you're 18 more content to simply say this was or was not a failure 19 in governance, then please do say so.

20 DAME SANDRA: As we've explained, governance isn't a cup of 21 water which is either fallen -- either broken or not. 22 I mean, it is a cup of water, which may be beautifully 23 overfilling with beautiful water or it may lose bits 24 along the way. And what we've identified there is the 25 problems that can arise within an Executive Team, which 158

> "... it is the role of the board to challenge and support the executive unless there is consensus amongst the NEDs that there are sufficient concerns about executive performance to conclude there should be a change at the top.

"Boards and shareholders can find themselves at a pivot point between continued support and time to plan for executive exit. One cannot, in our view, sustain a long period of 'half support' or 'half exit'. Having got to such a point it would be usual to follow through on the expressed concerns with a view to clearly demonstrated improvement, or to put in place succession plans about an exit."

What are you referring to, or to whom are you referring here?

DAME SANDRA: I don't know if it is in this evidence, I'm afraid I can't recall where we talk about it. UKGI had identified that there were concerns, both by the Board and by UKGI, about the performance of the Chief Executive. They were raised at a committee in UKGI, they went for review. The review concluded that there were problems, both with regard to the fulfilment of the strategy and with regard to the capacity to form effective relationships within the Executive Team, especially if they were with people whom the Chief 160

Executive found to be challenging. I think I've got that right.

And we also heard in testimony, in oral evidence, from the Non-Executive Directors that there'd been some concerns about -- there were certainly concerns about the General Counsel but there were also concerns about the Chief Executive. And so concerns raised, they took them to a particular point. In fact, UKGI undertook an exercise with an external headhunter to see what would be in scope for -- if the Chief Executive were to be replaced.

In fact, it was decided that she shouldn't be replaced -- it seems to us largely on the basis of the fact that she wasn't doing that badly and, also, that it was difficult to find a replacement for the given salaries.

To us, that -- how you leave that, and we -- perhaps we haven't seen all the evidence, but how you leave that is unsatisfactory from a board perspective because you're neither concluding that everything is fine, nor are you concluding that everything is awful. And that creates tensions, which we haven't looked at because this is post-2013, but it creates an unsteadiness in the board.

Do you want add anything?

But it wasn't a wholesome and wholehearted endorsement.

MR BEER: Can we turn to theme 9, please. It's identified in the heading there, "Organisational culture", and you set out your conclusions on page 39 in relation to this, through to page 41.

At 138, you say that:

"Horizon represented a huge investment and change in operations. By its scale and nature, it inevitably posed risks ... if only from popular public discourse about other large-scale system changes in public services, people involved in the commissioning and rollout of Horizon, its various guises, would have been likely to countenance that serious problems may arise during its commissioning and operation ...

"By any normal analysis of major system change, subpostmasters were very important end users. They were in the frontline of customer public service ... it would have been normal ... to listen, learn from and follow up on subpostmasters' views and experiences ..."

In paragraph 140, you say it seems to you that the culture of Post Office did not encourage listening or learning from subpostmasters. The nature of their contract with the Post Office and their experience of Post Office investigation and audit teams seems to be part of the company ethos in which subpostmasters were

MR BEER: So if we just scroll up to paragraph 127, you were
 rightly remembering the evidence of January 2014, where
 UKGI or ShEx was considering the suitability of Paula
 Vennells to remain as CEO. And I think you've had drawn to your attention some other material that exists - DAME SANDRA: Yes.
 MR BEER: -- showing continued consideration of that issue

8 well into 2014, including discussions with the
 9 Minister's office, Jo Swinson's private office,
 10 including a speaking note about what might be said to
 11 the Minister about Paula Vennells --

**DAME SANDRA:** Mm-hm.

MR BEER: -- including email exchanges about what the
 minister might be told about ShEx's view of Paula
 Vennells, and the tender document that you've just
 mentioned --

17 DAME SANDRA: Mm.

18 MR BEER: -- for essentially recruitment consultants to goout and recruit a new CEO.

Does any of that alter the substance of what you say in paragraphs 128 and 129?

DAME SANDRA: We were left with the view, even having
 reviewed that, that it still seemed to be half support.
 Perhaps it wasn't half exit because the half exit had
 not -- proved not to be a viable avenue in their view.

taken for granted and seen as insignificant. Then paragraph 141:

"The report was an opportunity for the Board to see that it was important to hear and listen to subpostmaster experiences of working both with Post Office and with Horizon and their voices remain unheard."

Then if we go on to paragraph 144, just at the foot of the previous page:

"The Board's handling of the report, it is striking that no member of the Executive of the Board asked out loud what is the right thing to do about the subpostmasters who were suffering so much and are protesting their innocence?

"So deep were the assumptions embedded in the culture of the organisation, so corrosive was the company ethos, that the Board did not call the Executive to account to face up to the Post Office's role in perpetuating miscarriages of justice, which were increasingly evident to others. Failure to uncover and correct the dark spots in the culture is a failure of management and governance."

I think they're probably the strongest words that you use in the course of this report; would I be right? **DAME SANDRA:** Mm, yes. Would you like me to expand?

MR BEER: Well, if you can explain, yes.

DAME SANDRA: Yes. And they're strong because the issue of the culture of the Post Office, with its perceptions, as we've said several times, about what Horizon was, what subpostmasters' role and approach was, and what the public duty of the Post Office was, created such a strong sense of what was right in the organisation that they found it impossible, apparently, to really hear, in 2013, that people were talking about, and had bits of evidence about, miscarriages of justice, wrongful prosecutions, and an arrogant and defensive approach. It was as if they somehow couldn't be heard.

And so we conclude on that note because we do think that it actually underlies a lot of the matters that we've been discussing today.

Perhaps before I ask Dr Steward to also comment, I say that at the beginning of these conclusions, we say even if you don't take account of these moral cultural points that we're making, actually, having a major systems development, putting in new systems, one of the basic points that we understand is that you find out from the end users what's actually happening, because in these complex systems, the end user, the facing to the public, is the place where the system is experienced absolutely at the frontline.

Those are the questions that I ask. Thank you very much for answering all of them.

Can we take a break now, sir, until tomorrow. There are questions from Core Participants and it will give them an opportunity to formulate them. I would ask, however, we start at 9.30 to ensure that we finish by 12.30.

**SIR WYN WILLIAMS:** Fine. Can you just give me an idea of how many sets of questioners there are?

MR BEER: There are five sets of questioners: the Hodge Jones & Allen Core Participants; the Howe+Co Core participants; the Hudgells Core Participants; the National Federation of SubPostmasters; and the representatives of Paula Vennells.

**SIR WYN WILLIAMS:** You'll agree with counsel suitable time estimates for each of them?

Can I say now, since it's something that concerns me, I would strongly take the view, I think, that questions from Ms Vennells' advocate should come last because I suspect, though I don't know, that questions from most other people will be with a view to making things worse for the Post Office, whereas questions from Ms Vennells may be to opposite effect, and I think she should know the full scale of what's being said before she asks her questions.

So even if you didn't take the moral and ethical matters that we're addressing at the end, you would say, from an instrumental management effectiveness approach, you'd want to listen and learn from what was going on at the frontline. And in 2013, and indeed in 2004, I think that should have been understood. So there was an instrumental reason, as well as our conclusion on the moral reason.

But on the cultural matter --

DR STEWARD: Well, just that sort of topping and tailing that is that the Board should ask questions about the culture. They can't know the culture in the way the Executive can know it, they can't shake the culture in exactly and precisely the same way that the Executive and the Management Team can, but the Board and the non-executives' question, particularly with everything that is going on around it, should be asking questions about what is the ethos of this organisation and what is the culture of this organisation.

If you look across the three case studies, there are, if you like, examples in all of them where there is -- we use the word "insignificant" or an indifference to the experiences of subpostmasters, and that appears to be part of the culture.

25 MR BEER: Thank you.

1 I said that's a strong view. I'm always open to 2 persuasion, but that's what I currently think.

3 MR BEER: Thank you very much, sir.

**SIR WYN WILLIAMS:** Now, then, how do I direct a witness about not talking to anybody when there are two of them?

6 MR BEER: I hadn't addressed that.

7 SIR WYN WILLIAMS: I think you can talk to each other.

8 MR BEER: Thank you very much.

9 SIR WYN WILLIAMS: See you tomorrow morning.

10 (4.11 pm)

(The hearing adjourned until 9.30 am the following day)

## INDEX

ROFESSOR DAME SANDRA JUNE NOBLE DAWSON (affirmed)
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Questioned by MR BEER ...... 1

	<b>1.45 [3]</b> 85/4 85/5	<b>16 July [11]</b> 77/6	<b>2004 [9]</b> 21/6 21/9	154/12
DAME SANDRA:	85/8	77/8 79/24 93/24	21/9 57/21 57/24	<b>29 October [2]</b> 3/7
[345]	<b>1.6.11 [1]</b> 36/25	94/12 104/15 109/7	75/12 147/15 154/20	4/12
DR STEWARD: [33]	<b>1.6.2 [1]</b> 30/25	124/16 147/14 153/11		3
1/13 4/5 4/8 6/16 6/20	<b>1.6.4 [1]</b> 32/10	156/1	<b>2005 [2]</b> 13/2 13/16	
8/25 9/3 9/7 9/11	1.6.8 [1] 33/23	<b>16 June [1]</b> 121/15	<b>2006 [3]</b> 7/16 12/2	3 July [2] 118/13
58/23 67/2 67/10 68/2	<b>1.6.9 [1]</b> 34/10	<b>160 [1]</b> 56/4	12/8	118/22
73/16 74/13 113/9	<b>1.8 [2]</b> 12/24 12/24	<b>161 [1]</b> 56/8	<b>2007 [1]</b> 63/18	3's [1] 34/19
117/9 121/8 122/22	10 [1] 29/9	<b>162 [1]</b> 57/15	<b>201</b> [1] 72/22	<b>3.00 [2]</b> 123/17   123/21
128/9 132/7 132/11	10.07 [1] 1/2	<b>163 [1]</b> 58/6	<b>2010 [2]</b> 25/14 26/21	<b>30 [3]</b> 39/6 43/19
133/11 136/8 137/9	<b>10.15</b> [1] 5/4	<b>164 [1]</b> 58/24	<b>2012 [1]</b> 76/10	138/24
138/9 139/6 141/1	<b>10.20 [1]</b> 5/6 <b>100 [2]</b> 12/23 109/8	<b>165 [1]</b> 59/8 <b>168 [1]</b> 60/5	<b>2013 [27]</b> 19/13	30 pages [1] 117/20
141/4 143/12 146/22	<b>103 [1]</b> 111/16	<b>169 [1]</b> 60/6	21/10 34/16 46/18	30 years [1] 8/24
150/5 166/10	<b>105 [1]</b> 114/5	<b>17 [2]</b> 144/19 144/20	75/25 78/8 81/4 100/6	
MR BEER: [368]	<b>108 [2]</b> 76/2 156/10	<b>17 July [2]</b> 118/21	101/7 108/19 115/3	<b>303 [1]</b> 101/6
SIR WYN WILLIAMS:	109 [2] 117/17	119/3	115/15 117/19 118/19	
[16] 1/14 1/20 1/23	117/20	<b>170 [1]</b> 61/6	124/3 139/18 139/22	<b>31 [3]</b> 139/2 139/7
4/16 5/1 37/18 37/23	<b>11 [2]</b> 34/11 138/13	<b>171 [1]</b> 61/6	147/15 154/17 155/3	156/10
49/19 49/23 50/11 85/5 167/8 167/15	11 November [2]	<b>172 [1]</b> 61/18	161/23 165/9 166/5	<b>310 [1]</b> 103/1
168/4 168/7 168/9	3/19 4/13	<b>176 [1]</b> 5/14	<b>2013-14 [1]</b> 136/14	<b>311 [1]</b> 103/20
	<b>11 years [1]</b> 7/16	<b>18 [1]</b> 144/20	<b>2014 [2]</b> 162/2 162/8	<b>312 [1]</b> 103/1
\$	<b>11.15 [1]</b> 37/20	<b>180,000 [1]</b> 147/17	<b>2015</b> [1] 119/25	<b>323 [1]</b> 104/21
<b>\$50,000 [1]</b> 81/21		<b>180k [1]</b> 56/1	<b>2019 [5]</b> 10/25 16/3	325 [1] 107/4
	<b>112 [2]</b> 35/3 35/5	<b>187 [1]</b> 65/19	18/17 33/14 34/16	<b>327 [1]</b> 107/22
	<b>114 [1]</b> 5/10	<b>188 [1]</b> 65/24	<b>2024 [9]</b> 1/1 3/5 3/7	<b>33 [3]</b> 4/15 5/9
<b>'13 [1]</b> 119/24	<b>116 [2]</b> 119/23	<b>193 [3]</b> 66/5 66/6	3/18 4/12 9/22 9/24	156/21
<b>'93 [1]</b> 12/4	156/21	70/13	20/20 115/3	<b>346 [1]</b> 109/3
<b>'94 [1]</b> 12/4	<b>117 [1]</b> 123/25	<b>194 [1]</b> 67/11	<b>203 [1]</b> 74/10 <b>205 [2]</b> 71/14 74/21	<b>35 [1]</b> 38/2   <b>36 [2]</b> 44/24 159/24
<b>'95 [1]</b> 25/7	<b>12 [2]</b> 1/1 24/16 <b>12-year [1]</b> 34/11	<b>195 [2]</b> 68/18 70/1 <b>196 [3]</b> 66/6 70/3	<b>205</b> [2] 71/14 74/21 <b>21</b> [2] 38/1 38/2	370 [1] 6/2
<b>'98 [2]</b> 25/7 51/4	12.30 [1] 167/7	70/13	<b>21 [2]</b> 36/1 36/2 <b>212 [1]</b> 76/4	<b>375 [1]</b> 109/9
'Alleged [1] 100/1	<b>12.45</b> [1] 85/6	<b>198 [1]</b> 71/14	<b>214 [2]</b> 76/4 76/23	<b>377 [1]</b> 110/7
'black [1] 91/13	<b>120 [1]</b> 157/16	<b>1990s [2]</b> 50/15	<b>217 [2]</b> 78/5 78/8	<b>378 [1]</b> 110/14
'bugs' [1] 91/24	<b>123 [1]</b> 157/23	51/23	<b>22 [2]</b> 39/12 147/1	<b>389 [1]</b> 111/16
'defects' [1] 91/24 'half [2] 160/9 160/9	<b>127 [1]</b> 162/1	<b>1992 [1]</b> 25/6	<b>222 [1]</b> 5/21	<b>39 [1]</b> 163/4
'independent' [1]	<b>128 [3]</b> 124/5 159/24	<b>1994 [1]</b> 19/11	<b>23 [1]</b> 138/24	<b>396 [1]</b> 114/5
80/2	162/21	<b>1995 [2]</b> 7/16 12/8	<b>23 January [1]</b> 100/5	<b>397 [1]</b> 114/18
'no [1] 76/20	<b>129 [2]</b> 159/24	<b>1996 [2]</b> 50/16 51/2	<b>238 [2]</b> 79/19 79/20	<b>399 [1]</b> 116/6
'should [1] 59/16	162/21	<b>1998 [3]</b> 12/2 51/1	<b>239 [1]</b> 80/25	4
'special [1] 28/21	<b>13 [3]</b> 20/2 138/12	51/4	<b>24 [1]</b> 39/14	
'special/individual [1]	139/1	<b>1999 [9]</b> 10/25 16/3	<b>240 [1]</b> 81/3	<b>4.11 pm [1]</b> 168/10
28/21	<b>13 pages [1]</b> 24/16	18/17 33/14 33/22	<b>241 [2]</b> 82/3 82/8	4.16 [1] 119/9
'the [1] 65/23	<b>131 [3]</b> 6/24 8/19	35/12 35/12 52/2	<b>242 [2]</b> 79/20 82/23	<b>4.2.10 [1]</b> 46/13
<b>'to [1]</b> 100/8	129/7	52/14	<b>25 [1]</b> 25/13	<b>4.2.9 [1]</b> 46/13 <b>400 [2]</b> 116/7 116/11
1	<b>132 [1]</b> 8/20	2	<b>25,000 [1]</b> 55/23	<b>41 [1]</b> 163/5
	133 [1] 3/20	<b>2.0 [1]</b> 51/4	<b>26 [1]</b> 148/6   <b>26 March [3]</b> 3/5 3/18	
1 hour [1] 37/15	133 pages [1] 3/5	<b>2.1</b> [1] 12/7	<b>26 March [3]</b>	<b>42 [2]</b> 54/19 55/10
1 July [5] 76/24	<b>134 [1]</b> 133/8 <b>135 [1]</b> 134/6	<b>2.1</b> [1] 12/7 <b>2.2</b> [1] 39/3	<b>262 [1]</b> 85/17	<b>43 [1]</b> 55/19
100/12 101/7 102/18	<b>137</b> [1] 134/7	<b>2.2.33 [1]</b> 150/9	<b>264 [1]</b> 87/17	<b>438 [1]</b> 119/22
104/24 1 million [3] 57/19	<b>138</b> [1] 163/6	<b>2.3 [2]</b> 12/24 13/10	<b>265 [1]</b> 90/14	<b>439 [1]</b> 121/18
59/22 64/4	<b>14 [2]</b> 136/14 144/14	<b>2.4</b> [1] 43/22	<b>266 [1]</b> 91/19	<b>44 [1]</b> 56/3
1's [1] 34/17	<b>140 [1]</b> 163/20	<b>2.47 [1]</b> 123/19	<b>268 [1]</b> 93/21	<b>447 [1]</b> 122/7
<b>1.0 [1]</b> 51/4	<b>141 [2]</b> 135/9 164/2	<b>2.5 [1]</b> 43/23	<b>269 [1]</b> 94/10	<b>448 [2]</b> 119/22 122/7
<b>1.1 [1]</b> 12/7	<b>143 [1]</b> 137/12	<b>20 [3]</b> 24/16 36/24	<b>27 [4]</b> 39/17 40/17	<b>45 [2]</b> 56/4 56/8
<b>1.2 [2]</b> 24/10 24/11	<b>144 [1]</b> 164/8	146/23	148/8 148/13	<b>47</b> [1] 45/20
<b>1.2.1 [1]</b> 26/2	<b>15 [2]</b> 30/23 37/15	<b>20</b> years [1] 25/23	<b>270 [1]</b> 95/1	<b>48 [3]</b> 5/14 46/12
<b>1.2.3 [1]</b> 26/17	<b>150 [2]</b> 55/19 55/20	<b>20-year [1]</b> 33/15	<b>271 [1]</b> 85/17	62/11
<b>1.2.4 [1]</b> 27/8	<b>154 [1]</b> 6/7	<b>2000 [5]</b> 10/4 35/12	<b>284 [1]</b> 95/22	<b>483 [1]</b> 124/5
<b>1.25 [1]</b> 28/18	<b>154 pages [1]</b> 3/7	36/1 49/21 50/2	<b>285</b> [1] 95/23	<b>49 [1]</b> 144/21 <b>490 [2]</b> 129/8 129/10
<b>1.3.1 [1]</b> 29/10	<b>155 [1]</b> 56/3	<b>2001 [6]</b> 13/17 13/22	<b>287 [1]</b> 96/16	<b>491 [3]</b> 129/9 129/10
<b>1.4.1 [1]</b> 30/7	<b>16 [4]</b> 97/16 104/18	33/22 36/1 37/6 46/18 <b>2003 [2]</b> 46/14 46/22		131/15
	105/5 108/25	2003 [2] 40/14 40/22	<b>29 [3]</b> 39/21 150/8	.01/10
			- 1	44) DAME SANDRA: - 491

1	5	23/20 26/18 34/17	accessible [1]	145/6	124/19 126/3 126/23
- 1 -		35/19 38/8 42/20 45/4	103/10	activity [6] 29/18	127/4 127/5 127/13
	<b>5.1.2 [1]</b> 47/13	47/3 48/23 49/15	accompanied [2]	45/6 141/15 141/17	128/1 128/19 128/20
	<b>50 [1]</b> 63/12	49/23 51/20 52/25	105/2 147/5	141/19 142/16	130/9 131/3 132/20
	5 <b>0 years [1]</b> 1/16	56/15 56/22 57/18	accompany [1] 95/2	actors [3] 106/18	134/14 136/4 136/5
	<b>500 [1]</b> 133/8	57/21 59/24 60/3 61/6		106/22 111/14	136/18 137/16 137/23
	<b>502 [2]</b> 133/20				
	133/20	64/11 66/15 67/17	58/25 108/6	Acts [1] 12/8	147/15 150/1
1	<b>503 [1]</b> 133/8	67/24 68/1 68/9 68/9	account [14] 6/11	actually [10] 9/25	advices [2] 122/6
	<b>51 [1]</b> 65/17	69/7 69/11 71/23 72/5		47/2 63/1 74/13	132/9
	<b>35 [1]</b> 135/10	72/11 72/23 73/9 74/9		121/19 138/14 153/22	
	<b>37 [1]</b> 136/9	74/9 78/16 78/23	45/12 45/13 76/25	165/14 165/19 165/22	
	<b>54 [2]</b> 45/23 55/10	78/24 80/16 80/17	133/25 164/18 165/18	add [19] 14/11 58/21	150/12
	<b>55 [2]</b> 47/11 76/1	88/4 89/20 90/11	accountabilities [4]	66/25 71/3 74/12	advised [1] 8/22
		90/17 91/2 91/4 91/5	39/4 39/15 40/11	94/16 117/8 121/7	adviser [2] 88/25
- 1	<b>56 [3]</b> 76/5 77/16	94/3 94/4 96/25 98/12	150/25	128/8 133/9 133/11	89/15
- 1	144/21	100/14 100/17 101/19	accountability [25]	135/22 136/7 137/8	advisers [1] 122/19
	<b>57 [3]</b> 76/5 78/6	102/20 103/4 103/7	31/1 31/4 31/20 31/24		advocate [1] 167/19
- 1	146/24	107/10 107/16 109/8	32/11 32/25 33/11	150/4 161/25	affairs [2] 111/21
{	<b>58 [2]</b> 78/5 78/9	110/25 111/24 112/25		added [4] 63/14 97/3	116/19
	3	113/23 113/25 114/9	38/3 38/6 38/12 38/17		affect [1] 94/21
- 1 -		114/15 115/6 116/12			
	<b>5.2.2 [1]</b> 50/13			<b>addition [3]</b> 7/20 53/2 145/11	
	<b>60 [1]</b> 5/21	116/16 118/15 121/21	40/3 64/19 144/15		169/2 169/4
16	<b>33 [2]</b> 48/21 50/13	121/21 122/4 126/7	144/22 149/4 150/15	additional [3] 18/21	aficionados [1] 35/11
- 6	<b>55 [1]</b> 79/19	126/7 126/8 126/13	156/25	96/23 156/11	afraid [2] 27/22
	<b>66 [1]</b> 147/2	126/17 128/22 132/2	accountable [10]	address [11] 2/19	160/17
	<b>8 [1]</b> 147/18	133/10 133/24 134/1	31/9 31/13 36/16 38/7	14/20 39/14 45/21	after [10] 5/18 11/20
	<b>69 [1</b> ] 148/4	135/21 135/24 136/20		55/6 62/16 108/20	16/15 26/23 43/18
-		138/17 138/23 142/15		129/20 144/21 148/9	77/8 100/20 106/8
7	7	143/13 143/18 143/19	accountably [1]	156/7	122/2 153/11
- 17	<b>7.1.3 [1]</b> 52/12	144/18 145/4 146/7	30/16	addressed [12] 2/15	afternoon [3] 85/9
	<b>'0 [2]</b> 51/21 85/14	147/5 147/6 147/10	<b>Accounting [1]</b> 13/25	2/17 54/12 62/23	85/10 123/16
	<b>'5 [2]</b> 95/20 99/22	147/24 150/6 152/16	accounts [2] 109/21	98/15 112/21 125/2	again [16] 4/12 33/21
	<b>6 [1]</b> 99/20	155/6 159/15 160/3	116/25	130/24 131/14 132/5	34/7 44/25 45/21
- 1 4					
	<b>77 [2]</b> 53/13 53/13	160/13 160/17 160/19	achieved [1] 10/13	132/6 168/6	47/17 51/22 53/14
7	<b>77 [2]</b> 53/13 53/13	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1]	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19
2	77 [2] 53/13 53/13 3	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20
8	77 [2] 53/13 53/13 3 3 July [6] 77/3	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1]	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12
8	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9
8	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16
8	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 above [10] 30/25	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17
8	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 above [10] 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21
**************************************	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 <b>above [10]</b> 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10
**************************************	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 <b>above [10]</b> 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1]	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20
8 8 8 8 8	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 <b>above [10]</b> 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 <b>absence [3]</b> 66/2	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11
8 8 8 8 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 <b>above [10]</b> 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 <b>absence [3]</b> 66/2 103/24 105/16	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1]	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11 agree [5] 7/5 97/1
\$ 8 8 8 8 8 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22  D April [1] 9/24	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 above [10] 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 absence [3] 66/2 103/24 105/16 absent [2] 43/11	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7 86/20 86/22 93/6	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1] 86/6	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11
## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ## ##	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22  9 April [1] 9/24 0.30 [2] 167/6 168/11	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 <b>above [10]</b> 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 <b>absence [3]</b> 66/2 103/24 105/16	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7 86/20 86/22 93/6 112/6 112/25 113/6	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1]	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11 agree [5] 7/5 97/1 136/24 140/9 167/15
8 8 8 8 8 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18  30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22  30 April [1] 9/24 30 [2] 167/6 168/11	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 above [10] 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 absence [3] 66/2 103/24 105/16 absent [2] 43/11	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7 86/20 86/22 93/6	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1] 86/6	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11 agree [5] 7/5 97/1 136/24 140/9 167/15
8 8 8 8 8 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18  30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22  30 April [1] 9/24 30 [2] 167/6 168/11	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 <b>above [10]</b> 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 <b>absence [3]</b> 66/2 103/24 105/16 <b>absent [2]</b> 43/11	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7 86/20 86/22 93/6 112/6 112/25 113/6	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1] 86/6 administrative [2]	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11 agree [5] 7/5 97/1 136/24 140/9 167/15 agreed [6] 2/18 98/21
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	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22  9  9 April [1] 9/24 9.30 [2] 167/6 168/11 90 [2] 148/7 148/13 92 [2] 53/13 109/2 93 [4] 11/19 12/6 14/17 51/3	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 above [10] 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 absence [3] 66/2 103/24 105/16 absent [2] 43/11 43/12 absolutely [6] 23/18 28/6 78/3 99/4 132/11 165/25 absolve [3] 65/15	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7 86/20 86/22 93/6 112/6 112/25 113/6 113/9 133/12 140/14 157/20 166/20 act [12] 12/13 14/23 23/23 50/16 50/19	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1] 86/6 administrative [2] 96/25 151/5 administratively [1] 153/4 adopt [2] 2/2 86/4	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11 agree [5] 7/5 97/1 136/24 140/9 167/15 agreed [6] 2/18 98/21 99/16 124/12 124/20 134/18 agreement [5] 72/11 79/1 97/5 98/18
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	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22  30 April [1] 9/24 30 [2] 167/6 168/11 30 [2] 148/7 148/13 30 [2] 153/13 109/2 31 [4] 11/19 12/6 14/17 51/3 34 [2] 14/11 14/25 38 [1] 156/9 39 [2] 6/1 13/24	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 above [10] 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 absence [3] 66/2 103/24 105/16 absent [2] 43/11 43/12 absolutely [6] 23/18 28/6 78/3 99/4 132/11 165/25 absolve [3] 65/15 92/19 157/5 academic [4] 7/9 7/20 17/15 31/22	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7 86/20 86/22 93/6 112/6 112/25 113/6 113/9 133/12 140/14 157/20 166/20 act [12] 12/13 14/23 23/23 50/16 50/19 51/1 51/2 51/5 51/7 56/19 129/14 151/25 acted [3] 61/20 70/4	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1] 86/6 administrative [2] 96/25 151/5 administratively [1] 153/4 adopt [2] 2/2 86/4 adopted [1] 11/14 Adrian [1] 44/15 advance [1] 101/11	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11 agree [5] 7/5 97/1 136/24 140/9 167/15 agreed [6] 2/18 98/21 99/16 124/12 124/20 134/18 agreement [5] 72/11 79/1 97/5 98/18 152/15 agrees [2] 2/23 2/23 AGS [1] 32/21
	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22  9 April [1] 9/24 9 30 [2] 167/6 168/11 10 [2] 148/7 148/13 10 [2] 53/13 109/2 13 [4] 11/19 12/6 14/17 51/3 14 [2] 14/11 14/25 18 [1] 156/9	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 above [10] 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 absence [3] 66/2 103/24 105/16 absent [2] 43/11 43/12 absolutely [6] 23/18 28/6 78/3 99/4 132/11 165/25 absolve [3] 65/15 92/19 157/5 academic [4] 7/9 7/20 17/15 31/22 accept [4] 88/14	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7 86/20 86/22 93/6 112/6 112/25 113/6 113/9 133/12 140/14 157/20 166/20 act [12] 12/13 14/23 23/23 50/16 50/19 51/1 51/2 51/5 51/7 56/19 129/14 151/25 acted [3] 61/20 70/4	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1] 86/6 administrative [2] 96/25 151/5 administratively [1] 153/4 adopt [2] 2/2 86/4 adopted [1] 11/14 Adrian [1] 44/15 advance [1] 101/11 advantage [1] 80/1	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11 agree [5] 7/5 97/1 136/24 140/9 167/15 agreed [6] 2/18 98/21 99/16 124/12 124/20 134/18 agreement [5] 72/11 79/1 97/5 98/18 152/15 agrees [2] 2/23 2/23 AGS [1] 32/21 Ah [4] 28/10 31/23
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	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22  9 April [1] 9/24 0.30 [2] 167/6 168/11 00 [2] 148/7 148/13 02 [2] 53/13 109/2 03 [4] 11/19 12/6 14/17 51/3 04 [2] 14/11 14/25 08 [1] 156/9 09 [2] 6/1 13/24  Abided [1] 40/13	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 above [10] 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 absence [3] 66/2 103/24 105/16 absent [2] 43/11 43/12 absolutely [6] 23/18 28/6 78/3 99/4 132/11 165/25 absolve [3] 65/15 92/19 157/5 academic [4] 7/9 7/20 17/15 31/22 accept [4] 88/14 88/16 88/20 117/14 acceptable [1] 146/5	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7 86/20 86/22 93/6 112/6 112/25 113/6 113/9 133/12 140/14 157/20 166/20 act [12] 12/13 14/23 23/23 50/16 50/19 51/1 51/2 51/5 51/7 56/19 129/14 151/25 acted [3] 61/20 70/4 124/14 action [6] 57/12 92/19 118/23 124/10	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1] 86/6 administrative [2] 96/25 151/5 administratively [1] 153/4 adopt [2] 2/2 86/4 adopted [1] 11/14 Adrian [1] 44/15 advance [1] 101/11 advantage [1] 80/1 advice [45] 17/11	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11 agree [5] 7/5 97/1 136/24 140/9 167/15 agreed [6] 2/18 98/21 99/16 124/12 124/20 134/18 agreement [5] 72/11 79/1 97/5 98/18 152/15 agrees [2] 2/23 2/23 AGS [1] 32/21 Ah [4] 28/10 31/23 69/21 141/3 ahead [2] 48/14
	77 [2] 53/13 53/13  3  3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22  9 April [1] 9/24 0.30 [2] 167/6 168/11 00 [2] 148/7 148/13 02 [2] 53/13 109/2 03 [4] 11/19 12/6 14/17 51/3 04 [2] 14/11 14/25 08 [1] 156/9 09 [2] 6/1 13/24  Abided [1] 40/13 able [8] 19/25 119/16	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 above [10] 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 absence [3] 66/2 103/24 105/16 absent [2] 43/11 43/12 absolutely [6] 23/18 28/6 78/3 99/4 132/11 165/25 absolve [3] 65/15 92/19 157/5 academic [4] 7/9 7/20 17/15 31/22 accept [4] 88/14 88/16 88/20 117/14 acceptable [1] 146/5 acceptance [1] 81/19	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7 86/20 86/22 93/6 112/6 112/25 113/6 113/9 133/12 140/14 157/20 166/20 act [12] 12/13 14/23 23/23 50/16 50/19 51/1 51/2 51/5 51/7 56/19 129/14 151/25 acted [3] 61/20 70/4 124/14 action [6] 57/12 92/19 118/23 124/10 124/14 128/23	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1] 86/6 administrative [2] 96/25 151/5 administratively [1] 153/4 adopted [1] 11/14 Adrian [1] 44/15 advance [1] 101/11 advantage [1] 80/1 advice [45] 17/11 17/19 19/14 55/2 72/20 117/18 117/23	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11 agree [5] 7/5 97/1 136/24 140/9 167/15 agreed [6] 2/18 98/21 99/16 124/12 124/20 134/18 agreement [5] 72/11 79/1 97/5 98/18 152/15 agrees [2] 2/23 2/23 AGS [1] 32/21 Ah [4] 28/10 31/23 69/21 141/3 ahead [2] 48/14 48/16
	3 July [6] 77/3 3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22 30 April [1] 9/24 30 [2] 167/6 168/11 30 [2] 148/7 148/13 30 [2] 153/13 109/2 30 [4] 11/19 12/6 14/17 51/3 30 [2] 14/11 14/25 30 [3] 14/11 14/25 30 [4] 156/9 30 [6] 1 13/24 4 3 bided [1] 40/13 3 ble [8] 19/25 119/16 120/8 126/14 134/10	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 above [10] 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 absence [3] 66/2 103/24 105/16 absent [2] 43/11 43/12 absolutely [6] 23/18 28/6 78/3 99/4 132/11 165/25 absolve [3] 65/15 92/19 157/5 academic [4] 7/9 7/20 17/15 31/22 accept [4] 88/14 88/16 88/20 117/14 acceptable [1] 146/5 acceptance [1] 81/19 accepted [11] 24/1	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7 86/20 86/22 93/6 112/6 112/25 113/6 113/9 133/12 140/14 157/20 166/20 act [12] 12/13 14/23 23/23 50/16 50/19 51/1 51/2 51/5 51/7 56/19 129/14 151/25 acted [3] 61/20 70/4 124/14 action [6] 57/12 92/19 118/23 124/10 124/14 128/23 actions [5] 21/20	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1] 86/6 administrative [2] 96/25 151/5 administratively [1] 153/4 adopte [2] 2/2 86/4 adopted [1] 11/14 Adrian [1] 44/15 advance [1] 101/11 advantage [1] 80/1 advice [45] 17/11 17/19 19/14 55/2 72/20 117/18 117/23 118/5 118/13 118/17	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11 agree [5] 7/5 97/1 136/24 140/9 167/15 agreed [6] 2/18 98/21 99/16 124/12 124/20 134/18 agreement [5] 72/11 79/1 97/5 98/18 152/15 agrees [2] 2/23 2/23 AGS [1] 32/21 Ah [4] 28/10 31/23 69/21 141/3 ahead [2] 48/14 48/16 aim [1] 2/25
	3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22  D April [1] 9/24 0.30 [2] 167/6 168/11 00 [2] 148/7 148/13 02 [2] 53/13 109/2 03 [4] 11/19 12/6 14/17 51/3 04 [2] 14/11 14/25 09 [2] 6/1 13/24  A bided [1] 40/13 able [8] 19/25 119/16 120/8 126/14 134/10 153/20 159/15 159/16	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 above [10] 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 absence [3] 66/2 103/24 105/16 absent [2] 43/11 43/12 absolutely [6] 23/18 28/6 78/3 99/4 132/11 165/25 absolve [3] 65/15 92/19 157/5 academic [4] 7/9 7/20 17/15 31/22 accept [4] 88/14 88/16 88/20 117/14 acceptable [1] 146/5 acceptance [1] 81/19 accepted [11] 24/1 29/11 49/16 66/23	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7 86/20 86/22 93/6 112/6 112/25 113/6 113/9 133/12 140/14 157/20 166/20 act [12] 12/13 14/23 23/23 50/16 50/19 51/1 51/2 51/5 51/7 56/19 129/14 151/25 acted [3] 61/20 70/4 124/14 action [6] 57/12 92/19 118/23 124/10 124/14 128/23 actions [5] 21/20 39/1 87/2 99/16 119/7	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1] 86/6 administrative [2] 96/25 151/5 administratively [1] 153/4 adopte [2] 2/2 86/4 adopted [1] 11/14 Adrian [1] 44/15 advance [1] 101/11 advantage [1] 80/1 advice [45] 17/11 17/19 19/14 55/2 72/20 117/18 117/23 118/5 118/13 118/17 118/20 119/3 119/10	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11 agree [5] 7/5 97/1 136/24 140/9 167/15 agreed [6] 2/18 98/21 99/16 124/12 124/20 134/18 agreement [5] 72/11 79/1 97/5 98/18 152/15 agrees [2] 2/23 2/23 AGS [1] 32/21 Ah [4] 28/10 31/23 69/21 141/3 ahead [2] 48/14 48/16 aim [1] 2/25 airing [1] 61/13
	3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22 30 April [1] 9/24 30 [2] 167/6 168/11 30 [2] 148/7 148/13 30 [2] 148/7 148/13 30 [2] 153/13 109/2 31 [4] 11/19 12/6 14/17 51/3 34 [2] 14/11 14/25 38 [1] 156/9 39 [2] 6/1 13/24 4 3 bided [1] 40/13 3 ble [8] 19/25 119/16 120/8 126/14 134/10 153/20 159/15 159/16 3 bout [136] 1/18 2/11	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 above [10] 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 absence [3] 66/2 103/24 105/16 absent [2] 43/11 43/12 absolutely [6] 23/18 28/6 78/3 99/4 132/11 165/25 absolve [3] 65/15 92/19 157/5 academic [4] 7/9 7/20 17/15 31/22 accept [4] 88/14 88/16 88/20 117/14 acceptable [1] 146/5 acceptance [1] 81/19 accepted [11] 24/1 29/11 49/16 66/23 66/24 69/5 81/4 81/12	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7 86/20 86/22 93/6 112/6 112/25 113/6 113/9 133/12 140/14 157/20 166/20 act [12] 12/13 14/23 23/23 50/16 50/19 51/1 51/2 51/5 51/7 56/19 129/14 151/25 acted [3] 61/20 70/4 124/14 action [6] 57/12 92/19 118/23 124/10 124/14 128/23 actions [5] 21/20 39/1 87/2 99/16 119/7 active [2] 32/21	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1] 86/6 administrative [2] 96/25 151/5 administratively [1] 153/4 adopte [2] 2/2 86/4 adopted [1] 11/14 Adrian [1] 44/15 advance [1] 101/11 advantage [1] 80/1 advice [45] 17/11 17/19 19/14 55/2 72/20 117/18 117/23 118/5 118/13 118/17 118/20 119/3 119/10 119/21 120/1 120/14	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11 agree [5] 7/5 97/1 136/24 140/9 167/15 agreed [6] 2/18 98/21 99/16 124/12 124/20 134/18 agreement [5] 72/11 79/1 97/5 98/18 152/15 agrees [2] 2/23 2/23 AGS [1] 32/21 Ah [4] 28/10 31/23 69/21 141/3 ahead [2] 48/14 48/16 aim [1] 2/25 airing [1] 61/13 Albeit [1] 50/12
	3 July [6] 77/3 3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22 30 April [1] 9/24 30 [2] 167/6 168/11 30 [2] 148/7 148/13 30 [2] 148/7 148/13 30 [2] 13/13 109/2 31 [4] 11/19 12/6 14/17 51/3 30 [4] 11/19 12/6 14/17 51/3 30 [2] 16/1 13/24 4 3 bided [1] 40/13 3 ble [8] 19/25 119/16 120/8 126/14 134/10 153/20 159/15 159/16 3 bout [136] 1/18 2/11 2/15 5/23 9/25 13/14	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 above [10] 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 absence [3] 66/2 103/24 105/16 absent [2] 43/11 43/12 absolutely [6] 23/18 28/6 78/3 99/4 132/11 165/25 absolve [3] 65/15 92/19 157/5 academic [4] 7/9 7/20 17/15 31/22 accept [4] 88/14 88/16 88/20 117/14 acceptable [1] 146/5 acceptance [1] 81/19 accepted [11] 24/1 29/11 49/16 66/23 66/24 69/5 81/4 81/12 114/24 135/18 146/5	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7 86/20 86/22 93/6 112/6 112/25 113/6 113/9 133/12 140/14 157/20 166/20 act [12] 12/13 14/23 23/23 50/16 50/19 51/1 51/2 51/5 51/7 56/19 129/14 151/25 acted [3] 61/20 70/4 124/14 action [6] 57/12 92/19 118/23 124/10 124/14 128/23 actions [5] 21/20 39/1 87/2 99/16 119/7 active [2] 32/21 44/17	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1] 86/6 administrative [2] 96/25 151/5 administratively [1] 153/4 adopt [2] 2/2 86/4 adopted [1] 11/14 Adrian [1] 44/15 advance [1] 101/11 advantage [1] 80/1 advice [45] 17/11 17/19 19/14 55/2 72/20 117/18 117/23 118/5 118/13 118/17 118/20 119/3 119/10 119/21 120/1 120/14 120/19 121/9 121/17	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11 agree [5] 7/5 97/1 136/24 140/9 167/15 agreed [6] 2/18 98/21 99/16 124/12 124/20 134/18 agreement [5] 72/11 79/1 97/5 98/18 152/15 agrees [2] 2/23 2/23 AGS [1] 32/21 Ah [4] 28/10 31/23 69/21 141/3 ahead [2] 48/14 48/16 aim [1] 2/25 airing [1] 61/13 Albeit [1] 50/12 alert [3] 80/5 102/16
	3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22  D April [1] 9/24 0.30 [2] 167/6 168/11 00 [2] 148/7 148/13 02 [2] 53/13 109/2 03 [4] 11/19 12/6 14/17 51/3 04 [2] 14/11 14/25 08 [1] 156/9 09 [2] 6/1 13/24  A bided [1] 40/13 able [8] 19/25 119/16 120/8 126/14 134/10 153/20 159/15 159/16 about [136] 1/18 2/11 2/15 5/23 9/25 13/14 13/25 14/2 14/18	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 above [10] 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 absence [3] 66/2 103/24 105/16 absent [2] 43/11 43/12 absolutely [6] 23/18 28/6 78/3 99/4 132/11 165/25 absolve [3] 65/15 92/19 157/5 academic [4] 7/9 7/20 17/15 31/22 accept [4] 88/14 88/16 88/20 117/14 acceptable [1] 146/5 acceptance [1] 81/19 accepted [11] 24/1 29/11 49/16 66/23 66/24 69/5 81/4 81/12 114/24 135/18 146/5 accepting [3] 38/24	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7 86/20 86/22 93/6 112/6 112/25 113/6 113/9 133/12 140/14 157/20 166/20 act [12] 12/13 14/23 23/23 50/16 50/19 51/1 51/2 51/5 51/7 56/19 129/14 151/25 acted [3] 61/20 70/4 124/14 action [6] 57/12 92/19 118/23 124/10 124/14 128/23 actions [5] 21/20 39/1 87/2 99/16 119/7 active [2] 32/21 44/17 activities [5] 142/9	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1] 86/6 administrative [2] 96/25 151/5 administratively [1] 153/4 adopt [2] 2/2 86/4 adopted [1] 11/14 Adrian [1] 44/15 advance [1] 101/11 advantage [1] 80/1 advice [45] 17/11 17/19 19/14 55/2 72/20 117/18 117/23 118/5 118/13 118/17 118/20 119/3 119/10 119/21 120/1 120/14 120/19 121/9 121/17 121/19 122/21 122/22	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11 agree [5] 7/5 97/1 136/24 140/9 167/15 agreed [6] 2/18 98/21 99/16 124/12 124/20 134/18 agreement [5] 72/11 79/1 97/5 98/18 152/15 agrees [2] 2/23 2/23 AGS [1] 32/21 Ah [4] 28/10 31/23 69/21 141/3 ahead [2] 48/14 48/16 aim [1] 2/25 airing [1] 61/13 Albeit [1] 50/12 alert [3] 80/5 102/16 108/2
	3 July [6] 77/3 3 July [6] 77/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 105/18 118/18 30 [1] 99/22 32 [1] 102/25 33 [1] 102/25 36 [1] 104/22 30 April [1] 9/24 30 [2] 167/6 168/11 30 [2] 148/7 148/13 30 [2] 148/7 148/13 30 [2] 13/13 109/2 31 [4] 11/19 12/6 14/17 51/3 30 [4] 11/19 12/6 14/17 51/3 30 [2] 16/1 13/24 4 3 bided [1] 40/13 3 ble [8] 19/25 119/16 120/8 126/14 134/10 153/20 159/15 159/16 3 bout [136] 1/18 2/11 2/15 5/23 9/25 13/14	160/13 160/17 160/19 161/5 161/5 161/6 162/10 162/11 162/13 162/14 163/10 164/12 165/4 165/9 165/10 166/11 166/18 168/5 above [10] 30/25 32/14 42/17 65/12 104/2 110/2 110/2 110/4 146/24 148/4 absence [3] 66/2 103/24 105/16 absent [2] 43/11 43/12 absolutely [6] 23/18 28/6 78/3 99/4 132/11 165/25 absolve [3] 65/15 92/19 157/5 academic [4] 7/9 7/20 17/15 31/22 accept [4] 88/14 88/16 88/20 117/14 acceptable [1] 146/5 acceptance [1] 81/19 accepted [11] 24/1 29/11 49/16 66/23 66/24 69/5 81/4 81/12 114/24 135/18 146/5	achieved [1] 10/13 acknowledge [1] 126/2 acknowledged [1] 130/16 acronym [1] 5/18 acronyms [1] 32/4 across [25] 12/1 20/20 27/19 31/15 33/14 33/18 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 36/13 40/24 54/21 57/7 86/20 86/22 93/6 112/6 112/25 113/6 113/9 133/12 140/14 157/20 166/20 act [12] 12/13 14/23 23/23 50/16 50/19 51/1 51/2 51/5 51/7 56/19 129/14 151/25 acted [3] 61/20 70/4 124/14 action [6] 57/12 92/19 118/23 124/10 124/14 128/23 actions [5] 21/20 39/1 87/2 99/16 119/7 active [2] 32/21 44/17	132/6 168/6 addresses [2] 44/24 106/9 addressing [6] 66/7 111/16 129/10 142/22 154/13 166/2 adduce [1] 138/15 adhere [1] 24/1 adjourned [1] 168/11 Adjournment [1] 85/7 administration [1] 86/6 administrative [2] 96/25 151/5 administratively [1] 153/4 adopt [2] 2/2 86/4 adopted [1] 11/14 Adrian [1] 44/15 advance [1] 101/11 advantage [1] 80/1 advice [45] 17/11 17/19 19/14 55/2 72/20 117/18 117/23 118/5 118/13 118/17 118/20 119/3 119/10 119/21 120/1 120/14 120/19 121/9 121/17	47/17 51/22 53/14 106/13 106/15 112/19 117/20 119/18 133/20 153/1 158/12 against [3] 59/9 104/5 147/16 agency [1] 46/17 agenda [5] 98/21 98/22 99/4 101/10 115/20 agendas [1] 151/11 agree [5] 7/5 97/1 136/24 140/9 167/15 agreed [6] 2/18 98/21 99/16 124/12 124/20 134/18 agreement [5] 72/11 79/1 97/5 98/18 152/15 agrees [2] 2/23 2/23 AGS [1] 32/21 Ah [4] 28/10 31/23 69/21 141/3 ahead [2] 48/14 48/16 aim [1] 2/25 airing [1] 61/13 Albeit [1] 50/12 alert [3] 80/5 102/16

