



UKOTP Oversight of Public Finances & Good Governance Forum

30 Nov - 2 Dec 2021

REPORT

Contents

Executive Summary	2
Forum Summary	3
Day 1	6
Day 2	9
Day 3	15
Delegate Feedback	19
Media Engagement	20

Programme Partners & Supporters

 UK Government

 UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES
PROJECT **PHASE II**



Executive Summary

Participating legislatures:

We are delighted to have welcomed delegates from:

Anguilla, Bermuda, The British Virgin Islands, The Cayman Islands, The Falkland Islands, Gibraltar, Montserrat, St Helena, and The Turks and Caicos Islands.

The three-day Forum was organised as part of the UK Overseas Territories Project. The Project is delivered by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch (CPA UK) in partnership with the National Audit Office (NAO) and the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA).

The Forum focused on good governance and the oversight of public finances. Attended by parliamentarians, parliamentary officials, auditors, and electoral officials from the Overseas Territories (OTs), it was an opportunity for delegates to learn from their peers.

Outcomes & Outputs

OUTCOMES:

1. Parliamentarians, parliamentary officials, auditors and electoral officials from the UK and the UK Overseas Territories were enabled to strengthen financial oversight and good governance in their jurisdiction.
2. Collaborative networks across the Overseas Territories were strengthened.

OUTPUTS:

1. Participants shared knowledge and understanding of key Forum themes.
2. Participants consolidated the knowledge built on good public financial management during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Participants identified current challenges and common solutions to implementing procedural and committee work of Parliament.

UK OVERSEAS TERRITORIES FORUM 2021 IN NUMBERS

Representatives from **9** Overseas Territories

72 delegates from UK and Overseas Territories

70% response rate from interactive polls

Forum Summary

The Forum explored three key themes:

- 1 Adapting to Change: Resilience & Recovery**
- 2 Scrutiny: Oversight & Accountability**
- 3 From Purpose to Creating Impact: Leadership, Community Outreach & Engagement**

Adapting to Change: Resilience & Recovery

The pandemic has created an unprecedented challenge for parliaments, legislatures, auditors and electoral officials, but has also presented a unique window of opportunity to improve technology skills and to innovate. Two sessions were covered under this theme. The first session featured insights from parliament and government experts across the UK and they considered the use of digital technology in key democratic processes from parliaments working virtually, to delivering elections during the pandemic and maintaining engagement with the public.

The second session featured insights from economic and finance experts across the UK and the UK Overseas Territories. It highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on public finances and considered key determinants contributing to the economic recovery process. Using the UK context and drawing references to the UK Overseas Territories and other smaller-sized jurisdictions the experts also looked at the global economic outlook and provided key lessons in the context of the pandemic.

Scrutiny: Oversight and Accountability

Three sessions were covered under this theme. The first session featured insights from parliamentary, audit, and climate experts from the UK and the Caribbean region. The experts discussed the response of governments to climate change and the role of scrutiny in holding them to account for performance against their commitments. Delegates had the opportunity to engage with the discussion and shared good practice on promoting accountability for government climate policy and developing broader public engagement. In the second session, delegates shared good parliamentary practice to facilitate the effective scrutiny of government, both in the chamber and in committee. The session explored the different mechanisms available to hold the Government to account and the factors that enhance or hinder them. Contributors also explored good practice in terms of effective questioning in the context of parliamentary committees, as well as sharing good practice in answering questions effectively as a witness, and the conduct to adopt as a witness before a committee.

This session also focused on sharing knowledge on both the roles of the Clerk and the Auditor General, and the nature of support they give to parliamentary committees, including the Public Accounts Committee.

The Good Practice Guide in effective oversight of public finances was also shared with the delegates and content was explained with contributions from the UK PAC, the NAO and GIAA.

From Purpose to Creating Impact: Leadership, Community Outreach & Engagement

Three key sessions were covered under this theme. The first session on leadership skills highlighted that strong leadership skills are critical to achieving and implementing the objectives of an organisation. This roundtable discussion with contributions from the OTs, NAO and GIAA explored the key lessons and challenges involved in maintaining good performance in legislature and audit office leadership positions. The session also investigated the ways leaders can support their teams, and how leaders themselves can continue to grow and improve. The second session featured insights from civil society and media leaders/experts from the UK and Kenya. In this session, panellists and delegates considered non-financial levers for improving democratic governance in the Overseas Territories through the lens of civil society engagement and media freedom. The session also explored the future programming options and covered key aspects of democratic practices and processes. The third session was an interactive workshop that helped delegates work through the quality of their communications to maximise the impact of their work.

Delegates had an opportunity to build on their knowledge and skills in engaging with stakeholders and examined some of the tools they could use to communicate effectively with different audiences.

Summary of Opening Remarks

Speakers from across the UK and the OTs made opening remarks. CPA UK Chief Executive, Jon Davies, underlined the value of peer-to-peer learning and noted that “good conversations create change.”

He observed that the support provided by his organisation to the OTs, through the project, aims to build deeper connections to navigate common challenges, while recognising the wide range of similarities and acknowledging the difference in governance, business make-up and culture.

“

One of the striking things about this group of people is the sense of community that we have built up, across the various strands of this Project's work, from internal and external auditors to those working in parliament. This community is a real strength.

