

Liaison Committee

Oral evidence: The Prime Minister, HC 833

Tuesday 20 December 2016

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Members present: Mr Andrew Tyrie (Chair); Hilary Benn; Mr Clive Betts; Crispin Blunt; Andrew Bridgen; Sir William Cash; Yvette Cooper; Meg Hillier; Mr Bernard Jenkin; Dr Julian Lewis; Stephen Metcalfe; Mr Laurence Robertson; Dame Rosie Winterton; Pete Wishart; Dr Sarah Wollaston; Mr Iain Wright.

Questions 1-129

Witness

[\[1\]](#): Rt Hon Mrs Theresa May

Examination of witness

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Q1 **Chair:** Prime Minister, thank you very much for coming to give evidence to us this afternoon. We are very grateful, and I think Parliament is also very grateful, that you are agreeing to do these sessions. Could I just have confirmation that you are going to continue the practice of your predecessor of three a year?

Mrs May: Yes, indeed, Chairman. I am happy to do three attendances at this Committee a year.

Q2 **Chair:** Logically, bearing in mind the very big events likely to take place at the end of March, it might be sensible to push scrutiny of the triggering, or proposed triggering, of article 50, and any accompanying Government documents, to after the spring recess. Then we will have two meetings: one right at the beginning and one towards the end of the summer session.

Mrs May: That may very well be sensible, Chairman. I suggest that perhaps the Clerk and my office will be able to talk about possible dates. Obviously the Committee will have a view as to when they wish to do it.

Chair: It would seem logical.

Mrs May: It is going to be quite busy in the run-up to the end of March.

Q3 **Chair:** Yes. I don't think it is going to be realistic or practical for either of us, so I think that will be a more sensible arrangement. I think we will go ahead on that basis. You indicated beforehand that you had one or two introductory remarks that you wanted to make. Why don't you make those now, Prime Minister?

Mrs May: Thank you very much, Chairman. I just wanted to make a few remarks that I hoped would be helpful to the Committee. Before I do that, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the appalling news that came in from Berlin and Ankara yesterday. We have seen very vivid images in our newspapers and on television, and I think they have shocked us all. I want to express our condolences—the condolences of all of us, I am sure—to those who mourn and all those who have been affected. We hold them in our thoughts today.

I thought it would be helpful to set out a little bit of what we have been doing in the months since the referendum, preparing for the negotiations on Brexit. First of all, obviously, we have been putting the machinery of Government in place. One of my first acts was to establish two new Departments: the Department for Exiting the European Union and the Department for International Trade. This puts in place the mechanisms necessary to marshal the important work that needs to be done to make sure that our departure is as smooth and orderly as possible. But we are taking a whole-of-Government approach to the issue, and there are experts in all Departments working on policies that will be affected by our withdrawal. The machinery is working well, and I would like to thank

everyone involved for stepping up so quickly, which they had to do, once the result was announced.

We have obviously also been engaged with other interested parties, including business and representatives from the devolved Administrations. DExEU Ministers have met more than 130 companies from every sector of the British economy since July. They have hosted 10 round tables with representatives from different sectors and joined 12 more round the country. They have met all the major business organisations and visited all parts of the UK to hear about particular concerns. I have also personally met a range of business leaders from a broad range of sectors and have been leading on our engagement with the devolved Administrations.

As we approach the negotiations to come, as the United Kingdom, we want to have a truly joined-up approach. I have also been able to meet or speak to the vast majority of European leaders on a bilateral basis and those discussions have been positive and constructive. Throughout this process, as you know, Chairman, I have been clear that I will not give a running commentary on our approach to the negotiations, because it is not the way to get the right deal for Britain.

Q4 **Chair:** Except, perhaps, before the Liaison Committee.

Mrs May: Negotiations are negotiations, and if one wants to get the right deal, one can't give a running commentary to everybody, but I expect some searching questions from the Liaison Committee.

Chair: We will do our best.

Mrs May: Seriously, the negotiations will be challenging. As with any international negotiation, they will require some give and take, but where possible I have sought to give reassurance to those who have legitimate concerns about the process ahead. As I have said, we will get the best deal for those who want to trade in goods and services with the European single market, while guaranteeing that we will make our own decisions over how we control immigration, over our laws, ending the jurisdiction of the ECJ, and over the way we spend taxpayers' money.

Although we are leaving the EU, we are not leaving Europe, and I want us to have the kind of mature, co-operative relationship that close friends and allies enjoy, and I fully expect us to continue to work alongside each other on issues such as crime and security, where co-operation helps to keep us safe.

As you alluded to in your opening remarks, Chairman, I said the Government would trigger article 50 before the end of March next year. We will meet that timetable and don't intend to extend the article 50 process. We have also said we will publish more information about our approach before article 50 is triggered. I will be making a speech early in the new year setting out more about our approach and about the opportunity I think we have as a country to use this process to forge a truly global Britain that embraces and trades with countries across the world.

One last word: it is important that we understand the wider meaning of the referendum result and respond accordingly. It wasn't just a vote to leave the EU but to change the way the country works and the people for whom it works, forever. That is why my Government have also embarked on an ambitious programme of economic and social reform to ensure wealth and opportunity are spread across the country and everyone is able to share in the success we will make of leaving the EU.

These reforms are an essential part of our plan for post-Brexit Britain, and I look forward to going into more detail about those early in the new year.

Q5 Chair: Thank you. It is the detail we will be looking for this afternoon, I am sure. We will begin on one point you made. You said you don't intend to extend the article 50 process. Do I take it from that that it is the Government's firm intention to have left the EU by April 2019? Should we take that to mean that the great repeal Act will have come into effect, and that, by April 2019, the direct applicability of EU law and ECJ rulings will no longer pertain in UK courts?

Mrs May: Chairman, obviously, as you know, the timetable I have set out is that we will trigger article 50 by the end of March next year. The treaty, under article 50, gives a two-year process for that discussion about withdrawal and the framework of the future relationship to be undertaken. That would take us through, as you have indicated, to March 2019. I fully expect us to be able to operate on the timetable that has been set out in the treaty. Obviously, that is a matter for the negotiations, but I fully expect us to be able to operate—and, in fact, the Commission has indicated a shorter period.

Q6 Chair: I heard a no in all that, so it may be the case that EU law continues to apply in the UK. Or have I misunderstood?

Mrs May: Sorry, no. If I may answer that specific point, the intention is to introduce the great repeal Bill next year—in the next Session—so that it will be in place and come into operation at the point at which we leave the EU.

Q7 Chair: It will definitely do so?

Mrs May: It will, yes; well, that is the intention, but of course the nature of legislation is a matter for parliamentary debate. The intention will be a repeal Bill that will come into effect at the point at which we leave the European Union. At that point, EU law will be brought into domestic law in the UK. That is important because it gives people a certainty, at the point at which we leave the EU, as to how EU law is operating—so workers' rights remain protected, and so forth.

Q8 Chair: I understand. I just want to clarify one very straightforward point. By "leaving", do you mean what is commonly understood by leaving, which is that EU law will no longer apply directly, and therefore be justiciable, in UK courts?

Mrs May: When we are outside the European Union, we will be determining our laws; it will be British courts determining our laws.

Q9 **Chair:** And that will be completed in April 2019. Is that what you are telling us?

Mrs May: I fully expect to be able to meet the timetable that has been set out, in terms of determination of the deal.

Q10 **Chair:** Just one further point, therefore, of clarification. Article 50 provides for a country to leave more than two years after it is triggered, as part of the withdrawal agreement. Do I take it from the answers I have just had that you are not seeking a withdrawal agreement that will lead you beyond the two-year period?

Mrs May: We are not seeking to extend the article 50 period beyond the two years. In fact, the European Commission has indicated that it considers that the negotiations may be completed before two years, but we are not seeking to say, "We want the negotiation process to be extended beyond the two years". I fully expect to be able to undertake a deal within that time.

Q11 **Chair:** Right, and that deal will not contain anything that could leave EU law directly applicable in the UK.

Mrs May: When people voted, they wanted us to be able to take control of our laws. When we are no longer a member of the European Union, laws will be determined here in the United Kingdom and will be subject to British courts.

Q12 **Chair:** I am trying to get clarity that the part of article 50 that provides scope for negotiation of flexibility on the operative part of leaving is not going to be exercised—that it is not the intention of the Government to try to make use of that flexibility.

Mrs May: As you say, article 50 allows that if there is an agreement that the period for negotiation of the withdrawal and the relationship with the European Union is extended—an agreement among the 27, but agreed with the member state concerned, which in this case is the UK—then the treaty allows for that period to be extended. We are not setting out to extend that period. We are setting out to negotiate this within the two-year timeframe.

Q13 **Hilary Benn:** Good afternoon, Prime Minister. This week marks six months since the referendum, and there are just over three months to go until the triggering of article 50. Can you tell us when the Government's plan will be published? You referred to a speech that you will give next month, but when will the plan be published?

Mrs May: As I have indicated, I will make a speech early in the new year that will set out more of our approach. Before we trigger article 50, we will be setting out, as I have indicated, more details of our approach. I have not set a date for when the plan is going to be published, but you will hear more about our approach when I speak in the new year.

Q14 **Hilary Benn:** Can you give the Committee an assurance that the plan, when it does appear, will be published in time for Parliament to scrutinise it before article 50 is triggered, and that there will be sufficient time for us to do our job of looking at it?

Mrs May: As I have said on many occasions, Parliament need have no concerns about having an opportunity to comment on all these matters. I fully expect Parliament to have proper opportunity to be able to look at these matters before we trigger article 50.