92/24 93/12 96/3 111/1 111/3 111/5 altogether [1] 116/4 appreciate [2] 18/21 always [7] 48/3 48/4 96/13 96/13 97/15 82/15 112/3 114/6 116/19 alerted... [2] 100/10 50/24 60/10 84/2 100/4 100/9 100/24 appreciated [1] 116/24 117/10 117/11 100/25 129/16 168/1 103/15 107/11 125/3 99/15 121/8 123/2 128/6 Alice [4] 96/2 97/25 Alwen [1] 121/25 125/4 125/10 125/17 appreciation [1] 129/16 130/5 134/25 98/2 99/12 am [19] 1/2 5/4 5/6 128/8 130/2 130/22 123/13 135/1 137/14 143/2 **all [58]** 4/24 5/1 11/17 18/9 27/22 132/5 132/19 135/14 143/2 145/5 145/16 apprised [1] 100/3 11/11 14/18 42/12 36/15 36/21 37/20 143/15 144/8 147/9 150/16 150/18 151/9 approach [16] 2/25 47/20 47/23 65/12 37/22 38/7 38/9 38/10 11/14 15/2 16/12 54/8 149/1 151/24 157/7 153/6 154/13 155/15 71/3 73/18 79/8 79/14 38/15 98/16 103/14 157/19 159/13 162/20 55/12 78/17 93/19 155/16 155/17 156/18 86/9 87/3 89/20 90/18 115/2 157/15 168/11 163/15 136/1 139/15 139/17 157/7 157/14 158/7 92/6 92/15 92/24 93/4 139/23 149/1 165/5 159/2 160/3 160/14 amalgamated [1] anybody [1] 168/5 96/7 98/18 101/1 anything [18] 58/21 27/3 165/12 166/3 160/14 161/21 164/13 101/4 105/20 108/14 66/25 74/12 94/6 166/21 167/1 167/4 amended [1] 51/1 approached [4] 115/17 120/14 120/19 amendments [2] 5/9 95/11 100/21 100/22 54/23 79/23 155/20 167/9 167/10 168/5 124/20 127/5 127/7 91/23 100/23 104/23 104/24 155/20 area [9] 44/20 89/10 127/9 127/18 127/18 108/9 117/8 120/11 89/11 89/11 142/5 amongst [2] 109/23 approaches [1] 133/12 136/22 138/1 20/19 133/9 135/22 136/7 142/8 154/8 155/22 160/2 138/2 138/18 139/12 amount [3] 17/16 138/6 161/25 approaching [3] 9/14 159/16 139/24 141/21 141/21 areas [15] 25/15 64/1 21/22 99/24 anyway [2] 58/1 58/3 80/12 82/16 142/9 146/17 149/22 70/5 72/18 73/14 amounts [1] 109/18 apart [2] 43/16 76/17 appropriate [13] 150/12 150/16 151/6 anachronistically [1] **apologise [1]** 16/10 28/22 29/5 30/3 45/5 87/11 87/13 87/14 151/9 151/13 153/14 143/7 apparent [2] 98/3 49/8 65/12 89/21 95/2 87/22 89/10 93/7 156/18 158/10 161/18 analysis [10] 18/7 158/5 132/17 132/24 133/3 107/11 108/22 138/4 166/21 167/2 20/7 21/16 55/10 76/1 145/6 150/16 158/10 apparently [3] allegations [2] 89/20 aren't [2] 80/23 84/16 94/19 114/21 137/14 121/11 127/17 165/8 appropriately [2] 89/22 appeal [2] 119/16 155/3 163/15 80/19 83/16 argue [1] 112/20 alleged [6] 76/10 angry [1] 111/24 119/17 **approve [1]** 59/12 argued [1] 131/10 143/15 143/16 143/18 Annex [12] 10/23 appealing [1] 32/3 **April [1]** 9/24 arise [5] 46/14 55/14 143/19 143/20 11/7 11/17 14/7 15/19 109/6 158/25 163/13 appear [5] 22/15 **Arbuthnot** [2] 76/13 Allen [1] 167/11 17/7 25/21 35/2 37/2 63/22 82/15 87/18 88/7 arisen [1] 60/6 **allow [1]** 44/13 37/5 53/18 53/19 119/21 are [157] 1/19 2/8 arises [1] 114/21 alluding [1] 143/25 arising [9] 21/7 21/12 Annex A [8] 10/23 appeared [5] 79/11 2/12 3/22 4/1 4/3 4/6 almost [2] 122/16 11/7 11/17 14/7 15/19 87/25 113/18 113/19 4/8 4/14 5/16 6/3 6/5 39/4 39/6 46/11 56/21 124/25 25/21 37/2 53/18 115/24 6/11 6/14 6/17 6/20 62/12 77/19 147/10 alone [1] 71/7 Annex B [3] 35/2 7/2 10/8 10/15 10/16 arose [1] 45/17 appears [8] 4/21 along [2] 35/20 37/5 53/19 66/23 67/10 91/19 11/2 11/4 11/5 11/8 around [10] 24/22 158/24 113/24 116/11 120/20 14/19 15/20 15/21 53/17 106/5 115/5 annoyance [2] already [5] 23/12 109/14 110/2 166/23 15/25 18/14 19/17 117/11 117/12 117/15 41/10 71/5 72/23 20/6 20/11 21/5 21/6 annoyed [2] 112/10 appendices [2] 3/6 134/16 146/25 166/17 156/12 113/23 3/8 21/11 21/15 21/25 arrangements [4] also [43] 3/1 9/8 17/3 annual [4] 28/19 29/6 **Appendix [4]** 28/8 23/13 28/15 28/22 50/7 50/23 65/13 22/17 37/11 38/14 44/12 44/12 30/13 31/11 31/16 28/24 31/4 31/8 31/20 153/2 38/19 42/19 42/25 32/1 38/16 40/10 41/1 array [1] 30/10 anomalies [2] 90/6 **Appendix A [2]** 28/8 47/8 49/11 51/16 52/5 41/2 41/3 41/6 41/7 arrived [1] 81/15 146/19 30/13 59/19 61/13 61/25 41/8 41/14 41/23 42/4 arrogant [1] 165/11 another [6] 1/24 Appendix B [2] 31/11 64/5 78/15 89/4 89/9 42/10 42/12 42/16 articulated [1] 79/22 12/22 48/7 52/22 31/16 89/12 92/21 93/2 137/4 141/7 applicable [1] 37/9 42/18 43/15 43/16 as [212] 107/4 107/8 110/4 answer [9] 2/20 2/21 applied [5] 10/25 43/17 45/6 45/12 ascertain [1] 81/8 112/13 114/25 115/20 12/9 16/20 29/23 45/13 46/8 47/24 48/3 ask [21] 1/9 2/3 2/10 55/15 65/14 81/1 121/24 126/5 127/9 99/10 111/22 142/11 33/18 49/2 50/6 52/4 52/15 2/14 4/24 55/15 69/18 130/18 144/1 146/18 142/12 apply [8] 11/3 11/24 52/18 54/2 54/20 80/7 94/8 109/5 153/5 153/11 155/14 59/16 59/19 59/19 111/20 113/7 132/1 answered [1] 111/23 28/11 28/13 28/16 155/25 161/3 161/6 138/17 144/11 150/6 30/4 42/10 73/11 59/20 61/13 63/12 answering [1] 167/2 161/14 165/16 154/9 165/16 166/11 answers [3] 2/23 applying [1] 34/7 64/16 64/17 65/1 alter [2] 152/14 61/2 69/24 appointed [6] 41/2 70/10 71/2 71/15 167/1 167/5 162/20 69/3 76/9 150/12 71/17 76/5 83/13 anticipated [1] 95/9 asked [13] 2/12 alternative [1] 18/22 any [53] 4/19 9/22 154/23 154/25 83/15 83/17 85/24 43/12 57/23 59/12 although [10] 48/22 9/24 16/19 17/19 87/20 89/15 90/10 59/13 70/3 80/7 82/17 appointing [1] 41/15 60/11 70/4 82/17 89/6 18/10 18/15 18/15 90/23 90/25 91/12 100/20 130/19 132/8 appointment [4] 118/20 128/19 129/25 30/14 36/11 42/10 96/15 96/21 99/21 159/10 164/11 76/12 76/15 76/21 152/21 153/24 43/2 43/4 54/21 62/6 149/11 100/14 100/24 101/16 asking [6] 2/2 70/15 **Altman [2]** 132/7 70/23 72/16 81/4 84/3 103/11 103/16 104/2 70/22 98/16 142/15 appointments [1] 143/7 89/19 89/24 92/11 157/2 104/21 106/9 109/4 166/17

asks [1] 167/25 aspect [5] 39/2 73/12 83/24 101/5 144/5 aspects [12] 25/20 37/11 41/22 48/11 86/22 89/11 90/19 92/7 92/24 108/17 130/15 149/23 asserted [5] 27/6 30/1 116/3 146/10 159/7 assertion [1] 30/19 **assess [2]** 45/15 91/13 assessing [1] 125/11 assessor [1] 4/17 asset [1] 44/11 assets [3] 29/15 29/24 45/14 assist [2] 18/14 87/5 associated [1] 126/17 assume [1] 83/16 assumed [2] 45/17 118/14 assumes [1] 80/18 assumption [2] 136/11 137/7 assumptions [4] 49/15 135/13 136/2 164/15 **assurance** [1] 48/8 assurances [2] 89/18 89/25 **assure [1]** 133/3 assured [1] 132/19 at [194] at page 36 [1] 44/24 attendance [2] 115/16 157/13 attendee [3] 114/23 115/11 115/13 attention [18] 11/3 53/18 57/25 59/11 63/23 75/18 78/15 87/15 103/3 108/1 108/15 108/22 134/11 142/18 149/21 150/17 155/23 162/5 attitudes [3] 78/16 103/6 106/3 **attracted [1]** 103/2 attribute [2] 106/16 106/21 attribution [1] 74/22 audit [10] 8/8 25/16 44/25 45/17 64/6 74/19 125/13 125/21 128/13 163/24 became [7] 13/19 auditing [1] 45/5 Aujard [1] 119/25 **authority [9]** 8/16

17/5 29/16 32/15 35/18 46/15 46/21 47/2 53/24 authors [1] 37/4 available [8] 17/19 37/4 60/20 60/21 77/4 105/12 136/3 156/1 avenue [1] 162/25 aware [20] 60/2 67/3 68/4 68/4 86/9 86/13 86/15 86/16 86/18 87/2 92/23 98/20 100/24 102/12 136/17 142/9 151/9 153/10 154/7 159/9 awareness [1] 46/4 away [3] 69/20 133/14 153/25 awful [1] 161/21 back [28] 6/21 12/6 13/21 13/23 15/8 20/1 23/17 28/9 33/25 36/24 44/16 51/19 104/22 108/4 110/24 122/8 129/14 134/15 138/11 140/17 142/21 143/22 144/12 147/23 149/6 150/7 154/11 155/11 background [3] 96/23 104/6 150/3 backgrounds [1] 150/2 backwards [1] 5/2 bad [1] 18/16 badly [1] 161/14 balance [1] 43/3 **ball [2]** 1/20 128/10 **Barclays** [1] 8/9 base [5] 20/23 27/9 27/21 60/13 96/22 based [11] 15/16 15/21 18/22 20/6 36/18 37/2 59/19 59/20 64/12 96/11 107/14 **basic [2]** 28/15 165/21 basis [15] 2/22 22/19 40/8 59/17 67/4 82/2 84/7 89/2 90/7 102/18 119/15 128/23 136/13 157/6 161/13 be [207] bear [1] 93/7 bearing [1] 47/8 beautiful [1] 158/23

47/3 118/24

**because [58]** 4/16

48/3 50/18 53/9 60/18 86/16 93/23 98/9 60/22 61/10 62/18 63/4 64/9 64/20 65/2 66/2 69/8 70/18 70/21 71/8 72/7 72/19 75/3 75/15 88/3 96/11 102/19 103/4 112/14 112/14 112/21 113/3 113/3 116/1 117/25 123/6 126/1 134/11 135/20 137/3 141/18 141/21 143/15 144/1 146/3 146/13 161/19 161/22 162/24 165/2 165/13 165/22 167/20 158/15 165/17 become [6] 29/11 46/9 49/1 118/12 126/6 132/23 becomes [3] 54/3 116/22 117/14 becoming [2] 26/19 78/18 been [115] 2/18 8/1 8/4 8/7 8/14 10/13 25/25 26/11 37/15 41/21 45/3 47/1 49/5 49/6 49/25 50/9 50/14 52/1 53/17 54/23 55/25 57/2 57/14 59/2 59/11 59/13 59/23 60/19 61/11 61/22 62/1 62/2 62/3 62/4 62/5 63/22 64/3 64/5 64/10 66/24 68/4 68/8 69/16 70/3 72/23 73/24 74/17 74/17 90/1 90/7 90/8 90/9 95/2 98/2 100/10 100/22 101/1 103/20 105/11 108/14 108/21 113/11 113/22 115/16 97/17 99/18 101/19 116/14 117/5 118/15 119/14 120/2 122/4 124/2 124/7 125/1 125/2 125/6 125/9 127/23 127/25 128/1 128/1 128/4 128/20 130/6 130/20 130/24 133/1 133/3 133/15 136/12 137/17 139/10 143/21 144/2 149/23 156/3 159/10 161/4 163/12 163/18 165/15 166/6 beautifully [1] 158/22 BEER [4] 1/7 1/9 1/14 169/6 24/23 25/6 25/7 46/20 **before [40]** 1/14 4/19 7/10 9/22 10/3 18/23 18/25 19/20 20/9 21/9

23/12 34/4 36/22 40/1 27/23 41/14 49/19 41/12 41/19 44/8 46/2 51/10 82/13 86/13 98/19 99/5 101/12 105/11 106/6 111/14 112/10 113/1 118/18 123/17 125/7 126/6 126/15 127/3 133/18 139/18 142/20 147/13 148/2 165/16 167/24 began [2] 28/14 149/7 begin [4] 39/9 101/13 beyond [7] 15/11 109/1 135/3 beginning [6] 19/23 44/16 54/9 145/3 begins [5] 11/19 53/12 117/17 144/13 144/20 behalf [2] 1/10 33/7 behave [1] 155/14 behaviour [9] 7/6 7/22 16/21 22/2 22/5 22/11 49/11 53/21 111/13 16/20 19/6 22/22 25/9 behind [2] 18/24 91/9 black [1] 122/13 being [36] 5/16 16/23 blind [1] 81/25 18/19 42/19 44/4 46/14 47/7 57/1 61/1 61/2 61/17 68/15 71/1 board [274] 75/12 78/16 80/6 80/18 83/15 94/4 96/15 100/7 106/13 112/3 115/22 117/13 125/18 130/8 130/10 133/14 133/22 134/14 142/16 144/5 146/16 148/1 167/24 75/8 78/15 84/2 86/13 belief [7] 4/2 4/7 6/13 86/20 86/23 87/1 90/1 6/19 22/25 60/4 82/9 beliefs [1] 135/18 believe [20] 21/25 25/21 52/5 85/24 90/2 30/10 94/7 96/11 96/11 101/19 102/8 111/5 120/23 132/24 135/23 143/7 145/17 145/25 believes [2] 111/2 111/2 **believing [2]** 18/9 146/4 130/25 131/14 132/24 beneath [2] 69/6 88/8 beneficiary [1] best [10] 4/2 4/7 6/12 6/18 10/9 22/13 22/15 28/11 52/16 114/1 better [3] 4/16 48/5 102/17 between [46] 6/3 7/16 10/2 11/8 16/2 18/17 20/11 21/6 21/9 **bottom [5]** 5/22 6/8

24/5 24/24 33/14 33/22 34/16 34/25 40/24 42/24 46/18 55/10 62/13 62/19 64/7 64/13 66/6 68/8 73/3 76/19 85/17 90/11 94/11 110/16 116/16 119/22 128/10 129/1 135/14 142/8 142/23 145/22 147/21 151/17 152/6 152/10 157/25 158/1 160/7 25/15 38/23 47/3 52/25 96/4 156/12 **big [4]** 39/4 43/19 43/24 126/6 bigger [4] 65/23 110/9 135/3 139/20 bit [3] 69/23 77/17 102/17 bits [12] 80/3 80/20 106/1 108/15 120/15 121/1 121/3 127/14 127/18 127/19 158/23 165/10 **blindfold [4]** 84/20 84/21 84/23 84/25 **board's [6]** 61/7 77/14 107/25 109/12 150/17 164/10 **boardroom** [7] 65/22 83/23 116/12 116/23 117/4 121/15 121/20 boards [13] 9/8 25/3 27/12 28/19 45/15 49/2 51/17 52/14 72/7 107/17 108/16 115/1 160/6 bodies [3] 9/9 30/2 **body [7]** 8/12 8/15 18/22 18/25 35/7 36/24 85/22 **bold** [1] 39/4 book [3] 13/19 13/24 17/19 both [38] 3/9 3/10 8/9 14/19 14/20 29/3 32/25 42/7 44/21 46/10 47/7 48/8 49/8 52/4 57/10 59/22 60/17 64/10 66/14 74/9 84/22 89/14 93/13 97/9 103/24 112/6 112/22 116/21 120/22 128/18 128/21 136/14 136/25 143/24 145/20 160/18 160/22 164/5

