
UK Government Reshuffle Briefing - November 13 2023

Overview

- **Today's reshuffle was one of the four 'interventions' which No 10 planned to use to reset the party's polling performance ahead of Christmas** — Alongside Party Conference (which created policy differentiators from Labour but didn't move polls) and the King's Speech (which has had little impact), No 10 is looking to use today's reshuffle and next week's Autumn Statement to close Labour's polling lead.
- **But while No 10's strategy at Conference was to present Sunak as the 'change candidate', today's headline appointment does the opposite** — Appointing former Prime Minister and leader of the Remain Campaign David Cameron as Foreign Secretary is likely to lead coverage of today's reshuffle, and sends a strong 'continuity' message to voters and MPs. This again shows the challenge No 10 is having in tying the changes they want to make into a coherent strategy.
- **That said, this is a Cabinet more in the Prime Minister's image** — Sunak was once seen as 'Cameron plus Brexit'. This is perhaps simplistic and ignores the two men's differences on issues like immigration, but today's moves can be seen in this light. Seeing Suella Braverman removed from the Home Office to be replaced by James Cleverly, with David Cameron replacing Cleverly in turn at the Foreign Office, means the holders of the great offices of state are now more moderate, while promotions for Victoria Atkins and Laura Trott both create a more moderate Cabinet.
- **And a number of appointments are designed to put the centre of Government on more of a 'campaign footing'** — Promotions for Laura Trott (to Chief Secretary to the Treasury), Victoria Atkins (to Health Secretary), and Richard Holden (to Party Chair) are intended to put people No 10 view as strong media performers into briefs facing key battleground issues at the election (the economy, health, and political attack lines respectively). Cameron's role will not be to act as a *de facto* domestic political adviser, but rather to take a lot of the foreign affairs work currently being led by the Prime Minister from Sunak's plate so he can better focus on running a domestic general election campaign.
- **While sacking Braverman will antagonise some on the Tory right, it is unlikely to meaningfully alter the political challenge Sunak faces** — Braverman is popular with a vocal but small group of the right of the Conservative Party. The MPs briefing their opposition to her sacking were already opponents of Sunak and hostile to many of the Government's policies. While they will get louder in their criticism of the Prime Minister, and Sunak will be pushed into firmer positions on immigration policy, this was true before today, and this dynamic will not meaningfully change.
- **Today's announcements are unlikely to have a significant impact on the result of the next general election** — While Westminster insiders and lobby journalists focus on reshuffles, they rarely have significant impacts on voter behaviour. Any gains for No 10 here are on the

margins (more competent media performers in important briefs and more capable Ministers in key Departments), and eyes will quickly turn to the Supreme Court's decision on the legality of the Government's flagship Rwanda policy on Wednesday, and the Autumn Statement next week.

Summary of new appointments [As of 17:45 Monday, November 13]

Name	New role	Previous role	Page number
James Cleverly MP	Home Secretary	Foreign Secretary	3
Lord (David) Cameron	Foreign Secretary	Backbencher	4
Steve Barclay MP	Defra Secretary	Health Secretary	5
Richard Holden MP	Minister without Portfolio and Party Chairman	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Roads and Local Transport	6
Victoria Atkins MP	Health Secretary	Financial Secretary to the Treasury	7
Laura Trott MP	Chief Secretary to the Treasury	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Pensions	8
John Glen MP	Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office	Chief Secretary to the Treasury	9
Esther McVey MP	Minister of State at the Cabinet Office	Backbencher	10
Greg Hands MP	Minister of State in the Department for Business and Trade	Party Chairman	n/a
Lee Rowley MP	Minister for Housing	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Local Government and Building Safety	n/a

Biographies of new Cabinet appointments

[James Cleverly MP — Home Secretary](#)

(Conservative, Braintree)

A Thatcherite to the right of the party, James Cleverly has been appointed Home Secretary, following the sacking of Suella Braverman MP. Cleverly most recently served as Foreign Secretary from September 2022, where he is seen to have dealt with the war in Ukraine and current Middle East crisis effectively.

