Twitter Thread by Matthew Chapman

Matthew Chapman
@MattChapmanUK

Exclusive: After a two-year battle to get hold of them, notes from of a secret meeting between Mark Zuckerberg and Matt Hancock reveal a UK government in thrall to Facebook and seemingly cowed by their threats:

Zuckerberg told Hancock the UK's 'anti-tech' attitude meant it was 'the only country in the world he will not visit [redacted]

After Zuckerberg was reassured by Hancock the tone could shift from 'threatening regulation to encouraging collaborative working' the 'ambience' of the meeting shifted from 'guarded hostility to cautious optimism'

DCMS fought for for two years to withhold the minutes, breaching the FOI Act twice in the process, with its lawyers making a last ditch attempt to stop the release

The Information Commissioner's Office ordered DCMS to release the meeting minutes after describing them as 'the only available insight and understanding' into Zuckerberg's position on UK tech legislation

Some interesting context courtesy of @jason_kint, Hancock was sat next to Facebook's Joel Kaplan and Michael Beckerman (chief exec of Internet Association, lobbyists for Facebook) at an exclusive New York dinner just three weeks prior to the meeting with Zuckerberg in Paris

The meeting between Zuckerberg and Hancock was brokered by Matthew Gould, who would later be appointed as chief exec of NHSX without interview when Hancock became health secretary

Our revelations come days before the Government is due to provide its full response to proposals to regulate tech giants. @julianknight15 has expressed fears the government has already rowed back on the scope of its online harms legislation

For those who have scrolled this far, here are the notes from the meeting: https://t.co/5nNmYHB1NX

It turns out Facebook was not the only company Hancock was fawning over at VivaTech, Uber also got the same treatment H/T @jtemperton https://t.co/4ts0tWXOqY

> I was at VivaTech when Hancock and Zuckerberg had their secret meeting. Hancock had another meeting that day with Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi. It was in the VIP green room. What neither of them realised was I was sitting at the other end of the table pretending not to listen...
>
> — James Temperton (@jtemperton) December 8, 2020

Another concerning element of the whole process was DCMS making the veiled threat to the ICO that releasing notes from this meeting would mean future meetings were held 'off the record'. cf point 95 in the ICO's decision notice: https://t.co/SRnFO1dzrG

Relationships between Matt Hancock and Mark Zuckerberg still very cosy, Hancock says he has been doing a lot of work with Nick Clegg, who he refers to as 'Mark Zuckerberg's representative on Earth' https://t.co/mtfYvZzHRt

> \U0001f6a8NEW\U0001f6a8: @TBIJ "Revealed: Mark Zuckerberg threatened to pull UK investment in secret meeting with Matt Hancock"@DamianCollins MP and RFOB Board Member had the chance to question @MattHancock in Parliament today. pic.twitter.com/SrzVG824Fx
>
> — The Real Facebook Oversight Board (@FBoversight) December 8, 2020