”

Jon Davies, Chief Executive, CPA UK

The Forum's opening prayer was led by the Rev Bishop Coleta Williams III, Chaplain to the House of Assembly of the Turks and Caicos Islands, who called for the social and spiritual to come together, stating the importance for leaders to understand their inner conviction and link it to their outward conduct.

Lord George Foulkes of Cumnock, Chair of the Project Board, welcomed the delegates on behalf of the Board and acknowledged the work done through the project, including the support received from the Devolved Legislatures and Crown Dependencies. He noted that the relations between the UK and the OTs have improved, and that he had also witnessed the wonderful relations between OTs.

Lord Foulkes called for greater power to be given to elected representatives in the OTs and for an increased recognition of the OTs by the UK in the context of the wider Commonwealth family, through for example, associate membership for the Territories at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). He then called on the OTs to ensure that they continue to show that their governance is above reproach in every way. Acknowledging that there have been encouraging success stories in the OTs, he expressed his hope that the Project can also continue to provide support towards these goals.

The Hon. Charles Washington Misick, Premier of the Turks and Caicos Islands, also called for more power to be delegated from the UK to the OTs, before noting that CPA UK's support is beneficial to OTs.

“

The level of cooperation that the OTs see from the UK is a good example of how the partnership can work effectively if issues are identified and reacted to quickly.

”

Hon. Charles Washington Misick, Head of Government, Turks and Caicos

Through technical assistance, training, mentoring, and secondments to other jurisdictions, all organised through the UK Overseas Territories Project (UKOTP), relationships are built. These result in excellent networks of support, which are mutually beneficial. Hon. Premier Misick additionally observed that the Forum provides space where every jurisdiction can learn from others, to build stronger governance, reduce corruption and increase the quality of life for all the citizens.

He encouraged the Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) to continue to fund “such a valuable project.”

Summary of Keynote Address

Baroness D'Souza, former Lord Speaker of the House of Lords, gave the Keynote address, highlighting her initial concerns that the pandemic presented significant challenges to democracy by reducing parliamentary scrutiny and debate. Recent widespread use of secondary legislation or executive orders in the UK, for example, were reducing parliamentary scrutiny because they were rarely debated.

The pandemic had also reduced informal chats and discussions, particularly in the division lobbies where soft power can have an impact. She highlighted the importance for MPs to engage in person, not just remotely, although there are advantages in working virtually too. The work of select committees illustrates this, as they can call upon expert witnesses from around the world to enhance their work. Baroness D'Souza talked about the delicate balance of democracy and that “democracy is always destroyed from within.”

The conduct of elected representatives, she noted, is also crucial for democracy to thrive. Baroness D'Souza underlined the importance of Nolan's seven principles of public life:



Day 1 - Adapting to Change: Resilience & Recovery

New Ways of Working: Challenges & Opportunities

Helen Haywood, Deputy Chief Executive of CPA UK, chaired the panel discussion which saw speaker contributions from Dr Hannah White, Deputy Director of the high profile think tank, the Institute of Government and Tim Youngs of the UK Parliamentary Digital Service.

In this panel, delegates explored how innovations were implemented through the pandemic, what challenges were faced, and what can be learnt from the benefits of technology.

Dr White talked about the changes to how elections were held, scrutiny was done, and legislation was implemented. The key benefits were that democracy continued in a safe, convenient, online environment which enabled engagement, inclusion, and transparency.

It was essential to swiftly find ways to hold government to account and to ask questions, particularly in the context of the pandemic. When a government displays a tendency to constrain civil liberties, it becomes more important than ever to scrutinise its decisions, especially the legislation that the government passes. For example, in the UK, a lot of primary and secondary legislation was passed in the House of Commons to give the Government what it needed to impose lockdowns.

Key challenges for MPs were being able to intervene spontaneously in debates, not being able to have the usual informal interactions, and digital exclusion potentially for those less tech-savvy members and public.

Innovation meant that:

1. Technology increased member participation
2. Voting increased in the House of Lords
3. There was increased attendance in select committees
4. There was increased diversity of witnesses
5. Improved outward facing public transparency and digitising internally, building on previous investment in technology

Tim Youngs talked of the swiftness of the technology implementation. It enabled remote voting, and new ideas were tried out, implemented, reviewed, and improved. An important area they explored was security to ensure safety and accessibility. The Digital Support Team also shared swiftly what was happening in the chamber and delivered broadcasting support for committees, as this was essential for transparency and openness. Overall, there was an increase in participation with the changes to the way Parliament worked. Going forward the learning will also inform hybrid working.





Q&A



To what extent has UK parliament business been curtailed versus how much was able to continue apace using technology?

The technology developed quickly, although there was some restriction of business for example adjournment of debates. The government chose to make use of emergency procedures to pass legislation. The government got "into a bit of a habit" with emergency legislation. Remote voting was more discomfort rather than the tech.

The tech seems robust but it is tricky for us – what are the points of concern with off-the-shelf systems?

Bespoke is not necessarily the panacea. The key point is to find out what your needs are. Originally, UK government had Microsoft and other private companies wanting to pitch, and what they found was that an element of bespoke on top of an existing platform was useful.