Q15 **Hilary Benn:** So what, in your view, would be a reasonable period of time for Parliament to see the plan in advance of the triggering of article 50? That is another way of asking when you are going to publish it.

Mrs May: It is another way of asking when I am going to publish the plan, and I still do not have a date for that. It is not for me to set out a period of time that I think is appropriate for parliamentarians. We will ensure that Parliament has an opportunity to look at these issues. Of course, we have to factor into this timetable the question of the Supreme Court judgment. We don't yet know what the judgment will be. If they find in favour of the Government, that leads us to one course of action; if they find against the Government, obviously there will be a need to respond to the Supreme Court judgment.

Q16 **Hilary Benn:** Is it your intention to ensure that Parliament has a vote on the final deal once it has been negotiated?

Mrs May: Parliament is going to have every opportunity, through the great repeal Bill, to vote on the various aspects of the relationship we will be having with the European Union.

Q17 **Hilary Benn:** That wasn't quite the question. The question is: when the final deal is negotiated with the 27, is it your intention to ensure that Parliament has a chance to vote on the deal—yes or no?

Mrs May: It is my intention to ensure that Parliament has ample opportunity to comment on and discuss the aspects of the arrangements that we are putting in place. We will be going through the negotiations, and the timetable is not clear at this point in time. I have indicated my expectation of the timetable for negotiating the deal, but obviously it isn't clear. This is going to take two parties—the European Union and the UK—to go through that process of negotiation, but we will be ensuring that, as we go through it, we give clarity when we are able to do so.

Q18 **Hilary Benn:** I'm not quite sure I understand why it is so difficult to answer the question on whether or not Parliament will have a vote. Given that we know the European Parliament will have a vote on the deal, why can't you say that the British Parliament will also have a vote?

Mrs May: What I'm saying is that, of course, there will be an opportunity for Parliament to consider, as we go through and as more details become available, how this is going to operate. There is a question about the timetable in relation to the agreement of the deal and how that timetable will operate in relation to the European Parliament. I am also clear about ensuring that, when we come to the point, we deliver on the vote of the British people to leave the European Union.

Q19 **Hilary Benn:** Talking about the timetable, Michel Barnier, as you know, said that he expects the negotiations to be completed by October 2018 in

order to provide for scrutiny of what has been agreed. Do you expect what are both complex negotiations about the divorce arrangements and a negotiation of a new agreement on market access and trade to be done sequentially or in parallel?

Mrs May: I am working on the basis that we will look to negotiate those in parallel, which makes sense. It is also what is implied by article 50 and by the treaty itself, which makes it clear that you have to know the framework of the future relationship before you can finalise the deal for withdrawal. Of course, at the point at which we exit the European Union, we will need to know what our new relationship with the European Union is.

Q20 **Hilary Benn:** Do I take it from that that you are wholly confident that it will be possible to negotiate both parts within the time available, which could be as little as 18 months?

Mrs May: It could be as little as 18 months. You indicated that Michel Barnier has referenced that, and you referred to it as being in relation to the need for the European Parliament to have a process of ratification. European leaders also have a concern in relation to the European Parliament elections that are taking place in 2019, and a concern, from their point of view, to ensure that the arrangements about the UK's relationship are clear before a decision has to be taken about UK candidates in the European parliamentary elections.

Q21 **Hilary Benn:** Are you confident that 27 member states think it is possible to negotiate a new trade and market access deal in 18 months, given that Sir Ivan Rogers is reported to have advised Ministers—this is not his view, but the view he picks up from discussions he has had with the 27—that it could take up to 10 years to agree a new trade deal?

Mrs May: I have noted, when I have been talking to individual leaders, the willingness from everybody to ensure that we can undertake this as smoothly and in as orderly a fashion as possible, and a recognition from everybody that we want to get this arrangement in place, so that people can move on to the new relationship that they will have with the United Kingdom. I think there is a willingness there to undertake this on that basis.

Q22 **Hilary Benn:** Can you confirm that it is the Government's intention to seek transitional arrangements of some sort to cover the period from the negotiation of the final deal to its full implementation, in order to give certainty to business and avoid the cliff edge that you were asked about at the CBI?

Mrs May: If I may, I will answer in this way, because when people talk about transition, often different people mean different things. Some people will talk about transition as a deliberate way of putting off actually leaving the European Union. For others, transition is an expectation that you can't get the deal in two years, and therefore you have got to have a further period to do it. If you think about the process that we will go through, once we have the deal and the new arrangements, there will of course be a necessity for adjustment to those new arrangements, for implementation of some practical changes that may need to take place in relation to that.

That is what business has been commenting on and arguing for when, as you say, they use the phrase about not having a cliff edge. They don't want to wake up one morning, having had a deal agreed the night before, and suddenly discover that they have to do everything in a different way. There is a practical aspect of how you ensure that people are able to adjust to the new relationship, which is not about trying to delay the point at which we leave and is not about trying to extend the period of negotiation.

Q23 Hilary Benn: Can you confirm that a decision has not yet been taken by the Government about whether we will remain in or leave the customs union? If that is the case, do we not have to stay in the customs union in order to honour the commitments that were given to Nissan about seeking a situation in which they can continue to trade without tariffs and bureaucratic impediments?

Mrs May: First of all, on the customs union itself, as I have said in the Chamber of the House, this is not a binary decision. There are a number of different aspects to the customs union, and there are a number of different relationships that already exist in relation to the customs union, so this is more complex than simply saying: "Are you in or are you out of the customs union?" The way I approach this, and the way the Government are approaching this and other issues, is to ask what outcomes we want to achieve and therefore how we reach those outcomes, rather than assuming only one means to an end, or only one process to an end.

As regards the very welcome decision to invest further in Sunderland that was made by Nissan, we have been very clear that we want the best possible deal for trading with and operating within the single European market. That is what I have been saying publicly and what we have been saying to companies, and also that we want to ensure the competitiveness of the British economy. I think Nissan's decision to invest and to bring the new models to be manufactured in Sunderland is a huge vote of confidence in the Sunderland workforce. This is the most productive car plant in Europe.

Q24 Chair: Can I just take you back to one answer you gave, which sounded quite favourable to the proposals being put forward by business, and particularly by the financial community, for some kind of standstill to the full application of departure in April 2019, on the grounds that they don't want to be faced, as you put it, with a cliff edge? Do I take it that the Government will try to negotiate a standstill, or transitional arrangement of that type, to give time for business and the financial community to adjust?

Mrs May: I wouldn't use the word "standstill."

Q25 Chair: That's the word that many of them use in their lobbying.

Mrs May: As I've said, at the point at which we leave the European Union and at the point at which the relationship that is going to exist is clear, there may very well be practical issues that have to be addressed.

Q26 Chair: I know; that was your last answer, but I am asking you something

slightly different, which is: are you going to try and negotiate it?

Mrs May: I was about to come on to that, Chairman, if you'd just allow me to explain. I want to make sure that there is a full understanding of what I was saying, in terms of the practicalities of this issue—people who may need to adjust IT systems, and other simple, practical matters like that. Of course, that won't just be for us here in the UK; it will also be for businesses and others operating within the European Union.

Chair: I understand that.

Mrs May: As part of the negotiations that we will be entering, I think there will need to be a discussion about how those practicalities can be dealt with.

Q27 **Chair:** Is that a priority for your negotiation—to try and seek an adjustment period after the date of application of Brexit?

Mrs May: I think it's a matter of practicality that we need to discuss with the European Union.

Q28 **Chair:** Can I have another go? Is it a priority for you?

Mrs May: I've set out one priority area that I think we should be making early decisions on in the negotiations, and that is in relation to EU citizens living here and UK citizens living in the rest of Europe.

Chair: You are going to add this one as well.

Mrs May: As part of the negotiations, we will have to address this question of the practicalities of adjustment to the new relationship once that new relationship has been agreed. When that takes place will of course depend partly on when the deal is agreed. That is why you can't say immediately now, "There is going to be such a period at this point."

Q29 **Chair:** Was that a yes to priority or a no? Is it a priority? We have to sit down and start negotiating pretty quickly.

Mrs May: We've got to sit down and start negotiating, and when we start negotiating we will be considering what the issues are, and how those negotiations will be taking place. This will be one of the issues that will be on the table. I'm well aware, Chairman, of the views and concerns that businesses have to make sure that they have that ability to have a period of practical adjustment.

Q30 **Sir William Cash:** Good afternoon, Prime Minister. When you opened, you referred to a joined-up approach. My European Scrutiny Committee has called on our ambassador to the EU, Sir Ivan Rogers, to see us shortly. He made some pretty controversial remarks the other day. Complementary to these activities across the board in COREPER and UKRep—United Kingdom permanent representatives—there is also this question of the co-ordination with the Cabinet Office, which also has to deal with my Committee. Do you have in No. 10 a fully specialised unit with specialists who deal equally with the negotiating instruments regarding political, economic and trade policies? Do they meet you personally in No. 10? Do they do so on a regular footing? If they don't, do

you think that it ought to happen?

Mrs May: I have set up a unit in No. 10 of people with expertise in European matters who are working with DExEU and other Departments on both issues relating to Brexit and particular decisions that we have to look at, as a member of the EU, as we go forward. They do see me, and I do meet with them regularly.

Q31 **Sir William Cash:** What assessment have you made with regard to the trade-off between your red lines—no EU law primacy, no ECJ adjudication and control of borders—and those aspects of our relationship with the European Union that you want to maintain?