Background

Before his appointment as Home Secretary, Cleverly served as Foreign Secretary, having been appointed under Liz Truss in September 2022. Sunak then kept him in post when he became Prime Minister in October 2022 as part of his efforts to appeal to the right of the Conservative Party.

Cleverly stood down from his post as a Member of the Greater London Assembly to become an MP in 2015. He entered Government as a Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department for Exiting the European Union in April 2019, before becoming Co-Chair of the Conservative Party in July 2019. In this capacity, he oversaw the successful 2019 general election campaign.

Cleverly went on to become a Minister of State in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, a role he held until July 2022, when he was appointed Secretary of State for Education as part of the summer's interim Cabinet.

Cleverly was privately educated in Lee, South East London. He joined the army after leaving school, though his service was cut short by injury. He remains a member of the Territorial Army. After leaving the military, Cleverly studied Business at the University of West London. He went on to pursue a career in digital publishing, founding Point and Fire Media in 2007, a web publishing and ad sales company.

Politics

Cleverly is on the right of the Conservative Party. He was previously Deputy Chairman of Conservative Way Forward, a pressure group led by Steve Baker MP which aims to provide Thatcherite solutions to present policy problems, and in 2015 he relaunched the Free Enterprise Group, originally founded by Liz Truss, which advocates for free-market economic policies.

He backed Brexit in the 2016 referendum, and said that he would consider leaving the EU without a deal if the Conservative Party's reputation depended on it.

Lord (David) Cameron — Foreign Secretary

Former Prime Minister David Cameron is returning to frontline politics after seven years, having been appointed Foreign Secretary. A surprise return for Cameron — who will be made a Peer to take up the role — his appointment follows both Sunak’s commitment to end the ‘30 years status quo’ and Cameron’s vocal criticism of the Government’s decision on HS2.

Background

David Cameron is the former Prime Minister of the UK, having headed the coalition government with the Liberal Democrats (2010 - 2015), before winning outright with the Conservatives in 2015. Cameron is widely remembered for overseeing public spending cuts and calling the EU referendum, with the result prompting his resignation in 2016.

After leaving No 10, Cameron began work as a lobbyist for Greensill Capital, which went insolvent in 2021, causing intense public scrutiny on Cameron’s activities ([link](#)).

Prior to becoming Prime Minister, Cameron had an extensive political career within the Conservative Party, first working for the research department (1988 - 1993) after graduating from Oxford University, before working as a Special Adviser to the Chancellor (1992 - 1993) and Special Adviser to the Home Secretary (1993 - 1994). He also has considerable experience in the private sector, having worked as Director of Corporate Affairs at Carlton Communications.

After failing to win election in a number of seats, Cameron was eventually elected in 2001 as the Member of Parliament for Witney after a period in the private sector. He quickly rose through the party and eventually won the Conservative party leadership contest in 2005 — a contest he largely fought on a ‘modernisation’ programme for the party.

After five years as Leader of the Opposition, Cameron was elected Prime Minister in the coalition Government with the Liberal Democrats, alongside Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg.

Politics

David Cameron is a moderate within the Conservative Party, and spent much of his time as Opposition Leader and then as Prime Minister trying to position the party as more ‘compassionate’ than its predecessors. Throughout his time as leader he was seen as one of the ‘modernisers’, advocating for economically and socially liberal policies. As Prime Minister, Cameron oversaw significant reductions in public spending, with a particular focus on ensuring the fiscal sustainability of the UK, consistent with the approach now being taken forward by Rishi Sunak.

Cameron was of course a staunch supporter of the European Union during his time in office, having called the referendum, and resigned after the Brexit vote was delivered. During his time as Prime Minister, he looked to promote a ‘golden era’ of relationships between China and Britain — including hosting a state visit with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Steve Barclay MP — Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
(Conservative, North East Cambridgeshire)

In what will be seen as a demotion, Steve Barclay has been appointed as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Barclay most recently served as Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, but had long been rumoured as someone who could be moved in a reshuffle after No 10 became unhappy with his handling of the health service.

Background

Steve Barclay was Secretary of State for Health and Social Care from 5 July 2022 to 6 September 2022, and again from 25 October 2022 to 13 November 2023. Barclay's departure from the job has long been rumoured given a number of disagreements between the Department and Treasury over the ongoing strikes, as well as a lack of progress on the Prime Minister's pledge to cut waiting lists.