134/16 140/9 104/24 118/3 130/4 122/14 151/12 157/5 В centre [1] 118/17 bundled [1] 128/2 146/20 164/17 160/8 **CEO [45]** 23/21 57/20 **bottom... [3]** 92/10 **business [48]** 7/15 called [6] 26/16 capability [1] 159/23 57/25 62/9 64/15 95/19 135/9 9/5 25/1 26/10 31/13 26/20 32/17 49/10 capacity [1] 160/23 85/19 90/15 91/25 **bound [1]** 127/13 32/3 32/5 32/7 32/12 50/15 105/7 capsulated [1] 80/22 92/2 95/22 95/24 96/4 **bounds [3]** 43/5 32/14 32/20 32/25 Cambridge [4] 7/11 care [1] 116/16 100/3 100/6 108/4 111/4 146/5 42/22 46/3 46/3 46/7 careful [4] 25/24 96/5 122/14 124/22 125/7 7/13 9/4 9/6 box [8] 1/17 1/25 3/1 came [3] 80/20 82/18 125/8 125/15 125/23 58/19 60/14 63/24 104/5 104/9 12/7 12/19 12/20 65/21 67/21 69/4 79/6 115/13 125/24 126/1 126/13 carefully [2] 46/6 13/10 122/13 can [159] 1/10 1/21 87/23 89/19 90/19 103/12 127/8 128/22 132/1 boxes [1] 93/4 3/14 3/20 4/9 4/15 5/8 carried [1] 75/4 92/7 92/15 109/19 132/5 132/6 134/8 **boxes' [1]** 91/13 110/16 110/24 122/17 5/9 6/7 6/21 7/4 8/22 carry [2] 76/10 97/10 134/10 135/13 137/21 branch [2] 55/22 123/7 123/14 124/23 9/12 9/13 9/15 11/17 Cartwright [7] 150/19 150/21 150/22 55/25 125/10 125/14 136/6 11/20 12/1 12/6 12/22 117/24 118/11 119/1 152/25 157/4 157/5 branches [2] 56/17 138/1 140/11 141/21 14/18 15/8 16/10 124/13 131/17 132/2 157/25 158/3 158/9 118/2 142/1 142/2 144/6 18/24 19/8 19/17 132/9 159/7 162/4 162/19 brand [1] 78/25 145/13 146/2 149/15 21/19 24/8 24/9 25/21 cascaded [1] 134/18 **CEO's [3]** 124/22 breach [2] 23/22 158/10 28/11 29/9 30/5 30/23 case [105] 18/6 18/9 157/2 159/14 23/25 businesses [2] 115/7 31/3 32/12 32/22 33/4 19/4 19/5 19/10 19/11 certain [5] 25/18 breached [1] 136/17 33/15 35/12 36/24 19/17 19/18 19/21 43/16 112/3 154/2 115/8 breaches [1] 125/25 37/25 38/3 38/12 19/24 20/7 20/19 21/5 but [107] 2/17 3/23 159/9 break [12] 4/23 5/5 4/18 5/1 11/18 15/20 38/13 40/24 41/11 21/16 21/18 22/21 certainly [6] 37/18 23/5 37/16 37/16 18/15 19/1 19/25 43/18 43/24 44/23 29/6 29/25 41/14 42/6 92/9 124/25 141/3 37/21 55/13 85/3 21/15 22/5 28/24 32/4 44/25 45/20 45/21 48/2 50/5 50/6 54/10 151/5 161/5 123/17 123/17 123/20 35/13 38/14 40/2 46/12 47/10 47/17 54/10 54/13 54/15 certificate [1] 154/5 167/3 41/19 41/23 42/19 54/18 54/21 55/1 55/2 cetera [2] 39/22 47/22 47/25 48/20 Brian [2] 132/7 143/7 43/13 47/3 47/8 51/15 48/23 49/17 49/24 55/4 55/9 55/11 55/14 116/14 **bridge [1]** 94/25 55/20 55/24 56/6 52/24 54/4 55/6 56/1 50/1 50/8 51/2 51/24 chain [1] 152/4 brief [4] 76/25 100/7 58/3 58/8 59/1 59/20 53/14 54/7 54/18 55/9 56/16 56/22 56/24 chair [45] 8/1 8/5 100/23 104/25 60/25 63/5 65/6 70/21 62/16 63/11 64/20 59/9 60/3 60/16 62/12 21/22 23/3 25/11 29/1 briefed [4] 93/25 71/8 72/9 72/16 75/9 39/15 43/6 59/24 60/1 65/17 66/12 68/12 62/17 64/8 64/9 65/19 98/3 101/6 102/3 76/6 77/8 77/13 78/13 68/23 69/18 70/12 65/25 66/8 69/9 71/14 62/6 63/17 64/3 64/14 briefing [3] 101/11 79/9 80/22 80/23 70/24 72/9 75/22 76/4 71/16 71/20 75/9 69/1 69/16 74/18 101/24 124/21 74/18 76/17 95/19 83/16 83/22 84/13 77/18 78/4 78/22 75/12 75/22 76/6 briefly [4] 24/9 32/22 86/17 87/11 91/2 79/18 85/13 87/5 77/14 78/2 83/25 95/22 96/1 96/10 33/4 138/11 92/18 93/5 93/11 94/3 89/14 90/20 90/23 85/11 89/17 96/21 96/12 96/25 98/20 bring [13] 34/23 41/3 98/12 99/4 102/8 98/24 99/3 100/6 95/13 98/12 99/1 92/11 95/1 95/18 42/25 58/4 87/3 89/1 100/22 101/22 102/11 95/19 97/17 97/18 102/21 111/13 112/21 114/1 114/7 116/17 93/7 125/4 134/10 97/19 99/19 99/22 102/12 102/17 103/15 114/18 114/22 115/12 121/12 121/13 125/20 143/6 143/17 145/8 101/4 104/14 105/23 117/16 117/17 117/19 104/9 105/8 105/14 150/15 150/19 151/8 145/19 105/20 105/21 106/10 107/8 107/17 108/23 122/13 123/24 128/17 151/10 153/16 153/21 bringing [4] 92/22 108/16 109/7 110/9 110/20 111/12 112/8 128/25 129/1 130/18 154/22 154/23 156/5 93/13 142/19 145/11 114/13 115/10 115/12 113/7 114/20 115/4 133/7 133/13 133/23 158/1 broad [3] 47/17 115/6 116/6 116/12 136/4 137/11 137/13 115/16 115/18 115/20 Chair's [1] 130/4 90/16 124/17 chaired [1] 99/13 120/19 121/2 123/4 117/16 120/7 122/7 138/7 138/10 139/3 broadcast [1] 17/10 124/22 127/2 127/2 122/20 123/17 123/25 139/6 139/8 139/8 **Chairs [1]** 27/13 broader [3] 14/4 127/10 130/1 130/23 124/4 126/21 129/4 141/3 142/4 151/6 challenge [26] 60/14 68/13 91/8 131/11 132/15 133/17 129/9 129/18 131/10 153/2 153/7 156/23 61/2 63/16 65/22 broadly [1] 33/19 138/17 142/12 146/3 131/15 134/5 136/19 157/20 159/1 159/2 68/21 69/5 70/4 70/10 broken [1] 158/21 148/18 151/14 152/18 137/10 137/19 138/11 166/20 72/6 72/7 72/9 72/20 brought [13] 6/11 159/4 159/5 161/6 138/17 138/18 144/12 cases [24] 55/7 81/3 81/9 81/12 81/16 6/17 25/9 57/18 57/24 161/18 161/23 163/1 144/13 145/1 146/23 56/12 57/11 58/18 81/22 81/22 82/4 59/11 80/12 87/15 166/9 166/15 168/2 148/3 148/20 150/6 62/19 62/20 63/1 63/7 84/19 101/14 110/18 96/14 128/4 147/16 150/7 152/12 152/20 69/12 96/24 118/7 126/6 136/11 139/16 **Byers [1]** 35/23 150/17 156/4 154/11 157/10 158/25 118/23 122/4 124/11 160/1 bug [1] 57/9 159/21 160/6 163/2 127/7 127/9 131/18 challenged [4] 49/16 **bugs [9]** 90/6 90/10 Cabinet [2] 13/6 165/1 166/13 166/15 139/12 147/9 147/19 69/17 137/7 139/22 91/4 118/1 120/3 13/15 167/3 167/8 167/17 155/3 157/19 157/24 challenges [2] 90/18 123/1 126/9 135/21 Cadbury [4] 25/5 158/7 168/7 110/15 146/19 26/18 28/7 44/16 can't [7] 105/8 152/5 caused [1] 113/25 challenging [2] bugs/anomalies [1] call [16] 1/3 76/6 153/24 153/25 160/17 ceased [1] 137/4 133/22 161/1 90/6 76/24 90/6 100/12 champion [1] 51/18 166/12 166/13 central [5] 10/4 13/7 **build [1]** 79/7 101/7 101/9 101/12 cannot [9] 19/7 41/23 29/19 64/24 79/8 Chancellor [1] 7/14 building [4] 83/8 83/9 101/18 101/24 102/18 91/13 92/14 119/18 centrally [1] 62/22 **change [7]** 36/8

30/21 38/14 44/5 44/7 committees [4] C 31/3 **chosen [1]** 18/10 **Chris [1]** 119/25 44/19 44/22 54/3 54/4 26/19 27/4 37/10 comply [2] 28/17 **change... [6]** 117/10 chronological [1] 83/6 85/21 129/15 39/12 28/25 147/3 152/18 160/5 33/12 150/13 151/21 common [2] 23/25 complying [1] 29/8 163/7 163/15 chronologically [2] coherent [4] 73/1 133/13 composition [1] **changed [3]** 51/15 11/1 33/17 73/7 126/4 134/25 148/10 communicate [5] 51/16 148/16 93/5 93/6 121/12 **chronology** [1] 10/23 coherently [2] compound [2] 158/7 **changes [2]** 149/3 circulation [1] 94/18 127/13 127/24 121/16 138/3 159/6 163/10 circumstances [10] communicating [1] colleague [2] 150/20 comprehensive [1] changing [1] 34/23 2/7 28/23 29/5 29/8 107/24 157/12 133/7 channel [1] 42/23 communication [13] comprehensively [1] 30/3 83/20 101/13 colleagues [9] 85/17 chapter [23] 24/15 17/5 42/24 49/13 54/1 107/25 102/5 122/24 148/16 87/17 87/25 116/10 24/18 37/25 38/1 38/5 87/20 88/4 88/6 circumstances' [1] 116/15 124/22 157/9 **computer [1]** 47/15 44/23 44/24 45/1 157/11 158/4 121/19 123/6 133/10 concentrating [1] 28/21 45/19 45/20 45/22 citizen [2] 49/19 collective [13] 42/13 133/14 147/4 147/21 81/24 46/12 47/10 47/19 49/25 58/15 61/21 90/16 concentration [1] communications [5] 48/20 48/24 49/17 civil [12] 33/6 55/23 87/19 88/2 94/3 94/11 92/6 93/8 93/14 94/22 51/20 51/21 52/25 56/24 57/7 57/11 121/20 122/11 123/13 146/25 concept [4] 31/21 53/12 53/15 53/16 58/18 59/9 62/19 63/1 156/25 158/6 159/12 companies [31] 49/24 50/7 50/13 Chapter 2 [1] 44/23 63/7 69/8 69/9 10/24 11/3 11/4 11/5 collectively [5] 2/18 concepts [2] 33/25 Chapter 3 [2] 44/24 11/9 11/15 11/24 12/8 claims [1] 115/25 3/3 43/6 64/17 126/2 36/6 45/19 clarity [6] 71/23 72/1 College [3] 7/10 7/14 12/9 12/10 12/13 conceptualisation [1] Chapter 4 [2] 45/20 72/2 72/14 144/15 12/14 12/15 12/25 68/14 46/12 144/22 13/1 13/2 13/14 15/2 conceptualise [3] column [2] 12/25 Chapter 5 [2] 47/10 Clarke [29] 55/2 15/3 23/22 29/12 67/13 67/15 67/25 35/20 47/19 118/2 118/6 118/13 29/19 30/9 30/21 columns [2] 11/1 concern [3] 42/20 Chapter 6 [1] 48/20 118/17 119/10 120/1 11/21 32/18 37/8 41/24 79/22 109/23 Chapter 7 [2] 49/17 44/18 129/14 149/17 120/14 120/18 121/6 combination [3] concerned [7] 22/9 51/20 121/9 121/17 122/6 29/18 120/5 159/17 151/25 22/10 42/3 63/15 Chapter 8 [2] 53/12 company [50] 10/19 122/21 122/22 124/3 88/13 131/24 146/11 combine [1] 35/8 53/16 124/19 126/2 127/12 combined [10] 13/3 16/2 29/23 39/23 41/7 **concerning [5]** 43/20 **chapters [2]** 15/25 48/24 60/16 64/12 127/25 131/3 134/13 25/8 25/13 26/20 41/11 41/20 44/10 53/16 136/4 136/18 137/16 26/21 27/1 27/2 27/5 45/4 45/8 45/16 46/22 94/4 Chapters 1 [1] 53/16 137/23 139/12 147/14 29/6 29/22 52/16 62/15 63/6 concerns [18] 29/14 characteristics [1] 157/24 come [24] 5/9 9/12 65/11 65/11 72/8 75/3 57/18 64/11 77/13 47/21 21/19 31/16 40/23 83/8 83/8 83/10 83/11 94/3 113/13 117/17 Clarke's [2] 19/14 charities [2] 9/9 83/12 84/14 89/2 89/3 117/18 49/20 51/18 54/25 125/21 135/16 145/22 28/12 classified [1] 47/14 61/18 70/24 80/22 91/23 98/22 99/2 160/3 160/11 160/18 check [1] 43/24 141/20 141/22 141/23 Claverhouse [1] 8/10 80/23 83/20 95/13 161/5 161/5 161/6 **checking [1]** 43/18 clear [10] 3/2 64/7 97/17 99/17 112/6 142/10 150/6 150/11 161/7 167/17 **checklist [2]** 107/5 67/6 72/11 75/8 94/7 112/24 113/5 113/9 150/24 151/4 151/11 **conclude [2]** 160/4 107/19 118/22 128/15 141/10 127/14 131/9 150/8 151/17 151/18 151/24 165/13 chief [54] 21/21 23/2 149/9 167/19 152/6 152/8 152/11 concluded [2] 23/2 25/11 26/13 26/13 152/14 152/20 154/19 160/21 clearly [6] 30/17 comes [2] 29/17 27/13 29/1 39/20 concludes [1] 119/12 52/14 134/14 146/14 163/25 164/17 114/21 39/22 56/14 57/16 149/6 160/11 coming [4] 5/2 28/6 company's [7] 35/16 concluding [4] 17/2 57/17 57/20 57/22 Cleveleys [1] 55/22 83/24 88/15 88/21 128/6 161/20 161/21 82/1 108/18 58/11 59/11 60/1 clients [1] 52/11 commenced [1] 9/22 89/23 150/14 151/3 conclusion [18] 61/20 68/6 68/7 69/13 closed [1] 55/25 comment [4] 16/5 comparatively [1] 18/15 37/2 55/16 69/14 77/1 85/16 86/3 closely [1] 158/9 16/8 22/20 165/16 43/13 56/21 61/18 73/11 86/8 87/7 92/14 92/14 clouded [1] 156/2 commentary [2] competence [2] 74/23 78/22 79/18 92/17 92/19 92/22 **Co [1]** 167/11 15/16 17/3 120/5 148/5 82/2 87/25 90/4 93/1 93/1 93/22 99/2 114/17 127/4 130/21 coached [1] 8/23 complain [2] 28/20 commented [1] 101/20 108/13 116/2 134/7 138/7 166/7 code [22] 13/3 13/6 15/13 28/24 121/10 121/10 122/24 13/11 16/24 24/2 25/8 commercial [9] 28/9 completed [1] 9/21 conclusions [47] 123/6 123/7 129/23 25/13 25/14 26/20 29/12 29/18 37/8 complex [2] 47/12 54/25 56/9 63/11 136/10 137/25 153/4 26/21 26/24 26/24 149/14 149/15 149/18 165/23 64/16 66/6 71/13 153/13 153/18 160/19 27/8 27/18 29/22 39/5 150/1 155/2 **complexity [1]** 47/22 77/25 78/2 85/15 160/25 161/7 161/10 39/7 40/7 47/5 107/6 **compliance [8]** 30/20 85/18 92/11 95/20 commissioning [2] choice [2] 38/19 107/7 152/1 163/11 163/14 62/5 150/14 151/3 99/21 102/25 103/9 64/24 151/13 151/13 151/19 Code's [1] 28/21 **committee** [10] 8/5 104/21 109/1 109/4 choose [1] 98/7 codes [20] 14/12 8/9 25/5 59/14 62/5 152/9 109/8 111/15 113/21 chooses [1] 58/11 15/4 24/14 24/20 64/6 125/13 125/22 compliant [1] 151/15 117/25 119/21 124/4 chose [1] 18/6 29/12 29/23 30/3 128/14 160/20 complicating [1] 124/18 127/16 129/7

C 51/13 77/7 162/3 134/8 coordinated [1] 146/20 159/10 consistent [1] 155/1 110/11 couldn't [3] 46/3 creation [2] 140/12 conclusions... [20] consistently [1] 6/4 copies [1] 3/22 102/18 165/12 140/16 131/11 133/8 133/19 Crichton [20] 91/21 consists [1] 17/7 copy [3] 3/15 3/16 Council [1] 47/6 135/9 137/11 137/14 constructed [2] 101/22 counsel [63] 10/14 91/22 98/1 98/3 105/3 137/23 139/1 144/18 53/17 55/7 Core [5] 2/3 167/4 56/14 63/8 63/9 63/9 111/18 113/17 115/13 145/2 147/1 148/6 167/11 167/11 167/12 88/20 88/23 88/25 116/9 117/23 118/6 constructing [1] 148/7 148/20 154/13 89/3 89/7 91/21 91/25 118/11 119/24 120/16 135/5 corporate [29] 11/22 156/9 156/20 159/24 construction [1] 13/6 13/11 14/4 16/24 97/22 112/20 112/24 121/10 121/13 121/15 163/4 165/17 24/2 25/8 25/14 28/4 113/1 113/5 113/12 122/1 122/3 124/13 33/21 conduct [10] 46/21 constructions [1] 29/11 30/8 30/14 113/24 114/3 115/1 Crichton's [3] 118/25 74/3 75/4 107/6 30/20 31/21 31/23 115/9 116/17 117/2 121/4 122/2 18/22 111/21 119/13 130/11 consult [1] 42/22 34/23 36/7 36/12 119/2 120/7 120/8 **crime [6]** 143/15 131/19 155/4 156/6 36/18 37/8 38/23 39/5 122/19 122/25 123/3 143/16 143/18 143/19 consultants [1] conducted [6] 63/5 39/7 40/7 44/7 45/2 162/18 123/5 123/5 124/10 143/20 143/21 80/18 119/1 132/21 consulted [2] 7/6 46/5 47/5 129/15 125/6 125/12 125/16 criminal [9] 56/23 134/3 141/11 corporation [4] 35/19 127/5 130/7 130/9 62/20 64/8 120/1 8/23 conducting [4] 68/14 35/20 39/6 41/11 131/8 132/17 137/20 122/4 124/11 127/7 consuming [1] 133/2 134/2 136/15 137/22 151/18 151/20 127/9 142/20 109/18 corporations [2] conference [1] 76/24 152/1 152/7 152/13 crisp [1] 117/21 11/24 12/10 contact [1] 125/7 confidence [1] 152/14 152/19 152/23 criteria [1] 28/14 contain [1] 78/10 Corporations/Compa 120/10 contained [3] 84/13 nies [1] 11/24 152/24 153/3 153/5 critical [4] 23/4 48/11 **conflict [6]** 43/10 103/2 120/13 correct [66] 3/10 153/10 153/15 154/4 76/14 134/8 53/25 130/6 131/13 4/23 5/13 5/13 5/20 154/5 157/14 158/1 criticism [1] 113/24 contemporarily [1] 131/18 132/19 5/24 5/25 6/6 7/8 7/17 158/2 161/6 167/15 criticisms [1] 57/4 25/25 conflicts [14] 25/18 7/19 8/3 8/6 8/13 8/17 counsel's [2] 114/10 cross [3] 5/11 30/25 contemporary [1] 129/6 129/11 129/16 8/25 9/3 9/7 10/6 25/4 154/1 91/16 129/18 129/22 130/2 11/16 11/25 12/12 **content** [2] 126/10 counsels [6] 89/15 cross-heading [1] 130/3 130/21 131/2 158/18 13/8 15/6 15/23 16/4 115/5 115/15 120/12 30/25 131/16 132/25 133/4 contents [11] 2/12 16/16 18/3 18/8 18/13 136/14 137/1 crossed [1] 110/16 156/8 4/1 4/6 6/12 6/17 92/1 18/18 20/14 20/18 countenance [1] crucial [1] 124/24 conflicts/divergent 20/25 21/4 26/22 28/1 163/13 102/23 104/16 105/17 crystallise [1] 134/1 **[1]** 129/18 105/19 121/16 30/22 33/20 35/1 counterclaim [1] **cultural** [3] 49/11 confluence [1] **contested** [1] 103/7 35/10 35/24 36/4 36/9 147/16 165/18 166/9 108/17 context [6] 24/20 37/13 39/16 39/18 counterpoint [1] **culturally [2]** 155/12 confronted [1] 69/8 76/6 97/19 39/24 42/9 51/9 51/14 96/17 155/14 149/23 56/2 56/7 56/25 58/2 114/24 155/19 **Counters [1]** 35/16 culture [36] 8/24 9/1 confronting [1] Continental [1] 26/6 59/15 70/7 77/21 17/5 22/2 22/11 53/25 course [11] 14/9 133/14 77/23 81/7 94/14 54/3 65/21 66/7 66/11 16/14 22/1 36/21 continuation [1] connect [2] 57/6 71/5 97/12 97/14 108/8 67/5 70/9 116/12 140/20 52/24 69/9 93/10 **connected** [3] 32/8 continue [4] 43/9 140/5 164/21 100/21 140/16 159/2 116/23 116/24 117/14 67/22 79/4 125/23 137/2 137/3 corrections [4] 4/14 164/24 135/8 135/12 139/10 connection [4] 31/7 5/14 6/11 6/17 Court [1] 119/16 148/18 154/14 155/4 **continued [2]** 160/7 57/13 86/6 90/11 155/9 155/10 155/10 162/7 corrective [1] 82/4 courts [2] 55/23 connections [2] continuing [1] 79/5 **correctly [3]** 10/12 156/6 163/3 163/21 142/20 57/11 73/3 164/16 164/21 165/3 contract [1] 163/23 56/20 128/18 coverage [7] 24/18 consensus [4] 17/9 contracts [1] 103/7 166/12 166/12 166/13 corrosive [1] 164/16 38/4 45/1 45/22 47/18 17/18 17/21 160/2 **contribute [2]** 135/4 cost [1] 48/1 51/24 53/15 166/19 166/24 consequence [2] 159/11 costs [1] 149/16 covered [4] 81/1 86/9 cultures [3] 116/24 125/5 126/22 117/10 117/11 contribution [1] 91/8 could [50] 4/24 22/6 87/22 89/5 consequent [1] contributions [1] 23/5 23/21 23/24 covers [2] 12/14 cup [2] 158/20 105/13 23/25 24/1 24/16 90/18 105/20 158/22 consider [4] 54/14 40/25 57/10 61/16 Coyne [5] 55/24 64/9 control [2] 22/5 **curiosity [2]** 65/22 111/6 114/4 130/17 61/22 62/1 62/2 62/3 24/24 68/5 68/9 72/15 84/19 considerable [1] controlled [1] 11/6 62/4 62/5 64/25 67/11 Covne's [2] 59/10 **curious [1]** 133/22 17/9 current [3] 88/11 controlling [1] 69/25 67/19 68/4 69/10 59/23 consideration [9] 69/16 69/23 71/8 109/22 147/11 convenient [2] 85/3 cracks [1] 128/10 19/12 75/24 77/11 123/16 71/18 73/3 73/18 create [3] 58/14 79/5 | currently [2] 2/8 92/24 93/16 96/6 73/20 73/24 74/14 conversation [5] 157/8 168/2 116/18 134/20 162/7 75/7 75/8 77/16 79/13 created [2] 101/12 62/3 68/8 68/13 74/16 custom [1] 26/11 considered [5] 18/23 128/13 80/3 81/8 81/11 87/3 165/6 **customer [1]** 163/17 19/20 56/6 112/16 conveying [1] 125/8 95/7 101/13 102/23 creates [2] 161/22 **customers** [1] 52/10 125/1 convictions [2] 118/9 110/10 112/20 120/12 161/23 **cutting [1]** 149/15 considering [3] 119/14 121/3 121/13 132/2 creating [2] 65/21

(50) conclusions... - Dame

50/22 61/22 68/13 64/6 64/14 116/10 116/15 D delegate [2] 92/17 157/4 115/1 director [17] 7/15 8/4 distinction [2] 40/23 Dame Sandra [10] developing [3] 41/22 delegated [2] 75/8 8/8 8/14 8/15 26/14 146/1 2/10 2/19 3/23 5/12 157/6 50/1 154/17 26/14 40/2 42/1 42/19 distributed [1] 128/2 6/9 6/25 31/15 37/25 development [6] delegates [2] 87/8 57/18 58/11 83/23 distribution [2] 85/10 123/23 93/3 25/4 45/2 52/13 148/5 89/3 89/4 100/18 122/21 122/22 Dame Sandra's [1] 148/15 165/20 112/23 delegation [3] 92/19 distributors [1] 52/11 2/23 92/21 93/13 develops [1] 38/18 director's [1] 89/5 distrust [1] 79/25 dark [1] 164/21 deliberately [1] 80/11 did [64] 19/18 19/25 directors [27] 25/12 divergence [1] 85/22 data [11] 45/8 56/18 35/7 36/8 42/7 53/9 26/4 27/12 39/17 delivery [2] 48/1 divergent [1] 129/18 57/10 58/18 64/13 100/15 55/2 55/4 56/19 58/13 39/20 40/18 41/2 41/6 diversity [1] 25/19 75/19 78/14 79/12 61/12 62/6 62/16 41/9 41/10 41/15 delve [1] 83/21 divide [2] 40/18 79/21 106/4 134/4 66/17 67/4 69/4 69/15 42/12 42/14 42/15 demonstrated [1] 48/13 date [2] 100/8 101/2 75/9 80/1 80/5 81/15 42/16 42/18 52/14 **do [90]** 3/17 10/12 160/12 dated [4] 3/5 3/6 4/11 82/3 82/6 82/15 82/19 87/3 87/9 93/3 102/2 denied [1] 115/23 10/13 18/10 18/15 9/21 dent [1] 95/6 93/9 93/11 93/15 111/24 112/2 113/3 19/3 19/25 23/9 25/19 **Dawson [4]** 1/4 1/5 93/23 95/5 95/6 95/21 125/3 150/12 161/4 33/23 34/22 37/24 department [5] 33/7 1/12 169/2 35/22 35/22 140/13 96/19 97/15 97/23 **Directors' [2]** 23/22 39/5 39/9 43/2 49/15 day [2] 153/11 140/13 98/7 110/8 111/22 87/14 49/19 50/8 52/7 53/24 168/11 113/10 113/16 116/4 56/4 56/20 58/21 59/5 departments [1] 13/7 **discerned** [1] 95/7 days [1] 118/17 120/13 120/14 126/2 61/9 63/21 65/3 67/15 departure [1] 107/2 discharge [2] 85/23 deal [6] 24/9 39/12 depend [2] 146/3 126/4 131/9 132/1 142/13 68/9 69/10 70/18 51/21 55/11 88/4 153/23 132/5 132/8 132/19 disciplines [1] 155/2 70/21 71/17 74/12 104/15 dependence [1] 134/12 135/14 136/11 disclose [2] 25/17 77/24 80/25 83/8 dealing [13] 15/3 139/9 139/13 139/19 83/12 84/10 84/12 79/21 120/3 25/16 25/17 25/17 147/13 152/8 155/5 85/20 86/12 88/10 **disclosure** [7] 50/19 dependent [1] 75/19 25/23 30/24 67/17 155/13 158/9 159/5 51/1 118/8 118/24 88/10 88/11 88/14 **deployed [1]** 9/14 87/16 108/11 108/12 88/16 88/20 91/1 91/2 depth [1] 19/22 163/21 164/17 119/13 124/12 135/21 115/2 124/1 131/16 **Deputy [1]** 7/14 didn't [30] 14/13 19/3 disclosures [2] 91/13 91/25 93/19 deals [3] 10/11 33/10 27/22 51/23 63/8 126/7 126/17 93/20 95/5 102/18 derived [2] 21/15 106/7 37/11 66/17 67/16 67/16 discourse [1] 163/9 104/3 105/5 106/17 dealt [3] 25/10 85/11 describe [7] 24/17 69/6 71/22 82/11 discovered [2] 90/5 107/11 117/15 121/4 151/4 88/12 89/7 94/20 30/24 33/11 38/3 121/7 122/6 122/14 136/20 dear [1] 109/19 101/23 102/19 106/20 discovery [2] 28/4 40/21 48/14 51/24 127/3 127/16 128/25 decades [1] 140/17 120/19 120/25 121/11 described [14] 23/19 90/5 130/13 136/7 137/8 decide [1] 52/20 35/14 35/14 36/12 121/12 127/1 127/11 137/18 139/24 140/3 discrimination [1] decided [2] 112/15 140/22 146/21 147/13 51/6 51/22 60/5 65/16 136/23 137/3 139/16 49/4 161/12 96/22 104/6 114/7 145/18 153/19 155/23 discuss [4] 97/19 150/4 152/19 153/6 decision [7] 99/1 131/12 131/13 132/25 166/1 99/1 125/23 125/23 153/24 154/3 154/7 109/6 128/16 143/17 155/7 156/18 158/19 describing [4] 39/7 difference [1] 43/1 discussed [15] 54/8 147/6 154/15 155/6 64/17 116/19 116/21 differences [3] 11/8 54/24 55/3 59/13 62/5 161/25 164/12 165/13 decisions [7] 6/5 **description [6]** 16/25 125/24 145/16 64/10 74/18 74/18 168/4 42/23 87/4 99/15 20/6 47/17 55/13 58/9 different [18] 27/3 91/22 92/1 99/15 document [5] 13/13 108/24 122/12 125/18 124/20 130/6 130/25 17/7 19/6 104/4 137/13 27/4 27/4 30/1 31/9 declaration [1] 3/21 42/10 53/16 53/19 134/19 162/15 descriptions [1] deep [2] 67/5 164/15 53/20 62/1 86/4 87/9 discussing [2] 38/13 documents [2] 15/5 deeper [1] 146/8 design [2] 31/24 32/1 88/23 91/12 93/11 125/10 165/15 18/4 **defective [1]** 55/25 designated [1] 46/1 121/8 149/8 154/25 discussion [22] 3/1 does [30] 9/17 9/19 defects [4] 90/10 designed [1] 31/5 differently [3] 43/2 43/10 58/5 64/13 96/9 16/5 21/6 22/7 22/15 91/4 123/1 146/19 23/18 40/4 51/18 52/6 despite [2] 37/16 61/21 74/15 97/10 103/3 105/5 defence [2] 109/17 98/3 differs [1] 125/22 105/17 107/10 108/24 52/6 61/4 69/7 70/15 146/13 detached [1] 122/16 difficult [7] 95/17 109/6 109/12 114/2 73/10 80/9 92/19 defend [2] 66/21 detail [10] 11/18 13/9 125/20 132/13 135/2 114/15 115/5 117/6 103/8 105/21 126/25 155/17 35/2 40/16 43/19 136/22 159/13 161/15 126/12 147/6 154/15 143/1 145/12 145/13 defendants [1] 118/9 54/21 56/11 86/20 dimensional [1] 36/5 155/6 156/4 146/3 151/18 152/8 **defending [2]** 66/20 99/17 110/5 dimensions [1] 34/8 152/9 152/14 158/16 discussions [7] 67/21 detailed [3] 27/20 dimensions/levels [1] 43/16 79/23 90/16 162/20 **defensive [2]** 82/5 27/24 94/19 34/8 122/12 134/9 139/21 doesn't [10] 28/3 165/11 direct [5] 52/23 98/17 162/8 51/6 65/4 65/7 65/14 details [1] 87/10 deficit [1] 60/24 121/5 125/16 168/4 dislodged [1] 84/20 84/3 111/8 116/16 determination [1] definitely [2] 52/23 145/14 direction [1] 97/5 **dismissal** [1] 51/8 119/5 149/23 153/13 develop [1] 94/10 directions [2] 35/21 disproportionately doing [15] 38/9 38/11 delay [1] 16/11 44/11 45/11 102/5 developed [9] 24/20 97/10 **[2]** 87/18 88/1 delayed [1] 128/17 44/22 45/14 49/6 50/9 directly [3] 14/13 disrespect [2] 121/3 123/2 125/15

D doing... [7] 132/20 137/6 139/2 141/24 142/1 149/5 161/14 dominance [1] 155/15 don't [22] 23/9 23/11 61/11 70/18 80/22 83/19 86/1 101/2 106/15 106/21 106/23 106/25 117/8 134/24 137/1 146/9 146/12 152/18 158/15 160/16 165/18 167/20 done [22] 6/4 14/17 58/1 58/2 62/9 65/4 66/24 70/25 84/2 104/12 106/19 106/24 108/6 112/3 124/2 124/7 126/15 127/25 128/2 133/23 147/9 148/1 dotted [1] 153/16 doubt [1] 64/20 doubts [1] 146/7 down [29] 8/20 9/12 11/20 14/25 20/11 20/16 21/19 23/5 26/1 32/10 34/2 34/19 35/25 39/20 51/3 55/13 56/1 64/25 69/23 99/23 109/3 112/16 112/17 134/21 135/2 135/5 144/14 152/18 157/16 downwards [1] 93/5 **Dr [21]** 1/4 1/6 1/8 2/11 2/20 2/22 4/4 6/15 8/19 22/22 37/25 55/2 58/21 66/25 85/10 113/7 123/23 128/7 150/4 165/16 **Dr Katy [1]** 1/4 Dr Steward [13] 2/11 4/4 6/15 8/19 22/22 37/25 55/2 58/21 85/10 113/7 123/23 128/7 165/16 draft [3] 55/2 55/4 91/23 drafts [1] 55/1 draw [4] 56/21 114/17 116/7 127/18 drawing [4] 71/15 71/19 102/1 107/7 drawn [5] 30/8 44/4 104/10 107/25 162/4 drew [2] 17/24 92/12 driven [1] 149/12 driver [2] 44/9 44/9 dropped [2] 101/17 101/18

dropping [1] 128/10 **DTI [1]** 35/23 dual [1] 89/16 due [4] 14/9 36/20 66/24 111/10 duly [1] 142/2 during [6] 10/25 11/10 55/24 67/2 139/21 163/14 duties [15] 23/22 23/25 28/17 40/3 42/10 75/9 89/4 89/5 89/12 119/10 126/1 136/17 151/9 152/16 152/20 duty [10] 66/20 73/25 120/17 125/4 125/12 125/16 126/5 135/25 151/15 165/6 dysfunctions [1]

158/3

each [25] 1/10 2/20 9/15 22/21 31/11 31/12 39/8 40/11 55/11 55/16 56/12 77/25 78/2 87/2 93/6 96/21 109/5 128/23 138/15 139/3 140/3 144/25 147/19 167/16 168/7

eager [1] 24/19 earlier [13] 62/19 72/10 74/12 89/5 95/10 110/24 112/22 116/1 133/18 135/23 147/23 154/20 155/11 early [2] 75/11 120/15

easier [1] 117/14 easily [1] 103/9 easy [1] 27/20 effect [4] 97/11 122/9 159/6 167/23

effective [12] 30/15 49/12 86/3 107/17 146/24 147/21 154/15 155/5 156/24 158/5 159/18 160/24

**effectively [2]** 145/18 148/1

effectiveness [1] 166/3

effects [1] 159/17 efficient [1] 2/6 effort [1] 121/20 eight [4] 15/25 24/13 107/18 144/25

eight-items [1] 107/18

either [19] 2/20 28/19 34/24 54/20 71/22 78/20 79/22 95/14

98/21 105/2 114/22 115/9 126/9 128/13 146/7 147/13 153/18 158/21 158/21 elaborate [1] 72/10 elected [1] 52/9 element [4] 29/17 127/3 142/2 149/11 elements [131 39/6 40/7 54/2 120/14 127/4 127/6 127/7 128/3 128/4 130/13 145/16 145/18 153/9 elevated [2] 72/22 74/17 elicit [1] 147/25 elicited [1] 147/20

else [2] 95/11 108/9 email [4] 62/10 101/11 121/25 162/13 ensured [3] 64/22 **emanating [1]** 46/23 embedded [4] 50/15 66/11 66/22 164/15 embraced [1] 130/10 **embryonic** [2] 68/22 68/25 emerge [1] 129/19

emergent [1] 58/14 emerging [4] 100/4 100/21 100/22 100/23 18/15 27/19 **Emerita [1]** 7/18

emphasis [1] 61/14 emphasise [2] 38/20 38/22 emphatically [1]

119/17 employed [1] 144/5 **employees [4]** 52/8 73/23 142/19 142/20

Employment [2]

50/16 51/2 enable [4] 49/15 118/8 147/8 157/4 enabled [1] 64/23 enabling [1] 49/3 encapsulate [1] 82/6 **encourage [2]** 155/5 163/21

encouraging [1] 11/13

end [7] 70/2 138/10 158/15 163/16 165/22 165/23 166/2

endeavour [1] 138/3 ended [1] 116/2 ending [1] 123/24 endorsement [1] 163/1

energy [1] 109/18 engage [1] 96/6 engaged [3] 108/3 141/15 141/17 engagement' [1] 76/20

