



# Achieving your top priorities in 2020

from 10.45am to 4.30pm on  
Tuesday, December 10th 2019

**Background Note and Agenda for our 43rd Leadership Conversation**

Society of Leadership Fellows, St George's House, Windsor Castle

**... and making sure  
next year ISN'T like this!**

## 2020 Calendar

M U S T

S O R T O U T

P R I O R I T I E S

# 43

## This is our 43rd Leadership Conversation

It follows on from two previous Conversations in which we were tough on ourselves in relation to our priorities for 2019 - and said we need to become tougher still in preparing for 2020!

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### At this Conversation we will:

- Compare notes with other Fellows about which **one or two key strengths** we each want to bring to the fore to help us nail our top priorities for 2020
- Ask what it is about ourselves as leaders that can get in our own way
- Focus on what we need to **do differently** to ensure that next year we **let go** of these self-limiting behaviours
- Ask how we might each become more effective in drawing on our **inner courage** to ensure that by this time next year we can say to ourselves "*this year we achieved our priorities in a way we never thought would be possible*".

### Creating more effective support groups

During the afternoon we hope to consider an important theme that has come out of a number of Conversations, about us each needing our own informal support group of trusted confidantes to help us in stepping forward more confidently as leaders.

Whenever we work at our best in Leadership Conversations, this is one of the roles that we play for each other. It is no surprise that so many Fellows have developed these **sounding boards** to support them in planning their future leadership journey.

## The three stages to our Conversation

Throughout this Conversation we will draw on some of the best ideas that we have gained through the previous 42 Conversations in this series. We will structure our discussions around three stages:

### 1 "This is me!"

We put stage one under this heading because early on we want to encourage you to share a story that helps us understand better where you are coming from as a leader.

Please be up for sharing something about yourself in a way that helps others have some sense of how much you are able to stick to your priorities - or how much you tend to start a year with good intentions and then gradually lose focus!

### 2 "Tell us more"

Stage two is under this heading because we hope that by now we will all want to mobilise the power of questioning to draw each other out.

We want to **get behind each other's stories** to try and understand what is getting in the way of us moving forward more quickly in delivering our top priorities.

### 3 "Yes I can!"

Our final stage is about each of us stepping into a really empowered place where we have a greater sense of all that we can achieve as leaders through clearer priorities for next year.

For every breakthrough in thinking that we achieve during this third stage, we will be able to identify its origins in the stories that we have each shared and the curiosity that others have shown in response.



# This is me!

## *Our opening session on Tuesday morning*

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After agreeing our Guiding Principles for this Conversation, we will explore our first question in small groups.

A few days before the Conversation, Pete will discuss this on the phone with as many members of our group as possible. He will then circulate a note with a summary of your initial thoughts and a "killer question" for our first round of small groups.

Our thinking now is that we should ask you to look at the list of **10 "game-changers" for 2019** on the next page that came out of last year's Conversation on achieving your top priorities for this year. They are written up more fully in Chapter 4 of "[Nurturing Wisdom, Volume 4](#)".

We will encourage you to share your answers in the form of **stories**.

Listening to others' stories can trigger all sorts of ideas about our own ambitions and priorities that we might never even have thought about before this moment.

*This year I started with far too many priorities! For 2020 I want just three*

*I love the one about asking more from those we really trust*

*If only I could picture myself achieving what I want - I know that will be a key stage*



## Ten game-changers for 2019

- 1** Recognising our self-limiting behaviours – **and** telling our inner critic to chill!
- 2** Being ourselves more – with skill
- 3** Asking more from those we trust the most
- 4** Shifting our focus from “exploit to explore”
- 5** Getting tougher on ourselves whenever we over-commit
- 6** Giving less time in meetings to tasks and more to colleagues’ concerns
- 7** Rethinking our view of duty
- 8** Becoming more measured, especially in drawing out points of learning
- 9** Picturing ourselves in the space we want to be in
- 10** Becoming more comfortable with our success as leaders.

# Tell us more

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## *Showing real curiosity to draw others out more*

As we hear the ideas that other Fellows bring back from small groups we hope that we will make a point of drawing them out so that we really do justice to the thoughts that they are sharing.

There should come a stage by late morning when we have identified a range of **potential game-changers**. It will then be time to make things a little more difficult for ourselves!

### **What is it about us that could get in our way?**

We will then ask what it is about each of us that results in us sometimes getting in our own way. We all have traits that can hold us back from achieving our goals.