Mrs May: I don't look at these things in terms of trade-offs between these issues in quite the way that is sometimes portrayed. I think that what is important is that when we look at this negotiation, we take the view not that, "We are currently members of the EU; we are going to leave, but how can we kind of keep bits of membership?" Actually, what we need to say is, "We are currently members of the EU. We are going to leave the European Union, and we need to negotiate a new relationship with the European Union". So the question is: what do we wish that relationship with the EU to be? I think that this is very important, in terms of how we approach this. It isn't, as I say, about trying to replicate bits of membership; it is about saying, "What is our new relationship?" and I am ambitious for what that relationship can be.

Q32 **Sir William Cash:** And you are entirely satisfied that at the end of this process, not only will we have repealed the European Union legislation but, in addition to that, it will be absolutely clear that all legislation from that moment onwards will be within the jurisdiction of Westminster and not the EU?

Mrs May: We will have repealed the European Communities Act—that is part of what the great repeal Bill will be about—and from the point at which we have left the European Union, it will be the British Parliament and British courts that decide our legislation.

Q33 **Sir William Cash:** Finally, as you will appreciate, there are many people who want us to move quickly in relation to all these matters. I appreciate that there is a timing issue, but do you not want to get on with this as quickly as possible, because the certainty that comes from that is what a great deal of the business community and other people in our civil society want—to reflect the outcome of the referendum as soon as possible?

Mrs May: I think it's right that people want to reflect the outcome of the referendum as soon as possible, but it is also right that the Government need to ensure that we take the time to prepare properly for the negotiations. That's why I said at a very early stage—actually before I become Prime Minister—that we shouldn't trigger article 50 until the end of this year. I then looked at the timetable—obviously, in Government, we looked at the timetable—and the triggering was a balance between giving us sufficient time to have made those preparations, and actually giving the 27 time to prepare for their side of the negotiations, but also recognising that the British public want us to get on with it.

Sir William Cash: Thank you very much.

Q34 **Pete Wishart:** Good afternoon, Prime Minister. I am sure you have been paying great attention this morning to the Scottish Government's paper on Scotland's place in Europe, which is about their view on what Scotland's relationship with Europe should look like. You said that you would listen very carefully to any differential arrangement for Scotland, and I think there is great encouragement in just how warmly you responded on this. Do you believe that Scotland, as a nation that voted overwhelmingly to remain within the European Union, should have its views respected?

Mrs May: First of all, the First Minister very courteously called me yesterday to tell me about the paper that was coming out. Obviously, I have not had an opportunity to look at the paper in detail yet, but I welcome the contribution to the debate. We have been encouraging the devolved Administrations to identify their particular concerns and priorities so that we can take that forward as part of the discussions we are having to ensure that we have a full UK view as we go into the negotiations. Obviously, I would expect the Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Assembly to come forward with the particular concerns that they have, and we will be able to discuss these within the JMC structures that we have.

Q35 **Pete Wishart:** Do you believe that differential arrangements are probably going to be necessary across business? We have seen the talk about the deal with Nissan, and we have seen differential arrangements being suggested for Northern Ireland—the border arrangements with Ireland. Do you think that is going to be a feature of a total UK Brexit approach? Will there be differential arrangements across business sectors and across the nations of the UK?

Mrs May: What we will be negotiating is a United Kingdom approach and a United Kingdom relationship with the European Union. I think you have assumed an acceptance of differential relationships that I don't think it is right to accept. When I became Prime Minister and first met the First Minister, I said that we would look very seriously at any proposals that came forward from the devolved Administrations, but there may be proposals that are impractical.

In terms of Northern Ireland, one of the key issues, obviously, is the question of the border, because it will be the one part of the UK with a land border with a country remaining in the European Union. A lot of work is being done as to how we can ensure that the arrangement for the movement of goods and people across that border is not a return to the hard borders of the past.

Q36 **Pete Wishart:** There has been lots of talk about a possible new devolution of powers to Scotland following Brexit. Is it your view that there will be further devolution of powers? I think the ones that have emerged are agriculture and fisheries. Does this then require a re-look at the devolution settlement for Scotland?

Mrs May: We will be discussing—we will obviously have discussions on this within the JMC environment—how the arrangements will work where we

have to take what is a framework currently set out in Brussels into the United Kingdom and recognise the different interests of the devolved Administrations and the different devolution deals that are currently in place.

Q37 **Pete Wishart:** Lastly on this, do you think Scotland would be entitled to hold another independence referendum if the Government refused to accommodate a differential arrangement for Scotland that would seem to be in Scotland's EU interests?

Mrs May: First of all, I would say that I do not think there is a need or reason for the Scottish Government to hold another independence referendum. I think the Scottish people gave their view in the referendum in 2014. But I would go further than that and make this point—and I understand that this is one of the points in the paper that the Scottish Government have produced on Brexit—if Scotland were to become independent, then not only would it no longer be a member of the European Union, it would no longer be a member of the single market of the European Union and it would no longer be a member of the single market of the United Kingdom, and the single market of the United Kingdom is worth four times as much to Scotland as the single market of the European Union.

Q38 **Pete Wishart:** Lastly from me, is the whole idea and the thing that is most informing the UK's Brexit decisions and strategy, is it immigration that is at the very heart of all this? Does immigration take precedence over all other approaches to, for instance, the single market and the customs union? If it is not immigration that is at the top of the list, where does immigration fit in to the hierarchy of the things the Government consider to be important about leaving the European Union?

Mrs May: As I indicated in response to Sir William's question, I do not see these things as trade-offs between these issues. I think there was a very clear message in the vote on 23 June, that people wanted us to take control of our borders and control of immigration from the EU, as well as from countries outside the European Union. What we also want to ensure is we get the best possible trading deal, operating within and trading with the single European market. We also want to ensure that we are able to continue to co-operate on matters that are relevant to our security and on crime issues. All these issues will be part of the negotiation that will take place.

Q39 **Mr Robertson:** Thank you for joining us, Prime Minister. You very briefly touched on the position with regards to Northern Ireland. There is obviously a very special relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland and particularly between Northern Ireland and the Republic. Is it Her Majesty's Government's position that that special relationship should continue?

Mrs May: We don't want to see a return to the borders of the past. The common travel area, which, as you know, covers the movement of people, has been in place since 1923 and continues to be in place. We are working very hard with the Government of the Republic of Ireland to ensure that

we can find a solution moving forward that, as I say, does not involve a return to the borders of the past.

Q40 **Mr Robertson:** Yes, Her Majesty's Government take that view, it seems the Irish Government do and it seems that, unusually, in Northern Ireland, pretty well every politician there takes the view that that should be the case. The problem is that there is another negotiating body involved here called the European Union. Have you any indication so far of what attitude they will take towards that aspiration?

Mrs May: The indications so far have been that, actually, other member states are very well aware of the sensitivity of the issue in relation to the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and want to see a solution that works for both sides of that border.

Q41 **Mr Robertson:** So they will probably be prepared to vary the rules they set about a hard border at the edge of the European Union in the same way as they vary the rules with regard to Schengen, for example. Not all countries in the European Union are in Schengen, so there is a degree of flexibility there. Do you expect that will continue?

Mrs May: There's a question as to the extent to which there needs to be a differential arrangement in relation to the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland or whether, actually, it is possible to come to an arrangement that is not a return to the borders of the past but reflects the wider relationship the UK will have. A number of discussions are taking place in the EU at the moment about the external border and what arrangements they will have on that external border, which will involve countries in various formations depending, primarily, on whether they are in Schengen or not.

Q42 **Mr Robertson:** With regards to the rights of Irish citizens in the United Kingdom, they have obviously changed over the years, but do you envisage after Brexit that citizens of the Republic of Ireland will, if they want to come to the United Kingdom, remain in the United Kingdom? At the moment, as you know, they have the same opportunities as members of the Commonwealth. Do you think that arrangement will continue?

Mrs May: The issue of the rights of citizens from the Republic of Ireland, as you say, is on a different long-standing historical basis from other members of the European Union. Obviously, I have been clear that I want, at an early stage, to look at how we deal with these issues of people from other countries within the EU who are living in the UK, in order to be able to give people reassurance.

Q43 **Mr Robertson:** It should really be up to us, once we have left the EU, how we treat citizens of the Irish Republic, shouldn't it?

Mrs May: I've been clear in relation to EU citizens as a whole that I want to ensure that we also see UK citizens living elsewhere being treated on a reciprocal basis.

Q44 **Mr Robertson:** You have indicated that, as we move forward, it is a deal for the United Kingdom. That presumably means that you would not accept

any sorts of customs or passport checks between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, as some have suggested would be necessary.

Mrs May: No, we want to ensure that we have the right arrangement between the border of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. That is where the focus needs to be.

Q45 **Mr Robertson:** As we go forward, how do you see the relationship between the United Kingdom and Ireland developing after Brexit? Do you think because of geography, trade and friendship that the Republic of Ireland might gravitate more towards the UK than the EU?

Mrs May: That is not for me to say; that's for the Government of the Republic of Ireland to say. What I will say—and I hope that everybody would accept and agree—is that it has been very welcome to see the growing relationship between the UK and the Republic of Ireland in recent years, and I want to see that continuing.

Q46 **Mr Robertson:** Could I just ask about the devolved Administrations? They have the ability to make laws themselves. How would the great repeal Bill or Act affect them in that respect? Would they be required to adopt any EU legislation themselves, or would it all be done on a UK basis?

Mrs May: These are matters of detail that would need to be looked into. They would obviously be affected by the devolution arrangements that pertain in each of the devolved Administrations. There are aspects of EU law that will be brought into domestic law in the UK, but whether that is specifically in a devolved Government or simply overall in the UK will be a matter of detail for the legislation.