**England** [1] 9/2 **enormous** [1] 17/16 enough [5] 48/3 48/4 64/11 97/2 146/13 enquire [6] 83/18 89/24 90/12 111/7 130/19 146/8 enquired [1] 84/17 enquiring [2] 102/15 130/14 enquiry [1] 130/14 **enshrined** [2] 25/7 26/19 ensure [17] 2/6 3/2 42/23 83/9 83/15 93/2 73/8 107/9 93/23 96/13 99/14 131/24 137/25 141/5 145/6 150/14 150/16 151/9 167/6 90/16 107/23 ensures [1] 93/6 ensuring [3] 38/22 50/8 151/13 54/24 55/3 101/18 145/5

**enterprise [1]** 149/18 entirely [6] 17/1 44/8 entirety [3] 18/10

**entities [1]** 11/5 entity [2] 30/16 35/15 83/17 161/20 161/21 entrustment [1] 149/20

episode [5] 75/12 76/6 77/19 116/7 133/10 equality [1] 25/20

equation [1] 143/13 **equipped** [1] 92/2 er [1] 115/15 **escalate [2]** 59/6 138/4

**escalated [6]** 58/25 59/24 59/25 64/5 121/13 137/17 escalation [5] 73/2 73/8 81/18 144/16 144/23

**especially [6]** 72/19 87/23 153/5 157/12 159/13 160/25 **essential** [2] 36/14 46/10

essentially [26] 12/1 12/11 12/18 15/1 16/23 20/12 33/12 34/7 35/6 40/5 43/25 48/13 50/25 71/15 76/5 77/7 96/17 100/14 101/16 114/5 126/22 132/22 134/21

139/2 140/6 162/18 **establish** [3] 11/18

16/18 118/7 established [4] 27/9 27/21 27/24 63/19 **estimates** [1] 167/16 et [2] 39/22 116/14 et cetera [1] 39/22 etc [1] 37/10 ethical [1] 166/1 ethos [3] 163/25 164/17 166/18 Europe [1] 26/6 **evaluated** [1] 46/9 evaluating [1] 137/15 evaluation [3] 73/2 even [23] 4/14 19/4 37/15 50/14 56/23

63/24 64/8 67/23 103/25 116/13 120/15 120/19 125/22 128/14 136/13 136/25 139/17 154/5 155/21 158/15 162/22 165/18 166/1 events [3] 71/3 111/20 139/21 ever [4] 1/15 76/20 112/25 132/2

every [4] 19/6 23/10

70/16 157/10

**everyone** [1] 31/22 **everything [5]** 54/24 166/16 evidence [67] 2/7 2/8 3/2 9/22 9/23 9/24 16/15 17/14 17/25 18/1 18/6 18/20 18/22 18/24 20/8 54/9 59/1 59/9 69/25 72/16 78/20 80/3 88/3 90/15 90/21 91/17 93/9

93/10 93/12 97/15 99/11 100/8 101/3 103/7 108/7 110/3 110/4 111/3 113/19 119/11 119/15 120/3 120/15 122/8 123/1 132/5 133/5 135/15 136/13 138/15 138/25 142/5 142/12 143/19 146/10 146/17 146/18 147/9 147/25 148/14 157/17 159/4 160/16

161/3 161/18 162/2 165/10 evidenced [1] 146/17 evident [2] 104/2 164/20

evidential [1] 20/23 evolving [2] 25/22 25/23

exacerbated [2] 68/20 72/1 exact [2] 85/20 105/8

38/19 101/14 119/14 117/12 148/4 148/9 Ε **extracted** [1] 106/12 |**fault' [1]** 100/9 **extremely [1]** 135/1 124/12 141/18 161/9 149/14 154/22 157/4 faults [1] 67/13 exactly [20] 10/15 exercised [5] 38/10 163/23 **Eye [1]** 82/18 FCA [1] 46/21 21/18 22/3 35/1 40/10 111/24 112/4 113/20 experienced [1] fear [1] 49/4 50/5 67/9 74/11 95/9 140/10 165/24 feature [4] 62/6 95/25 97/7 102/3 face [7] 79/11 116/18 66/17 91/14 103/9 **exercising [1]** 111/10 **experiences [6]** 91/5 102/10 103/19 114/16 118/22 118/22 121/16 **featured [2]** 156/23 112/6 112/9 163/19 **exert [2]** 102/4 117/10 128/25 134/23 121/16 164/18 102/10 164/5 166/23 157/19 143/25 166/14 facilitating [1] 115/5 Experiencing [1] exhaustive [1] 19/6 Federation [1] examination [2] 19/5 167/13 facing [2] 64/4 exist [3] 51/23 53/14 106/15 165/23 129/22 130/3 feedback [1] 63/21 expert [13] 3/21 examined [4] 75/13 fact [41] 16/7 16/19 17/14 54/21 59/8 existed [1] 130/24 feel [5] 43/10 96/22 93/18 109/11 140/15 23/7 35/17 41/3 41/8 **existence [4]** 35/13 91/17 91/18 92/15 137/1 138/2 146/9 **examining** [1] 78/1 43/14 49/15 52/5 58/3 **feeling [1]** 44/17 107/20 129/19 131/5 119/10 119/12 153/25 example [25] 12/4 60/20 66/15 75/4 **existent [2]** 107/19 157/7 157/9 159/8 feet [1] 69/3 12/22 23/1 25/16 29/1 81/23 84/7 84/13 87/7 feint [1] 92/7 expertise [13] 6/23 107/20 32/7 35/12 38/21 40/1 97/16 99/25 100/17 7/2 8/21 15/16 15/22 existential [2] 84/8 fellow [1] 9/4 44/15 49/13 51/17 101/9 105/24 106/10 84/13 41/5 41/25 42/25 felt [13] 17/20 29/4 52/9 54/3 63/25 66/17 111/14 115/2 122/1 existing [1] 119/17 53/21 89/1 93/8 150/1 47/20 49/7 53/9 77/12 89/10 89/12 91/24 129/4 131/11 132/15 154/8 exists [1] 162/5 92/2 94/20 97/2 105/17 139/7 140/8 137/2 137/4 142/19 125/17 132/17 153/17 exit [4] 160/8 160/13 experts [2] 91/13 140/12 144/7 144/9 144/19 145/4 149/18 162/24 162/24 107/15 157/18 examples [3] 41/14 152/13 154/3 158/10 few [2] 61/1 77/12 exit' [1] 160/9 EXPG0000006 [1] 133/19 166/21 161/8 161/12 161/14 expand [8] 78/22 fiduciary [3] 88/14 3/15 exceptional [1] 80/25 88/24 92/11 factor [1] 67/14 88/18 88/21 EXPG0000010 [1] 141/19 94/6 136/19 148/20 facts [5] 23/1 55/13 field [2] 157/7 157/10 4/10 exceptionally [1] 56/21 114/6 117/21 164/25 fifth [2] 35/20 91/11 **explain [23]** 18/24 143/6 28/25 29/7 31/4 31/12 factual [2] 94/20 expect [13] 37/6 finance [5] 26/13 **excerpts** [1] 17/25 32/5 33/4 40/24 47/13 94/22 86/15 87/12 89/24 26/14 39/22 45/7 68/5 exchange [1] 56/15 failed [5] 67/12 67/15 finances [1] 45/11 98/17 98/20 100/23 48/23 53/15 67/11 exchanges [2] 10/2 67/23 67/25 67/25 107/13 108/21 129/25 68/23 78/22 81/3 86/5 financial [10] 8/16 162/13 130/16 142/17 143/3 90/20 110/20 114/20 failing [2] 64/17 46/15 46/18 46/21 **excite [1]** 84/3 expectation [9] 30/2 122/20 136/19 148/20 80/10 46/25 47/2 47/5 47/9 **excluded [2]** 113/2 failings [5] 70/11 38/15 44/20 97/20 165/1 83/10 83/11 117/13 97/21 108/11 108/13 70/15 112/5 131/5 explain' [1] 28/20 find [14] 27/20 28/4 **excluding [5]** 112/12 131/8 141/13 153/14 31/3 107/6 107/8 **explained [4]** 40/13 112/18 113/4 113/12 failure [39] 21/23 107/18 128/7 136/22 expectations [5] 42/5 149/6 158/20 113/17 21/25 22/3 22/7 22/7 11/11 27/5 59/21 137/6 147/25 153/1 explaining [1] 40/6 **exclusion [3]** 111/18 22/8 22/14 22/17 96/10 107/5 160/6 161/15 165/21 **explains** [1] 38/7 113/2 122/2 22/21 22/23 23/7 finding [2] 67/5 118/3 expected [37] 10/9 explicit [5] 62/1 **ExCo [10]** 23/21 58/7 23/15 23/16 23/16 10/11 10/16 10/19 118/15 126/9 136/4 findings [5] 78/10 58/8 124/20 125/1 23/20 24/1 24/4 57/5 16/1 16/7 16/21 17/14 148/25 90/17 96/4 96/7 99/14 125/3 126/1 134/18 22/17 25/25 45/7 **explicitly [2]** 107/25 57/6 57/8 59/4 60/21 finds [1] 11/11 135/14 136/11 64/19 65/10 70/9 45/10 48/12 57/13 120/13 fine [4] 50/11 83/17 excuse [1] 65/5 70/25 71/4 71/12 59/17 60/19 83/21 exploring [1] 54/16 161/20 167/8 **exec [1]** 157/3 110/1 120/2 120/4 86/8 86/12 86/18 finish [1] 167/6 express [2] 85/14 Execs [1] 147/13 120/6 122/11 137/18 86/25 96/1 96/5 96/8 firm [1] 131/24 125/21 executive [195] 137/19 140/2 158/18 97/25 100/3 102/4 expressed [3] 17/17 firmly [1] 80/4 **executive's [6]** 81/19 164/20 164/21 107/3 110/6 111/4 99/21 160/11 first [46] 2/19 3/5 82/4 92/23 93/2 112/12 113/1 127/22 failures [5] 22/6 57/4 3/14 3/19 4/1 4/6 6/21 expressing [1] 129/23 145/23 65/16 68/19 70/25 127/23 141/9 143/9 113/23 6/23 6/25 10/23 13/10 executives [29] fair [2] 19/9 94/24 148/4 expressions [1] 13/13 15/8 19/10 26/11 26/12 27/14 fairly [1] 80/13 20/15 21/15 25/9 112/2 expected/best [1] 41/7 45/6 45/12 45/13 fall [1] 43/2 **expressly [1]** 105/15 31/12 38/1 38/2 42/3 10/9 45/15 46/6 60/10 fallen [1] 158/21 **expecting [3]** 101/21 **extend [3]** 77/13 47/20 54/11 54/15 60/11 60/13 67/12 falling [3] 78/25 117/4 142/6 87/22 92/9 55/1 55/2 55/4 61/19 72/4 72/21 94/11 95/3 103/25 112/10 113/20 **expects [1]** 87/8 78/25 79/1 67/12 69/2 76/25 extent [7] 16/6 46/21 133/21 147/22 148/23 expenses [1] 45/10 84/18 95/17 123/12 falls [1] 52/21 81/10 101/25 104/22 familiar [1] 78/18 131/8 144/8 119/20 127/15 138/19 **experience [26]** 6/23 149/12 149/22 149/25 far [8] 28/3 60/2 7/1 7/22 8/21 15/16 external [9] 52/10 141/21 142/10 142/22 154/18 157/18 159/10 64/20 67/18 75/9 15/21 17/4 43/7 43/13 142/23 145/21 149/2 99/24 129/5 129/11 executives' [1] 79/13 90/5 94/25 48/2 49/14 53/23 54/5 131/16 142/4 144/8 150/8 154/23 156/19 166/16 fault [3] 69/24 101/3 firstly [8] 2/9 6/8 7/5 59/20 107/8 107/8 146/17 161/9 **exercise** [7] 37/1 107/15 107/15 112/19 extract [1] 103/12 133/15 8/22 21/14 31/4 31/21

F	55/25 69/12 99/11	Furthermore [1]	132/25 148/14 148/25	1
firstly [1] 71/21	119/23 137/17 145/2	71/23	149/3 161/15	20/12 21/1 21/7 21/12
five [5] 4/23 4/24	145/17 157/17 161/1	future [4] 52/7	gives [1] 27/9	21/23 21/25 21/25
118/17 150/25 167/10	165/8	133/23 155/8 155/21	giving [3] 2/8 78/11	22/6 22/7 22/8 22/9
fixed [4] 4/19 80/13	foundation [2] 17/9	G	100/6	22/12 22/18 23/7
80/16 80/16	66/12		go [58] 3/20 4/19 5/1	23/15 23/16 24/2
flag [1] 94/2	founded [2] 15/18	Gareth [2] 118/16	5/8 6/7 6/21 11/17	24/13 24/22 25/4 25/8
flagged [2] 96/3	15/20	120/2	12/2 12/6 13/21 13/23	l l
101/11	four [8] 30/25 31/4	gather [1] 108/13	14/9 15/8 15/24 16/10	l l
flaws [1] 135/15	31/23 33/17 36/7 68/3	gave [3]   7 1/25 12 1/1     136/1	19/22 20/1 27/7 29/9	29/19 29/22 30/8
Flemington [1] 119/4	68/8 107/19	gaze [2] 52/21 78/24	30/23 36/21 36/24	30/10 30/14 30/20
flows [1] 45/7	Tourth [2] 5/15 33/4	GC [1] 158/11	39/11 39/14 43/18	31/22 31/23 36/15
focus [13] 57/18 61/7	Fourthly [1] 2/22	general [79] 17/18	46/12 48/9 48/14	37/6 37/8 38/6 38/8
61/10 66/9 72/24 74/6	fragmented [1] 92/5	19/19 44/12 56/13	48/16 51/19 62/11 66/5 72/22 77/24 78/8	38/14 44/7 44/10 45/3 46/5 46/10 47/5 47/11
74/7 77/9 77/9 95/5	fragments [2] 128/21 129/2	63/8 63/8 63/9 71/11	82/20 83/19 86/5 88/7	48/21 48/24 49/2
134/9 138/1 155/23	framed [1] 134/14	83/5 88/20 88/23	95/1 95/20 107/22	52/13 53/14 53/22
focused [6] 79/2	framework [6] 30/9	88/25 89/3 89/7 89/15	110/5 112/17 114/4	53/23 54/3 54/4 59/18
87/18 88/1 110/10	73/1 73/7 133/25	90/4 91/20 91/25	116/6 117/4 119/16	60/21 60/24 68/21
142/6 156/4	134/20 135/6	97/22 112/20 112/24	131/15 134/15 138/11	71/7 79/7 83/6 85/21
focuses [1] 101/7	frank [2] 126/12	113/1 113/5 113/12	138/21 144/12 149/22	
focusing [3] 94/12	132/11	113/24 114/3 114/10	150/7 154/11 162/18	110/22 120/4 120/5
124/23 142/8	FRC [1] 47/5	115/1 115/5 115/7	164/8	129/15 129/17 134/16
follow [6] 11/13 40/4	free [1] 57/9	115/8 115/9 115/15	goes [6] 8/20 79/20	134/17 138/20 140/2
99/16 154/10 160/10	freely [1] 50/9	116/16 117/2 117/9	110/24 140/16 147/23	l l
163/18	frequently [1] 30/1	119/2 120/7 120/8	155/11	145/4 145/7 150/13
follow-up [1] 99/16	front [2] 3/16 110/13	120/12 122/19 122/25	going [51] 2/4 3/12	150/16 151/22 154/17
followed [3] 25/5 61/24 105/2	frontline [3] 163/17	123/3 123/5 123/5	4/22 11/6 11/17 14/9	158/19 158/20 159/19
following [7] 36/2	165/25 166/5	124/10 125/6 125/12	25/1 25/1 31/16 33/16	164/22
61/23 105/8 109/9	<b>FSA [4]</b> 46/14 46/14	125/16 127/5 130/7	36/21 37/15 38/9	governed [2] 30/11
119/19 124/8 168/11	46/24 47/3	130/9 131/8 132/17	42/21 44/16 45/4 48/5	
follows [1] 76/22	Fujitsu [1] 53/6	136/14 136/25 137/19	54/13 56/11 57/6	government [27]
foolproof [1] 90/1	Fujitsu's [1] 118/16	137/22 143/3 151/18	62/19 62/20 64/22	10/4 11/6 11/24 12/11
foot [19] 7/24 12/23	fulfilment [1] 160/22	151/20 152/1 152/7   152/12 152/13 152/19	67/20 72/13 83/17	12/14 12/15 13/1 13/7
15/9 26/17 30/5 39/11	fulfils [1] 85/25	152/12 152/13 152/19	97/5 98/23 98/23	13/10 13/14 13/14
39/23 46/12 50/12	full [6] 1/10 66/1	153/5 153/10 153/15	98/24 100/19 101/4	15/3 17/18 28/9 29/16
78/6 124/5 129/8	99/14 131/8 133/17 167/24	153/25 154/4 154/5	101/23 102/19 109/4	29/25 30/8 30/19 32/21 32/23 33/4
137/11 138/25 144/19	fully [10] 37/9 43/17	157/14 157/25 158/1	111/8 117/11 117/12 128/7 136/6 138/15	37/12 42/7 53/3 79/1
150/9 156/10 156/21	93/24 98/3 98/20	161/6	138/18 142/21 144/25	l l
164/8	104/11 108/3 125/12	generality [2] 86/2	146/2 146/9 149/6	government-owned
form [8] 68/22 68/25	127/11 134/17	86/3	153/4 153/23 166/4	[ <b>1</b> ] 13/14
82/2 97/15 103/10	function [0] 62/21	generally [5] 10/11	166/17	governments [1]
113/10 113/16 160/23	62/22 64/25 65/7 68/5	10/16 73/11 114/24	gone [1] 130/19	11/13
formal [10] 11/21	131/6 141/19 142/13	125/12	good [18] 1/3 1/8	granted [4] 69/5
11/23 13/13 14/12 14/19 38/12 38/24	functional [8] 64/1	generator [1] 143/18	17/11 18/16 22/18	135/13 136/2 164/1
76/20 120/5 120/6	68/8 89/9 89/13 92/8	germane [3] 71/1	30/14 59/17 76/7 79/8	grateful [3] 5/2 50/17
formally [3] 63/1	93/4 124/21 153/7	106/1 153/17	85/9 85/10 103/17	69/24
151/21 152/17	functionally [1] 75/4	get [6] 48/5 61/13	103/20 134/16 141/1	great [4] 88/4 109/23
format [2] 35/6 36/6	functioning [2] 37/9	72/20 101/22 112/8	146/1 146/6 150/21	117/6 125/2
formation [1] 25/2	150/18	121/3	got [25] 3/2 4/18	greater [2] 60/19
formatting [1] 3/10	functions [7] 63/25	gets [1] 121/22	24/23 36/22 41/10	72/8
formed [1] 80/14	68/4 79/8 90/18 91/12		41/12 45/19 54/6	Greenbury [2] 25/7
forms [1] 29/13	134/15 144/9	78/12 79/2 111/24   121/19	55/16 59/4 84/11 91/1	26/19
formulate [1] 167/5	fundamental [3] 30/14 39/1 110/19	give [11] 3/3 37/23	99/9 99/11 101/24 105/1 121/23 122/25	grip [1] 78/12 ground [2] 2/5 2/9
formulated [2] 59/16	fundamentally [1]	52/11 90/23 96/5	126/15 126/24 144/14	
134/19	49/1	116/11 120/13 120/14	146/5 146/7 160/10	group [16] 52/19
formulating [1] 56/6	funding [3] 29/17	135/8 167/4 167/8	161/1	56/13 59/25 60/1
forum [1] 62/7	79/2 79/4	given [19] 42/17 90/1	governance [107]	62/14 62/22 63/2 63/6
forward [2] 30/23	funds [1] 82/14	90/8 90/9 99/24	7/7 7/23 8/24 10/24	63/23 63/25 64/14
82/1 <b>forwards [2]</b> 5/2 78/8	further [6] 4/19 82/20	104/25 106/13 108/18	11/10 11/22 13/6	64/15 70/4 70/10
found [11] 47/23	90/12 94/8 128/23	113/11 113/12 113/16	13/11 14/5 15/12	154/21 157/17
10unu [11] 7//20	146/8	122/9 125/18 132/25	15/15 16/24 17/11	groups [4] 40/19

154/16 155/13 155/25 G handle [1] 129/24 headhunter [1] 161/9 highlighted [3] 5/16 handled [7] 46/25 heading [11] 30/25 131/4 131/5 161/17 161/18 167/9 groups... [3] 48/1 38/3 39/4 40/17 43/20 highlights [1] 8/1 76/16 103/15 130/17 168/4 52/4 52/17 131/1 137/16 156/3 144/19 146/24 148/3 **highly [2]** 104/8 Howe [1] 167/11 grown [1] 92/8 handles [1] 49/13 155/9 159/22 163/3 106/1 however [8] 2/17 growth [1] 61/15 handling [11] 19/13 headings [3] 14/19 Highway [1] 16/24 62/23 100/11 102/12 guess [2] 74/5 83/22 73/23 77/14 80/1 108/1 111/2 137/17 15/1 15/25 him [1] 58/4 guidance [14] 10/24 hint [2] 100/9 100/24 98/13 117/18 128/17 heads [1] 124/21 167/6 11/2 11/14 13/3 14/12 130/5 151/2 156/8 hear [6] 9/25 27/22 his [2] 85/19 132/8 **HQ[1]** 116/14 15/4 15/12 23/6 27/10 HR [2] 63/25 153/12 164/10 102/19 106/20 164/4 **historical** [1] 24/19 27/21 27/24 29/12 happen [6] 4/22 historically [3] 45/25 Hudgells [1] 167/12 165/9 37/2 43/5 75/10 96/19 97/24 heard [10] 16/15 67/2 131/25 136/12 huge [1] 163/7 guilty [2] 82/13 108/16 108/16 76/11 76/18 91/22 **hm [4]** 14/22 114/19 **Hugh [1]** 119/4 155/17 happened [14] 10/1 92/1 101/25 104/24 158/13 162/12 human [2] 109/21 guises [1] 163/12 10/1 10/3 46/4 50/25 161/3 165/12 Hodge [1] 167/10 116/10 humiliating [1] 116/9 67/8 67/10 74/16 75/8 hearing [2] 9/22 Hodgkinson [2] 59/1 96/18 97/16 106/8 168/11 63/17 hundreds [1] 140/17 had [95] 13/20 19/20 107/1 116/25 heart [2] 38/6 68/16 hold [4] 25/2 29/3 23/3 24/20 32/9 41/16 height [1] 86/1 44/10 154/4 happening [4] 51/5 55/25 56/23 115/22 116/13 122/23 held [12] 7/9 7/21 I accept [1] 88/16 holding [8] 32/18 57/20 59/24 61/20 I accountable [3] 165/22 25/1 45/12 45/13 44/18 62/14 63/6 63/4 64/21 64/24 65/4 36/16 38/7 38/11 happens [2] 115/4 62/22 75/6 80/4 65/10 72/8 75/3 89/16 66/1 67/6 68/7 68/14 I add [1] 14/11 146/13 109/19 127/14 135/4 **Holdings [2]** 32/17 71/24 72/2 74/15 lam [9] 11/17 27/22 happy [4] 55/5 93/10 136/14 60/24 74/16 74/17 74/18 122/17 127/2 help [9] 19/17 44/25 36/21 38/9 38/15 holistic [2] 133/24 75/4 75/6 75/17 78/17 136/5 98/16 103/14 115/2 45/21 47/17 62/16 hard [1] 3/16 78/19 79/7 80/11 157/15 70/23 110/8 126/21 hardly [1] 103/15 honest [1] 49/5 80/16 80/16 84/15 I anticipated [1] 95/9 hardship [1] 109/21 145/1 hope [2] 22/5 106/9 85/11 85/13 90/1 90/1 I apologise [1] 16/10 has [52] 2/18 19/5 helpful [1] 24/15 Horizon [51] 32/9 95/23 98/2 100/9 lask [6] 1/9 4/24 24/12 25/15 26/11 47/14 55/25 56/16 helping [1] 79/4 100/9 104/23 105/25 56/18 57/1 57/9 57/10 69/18 113/7 150/6 29/11 29/24 30/8 Hence [1] 44/11 106/12 107/4 110/15 165/16 30/20 38/25 44/12 her [41] 55/23 55/24 58/18 63/20 64/7 110/24 113/13 114/22 44/12 46/4 46/9 49/5 55/24 55/25 85/16 64/13 67/14 69/7 I be [1] 164/24 115/9 115/12 120/17 49/6 49/20 49/23 50/9 I believe [11] 25/21 85/19 86/12 86/15 71/11 73/3 73/13 121/4 122/4 125/1 85/24 94/7 96/11 51/16 52/23 54/23 86/18 86/25 87/1 87/3 75/19 76/11 78/14 126/12 126/15 127/7 97/17 99/18 102/8 76/11 76/18 83/14 87/4 87/8 87/9 87/9 79/12 79/16 79/21 127/8 127/14 127/18 132/24 135/23 143/7 88/16 88/20 88/23 87/15 87/17 87/25 80/13 81/5 82/9 82/19 128/1 130/8 130/8 145/25 88/25 89/4 89/9 89/12 89/1 89/13 92/17 93/2 82/24 88/10 89/19 130/9 130/19 130/20 93/5 94/3 96/5 96/12 90/24 91/20 98/5 I call [1] 1/3 92/7 98/21 99/3 130/22 130/23 131/19 I can [4] 33/15 72/9 105/11 108/14 112/22 98/25 112/21 115/22 99/24 100/2 103/8 131/19 134/3 135/16 115/4 115/6 112/23 115/1 116/23 119/5 119/24 121/16 106/4 106/5 109/17 136/12 136/17 139/10 122/1 123/8 125/12 122/25 129/25 130/1 119/15 134/4 135/24 | I can't [1] 160/17 139/17 141/10 141/13 125/16 126/5 130/5 130/9 136/11 146/22 136/13 139/24 146/18 | I currently [1] 168/2 143/9 144/2 144/3 133/15 141/23 141/25 148/17 149/2 163/7 I described [1] 158/9 167/25 149/5 153/12 153/17 131/13 151/18 153/5 here [46] 4/25 5/1 163/12 164/6 165/4 154/21 156/3 159/10 hat [2] 130/8 130/10 12/7 15/3 16/12 30/24 Horizon's [1] 155/15 | I did [1] 55/4 160/17 162/4 162/24 I didn't [2] 27/22 hats [1] 130/8 32/3 33/16 47/13 57/8 hour [1] 37/15 165/9 have [286] how [62] 11/18 12/22 | 127/1 63/10 64/18 70/11 hadn't [3] 59/13 97/2 14/7 23/6 24/20 24/25 I direct [1] 168/4 haven't [9] 4/18 40/8 70/24 71/14 80/10 168/6 70/24 72/16 73/13 81/15 84/25 85/14 30/10 33/17 35/17 I do [2] 3/17 127/3 half [5] 77/18 133/16 36/8 37/3 49/13 49/13 I don't [8] 83/19 86/1 90/14 148/14 161/18 96/24 97/3 97/4 99/7 162/23 162/24 162/24 101/2 106/15 117/8 161/22 100/15 101/16 106/18 49/24 52/6 57/4 64/17 halfway [2] 39/20 109/1 111/8 115/2 65/9 68/12 69/10 152/18 160/16 167/20 haves' [1] 59/16 144/14 l ever [1] 112/25 having [7] 4/17 26/15 117/15 123/12 128/10 70/10 75/11 82/15 hallmark [1] 30/16 I exercised [1] 38/10 128/13 153/14 160/9 129/5 129/7 129/10 82/21 85/19 85/22 Hampel [2] 25/7 162/22 165/19 129/21 131/15 134/21 85/25 88/4 88/6 94/4 | **I find [1]** 31/3 26/19 he [10] 57/20 57/24 137/5 138/22 142/12 96/6 97/1 98/22 102/9 | **1 got [2]** 55/16 59/4 hand [14] 11/2 11/4 57/25 58/2 59/12 145/25 148/21 151/22 104/18 107/10 111/22 I guess [2] 74/5 11/23 12/9 12/13 59/24 59/25 89/4 154/13 160/15 113/13 113/21 116/19 83/22 12/19 12/20 12/25 119/11 120/22 122/20 I hadn't [1] 168/6 151/14 153/16 herself [5] 96/3 98/24 12/25 15/2 15/2 90/8 I have [4] 54/6 129/20 130/5 130/17 head [3] 9/1 130/10 116/3 116/4 119/5 90/9 126/15

high [3] 85/25 86/1

highest [1] 10/16

100/4

146/22

headed [3] 4/11

11/21 53/13

handed [3] 103/14

103/17 106/6

I hope [1] 106/9

130/25 130/25 134/25 112/24 113/9 126/24

149/14 149/20 153/22 I imagine [3] 117/6

139/15 143/2 147/6

107/4 107/22 109/2 103/13 103/16 103/25 153/1 155/9 155/11 identify [23] 17/2 156/11 161/1 162/4 20/10 21/20 24/21 110/15 111/2 111/5 115/18 115/19 125/18 I imagine... [2] 164/23 166/5 167/18 31/11 47/21 61/23 111/20 114/6 115/13 129/2 137/15 142/25 122/23 144/10 167/23 168/7 61/25 65/18 70/3 117/8 117/12 118/9 157/12 163/16 164/4 I interrupted [1] I turn [1] 9/13 70/11 74/25 78/5 119/23 120/11 120/19 impossible [2] 152/3 I understand [3] 104/16 108/10 109/2 121/14 122/12 122/23 134/15 165/8 I just [2] 31/18 43/24 129/24 138/3 138/21 125/17 128/7 128/9 10/12 15/17 61/9 improve [1] 155/2 I made [2] 22/19 138/24 139/3 139/14 128/16 128/18 129/22 improved [1] 107/12 I understood [1] 147/23 143/5 151/15 130/3 130/5 133/18 improvement [1] I may [3] 2/9 36/20 134/24 135/18 137/17 I want [1] 24/8 identifying [4] 15/11 160/12 77/24 I was [4] 1/18 50/18 47/4 47/8 105/16 138/17 138/21 141/1 inaccuracies [3] I mean [9] 62/23 67/2 82/6 105/24 143/5 143/13 144/2 94/20 94/23 95/6 identity [2] 36/13 68/2 84/11 86/2 105/7 I will [1] 2/10 79/11 144/12 146/7 151/14 inaccurate [1] 112/13 133/11 158/22 I won't [1] 154/9 ie [16] 3/20 12/15 151/17 152/8 153/5 125/19 I might [1] 68/2 I would [8] 75/16 14/23 19/6 36/7 40/5 153/16 157/12 157/16 inadequately [1] I perhaps [1] 96/20 98/20 133/11 143/3 54/14 59/10 66/2 81/8 158/17 159/13 160/16 102/3 I personally [1] 154/7 143/8 144/11 167/5 106/18 106/24 111/14 160/25 161/10 162/1 inappropriate [3] I probably [1] 152/3 163/9 164/8 165/1 167/18 113/13 114/9 142/19 43/9 83/18 89/21 I put [2] 49/24 50/1 **I'd [5]** 4/16 5/2 67/11 ie because [1] 66/2 165/12 165/18 166/1 included [5] 48/23 I reads [1] 6/4 77/24 144/2 166/20 166/21 90/17 122/5 130/11 ie bringing [1] I realise [1] 70/15 **I'II [5]** 4/20 5/1 31/11 142/19 ii [1] 10/10 139/11 I regard [2] 83/24 80/7 98/16 ie consider [1] 54/14 iii [1] 10/22 includes [2] 17/3 84/1 ie in [1] 111/14 I'm [31] 1/20 14/9 ill [1] 92/2 65/22 I right [1] 18/9 25/22 31/15 50/17 ie incorporated [1] illustrate [1] 139/13 including [14] 3/6 3/7 I said [3] 72/10 54/13 56/11 61/2 **illustrated** [1] 159/1 9/9 17/25 27/13 32/7 12/15 151/20 168/1 70/12 70/15 70/22 37/10 45/8 87/23 ie Jason [1] 59/10 **illustrates [2]** 139/9 I say [2] 165/17 73/15 83/22 83/22 155/3 100/8 147/7 162/8 ie looking [1] 19/6 167/17 83/23 84/14 87/7 ie primary [1] 14/23 illustrations [2] 162/10 162/13 I see [3] 67/23 68/2 100/17 109/4 116/21 ie that [1] 113/13 19/21 159/3 inclusion [2] 25/20 82/6 127/2 128/7 132/7 ie the [1] 40/5 **imaginary [1]** 158/14 92/22 I shall [1] 2/14 138/15 142/8 142/15 ie there [2] 81/8 imagine [5] 67/16 incomplete [1] I should [7] 1/14 2/1 142/21 153/24 154/7 114/9 93/3 117/6 122/23 125/19 94/16 114/24 114/25 160/16 168/1 ie what [1] 36/7 144/10 incorporated [2] 129/22 138/13 l've [13] 4/18 16/22 ie why [2] 106/18 **immediate [5]** 94/3 12/15 35/17 I skipped [1] 14/14 23/19 27/2 45/19 106/24 110/3 118/23 124/10 increasing [1] 76/12 I spoke [1] 95/10 48/22 80/7 105/25 124/14 ie yesterday [1] 3/20 increasingly [3] I summarise [2] 7/4 immediately [5] 106/5 113/5 128/18 if [153] 2/9 5/1 5/9 25/15 29/11 164/20 8/22 140/6 161/1 6/4 7/4 8/19 9/15 57/17 121/4 128/2 indeed [58] 2/2 7/12 I suspect [1] 167/20 11/17 12/2 12/6 13/21 10/21 12/17 12/21 idea [3] 99/3 121/2 135/7 136/24 I take [1] 56/20 167/8 13/23 15/24 19/10 **imminent** [1] 77/2 13/4 14/6 14/6 16/18 I then [1] 143/5 ideally [1] 147/5 20/1 20/10 20/15 impact [11] 52/24 19/16 19/24 21/4 I think [83] 3/5 4/14 ideas [2] 47/6 155/15 22/14 23/1 24/9 24/15 56/22 57/10 86/10 21/25 22/25 23/8 4/16 4/19 6/25 8/1 26/1 26/5 27/7 28/25 88/11 92/24 103/7 23/14 24/3 24/7 28/1 identical [1] 51/4 14/13 18/2 23/9 24/16 32/2 32/10 33/4 33/15 130/22 130/23 152/20 identifiable [1] 46/2 28/11 28/24 29/25 28/6 30/6 30/12 40/23 34/2 35/5 35/11 35/25 158/8 34/1 34/6 34/9 34/14 identification [8] 44/15 46/17 47/13 46/7 73/1 73/8 73/14 34/21 38/14 39/9 36/19 38/9 39/11 impacted [1] 118/2 49/22 50/12 52/1 129/16 144/16 144/23 39/14 40/2 40/25 39/13 40/8 41/21 **Imperial [1]** 7/9 52/13 53/2 55/5 57/21 147/3 43/21 46/12 50/12 **impersonal** [1] 116/8 43/12 47/16 48/19 59/1 60/17 61/18 implications [3] 69/8 identified [44] 20/24 51/19 52/15 55/18 49/22 53/9 56/10 59/3 64/19 67/4 68/19 61/25 62/25 66/19 21/24 22/18 22/22 56/8 59/12 59/24 123/2 125/10 73/14 74/11 74/13 23/6 23/12 25/11 60/20 61/2 61/20 implicit [2] 44/6 75/2 96/20 107/21 75/14 77/17 80/10 25/15 32/24 44/20 62/11 66/5 67/6 67/7 126/10 112/7 114/8 131/20 80/25 81/21 82/20 46/8 53/2 54/2 54/10 67/11 68/2 69/10 132/16 136/3 139/6 implied [1] 105/14 84/22 92/13 93/18 54/11 56/25 59/18 69/23 71/3 71/7 71/24 146/19 149/20 149/24 implies [2] 116/9 94/24 95/22 101/5 60/19 66/1 70/25 72/9 77/16 77/17 122/16 150/2 153/10 153/20 102/1 112/6 114/4 80/24 85/1 85/13 77/24 78/8 83/8 83/9 implying [2] 120/11 166/5 114/17 117/2 119/19 87/13 88/10 96/4 83/10 83/16 83/19 122/10 independence [4] 121/8 121/24 121/25 82/10 102/4 102/10 103/13 104/2 105/4 83/22 84/1 84/15 import [1] 99/14 122/22 123/11 127/3 105/21 106/10 108/22 87/13 89/3 89/5 89/9 importance [4] 38/24 132/9 127/15 128/5 128/9 129/5 129/21 138/12 89/17 90/2 91/12 80/8 80/17 138/22 independent [35] 8/4 132/7 132/11 132/16 139/5 151/21 151/22 91/25 96/3 96/22 **important [25]** 7/4 8/15 39/19 41/1 41/3 133/18 142/10 143/24 14/8 17/7 24/23 36/17 156/5 158/16 158/24 97/15 99/10 99/22 41/4 41/8 41/9 41/10 144/18 145/3 148/24 159/22 160/18 163/2 100/21 100/22 100/25 49/1 50/19 54/4 66/19 41/19 41/23 42/11 151/20 152/11 152/13 identifies [1] 22/14 101/2 102/10 105/23 72/19 93/25 95/7 97/6 42/11 42/17 59/8