Global Economic Outlook and the Impact of COVID-19 on Public Finance

Thomas Pope, Deputy Chief Economist at the Institute for Government chaired a discussion with contributions from Richard Hughes, Chair of the Office for Budget Responsibility, and the Hon. NH Cole Simons, Opposition Leader and Shadow Minister of Finance, Bermuda.

Speakers explored the different economic responses to the pandemic, such as the use of unemployment benefits (USA) versus furlough schemes. The latter was deemed to be the more successful initiative. The discussion also explored whether precedents have been set with these responses, observing that it will be interesting to see what is expected economically in the future. Future furloughs may not be realistic and will be too expensive.

Richard Hughes reflected that shocks outside of the financial sector are unusual in the UK, while in the OTs they are used to hurricanes and other climate dynamics. Given the new phenomenon, they needed to quickly understand epidemiology.

Different sectors had different impacts. Social consumption and all face-to-face services fell considerably, but the financial sector output fell only by 8% in the peak of the pandemic. The OTs need to understand their unique sectors and their own logic of recovery. Normally there is not a shock to supply and demand, with both occurring independently. However, with COVID-19, things happened simultaneously. This was the challenge of forecasting and most people got it wrong. What was surprising is that demand improved better than supply. For context, it was easier to open a shop than get the supplies of stock to the shop.

Hon NH Cole Simons maintained that whilst COVID-19 had tested most economies and there was a sense that "we are all interconnected," the impact of the pandemic was not uniform as it depended on sectors and jurisdictions. In the OTs, he acknowledged that there are different people, cultures, populations sizes, different economies, wealth, sophistication, and development and consequently the impact of COVID was not uniform. The direct impact was on tourism, given the below:

- Tourism numbers plummeted by 70-90%.
- Islands were increasingly isolated due to air and shipping visits either down or non-existent.
- The shipping and related industries collapsed by 95%.

Considering the above, OTs began to cater more to domestic tourism. They shifted to other industries such as honey-making. The supply challenges fed inflation and many products required to sustain the territories were not available. People resorted to farming to support each other, and measures for food security were put into place. People “literally borrowed from their future”, as they borrowed from their pension plans.

However, the financial service sector, insurance, and banking industries carried on with very little change. The stimulus and financial support for most countries was unemployment assurance and an increased financial assistance. Government grants were made available to get new businesses up and running or to get existing businesses back on their feet. In the tourism sector, there was free e-learning training for the workforce given to get them ready for the new paradigm.

Nonetheless, across the Caribbean region the economic gaps between the “haves” and “have-nots” were stretched to the limit. Although the vulnerable were supported by the social systems, Caribbean countries with a large restaurant industry felt the hit more than others. It also appeared that COVID-19 exacerbated the gender equality and rights of women, as working mothers had to stay at home to carry out home schooling duties, whilst also working in their professional careers. Men were generally not involved to the same degree.

It is important to note that one size does not fit all in the OTs.

“

...It is not just looking back and taking stock on the impact of Covid-19...it's about looking forward to address challenges, whether that's levelling up and funding public services, or addressing climate change.

”

Thomas Pope, Deputy Chief Economist,
Institute for Government

Q&A



Given the 'unique' nature of the pandemic shock, and ultimately the objective to get money in the hands of people, what lessons were learnt that would (a) suggest that a shock system should be developed and implemented in a timely manner, and (b) really having appropriate metrics to evaluate the “success” of the programme?

The ability to support the data depends on how much you know about it. You need efficiency in governments so that the financial statements are up to date, and you have good data about your population. You need to find and give the people support. COVID-19 revealed the inefficiencies of governments.

What are your views on how well governments in general balanced the governance risks of furlough and business support schemes with the need to act quickly in an emergency?

UK gave support to many people rather than target the support. It is difficult to design it perfectly. Money got into people's hands quickly which was a success. Now the challenge is exploring how procedures were followed and for the Auditors General to explore whether there was value-added. The real challenges are exploring what protocols are in place.

Day 2 - Scrutiny: Oversight and Accountability

Government Response to Climate Change

Philip Dunne MP, Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee, chaired a panel with Ambassador Diann Black-Layne, Ambassador for Climate Change in Antigua and Barbuda, and Rebecca Sheeran, Executive Director of the UK's National Audit Office (NAO).

Philip Dunne MP spoke about the successes of the Environment Audit Committee, which include making recommendations to protect biodiversity as referenced in a recent [report on the UK's footprint on global biodiversity](#). Given the pledges made by the UK Government, he underlined the necessity to follow up on these and hold government to account on such pledges. Observing that around 90% of the biodiversity for which the UK Government has responsibility can be found in or around the OTs, he acknowledged the role the OTs play in enabling the UK to meet its environmental and climate commitments.

On climate change, Philip Dunne MP highlighted the [Climate Change Act 2008](#) on reduction of green gas emissions and the new framework of climate governance. In 2019, the UK Government amended the Act and committed the UK to achieving net zero by 2050, while the previous target had been an 80% reduction in emissions by 2050. This move made the UK the first country in the world to set a stricter target in legislation to meet net zero by 2050.

Ambassador Black-Layne explored the challenges of environmental management when the rules are not followed by all equally.

Participants gathered that government's transparency is key for oversight and accountability, and citizens must be more aware of what they are investing and how it impacts on climate change.



