



Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords  
Rt. Hon. the Baroness Smith of Basildon

11 February 2026

Dear Baroness Smith,

The Justice and Home Affairs Committee has asked me, as Chair, to write to you about our work scrutinising the Home Office.

The Committee was appointed in 2021 “to consider justice and home affairs, including the domestic criminal justice system, and international cooperation in respect of criminal justice, civil justice, migration and asylum”.

Since the Committee was established, we have had the opportunity to question three Home Secretaries and three Justice Secretaries about the work of their respective departments. We were grateful to Rt. Hon. Yvette Cooper MP for appearing before us in July 2025.<sup>1</sup> We have also held sessions with other Ministers on inquiry-related work.

This letter, however, is to place on record our concern about the length of time it has taken for the Home Office to respond to recent requests for Ministerial sessions.

We wrote to the Home Secretary, Rt. Hon. Shabana Mahmood MP, shortly after her appointment in September 2025, inviting her to meet us publicly in the near future.<sup>2</sup>

When the Committee launched its recent inquiry into settlement, citizenship, and integration, the Secretariat asked the Home Office whether the Home Secretary would be prepared to give oral evidence at the end of our inquiry, given the priority attached by the Home Office to the immigration white paper. We also invited the Home Office to submit written evidence to the inquiry. Emails were sent by the Committee Clerk to the Home Office on 24 November, 16 December and 12 January without response. On 16 December the Clerk noted: “The Committee remains keen to hear from the Home Secretary directly on this subject, given its importance within the Home Office and the cross-cutting nature of the inquiry. I know that the Committee had previously written to the Home Secretary on 8 September shortly after her appointment about a possible appearance in any case.”

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<sup>1</sup>We previously held sessions with Rt. Hon. Priti Patel MP and Rt. Hon. Suella Braverman MP, when they were in post. A session with Rt. Hon. James Cleverly MP was planned but could not proceed because of the 2024 General Election.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Foster of Bath to the Home Secretary, 8<sup>th</sup> September 2025: [committees.parliament.uk/publications/49473/documents/263374/default/](https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/49473/documents/263374/default/) A similar letter was issued to the Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice and a session has now been agreed.

Following the intervention of the Government Whips' Office in January and a second intervention earlier this month, the Home Office responded to say that diary pressures on the Home Secretary meant that it was not possible to agree to a find a suitable before the end of our inquiry. We have now agreed to hear from the Parliamentary Undersecretary of State, Mike Tapp MP, pending confirmation of a date. We have asked to see the Home Secretary separately for a standalone session at a slightly later date.

We acknowledge that there are many requests made to the Home Office from other Select Committees. However, this is not the first time that we have struggled to get responses from the Department, and invoking ministerial diary pressures to decline an invitation sent several months ago is discourteous to the Committee.

As the Committee tasked by the House of Lords to scrutinise Home Affairs, we feel that it is important to have reasonable access to the Home Secretary and other Ministers. We respect the fact that priority is given to the Commons Home Affairs Committee. Our aim would be to establish a pattern of an annual session with the Home Secretary where possible. We hope that you are able to lend your support to our requests.

I should also note for the record that the Ministry of Justice has always been extremely responsive to our requests for information and to requests for ministerial sessions.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Foster', with a horizontal line underneath.

Lord Foster of Bath

Chair, House of Lords Justice and Home Affairs Committee