75/23 77/15 88/6 88/9 investment [2] 8/10 126/6 126/17 126/19 injury [1] 73/25 innocence [1] 164/14 90/3 91/6 91/10 93/16 163/7 126/21 137/14 156/1 independent... [20] Inquiry [24] 1/10 3/12 94/18 95/15 96/7 **investors** [1] 33/7 158/16 60/12 60/14 60/15 9/23 14/8 16/23 18/12 98/13 101/21 105/9 invite [1] 157/10 it [354] 60/17 62/21 69/15 18/14 18/23 18/25 105/10 105/25 113/22 invited [1] 97/8 **It'll [1]** 150/8 72/5 72/7 72/15 72/17 20/9 21/12 21/13 118/18 inviting [1] 2/20 it's [67] 1/15 3/19 72/20 79/6 80/11 25/23 36/20 40/24 intermediary [1] 42/8 involved [3] 97/9 4/11 5/13 6/23 9/21 80/15 88/25 89/15 41/14 53/11 70/23 9/24 17/3 23/9 26/12 intermediate [3] 132/23 163/11 130/9 132/3 150/19 71/1 75/21 76/11 32/11 33/1 34/24 involvement [1] 26/16 28/3 35/17 38/2 154/19 76/18 91/22 148/2 38/14 45/3 49/1 57/6 intermediately [1] 76/17 indicate [2] 24/4 insert [1] 6/2 32/18 involves [1] 55/12 57/22 59/1 60/17 45/24 internal [5] 52/8 52/9 60/18 65/17 72/6 insignificant [2] **involving [2]** 10/3 indicated [3] 22/5 164/1 166/22 129/5 129/11 131/2 110/25 74/23 74/25 75/14 79/10 105/25 insofar [3] 30/2 irony [2] 84/6 84/10 77/14 78/24 80/10 interpretation [1] indication [2] 101/3 86/10 113/25 43/5 irrespective [1] 84/12 86/3 90/8 93/18 121/24 **Insolvency [2]** 73/22 interrelates [1] 142/18 102/22 103/14 103/14 indications [2] 140/1 105/9 105/14 110/22 73/23 159/19 **irritation [2]** 113/20 155/22 interrogate [1] 108/3 **inspected** [1] 83/6 111/20 112/7 120/24 156/2 indifference [1] instance [2] 2/19 interrogated [4] 96/2 **irritations** [1] 110/3 121/2 121/21 121/21 166/22 103/25 104/11 128/5 122/12 123/10 127/12 90/3 is [413] indirectly [1] 98/16 129/17 129/23 130/3 instantiated [1] interrogating [2] is particularly [1] individual [7] 28/21 132/12 135/1 137/18 116/22 62/25 95/16 42/13 71/2 71/3 87/14 instead [2] 18/14 interrogation [1] isn't [6] 105/4 112/15 138/22 141/21 142/1 93/14 148/10 109/7 61/17 113/4 129/19 152/5 144/19 145/20 149/9 individually [2] 2/13 158/20 151/23 153/2 154/8 instil [1] 155/2 interrupted [2] 152/3 2/16 159/14 163/2 167/17 instituted [1] 118/25 152/3 isolate [2] 55/14 individuals [4] 24/5 62/12 intervene [1] 2/24 italics [1] 5/22 institutional [1] 40/12 152/10 157/3 27/16 into [50] 5/11 5/15 isolated [3] 20/24 item [3] 99/4 101/10 **induction [3]** 66/18 instructed [2] 10/8 6/11 6/18 11/1 12/19 36/6 77/19 101/17 148/25 149/24 14/12 19/22 24/20 16/18 issue [53] 35/21 items [1] 107/18 Industry [1] 35/22 instructions [4] 9/18 33/19 36/1 40/18 47/4 55/16 62/8 62/12 **iterations** [1] 76/19 **INEDs [4]** 40/21 19/20 29/20 118/25 48/10 48/13 55/24 62/16 63/12 64/16 its [38] 3/6 3/7 20/13 40/25 41/1 41/8 instrument [2] 27/20 57/18 58/4 68/13 65/16 68/11 68/12 22/16 27/8 32/24 inevitably [3] 47/24 40/12 76/10 83/18 83/21 70/8 70/8 78/4 78/5 33/24 34/3 34/10 129/18 163/8 instrumental [2] 84/17 87/4 89/24 78/7 79/15 79/19 41/22 45/18 53/3 54/5 inexperienced [1] 166/3 166/7 90/12 91/9 92/22 97/8 82/23 85/12 85/15 60/3 62/24 66/20 154/18 97/10 102/14 102/15 66/21 77/11 84/4 instruments [5] 15/4 85/18 92/25 95/12 influence [3] 102/13 15/19 15/21 17/8 110/5 117/4 118/3 95/18 99/19 99/20 99/25 109/17 115/23 102/13 132/20 121/19 122/11 130/14 102/21 104/16 106/2 120/14 133/2 134/2 85/21 influential [1] 150/22 130/19 134/18 136/5 108/10 108/23 108/25 134/3 134/4 135/12 integrate [1] 122/11 **inform [2]** 125/13 integrity [1] 118/3 136/21 143/13 145/9 109/25 111/12 114/13 136/17 140/10 141/11 125/20 145/19 146/8 146/20 122/10 123/18 123/24 143/1 143/1 148/5 intend [1] 2/1 informal [3] 38/15 intention [4] 16/18 148/25 156/4 162/8 123/25 124/4 127/21 163/8 163/12 163/14 120/6 153/15 35/4 106/16 106/21 129/4 129/10 133/6 introduce [1] 149/13 165/3 information [32] 23/4 interconnectedness introduced [1] 51/5 135/7 138/21 138/22 itself [13] 14/10 28/9 23/20 37/4 45/3 69/7 138/25 144/21 149/4 47/9 51/7 94/5 96/18 **[1]** 110/12 introduction [4] 78/11 80/20 81/25 156/21 162/7 165/2 47/14 82/13 96/24 104/14 110/10 110/25 interdependent [1] 87/4 90/12 96/23 97/2 145/6 104/25 issue 2 [1] 123/18 111/15 111/19 133/4 100/12 103/2 103/8 interest [20] 25/18 invented [1] 40/9 issue 6 [1] 135/7 138/16 106/1 108/2 108/14 30/17 38/21 43/8 51/1 issued [4] 13/5 13/11 iv [1] 10/22 **invention** [1] 31/8 120/13 120/21 121/22 52/5 53/11 53/24 invert [1] 54/13 13/14 13/15 125/19 128/15 132/12 53/25 76/15 79/10 issues [46] 3/10 investigating [1] 135/4 136/3 136/23 James [2] 76/13 88/7 99/24 102/14 129/6 55/13 55/14 58/14 83/25 139/17 145/8 145/19 65/18 71/2 71/3 75/13 **January [3]** 100/5 129/11 130/6 144/2 investigation [2] 147/10 147/19 100/21 162/2 144/4 155/16 156/8 5/18 163/24 77/19 77/22 78/1 informed [8] 20/8 78/21 80/6 85/12 86/9 January 2014 [1] interested [3] 52/15 investigations [11] 42/20 44/21 53/20 5/12 5/16 78/12 82/11 86/13 86/16 86/18 162/2 143/9 153/19 108/12 119/25 120/18 Jason [4] 1/9 55/24 interests [7] 7/20 82/12 82/16 103/5 88/10 96/3 96/15 157/11 22/13 22/16 52/16 59/10 59/23 106/3 139/10 140/12 99/18 100/4 100/10 inherent [3] 48/6 **Jenkins [4]** 118/16 71/1 129/18 131/7 147/11 100/24 103/4 103/13 64/12 71/10 119/12 119/18 120/3 104/15 105/4 105/21 interfere [1] 110/23 investigative [2] initial [2] 74/14 125/9 **Jo [1]** 162/9 76/14 78/19 106/15 107/24 108/4 interfering [2] 111/9 initially [2] 32/15 job [3] 38/13 95/16 108/12 108/20 114/9 146/2 investigator [1] 124/19 146/3 interim [19] 19/12 143/16 119/20 122/17 124/23

join [2] 142/24 154/23 joining [1] 148/23 jointly [1] 125/10 Jones [1] 167/11 journalists [2] 76/14 78/19 JPMorgan [2] 8/9 8/10 Judge [2] 7/15 9/5 Julie [1] 55/21 July [37] 57/24 75/25 76/24 77/3 77/6 77/8 78/7 79/24 81/4 93/24 94/12 97/16 100/12 101/7 101/21 102/18 102/24 104/15 104/18 104/24 105/5 105/12 105/18 108/25 109/7 118/13 118/18 118/21 118/22 119/3 119/24 124/3 124/16 139/21 147/14 153/11 156/1 July 2004 [1] 57/24 **JUNE [4]** 1/5 1/12 121/15 169/2 just [55] 4/20 7/25 11/18 13/9 14/17 15/13 15/17 20/10 20/19 23/19 24/12 24/15 26/1 26/2 26/18 27/6 30/6 31/18 32/2 32/5 35/14 35/25 37/23 40/4 40/16 43/24 46/11 49/19 51/3 67/8 69/18 73/5 73/9 77/17 78/6 85/1 94/16 98/11 99/23 101/17 121/2 123/4 123/10 124/17 129/8 137/22 138/17 144/19 150/7 151/23 162/1 162/15 164/8 166/10 167/8 justice [6] 118/5 126/8 126/14 135/19 164/19 165/10 K

Katie [1] 1/13 Katy [3] 1/4 1/6 169/4 keep [6] 12/3 12/3 42/19 42/20 100/3 157/11 keeping [1] 151/6 **kept [2]** 127/13 152/12 key [9] 46/2 52/17 52/19 53/3 53/6 72/18 95/4 95/14 139/14 kind [2] 74/1 98/17 King [7] 117/24

118/11 119/1 124/13 131/17 132/2 132/9 knew [10] 102/11 102/11 109/15 109/21 126/7 126/16 127/6 127/8 127/9 128/22 **know [27]** 1/9 19/7 31/23 61/11 68/9 71/4 71/5 75/10 83/19 91/25 98/22 101/2 101/23 102/19 117/8 120/23 122/6 127/1 144/7 145/10 154/3 158/15 160/16 166/12 leading [1] 86/25 166/13 167/20 167/24 leads [2] 68/9 85/19 knowledge [9] 4/2 4/7 6/13 6/18 58/4 58/13 122/11 122/13 123/4 known [15] 13/19 15/14 26/23 59/24 108/19 108/19 118/12 118/24 127/4 127/5 127/6 127/8 128/3 129/3 143/10 **knows [1]** 114/15 lack [15] 60/18 66/9

95/13 110/3 110/4 116/10 158/5 lacked [2] 73/1 73/7 laid [6] 59/21 105/11 120/7 135/23 137/19 152/17 **Lancashire** [1] 55/22 language [1] 16/22 large [8] 3/9 12/16 17/10 27/17 102/13 109/18 117/19 163/10 large-scale [2] 102/13 163/10 largely [4] 20/6 72/4 81/1 161/13 larger [2] 26/8 115/7 last [7] 34/15 65/14 82/3 111/12 142/11 156/18 167/19 lastly [3] 6/1 53/12 82/23 late [1] 51/23 later [10] 50/22 51/18 let's [2] 102/17 141/7 80/21 82/20 83/20 97/17 97/18 114/4 128/14 134/1 latterly [1] 25/19 law [8] 1/16 11/14

14/21 15/18 23/5

23/25 51/5 87/24

lawyer [5] 114/22

115/18 116/4 154/1

laws [1] 10/24

68/20 71/23 72/1 72/2

72/19 72/24 74/6 74/7

154/6 lawyers [3] 32/4 124/13 124/15 lawyers' [1] 125/8 lay [4] 18/24 24/19 63/1 81/5 lead [3] 136/23 147/4 152/18 leader [2] 47/3 47/7 leadership [10] 7/7 7/23 8/23 9/2 15/15 17/5 17/18 53/25 58/10 89/13 leaning [1] 133/22 learn [2] 163/18 166/4 learning [1] 163/22 least [6] 50/15 51/10 68/3 130/16 136/16 153/15 leave [4] 84/4 156/12 161/17 161/18 leaving [2] 117/2 133/16 led [6] 25/2 61/15 87/24 90/2 101/19 124/9 left [9] 11/2 12/9 12/19 12/25 15/2 63/18 82/25 91/19 162/22 left-hand [5] 11/2 12/9 12/19 12/25 15/2 linked [4] 60/15 legal [34] 11/21 11/23 14/12 14/19 62/20 63/25 72/18 89/2 89/10 92/9 115/19 115/23 115/25 11/14 30/9 77/22 117/23 118/21 119/4 120/17 122/10 122/10 listen [3] 163/18 122/11 122/13 122/16 164/4 166/4 122/18 122/19 123/4 123/10 123/12 124/17 listening [1] 163/21 130/10 150/14 151/3 151/24 153/8 153/18 legally [1] 132/12 legislation [1] 14/23 legitimate [1] 84/4 less [3] 34/24 61/1 148/24 let [1] 120/19 **letter [1]** 76/20 level [38] 10/17 10/17 21/1 31/12 32/2 131/21 131/22 160/9 32/5 32/6 32/11 32/14 long-term [1] 30/17 33/24 33/24 34/3 34/4 110/9 34/5 34/10 34/11 34/17 34/19 34/20 34/25 34/25 35/13 42/8 75/7 85/25 86/1

30/5 35/11 43/21 46/6 86/2 90/23 90/24 96/25 100/4 138/1 138/20 151/5 levels [18] 30/25 31/4 31/5 31/11 31/12 31/20 31/24 33/17 34/8 34/12 34/13 34/24 35/8 35/13 35/15 36/8 37/7 141/5 liabilities [1] 45/9 liaison [1] 98/17 lie [1] 65/7 lies [1] 65/7 **life [1]** 1/15 light [4] 77/5 109/10 131/9 138/12 like [19] 17/3 46/22 46/23 53/23 66/25 67/6 67/7 67/11 73/19 77/24 83/19 88/24 94/8 121/14 128/9 128/16 129/12 164/25 166/21 110/11 150/22 163/13 lose [1] 158/23 limited [3] 35/16 60/7 lost [1] 58/15 101/9 line [11] 5/10 5/12 5/15 5/15 6/2 10/10 18/20 91/11 93/21 110/16 153/16 lines [1] 5/22 link [4] 41/11 64/7 64/9 135/14 60/17 60/18 61/3 list [5] 52/11 126/19 126/22 158/12 158/16 listed [6] 11/4 11/9 101/10 listened [1] 120/10 **Litigation [1]** 115/21 little [11] 16/11 31/3 63/23 69/23 72/5 72/6 76/17 77/17 93/4 108/15 157/17 lived [2] 49/14 135/17 local [1] 29/16 **locus [1]** 149/5 London [2] 7/10 7/10 maintenance [2] long [6] 3/6 3/7 30/17 32/19 32/21 33/3 33/4 longer [3] 24/25 76/1 look [39] 4/15 11/7 11/17 12/6 12/22 165/19 12/24 19/10 21/13 majority [1] 60/10 21/13 25/24 29/10

49/8 50/12 53/24 54/5 55/9 75/15 77/16 78/4 78/6 79/18 90/2 92/13 93/10 107/4 110/2 110/2 110/4 122/7 124/4 133/18 138/11 141/7 145/9 166/20 looked [20] 15/13 19/2 19/3 19/10 28/9 28/9 28/12 30/13 33/17 37/3 37/5 40/5 60/6 69/12 71/24 73/12 73/13 129/2 130/18 161/22 looking [21] 7/25 10/22 19/6 24/10 27/19 30/1 50/6 54/15 54/15 65/23 70/8 70/13 81/24 88/8 90/21 90/22 91/8 123/24 124/7 134/21 137/3 likely [5] 57/22 104/8 looks [2] 26/5 49/14 lot [3] 113/23 142/4 165/14 lots [1] 105/25 **loud [1]** 164/12 lower [2] 135/2 135/4 lowest [1] 10/17 Lyons [1] 121/25 М made [21] 19/1 22/19 47/25 57/12 57/14

61/2 62/1 72/4 73/3 74/13 77/4 81/25 91/23 95/17 105/11 108/24 110/15 116/24 117/11 137/23 147/23 magnitude [1] 110/12 Mail [13] 32/17 56/13 60/1 60/24 62/14 62/22 63/2 63/5 63/23 64/14 64/15 70/4 154/21 main [2] 77/13 155/1 mainly [2] 149/12 150/1 maintaining [2] 15/1 151/6 140/18 140/19 major [17] 29/16 42/22 47/12 47/21 100/9 100/24 105/3 107/24 108/5 108/12 127/21 139/9 147/3 147/10 157/11 163/15

(58) join - majority

61/16 63/15 71/2 104/18 105/11 108/25 mind [8] 30/17 44/15 М 108/21 110/10 126/16 77/12 82/25 83/3 111/17 111/18 112/10 47/8 50/18 92/23 128/8 133/24 148/23 make [16] 4/14 31/8 83/12 83/15 83/22 112/11 112/13 112/19 120/9 126/24 127/2 158/18 43/9 49/2 65/1 82/23 118/22 124/16 125/8 | mindful [4] 16/20 84/7 84/16 87/22 morning [9] 1/3 1/8 83/5 85/19 95/21 89/25 92/15 92/22 147/14 153/11 155/25 25/22 115/2 149/15 1/20 14/17 37/16 95/23 98/1 98/16 93/25 102/14 103/16 meetings [3] 44/12 mindset [1] 92/7 110/25 149/7 151/21 124/8 124/19 131/24 104/7 106/9 111/1 60/7 117/13 minimised [1] 131/9 168/9 157/2 111/1 111/6 111/11 meets [2] 112/1 minimum [1] 134/12 morph [1] 117/10 maker [1] 143/17 most [6] 7/14 58/12 114/4 115/19 115/25 112/1 minister [2] 162/11 makes [3] 16/8 17/11 116/5 125/4 146/7 114/15 115/15 115/18 member [17] 8/8 162/14 105/22 148/2 150/13 157/11 8/11 23/21 69/14 Minister's [1] 162/9 167/21 making [15] 5/8 159/9 165/14 166/2 89/14 114/23 115/10 **ministerial** [2] 76/15 motive [2] 106/16 17/12 27/18 28/2 may [49] 1/3 2/9 117/3 125/3 130/12 79/10 106/21 29/21 62/18 74/12 14/11 17/19 18/21 142/24 143/3 157/13 **Ministers** [1] 33/6 **motives** [1] 93/19 109/6 125/17 131/10 19/1 19/24 28/24 158/11 159/13 159/14 minority [1] 82/12 move [6] 41/17 44/23 149/16 154/15 155/6 36/20 38/20 40/23 164/11 45/20 47/10 56/8 minute [2] 4/23 165/19 167/21 41/16 41/21 43/9 members [17] 23/3 112/18 69/18 man [2] 29/2 148/24 43/10 43/12 43/15 26/14 39/22 39/25 minutes [3] 4/24 60/7 moved [3] 14/11 manage [1] 75/1 51/15 51/22 52/7 52/8 43/17 66/18 73/25 69/19 69/19 100/5 managed [4] 30/15 52/10 57/21 61/10 87/9 89/17 112/18 mirage [1] 135/19 movement [1] 60/11 113/14 142/3 145/15 119/3 129/25 136/16 70/21 77/24 84/20 misappropriating [1] moving [3] 7/10 management [33] 85/3 89/6 100/10 138/2 148/6 148/10 82/14 123/25 156/16 13/18 13/25 14/2 100/10 100/22 100/25 151/9 miscarriages [6] MPs [6] 76/13 78/19 15/15 17/12 17/17 101/1 108/15 108/16 memo [2] 94/17 95/5 118/5 126/8 126/14 88/7 102/14 109/23 20/5 21/2 22/12 46/10 112/16 115/7 118/7 135/19 164/19 165/10 memorandum [1] 127/21 47/11 47/22 48/6 48/7 missed [4] 61/11 MR [7] 1/7 1/14 118/2 120/2 125/15 130/22 94/17 48/12 48/22 48/24 74/9 109/13 121/14 152/13 152/18 158/22 mention [6] 11/21 118/6 119/12 119/18 49/18 51/22 53/14 158/23 159/4 163/13 17/8 27/11 65/14 84/3 mission [1] 79/25 169/6 53/23 64/1 109/15 167/23 116/8 mitigate [1] 138/4 Mr Beer [1] 1/14 126/16 126/23 129/18 me [15] 1/15 7/4 mentioned [7] 26/18 mitigated [1] 139/16 Mr Clarke [2] 118/2 130/20 134/9 145/5 mitigation [1] 46/9 14/16 38/16 49/25 27/25 30/7 68/19 118/6 159/18 164/22 166/3 55/6 83/19 84/4 88/24 108/6 156/12 162/16 mitigations [1] Mr Jenkins [2] 166/15 113/15 144/4 158/15 mere [1] 81/19 134/19 119/12 119/18 managers [1] 134/15 164/25 167/8 167/18 messages [4] 90/23 mm [12] 14/22 14/24 | Mrs [8] 55/1 56/16 managing [1] 58/11 mean [26] 21/6 22/8 90/24 95/7 104/2 66/4 66/4 83/2 114/19 56/22 57/24 59/10 manner [3] 109/24 43/15 62/23 67/2 126/20 151/1 158/13 62/10 65/25 147/15 messaging [1] 87/20 112/17 137/6 67/15 68/2 68/23 met [2] 76/24 118/11 162/12 162/17 164/25 Mrs Wolstenholme manual [2] 73/21 [2] 57/24 59/10 68/25 84/10 84/11 Mm-hm [4] 14/22 metaphoric [1] 84/21 73/23 85/20 86/1 86/2 86/12 methodology [2] 114/19 158/13 162/12 Mrs Wolstenholme's many [12] 22/6 36/21 90/20 104/3 105/5 9/13 16/13 **modelled** [1] 37/7 **[5]** 55/1 56/16 56/22 44/18 71/2 82/15 105/7 110/17 111/8 Michael [2] 59/1 moment [9] 2/11 65/25 147/15 87/22 88/23 107/9 112/13 121/22 133/11 63/17 2/14 4/18 11/7 31/16 Ms [6] 91/16 91/22 108/16 116/3 148/18 153/12 158/22 31/18 74/14 85/3 118/6 118/25 167/19 microphone [2] 167/9 meaning [3] 67/23 69/19 69/20 123/16 167/23 March [3] 3/5 3/18 mid [2] 50/15 76/10 momentous [1] 28/7 Ms Crichton [2] 91/4 91/9 9/21 money [3] 67/22 means [6] 45/4 45/5 mid-1990s [1] 50/15 91/22 118/6 MARY [3] 1/6 1/13 mid-2012 [1] 76/10 Ms Crichton's [1] 89/13 90/13 111/9 135/25 143/22 169/4 131/13 middle [3] 85/11 monies [2] 66/21 118/25 master [1] 7/13 meant [10] 80/20 123/23 142/15 66/22 Ms Vennells [1] material [11] 14/8 94/21 95/16 104/6 midst [1] 80/2 monitor [2] 45/7 167/23 17/13 18/2 18/25 19/5 106/11 110/20 128/15 might [35] 10/9 15/13 72/13 Ms Vennells' [2] 19/19 56/5 57/9 130/14 136/2 159/17 16/1 17/14 23/2 24/4 91/16 167/19 monitored [1] 46/8 128/16 139/3 162/5 24/15 36/12 37/16 measure [2] 3/9 monitoring [5] 44/25 | much [27] 4/9 5/21 materials [1] 109/25 38/21 42/16 50/2 45/6 63/20 65/1 65/13 70/24 6/1 6/21 9/12 15/7 matter [15] 17/16 measures [1] 150/16 50/14 50/22 60/5 moral [3] 165/18 33/9 36/10 37/14 52/20 71/6 72/1 84/2 media [5] 79/10 88/7 60/19 65/6 68/2 69/10 166/1 166/8 37/19 43/4 47/10 55/8 96/13 100/19 117/5 102/13 109/23 127/21 70/2 72/20 82/21 74/8 75/25 76/1 77/9 more [30] 1/16 19/23 120/21 122/10 125/2 34/24 35/2 44/17 meet [6] 22/17 83/20 90/7 102/9 103/2 103/8 120/4 146/11 146/14 153/17 111/14 112/4 112/8 102/16 116/8 118/3 45/19 49/20 52/21 126/16 149/6 150/2 166/9 112/15 154/1 118/4 126/16 131/7 53/20 54/6 54/20 164/13 167/2 168/3 matters [47] 11/10 153/1 153/3 162/10 meeting [26] 77/6 60/20 72/16 73/11 168/8 16/19 25/9 25/18 multiple [1] 130/8 92/4 93/24 93/24 162/14 84/19 87/10 90/22 25/19 32/8 42/20 43/7 96/18 97/9 98/2 98/8 95/2 95/17 98/17 million [3] 57/19 must [6] 52/16 56/14 54/14 59/25 61/12 99/13 100/5 104/14 59/22 64/4 99/17 103/25 107/7 120/8 125/20 126/13

## 147/20 161/20 40/18 41/1 41/6 41/9 168/4 М network [2] 22/4 32/8 41/10 41/15 42/16 number [17] 21/24 must... [1] 155/17 never [6] 48/3 48/4 42/18 66/2 69/1 69/2 26/8 35/17 50/6 80/7 my [13] 1/8 22/19 105/10 112/24 113/5 69/16 102/2 111/23 88/10 90/25 92/17 43/6 43/13 49/20 113/9 112/1 156/2 161/4 98/9 106/9 108/20 50/18 69/24 126/24 new [5] 15/1 61/14 non-executives [13] 111/13 117/19 121/8 127/2 152/21 152/21 66/18 162/19 165/20 26/12 60/11 72/21 133/12 133/19 156/24 154/8 158/14 number 9 [1] 111/13 next [3] 33/10 43/19 94/11 95/3 103/25 mythical [1] 117/1 122/8 112/10 113/20 133/21 numbered [1] 60/12 NHS [3] 8/1 9/2 9/9 148/23 149/12 149/22 numerous [1] 67/2 **NHS Trust [1]** 9/9 149/25 name [5] 1/8 58/8 0 **nice [1]** 55/19 non-executives' [1] 62/24 63/5 141/22 **obligation [4]** 38/12 nine [9] 20/24 54/11 166/16 namely [7] 8/15 42/5 38/24 88/15 88/21 54/12 77/19 78/1 non-existent [1] 54/9 62/13 90/23 obligations [4] 85/23 138/11 138/19 140/3 107/19 109/20 121/4 150/14 151/3 154/2 145/1 non-experts [1] names [1] 1/11 NINEDs [5] 40/21 observations [2] 91/13 narrate [1] 33/23 40/25 41/8 41/16 42/2 non-independent [3] 20/4 124/8 narrated [1] 40/17 **no [54]** 6/3 6/5 16/8 41/9 41/10 42/17 **observers** [1] 1/18 **narrative** [1] 35/6 21/5 21/7 21/11 24/25 obstacles [1] 156/24 non-problematic [1] national [3] 9/1 29/16 obvious [2] 104/3 28/6 29/2 34/4 40/10 66/19 167/13 104/7 45/19 48/22 54/6 none [1] 60/2 naturally [1] 87/8 obviously [1] 125/19 58/10 58/23 60/25 nonetheless [12] nature [8] 35/14 91/3 64/20 70/20 73/18 63/3 63/5 69/13 70/22 occasion [6] 4/22 94/5 122/18 139/23 81/3 81/8 81/18 81/22 80/23 87/11 108/1 13/10 23/10 70/16 142/16 163/8 163/22 81/22 90/4 90/24 94/9 98/8 113/13 114/13 115/4 128/3 nearly [1] 47/23 94/24 98/12 99/8 99/8 occasional [1] 128/21 145/16 necessarily [2] 40/1 99/10 99/11 100/8 152/19 nor [10] 16/18 21/9 110/17 100/11 101/3 101/11 21/10 112/25 119/24 occasionally [2] 43/7 necessary [2] 45/24 101/24 113/9 114/22 126/4 137/5 147/20 155/16 138/17 115/12 121/2 127/17 occasions [2] 116/3 157/13 161/20 **NED [8]** 8/7 42/11 116/3 135/23 136/8 137/9 normal [7] 12/25 42/11 108/3 110/18 138/8 138/9 147/8 26/12 107/5 107/12 112/4 112/8 154/23 153/14 163/15 163/18 occur [3] 42/7 98/18 147/25 150/5 152/2 **NEDs [27]** 37/10 130/2 164/11 normally [6] 15/14 40/19 41/8 60/12 occurs [1] 22/3 **NOBLE [3]** 1/5 1/12 130/16 150/13 151/4 60/20 60/21 60/25 **October [2]** 3/7 4/12 169/2 152/24 153/2 61/1 84/7 99/20 100/3 odd [2] 136/10 137/6 **nobody [1]** 127/17 not [193] 100/9 100/15 100/24 oddity [2] 136/19 nomenclature [2] **notable [1]** 11/9 101/6 101/13 103/3 136/20 51/15 51/16 notably [1] 29/13 104/11 108/11 110/15 off [3] 30/24 57/23 **nominal [1]** 107/19 **note** [10] 12/7 12/13 110/17 110/23 111/17 127/14 nominated [1] 41/12 13/17 50/13 105/2 148/11 154/18 154/25 nomination [2] 42/5 105/16 106/25 151/8 offer [3] 29/12 83/11 160/3 147/24 42/7 162/10 165/13 **NEDs' [1]** 148/11 offered [1] 147/20 non [49] 8/8 8/14 noted [1] 13/18 need [13] 4/23 25/10 **offering [2]** 80/3 25/12 26/4 26/12 **nothing [11]** 1/15 25/17 45/12 47/25 150/1 39/17 40/18 41/1 41/6 12/3 80/5 82/3 82/19 96/23 119/13 122/14 office [119] 10/1 10/2 41/9 41/9 41/10 41/10 82/20 84/12 95/6 126/7 145/17 146/8 10/20 13/6 13/15 16/2 41/15 41/18 42/1 102/11 102/11 156/11 149/13 150/21 16/7 18/17 19/13 42/11 42/16 42/17 **notice [3]** 1/19 49/20 needed [11] 97/4 19/14 31/7 31/13 32/3 42/18 60/11 66/2 151/14 104/10 118/7 118/23 32/4 32/7 32/12 32/14 66/19 69/1 69/2 69/16 notification [1] 95/3 121/20 121/20 124/10 72/21 83/23 91/13 32/15 32/16 32/20 noting [1] 115/21 124/14 138/5 149/5 32/25 33/1 35/16 94/11 95/3 100/18 notionally [1] 126/24 155/23 35/18 35/21 40/13 102/2 103/25 107/19 notwithstanding [2] needing [1] 158/9 46/22 46/25 47/9 111/23 112/1 112/10 109/14 109/24 needs [5] 4/19 92/17 55/22 56/1 56/14 113/20 133/21 148/23 November [4] 1/1 114/14 121/23 141/4 58/19 58/25 60/7 61/7 149/12 149/22 149/25 3/19 4/13 119/24 **negative** [1] 51/7 61/22 62/13 62/21 151/15 154/22 156/2 now [20] 2/6 5/13 neglect [1] 71/9 63/3 63/8 63/14 63/16 161/4 166/16 7/18 7/25 9/5 37/15 **neglected** [2] 72/16 63/18 63/24 64/2 64/3 non-compliant [1] 37/16 50/3 52/19 54/2 75/20 64/4 64/14 65/15 151/15 69/10 85/3 97/18 neither [7] 4/17 21/9 66/10 66/11 66/17 97/19 107/5 108/19 non-executive [20] 71/25 119/23 137/5 66/20 66/21 67/12 25/12 26/4 39/17 108/25 167/3 167/17