Climate change is an incredibly important area of policy that the Overseas Territories do need to give greater attention to as vulnerable Small Islands and low-lying coastal communities. I hope the establishment of Parliamentary Select Committees on Environment/Climate Change can provide an accountability function to ensure Government's follow through on their climate action commitments. These commitments should cover both adaptation and mitigation. However, parliamentarians need support in understanding the complexities of the issue so that they can effectively perform an accountability function.



Mr. Benito Wheatley, Special Envoy of the British Virgin Islands (BVI) Government

Rebecca Sheeran pointed out that while there are challenges for audit offices to support de-carbonisation, audit offices have a unique and valuable role in auditing environmental pledges, nonetheless, considering that:

- They are independent of governments and so can be effective without fear or favour.
- They know what to look for as they have expertise in project delivery and risk management and can draw out lessons and learnings for Government's environmental work in the early stages of delivery.
- They encourage transparency and a robust approach to reporting and recording environmental risks that affect organisations.

- Their role is to support parliamentary committees and monitor progress.
- They explore the immediate spending and look at long-term value and how to adapt.

In 2020, NAO audited the UK Government's approach to reach net zero. They looked at the individual components of the Government's approach and explored environmental tax measures and the UK environmental land management scheme. To ensure progress is recorded, the NAO uses a recommendation tracker. Prioritisation must be clear, she noted, and there must also be good performance information.

However, it is difficult to assess the overall impact and the cost of action or inaction, given that the benefits and costs may spread across many groups and organisations, which could make the process complex. Rebecca Sheeran suggested, therefore, focusing on exploring in more depth if the government has the right frameworks in place for long term success given the long-term nature of the challenges of environmental management.

In 2021, NAO produced a good practice guide that can help Audit Risk and Assurance Committees understand climate change risk better.

Parliamentary Scrutiny and Holding Governments to Account

With Hon. Patricia Gordon Pamplin, Former Chair of Bermuda PAC, Dr Stephen McGinness, Clerk of the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee, House of Commons, & Fay Bowen, Clerk of Public Administration and Public Accounts Committee (PAPAC) in the Senedd.

Noting that scrutiny is essential to ensure power is not abused and actions are followed through, Hon. Patricia Gordon Pamplin outlined the eight reasons why it is important to hold government to account.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HOLD GOVERNMENT TO ACCOUNT?

1. Stability for the country
2. Improvement of service delivery
3. Obeying the law (protection from rogue activity)
4. Concept of before, during and after
5. Preventing abuse of power
6. International reputation
7. Explore policy and legislation that has not been scrutinised by the public or included in the election manifesto
8. Match actions with rhetoric

She also listed a range of bodies that can hold government to account, generally, with a particular focus on the context of Bermuda.

BODIES THAT CAN HOLD GOVERNMENT TO ACCOUNT

- The Opposition through parliamentary questions, questions on ministerial statements, recommending amendments to legislation
- Backbenchers
- House Committees and the PAC
- The Senate or with-holding Royal Assent (in bi-cameral legislatures)
- The Governor (in unicameral legislatures)
- The Auditor General
- Ombudsman
- Freedom of Information Officer
- Public at large through protests

The Public Accounts Committee has a particularly important role to play, she noted, which can impact the public purse and create lasting efficiency in the administration. Hon. Patricia Gordon Pamplin also called on committees to follow up on the implementation of recommendations.



Dr Stephen McGinness, highlighted that:

- Standing orders create a powerful framework and help create agreement, in a parliamentary context.
- The size of a country and jurisdiction matters.
- Parliamentary clerks are about function and institutional memory.
- Cross party work is essential, especially in a committee context for committees to be efficient and effective.
- Coherence, persistence, and soft powers help achieve impact.

He acknowledged that a committee in the UK is different to committees in smaller legislatures with less time and resources. However, smaller legislatures can use external expertise by building powerful relationships with universities and other experts. Whatever the size of the committee structure, persistence is key.

It is important for members to use their soft powers to enable impact: “the drip on the rock eventually creates the groove”. It is useful to get soft agreements with governments and build up relationships that ensure the governments provide information in a timely way, and that the committee gets early sight of information. It is also important to assert the rights and use them regularly.

Fay Bowen, Clerk to the Public Administration and Public Accounts Committee in the Senedd explored:

1. The relationship with the government – clerks will work with complete impartiality and maintain regular dialogue with officials to facilitate the work of committees.
2. The relationship with auditors – they are external and can give advice and support on a course of action and help draft reports.
3. The approaches if resources are limited - holding government to account is a resource intensive task as it can involve a wider integrated team of specialists, communications, lawyers, experts and key messages and approaches to engage the public. Where resources are limited building the skill of questioning is vital.
4. The importance of events and shared best practice - Share resources to save time and use the expertise and reports of other jurisdictions to help you. Ensure that members are well informed using handbooks e.g., the PAC in the Senedd use a members' handbook and there is also a PAC clerk handbook.

Parliamentary Scrutiny and Holding Governments to Account

Hon Jose Vanterpool, MP for Anguilla, Dr Anna Dickson, Head of International Affairs and Defence, Research and Information Unit of UK Parliament, Sue Winspear, Auditor General of Cayman Islands discuss different approaches to questioning and Daniel Davies – Chief Executive Officer, Department of Home Affairs, Isle of Man considered the role of the witness.