Q47 **Mr Robertson:** Presumably, when we pass the great repeal Bill or Act, it would take into UK law regulations and directives but not treaty commitments, such as free movement.

Mrs May: It will be that body of law to give people the confidence and the clarity of knowing where they stand in relation to EU legislation. We will bring it into UK law; it will then offer an opportunity for Parliament to determine which of those pieces of law they wish to continue with and whether they wish to change any. But, of course, we will be coming out of the treaties.

Mr Robertson: Thank you.

Q48 **Yvette Cooper:** Prime Minister, do you intend to publish proposals on immigration control as part of your plan in February, or whenever that is?

Mrs May: We are working on our proposals for immigration. There are a number of ways in which we can address the issue. When we feel that it is appropriate to give any indications of those details, we will do so.

Q49 **Yvette Cooper:** Does that mean they might not be part of the February plan?

Mrs May: As I said, when we feel it is appropriate to give those indications, we will do so.

Q50 **Yvette Cooper:** I assume that means that they may not be part of the February plan. Is meeting the net migration target going to be one of the objectives of the Brexit negotiations?

Mrs May: The net migration target that has been set by Government is there for a very good reason. It is because of the impact that immigration—net migration—has on people in this country, and we retain that net migration target. The objective of our Brexit negotiations will be to ensure that we get the best possible deal for the United Kingdom in our future relationship with the European Union.

Q51 **Yvette Cooper:** Which you have said many times.

Mrs May: And which I will repeat.

Q52 **Yvette Cooper:** Does that mean that, if there is a tension between what you conclude is in the best interests of Britain, as part of looking at immigration controls and trade and so on, that makes it impossible to meet the net migration target, will you then ditch the net migration target?

Mrs May: You are making an assumption that you can automatically extrapolate from any discussions that take place in relation to Brexit through to the net migration figures at some point in the future. As you will know, from your time as shadow Home Secretary and now Chair of the Home Affairs Committee, looking at immigration numbers is not an exact science in that sense.

There are a number of factors that can come into play that are sometimes not under the control of the Government. I would say that you can't look at it in the way that you are suggesting that we look at it. What we will be very clear about is two things. As I have said, we want to get the best possible deal in terms of the relationship that the UK has with the European Union for trading with and operating within the single European market. We will also want to ensure that it will be the British Government that is making decisions about the immigration arrangements for people coming from the European Union.

Q53 **Yvette Cooper:** But clearly there is a link between the kinds of controls you are able to have and the numbers. You have said on many occasions that the reason you were not able to meet your net migration target was the free movement arrangements with the EU. Currently, net migration from the EU is 189,000. Clearly if you are to stand any chance of meeting your net migration target, you would have to get EU net migration down to, what, 50,000?

Mrs May: We will be putting in place the immigration arrangements for people coming from within the European Union that we believe are in the interests of the United Kingdom.

Q54 **Yvette Cooper:** So does that mean that if you conclude it is not in the interests of the United Kingdom to get net migration from the EU down to 50,000, you will ditch the net migration target, or will you give the net migration target priority over what is in Britain's best interests in the negotiations?

Mrs May: This Government will retain its intention of bringing net migration down. We have set out very clearly for some time now that we believe it is sustainable levels, and that sustainable levels are in the tens of thousands. We do that for very good reasons—because of the impact that we believe immigration has and that research has shown it has on people, particularly those at the lower end of the income scale, and keeping their pay down.

Q55 **Yvette Cooper:** All that may be the case. I understand the reasons behind it. The question is: what is your objective going forward? You have a target to get net migration below the tens of thousands. I am simply asking whether you are planning to meet that net migration target through the Brexit negotiations. If so, what are you aiming for on net EU migration? If you have to get it down from 189,000 to at least below 100,000, who do you want not to come?

Mrs May: You have asked me about the Brexit negotiations, and I have been clear about the Brexit negotiations. The vote on 23 June from people was that they wanted us to have control of immigration and to put in place controls on immigration for people coming from the European Union. We also want to ensure we get the best possible deal for trading with and operating within the European Union. That is what we will be looking for in relation to the Brexit negotiations. Government does have its target. It does have its ambition and its intention of bringing net migration down.

It is absolutely right that one part of migration we have not been able to put controls on so far is migration from the European Union. We will be doing that in future, but I am not setting a figure in the way that you suggest, precisely because, as I have said, many factors come into the whole question of immigration. Many factors determine the movement of people across the world and the movement of people trying to come to the United Kingdom. I have been very clear with my European colleagues, and they are now also clear, that one of the things we all collectively need to do is work in countries like those in Africa where people are coming from, to try to ensure greater stability and greater economic opportunities there, so that fewer people are trying to come to the United Kingdom.

Yvette Cooper: But none of this answers my question.

Mrs May: That is nothing to do with the Brexit negotiations, but you are trying to focus—

Yvette Cooper: In which case, let me ask you just about the net migration target.

Mrs May: You are trying to focus what we do on immigration on one area of activity—namely, the Brexit negotiations. What I am saying to you is that how we deal with immigration is a much wider issue.

Q56 **Yvette Cooper:** Indeed. Prime Minister, you are refusing to answer my questions, and you seem to have a certain tone of contempt towards having a figure as a target. However, you have chosen to have a net migration target figure for the whole of immigration, and you chose to stick

with it rather than to change it when you became Prime Minister. Let me ask you again. Given that non-EU net migration is currently 196,000—the same level it was when you became Home Secretary in 2010, so that has not changed after six years—how are you expecting to meet your net migration target if you have no way to reduce the non-EU net migration and you are refusing to say what your plans are for EU migration?

Mrs May: What I have said is that we will of course, in due course, have set out and made decisions about the arrangements we wish to have in place for the immigration controls for people coming from the European Union. But it is not possible to say that one aspect of the issue of migration is the only one you need to focus on and the only one you need to think about in order to look at the broader aspect of the net migration figures.

That is the whole point. This is a very wide issue that cannot be encapsulated simply in terms of what the Brexit negotiations are.

Q57 **Yvette Cooper:** Your Chancellor, your Foreign Secretary, your Home Secretary and the previous Chancellor have all said that they would have refused to endorse your target. In fact, they refer to it as your target on net migration and refuse to endorse having that net migration target with students in it. Do you think that it is now time to remove students from your net migration target?

Mrs May: Students are in our migration figures because we adopt—

Q58 **Yvette Cooper:** The target—you choose the target. The figures are different from the target. Do you choose the target?

Mrs May: With due respect, the target figures are calculated from the overall migration figures, and students are in the overall migration figures because it is an international definition of migration—

Yvette Cooper: But you choose what to target.

Mrs May—that is used by countries around the world. Having students in that overall migration figure actually showed us, when we first came into government, that what we had seen in the previous 13 years of Labour Government was significant abuse of the student visa system into the United Kingdom. That is why something like over 900 colleges are no longer able to bring students in, because they were not offering an education to individuals coming into this country; effectively, it was a backdoor route into working in the UK. We have been able to reduce abuse of the student visa system by looking at those figures and focusing on them and we retain an international definition.

Q59 **Yvette Cooper:** But you don't have a way to meet the target; it's a bit of a mess on immigration, isn't it?

Q60 **Chair:** Just to be clear, Prime Minister, that abuse has largely been sorted out. Most people agree that students are a huge success story for the UK. They are a major British export, quite unlike the concerns that were expressed during the debate during the referendum about migration generally. Don't you think it might be a good idea to reconsider that

decision?

Mrs May: We use, Chairman, the international definition of migration. It is perfectly simple; it is used by countries around the world when they are looking at their immigration systems and we use it as the United States does and as other countries do.

Q61 **Chair:** So was that a no?

Mrs May: We use the international definition and students are in the international definition.

Q62 **Crispin Blunt:** Prime Minister, what contingency planning has your Government done in case the UK and EU fail to agree an Article 50 deal at the end of the two-year negotiating period?

Mrs May: We are looking at all the scenarios that might pertain in relation to this. Obviously, as we get into the negotiations, we are going to be able to have a much better understanding of where the European Union is coming from in terms of its expectations. Michel Barnier has set out its expectations that it is going to be able to do this within the 18-month period.

Q63 **Crispin Blunt:** I take that as a yes, that there is contingency planning going on. Who is responsible for it and on what expertise are you relying? Is DExEU in the lead, is the Cabinet Office in the lead, are you seeking the advice of outside experts on the law and trade implications, and the rest?

Mrs May: As I said, we are looking at a variety of scenarios that could pertain in relation to this process. The Department that has lead responsibility for this is the DExEU Department, but it brings in expertise as necessary. Obviously, within the Department, there are experts from other Government Departments, but it also works with other Government Departments, so there is no duplication between the two. Where it is necessary to bring in particular legal expertise, it will do that.

Q64 **Crispin Blunt:** When you publish this analysis, will it be published alongside the statement that is going to be made in February/March, before the notification?

Mrs May: You will see what we publish when we publish it, if I may put it like that. You would expect the Government to be thinking around what the various scenarios are that could pertain in the future.

Q65 **Crispin Blunt:** And you accept that one of the scenarios is that it gets vetoed by the European Parliament at the end of the process and there is no agreement? It does seem a statement of the obvious to me that it is outwith our control.

Mrs May: You are asking me to accept that we are going to fail, which I don't accept. What I have seen from everybody else sitting around the table is a real intention to ensure that we do this in as smooth and orderly a process as possible and that we do meet the timetable that is set. That is what the Commission has indicated. I had a very good meeting with Martin Schulz and Guy Verhofstadt, who has been asked to take the

negotiation role for the European Parliament, when I was in Brussels last week. The European Parliament is also keen to ensure that this process is smooth and orderly.