68/21 68/22 69/4 69/13 69/14 70/5 72/12 72/18 75/7 75/24 76/9 76/16 77/1 79/6 79/17 82/16 82/24 86/11 89/7 94/1 102/12 103/4 103/6 103/21 103/22 108/21 109/20 118/21 119/13 124/9 125/25 133/2 134/11 135/8 135/12 135/16 136/12 136/15 136/17 137/15 140/10 141/10 141/11 141/17 143/14 143/22 147/11 147/16 148/16 151/25 153/8 154/20 155/6 157/18 162/9 162/9 163/21 163/23 163/24 164/6 165/3 165/6 167/22 Office's [13] 18/11 20/4 78/12 78/16 106/2 109/16 117/24 124/13 127/20 128/12 148/25 154/16 164/18 officer [14] 39/22 56/14 57/16 57/17 57/21 57/22 59/12 60/2 61/20 68/7 77/1 85/16 93/22 150/11 Officers [1] 14/1 occupying [1] 155/13 offs [2] 47/24 48/3 often [8] 26/7 26/13 27/2 89/15 110/22 112/2 112/7 146/9 **Oh [2]** 28/14 49/22 okay [7] 31/19 32/2 32/9 52/3 86/20 97/4 99/9 omit [2] 5/15 5/17 on [277] once [3] 46/8 48/18 99/12 one [74] 11/10 11/21 15/19 17/14 19/14 20/20 22/9 22/14 24/5 26/5 28/3 29/2 30/18 37/6 38/20 38/21 38/25 40/16 42/16 44/7 44/12 44/12 46/3 46/11 47/25 49/13 49/13 50/22 52/21 52/23 57/13 60/19 62/3 62/3 65/6 69/10 70/5 71/6 71/7 72/20 78/6 80/18 85/25 89/24 90/6 90/8 98/11 102/16 104/3 107/9 107/16 112/7 112/20 114/9 115/12 117/14 120/12 127/24 129/25

130/15 132/8 140/8

142/16 151/18 152/8

0	<b>Orange [2]</b> 13/19	27/23 28/4 31/18 35/6		163/5 164/9
one [9] 152/8 153/3	13/24	39/5 45/8 45/17 50/18		page 10 [1] 29/9
153/24 153/25 154/21	order [8] 44/13 54/14	54/20 55/12 56/4 56/8		page 100 [2] 12/23
155/19 159/19 160/8	103/12 125/14 126/14		131/25 141/11	109/8
165/20	141/5 143/21 145/19	61/13 65/12 66/6 70/1		page 103 [1] 111/16
one's [3] 38/20 38/22	orderly [1] 2/6	71/13 74/15 74/22	13/14 24/25 29/15	Page 105 [1] 114/5
39/1	ordinary [2] 13/2	75/4 76/10 76/22	29/19 29/24 32/16	page 108 [1] 76/2
one-year [1] 154/21	42/16	77/17 82/18 85/18		page 109 [2] 117/17
ones [3] 10/15 19/22	organisation [29] 17/20 20/6 21/2 22/12	86/23 96/17 99/6 99/20 102/22 102/25	ownership [16]	117/20
126/6	22/13 22/16 30/15	103/11 104/10 104/21	12/11 12/14 13/1 15/3 24/24 29/13 30/21	page 112 [2] 35/3
ongoing [2] 79/1	38/23 41/17 52/6	107/3 107/18 109/1	32/12 32/19 32/19	35/5
147/8	60/23 92/8 115/19	114/6 117/19 119/19	33/1 37/12 63/18 67/6	
only [11] 19/25 84/15	116/24 117/7 129/25	120/19 121/1 121/18	148/16 149/4	page 117 [1] 123/25
93/5 115/13 115/24	135/1 135/2 135/5	123/11 126/15 128/7	<del></del>	page 128 [1] 124/5
117/9 133/11 154/21 154/23 159/2 163/9	142/24 142/25 145/7	129/7 130/4 133/7	P	page <b>13 [1]</b> 138/12
onto [1] 95/13	145/10 153/23 159/18	135/23 138/18 139/1	page [161] 3/18 3/20	page 131 [3] 6/24
onwards [8] 10/4	164/16 165/7 166/18	144/18 147/1 148/4	4/15 5/9 5/14 5/21 6/1	8/19 129/7
39/3 46/23 79/19	166/19	148/6 149/20 150/24	6/7 6/24 7/1 7/24 8/19	
117/20 124/2 139/3	organisational [5]	153/22 156/9 156/20	8/20 9/16 11/19 12/2	page <b>134</b> [1] 133/8
156/9	7/6 7/22 8/23 53/21	162/19 163/4 164/11	12/2 12/6 12/23 12/24	page 135 [1] 134/6
opaque [1] 105/22	163/3	165/21	13/24 14/11 14/17	page 137 [1] 134/7
open [3] 43/4 139/19	organisations [9]	outcome [1] 96/8	14/25 15/8 15/9 15/24 16/12 19/10 20/1	page 14 [1] 144/14
168/1	11/12 17/4 22/10 26/6 28/10 28/12 28/14		24/10 24/12 24/14	page 141 [1] 135/9
opened [1] 101/20	29/4 40/11	outlined [1] 140/6 outlines [1] 119/10	24/16 26/1 26/17 27/7	page 143 [1] 137/12 page 15 [1] 30/23
opening [1] 74/5	organised [1] 143/2	outside [4] 69/8	27/7 29/9 30/5 30/23	page 154 [1] 6/7
operated [2] 87/12	other [32] 15/4 15/19	112/19 114/18 117/3	33/3 34/2 34/3 34/15	page 17 [2] 144/19
158/4	15/20 19/24 25/20	over [51] 8/20 12/2	34/19 35/3 35/5 36/1	144/20
operates [1] 43/4	28/13 29/13 32/18	14/14 14/25 15/24	36/2 36/24 36/25 38/1	page 18 [1] 144/20
<b>Operating [5]</b> 57/17 57/21 57/22 59/11	39/21 39/24 54/14	15/25 18/12 27/7 29/9		page <b>20 [2]</b> 24/16
68/6	61/15 71/9 73/14	33/3 34/2 34/15 34/18		36/24
operation [4] 27/12	73/18 76/13 85/21	39/11 39/19 43/21	39/20 39/21 39/23	page 21 [1] 38/1
41/22 148/15 163/14	88/7 90/9 93/6 107/15		40/17 43/19 43/21	page 22 [2] 39/12
operational [16]	111/5 114/4 120/23	60/6 60/11 66/5 67/7	43/23 44/24 45/20 45/23 46/12 46/13	147/1
61/16 67/13 82/25	145/15 153/6 153/8	74/8 79/15 91/18	47/11 48/21 50/13	page 24 [1] 39/14
83/3 83/12 83/15	159/4 162/5 163/10 167/21 168/7	94/15 95/1 96/16 100/19 107/22 110/14		page 26 [1] 148/6 page 27 [4] 39/17
83/21 84/7 84/12	others [5] 116/18	113/13 115/1 116/6	54/19 55/10 55/10	40/17 148/8 148/13
84/16 111/1 139/24	122/14 132/18 138/16		55/19 56/3 56/8 58/6	page 29 [3] 39/21
145/13 145/23 146/11	164/20	119/19 129/8 130/2	62/11 63/12 65/17	150/8 154/12
146/14	otherwise [1] 2/24	131/15 136/9 138/23	66/5 74/8 76/1 76/2	page <b>30 [2]</b> 39/6
operations [9] 63/24 81/5 83/18 83/25 84/3	ought [7] 10/13 40/13	149/4 150/25 156/2	77/16 77/18 78/5 78/6	43/19
87/23 89/11 111/3	56/23 59/2 61/24	156/15 157/1 157/23		page 31 [1] 156/10
163/8	113/11 132/22	overall [12] 22/4 36/7		page 33 [3] 4/15 5/9
operator [1] 68/6	our [41] 15/16 19/20	36/17 63/6 64/21	94/17 95/1 95/20	156/21
opine [1] 93/19	19/23 22/25 29/20	71/13 75/11 137/10	95/20 96/16 99/20 102/25 104/22 107/22	page 36 [1] 159/24
opinion [2] 125/21	30/19 31/8 32/1 33/20 35/4 38/17 44/21 48/2		109/2 109/8 111/16	page 39 [1] 163/4
125/24	53/21 54/25 59/20	overarching [1]	114/5 116/6 117/17	page 41 [1] 163/5 page 42 [2] 54/19
<b>OPOD [1]</b> 32/11	60/4 77/9 77/9 77/13	109/8	117/20 119/9 119/23	55/10
opportunities [2]	98/12 104/7 107/7	overfilling [1] 158/23	122/8 123/25 124/5	page <b>43 [1]</b> 55/19
58/14 133/21	107/14 107/14 112/6	overly [2] 131/24	124/5 129/7 129/8	page 44 [1] 56/3
opportunity [7] 74/9 109/13 121/14 128/11	112/19 113/18 114/21		129/8 131/15 133/8	page 45 [1] 56/8
139/19 164/3 167/5	115/14 127/15 130/21	oversee [2] 72/13	134/6 134/7 135/9	page <b>47 [1]</b> 45/20
opposed [5] 26/4	133/22 137/18 139/8	83/14	136/9 137/12 138/12	page 48 [3] 5/14
26/5 42/11 44/4 96/19	139/21 147/19 147/20		138/13 138/21 138/23	
opposite [1] 167/23	155/18 160/8 166/7	oversight [7] 33/8	139/1 144/14 144/19	page 50 [1] 63/12
optimistic [1] 19/23	ourselves [1] 136/21	72/2 141/25 144/8 145/14 145/24 147/8	144/20 144/20 146/23 147/1 148/6 148/8	
option [1] 55/5	out [85] 2/1 2/5 5/1 7/2 7/23 7/25 8/21	overstepping [1]	148/13 150/8 150/9	<b>page 54 [2]</b> 45/23 55/10
or [174]	9/17 10/9 13/1 15/24	111/9	154/12 156/10 156/15	page 55 [2] 47/11
oral [5] 18/1 91/17	15/25 16/12 16/21	<b>Overview [2]</b> 13/19	156/21 157/1 157/23	76/1
118/12 118/14 161/3	19/9 24/19 27/20	20/3	159/22 159/24 163/4	page <b>56 [1]</b> 77/16

	I	T	I	Ī
P	114/5 114/18 117/21	79/19	66/6 68/20 70/13	partisan [1] 80/15
	124/2 124/5 129/9	paragraph 242 [1]	71/14 76/4 85/17	parts [3] 7/4 15/20
page 57 [1] 78/6	135/10 138/24 139/2	82/23	99/21 103/1 116/6	87/20
page 58 [2] 78/5 78/9	144/21 146/24 147/2	paragraph 264 [1]	119/22 122/7 133/6	party [3] 39/1 43/16
page 6 [3] 9/16 15/8	148/4 148/7 148/13	87/17	133/8 133/10 135/8	48/8
16/12				1
Page 60 [1] 5/21	150/9 156/9 156/10	paragraph 266 [1]	145/1 150/25 159/24	passing [1] 128/20
page 63 [2] 48/21	156/12 156/21 162/1	91/19	162/21	past [6] 16/23 124/11
	163/20 164/2 164/8	paragraph 268 [1]	paragraphs 128 [2]	133/24 147/11 155/7
50/13	paragraph 1 [1] 10/7	93/21	159/24 162/21	155/20
page 65 [1] 79/19	paragraph 1.25 [1]	paragraph 284 [1]	paragraphs 170 [1]	pattern [1] 75/15
page 70 [2] 51/21	28/18	95/22	61/6	Paula [12] 86/8 90/15
85/14				93/22 105/3 107/23
page 75 [1] 95/20	paragraph 1.3.1 [1]	paragraph 287 [1]	paragraphs 193 [2]	
page 76 [1] 99/20	29/10	96/16	66/6 70/13	121/25 122/9 122/17
page 77 [1] 53/13	paragraph 1.8 [1]	paragraph 3 [1]	paragraphs 212 [1]	162/3 162/11 162/14
page 8 [3] 20/1 24/10	12/24	16/19	76/4	167/14
24/12	paragraph 108 [1]	paragraph 303 [1]	paragraphs 262 [1]	pause [1] 4/20
	156/10	101/6	85/17	paused [1] 137/5
page 82 [1] 102/25	paragraph 114 [1]	paragraph 31 [1]	paragraphs 310 [1]	pausing [1] 20/19
page 86 [1] 104/22	5/10	139/2	103/1	pay [2] 47/1 153/3
page 9 [2] 19/10 27/7	paragraph 116 [1]	paragraph 325 [1]	paragraphs 399 [1]	paying [4] 37/11
page 92 [1] 109/2	156/21	107/4	116/6	53/18 75/18 78/15
page 93 [4] 11/19				
12/6 14/17 51/3	paragraph 127 [1]	paragraph 346 [1]	paragraphs 447 [1]	payment [1] 143/22
page 94 [1] 14/11	162/1	109/3	122/7	payments [1] 45/9
page 99 [2] 6/1 13/24	paragraph 13 [1]	paragraph 370 [1]	paragraphs 500 [1]	people [22] 19/1 49/3
pages [13] 3/5 3/7	20/2	6/2	133/8	52/4 52/4 67/3 81/5
19/8 24/16 36/21 38/2	paragraph 140 [1]	paragraph 375 [1]	parallels [1] 129/1	112/12 112/15 112/16
	163/20	109/9	parent [3] 62/14 63/6	116/16 117/13 120/23
40/4 53/13 76/5 99/22		paragraph 377 [1]	75/3	127/14 127/15 128/5
117/20 117/20 119/19	164/2	110/7	<b>Parliament [1]</b> 14/23	146/10 149/13 149/17
pages 21 [1] 38/2	paragraph 144 [1]	paragraph 389 [1]	Parliamentary [1]	160/25 163/11 165/9
pages 56 [1] 76/5	164/8	111/16	79/10	167/21
pages 75 [1] 99/22				
pages 77 [1] 53/13	paragraph 150 [2]	paragraph 396 [1]	part [38] 1/24 15/18	peppered [1] 106/5
pages 8 [1] 19/8	55/19 55/20	114/5	20/13 21/21 33/10	perception [1] 50/3
paid [4] 11/3 63/23	paragraph 163 [1]	paragraph 397 [1]	36/15 45/25 46/2	perceptions [5]
108/22 142/17	58/6	114/18	46/10 46/20 48/6 48/7	79/16 80/4 81/20 85/1
pair [5] 35/8 40/6	paragraph 164 [1]	paragraph 4 [1] 17/6	48/16 49/1 51/24	165/3
43/25 54/20 58/7	58/24	paragraph 412 [1]	54/11 66/20 66/23	perfection [1] 10/14
	paragraph 176 [1]	117/21	71/11 73/6 76/12	performance [7]
pan [1] 77/17	[ E / 1 / 1	paragraph 483 [1]	81/10 81/23 84/2	111/5 114/10 146/4
paper [21] 77/5 91/20	navanna 407 [4]	124/5	91/14 110/19 131/5	155/2 159/23 160/4
92/1 92/3 95/16 95/17	65/19	paragraph 49 [1]	131/25 138/2 140/11	160/19
96/13 97/1 97/6	paragraph 195 [2]	144/21	141/20 142/11 142/11	performed [1] 152/17
101/11 101/24 104/17	68/18 70/1		142/15 143/6 159/19	
104/19 105/7 105/20		paragraph 5 [1] 17/8		perhaps [21] 52/21
107/11 108/2 109/13	paragraph 196 [1]	paragraph 535 [1]	163/25 166/24	53/10 74/15 83/5
112/15 113/4 120/16	70/3	135/10	partial [2] 104/25	84/16 84/17 94/16
papers [5] 98/9 98/18	paragraph 2 [1]	paragraph 57 [1]	133/16	96/20 97/2 112/17
105/6 105/15 111/25	16/17	146/24	partially [1] 107/20	114/23 121/1 133/21
paragraph [76] 5/10	paragraph 2.2 [1]	paragraph 6 [1]	participants [5] 2/3	140/9 142/15 143/7
5/14 5/21 6/2 7/24	39/3	17/23	167/4 167/11 167/12	143/14 158/14 161/17
10/7 10/10 12/24	paragraph 2.2.33 [1]	paragraph 6.2.2 [1]	167/12	162/24 165/16
	150/9	50/13	particular [19] 29/7	period [23] 10/13
16/17 16/19 17/6 17/8		paragraph 66 [1]	43/8 43/11 43/14	10/25 11/10 18/12
17/23 10/3 10/20 20/2	43/22	147/2	53/10 53/18 62/9	27/19 28/5 28/7 31/10
24/10 24/17 28/18	norograph 2 E [4]	paragraph 69 [1]	73/10 83/24 84/3	31/10 32/16 33/15
29/10 38/4 39/3 43/22	43/23	148/4	86/22 87/11 90/2	34/11 34/16 36/2
43/23 50/13 55/19		paragraph 7 [1] 18/5	92/25 142/4 142/18	49/23 50/1 50/20
55/20 58/6 58/24	paragraph 205 [1] 74/21		153/1 155/25 161/8	51/11 77/8 136/14
65/19 68/18 70/1 70/2		paragraph 8 [1]		
70/3 74/21 78/5 78/8	paragraph 217 [2]	18/20	particularly [18] 17/4	140/14 149/4 160/9
79/19 82/23 87/17	78/5 78/8	paragraph 90 [2]	25/3 26/5 27/16 39/25	, , , , , ,
91/19 93/21 95/22	paragraph 222 [1]	148/7 148/13	73/2 73/12 74/3 78/13	,
96/16 101/6 104/21	5/21	paragraph 98 [1]	78/17 93/25 104/5	Perkins [4] 96/2 98/1
107/4 109/3 109/9	paragraph 23 [1]	156/9	108/18 140/1 142/6	98/2 99/12
	138/24	paragraphs [23]	143/9 149/24 166/16	perpetuating [1]
110/7 110/20 111/16	paragraph 238 [1]	43/24 56/3 61/6 61/10		164/19
	,			
	1		1	1

136/21 143/14 153/18 15/14 18/16 24/21 32/13 34/2 34/15 30/4 59/17 85/24 P 34/19 35/5 39/11 155/18 26/3 63/21 78/13 94/1 85/25 **persistent** [2] 76/13 40/24 43/18 44/25 positioning [1] 88/5 103/5 103/21 155/8 prior [4] 22/20 58/3 135/14 45/20 46/12 47/11 positions [2] 7/21 155/21 156/8 98/18 155/19 person [3] 14/17 48/20 51/19 51/25 157/3 practices [4] 71/22 priorities [3] 78/7 114/15 115/24 54/7 54/18 55/9 55/18 possibility [2] 3/1 79/17 82/11 140/2 78/21 79/8 personal [3] 7/21 58/6 66/5 66/13 74/8 **practising [1]** 154/4 prioritisation [2] 126/8 43/6 136/15 75/23 76/4 77/16 78/4 possible [4] 23/22 **pre [9]** 48/14 111/14 78/23 155/5 personally [2] 112/24 111/17 112/1 112/1 78/6 78/8 79/15 79/18 24/4 86/3 121/2 priority [6] 71/22 154/7 85/14 95/1 95/20 112/4 112/8 112/15 71/25 78/11 79/14 post [129] 10/1 10/2 persons [1] 1/16 99/22 104/14 107/22 10/20 16/2 16/7 18/11 155/13 98/1 125/1 perspective [5] 41/4 110/21 114/20 116/6 18/16 19/13 19/14 **pre-go [1]** 48/14 **prism [1]** 141/8 53/19 53/20 110/9 pre-meet [3] 112/4 117/16 122/7 122/20 20/4 31/7 31/13 32/3 private [9] 28/13 161/19 123/17 123/25 124/5 32/4 32/6 32/12 32/14 112/8 112/15 82/18 136/16 136/24 **persuasion** [1] 168/2 pre-meeting [1] 129/4 131/15 134/7 32/15 32/16 32/19 140/11 141/18 143/8 phase [5] 33/22 34/7 144/13 146/23 148/3 32/25 33/1 35/15 111/17 149/17 162/9 34/15 35/12 36/2 148/21 150/8 154/11 35/18 35/21 40/13 pre-meets [2] 112/1 privatisation [1] 79/5 Phase 1 [2] 33/22 157/16 157/23 158/19 46/22 46/25 47/9 **privileged** [1] 132/12 112/1 35/12 163/2 55/22 56/1 56/14 probably [12] 72/1 pre-occupying [1] Phase 2 [2] 34/7 36/2 58/19 58/25 60/7 61/7 83/4 94/24 95/13 99/1 plus [1] 44/21 155/13 **phases [5]** 9/23 61/22 62/13 62/21 pm [5] 85/6 85/8 preamble [1] 11/20 100/20 115/10 115/15 16/15 33/11 33/19 63/3 63/8 63/14 63/16 precautions [1] 123/19 123/21 168/10 115/16 132/18 152/3 **POB** [1] 32/3 63/18 63/24 64/2 64/3 83/10 164/23 Phases 5 [2] 9/23 point [35] 13/1 17/12 64/4 64/13 65/15 precisely [1] 166/14 probing [1] 132/23 16/15 27/18 28/2 29/21 30/6 66/10 66/11 66/16 problem [11] 31/25 preliminary [1] pick [4] 14/16 19/18 66/20 66/21 67/12 32/1 67/13 69/6 118/8 43/19 60/12 60/15 117/25 86/22 98/4 60/16 62/23 68/7 68/21 68/22 69/4 preparation [2] 77/10 126/3 126/15 127/10 picked [1] 21/5 74/11 74/13 82/24 69/13 69/14 70/5 91/20 127/11 129/19 129/19 picking [3] 7/25 65/5 83/5 85/19 95/9 95/21 72/12 72/18 75/7 problematic [2] prepare [2] 79/4 99/6 95/23 101/5 106/12 75/24 76/9 76/16 77/1 66/19 142/19 98/24 picture [6] 34/23 110/24 116/7 117/9 78/12 78/16 79/5 prepared [6] 3/4 9/21 problems [29] 56/25 92/20 110/9 126/5 127/15 134/24 142/22 79/17 82/16 82/24 16/14 18/14 99/12 67/18 67/19 76/10 135/3 139/20 142/23 147/23 149/2 86/10 89/7 94/1 104/18 79/12 81/4 90/4 90/25 picture' [1] 65/23 149/3 160/7 160/10 102/12 103/4 103/6 preparing [1] 17/24 96/3 96/15 100/2 piece [1] 136/4 161/8 103/21 103/22 106/2 presence [3] 66/3 118/15 126/9 126/19 **piecemeal [1]** 58/13 pointing [4] 50/17 108/20 109/15 109/20 105/14 114/2 131/7 139/9 139/23 pieces [4] 81/25 117/24 118/21 119/13 present [10] 92/3 142/5 142/12 144/17 61/12 61/13 103/11 82/18 90/11 136/23 points [5] 95/4 95/14 124/9 124/12 125/25 97/5 97/22 97/23 144/24 146/15 146/16 **pitch [1]** 70/16 109/5 165/19 165/21 127/19 128/11 133/2 148/17 149/1 158/3 97/23 98/2 98/23 **pithy [1]** 55/19 POL [16] 64/10 64/22 134/11 135/8 135/12 109/16 124/11 129/17 158/25 160/22 163/13 pivot [1] 160/7 64/25 65/5 66/7 67/3 135/16 136/12 136/15 presentation [1] 97/9 proceed [1] 55/5 pivotal [2] 123/8 67/5 68/14 69/13 136/17 137/15 140/10 presented [4] 11/1 proceeding [1] 111/4 134/24 71/21 71/23 72/4 141/9 141/11 141/17 97/1 107/11 109/25 proceedings [3] place [7] 50/24 63/22 72/12 72/24 74/6 143/14 143/22 147/11 presenting [1] 116/2 56/23 57/7 143/17 121/23 131/23 141/2 134/2 147/16 148/16 148/25 presents [1] 120/21 **Proceeds [1]** 143/21 160/12 165/24 151/25 153/8 154/16 press [1] 109/22 **POL's [1]** 106/2 process [6] 2/1 66/24 places [1] 148/18 154/20 155/6 157/18 108/15 109/15 124/12 policies [5] 63/20 **pressure [2]** 76/13 plan [2] 79/3 160/7 71/21 82/10 124/25 161/23 163/21 163/23 112/14 135/15 **plans [2]** 134/19 pretty [1] 113/5 140/2 163/24 164/5 164/18 processes [8] 22/1 160/13 policy [10] 23/6 165/3 165/6 167/22 prevailing [2] 135/24 22/4 22/11 45/13 plate [5] 103/14 78/13 79/17 94/1 post-2013 [1] 161/23 139/22 63/19 88/12 107/9 103/17 106/6 106/13 103/5 125/18 128/12 prevented [1] 102/5 121/22 posts [1] 7/9 110/4 155/8 155/21 156/7 **prevents** [1] 146/1 product [1] 113/14 potential [2] 131/18 play [1] 22/23 pool [1] 58/13 143/21 previous [6] 41/16 products [1] 61/15 played [2] 148/11 pooled [1] 127/23 potentially [2] 131/4 68/20 81/1 129/1 professional [3] 149/20 popular [1] 163/9 131/13 130/18 164/9 17/20 120/9 154/2 players [1] 127/18 pose [1] 131/23 power [3] 17/5 35/20 previously [1] 131/19 Professor [4] 1/3 1/5 please [85] 1/4 1/11 **primary [2]** 14/23 **posed [5]** 56/16 53/24 7/18 169/2 2/3 3/15 3/20 4/10 58/18 75/19 135/1 powers [2] 140/10 18/4 **Professor Dame [1]** 4/15 5/9 6/7 6/22 8/20 163/9 primer [1] 76/7 151/10 1/3 12/6 12/24 15/1 15/9 position [14] 4/23 **PR [1]** 94/12 priming [1] 100/14 **Professor Emerita** 15/24 16/10 19/8 20/1 practical [2] 7/22 **principally [1]** 13/25 10/19 16/2 41/17 **[1]** 7/18 20/16 24/8 29/9 30/6 41/18 41/18 43/11 60/25 **principles [9]** 21/14 **profit [2]** 45/10 30/23 32/5 32/10 80/13 82/5 89/16 practice [13] 10/9 24/13 27/8 28/5 28/15 149/16

142/20 144/16 144/23 P **protecting [2]** 24/22 readily [1] 136/3 reading [6] 17/24 **references [3]** 17/15 50/19 question [24] 24/24 **programme** [2] 9/2 **protection [1]** 51/10 40/16 44/3 44/14 18/2 20/8 104/10 40/10 56/5 147/7 protesting [1] 164/14 46/11 55/15 61/3 80/7 113/18 119/5 referencing [1] 3/10 project [4] 47/15 proved [1] 162/25 81/10 81/21 82/20 reads [2] 6/4 104/3 referring [11] 13/24 47/21 48/18 114/11 58/8 58/16 58/17 87/5 provide [5] 10/8 17/9 99/10 111/22 111/23 ready [2] 112/16 projects [2] 47/12 23/20 30/9 82/4 113/15 118/3 124/1 87/7 105/23 105/24 113/4 47/23 127/12 132/4 135/18 157/14 160/14 160/15 provided [3] 23/4 real [3] 35/11 69/6 pronged [1] 74/23 53/18 96/24 140/22 144/10 146/20 135/19 reflect [1] 18/15 pronouncements [1] provides [3] 10/23 166/16 realise [1] 70/15 reflected [1] 17/10 30/18 20/3 137/13 questionable [1] reflection [2] 66/10 realised [2] 16/7 properly [4] 67/23 **providing** [1] 33/8 82/10 118/2 158/7 69/25 70/9 101/6 reflects [1] 116/22 provision [1] 48/9 questioned [3] 1/7 really [14] 25/8 28/7 proportionate [1] 46/1 71/24 72/12 provisions [1] 27/9 82/21 169/6 refrain [1] 78/18 141/5 74/23 80/15 91/2 91/3 regard [20] 37/11 **public [30]** 8/15 9/8 questioners [2] **proposals** [3] 46/9 11/5 11/24 12/10 30/1 167/9 167/10 91/5 94/21 111/7 39/24 44/2 46/23 47/1 125/9 147/5 30/10 30/21 37/11 149/9 165/8 54/25 65/9 72/12 questions [35] 1/9 propose [1] 139/15 38/21 50/18 51/1 2/2 2/3 2/10 2/14 2/17 reason [4] 42/18 75/17 83/24 84/1 91/1 proposed [2] 98/21 66/20 66/21 67/22 21/7 21/12 45/19 102/8 166/7 166/8 130/17 137/5 146/18 114/6 148/1 150/7 155/7 82/14 87/19 88/1 48/23 54/6 55/6 60/5 **reasonable [5]** 15/14 propriety [1] 18/11 109/20 116/8 135/25 70/1 70/2 76/14 82/17 50/4 85/22 94/2 111/4 160/22 160/23 prosecute [1] 135/25 135/25 149/19 155/16 94/8 100/10 100/25 reasonably [10] regarded [1] 15/14 prosecuting [3] 155/18 163/9 163/10 111/6 131/23 132/2 10/19 16/1 16/6 22/17 regardless [1] 83/25 84/1 117/24 163/17 165/6 165/24 132/6 138/17 154/9 23/2 24/1 59/17 61/24 139/25 prosecution [10] public's [1] 66/22 155/11 166/11 166/17 107/2 142/17 regards [2] 95/22 57/11 58/18 79/17 167/1 167/4 167/19 publication [9] 30/12 reasons [8] 42/17 150/17 99/25 116/1 124/25 77/2 77/10 77/10 88/5 167/20 167/22 167/25 44/11 66/1 112/7 register [6] 57/20 131/6 140/1 140/11 95/3 101/25 106/8 quickly [2] 127/9 113/10 113/12 113/16 59/23 62/4 68/6 141/19 118/18 147/4 143/25 143/23 143/25 prosecutions [79] publicly [8] 11/3 11/8 quiet [1] 44/9 recall [2] 105/23 regular [4] 84/2 56/18 57/1 57/7 62/25 11/9 11/14 29/15 quite [8] 50/6 71/8 160/17 84/16 115/12 125/6 63/7 63/16 63/19 29/19 29/24 30/9 94/7 126/19 127/9 receipt [7] 2/6 86/13 regularly [3] 42/20 63/20 64/7 64/12 66/9 132/12 135/19 158/12 86/14 86/21 109/12 115/16 157/13 publicly-owned [1] 66/16 67/4 67/7 67/21 29/24 quotation [1] 5/22 124/9 147/14 regulated [1] 46/17 68/12 68/15 69/9 70/5 published [4] 77/3 quote [1] 30/12 received [12] 76/25 regulations [1] 27/10 71/10 71/21 72/3 101/21 102/24 105/12 77/4 89/18 100/11 **regulator** [1] 144/9 72/12 72/24 73/4 pull [2] 121/18 100/13 104/19 117/23 regulators [1] 11/13 73/10 73/13 74/4 74/7 raise [2] 100/11 118/11 118/20 119/2 123/11 **regulatory [3]** 151/3 75/5 75/17 75/19 100/25 purpose [11] 2/5 119/21 120/22 151/19 152/9 78/13 79/13 79/21 raised [8] 64/11 80/6 9/15 24/17 38/4 45/1 receiving [3] 62/9 reinforced [1] 139/22 80/17 82/11 82/17 103/4 103/16 113/22 45/22 47/18 51/24 86/16 86/17 reissued [2] 3/11 82/25 87/24 88/11 115/25 160/20 161/7 53/15 96/8 143/1 recently [2] 3/9 49/20 3/11 94/2 103/5 106/2 ramifications [1] relate [9] 20/11 20/13 purposes [3] 22/16 recognise [1] 126/14 106/4 118/4 120/1 116/23 41/2 104/17 20/15 20/16 21/1 21/2 recognised [1] 120/18 126/4 127/20 ran [1] 55/22 49/11 84/25 89/5 **pursue [2]** 22/16 124/14 128/12 130/11 130/13 range [1] 148/9 recommend [1] related [4] 63/14 91/6 136/12 131/25 133/2 133/23 rapidly [1] 13/19 pursued [2] 55/23 128/24 101/12 127/19 133/24 134/2 134/3 rare [1] 43/13 56/1 recommendations relates [3] 48/21 74/5 134/10 136/13 136/16 put [10] 35/16 49/24 rather [15] 14/4 35/5 **[3]** 28/15 124/19 122/20 136/25 139/10 139/14 50/1 88/6 89/16 97/2 52/21 78/1 81/5 91/24 137/24 relating [6] 59/9 141/2 141/6 141/11 94/12 95/5 100/6 105/15 131/23 136/21 record [2] 3/2 100/6 62/10 94/1 122/1 143/8 146/16 147/12 106/13 111/9 115/8 160/12 134/13 155/10 recorded [1] 13/9 148/17 149/1 155/7 134/21 139/22 141/7 puts [1] 72/8 records [1] 151/6 relation [41] 13/2 155/8 155/15 155/20 rations [1] 153/3 16/13 17/1 17/4 25/3 putting [1] 165/20 recruit [1] 162/19 155/21 165/11 reach [1] 77/25 recruitment [1] 25/18 28/8 47/23 **prosecutor** [2] 126/1 reached [1] 78/23 162/18 48/11 49/9 56/11 143/20 qualifications [4] react [1] 125/25 62/17 66/7 71/9 71/10 recurring [1] 69/11 prosecutorial [2] 2/15 6/22 7/1 8/21 reactions [1] 113/11 redacted [1] 3/22 71/16 73/10 73/14 135/15 140/13 read [9] 12/19 12/19 qualified [2] 154/1 74/3 77/25 78/4 89/7 reduce [1] 2/25 protect [5] 88/15 23/15 29/22 57/7 154/6 refer [3] 91/24 89/13 93/16 95/12 88/21 89/22 125/14 quality [4] 48/1 48/5 66/15 76/4 103/11 104/22 122/8 95/21 95/23 96/21 135/25 104/5 108/23 108/24 reference [9] 21/14 98/18 108/10 111/10 protected [2] 51/5 quasi [1] 142/20 reader [2] 104/9 23/5 23/17 40/12 112/3 114/10 126/13 132/1 quasi-employees [1] 106/13 76/18 91/16 132/15 126/22 140/3 140/8