He was previously appointed Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (where he was responsible for trying to get the Government to make better use of public sector data) between 15 September 2021 and July 2022.

Prior to this, Barclay was Chief Secretary to the Treasury from 13 February 2020 to 15 September 2021, Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union from 16 November 2018 to 31 January 2020, and Minister of State for the Department of Health and Social Care from January to November 2018. Barclay was also Economic Secretary to the Treasury from June 2017 to January 2018. He served as a Government Whip (Lord Commissioner of HM Treasury) from July 2016 to June 2017. He was elected Conservative MP for North East Cambridgeshire in May 2010.

Outside of politics, Barclay qualified as a solicitor in 1998. He worked as an insurance company lawyer for Axa Insurance, as a regulator for the Financial Services Authority, and as Director of Regulatory Affairs and then Head of Anti-Money Laundering and Sanctions at Barclays Retail Bank.

Politics

Barclay sits towards the economic 'right' of the Conservative Party and is a staunch fiscal hawk. He was a prominent Brexiteer, notably holding the role of Brexit Secretary under Theresa May's Government. He shares Sunak's Thatcherite economic agenda, and has a personal interest in the better use of data and analytics in Government policymaking.

Victoria Atkins MP — Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
(Conservative, Louth and Horncastle)

Atkins is one of a number of MPs typically associated with the moderate, modernising wing of the Conservative Party to have been promoted to the Cabinet in Sunak's reshuffle. This follows a period in which she has held a number of junior ministerial posts since her election in 2015.

Background

Prior to her promotion to the role of Health Secretary, Atkins had served as Financial Secretary to the Treasury since October 2022, a role that she had held since Rishi Sunak became Prime Minister. She has also served in a number of junior ministerial posts under both Boris Johnson and Theresa May's premierships, including as Minister of State for Prisons and Probation from September 2021 - July 2022, Minister for Afghan Resettlement from September 2021 - March 2022, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Safeguarding from November 2017 - September 2021, and Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Women from January 2018 - February 2020.

Atkins was first elected as the MP for Louth & Horncastle in May 2015, having previously been a criminal barrister specialising in serious organised crime. Her father, Sir Robert Atkins, was also a politician, serving as a Conservative MP from 1979 to 1997 and as a Member of the European Parliament from 1999 to 2014. Her husband is the managing director of British Sugar, which produces sugar and medicinal cannabis. Atkins recused herself from speaking on drugs policy when at the Home Office.

Atkins is a Sunak loyalist, and backed the current Prime Minister in both leadership elections in 2022, making her one of a number of long-term Sunak backers to have been promoted over the course of his last two reshuffles.

Politics

Atkins identifies as a One Nation Conservative, meaning that she is from the moderate wing of the Conservative Party. She is an economic and social liberal whose politics emphasise reward for hard work and support for the vulnerable.

The One Nation faction is typically associated with the leadership of former Prime Minister David Cameron, making Atkins one of a number of MPs from this wing of the party promoted today.

Richard Holden MP — Minister without Portfolio and Party Chairman
(Conservative, North West Durham)

A 2019 'Red Wall' MP who is seen to have been an effective junior minister, Holden has been promoted from his role as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Roads and Local Transport to become Chairman of the Conservative Party and Minister without Portfolio.

Background

Prior to his promotion to Party Chairman, Holden served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Roads and Local Transport from October 2022 to November 2023, where he is said to have impressed No 10.

Holden first joined the Government as a Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS), serving as the PPS for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport from February 2022 to October 2022, then briefly as the PPS to the International Trade Secretary in October 2022 under Liz Truss. Holden was first elected as the MP for the 'Red Wall' seat of North West Durham in 2019.

Holden spent eight years working for the Conservative Party before entering Parliament, first as a Data Administrator and latterly Deputy Head of Press. He then went on to work as a special adviser to a number of Cabinet ministers, including periods in Defence, Education, and Transport.