Q66 **Crispin Blunt:** But he has been reported as complaining to the European Commission and the Council about the inadequacy of the arrangements for involving the European Parliament in the process and pointing out that Parliament must approve it. It is simply a statement of logic that it is entirely possible that the European Parliament will veto the agreements at the end of this two-year process. I am assuming, therefore, that your contingency planning accounts for that possibility, although of course you are clearly not aiming for it.

Mrs May: We are working to make sure that we get that agreement. As I understand it, the remaining 27 members of the European Council have agreed a different arrangement in relation to the European Parliament—they did that at their meeting last week—so the European Parliament will have some involvement in the process.

Q67 **Crispin Blunt:** But I want your assurance that we are not going down the route of the last Government, which my Committee found grossly negligent in instructing Whitehall to do no planning at all around the possibility that the country might have the temerity to vote to leave the European Union. Presumably, it is possible that the European Parliament would veto any agreement or even, despite your best efforts, that no agreement is reached between yourself, the Council and the Commission, and that this planning is taking place.

Mrs May: As I said, we are looking at a variety of scenarios that could come forward in relation to the negotiation: the deal, the timing and what other opportunities would be there.

Q68 **Crispin Blunt:** I am hoping that's a yes, but—

Mrs May: We are looking at a variety of scenarios. Therefore, we are looking at—

Q69 **Crispin Blunt:** I am not sure which scenario.

Mrs May: We are looking at all the options, but crucially—

Q70 **Crispin Blunt:** All the scenarios. Thank you very much, Prime Minister. "All the options" is fine.

Mrs May: Okay, but crucially, what we are doing is ensuring that we are working with others to set up the relationships so that—I have every expectation—if we get that process right, it will be possible to see the positive outcome that I am ambitious for.

Q71 **Crispin Blunt:** Have you determined what issues will fall under the remit of Article 50?

Mrs May: When you say "what issues will fall under the remit of Article 50"—

Q72 **Crispin Blunt:** It's perfectly possible that our partners could find themselves in the same trap the Government has found itself in, where the ability to conclude an agreement under Article 50 terms—that is, by qualified majority—is actually an agreement that would require domestic ratification and unanimity in the Council. In other words, the Article 50 agreement could be so extensive that it is outwith the scope of Article 50 in domestic law in other countries. We could then find ourselves in the same position with the 27 in the Council that the Government is in now. Has there been any examination of that policy?

Mrs May: If I understand the question correctly, you are saying that at the end of this process, there may be some matters of mixed competence that need to be ratified by individual national Parliaments as well as by the rest of the process.

Q73 **Crispin Blunt:** Yes.

Mrs May: That is something that we are well aware of, and something that those we will be negotiating with are well aware of.

Q74 **Crispin Blunt:** Are you confident that you know what those issues are, or do you have a date by which you expect to complete that analysis?

Mrs May: Work is still ongoing in terms of the great detail on this, but I think that one of the questions that is a matter of legal discussion is the extent to which any trade arrangement negotiated with the European Union is a matter for the European Union or national Parliaments. That is an example of an issue.

Q75 **Crispin Blunt:** Would your analysis be published as part of the formal negotiation notification letter to the European Council about what might be seen as mixed competence?

Mrs May: I don't think that's appropriate for the triggering of Article 50. I hesitate to say this, but due to the very fact that I have suggested that there will be legal discussions for this, this will be a matter the lawyers will be discussing at that point. I don't think it will be for us to assert.

Q76 **Crispin Blunt:** The lawyers, along with the judges, already have a disagreeable habit of upsetting your Government's timetable in the move to notification, what with the action of the Supreme Court. What judgments will you be making about what is achievable under the Article 50 negotiations, and will you review that as you go through the process?

Mrs May: Well, first of all, I would point out that the timetable I set out for triggering Article 50 was by the end of March next year. Yes, the Supreme Court has to come forward with its judgment on the Government's appeal, but I expect to be able to trigger article 50 by the end of March next year, so it hasn't in any sense blown the timetable off course.

Q77 **Crispin Blunt:** Can you confirm that it is your intention to cover as many aspects of our future relationship with the European Union as possible within the article 50 negotiations?

Mrs May: Within the negotiations that we will be having with the European Union, it will be my intention to cover not just the process of withdrawal but the future relationship.

Q78 **Crispin Blunt:** Okay. What would be the major immediate consequences of failing to agree a deal?

Mrs May: You mean failure to agree a deal and the European Union not having agreed—

Crispin Blunt: If we find ourselves with the European Parliament vetoing any deal that is agreed between you and the 27 and the Commission.

Mrs May: I imagine that the process that would then kick in would be that the 27 would determine whether or not they wished to continue negotiations. We would have to agree to that, but I imagine that would be next step that they would take.

Q79 **Mr Jenkin:** PACAC, my Committee, is looking at machinery-of-Government issues and capacity issues across the whole of Whitehall. In answer to Sir William Cash, you said that the machinery of Government is working well, and that you have your own specialists in No. 10 advising you personally. You have also set up these separate Departments—DExEU and DIT—which, alongside the Treasury and DEFRA, each have their own concerns and priorities. How will the Government synthesise all these different approaches into a single UK negotiating policy?

Mrs May: I have also set up a Cabinet sub-Committee, which is responsible for looking at the EU exit issues—it is the EU exit and trade Cabinet Committee. That is a departure. I have set up a number of Cabinet sub-Committees to reintroduce that approach to government. Of course, debates are taking place regularly in that Committee on the sorts of issues we are thinking about—the future trade relationship, aspects of the legal processes, Article 50 and so forth.

Q80 **Mr Jenkin:** What kind of capacity does the relevant sub-Committee have in the Cabinet Office in order to synthesise all the different approaches coming in from other Departments so that a coherent brief is put in front of the entire Committee?

Mrs May: The papers are submitted to the Committee by Secretaries of State. The majority of those papers will come from the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union. It is that Department that is the clear focus on these issues, but when it is relevant for other Departments to put forward papers, Secretaries of State will do so.

Q81 **Mr Jenkin:** But inevitably, because DExEU is a separate Department, it will be seen as something of a rival to other Departments. Who is holding the ring between these Departments? What capacity do you or the Cabinet Office have to make sure that all the different approaches are drawn into one approach?

Mrs May: I am afraid I will challenge the concept that people see DExEU as a rival Department. DExEU is the focus of the work that is being done in

relation to Brexit, but it does call on the expertise of other Departments. We are very clear that we don't get that rivalry and we don't get that duplication between DExEU and other Departments.

Q82 **Mr Jenkin:** So DExEU is the Cabinet Office Department that is co-ordinating the other Departments on your behalf. Is that correct?

Mrs May: DExEU is the Government Department responsible for working with the other Government Departments—

Mr Jenkin: With your authority.

Mrs May: Yes.

Q83 **Mr Jenkin:** Who will actually negotiate the article 50 withdrawal agreement?

Mrs May: The negotiation will be conducted at a number of levels. Obviously, I will have a role to play in relation to discussions with other European leaders. The Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union will have a key role to play in the negotiations, but there will obviously be a lot of technical negotiations and discussions that will take place at official level.

Q84 **Mr Jenkin:** So who will actually negotiate the UK's new trade relationship with the EU?

Mrs May: In so far as that is part of the negotiations, it will be those who are negotiating who will be part of that, but they will bring in the expertise from DIT in relation to the trade aspects of that.

Q85 **Mr Jenkin:** Will Lord Price, the Trade Minister, have a special role in that—or Dr Liam Fox?

Mrs May: As we unfold the way in which that trade negotiation will take place, obviously we will bring in expertise—both official expertise and Ministers, as appropriate—from the Department for International Trade.

Q86 **Mr Jenkin:** Many Governments have a single trade negotiator. The US Government, for example, have a single trade negotiator who deals cross-departmentally. Do you envisage that we have someone playing such a role, or should we have?

Mrs May: We are currently building up the specific trade negotiation expertise within the Department for International Trade. In due course, we will be setting out more clearly how that will—

Q87 **Mr Jenkin:** And it is your intention that that capacity and expertise should be applied to the trade negotiations with the EU.

Mrs May: Where it is appropriate that that should happen.

Q88 **Mr Jenkin:** PACAC is also looking at civil service capacity issues Department by Department, starting with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The Institute for Government has produced a paper that suggests that Departments are having to choose between meeting the pre-existing

commitments and demands that were placed on them before Brexit arose, and the Brexit priorities. How confident are you that there is sufficient capacity across Departments to deal with all these priorities?

Mrs May: I am afraid that I am tempted to say, in answer to your question, Mr Jenkin, that I am not at all surprised when former civil servants suggest that we need to employ more civil servants.

Q89 **Mr Jenkin:** Right. Okay. The Chancellor suggested in the Foreign Office, when he was Foreign Secretary, that with the Foreign Office taking over a whole lot of aspects of foreign affairs that are currently handled by the EU, you would need to change the layout and capacity of the Foreign Office. How will the Government reinforce their diplomatic network in the EU capitals after Brexit?

Mrs May: Let us see what the nature of the relationship that we have with the European Union is. We, of course, will look at a number of areas where the European Union has been negotiating and undertaking activity on behalf of member states—notably in trade. That is where we do know that we need to build up trade negotiating expertise, because we haven't needed to do that for a significant period of time because it has been done under the European Union. We have obviously been contributing already to the debate and discussion on foreign affairs that has been taking place within the European Union, but as we look at what the UK's role will be outside the EU, it is not just about what we do in relation to remaining EU member states; it is also about how we build up our presence globally. It is not just about looking at Europe, but about looking at the rest of the world.

