Thank you for your letter of 5th February.

Firstly, on your question on the timing of the White Paper, the original intention was indeed to have it published in the winter. However, a variety of circumstances, not least the appointment of a new Ministerial team in DWP, has meant it will take a little extra time.

Turning to Carillion, you will understand that the Pensions Regulator is an independent regulator and, as such, ministers do not monitor its day to day activities. However, I have met with the Pensions Regulator twice and have met the Pension Protection Fund. The Carillion case was a discussion point in my Secretary of State’s recent meeting with the Regulator. As a matter of course I do not meet with the Insolvency Service and haven’t done so regarding Carillion.

My officials continue to work closely with the relevant government departments as well as with the Insolvency Service, the Regulator and the Pension Protection Fund to ensure that they have the support they need to carry out their responsibilities with the official receiver and the Carillion pension schemes. The basis of my officials work is to understand the circumstances of each Carillion pension scheme. The Pension Protection Fund is, of course, considering whether it should now take responsibility for them.

You have also asked about the grounds for re-appointing Mark Boyle as the Pensions Regulator Chair. The Governance Code on public appointments provides that Ministers may re-appoint or extend the terms of public appointees or statutory office holders subject to:
• any such reappointment or extension being made in accordance with the law relating to the particular public body or statutory office; and
- no reappointment or extension being made without a satisfactory performance appraisal, evidence of which must be made available to the Commissioner on request.

The decision to re-appoint Mark Boyle as TPR Chair to from 1 April 2018 to 31 August 2021 was made on the basis that there was nothing contrary to the reappointment in the Governance code on public appointments, and, there was no evidence that he had not performed effectively in the role, at the same time as helping to deliver high auto-enrolment compliance rates.

TPR will be facing further challenges in the coming years, and the Department felt that extending Mr Boyle’s contract would provide TPR with much needed stability and continuity.

Yours sincerely,

Guy Opperman

Guy Opperman MP
Minister for Pensions and Financial Inclusion