Politics

Reflected by his long career in the Conservative Party, Holden takes a strongly partisan approach to politics, and has sought election under a number of different Conservative leaders. Having worked for the party for many years, he is well connected within the Conservatives and in Westminster more broadly, and No 10 have been informally using him as a political 'sounding board' for policy announcements over the last 12 months.

Despite working with Boris Johnson during his 2019 campaign to be elected Conservative Leader, Holden backed Rishi Sunak in both the Summer 2022 and October 2022 leadership elections, becoming one of his most vocal supporters. While this is somewhat unusual for a previously vocal supporter of Boris Johnson, it indicates that Holden is likely to remain supportive of Sunak throughout his time as leader.

Laura Trott MP — Chief Secretary to the Treasury
(Conservative, Sevenoaks)

Trott, a former special adviser, is one of a number of MPs first elected in 2019 to have been appointed to the Cabinet by Rishi Sunak, following the appointment of Energy Secretary Claire Coutinho MP earlier this year. Trott is one of a number of Sunak supporters from the moderate wing of the party to have received a promotion.

Background

Prior to her appointment to Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Trott served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Pensions for just over a year, having held the post since Rishi Sunak became Prime Minister in October 2022. Trott supported Sunak during both of last year's Conservative leadership elections, having resigned from Boris Johnson's frontbench after Sunak.

Trott has been the MP for Sevenoaks, a safe Conservative seat, since the 2019 general election. Prior to her selection as a candidate, she spent her career in Conservative Party politics. She began working for the Conservative Party in 2009 as a political adviser prior to the 2010 general election.

Following the election, Trott held a number of advisory roles in Government. She was a special adviser, and later chief of staff, to Cabinet Office Minister Francis Maude, before moving into No 10 as a special adviser in the Policy Unit, where she worked on family policy, and then as Director of Strategic Communications following the 2015 general election. After David Cameron's resignation as Prime Minister following the EU referendum, Trott left frontline politics, and worked as a political consultancy until her election in 2019.

Politics

Trott is on the moderate wing of the Conservative Party, having spent her first tenure in Conservative politics working for David Cameron as part of his project to modernise the party.

Trott is an economic and social liberal. In her new role as Chief Secretary to the Treasury, she is likely to prioritise delivering the Prime Minister's objectives of lowering inflation and ensuring that any changes in tax and spending are consistent with the Government's fiscal rules.

Having endorsed Sunak in the last two Conservative leadership elections, she is likely to remain supportive of his approach now that she has been elevated to the Cabinet.

John Glen MP — Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General
(Conservative, Salisbury)

John Glen MP has been appointed as the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General. An early supporter of Rishi Sunak's leadership bid in summer 2022 who had worked with him during his time as Chancellor, he is a close ally of Sunak.

Background

Prior to his current role, Glen previously served as the Chief Secretary to the Treasury from October 2022 to November 2023. He was the longest serving Economic Secretary to the Treasury before this, holding the position continuously from January 2018 until his resignation on July 6, 2022. His role was upgraded to a Minister of State role during the September 2021 reshuffle.

Having held a number of high-profile roles in the Treasury, he is seen to have strong relationships across the banking and financial services sectors.

Prior to becoming Economic Secretary, Glen was PPS to then Chancellor Philip Hammond, and PPS to then Business Secretary Sajid Javid. Before winning his Salisbury seat, Glen unsuccessfully contested Plymouth Devonport.

Before becoming an MP, Glen worked as head of strategy at Accenture and was director of two consultancy firms, Walton Bates and Thalip Consulting. He has also worked as a parliamentary researcher and in the Conservative Research Department.

Politics

Glen was a reluctant remainer and later a Brexiteer convert, playing a key role in the proposed post-Brexit Solvency II reforms to the insurance sector. He has been associated with the Free Enterprise Group of Conservative MPs, which once included Liz Truss, Priti Patel, and Dominic Raab.

In his resignation letter in July 2022, Glen criticised Boris Johnson, saying: 'I can no longer reconcile my commitment to the role and to the financial services sector with the complete lack of confidence I have in your continuing leadership of our country.' He left Government soon after Rishi Sunak, his superior at the Treasury, and was then a strong supporter in Sunak's two leadership bids.