Q90 **Chair:** Could I just come back to one or two points that have been at least touched on? David Davis made a firm commitment on a number of occasions that Parliament would be "at least as well informed as democratic institutions on the Continent, including the European Parliament" about Brexit negotiations. In the course of those negotiations, are you as committed to that as your Brexit Minister is?

Mrs May: We are committed to ensuring that Parliament does have an opportunity to look at these issues, to be discussing these issues and to be putting its views forward. David Davis and I are very clear, as I indicated, that through the negotiations, we are not going to give a running commentary on every aspect of them, but we will make sure that Parliament has the opportunity to be informed. I have said that when we are able to make information available, we will.

Q91 **Chair:** So was that a yes; you are supporting David Davis in that objective.

Mrs May: We are very clear that we want Parliament to have the opportunity to debate and discuss these issues. The European Parliament has a specific role within the negotiations, which is different to the role that the UK Parliament has—

Q92 **Chair:** People are hearing a no, I think, Prime Minister.

Mrs May: There seems to be this idea that somehow we are not letting Parliament do anything. We have made statements to Parliament, we are

having debates in Parliament, there will be the great repeal Bill and there are a whole variety of commitments that we have given to Parliament.

Chair: This is about information.

Mrs May: We will make sure that Parliament has the opportunity to discuss these matters as we go through the negotiations, but as I have said, what we will not be doing is setting out in detail, on an hour-by-hour basis, a running commentary on which aspects of the negotiations we are discussing or what the particular discussions are that are taking place. We need to have that flexibility as a Government to be able to enter those negotiations on that basis.

Q93 **Chair:** People will have to draw their own conclusions from the response, but I have to say that for my part, I did not hear a yes to the question. I just want clarity on a couple of other points. Is it your intention that Parliament should vote on a final deal once it has been negotiated? This was a question put to you earlier.

Mrs May: It was a question put to me earlier, and what I have said is that it is my intention that Parliament should have every opportunity to consider these matters. What I am also clear about is ensuring that we actually deliver on the vote of the British people, which was a vote to leave the European Union.

Q94 **Chair:** Okay. Again, was that a yes or a no?

Mrs May: I gave the answer I gave, Chairman.

Q95 **Chair:** Okay. I will leave people to decide on that one as well. In the exchanges we had right at the beginning, you did give a very clear answer to one question: you ruled out seeking an extension of the negotiating period beyond two years, as part of your negotiating objectives.

Mrs May: I said that as we go into the negotiations, it is not our intention to extend that period of negotiation.

Q96 **Chair:** But you didn't completely rule out completing the negotiations within the negotiating period but applying an implementation date at some point after 2019. That is specifically provided for in the treaty—that is article 50(3)—and that is what I am seeking clarity on.

Mrs May: Article 50(3) is not about an implementation phase. It is about an extension of the period of negotiation.

Q97 **Chair:** Well, I think that is a matter of interpretation. Let's just read it out. "The Treaties shall cease to apply to the State in question from the date of entry into force of the withdrawal agreement", so that date of entry into force of the withdrawal agreement can be after 2019. Indeed, it is generally understood to be capable of that interpretation by most people who have looked at it. That is why I have been asking you this question. I just want clarity about that question.

Mrs May: Sorry, Chairman; in that case, I misunderstood the question you were asking me earlier, because I thought you were asking me about the

reference at the end to the European Council agreeing with the member state that the period be extended.

Q98 **Chair:** That's the negotiating period.

Mrs May: That's the negotiating period, yes.

Q99 **Chair:** You did give a very clear answer to that question. I am asking you a different question, Prime Minister.

Mrs May: I would expect us, as I hope I tried to answer in the first place, to be able to negotiate a deal within the two-year period that is set out.

Chair: We are all agreed on that.

Mrs May: But it may be the case that there are some practical aspects which require a period of implementation thereafter. That is what we will need, not just for us but for businesses on the continent and others, but that has to be part of the negotiation that is taking place.

Q100 **Chair:** I quite understand, and that is what you said earlier. Just to clarify, you may therefore seek to use the discretion provided by article 50(3) to negotiate an implementation date after the end of the completion of the negotiations, even if the negotiating period is within the two-year framework.

Mrs May: We will discuss whether we need an implementation phase. The point at which the treaties cease to apply may be a different issue from whether or not you have got an implementation phase.

Q101 **Chair:** The reason I keep raising this question is that what I get privately from major financial institutions and major businesses is that we are at risk of walking straight towards this cliff edge. What they want is some kind of assurance; otherwise, they are going to take pre-emptive measures now. Can I just read you what one large financial institution has given me? It does not want to be named, but it gave me permission to read this out. I have quoted this to the Chancellor, too, and it was on that basis that he replied that he thought all "thoughtful politicians" would want a transitional arrangement. The institution said: "Two years is unlikely to be sufficient to complete the changes that are needed". It also said that without the transitional period, there may be "severe disruption to client services, causing financial instability and significant cost to the wider economy in Europe, as well as globally". It said: "Firms may need to activate contingency plans"—at this point, which is now—"rather than waiting until the terms of the agreement are known", which could lead to the financial instability discussed earlier in the document. That is what is being put to me, the Treasury Committee and, I think, to a wide number of MPs, and it is what is leading us in various ways to press for a commitment from you today for an early negotiation of some kind of transitional arrangement and for clarity that there will be one to prevent a cliff edge in April 2019. That is what I am hoping to get a commitment on.

Mrs May: It is precisely because we understand that financial services and other businesses may need that implementation phase that we are talking

about that and giving it consideration. It may be that Government needs a period of time to ensure that its systems, for example, adjust to whatever the new arrangements are going to be. Actually, the difficulty and uncertainty here—I accept that it is an uncertainty—is that the extent to which that is required actually depends on the nature of the deal that is agreed and the extent of change that is required by that deal.

Chair: Thank you very much, Prime Minister. We have had just over an hour on Brexit. I am sure we will be coming back to it on many more occasions. We are just going to move on to health and healthcare for half an hour.

Q102 **Meg Hillier:** Prime Minister, do you believe that the NHS can do everything it has promised with the money it has got?

Mrs May: We asked the NHS to come forward with its five-year forward plan. It did so. We provided the money it requested for that five-year forward plan.

Q103 **Meg Hillier:** We won't get into too much detail on the figures, but, as you know, there has been some discussion about whether that £10 billion that has been so often quoted is exactly accurate. Both the Health Select Committee and my Committee do not quite agree with that. I don't want to get bogged down in numbers today, however. What I do want to know, though, is the difference between the different scenarios, where NHS England asked for a range between £8 billion and £21 billion. What difference in NHS England services would you see between the £8 billion scenario and the £21 billion scenario? It is quite a different kind of NHS that they were asking for funding for.

Mrs May: They put forward a proposal. The Government looked at that proposal, and the Government then funded that proposal. The figures are that, in 2014-15, the NHS budget was £98.1 billion. In 2021, it will be £119.9 billion. That is a £21.8 billion increase in cash terms, which is £10 billion in real terms. NHS England is now looking at that, and it is in the process of putting forward the changes necessary in relation to the plan that we agreed.

Q104 **Meg Hillier:** Well, that plan also included 4% efficiency savings over the past Parliament, which the NHS at the time began to acknowledge—people were frightened to say in the early stages—was just too great. We saw an extraordinary situation with the accounts in the past year, with the Comptroller and Auditor General issuing very strong words about how that was measured. How bad does it have to get before you acknowledge that there is a sustainability problem with the long-term future of the NHS?

Mrs May: What we have also seen in the past year is a number of hospitals that were previously in deficit coming out of deficit and managing their finances in a different way. The number of hospitals in that position has now significantly reduced. I think what the Government did was absolutely the right thing, which was to say to the NHS, "You determine what your five-year forward plan is." We have given backing to that five-year forward plan. The NHS is now putting that into place.

Q105 **Meg Hillier:** You are probably aware that in terms of productivity rates, spending on health has one of the highest and most positive returns on investment. According to "The Lancet", which published its NHS manifesto—you may be aware of that, although probably not the detail—that spending yields up to £3 for each £1 invested. Given the productivity gap in the UK, has that been a consideration of the Government more widely on health funding?

Mrs May: I am sorry, but I am not quite sure I have fully comprehended your question. If you are saying that the productivity in the NHS is extremely good—

Q106 **Meg Hillier:** No, I am saying that if you invest £1 in the NHS you effectively get £3 back in the economy, in simple terms. So there is a big benefit there. If you have people who are ill, who are sick, who are not working, that can have a really big impact. Has the Government looked more widely at the economic benefits of investing in the NHS?

Mrs May: What we have looked at, and you raise the issue about the service of the NHS and the impact that that has on the wider economy by people being able to be in work, be healthy, be self-supporting and so forth. But in looking at an aspect like that, of course one of the benefits of the seven-day NHS is precisely that it will have that sort of benefit. People are able to access the NHS across the week on a confident basis regarding the service they are getting—for many people, when they are able to do so, when it suits them to do so.

Q107 **Meg Hillier:** Can I repeat something on the issue of the seven-day NHS? In a hearing we had in the Public Accounts Committee, we heard from a senior person in the Department about the additional £10 billion, which you have mentioned and which we have heard of so often from the Government. We asked if it would cover the seven-day NHS and he said that it had not been costed because "it is difficult right now to get a precise figure or to have a mechanical approach for how you would deliver seven-day services in different areas". The seven-day NHS has not, in fact, been properly costed. Would you agree?