EFFECTIVE QUESTIONING

WHY ARE QUESTIONS IMPORTANT?

- To consider legislation, and to scrutinise and hold government to account.
- To aid ministers to think more carefully, which helps to improve governments.
- To assist members of parliament in deepening their knowledge of topics, and skillset.

HOW ARE QUESTIONS DISTRIBUTED?

- Pre-planning of questions is important. They can be organised into themes to work out who asks what, and when.
- If the committee has a pre-meeting, they can narrow down the scope to key elements and decide on the members who will propose individual questions on a particular subject matter.
- One member can build the foundation, and then other members build on the subsequent lines of questioning.
- If you can plan what order you will ask questions, that can be beneficial.

HOW ARE THEY ASKED?

- Open-ended questions require a deeper level of response. This way you are asking the witness to tell their story about what took place. If you want them to give their perspective, you need to ask open questions.
- Closed questions are good to check in with. For example, "could you explain the agreement between the government and your organization?" The answer was given "yes."

WHAT ARE THE WITNESS TACTICS?

- Witnesses often blame earlier governments, public officials, or other unrelated subjects. This evasion can give a headline but not a good answer.
- Get good at reeling in. Use closed questions to focus on a detail.
- Witnesses need to do most of the talking but the committee needs to take control of the information being gathered.

HOW CAN SOFT POWERS BE USED IN COMMITTEES?

- You can put gentle pressure on non-attenders. You can put pressure on a minister to clear their name. You can create a sanction of non-appearance. However, this should be a last resort as it can impact the relationship.
- Don't be afraid to follow up if the witness has been evading information.
- It is also possible that if one of your colleagues did not get the answer needed for the committee don't be afraid to follow up on it when it comes round to your time slot. This way you build on other members questioning approaches.

WHAT APPROACHES CAN THE CHAIR OF COMMITTEE USE?

- The Chair should not ask all the questions - they set the tone and the expectation of the session.

ROLE OF THE WITNESS

WHO IS YOUR WITNESS?

- When you ask your first question, think first "who is my witness?"
- If they are a government minister, they are accountable to the PAC and your job is to hold them to account.
- Private individuals give their time voluntarily so it is best if you optimize their time to get the information you need. The tone should not be the same used for the minister.
- Some newspaper articles a few years ago were critical of select committees on how they were too heavy-handed with witnesses that were inexperienced.
- When preparing, take the witnesses' role and responsibility into account. Ideally, you will have background information on them. If you know their areas of expertise and responsibility, you can then ask them questions based on that expertise.

THINKING ABOUT THE WITNESS EXPERIENCE

- If you treat your witnesses well, you are more likely to get them to cooperate and work with you to give you the best information.
- If you start aggressively, people will tend to block you by giving answers that are not the information you are looking for.
- You get good information by giving the witness a good experience. If you create a respectful and good experience you will find out the most useful information from them.

PLANNING YOUR QUESTIONS

- In the UK, the normal practice is the clerk of the committee will write the brief with some suggested questions. This will be based on the evidence that the committee is trying to know about. The Chief Auditor can help with framing the questions. This may vary across the territories, however, it is always helpful if the clerk has a good relationship with the auditors and Auditor General.

DOING A DEBRIEF - BEFORE & AFTER

- Go through the questions together beforehand and think of the purpose of each question.
- Understand what the question is. If you don't understand the question, it is almost impossible to understand the answer. If you understand the question with some background context, you can then ask informed follow-up questions.
- Immediately after you've asked the questions, go through the information, and check what worked and what did not.
- Additional considerations include: What are the key things you learnt? What didn't you get from the questioning? What is the next line of questioning with the next witness?

Sue Winspear discussed the role of the Auditor General (AG) which is to be independent and to improve public services. She observed that the PAC in Cayman Islands rarely has a politician as a witness and usually has a government official. The PAC is not about policy but the implementation of policy and the improvement of that implementation.

The relationship between PAC and Auditor General is symbiotic, she noted. PAC amplify the work of the AG who gives support with hearings. Similarly, a good relationship with the clerk is imperative, especially in smaller jurisdictions. Often time the PAC clerk will need the support as they have many other roles to play.

The Audit Office will produce evidence-based reports, audit questions and suggest recommendations that improve public services more efficiently by being more reflective. The executive summary within the report helps the PAC absorb and understand the information quickly.



STYLE

- The style of the chairperson will determine how they provide the briefing. One Chair may rely heavily on the AG and will get suggested questions whilst another may not want questions.
- Our advice is to start with open questions. It can be important because they can create wordy responses. It may be important to follow up with closed questions when needed.

TONE

- Tone is important. If you hold a civil servant to account, it is important not to be too aggressive nor too deferential. It is important to be persistent but to do it respectfully.

PERSISTENCE

- An Auditor General can help in a hearing by passing notes. This is easier in person and in a horseshoe set up. Online it can be trickier.
- Sometimes in a face-to-face environment it may be essential to get up and deliver a note if there is a risk the committee is being misled. That tactic is used infrequently but it can be part of your approaches when the situations arise.
- Recommendations are a fundamental way to drive public improvements.

Q&A



When you are dealing with a highly partisan environment how do you engage the disconnected electorate?