More often than not, a bad leadership habit of ours is based on a relatively good behaviour that we tend to **take too far**.

The question that we want to ask ourselves is:

- what is it about each of us that means we can sometimes end up as **the number one saboteur of our own ambitions and priorities?**

We all learn a huge amount when other Fellows capture the one or two habits of theirs that they see as getting in their own way.

It reminds us of how much our ability to achieve our priorities for 2020 really does lie in our own hands.

Key to us exercising this ability is our capacity to **look inside ourselves** and ask what it is about **us** that holds us back from achieving our full potential.

By challenging ourselves in this way, we create the scope for breakthroughs in thinking later on.

# Yes I can!

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## *Encouraging each other to "think big" - and go for it!*

From lunchtime onwards we hope that we will be moving on to the stretch part of our Conversation, when we will encourage a higher level of feedback and coaching across the group.

### **What were we not acknowledging before now?**

We hope that we will support each other in sharpening up the different elements of our own process for priority-setting that weren't so obvious before we came to Windsor and started asking ourselves some tough questions!

Once we challenge ourselves as to what we've been **missing**, or **looking away from**, it's remarkable how quickly we can move forward.

The key is that we don't **duck** the answers that we have come up with in response to the questions that we ask ourselves!

*I haven't been ambitious enough about my top priorities. With a smaller number I can think bigger*

*I'm going to have to trust others more to deliver my lesser priorities - that worries AND excites me at the same time*





## Many answers involve one word: courage!

In our two Conversations on this theme last December and then in February of this year, we found the word courage coming up time and again. In so many ways, we are all challenged to draw on our own courage to challenge our "inner critic" or to say "no" more often to others, and focus on the small number of key leadership challenges that we see as essential to us achieving our top priorities for 2020.

This will be less dependent on the actions of others than we sometimes let ourselves think, and more dependent on our personal sense of resolve and determination as we go into the New Year.

Hence the core mission of this Leadership Conversation: *to enable us to look forward to the year ahead and ask what it is about ourselves as leaders that we most need to protect, and develop, and perhaps manage more thoughtfully if we are to have the best chance possible of achieving our main priorities for the year.*

As we go through the afternoon, we will stretch ourselves more and more until that moment when we "hit the buffers" at 3.30pm! In the final 30 minutes or so we expect to achieve a range of breakthroughs, as we hope you will experience!

*I think I can ...  
and I'm finding the  
courage to keep  
focused!*

*I know I can make  
that happen - and  
that's exciting!*

*Yes I can -  
and in the process I want  
to help others achieve their  
priorities, too!*



# Agenda

**Tuesday, December 10th 2019**

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- 10.15am+** Coffee and light refreshments served in the Vicars' Hall
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- 10.45am** We welcome you to the Conversation and invite you to agree on the Society's Guiding Principles as providing the framework for today's Conversation. We then break into small groups for 15 minutes to consider our first question (Refreshments available)  
*Prompt, please*
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- 11.15am** We hear your stories and insights arising from small group discussions. After a while we agree on our key challenge for our second round of small groups
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- 11.40am** 2nd round of small groups considers agreed question
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- 12.00 noon** (Refreshments available)
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- 12.05pm** Back in the circle in new seats, we capture the key messages coming forward from this second round of groups, drawing out the most challenging issues that we might want to return to later. From 12.45 we change gear and begin to think our way into the challenge that we want to consider over lunch
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- 1.00pm** Lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall. Over lunch, working groups engage with the agreed question. At the end of lunch, each group nominates one of their number to share with us their own stretching resolve or "big idea" for ensuring that they exceed their own expectations in achieving their top priorities in 2020
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- 1.50pm** We gain inspiration from a small number of resolves and ideas and agree on a really stretching question for our next round of small groups
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- 2.30pm** In groups we set ourselves goals for achieving our 2020 priorities that require high levels of courage and focus and self-discipline (Refreshments available)
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- 2.50pm** Back together again as a single group, we explore how we each see ourselves developing our ability to achieve our top priorities for 2020 more quickly than we have allowed ourselves to expect. We have a ground rule of "no recycling", so that we all need to find **fresh language** if we wish to go back to something that we have already said
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- 3.25pm** We have a 5-minute comfort break, and light refreshments are available to bring back into the circle (to different chairs, please). We ensure that everyone has an opportunity to benefit from quality feedback from others in the group before we finish on the dot of **4.30pm**.