Mrs May: No, what I would say to you about the seven-day NHS is that it is being delivered in parts of the country. It is being delivered on existing budgets. Very often, it is about how delivery is taking place in different parts of the country.

Q108 **Meg Hillier:** Well, we have very big reservations about how the seven-day NHS will work, but I do not want to get drawn down that alley because I think the bigger picture here, as you have highlighted, is that there is currently an exercise to stabilise NHS budgets. Extraordinary measures were taken to balance the accounts in the last financial year. You say it is getting better now, but we know that there could be problems ahead. Already, a plan is in place for a potential winter crisis, taking money from other pots. But all of this makes the assumption that it is possible to manage demand to match the funding available. That's a big gamble, isn't it, Prime Minister? The head of NHS England and the Department of Health say that at the very least it is "challenging", so if it does not work, what

will you do?

Mrs May: Well, first of all, it is up to NHS England, but also working with the Government, to ensure that we see the plans being put forward that maintain the service in the NHS that we all want to see. Yes, there are changes that are being proposed by the Government. You dismissed the issue of the seven-day NHS. I think that is an important issue. I think it is a good example—

Q109 **Meg Hillier:** I didn't dismiss it. I said that it wasn't costed.

Mrs May: Well, you passed on from it. But I think there are some very good examples of the way in which that is being delivered by innovative approaches, particularly by hospitals in various parts of the country. That is to the benefit of patients; it is to the benefit of the NHS.

Q110 **Meg Hillier:** I am asking what you will do if this exercise to try to get the budgets to balance does not work. What will you do if demand does not match the funding available?

Mrs May: The focus that we should have as a Government at the moment is on looking at how the plans that NHS England have for the next five years are being put into place, making sure that the NHS is able to make the efficiencies that the NHS itself said it would be able to make. There is a question, an issue, in a lot of areas about the demand that is being put on the NHS and the expectations that people have of the NHS. We want to make sure that the service that people are getting is the right one, and that covers issues such as people sometimes putting demands on hospitals when something could be dealt with at their local GP. So there are issues there that need to be addressed.

Q111 **Meg Hillier:** You talk about the demands being the right ones. I will not go through every example but just take diabetes, for example. It is increasing by an average of 4.8% a year, and, by 2030, 8.8% of the adult population are expected to have the condition. That already has been costing the NHS a figure that is reaching £6 billion. If you take specialist services, that is 14% of the budget. With all of these, the demand is going up, but the funding will not be available to meet that demand. How are you going to tackle it?

Mrs May: First of all, of course, we are putting in a strategy in relation to diabetes, the aim of which is to reduce the number of people who develop type 2 diabetes. But on diabetes, diabetes takes 10% of the NHS budget, 80% of which goes on complications. That is about the management of the condition. That is partly about individuals, but it is also partly about how the NHS manages that condition and how it helps those people to manage that condition.

Q112 **Meg Hillier:** Partly. I don't disagree, Prime Minister. There is a truth in what you say, but it is not going to solve the issue of the increase on diabetes alone overnight, let alone the other areas, which I won't go through, but I did write you a letter on 3 November—

Mrs May: Will you accept that, on diabetes, it is an issue that is not just about preventing people getting type 2; it is about the complications.

Q113 **Meg Hillier:** Prime Minister, absolutely. I refer you to our report on diabetes, which said much that, so we don't need to replay that here. We have as a Committee produced a report which acknowledges that. Of course we would as a Public Accounts Committee. It is not just about funding, but funding we have acknowledged over this year alone is an issue. It will be apparent by the end of this financial year whether these plans to stabilise the NHS are working.

I put it to you that it is not good enough to say "Wait and see". It is far more serious than that. What will you do personally and what focus have you got personally as Prime Minister if the NHS budget is in the same state it was in at the end of the last financial year at the end of March. I know you will be busy at the end of March.

Mrs May: The point I made is a very simple one. We have been working with parts of the NHS to ensure that the financial management is in place, so that we see those better—86% of trusts are now hitting their financial plans, compared to a year ago. That is careful work that is being done with the trusts to ensure that they are able to meet those financial arrangements and the financial management that is necessary. That is where the focus should be, because we all want to see the NHS providing the right level of service for everybody, but we also want to make sure that the management of finances within the NHS is such that they are able to deliver that.

Q114 **Mr Betts:** Good afternoon, Prime Minister. The number of elderly people in our society is growing, particularly those over 75, which is a cause for celebration at one level but also a challenge for the public services at another. The number of people receiving social care fell over the last six years from 1.7 million to 1.1 million—600,000 less. There are now around 1 million people who should be entitled to social care who are not receiving it. There is great pressure on them and their families. The reason: real-terms spending on social care fell by 9% over the last Parliament. To use a form of words with which you might be familiar, do you agree that, for social care, crisis means crisis?

Mrs May: As I've said previously, I accept that there are pressures on social care. That is why the Government has made available the opportunity for local authorities, as was set out in the local government finance settlement last week—the opportunity for extra money to be available to be spent on social care. However, there is also a question not just about those short-term pressures, but in the medium term ensuring that we are seeing delivery and best practice being introduced in delivery of social care across the country.

You talk about fewer people being able to access social care. Actually, there are many local authorities around the country where we are now seeing more people accessing social care as a result of the decisions that local

authorities have made. Part of that may be about the social care precept, but also about how they are operating their social care services.

Q115 Mr Betts: It would be interesting to see those figures. Perhaps your office could let us have the number of authorities where the number of people receiving social care has gone up in the last six years. It would be interesting to see how many there are.

To come on to the money from the statement last week, there isn't any new money for local councils, actually, is there? Instead of having three 2% increases in the precept, we can now have two 3%, and two threes are the same as three twos, as far as I can add up.

The money for the extra grant comes from the new homes bonus, which is all money recycled within councils. We have the particular problem of the authorities with the lowest tax base in the poorest areas often with the greatest need, where the increase in the precept will not actually fund the increase in the minimum wage they will face next year.

Is it right that authorities in the poorest areas will have less money to spend on social care next year than this?

Mrs May: In response to your first point, I am happy to give you some examples of authorities where the numbers accessing long-term care have gone up: Coventry, Darlington, Derby, Doncaster and Dudley. So there are examples out there of local authorities and the way that they are operating these arrangements for social care.

The decision that was taken and announced in the local government finance settlement was, yes, to bring forward the opportunity for local authorities to increase the social care precept.

Q116 Mr Betts: It's not new money though, is it?

Mrs May: Instead of having a 2% increase, a 2% increase and a 2% increase, they will have two years at 3%.

Q117 Mr Betts: But over three years it's the same money, isn't it?

Mrs May: They are bringing forward the money. What is then happening, of course, is that we are also seeing, as we go towards the end of this Parliament, the money from the better care fund going in. But I repeat the point that it is wrong to assume that the only solution in social care is the solution about funding. If you look at the different levels of delivery that we see across the country, there are short-term pressures that we have acknowledged, there is a medium-term job to be done in terms of delivery of social care and ensuring that we see good practice, and there are some very good examples of integration, for example, between social care and NHS trusts—very good examples where you see virtually no delayed discharges from hospital beds because of the way this integration is being operated. We need to ensure that there is reform in the provision of social care and then, longer term, we need to make sure that we have sustainable arrangements so that people can have the reassurance and comfort that social care is going to be available in their older age.

Q118 **Mr Betts:** Prime Minister, all the evidence from the King's Fund, the Nuffield Trust and the Local Government Association is showing a funding gap by the end of this Parliament of somewhere between £2.5 billion and £3.5 billion. The King's Fund said of the statement last week, it is nowhere near enough to address next year's funding gap. I put the points you raised directly to Simon Stevens at the CLG Select Committee last week: whether we can sort this all out by getting local authorities to get their performance up to the level of the best. He said, yes, of course you need to do something about the performance of the worst performing authorities, but you will still need more funding. I asked him, on the point about integration, will integration allow us to sort out the funding pressures? The answer is no. So the idea that somehow this problem is going to go away if only we slightly improve performance in some local authorities and integrate health and social care better is simply not true, is it?

Mrs May: I have set out what I believe we need to do in looking at the issues of social care. We accept short-term pressures, and that is why the funding arrangement for local government has been changed to enable them to bring forward that increase in the social care precept and to retain money from the new homes bonus. There is a more medium-term issue, which is about delivery and about asking what is working well out there and how can we ensure that we are seeing best practice in social care provision. In some parts of the country the reform that is necessary, which is about integration of social care and health, is being done very well and very innovatively; in others, not so. We need to ensure that that is being done, but there is a longer-term issue which has not been addressed by Governments for too long. They have ducked this issue, which is about how we ensure we have a sustainable system of social care going into the future.

Q119 **Mr Betts:** The Select Committee visited Germany last week. Our thoughts are very much with the people in Berlin. We were in Berlin and saw the Christmas markets there, so that is very poignant at present. The Select Committee was there and we saw a country which, 20 years ago recognised it had a problem and on a cross-party basis came to a solution that fitted that country. It is now building on that, adapting it and taking it forward. Simon Stevens also said last week that he thought we needed a national consensus on a new deal for retirement and security for people in their older age. The Local Government Association has asked for that, as has the King's Fund and the Nuffield Trust. They have all called for a major review of social care funding and provision for the future. As Prime Minister, are you prepared now to commission that review, to set it in train, and will you actually get the Opposition parties to join you in that, so we can get cross-party consensus on a long-term, sustainable agreement on this issue?