The committee process helps improve public engagement especially if you ask questions that are important to the public. We need to educate the electorate and bring them along on the process and can do this with a public consultation or inquiry.

A few small steps by the Committee can help engage the public:

- Publish the formal minutes in the newspaper
- Get the Chair to go on the radio to talk about what they've done and their concerns
- Go to town halls and different parts of the country to talk about it – if the people won't come to the parliament, take the parliament to the people.

Daniel Davies, CEO at the Department of Home Affairs, Isle of Man noted that scrutiny is a mutually beneficial tool if used correctly. The essence of good scrutiny is research, respond, review. As a Senior Civil Servant, he suggested that anyone going in front of a committee should review what they have said before themselves, as well as what the committee would have said before on the record.

He listed three good questions to consider as a civil servant and potential witness:

1. What is the committee going to talk about?
2. What have they said in the past?
3. What have you or your minister said in the past?

Then do your research:

- Who are the members of the committee?
- Do they have an agenda?
- Can you speak to the parliamentary officers?
- Are there any issues – be honest with yourself!

SUMMARY OF ADVICE FOR WITNESSES

Don't copy

- Don't do a cut and paste job as it undermines credibility and doesn't achieve anything from a scrutiny point of view.

Don't bluff it or use jargon

- Make your comments as simple as sound bites. If it's complex it may take a while to work the comment out. Link your sound bite to the policy.

Don't let the headline be made – make it

- Think of how the media will report your story. Rather than leave it to chance, can you create a phrase that would make a great headline?

Don't be defensive

- If you are defensive, you will not build trust. Plan your responses so you can be open and honest.

Review

- How did it go?

Good Practice Guide Update 2021



The Good Practice Guide shares a synthesis of information. It offers a look at how a positive working relationship can operate and it is important to use it proportionately and realistically. It can be used to self-assess in line with international standards. Once implemented ideas from the guide can be tracked to measure progress.

Day 3 - Purpose to Impact: Leadership, Engagement and Community Outreach

Developing Strong Leadership Skills

In this discussion, Jon Davies asked the panellists to share their key learnings as leaders. The panel was composed of Elizabeth Honer, Chief Executive of Government Internal Audit Agency, Gareth Davies, Comptroller and Auditor General of NAO, Pam Webster, former Leader of the Opposition in Anguilla and Shirley Osborne, Former Speaker of the Legislative Assembly in Montserrat.

KEY LEADERSHIP SKILLS

- Have a **strong and compelling vision**, which should be crafted through research and listening.
- **Engage your staff regularly** and continue the communication. Alongside listening, use repetition to reinforce your message; consider creating a visual representation of your vision to make it memorable.
- **Focus on people** - leadership is not about being clever or having a better vision, it is about harnessing the talent to get the best out of the people so they can deliver the mission of the organisation.
- **Know the mission** and be clear on why you are doing it. Once you've crafted the vision strategy, get the project off the blocks based on the values. Look to embed the values, and put the values into action. A leader must live by the values he champions and show what makes them real and genuine.
- Demonstrate focus, commitment, dedication, inspiration, and excitement through your actions. Show your **integrity and trustworthiness**.
- Know the purpose and translate the **purpose into impact**.
- **Measure improvements** - "start with the end in mind, then test, test, test!"
- Teach individuals at every level of the organisation the **meaning of leadership**.
- Be a **female role model in leadership** - "countries that were well managed during the pandemic had female leaders."
- Leadership is a test, as challenges are inevitable. It is the leader's role to be a **good human** amidst such challenges.
- **Respect everyone** and allow their voice to be heard. Great ideas come from anyone, and nobody has a monopoly on knowledge or creativity.
- **Consider innovation**. For example, The UK Government's Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) recrafted the senior team and created a new role – Director of Innovation and an innovation hub concept. The hub was used to come up with solutions to solve problems that arose during the lockdown.
- **Be disciplined** about the challenges so that you can unlock the creativity. For example, tracking government spend was challenging so NAO created a cost tracker – which is now on their website. The tracker facilitates transparency on Government spend in addressing the pandemic.
- People will draw conclusions about leadership from their failures as well as their successes. Deal with failure privately but deal with success publicly. If failure was a **learning experience** it is okay to share it openly and review it.
- **Encourage young leaders** to establish their own unique voice and style.
- Leadership is about **assuring progress** to the deliverable. Success is measured by how the team works together, so, focus on the strengths of the team not just their weaknesses.
- **Don't worry about being a pioneer**. Nothing is wrong with duplication or copying what works well elsewhere.
- **Trust** is key. Give the team the latitude to be creative.
- **Listen** and give credit. Run ideas past people in the organisation.
- Encourage people to have a life outside as this sparks their **creativity**, and they can bring that new thinking back to their work.

The panelists agreed also that the pandemic has been a test for everyone, with adjustments to be made, considering the shift towards working from home. They observed that leaders go through the same psychological challenges as their staff and that leadership can be lonely. The panelists recognised the need to focus on people's wellbeing, given the pandemic. This includes the wellbeing of staff, their children, families, and communities, creating support structures to deal with psychosocial issues.

Leaders were particularly encouraged to look after their own wellbeing also throughout the pandemic and encourage all leaders, at all levels in their organisation, to do the same.

