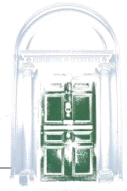


The Cabinet



What is the Cabinet?

- The Cabinet is the team of the most senior ministers in government and is the ultimate decision-making body of the Westminster system.
- The backing of the Cabinet is the strongest endorsement a policy can obtain from government, and the policy produced is usually passed through the Commons and Lords providing it has the support of backbenchers.
- The Prime Minister chairs the Cabinet and sets its agenda.
- Some Prime Ministers have been known to keep the Cabinet as close advisors, whilst others simply use the Cabinet as a 'rubber stamp' and largely disregard its members. For example, Tony Blair was seen as more presidential than John Major.
- It consists of the Prime Minister, the Chancellor, the Secretaries of State responsible for each government department, and other Ministers including the Chief Whip.
- Both members of the House of Commons and the House of Lords can serve in the Cabinet.
- A current list of members of the Cabinet can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/ministers#abinet-ministers>

Cabinet Meetings

- The agenda for Cabinet typically consists of Parliamentary business, domestic and foreign affairs, and topical issues.
- In addition to the Ministers who are members of the Cabinet, special guests such as the Queen have been invited to attend meetings.
- Meetings of the full Cabinet are usually held once a week, though this varies. The lack of regular full meetings has led the Institute for Government to claim that the Cabinet as a decision-making body is 'in decline'.
- The meetings provide a forum for debate between the top officials. It allows for compromises to be made, and for future policy directions to be decided upon.
- The Cabinet's decisions are made unanimously, and the opinions of individual members of the Cabinet are not recorded. Instead, they are expected to maintain a common front even if they privately disagree with a decision. This is known as 'Collective Cabinet Responsibility'.
- Minutes of each meeting are taken by the Cabinet Secretariat in order to be distributed to those in attendance and to top civil servants. These minutes are released to the public after 30 years.

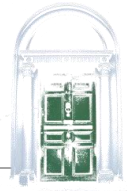
Did you know?

Usually, only the minutes of a Cabinet meeting are recorded; however, following the 2015 General Election, Prime Minister David Cameron made the unprecedented move to film the early stages of the new Cabinet's first meeting, to be released to the press.

In 2016, the Shadow Cabinet similarly filmed the first meeting of a new Cabinet following a reshuffle. The Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, however, appeared to regret the move, and was filmed stating 'This seems a bad idea' to his Communications Team.



The Cabinet



What is the Privy Council?

- The Privy Council is the formal body of advisors to the Monarch, and is mainly made up of senior politicians who are current or former members of the House of Commons or the House of Lords.
- All members of the Cabinet are invited to join the Privy Council by the Monarch, and receive a life membership.
- Members of the Privy Council have the prefix 'The Right Honourable' added to their title.
- Its main role today is to advise the sovereign on issuing Royal Charters, which grant special status to incorporated bodies, and give city or borough status to local authorities.
- Full meetings of the Privy Council occur when the monarch becomes engaged, or when the monarch abdicates or dies, in order to make a proclamation in order to declare accession to a new sovereign. The last full meeting occurred in 1952, for Queen Elizabeth II.
- The council does have regular meetings, where it approves of matters including bank



holidays for the upcoming year and commemorative coins.

For further information about our services and expertise please contact Anna Wolffe on 020 3642 2754 or by email at anna.wolffe@ranelaghuk.com

Cabinet Committees

- Committees are used by the Prime Minister to enable the Cabinet to deal with government business more efficiently.
- Some are permanent; others are set up in order to deal with pressing issues.
- They carry out the bulk of cabinet work, and their decisions have the authority of the full Cabinet. If they are unable to agree on a decision, the issue is sent to the full Cabinet.
- Some committees have sub-committees, who cannot make final decisions on policies but can discuss policies in more detail, which can then be relayed back to their respective main committees.

Key events

- 1625 – Charles I introduces the Cabinet Council
- 1714 – Under King George I, the Cabinet becomes the principal executive group of the British government. It acted as his principle group of advisors, as both the British language and the British political system were foreign to him.
- 1916 – Under the twin pressures of war and increased welfare, David Lloyd George introduces the modern Cabinet system. The Cabinet Secretariat introduced, as is the Cabinet Office and the committee structure. For the first time, Cabinet decisions are recorded.

Did you know?

Most Prime Ministers also have what is known as a 'kitchen cabinet', which is usually made up of their most trusted advisors or staff. In recent governments, including that of Tony Blair, it has been said that all decisions have been made by such groups before being brought to the full Cabinet.