Supplementary written evidence from the Rt Hon. Oliver Letwin MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (UDE0070)

Details and Responsibilities of the UK Governance Group

At my appearance before your Committee on 11 February I promised to write to provide further information on the UK Governance Group. The Group was established in June 2015 and is led by Philip Rycroft, Second Permanent Secretary at the Cabinet Office. It brings together under one command the Scotland Office, the Wales Office, the Office of the Advocate General for Scotland and the Constitution Group (part of the Cabinet Office).

Ministerial responsibilities are unchanged in this arrangement; the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales and the Advocate General continue to lead their departments at Ministerial level as before and the offices retain their own distinct identities and budgets. I lead on the overarching constitutional agenda.

The UK Governance Group is the primary source of knowledge within the UK Government on constitutional and devolution issues and advises UK Government Ministers and Departments on all matters to do with the UK constitution and on devolution to Scotland and Wales. It works collectively with all UK Government departments to build their constitutional and devolution capability and supports them in their relationships with the devolved administrations.

The group comprises four teams:

- the **Constitution Group** in the Cabinet Office has the overarching responsibility within the UK Government for the constitution and its constituent parts. This includes: managing the relationship between the Crown, Executive and Parliament; ensuring the good function of the democratic process through the delivery of electoral and registration policy and law; strategic oversight of the devolution settlements and the interaction between the governments of the UK; and implementing Parliamentary reform. This team has the equivalent of 86 full time roles;

- the **Scotland Office**, which is responsible for the smooth working of the devolution settlement in Scotland and for representing Scottish interests within the UK Government and the UK Government in Scotland. This team has the equivalent of 71 full time roles;

- the **Office of the Advocate General for Scotland (OAG)**, which is the UK Government’s Scottish legal team. OAG provides legal advice, drafting and litigation services to the UK Government in relation to Scotland and support the Advocate General in his role as a Law Officer. This team has the equivalent of 44 full time roles; and

- the **Wales Office**, which is responsible for the smooth working of the devolution settlement in Wales and for representing Welsh interests within the UK Government and the UK Government in Wales. This team has the equivalent of 43 full time roles.

The Group is a visible and active presence in Scotland and Wales, and its creation reflects the Prime Minister’s clear commitment to governing for one nation and with respect.

17 February 2016