

Findlay says lack of evidence from CMO meetings is 'unacceptable'

Scottish Labour says that the SNP Government's refusal to publish files detailing meetings between Chief Medical Officers at the start of the coronavirus pandemic is 'completely unacceptable'.

In response to an FOI request asking for details of meetings involving the CMOs of Scotland and England and other officials held between 24 January and 9 March 2020, the SNP Government replied that while they could confirm that 17 such meetings had taken place, the details of the meetings were not in the public interest.

The period covered by the request was when the first decisions were made concerning Scotland and the rest of the UK's approach to tackling coronavirus. As such, Scottish Labour believes the details of the meetings may hold information as to why the approaches implemented led to Scotland and the rest of the UK suffering one of the highest death tolls in the world.

In response to a further FOI request asking for details of written advice from Scotland's CMO and National Clinical Director to Scottish Government ministers during the same period, The Scottish Government claimed that no such written advice exists.

Scottish Labour MSP Neil Findlay said: "It is completely

unacceptable to claim it is not in the 'public interest' to publish these documents.

"Furthermore, the assertion that neither the CMO nor the National Clinical Director provided ministers with written advice during such a critical period is both unbelievable and deeply disturbing.

"How can experts advise the government without issuing written advice?"

"The Scottish Government talk about wanting to be open and transparent, yet once again they refuse to publish minutes of key meetings between the former CMO and her UK counterparts. Covid-19 is one of the biggest health crises of the last 50 years – the public must be able to scrutinise the advice and decisions made."