(64) programme - relation

R relation... [4] 149/1 149/22 159/1 163/4 relations [3] 45/16 87/19 88/1 relationship [21] 24/5 33/24 34/4 34/11 34/12 34/13 34/17 34/18 34/19 38/18 41/13 43/14 62/13 62/18 67/20 69/15 98/4 150/21 150/23 151/11 157/25 relationships [10] 38/8 120/6 121/21 152/16 153/22 156/20 157/8 158/8 159/6 160/24 relatively [3] 27/17 60/13 75/11 relax [1] 101/4 relevance [3] 13/20 36/11 36/14 relevant [25] 10/25 11/10 12/3 18/12 23/13 23/20 31/10 33/7 33/15 41/5 47/7 48/9 51/11 57/3 83/5 87/4 94/16 106/18 106/22 111/13 111/20 138/25 139/4 145/19 147/19 relevantly [1] 7/14 reliance [1] 134/4 relied [1] 119/11 rely [3] 17/21 30/19 157/10 remain [3] 122/18 162/4 164/6 remaining [3] 20/16 114/13 150/25 remember [5] 24/12 54/8 105/8 115/4 119/5 remembering [3] 9/21 86/5 162/2 reminder [1] 17/6 Remuneration [1] 8/5 repeat [1] 70/12 repeated [1] 75/16 replace [1] 5/23 replaced [2] 161/11 161/13 replacement [1] 161/15 replete [1] 17/15 report [158] 3/14 3/19 3/19 4/1 4/6 4/10 4/11 5/8 6/12 6/22 6/23 9/16 9/20 9/20 10/8 10/11 10/23 15/8

15/18 15/20 16/5

16/10 16/13 16/13 16/22 16/23 17/2 17/7 17/24 18/10 19/9 19/12 21/15 21/17 21/20 22/18 22/21 23/6 23/12 23/17 24/8 24/12 29/6 33/10 35/3 35/7 36/25 38/1 38/2 38/5 43/20 45/7 47/18 51/3 51/25 54/7 54/7 54/12 55/24 59/10 59/18 59/21 59/23 68/5 68/9 70/19 72/15 75/23 76/2 77/3 77/3 77/5 77/15 78/10 79/24 80/6 81/15 85/14 86/7 86/10 86/14 86/14 86/17 86/17 86/19 86/21 86/23 87/16 87/22 88/6 88/9 90/3 90/17 91/7 91/10 93/16 94/18 94/21 94/23 95/4 95/8 95/15 96/2 96/8 96/22 97/3 97/23 requires [2] 43/11 98/5 98/13 99/6 99/15 100/16 101/10 101/21 requiring [1] 115/14 102/24 103/1 103/10 103/12 103/15 104/1 104/10 105/1 105/1 105/4 105/10 105/10 105/18 105/21 105/25 resource [1] 48/4 106/7 106/9 107/3 108/2 108/4 113/22 114/14 115/21 116/2 118/1 118/12 118/18 123/1 124/1 126/11 131/3 138/13 138/16 138/18 139/11 145/3 150/8 154/11 154/12 156/23 157/19 164/3 164/10 164/24 Report 1 [19] 9/16 9/20 16/5 16/22 16/23 17/2 17/7 22/18 23/6 23/12 23/17 24/8 24/12 54/7 59/18 59/21 96/22 97/3 107/3 Report 2 [7] 16/10 16/13 18/10 22/21 54/7 154/11 154/12 reporting [3] 47/6 63/18 100/1 reports [10] 2/12 3/4 3/4 3/9 3/11 3/12 9/15 27/3 28/19 44/12 represent [5] 10/14 18/10 120/9 130/1 159/16 representation [1] 36/5 representative [1] 26/8

representatives [3] 52/9 53/3 167/14 represented [3] 35/2 147/21 163/7 reputation [5] 78/25 88/15 88/22 89/23 109/20 require [2] 103/21 108/4 required [10] 28/25 32/24 45/6 60/22 72/9 72/11 92/3 110/10 130/13 135/20 requirement [8] 46/5 147/24 147/25 149/19 revenue [1] 29/18 151/24 152/2 152/5 requirements [17] 11/2 11/4 11/11 11/22 11/23 12/8 14/12 14/20 15/11 28/22 45/15 49/12 51/17 53/22 118/24 152/14 154/1 134/17 research [1] 31/22 researched [1] 7/5 reside [1] 152/10 resonance [1] 78/18 respect [1] 131/17 respectively [1] 35/15 respond [2] 89/21 127/2 response [4] 50/21 76/12 86/7 121/5 responsibilities [18] 25/16 27/13 27/15 38/8 39/8 45/25 49/7 50/21 65/10 65/11 87/21 89/9 112/22 112/22 112/23 120/9 153/6 153/7 responsibility [45] 26/15 38/10 38/25 42/13 42/14 62/24 63/4 64/21 64/23 65/15 72/8 74/22 74/25 83/13 83/14 87/21 88/17 91/15 92/6 92/18 93/14 93/15 96/12 99/3 111/10 122/18 124/18 right-hand [4] 11/23 124/21 130/4 137/21 139/25 141/24 141/25 rightly [1] 162/2 145/8 145/9 145/20 151/2 152/9 153/12 157/2 157/5 157/6 157/8 158/6 159/15 responsible [18] 26/9 38/9 41/7 41/21

50/2 50/3 63/7 63/10 64/1 71/24 129/24 130/1 130/15 130/20 137/25 151/12 151/19 159/11 result [3] 61/1 126/23 128/17 resulted [1] 118/4 retain [1] 41/25 **retrospect** [1] 75/14 revealed [5] 84/18 110/12 126/3 126/18 158/6 revelation [1] 131/6 review [22] 8/11 64/9 76/10 80/21 118/7 118/23 118/25 119/7 120/17 121/5 124/11 124/15 124/18 127/7 127/8 128/11 132/8 132/8 135/20 159/5 160/21 160/21 reviewed [5] 18/5 19/19 137/23 148/23 162/23 reviewer [2] 80/2 80/11 reviewing [1] 131/18 revised [1] 13/3 revisions [1] 44/19 richer [1] 135/5 rife [1] 116/14 rift [1] 116/16 right [66] 5/12 5/19 9/11 10/5 10/15 10/18 11/4 11/23 12/10 12/11 12/13 12/19 12/20 12/25 14/16 15/2 16/14 17/1 18/9 21/8 23/9 28/2 30/18 31/17 33/14 33/16 34/22 35/9 39/5 44/1 50/20 50/23 55/10 55/16 56/3 59/4 66/21 69/21 75/1 76/1 77/20 79/20 93/18 94/13 95/24 95/25 97/6 97/13 102/7 129/14 132/7 132/10 134/22 136/12 138/24 140/4 144/21 148/7 151/23 156/13 156/16 157/21 161/2 164/12 164/24 165/7 12/13 12/25 15/2 rights [3] 24/22 50/16 51/2 rise [1] 4/24 risk [69] 13/18 13/25 14/3 23/4 23/20 25/17 45/16 45/17 45/21

45/24 46/4 47/3 47/4 47/8 56/17 57/19 57/19 57/22 58/17 59/14 59/22 62/4 62/4 64/4 64/5 64/6 64/7 65/13 67/14 68/6 71/10 72/22 72/25 73/1 73/6 73/7 73/13 74/20 75/20 84/8 84/13 84/18 89/11 118/9 123/7 123/9 123/13 125/11 125/13 125/22 128/14 133/7 133/24 134/6 134/9 134/10 134/17 134/20 138/23 140/1 140/14 140/23 141/4 141/6 141/8 143/23 143/24 147/3 147/5 risked [1] 131/6 risks [25] 45/16 46/7 46/8 58/15 58/16 58/18 61/25 63/20 64/12 65/1 75/1 75/18 108/5 110/13 133/25 134/13 134/16 134/17 134/25 138/1 138/4 139/14 139/18 147/10 163/9 **RMG [11]** 63/9 63/14 64/5 64/21 67/3 71/22 74/19 74/19 74/25 79/4 79/6 robust [10] 71/8 80/14 82/9 82/19 89/19 90/9 90/13 90/24 146/13 155/15 robustness [4] 103/8 106/4 135/24 146/20 **Rodric [1]** 119/4 role [47] 32/24 43/20 43/22 44/2 44/3 44/6 44/8 44/19 44/20 45/18 48/10 48/10 49/8 49/9 65/21 68/14 83/7 88/25 89/6 89/8 92/13 93/1 93/2 95/18 96/12 99/20 99/25 101/14 110/19 114/25 115/6 124/22 134/8 145/23 145/24 148/10 148/12 149/25 150/6 152/11 152/12 152/23 158/9 159/18 160/1 164/18 165/5 roles [121 25/12 25/12 25/15 27/13 27/15 85/15 88/24 89/16 120/5 143/23 144/15 144/22 rollout [2] 47/14 163/12 roots [1] 24/21 round [2] 54/14

R	<b>say [112]</b> 1/14 1/18
round [1] 141/7	10/7 10/10 10/13 11
route [1] 143/8	15/10 17/8 20/1 23/9
routes [2] 74/19	29/10 30/7 33/16
121/9	36/20 42/16 44/8 44
routine [4] 67/21	49/21 49/21 50/23
114/23 115/10 140/11	56/13 58/6 59/22 60
routinely [1] 141/11	61/9 63/13 66/8 68/1
<b>Royal [13]</b> 32/17	68/24 69/6 69/10 71 71/8 75/16 78/9 81/1
56/13 60/1 60/23	82/7 84/6 84/10 84/1
62/14 62/22 63/1 63/5	
63/23 64/14 64/15	86/25 87/16 88/8 89/18 90/14 91/11
70/4 154/21	91/19 93/21 95/1
RTS [1] 4/20	95/11 96/1 96/20
rule [1] 155/1	97/25 99/11 99/23
rules [3] 2/5 2/9 22/2	101/9 102/1 102/9
rumours [1] 116/13	102/16 103/1 103/20
run [11] 30/16 46/3	104/1 105/20 107/23
78/1 83/7 83/11 84/5	109/11 110/7 111/19
100/15 107/17 111/2	111/23 114/24 114/2
149/14 149/17	115/6 116/8 116/11
run-up [2] 78/1	117/22 118/14 119/2
100/15	120/12 120/24 122/1
running [13] 26/10	122/24 124/6 129/22
31/13 32/6 41/7 46/3	130/4 132/4 133/20
83/12 92/15 110/23	134/7 136/9 136/24
141/23 142/1 145/13	139/7 140/9 140/16
149/16 154/19	142/21 142/22 145/2
runs [6] 24/15 38/2	147/2 148/13 152/6
45/23 53/13 55/10	153/3 154/16 156/22
76/1	157/16 157/23 158/1
S	158/19 159/25 162/2
safeguards [1] 144/5	163/6 163/20 165/17
safety [2] 56/18 83/9	165/17 166/2 167/17
said [32] 27/22 28/10	saying [18] 15/17
59/20 64/25 72/10	15/18 37/1 47/2 83/2
73/9 84/15 88/9 106/6	90/7 94/10 97/4
110/22 112/7 114/9	101/16 101/20 109/2
120/16 121/11 121/11	128/19 130/23 130/2
130/8 136/5 136/25	131/3 132/7 132/22
137/1 146/10 146/17	134/23
148/24 151/7 151/12	says [12] 29/1 39/25
151/20 153/14 159/3	73/6 91/17 105/17
159/8 162/10 165/4	119/5 119/17 122/3
167/24 168/1	127/10 133/20 143/8
salaries [2] 8/11	151/8
161/16	scaffolding [1] 53/1
same [7] 1/17 13/5	scale [6] 47/22
15/1 50/2 70/0 120/16	102/13 141/12 163/8

166/14

Sandra [16] 1/4 1/5

1/8 1/12 2/10 2/19

3/23 5/12 6/9 6/25

31/15 37/25 69/18

**Sandra's [1]** 2/23

**sands [1]** 36/12

sat [1] 123/12

**save [1]** 5/2

149/25

85/10 123/23 169/2

saw [6] 78/20 84/11

88/3 132/13 149/25

0/7 10/10 10/13 11/6 32/10 34/2 34/19 5/10 17/8 20/1 23/9 35/25 51/3 99/23 9/10 30/7 33/16 109/3 157/16 162/1 6/20 42/16 44/8 44/9 scrolling [2] 12/3 9/21 49/21 50/23 12/3 6/13 58/6 59/22 60/6|scrutiny [2] 60/18 1/9 63/13 66/8 68/18 101/14 8/24 69/6 69/10 71/4|search [1] 28/3 1/8 75/16 78/9 81/12 second [74] 3/6 4/9 2/7 84/6 84/10 84/19 5/8 5/10 6/2 10/10 6/25 87/16 88/8 14/16 17/24 19/12 9/18 90/14 91/11 21/17 21/20 32/11 1/19 93/21 95/1 36/2 37/23 55/4 55/4 5/11 96/1 96/20 62/11 75/22 75/23 7/25 99/11 99/23 01/9 102/1 102/9 77/11 77/15 78/16 02/16 103/1 103/20 79/16 79/25 80/6 04/1 105/20 107/23 80/14 80/21 82/9 09/11 110/7 111/19 85/13 86/7 88/5 88/8 11/23 114/24 114/25 89/6 90/3 91/6 91/10 15/6 116/8 116/11 93/17 93/21 94/18 17/22 118/14 119/23 95/15 96/7 98/5 98/7 20/12 120/24 122/15 98/13 99/6 100/1 22/24 124/6 129/22 100/7 100/15 101/5 30/4 132/4 133/20 34/7 136/9 136/24 105/1 105/9 105/10 39/7 140/9 140/16 42/21 142/22 145/25 117/25 122/25 124/1 47/2 148/13 152/6 131/3 139/8 139/8 53/3 154/16 156/22 57/16 157/23 158/18 149/3 156/3 157/24 58/19 159/25 162/20|secondly [3] 2/14 7/9| 161/18 164/1 63/6 163/20 165/17 21/15 65/17 166/2 167/17 secretary [14] 35/23 39/23 91/23 98/22 aying [18] 15/17 5/18 37/1 47/2 83/22 99/2 150/7 150/11 151/4 151/11 151/17 0/7 94/10 97/4 152/7 152/11 152/15 01/16 101/20 109/24 28/19 130/23 130/23 152/21 31/3 132/7 132/22 secretary's [1] 34/23 150/24 ys [12] 29/1 39/25 section [5] 17/2 3/6 91/17 105/17 47/18 53/19 54/5 19/5 119/17 122/3 106/10 27/10 133/20 143/8 section 8 [1] 17/2 51/8 **sections [2]** 51/4 caffolding [1] 53/17 91/16 cale [6] 47/22 sector [1] 9/9 102/13 141/12 163/8 secure [1] 22/12 15/1 50/3 79/9 138/16 163/10 167/24 secured [2] 64/23 scenario [1] 23/19 119/15 **scheme [2]** 19/9 securing [2] 79/1 70/14 79/2 schemes [1] 54/16 security [1] 89/12 see [53] 1/16 1/21 **scholar [1]** 9/5 3/18 4/11 11/20 12/1 **School [2]** 7/15 9/5 science [1] 85/20 15/9 24/14 35/12 scope [1] 161/10 screen [7] 3/14 4/17 48/11 51/2 64/20 5/10 5/17 69/19 77/17 129/5 71/9 71/11 77/12 scroll [17] 6/8 8/19 77/18 79/13 80/21 11/20 12/23 14/25

20/10 20/16 26/1

93/9 93/11 93/15 95/19 96/2 97/21 110/8 112/4 117/11 117/12 128/25 132/5 133/19 135/3 135/14 139/9 139/20 140/22 145/10 158/9 161/9 164/3 168/9 seeing [1] 71/10 seek [1] 150/13 seeking [1] 92/20 seeks [1] 35/8 seem [2] 88/12 149/23 seemed [3] 58/7 76/9 76/15 76/21 77/2 130/7 162/23 seems [15] 46/13 49/25 61/15 65/4 72/25 73/7 75/15 133/13 135/10 136/10 83/11 163/11 149/12 159/5 161/13 163/20 163/24 seen [32] 20/20 25/21 28/8 41/23 46/2 50/21 57/2 61/16 102/14 103/10 103/21 66/16 66/19 69/1 72/16 78/19 82/25 105/18 105/25 113/21 83/3 84/6 90/14 104/8 104/23 108/7 112/25 113/19 116/1 123/13 139/12 144/13 145/22 147/8 148/14 149/13 154/16 155/14 155/25 selected [2] 20/7 159/3 **selection [3]** 17/25 19/1 20/8 **selective [1]** 18/19 semi [1] 122/16 semi-detached [1] 122/16 senior [13] 8/4 8/11 8/15 33/6 39/19 58/10| **seven [1]** 34/16 58/12 114/22 115/18 117/2 157/3 157/17 158/4 sense [16] 26/16 27/1 27/3 31/8 34/23 38/21 67/6 79/25 91/8 shaken [1] 80/4 92/6 93/12 93/13 115/14 120/24 150/20 82/15 88/9 165/7 sentence [8] 1/24 73/9 74/6 82/3 separate [5] 25/10 29/2 61/3 79/6 145/5 separated [1] 29/2 35/25 37/3 38/9 44/13 separately [1] 152/12 separation [1] 67/23 68/2 68/12 71/1 145/22 series [7] 22/1 70/10 109/1 111/20 126/21 82/6 82/15 86/23 88/9 143/23 148/7

79/12 80/5 80/10 103/3 108/20 116/19 118/15 128/9 139/18 140/1 140/22 141/4 144/17 144/24 163/13 seriously [2] 135/17 136/11 seriousness [4] 70/14 126/24 128/12 158/17 servants [1] 33/6 served [1] 9/8 **service [2]** 149/19 163/17 **services** [10] 8/16 17/20 46/15 46/18 46/25 47/2 47/9 83/10 serving [1] 52/16 session [1] 54/9 set [44] 2/1 7/2 7/23 9/17 15/24 15/25 16/12 16/21 27/9 27/20 27/23 27/24 39/5 55/12 56/4 56/8 66/6 70/1 71/13 74/22 76/22 85/17 85/24 99/19 102/22 102/25 104/21 107/3 108/25 117/19 119/19 129/7 133/7 136/1 139/1 144/18 147/1 148/4 148/6 150/24 155/19 156/9 156/20 163/4 sets [5] 8/20 10/8 19/8 167/9 167/10 setting [4] 2/5 35/6 96/17 114/6 **settlement [3]** 57/23 59/12 60/3 **seven-year [1]** 34/16 **several [5]** 76/19 116/3 134/1 148/17 165/4 **shake [1]** 166/13 shall [4] 2/14 49/21 share [4] 42/14 58/14 112/9 124/21 61/19 67/12 73/5 73/6 shared [5] 91/14 92/6 119/3 134/17 138/2 shareholder [21] 10/3 12/16 32/22 32/24 33/2 41/15 42/6 42/19 42/21 42/22 42/24 43/8 43/15 43/21 44/2 44/6 44/9 44/13 44/19 44/21 52/24 shareholders [9]

serious [20] 57/5

64/17 65/9 65/9 70/10

S shareholders... [9] 24/23 27/15 27/16 41/12 41/13 42/6 44/17 53/1 160/6 shareholdings [1] 27/17 **sharp [1]** 57/18 **she [73]** 2/23 56/1 86/16 86/20 87/1 87/3 87/8 87/11 87/12 87/17 87/25 89/4 89/6 89/9 89/12 89/14 91/17 91/19 92/2 92/23 93/3 93/6 94/2 96/6 96/14 98/21 98/24 99/1 99/13 108/14 112/22 112/23 113/13 113/25 115/13 115/18 116/4 117/4 119/3 119/4 119/5 120/16 121/4 121/11 121/11 122/1 122/3 122/4 122/5 127/10 127/11 128/7 130/1 130/8 130/9 130/11 130/14 130/15 130/18 130/20 134/12 151/14 151/15 153/12 153/17 159/8 159/9 159/10 159/10 161/12 161/14 167/23 167/25 she's [2] 91/17 114/15 **ShEx [2]** 42/7 162/3 ShEx's [1] 162/14 **shifting [1]** 36/12 **shook [1]** 146/22 short [7] 5/5 37/21 76/5 85/7 123/20 131/21 131/22 shortfall [1] 55/23 **shortly [1]** 122/2 should [110] 1/14 2/1 3/15 5/10 5/15 5/17 5/23 6/2 12/18 19/2 19/3 21/13 28/11 28/13 28/16 29/2 29/2 29/3 29/5 29/23 30/4 30/10 44/17 45/5 46/22 49/2 52/15 52/15 57/2 57/16 58/1 58/2 58/4 59/10 59/13 59/23 59/25 62/9 64/3 64/5 64/9 64/11 64/22 65/20 72/23 75/7 77/13 78/5 78/15 84/17 86/20 88/6 88/6 90/10 90/12 94/2 94/16 96/18 96/20 102/10 103/2 104/11 107/12 107/23 108/3 108/12 111/6 111/7

114/24 114/25 119/20 significantly [3] 49/6 121/3 124/2 124/7 125/2 125/6 125/9 125/23 126/12 127/25 128/4 128/20 129/22 130/6 130/17 130/24 130/25 131/14 132/4 132/18 133/1 133/23 136/15 136/24 137/2 137/5 137/16 138/13 139/16 142/2 142/9 145/10 147/4 155/7 160/4 166/6 166/11 166/17 167/19 167/24 **Simon [21]** 19/13 shouldn't [4] 21/11 21/13 110/23 161/12 **show [3]** 45/9 45/10 82/21 **showed [1]** 75/16 **showing [2]** 118/1 162/7 **shown [1]** 126/16 **shows [1]** 119/11 **shying [1]** 133/14 **sic [1]** 31/3 **SID** [1] 8/5 side [8] 11/2 11/23 12/9 12/10 12/14 12/25 15/2 15/2 **sides [1]** 145/20 **Sidney [2]** 7/13 9/6 **SIDs [1]** 39/19 sift [6] 118/25 119/7 121/5 124/15 132/21 135/20 Sigh [1] 105/18 Sight [47] 19/12 55/5 75/23 76/9 76/15 76/21 77/2 77/11 77/15 78/16 79/16 79/25 80/6 80/15 80/21 86/7 88/5 88/9 90/3 91/6 91/10 93/17 situation [3] 63/15 94/18 95/15 96/7 98/5 98/7 98/13 99/6 100/1 situations [2] 125/14 100/8 100/16 102/14 103/10 103/21 105/1 105/9 105/10 105/25 113/21 117/25 122/25 131/3 139/8 139/12 156/3 157/24 Sight's [1] 82/10 sign [1] 57/23 **signals [1]** 116/12 signature [4] 3/24 4/4 6/8 6/15 signed [1] 76/20 significance [3] 36/11 80/8 106/12 significant [13] 57/23 smaller [1] 115/8 75/11 75/14 86/24 87/2 87/4 87/13 104/8 115/21 117/5 123/7 140/14 141/12

50/9 86/10 signing [1] 2/11 **signpost [1]** 104/9 silence [1] 116/17 silo [2] 123/11 123/12 silos [3] 92/8 158/8 159/7 similar [4] 15/4 85/21 95/21 95/23 similarly [2] 28/12 129/2 55/2 117/18 118/13 121/6 121/9 121/17 122/6 124/3 124/18 126/2 127/12 127/25 134/13 136/4 136/18 139/12 157/24 simple [1] 40/25 simply [10] 46/2 47/25 61/11 80/23 115/20 120/7 120/12 120/24 137/19 158/18 since [3] 38/15 56/25 167/17 singly [1] 151/12 sir [17] 1/3 2/5 2/25 4/22 5/3 5/7 37/15 37/24 50/5 59/1 63/17 85/3 85/9 123/16 123/22 167/3 168/3 Sir Wyn [1] 50/5 sit [10] 5/1 26/12 26/14 70/15 80/9 123/4 123/5 126/25 151/19 158/17 sits [1] 123/10 **sitting [3]** 57/19 83/22 117/3 109/16 125/20 155/4 six [8] 20/15 21/1 34/16 109/4 109/5 109/10 119/20 137/14 size [1] 118/7 **skills [1]** 157/4 skipped [1] 14/14 skipping [1] 74/21 slightly [1] 142/21 slipping [1] 128/10 slow [2] 69/23 125/25 **slowly [1]** 103/12 small [1] 126/6 so [158] 2/9 3/4 3/14 4/18 4/23 6/3 9/24 10/18 12/4 12/18 13/13 14/7 14/17

15/17 19/4 20/15 20/19 21/11 22/21 23/1 23/15 23/19 24/12 27/18 28/2 28/25 29/21 31/11 31/20 32/15 32/19 33/11 33/15 33/22 34/22 35/5 36/3 36/5 41/23 42/2 42/25 44/13 44/18 44/20 45/10 47/6 48/5 49/23 50/2 50/8 50/20 50/23 50/25 51/10 54/18 55/9 55/18 57/12 61/18 65/2 65/9 66/22 67/4 67/23 70/18 70/21 71/17 71/25 88/12 90/5 92/21 92/23 93/1 97/1 97/3 97/4 98/8 99/3 99/6 100/14 100/23 101/24 102/5 102/16 105/10 109/10 109/24 112/3 112/10 112/18 113/2 120/4 120/23 121/18 128/18 130/5 130/21 131/2 132/12 132/14 133/15 134/21 135/13 137/18 138/1 138/18 140/8 140/19 142/1 142/5 143/3 145/15 146/11 151/11 152/5 157/9 157/20 158/19 159/17 161/7 162/1 165/13 166/1 166/6 social [1] 121/21 societal [1] 25/20 sole [1] 12/16 solely [2] 78/14 151/12 **solicitors [1]** 117/24 **solution [1]** 114/6 some [47] 4/14 5/8 7/25 12/7 13/20 18/2 64/1 70/1 70/5 87/17 87/25 91/16 100/20 103/9 105/20 105/22 106/12 109/3 109/23 116/8 118/3 118/4 118/6 118/8 120/17 122/8 126/8 128/25

131/23 136/16 152/15 152/18 158/4 161/4 162/5 **somebody [1]** 4/20 **somehow [2]** 132/18 165/12 someone [4] 120/20 120/21 130/5 136/23 36/20 38/9 39/9 40/10 something [19] 27/23 29/23 46/1 49/6 54/3 57/25 66/16 67/8 67/10 71/4 71/5 90/22 93/11 93/15 111/25 116/21 123/10 137/2 167/17 118/17 120/14 120/18 58/14 59/5 60/2 60/24 sometimes [8] 29/17 52/20 55/12 112/13 112/14 117/1 117/1 159/8 74/7 78/4 78/22 79/24 somewhat [1] 105/22 82/18 86/20 87/1 87/3 sorry [5] 6/4 31/15 70/12 141/3 152/3 sort [10] 24/17 65/12 70/24 80/22 118/6 118/8 133/11 134/23 153/3 166/10 105/16 105/21 107/14 sorts [1] 73/18 sought [3] 45/4 56/21 89/22 113/20 113/22 115/22 sound [1] 28/15 **source [1]** 14/8 123/10 124/15 126/16 speak [10] 31/15 127/12 127/21 127/25 49/3 49/3 49/4 50/8 108/9 109/5 120/8 120/25 136/20 speaking [9] 14/18 40/5 40/6 40/7 43/25 44/8 50/7 100/14 162/10 speaks [4] 14/10 153/16 153/22 155/14 113/25 120/20 138/16 **special [10]** 11/3 41/13 41/25 99/7 164/13 164/15 164/16 112/21 144/2 144/3 144/15 144/23 159/14 specialist [7] 41/4 42/25 72/15 91/12 92/18 93/7 115/24 specialists [1] 72/17 **specific [8]** 15/11 25/12 45/16 51/17 53/22 54/17 57/12 152/15 specifically [7] 46/1 19/22 26/2 29/3 32/24 73/16 73/17 100/20 34/23 41/6 41/11 47/6 115/14 120/1 122/5 54/16 56/5 56/11 63/4 specified [2] 38/13 38/13 spectrum [9] 57/4 70/14 70/16 80/8 126/23 127/1 127/2 158/14 158/17 speculation [2] 116/14 117/7

127/22 131/6 131/8 122/1 122/2 122/3 S 2/22 4/4 6/15 8/19 **sub [4]** 95/12 99/19 22/22 37/25 55/2 102/21 108/10 131/12 151/24 160/10 124/13 **sped [1]** 69/23 sub-issue [4] 95/12 58/21 66/25 85/10 165/6 suspect [1] 167/20 **split [6]** 11/1 20/11 113/7 123/23 128/7 99/19 102/21 108/10 **suddenly [1]** 92/3 Sussex [2] 7/13 9/6 24/24 33/18 46/20 150/4 165/16 169/4 subcategorisation [1] suffering [3] 84/14 sustain [1] 160/8 152/6 still [5] 110/10 42/2 109/21 164/13 **sustained** [1] 110/11 **SPM [1]** 5/18 142/22 154/17 154/20 subheading [1] **Swinson's [1]** 162/9 **sufficient [6]** 78/10 **spoke [1]** 95/10 108/1 128/22 148/14 162/23 55/15 **sympathy [1]** 116/10 **spoken [2]** 73/9 stood [1] 112/16 subject [7] 14/4 159/15 160/3 system [21] 16/11 122/1 stop [2] 4/16 136/24 61/17 76/19 101/23 47/15 55/24 56/16 sufficiently [4] 17/21 sponsoring [2] 33/7 105/4 117/6 155/17 92/23 100/3 118/21 67/18 67/20 71/7 **stopping [2]** 73/5 35/21 subjects [1] 107/10 72/25 73/6 76/11 151/23 **suggest [5]** 100/9 spotlight [1] 133/1 **stories [2]** 116/25 101/3 111/3 156/23 79/16 82/24 89/19 suboptimally [1] spots [1] 164/21 157/24 109/17 118/1 120/3 133/16 159/20 staff [1] 73/25 story [7] 25/22 25/23 subordinate [1] **suggested [6]** 30/20 123/2 146/20 163/10 stage [1] 34/5 75/20 94/4 94/5 150/20 57/9 89/25 92/4 96/15 163/15 165/24 **stages [1]** 31/9 133/17 133/17 subpoints [1] 109/10 139/18 system' [1] 100/2 **stake [1]** 52/5 strain [1] 98/4 suggesting [1] 12/18 systematically [1] subpostmaster [3] stakeholder [7] strained [3] 157/25 56/17 63/21 164/5 **suggests [2]** 93/11 139/14 49/17 51/22 52/17 158/8 159/6 subpostmasters [28] 116/15 systemic [2] 90/4 52/19 52/21 52/23 strategic [2] 13/18 32/8 53/8 78/17 79/18 suitability [1] 162/3 90/25 53/4 79/3 80/16 82/13 84/1 **suitable [1]** 167/15 systems [6] 22/1 stakeholders [6] strategy [7] 41/22 84/15 88/12 91/6 sum [2] 127/17 22/4 22/11 165/20 26/9 52/1 52/8 52/10 43/23 44/4 101/19 99/25 103/6 106/3 133/12 165/20 165/23 52/25 53/10 138/23 145/14 160/23 109/17 109/22 119/14 summarise [8] 7/4 **stall [1]** 17/19 127/20 135/17 136/1 8/22 32/12 32/22 37/1 **striking [1]** 164/10 standalone [1] 79/7 table [4] 15/12 35/9 139/15 141/12 155/16 129/9 129/12 131/2 strong [12] 17/21 **standard [2]** 86/2 36/22 69/3 163/16 163/22 163/25 summarised [4] 61/14 66/2 116/11 107/13 tabled [1] 98/19 127/3 135/13 146/6 164/13 166/23 167/13 15/12 15/19 37/5 standards [15] 10/11 149/19 155/23 165/2 76/21 tabular [1] 36/6 subpostmasters' [2] 10/12 10/15 10/18 tackled [1] 147/7 165/7 168/1 163/19 165/5 summarising [3] 16/6 16/21 22/18 tailing [1] 166/10 **stronger [2]** 78/12 subpostmistress [1] 45/1 45/22 105/3 22/23 23/13 23/17 tainted [1] 119/12 55/21 summary [26] 9/17 159/11 24/2 28/5 28/10 107/3 9/20 19/9 20/3 37/3 take [23] 5/7 21/11 **strongest [1]** 164/23 subsequent [5] 114/25 23/1 37/16 53/19 strongly [1] 167/18 21/10 25/13 99/18 37/6 55/20 76/5 95/4 standing [1] 112/17 53/20 56/11 56/20 105/9 126/10 95/14 100/4 103/10 **structural** [2] 158/8 stark [1] 131/18 71/6 80/1 97/18 97/18 103/18 103/22 103/23 159/7 subsequently [2] start [14] 1/14 3/23 110/9 124/10 126/4 **structure [6]** 22/10 9/25 113/2 105/19 106/11 106/14 4/15 14/20 24/9 30/24 139/7 139/19 153/20 27/12 36/7 36/18 107/14 107/14 107/18 subsidiary [9] 32/17 32/3 55/18 104/22 153/25 165/18 166/1 107/24 117/21 118/12 105/22 140/6 35/18 60/23 60/23 111/15 119/22 124/11 167/3 167/18 structures [11] 22/1 62/14 65/3 65/11 72/7 118/14 131/16 134/16 167/6 taken [15] 1/15 23/16 22/4 34/24 37/7 37/10 154/21 supplier [1] 53/6 started [3] 9/23 79/8 130/2 131/12 substance [11] 94/12 suppliers [2] 48/8 47/4 57/12 63/1 69/5 121/5 138/13 149/8 154/17 156/19 79/24 102/23 127/24 94/21 94/23 104/23 52/11 starting [3] 6/25 35/3 128/23 135/12 135/16 studies [27] 18/6 104/24 114/14 114/14 support [6] 30/19 56/3 136/2 136/5 164/1 18/9 19/5 19/11 19/17 126/3 128/19 144/20 79/3 91/1 160/2 160/7 starts [6] 38/1 44/24 takes [1] 114/18 19/18 19/21 19/24 162/20 162/23 54/18 75/25 95/19 taking [5] 16/11 20/7 20/20 21/5 21/16 substantial [1] 7/24 **support' [1]** 160/9 156/15 33/24 123/9 127/16 54/10 54/11 54/13 substantive [1] 117/1 supportive [2] state [2] 35/23 158/6 54/15 54/22 55/11 subsubthemes [1] 110/18 154/14 116/19 sure [6] 49/2 61/2 talk [8] 32/2 52/25 96/21 133/13 138/10 109/3 statement [4] 3/22 66/15 71/18 96/25 139/4 156/23 157/20 **subtheme [1]** 109/2 65/1 116/13 120/10 46/14 88/8 119/6 159/2 159/2 166/20 131/25 145/4 160/17 168/7 **success [1]** 38/23 statements [4] 18/1 talked [5] 57/16 study [21] 54/18 55/9 successful [1] **surfacing [2]** 147/10 46/23 66/15 148/22 57/20 72/5 72/23 55/14 71/14 75/22 149/14 148/18 status [1] 43/24 succession [1] 122/3 85/11 98/12 102/22 **surprises** [1] 1/15 **statutory [2]** 35/19 111/13 114/18 114/22 surprisingly [1] 80/4 talking [5] 49/23 160/12 35/20 100/17 121/10 165/9 117/16 117/17 117/19 successor [1] 119/24 survival [1] 61/14 staying [1] 8/19 168/5 123/24 130/18 133/7 such [26] 15/20 19/1 | Susan [20] 91/21 steeped [1] 41/20 task [1] 9/14 137/11 137/13 138/7 29/19 41/24 45/9 98/1 98/3 105/3 step [1] 142/21 47/15 47/23 69/9 71/6 111/18 113/17 115/13 taught [2] 7/5 8/22 139/8 Stephen [1] 35/23 tax [1] 45/9 84/19 85/24 86/2 98/5 116/9 117/23 118/11 **Study 1 [2]** 54/18 Steward [22] 1/4 1/6 taxpayer [1] 29/17 99/13 100/11 103/22 119/23 120/16 121/4 55/9 1/8 1/13 2/11 2/20 105/11 110/15 111/20 121/10 121/13 121/15 team [28] 58/10 styles [1] 86/4