Esther McVey MP — Minister of State at the Cabinet Office

(Conservative, Tatton)

Esther McVey has been appointed Minister of State at the Cabinet Office, with a reported focus on the 'anti-woke agenda.' Her appointment is one of relatively few promotions for MPs from the right of the party in this reshuffle, and should be seen as an attempt to try and keep this wing of the party on side.

Background

McVey has returned to the Government frontbench for the first time in over three years, having been appointed as a Cabinet Office Minister by Rishi Sunak. This role will reportedly focus on 'leading the charge on the government's anti-woke agenda'. ([link](#))

In her time in Parliament, McVey has held a number of Government positions, most recently serving as Housing Minister from 2019 to 2020. She also had a brief period as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in 2018, before resigning over Theresa May's proposed Brexit deal.

McVey currently works part-time as a presenter for GB News, although she is expected to quit in order to attend Cabinet. Prior to entering politics, McVey was a television producer and presenter, working on shows such as GMTV, and founded a women's business network in the North West. Outside of Parliament, McVey founded and runs If Chloe Can, a charity which aims to empower young women and girls with career advice.

Esther McVey has been the Conservative MP for Tatton since the 2017 General Election, and was previously the MP for Wirral West from 2010 to 2015.

Politics

McVey is a vocal member of the socially conservative wing of the Conservative Party. In 2012, while still a backbencher, McVey founded Blue Collar Conservatives, a pressure group and caucus of Conservative MPs focussing on what they consider 'blue collar' issues around the cost of living, family values, and social mobility. She then relaunched the Group ahead of the 2019 general election, seeking to 'champion working people and develop a conservative agenda to benefit the voters and communities most neglected by Labour.'

More recently, she was a founding member of the Northern Research Group, which seeks further Government investment in the North and holds the Government's feet to the fire on delivering the 'levelling up' policy agenda.



Annex — Full list of Cabinet ministers [as of 18:00 GMT, Monday 13 November]

Name	Current Role	Previous Role
Rishi Sunak MP	Prime Minister	Prime Minister
Jeremy Hunt MP	Chancellor of the Exchequer	Chancellor of the Exchequer
James Cleverly MP	Home Secretary	Foreign Secretary
Lord David Cameron	Foreign Secretary	n/a
Oliver Dowden MP	Deputy Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	Deputy Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Grant Shapps MP	Secretary of State for Defence	Secretary of State for Defence
Victoria Atkins MP	Secretary of State for Health and Social Care	Financial Secretary to the Treasury
Claire Coutinho MP	Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero	Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero
Steve Barclay MP	Secretary of State for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs	Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Simon Hart MP	Chief Whip	Chief Whip
Penny Mordaunt MP	Leader of the House of Commons and Lord President of the Council	Leader of the House of Commons and Lord President of the Council
Gillian Keegan MP	Secretary of State for Education	Secretary of State for Education
Mel Stride MP	Secretary of State for Work and Pensions	Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Michael Gove MP	Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations	Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations
Kemi Badenoch MP	Secretary of State for Business and Trade	Secretary of State for Business and Trade
Michelle Donelan MP	Secretary of State for Science, Innovation, and Technology	Secretary of State for Science, Innovation, and Technology
Mark Harper MP	Secretary of State for Transport	Secretary of State for Transport
Lucy Frazer MP	Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport	Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport
Laura Trott MP	Chief Secretary to the Treasury	Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Pensions
Chris Heaton-Harris MP	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland	Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Alister Jack MP	Secretary of State for Scotland	Secretary of State for Scotland
David TC Davies MP	Secretary of State for Wales	Secretary of State for Wales
Lord True	Leader of the House of Lords	Leader of the House of Lords
Victoria Prentis MP	Attorney General	Attorney General
Johnny Mercer MP	Minister for Veterans' Affairs	Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Tom Tugendhat MP	Minister for Security	Minister for Security
Robert Jenrick MP	Minister for Immigration	Minister for Immigration
Andrew Mitchell MP	Minister for Development	Minister for Development

BRITISH CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

UK Government Reshuffle Briefing – November 13 2023



John Glen MP	Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office	Chief Secretary to the Treasury
--------------	---	---------------------------------