Civil society Engagement and Media Freedom

In a session that explored the key aspects of democratic practice and processes, including civil society engagement and media freedom that foster good governance, the panel made the observations listed below. Diana Atungire-Ocaya, Strategic Lead of the UK Overseas Territories Project at CPA UK, chaired the discussion between Shem Ochola, Deputy Director General of the Commonwealth Foundation, Rita Payne, Journalist and Media Adviser and President Emeritus of the Commonwealth Journalist Association, David Page, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, and Paul Okumu, Head of Secretariat, Africa Platform.



REQUIREMENTS FOR EFFECTIVE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

1. A **framework for participatory engagement** by citizens in all aspects of governance.
2. A **regulatory and policy framework** to promote citizens involvement and a system that values the role citizens play.
3. A **social contract** with those that are being governed with the authority of those who are governing.
4. **State-Society relationships** as governments need to make constant steps to engage with their citizens to build trust.
5. **Independent systems** that serve the people rather than those in power.
6. **Freedom with responsibility** (i.e., contextualising freedom within the boundaries of the society and the government).
7. **Work with civil society.**
8. **Partnership with government** that creates both formal spaces and informal channels to engage civil society. Civil society also informing policy through structured processes.
9. **Domestic financial support** for civic engagement. Civil society NGOs get the bulk of their funding from foreign governments. This often results in reports that do not focus on key national topics and issues.
10. **Balance culture with legislation.**

CONSIDERATIONS FOR MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

- The media must **hold power to account**. Responsible media outlets fact-check everything, to establish the difference between news, facts, and opinion, before publishing facts and letting the civil society and consumers to judge for themselves.
- Media should hold themselves to account and adhere to the standards and journalistic ethics by **reporting accurately and fairly**.
- Media owners should commit to **informing not sharing partisan interests**.
- Polarisation happens because people are often exposed to the algorithm of like-minded people. **Consider opposing points of view** on social media.
- With a proliferation of media outlets, it has become difficult to know who to trust. Always **consider the source of the material**. If you can provide a feed of your own activities, then you can become the authoritative source.

Strategic Communications

Participants also explored the three most common types of conversations: Discussion, Debate and Dialogue.

DISCUSSION

- Takes place when both parties listen for clarity to assert their own opinion and perspective. This can degenerate into serial monologues.

DEBATE

- Focuses on proving that one party is right over the other.

DIALOGUE

- Focuses on collaboration by exploring differences. It allows opposing ideas to coexist in the same conversation.

Kate Faragher, Director of Bespoke Skills, pointed out that the motives of the people involved in a conversation often determine the type of conversation they choose to adopt. She noted that dialogue is the most underused of the three styles of conversation mentioned above. This could be explained by the fact that dialogue requires mental discipline, to avoid slipping into habits linked to other styles of conversation (debate and discussion), which are less likely than dialogue to lead to collective creative thinking. In times of speedy change and crisis, dialogue is especially effective as a way of communicating, because it can help diverse groups think together more innovatively.

Participants also identified the main benefits of regular dialogue:

- Builds trust, which improves soft powers over time.
- Creates opportunities to move beyond discussions or debates, to focus on working together to solve problems.
- Provides the opportunity to read the intrinsic motivations of stakeholders and determine what course of action to take.
- Provides the opportunity to explore the views of stakeholders in more depth and understand beyond the sound bite and beyond the headline.

Participants noted that, dialogue starts from a place of curiosity. Where the PAC is concerned, dialogue offers the possibility to obtain important information which increases its capacity to scrutinise government policies effectively. From conversations held behind the scenes with key stakeholders, including audit offices, can come greater clarity than official debate or formal questioning can afford. Regular dialogue between the members of the PAC and the PAC Clerk also strengthens the committee's capacity to prepare effectively for inquiries.

Since the committee has certain facts it needs to uncover, based on the report by the Audit office, members interests may vary from that slightly. The public may have an expectation that influences approaches, and the executive may be easily persuaded on certain issues over others. This interaction is often at play when preparing for an inquiry. This challenge for a committee is referred to as the 'push and pull influence', as illustrated in the diagram above. Using dialogue can help bypass some of this political thinking to find solution and innovative thinking where diverse points of view can come together to find a cross-party win-win solution for all.

Five recommendations were listed, for a dialogue to be effective:

1. Listen actively.
2. Respect other points of view, even if they clash with your beliefs.
3. Suspend judgement and refrain from jumping to conclusions.
4. Speak courageously (i.e., before you speak, ask yourself “what needs to be expressed now, to add value to the group discussion?”).
5. Consider the tone (a neutral tone is likely to ensure you are getting the answers you need), timing (dialogue is built over time) and personal experiences (witness or other persons in the conversation).



“
**If you want people
 to change, you
 have to persuade
 them through
 communication
 that change is in
 their interest.**”

Kate Faragher, BeSpokeSkills

How you start a dialogue is important, as Dr Anna Dickson observed, before underlining the necessity as far as committee inquiries are concerned, to ‘create the right witness experience’ by ensuring hearings are conversational. She referenced William Isaac’s book, ‘Dialogue’, which champions the idea of creating such safe space as ‘convening’, which requires being in ‘the right mindset.’ William Isaacs calls this the ‘ecology of the mind.’