Т team... [27] 58/12 68/3 74/16 75/17 85/20 87/1 87/10 87/12 89/14 91/9 92/5 92/18 117/3 118/21 119/4 124/22 124/23 130/12 136/17 138/2 141/9 146/6 157/19 158/5 158/25 160/24 166/15 teams [3] 134/18 153/8 163/24 teamworking [1] 156/24 technically [2] 47/12 150/18 technology [8] 67/18 67/20 68/11 68/15 72/18 81/6 87/23 91/3 tell [31] 1/10 7/4 10/22 16/17 16/19 17/6 17/23 18/5 18/19 26/2 26/18 27/8 28/17 34/10 34/17 35/19 57/15 58/20 58/24 59/8 61/6 65/19 66/12 67/19 74/9 79/20 101/2 132/13 135/10 137/12 150/9 telling [5] 19/4 68/10 68/10 68/11 133/16 tended [2] 11/12 11/12 tender [1] 162/15 tensions [2] 47/24 161/22 term [1] 30/17 terminology [1] 26/2 terms [18] 28/17 36/18 40/25 45/14 47/7 47/8 47/25 49/7 60/25 62/23 76/18 86/1 86/2 103/17 110/22 123/8 152/23 156/5 testimony [2] 67/3 161/3 text [1] 46/13 than [21] 1/16 14/4 35/6 48/5 49/21 52/22 53/21 78/1 81/6 87/11 90/22 91/24 94/12 95/5 100/6 106/13 115/8 126/17 134/21 139/22 141/7 thank [94] 1/23 4/9 5/3 5/7 5/21 6/1 6/7 6/15 6/21 8/18 9/12 9/17 9/20 10/7 10/22 12/7 12/22 14/7 14/16 15/7 16/5 16/9 17/23 63/24 64/24 65/20

21/19 26/1 26/17 27/7

29/9 30/5 30/23 32/21 33/3 33/9 33/22 36/10 36/19 36/23 37/14 37/19 39/3 43/18 44/23 45/19 46/11 47/10 48/20 49/17 50/11 51/19 53/12 54/6 55/8 55/18 61/4 61/5 63/11 68/17 71/18 74/8 74/21 75/22 75/25 77/18 82/22 84/24 85/2 90/14 94/9 95/11 95/18 99/23 102/21 108/23 111/12 113/10 117/16 123/15 123/22 134/5 137/9 137/10 138/8 138/10 140/19 144/12 154/9 156/7 156/15 157/1 159/21 166/25 167/1 168/3 168/8 that [929] that I [1] 167/1 that's [95] 4/22 7/24 9/11 10/6 10/15 11/16 12/4 12/12 13/8 13/23 14/7 14/17 15/6 15/23 16/4 16/16 17/1 18/3 18/13 18/18 20/14 20/18 23/16 28/1 30/18 31/10 33/20 34/4 35/1 35/24 36/4 36/9 36/19 37/13 39/24 43/13 43/25 44/8 48/5 57/20 57/21 58/2 62/8 67/4 69/24 70/18 71/4 73/8 77/21 thematic [1] 20/3 77/23 81/21 84/2 84/2 theme [14] 69/12 85/3 86/8 89/6 92/16 93/1 93/9 93/24 94/16 94/24 95/25 96/1 97/12 97/14 99/10 104/11 104/17 108/8 109/8 123/11 123/16 126/19 132/10 132/14 themes [13] 18/20 138/10 139/4 139/6 139/8 140/5 141/3 145/21 146/3 146/12 149/2 152/21 152/21 156/5 157/20 158/12 159/13 159/22 168/1 168/2 their [97] 2/3 4/17 26/15 28/19 28/20 28/22 29/5 29/6 29/7 30/3 37/11 38/17 40/3 41/4 42/13 42/25 43/8 43/10 44/11 44/19 46/7 46/9 48/6 48/7 48/12 52/16 52/21 58/12 58/13 63/5 63/7

69/3 76/21 76/25 77/5

79/7 79/25 79/25 80/2 80/4 80/17 87/10 91/14 93/4 93/7 93/8 98/4 101/14 102/4 102/10 103/7 103/23 109/14 110/2 110/19 111/10 111/25 112/9 113/4 113/20 115/6 118/9 120/8 120/9 124/22 125/21 125/21 126/1 129/19 131/25 134/15 135/4 135/18 137/1 138/4 139/15 148/12 149/25 150/2 150/22 151/9 153/6 153/18 155/1 155/1 155/23 157/8 157/10 158/4 162/25 163/22 163/23 164/6 164/14 them [56] 2/20 19/14 25/2 28/12 28/16 29/3 35/8 37/23 39/8 41/25 42/3 43/9 43/11 60/3 65/2 65/5 70/6 71/3 71/25 81/25 82/15 84/13 91/2 93/4 102/5 105/22 109/4 109/8 110/13 112/6 112/9 120/24 126/4 127/16 128/23 129/20 129/24 there'd [1] 161/4 129/24 130/1 130/4 138/4 138/12 138/17 139/18 142/6 143/9 157/11 159/3 159/11 161/8 166/21 167/2 167/5 167/5 167/16 168/5 69/22 94/10 133/13 139/4 144/13 146/23 148/3 154/11 154/13 156/7 156/15 159/21 163/2 theme 8 [1] 159/21 20/10 20/11 20/12 20/24 21/17 54/11 54/12 138/11 138/19 140/3 144/12 156/18 themselves [5] 43/11 43/12 104/1 157/5 160/6 then [124] 5/11 6/1 9/13 12/9 14/25 15/24 16/14 20/1 20/10 20/12 20/15 24/8 24/20 25/5 25/6 25/19 29/14 29/22 30/12 32/2 32/10 32/15 32/21 33/3 33/10 33/17 33/23 34/2 34/3 34/7 34/15 34/18 39/3 39/11 39/14 39/17

39/20 39/21 39/22 they'd [2] 101/25 40/17 42/8 43/21 43/22 45/14 45/17 46/20 47/4 47/6 48/9 48/16 48/18 54/12 54/15 54/16 55/3 55/13 55/14 55/15 56/3 56/8 61/21 61/23 62/11 66/5 68/12 71/7 71/18 72/8 72/22 74/8 74/17 74/17 74/18 74/21 75/23 76/23 78/8 80/5 83/17 84/4 89/4 90/12 91/18 92/13 94/15 96/23 97/10 99/19 101/22 105/13 106/7 108/21 110/4 110/14 111/6 111/17 113/2 116/22 117/13 119/9 119/19 120/3 120/20 128/14 129/23 134/6 135/1 135/3 138/11 138/23 138/25 142/11 143/5 146/8 147/18 150/24 151/15 156/4 157/23 158/19 159/14 164/1 164/8 168/4 there [230] there's [12] 48/3 48/4 55/19 82/19 90/24 94/17 112/2 113/3 117/21 121/24 121/24 137/25 thereafter [3] 2/18 9/4 131/4 therefore [19] 2/1 21/13 22/3 22/14 36/16 47/1 56/18 57/2 60/13 62/24 64/21 77/7 84/12 84/14 84/15 90/7 98/15 139/25 152/18 these [59] 2/5 4/17 25/9 27/3 27/4 28/10 28/14 28/14 28/15 30/3 31/20 32/4 34/8 36/11 40/9 40/10 45/12 46/23 48/3 52/4 52/8 52/17 54/23 56/11 59/16 59/25 61/9 61/12 61/25 62/7 65/1 71/2 75/1 80/20 84/16 92/22 96/21 99/1 104/7 115/7 116/5 126/9 130/5 131/12 132/1 133/6 133/12 135/7 136/1 136/23 138/15 145/18 152/16 153/22 155/14 thinking [2] 50/18 159/17 165/17 165/18 107/16 165/23 they [236]

102/16 they'll [1] 100/24 they're [21] 10/16 10/18 31/21 31/24 41/9 41/19 41/19 44/11 45/11 68/19 77/22 83/8 83/9 83/10 101/1 101/2 117/1 137/11 141/24 164/23 165/2 they've [3] 41/12 146/5 146/7 thing [8] 12/4 57/13 74/1 114/1 133/11 145/21 145/22 164/12 things [29] 4/17 21/24 22/6 27/10 27/25 40/11 45/9 50/6 61/23 70/14 71/9 73/18 74/14 81/24 88/13 90/25 101/4 103/24 108/5 111/16 112/3 116/25 117/15 139/24 142/9 145/15 148/9 155/12 167/22 think [105] 3/5 4/14 4/16 4/19 6/25 8/1 14/13 18/2 19/2 23/9 24/16 28/6 28/14 30/6 30/12 40/23 44/15 46/17 47/13 47/25 49/22 50/12 50/25 52/1 52/13 53/2 55/5 57/21 59/1 60/17 61/18 61/24 64/19 65/6 67/4 67/17 67/24 68/1 68/19 71/25 73/14 74/11 74/13 75/14 77/17 80/10 80/25 81/21 82/20 84/22 90/10 92/13 93/18 94/24 95/22 101/5 102/1 106/16 107/12 112/6 114/1 114/4 114/17 117/2 117/9 119/19 120/22 121/8 121/24 121/25 122/22 123/11 127/3 127/15 128/5 128/9 132/7 132/11 132/16 133/18 142/10 143/24 144/18 145/3 145/10 146/12 148/24 151/20 152/11 152/13 152/19 153/1 155/9 155/11 156/11 159/1 161/1 162/4 164/23 165/13 166/5 167/18 167/23 168/2 168/7 third [15] 2/17 5/11 5/15 9/13 18/19 39/1 (69) team... - third

71/18 74/19 76/2 T touch [3] 42/21 87/10 U unequivocally [1] 138/24 141/8 144/21 158/10 128/20 third... [9] 48/8 65/18 UK [9] 11/12 25/14 144/25 149/10 160/10 towards [1] 135/5 unfair [2] 16/24 51/8 70/8 85/12 85/15 26/2 26/11 26/23 28/7 track [2] 12/1 35/25 163/5 unfold [1] 98/23 116/7 142/23 146/23 29/22 46/18 129/15 **throughout [5]** 21/20 trade [4] 35/22 47/24 unfounded [1] 89/20 149/11 **UKGI [8]** 10/2 10/3 48/3 52/9 45/2 75/20 125/7 unhappiness [1] third-party [1] 48/8 42/8 160/17 160/19 129/15 trade-offs [2] 47/24 112/2 thirdly [1] 54/16 160/20 161/8 162/3 tie [1] 81/23 48/3 **UNHCR [1]** 9/10 thirds [1] 7/1 ultimate [2] 125/4 tier [1] 26/7 trained [1] 1/18 unheard [1] 164/7 this [232] 129/23 time [45] 1/17 12/1 training [1] 91/1 unions [1] 52/10 thoroughly [1] 148/1 ultimately [4] 98/25 unitary [3] 26/3 26/16 13/13 18/12 20/20 transcripts [3] 18/1 those [70] 3/11 3/22 123/8 130/1 137/24 66/14 148/22 22/24 25/3 25/9 25/25 148/15 6/11 6/17 16/6 18/9 unaffected [1] 9/24 26/23 33/14 33/18 transparent [1] 49/5 university [2] 7/10 19/17 19/18 19/21 unambiguously [1] 34/8 34/25 36/1 36/8 7/18 **Treasury [3]** 13/5 20/23 21/14 28/11 128/15 36/13 48/1 48/4 50/10 13/15 30/12 unless [5] 2/23 94/7 38/15 41/24 43/24 uncertainty [1] 47/22 60/22 61/7 63/9 63/17 treated [1] 43/2 141/1 152/15 160/2 46/8 47/6 50/2 50/3 uncomfortable [1] 65/25 69/2 75/16 treatment [5] 51/7 unresolved [1] 50/8 51/6 54/2 54/10 92/2 77/15 79/9 101/9 86/6 98/6 99/7 116/9 109/16 55/3 64/16 65/12 68/8 uncover [1] 164/20 102/3 102/10 104/23 tried [1] 25/24 unsafe [2] 118/10 78/1 78/21 83/14 under [13] 38/3 true [5] 2/12 4/1 4/6 109/18 110/9 112/14 135/21 83/21 85/25 86/18 40/17 48/18 51/3 55/5 113/3 115/1 115/6 6/12 6/18 unsatisfactory [1] 88/13 89/16 89/22 55/16 62/8 69/3 119/8 119/7 124/16 125/17 truly [1] 132/3 161/19 90/11 93/25 94/22 124/16 143/8 151/25 Trust [3] 8/2 8/10 9/9 149/13 160/7 167/15 unsteadiness [1] 96/4 96/10 97/10 155/9 times [6] 43/15 67/2 truth [3] 3/22 17/16 161/23 99/22 102/1 103/24 underlies [1] 165/14 80/8 148/17 154/25 until [17] 26/21 33/14 62/6 108/17 109/5 111/3 underlying [4] 18/2 try [2] 24/9 102/17 165/4 37/17 39/5 55/10 76/2 56/5 135/12 135/14 119/15 120/7 122/23 trying [7] 31/8 34/22 tiny [1] 82/12 77/8 85/4 100/12 127/18 128/3 132/6 undermined [1] title [1] 3/18 71/17 82/7 121/18 119/25 123/17 128/14 133/4 133/9 135/2 120/2 today [3] 3/12 16/11 123/11 136/21 134/1 148/7 153/11 142/8 143/2 143/6 underneath [2] 133/6 167/3 168/11 165/15 **TSB [1]** 8/7 144/9 144/25 145/20 135/7 together [20] 25/6 Tuesday [1] 1/1 unusual [9] 72/6 underpinned [1] 22/2 146/7 149/8 149/22 25/10 26/12 53/25 turn [42] 4/9 6/22 111/21 112/1 112/5 152/10 155/3 158/7 understand [29] 54/24 54/25 55/3 9/13 9/15 16/12 19/8 112/11 112/13 113/4 10/12 14/18 15/17 167/1 71/15 71/19 93/13 24/8 35/5 37/25 48/20 113/5 143/14 33/16 36/17 38/17 though [9] 50/14 102/1 108/14 108/18 49/17 51/20 54/7 unusually [3] 1/22 57/8 61/9 65/10 65/20 56/23 63/24 64/8 112/8 127/18 127/24 54/13 54/18 62/11 1/25 113/7 136/14 136/25 139/17 92/20 93/12 96/14 128/4 133/12 145/17 63/11 65/16 65/17 unwilling [1] 70/21 155/22 167/20 102/17 116/5 121/12 145/18 75/22 85/13 95/18 up [41] 5/9 14/16 thought [18] 13/20 122/14 123/2 126/13 99/19 99/22 104/14 21/5 24/16 26/21 told [14] 26/20 60/3 19/21 19/24 28/13 127/11 134/12 136/22 64/3 69/11 77/2 78/16 108/23 109/7 111/12 33/14 35/5 39/5 45/23 31/5 41/24 43/8 48/9 138/19 141/24 142/25 82/18 84/14 90/8 90/9 117/16 123/17 123/25 47/6 48/13 49/3 49/3 65/6 67/17 80/18 144/4 153/19 159/15 94/4 101/1 101/2 129/4 133/6 134/5 49/4 50/7 50/8 55/10 102/16 121/2 125/1 165/21 162/14 135/7 137/10 144/13 65/6 65/7 69/23 71/4 127/17 148/14 149/9 understanding [15] 146/23 148/3 159/21 72/4 77/8 78/1 79/20 tomorrow [4] 2/4 152/4 38/25 52/17 57/2 3/13 167/3 168/9 159/23 163/2 85/13 92/22 99/16 threads [3] 71/15 58/15 61/21 65/2 69/4 100/15 116/2 116/24 too [2] 83/4 94/25 turned [1] 74/15 71/19 102/1 93/8 134/6 134/25 took [3] 47/6 133/25 117/11 123/25 127/13 turning [2] 85/12 141/10 143/4 148/11 threatening [1] 128/2 134/22 148/7 161/7 102/21 149/7 159/12 109/19 top [14] 13/23 24/14 turnover [1] 45/10 150/8 162/1 163/18 three [30] 5/22 18/6 understandings [1] 34/3 36/25 77/16 two [34] 1/16 1/19 164/18 19/10 19/17 19/18 83/6 77/18 79/15 87/9 1/25 3/4 5/14 7/1 update [16] 77/5 19/25 20/7 20/16 understood [22] 90/23 90/24 92/9 11/21 14/19 20/20 91/20 95/15 100/7 20/19 21/2 21/16 25/14 45/3 52/2 56/15 138/1 144/14 160/5 24/17 26/7 27/10 100/23 105/7 105/9 33/11 33/19 33/19 63/3 91/2 91/4 91/5 top-level [2] 90/23 27/25 34/8 36/5 37/23 105/13 105/20 106/7 47/21 48/1 53/10 92/16 97/22 115/25 90/24 38/4 40/19 42/23 106/8 108/2 109/13 54/10 54/21 65/18 118/6 128/18 129/17 topic [4] 9/13 24/13 65/12 74/23 85/12 115/20 120/15 126/10 94/17 108/5 139/3 132/16 141/14 141/16 45/21 98/5 90/11 107/19 107/20 updated [3] 3/9 3/19 139/12 147/9 147/19 142/2 143/5 144/3 topics [2] 24/13 111/16 114/9 120/7 4/12 156/18 157/19 157/20 149/17 166/6 54/17 142/8 145/16 145/18 updates [1] 100/20 166/20 undertaken [4] 83/16 topping [1] 166/10 155/3 158/7 168/5 **upon [22]** 15/21 16/5 three-page [1] 94/17 100/7 141/22 142/16 total [1] 120/25 two-thirds [1] 7/1 17/22 61/14 75/19 through [18] 5/11 undertakes [1] totally [5] 111/25 78/22 80/25 86/14 typically [1] 10/9 11/18 14/9 27/8 32/2

112/5 112/9 112/11

112/13

36/21 54/10 56/4

142/10

undertook [1] 161/8

86/17 86/21 88/24

94/6 105/13 107/7

various [8] 41/22 54/2 80/3 108/17 127/15 128/5 143/1 163/12 variously [1] 32/17 vast [1] 18/25 Vennells [13] 86/8 90/15 93/22 105/3

107/23 121/25 122/9 122/17 162/4 162/11 162/15 167/14 167/23 Vennells' [2] 91/16 167/19 verifiable [1] 45/8 very [70] 4/9 5/21 6/1 6/21 9/12 15/7 24/23 28/3 28/7 32/15 33/9 36/10 36/16 36/19 37/14 37/19 43/4 43/14 46/6 47/10 50/9 50/17 50/19 51/16 52/2 52/14 54/4 54/16 55/8 55/19 58/3 64/7 66/19 74/8 74/15 75/25 76/16 76/25 77/9 92/16 92/16 92/18 93/10 94/19 103/15 108/20 111/24 117/2 117/5 127/3 131/11 132/21 136/22 136/22 141/1 141/1 141/12 149/5 149/6 149/18 149/19 150/2 150/21 150/22 152/17 157/17 163/16 167/1 168/3 168/8 vi [1] 15/9 via [3] 64/6 64/15 76/24 viable [1] 162/25 Vice [1] 7/14 victim [1] 143/15 view [39] 10/14 18/11 21/22 28/22 44/21 56/6 56/13 59/2 66/10 66/22 71/6 80/14 81/4 81/13 93/22 96/17 97/15 102/2 104/7 109/12 113/10 113/16 115/14 136/6 137/1 137/18 139/21 139/23 147/20 152/21 152/22 160/8 160/11 162/14 162/22 162/25 167/18 167/21 168/1 viewing [1] 60/14 views [12] 16/1 71/19 74/22 80/13 80/16 80/17 87/2 98/25 135/24 136/15 155/1 163/19 visiting [2] 9/4 9/5 vital [1] 87/20 voices [1] 164/6

voicing [1] 112/9 volume [2] 17/10 17/13 voluntary [1] 38/19 volunteered [1] 118/5

voyage [1] 28/4

W wait [1] 4/25 want [17] 11/18 24/8 31/18 48/4 58/21 65/2 74/12 95/11 108/9 117/8 121/7 136/7 137/8 146/21 150/4 161/25 166/4 wanted [2] 75/6 144/7 wanting [1] 127/16 wants [1] 128/7 warmed [1] 69/22 warrant [3] 64/13 78/11 82/12 warranted [1] 103/3 was [371] wasn't [19] 16/17 57/12 60/24 67/6 69/17 72/13 72/22 81/12 101/10 105/2 106/6 106/11 108/6 128/2 137/7 153/19 161/14 162/24 163/1 water [3] 158/21 158/22 158/23 way [**59**] 12/4 13/9 14/20 17/6 24/21 38/17 42/23 43/4 44/22 45/3 46/7 48/18 50/1 54/14 54/23 55/7 55/11 60/14 62/1 62/25 63/14 64/24 68/2 70/23 80/22 81/24 87/12 89/22 92/11 99/12 99/13 101/25 103/15 105/14 106/24 107/16 117/15 119/8 121/4 124/16 130/14 132/19 133/1 134/2 134/3 137/15 138/16 140/10 141/7 149/16 149/24 152/16 153/23 156/3 158/3 158/24 159/11 166/12 166/14 ways [3] 49/4 62/2 147/20 we [343] we'd [2] 21/24

100/23 we'll [9] 2/22 4/24 77/12 80/21 91/2 95/13 97/21 99/17 112/17 we're [27] 3/12 7/25 11/6 27/19 42/2 49/23 51/13 55/5 61/12 69/7 70/23 93/10 101/19

101/20 108/11 108/12

108/19 115/2 121/18

123/11 130/22 130/23

131/10 134/23 159/4

165/19 166/2 we've [45] 3/2 13/18 14/11 15/13 20/20 22/5 25/24 28/8 36/22 37/3 37/5 37/15 40/4 54/24 59/21 69/1 69/12 69/12 70/25 72/5 72/23 74/13 79/9 90/8 90/9 91/1 108/22 112/6 113/19 116/1 130/7 130/18 136/5 136/25 144/14 145/15 145/24 151/22 155/25 158/20 158/24 159/3 159/3 165/4 165/15 weak [1] 60/13 wearing [2] 84/20 84/23 week [1] 125/7 well [49] 1/20 3/16 19/2 26/15 27/9 27/21 27/24 30/15 36/19 41/4 44/6 45/24 52/2 53/22 65/7 67/16 69/6 which [232] 69/10 72/11 80/22 90/8 92/16 95/13 97/21 101/4 102/9 102/17 110/22 111/7 114/1 119/7 128/11 129/21 130/5 132/18 132/21 141/21 146/10 48/22 48/25 49/10 151/20 152/6 158/1 162/8 165/1 166/7 166/10 went [4] 63/16 94/17 132/13 160/21 were [192] weren't [7] 57/11 60/21 60/22 67/3 69/11 80/15 146/11 what [180] what's [14] 13/9 33/16 42/21 51/21 68/10 69/6 72/16 106/8 107/12 138/18 146/2 146/8 165/22 167/24 whatever [2] 90/6 99/4 whatsoever [1] 131/11 when [39] 2/2 2/3 22/9 24/23 30/1 32/16 163/1 42/7 43/15 57/22 59/12 62/9 66/7 71/19 wholly [2] 11/5 74/14 77/3 78/14 80/20 82/17 82/18 84/10 92/2 95/10 100/18 102/3 104/3 104/25 105/1 105/12

108/17 119/2 121/15

124/7 125/17 125/22

138/5 140/16 142/24

147/15 168/5 where [46] 2/7 22/3 22/21 23/15 26/6 29/4 29/15 32/23 37/9 43/7 45/20 51/19 70/15 78/24 80/9 83/20 88/9 91/17 92/5 92/8 94/19 96/25 104/15 107/9 107/11 112/25 119/14 120/16 121/23 125/14 126/25 129/2 132/13 133/15 134/18 146/10 149/6 149/21 151/17 152/9 155/4 158/16 160/17 162/2 165/24 166/21 whereas [1] 167/22 whether [16] 2/12 49/15 61/3 97/8 108/5 113/7 120/20 120/21 122/5 132/2 141/8 142/18 143/17 151/25 154/3 154/14 while [2] 16/11 21/5 86/9 86/13 87/1 88/23 whilst [7] 11/8 37/10 87/19 90/3 92/21 125/19 157/9 whistleblowers [2] 49/14 51/6 whistleblowing [9] 49/12 49/20 49/25 50/14 51/18 63/21 who [47] 19/2 24/25 25/1 31/9 31/12 38/9 38/16 49/3 50/8 52/4 52/19 55/21 58/7 63/9 68/4 71/24 72/2 72/12 80/2 84/20 97/5 98/23 98/23 112/12 114/15 115/9 115/10 115/12 115/24 115/24 116/2 119/20 125/3 127/6 127/8 127/9 132/13 132/17 141/23 149/5 149/7 150/11 150/22 157/3 158/9 159/8 164/13 whole [9] 39/10 44/7 49/24 52/11 62/1 62/2 72/25 73/6 92/20 wholehearted [1] wholesome [1] 163/1

(71) upon... - why

122/18

whom [8] 31/9 36/15 38/7 38/10 38/15 149/8 160/14 160/25 whose [1] 33/7 why [20] 19/18 28/20 29/7 31/10 40/13 48/23 62/16 68/23

W
why [12] 81/8
81/18 81/21 92/16
96/10 98/4 98/7 102/9 106/18 106/24 155/9
156/5
wider [4] 20/8 56/21
114/17 116/23 will [30] 1/18 2/10
2/12 2/15 2/17 2/19
14/8 22/11 26/7 26/14
36/20 37/24 38/16
41/3 43/7 49/5 71/9 108/13 119/13 119/16
120/10 120/22 127/1
135/4 138/3 147/6
150/13 153/10 167/4
167/21 <b>Williams [1]</b> 119/4
willing [1] 70/23
window [1] 139/19
wise [2] 47/1 47/20
wish [10] 19/22 41/25 49/3 50/8 94/6
100/11 100/25 133/9
135/22 138/6
wished [2] 96/6 144/11
wishes [2] 2/24 90/6
within [28] 16/22
42/2 43/5 61/21 85/20
86/19 87/13 89/18 92/8 102/12 102/21
103/15 109/2 111/4
116/14 116/22 117/7
123/5 123/10 123/12
129/22 133/24 134/20 135/18 146/4 149/21
158/25 160/24
without [9] 46/4 49/4
63/16 104/9 112/9
114/2 134/13 135/17 144/25
witness [17] 1/17
1/25 3/1 3/21 18/1
66/14 118/16 119/6 119/11 119/12 119/17
127/10 135/21 137/4
146/22 148/22 168/4
witnesses [6] 1/19
1/25 2/2 2/7 2/8 3/3 <b>Wolstenholme [17]</b>
19/11 55/21 57/24
59/10 60/16 62/8
62/10 62/12 62/17
64/8 65/19 66/8 71/14 71/16 71/20 75/12
139/13
Wolstenholme's [5]
55/1 56/16 56/22 65/25 147/15
woman [2] 29/3
148/24

won't [1] 154/9 wondered [1] 27/2 wonderful [1] 128/1 word [8] 5/23 5/23 6/3 27/5 27/22 49/19 51/23 166/22 words [9] 5/11 5/16 5/17 6/3 51/7 51/23 105/8 133/22 164/23 work [24] 2/22 19/23 25/4 31/18 36/19 54/24 76/25 89/10 89/10 89/11 89/12 100/5 100/7 110/11 113/21 125/9 131/4 138/18 145/17 145/18 147/7 153/4 153/22 156/3 worked [1] 159/20 workers [2] 50/19 50/20 working [8] 150/21 151/8 151/10 153/13 154/18 154/22 157/18 yeah [8] 13/12 26/25 164/5 works [6] 11/19 12/5 12/23 14/7 37/3 153/24 world [1] 31/23 worse [1] 167/22 would [126] 11/23 19/22 22/22 23/7 25/24 29/7 31/23 37/6 40/3 41/16 44/7 47/1 47/20 52/1 52/19 57/13 57/24 65/6 66/25 68/13 69/24 71/4 72/9 72/10 75/16 83/17 83/21 84/17 86/7 86/12 86/15 86/17 86/25 87/1 87/11 87/14 88/8 88/24 89/20 89/24 94/24 95/2 96/1 96/5 96/10 97/22 97/23 97/23 97/25 98/17 98/20 98/24 98/25 99/1 100/1 100/2 101/22 102/9 103/20 104/6 108/21 110/5 110/16 111/8 111/10 115/9 115/15 116/14 117/5 118/12 118/14 120/24 122/3 122/5 122/24 122/24 123/3 123/5 124/25 127/22 127/22 127/23 127/24 128/1 129/12 129/25 130/15 130/25 131/1 132/17 132/24 133/3 yesterday [3] 3/11 133/11 140/9 141/9 yet [10] 56/19 80/12 141/13 141/14 142/6 142/17 143/3 143/8

143/22 143/24 144/1

144/1 144/3 144/7 144/10 144/11 147/8 152/17 153/12 153/15 166/4 164/25 166/2 167/5 167/18 wouldn't [3] 40/1 107/6 123/4 write [1] 103/22 written [8] 7/6 17/10 17/17 103/23 112/25 118/20 119/2 120/16 wrong [2] 84/11 130/19 wrongdoing [2] 133/15 155/17 wrongful [2] 116/1 165/11 **Wyn [1]** 50/5 51/12 88/18 100/17 100/17 102/6 104/13 year [9] 13/5 33/15 34/11 34/16 36/1 49/21 100/19 154/21 154/24 **years [7]** 1/16 7/16 8/24 25/13 25/23 134/1 140/17 yes [87] 4/20 7/3 8/10 16/12 16/12 16/17 13/17 14/2 14/15 17/14 20/22 31/2 31/6 32/23 33/13 37/18 40/15 40/20 40/22 41/1 44/4 46/16 46/16 46/19 48/15 48/17 50/17 51/9 52/1 53/5 59/7 60/9 61/8 67/25 70/13 70/17 71/21 74/2 74/5 74/24 75/6 76/3 76/8 78/24 81/2 81/7 81/14 81/17 82/6 85/14 85/18 93/22 84/9 85/5 88/19 96/20 98/8 98/10 98/14

98/16 99/19 101/8

101/15 104/20 105/7

121/8 129/13 140/7

140/25 141/1 141/16

145/3 152/21 156/14

156/17 157/22 162/6

164/25 165/1 165/2

81/15 90/9 93/13

93/14 112/16 145/5

3/20 4/12

you [583] 147/21 149/15 151/15 you'd [3] 83/19 94/8 153/20 160/10 161/10 you'll [8] 3/18 4/11 163/12 163/17 164/24 5/1 13/17 15/9 133/19 151/8 167/15 vou're [34] 7/18 12/18 13/24 14/16 14/18 15/17 15/18 19/4 22/10 27/18 28/2 29/21 34/7 48/5 65/2 70/21 87/5 97/4 99/6 100/18 105/16 111/16 124/1 127/16 128/19 129/10 131/2 131/16 132/22 134/21 139/2 143/25 158/17 161/20 you've [23] 3/4 8/1 16/12 20/23 23/12 35/14 35/16 42/5 51/5 59/18 60/6 69/19 69/19 69/22 69/22 73/9 108/25 109/10 118/14 131/12 140/14 162/4 162/15 your [111] 1/10 2/11 2/15 3/24 4/2 4/4 4/7 6/8 6/12 6/15 6/18 6/22 7/1 7/20 8/21 9/14 9/15 9/17 10/14 10/23 15/8 15/18 15/20 15/21 16/1 17/24 17/25 19/9 20/4 20/10 20/23 21/15 21/16 21/17 21/22 31/24 33/10 33/15 33/25 35/3 38/1 38/5 47/18 51/3 51/25 54/9 55/9 56/4 56/8 56/13 53/7 53/16 55/17 59/6 59/1 61/2 63/11 64/16 66/6 66/10 69/22 69/23 69/25 71/13 71/18 74/22 76/2 79/18 81/1 81/10 95/20 96/17 96/17 99/21 102/2 102/25 104/21 106/15 107/10 109/7 109/12 111/15 105/19 110/22 114/12 114/6 119/21 124/4 127/2 129/7 133/7 140/18 140/21 140/24 134/6 135/9 137/10 137/13 139/1 142/11 142/14 143/10 143/12 144/12 144/18 145/2 147/1 148/6 148/20 150/7 152/4 154/13 155/3 156/9 156/20 159/23 162/5 163/4 yourself [1] 18/6

149/19 159/9