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11 June 2024

Dear Committee Convener

Thank you for your invitation to attend the planned evidence session to discuss the recent Cass Review in England and Wales and implications for gender identity services in Scotland on 18 June 2024.

Following consideration of this session against the published pre-election guidance and in the context of this area being a subject of debate during the pre-election period in recent weeks, it is with regret that in line with the guidance neither I nor my senior clinical officers will now be able to attend this session on behalf of the Government on 18 June or on another date during the pre-election period.

The pre-election guidance published by the Scottish Government on 24 May 2024 states that “Civil servants should not undertake any activity which could call into question their political impartiality or give rise to the criticism that public resources are being used for party political purposes”. Having sought advice from Cabinet Secretariat on the application of the pre-election guidance, I have judged that, given there is a risk that my contribution to the session could inadvertently influence the debate on a topic which is already part of the election campaign, it would be appropriate to defer my participation until after the election to ensure that any election campaign debate on this issue can continue in a political space.

I am of course happy to reschedule this attendance for a meeting of the committee after the election when restrictions around the pre-election period are no longer in place. I appreciate the period of time to appear before the committee now being post-recess is sub-optimal, but unfortunately in the context of the general election advice being adhered to I would note this is outside of my control.

Your sincerely



Professor Sir Gregor Smith
Chief Medical Officer