Participants also underlined the importance of building on the learnings from a dialogue. This can either lead to a solution or highlight the necessity to engage in further dialogue. Two questions must be considered: (i) What did I learn? and (ii) What am I still wanting to find out? In the committee context, the answers to the above questions will determine whether a follow up meeting is required.

Delegate Feedback

CPA UK seeks to make its programmes as tailored and relevant as possible to delegates' needs. We do this through consultation with our key stakeholders and continuous learning from previous activities.

In accordance, we asked delegates from the participating territories to complete Pre-Forum and Post-Forum Assessments to measure impact. Delegates rated their own levels of understanding against key areas covered during the forum on a scale from basic to expert knowledge.

Feedback in numbers

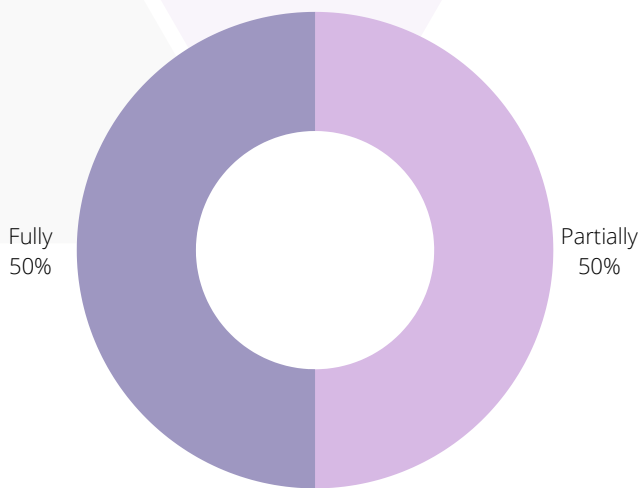
On average, we saw an 11% increase in knowledge with the highest increases including:

- Communicating with the Public & Media (14% increase)
- The Impact of COVID-19 on Public Finances (12% increase)
- Effective Oversight of Government Response to Climate Change (11% increase)

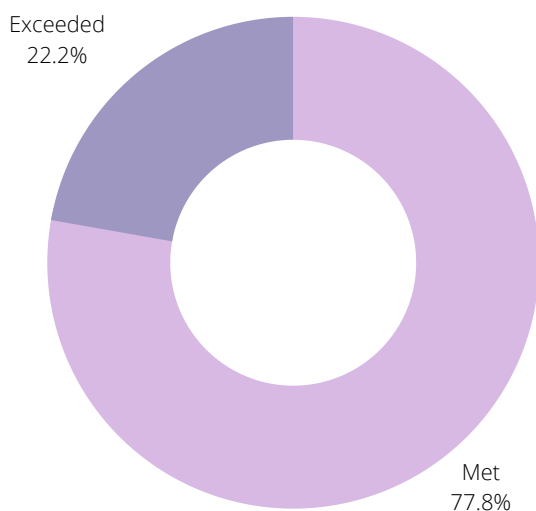
	AVERAGE RATING OF UNDERSTANDING PRE-FORUM	AVERAGE RATING OF UNDERSTANDING POST-FORUM	DIFFERENTIAL	% CHANGE
The Impact of COVID-19 on Public Finances	3.18	3.56	0.38	12%
Effective Oversight of Government Response to Climate Change	2.59	2.89	0.30	11%
Effective Methods of Leadership	3.59	3.89	0.30	8%
Mechanisms Available to Hold Government to Account	3.73	4.06	0.33	9%
Communicating with the Public & Media	3.20	3.65	0.45	14%
AVERAGE RATING OF OVERALL UNDERSTANDING	3.26	3.61	0.35	11%

When delegates were asked how relevant the Forum was to their role, half said it was fully relevant to their role, the remaining half stated it was partially relevant, and no one responded that it was not relevant to their role. When it came to meeting delegates expectations, over three-quarters said we met expectations with over 20% saying we exceeded them.

Was the Forum relevant to your role?



Did the Forum meet your expectations?



KEY TAKEAWAYS



Transparency is fundamental

Governments need to be open to the **scrutiny** of the Auditor-General

Greater **accountability**

Hybrid **mode of work** can be more challenging than virtual and/or in-person

'**We are all different**' and therefore adapt differently

Resilience is fundamentally a human response in times of crisis

Media Engagement

The UK Overseas Territories Forum received positive media coverage with an emphasis on the premise of the Forum which was to continue strengthening financial oversight and good governance in the Overseas Territories.

See the articles below:

- 'UK Overseas Territories to Attend Virtual Forum,' Bernews, <https://bernews.com/2021/11/uk-overseas-territories-virtual-forum-on-nov-30/>
- 'Good Governance Forum for Overseas Territories to be held,' The Royal Gazette, <https://www.royalgazette.com/politics/news/article/20211124/good-governance-forum-for-overseas-territories-to-be-held/>
- 'BOTs Public Finance and Good Governance Forum Starts Next Week,' MercoPress, <https://en.mercopress.com/2021/11/25/bots-public-finance-and-good-governance-forum-starts-next-week>

CPA UK

Westminster Hall | Houses of Parliament | London | SW1A 0AA

T: +44 (0)207 219 5373

W: www.uk-cpa.org

E: cpauk@parliament.uk

