



The Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer  
20 Rushworth St  
London SE1 0SS

07 June 2024

Dear Sir Keir,

### **Opposition costings**

As has been painfully obvious over the last few days, the practice of civil service opposition costings is one that is almost impossible to separate from the cut and thrust of political claim and counter claim in a febrile election period.

The practice has not been restricted to this government. Previous administrations, including Labour ones, have used the process to try to undermine opposition policies in the runup to an election.

The very nature of this process drags the civil service into party political mudslinging and, as I'm sure you will have seen, a former Cabinet Secretary and Permanent Secretary have called for the process to be abandoned.

There are many arguments for reform and greater support for opposition parties to help them prepare for government. As I'm sure you will recognise, however, any process that draws civil servants into a party political debate only undermines the impartiality of the civil service at a crucial time when they may be preparing to support a change of government.

This entire process of opposition costings should now be abandoned. Therefore, I am asking for a commitment that any future Labour government led by you will end the use of civil servants to cost the policies of opposition parties for all future elections.

I have written to Rishi Sunak, the Prime Minister, today to seek the same commitment from him, should the Conservatives form the next government after the election.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave Penman', with a small flourish at the end.