Mrs May: I think it is important that any decisions taken on social care are going to last into the longer term. That is important because we want people to have that reassurance and that comfort. As I propose to do, Government are already starting to look at the issue of long-term social care. Obviously we will want to discuss any proposals that are brought forward and we want Parliament to have an opportunity to look at them.

We want to make sure that we have a solution that will be sustainable. But this is not going to be an immediate, "Let's have a quick review over a matter of weeks," and that's it. We are going to have to look at this, because attempts have been made already, with the Dilnot proposals, to try to come up with proposals.

Q120 **Mr Betts:** All parties from the beginning, Prime Minister, not as an add-on.

Mrs May: All parties were involved in Dilnot and then some parties didn't support it when it actually came to it.

Chair: We have one more colleague who wants to come in, as you would expect—the Chairman of the Health Committee, Sarah Wollaston.

Q121 **Dr Wollaston:** Prime Minister, you spoke compellingly in your first speech in Downing Street about wanting to tackle the burning injustice of the gap in life expectancy between rich and poor. Of course, the gap between rich and poor is even greater for years lived in good health, which is estimated to be around 19 years. Could you set out for the Committee how you are going to make progress on that pledge and how you are going to monitor that progress?

Mrs May: Yes. There is obviously not just one thing that you can do that will be the single thing that changes that. It has to be across a whole range of activity. It is across many of the aspects of what Government does. To give an example responding to the point Meg Hillier made earlier, diabetes is an increasing issue for an awful lot of people that affects them in the their middle to older age. I am talking about type 2 rather than type 1 diabetes. Having our programme in place to try to help people to adopt a healthier lifestyle will have an impact on that, and, we hope, on them not acquiring type 2 diabetes, which in itself can lead to the complications that I am talking about. We know that there are more than 100 amputations due to diabetes every week on the NHS. That is one aspect, but that adoption of a healthier lifestyle obviously would have other impacts on people as well.

Q122 **Dr Wollaston:** Yes, and a lot of this concerns the wider determinants of health that require cross-Government working. One thing that is often lacking is clear leadership on cross-Government working. Would you be prepared to think again about some of the recommendations from the Health Committee about having this led in the Cabinet Office at ministerial level, so that we get clear drive and implementation across all Government Departments?

Mrs May: The Cabinet Office does have a responsibility to look at the implementation of Government policy more generally. There is an important thing that I've started to see already. I chair one of the Cabinet Sub-Committees that I have set up and referred to earlier. That is the Social Reform Cabinet Sub-Committee, and it brings together a variety of Departments—Health, Education, Work and Pensions and others—to look at these issues. We are seeing that cross-fertilisation, with the Department of Health saying that work can be a health outcome—that linkage of

somebody being able to get into the workplace. Likewise, it could be that for somebody with particular health problems, being able to work can be part of that process of recovery. We are already starting to see much greater linkage and thinking of Departments about that sort of cross-Government approach to things.

Q123 **Dr Wollaston:** Are you going to set out how you will measure and monitor progress? Because the final point—the end point—of life expectancy we are not going to see for several decades.

Mrs May: Yes, that is a difficulty. It is very difficult to set out measures that properly explain or show what is happening, precisely because, if you are looking at something such as life expectancy, it is not going to be immediate. The great danger for Government, it seems to me, is that in the desire for such targets, it is likely to look at inputs rather than outcomes. What you actually want to be looking at is outcomes.

Q124 **Dr Wollaston:** A point you made just now was about how you want to reduce the costs of complications of diabetes. Really we ought to be looking way before that, and reduce the number of people who contract diabetes in the first place. In the “Five Year Forward View”, there was a clear call for a radical upgrade in public health to look at all these measures. The scale of the rise is extraordinary, as we have just said. There was some disappointment in the childhood obesity strategy that we are missing important opportunities. Is the Government going to be more robust, going forward, in how we use every opportunity and draw on the evidence about what makes a difference? Because some of these decisions are politically challenging.

Mrs May: On the issue of diabetes, the NHS is introducing a diabetes prevention programme. That will work to try to develop behavioural change in people. That is precisely about the healthier lifestyle, to reduce the number of people who actually develop type 2 diabetes. There are some very specific ways in which we can deal with this issue.

Q125 **Dr Wollaston:** Indeed, but people feel that the Government have also missed opportunities in driving behaviour change because they are perhaps politically challenging—for example, calling on the way manufacturers and retailers market products. The whole area around deep discounting and price promotions was missing from the final strategy. There is a sense in which people feel the Government need to do their part as well in taking these difficult decisions.

Mrs May: Well, and Government do. We have encouraged introducing the soft drinks industry levy, which will have a significant impact.

Dr Wollaston: Which is welcome.

Mrs May: This will obviously mean we are able to put more money into primary PE and sport through the premium and into other projects such as healthy breakfast clubs at schools. There is an important thing about helping young people to understand about healthy eating and a healthy

lifestyle, as well as doing that at a later stage for adults. There are decisions that the Government take.

There are certainly areas—and I know we have discussed some of these in the past—where we do feel sometimes that it is about working with industry voluntarily, on some of the issues around alcohol for example, rather than just assuming that legislation is the right way forward. Ultimately, it is about encouraging people to be making—it is about the decisions people are making in terms of their behaviour and what they are eating.

Q126 Dr Wollaston: Could I urge you to go further on that if possible?

The other point here is that part of the radical upgrade in public health also called for public health to be supported, yet public health grants are being cut at a time when we really need to be focusing on prevention if we are going to keep the NHS sustainable in the future.

We don't want to get into an argument here about numbers, but not only are we seeing cuts to public health, but also to Health Education England and huge challenges in cuts to the capital the NHS is receiving—all of these working together at the same time as this extraordinary increase in demand, with a 31% increase in the number of people who are living to 85 or over; all of this happening when the NHS has a historic low rate of growth, averaging around 1.1% over the last Parliament and for this.

Can I join my fellow Committee Chairs in calling, absolutely, for you to work with other political parties for a long-term sustainable solution? It is very encouraging to hear you say today that you are already working on some of the possibilities, but do you feel that would have greater buy-in and consent if, at an early stage, you were sitting down and doing that process alongside other parties and having a cross-party approach to this?

Mrs May: I have to say that past experience does not suggest that that is the case, but I think it is important that when there is a decision taken as to what is the sustainable way of ensuring social care provision in the future, of course that will be for everybody to contribute and to be part of that decision.

Just on the public health point, over the SR period, local authorities will be receiving more than £16 billion for public health. NHS is also, obviously, spending money on prevention in a whole variety of ways.

Q127 Dr Wollaston: It has been reduced. You would accept there has been a cut in the public health grant, including in-year cuts.

Mrs May: There have been changes to the way that public health funding—changes to the way public health is approached and dealt with at local authority level as well. There are a number of areas where I think it is absolutely right for us to look at how we can work to encourage and to display and show to people how changes in lifestyle and changes in behaviour will be of long-term benefit to them in a whole variety of ways. People focus on things such as tobacco, but there are a whole variety of other areas where this is important too.

Q128 Dr Wollaston: Thank you. Finally, when you are considering this long-term sustainable settlement, can you assure us that you will be looking at both health and social care together? For far too long we have looked at these as separate areas, and of course just combining a budget—you need to have close working as well as a combined budget. Do you see in the future that we will have a combined health and social care system with a combined budget, and will you look at that in the totality?

Mrs May: If I may answer in this way, I think it is important, as we are looking at the long-term sustainability of social care, for us to certainly look at health alongside that. As I indicated in answers I gave earlier, one of the things we need to ensure is happening is that reform, at local level, in the way in which health and social care work together. You are asking me about a wider issue—what the future departmental budget will be and whether they will all be together. We certainly need to recognise the interaction between social care and health and recognise where and how the integration of working can be done in a way that delivers for people, but there are other aspects of looking at sustainable social care and long-term care for people in future.

Q129 Dr Wollaston: What I mean is this. You have confirmed today—and it is very welcome—that you are already looking at a mechanism to increase funding for social care. All I am saying is, will that mechanism also include how you are going to fund health in the long term? We keep looking at them as separate issues, but they are so closely connected.

Mrs May: We are looking at how we develop a sustainable social care system for the future. You are asking whether we are going to look at the whole NHS budget as part of that.

Dr Wollaston: Yes.

Mrs May: At the moment, that is focused on social care, but in so far as it interacts with health, we will be looking at the health aspects of it.

Chair: Thank you for that, Prime Minister. You have heard three Select Committee Chairmen in a row saying the same thing, and I take the point, which you made in reply to Sarah Wollaston, that the greater the sense of national consensus can be built up and the greater there can be a sense that there is widespread agreement about how to handle this very serious pressure that will remain in the healthcare system, the better. I am sure you have taken that point on board.

I have been passed a letter from the Chairman of the PAC, dated 3 November, to which you have not yet a chance to reply. Rather than go through that, I am sure you will take a look at it, along with, if I may say so, a number of other pieces of correspondence that we Select Committee Chairman have sent in to various parts of your Government over the past month or two. Anything you can do from your position in No. 10 to accelerate replies to our letters would be gratefully received.

I want to end by saying thank you very much for an extremely interesting session. We have been going for just over an hour and a half, and it has

been valuable, with a wide range of questions and a robust exchange of views. Thank you very much for coming. We will see you in this forum after the Easter recess, by which time, of course, we will have a much clearer idea of what is happening on Brexit. Thank you very much indeed, Prime Minister.

Mrs May: Thank you.