

Public Accounts Committee

Oral evidence: Emergency Services Network: Progress Review, HC 457

Monday 13 November 2017

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 13 November 2017.

Watch the meeting

Members present: Meg Hillier (Chair); Geoffrey Clifton-Brown; Chris Evans; Gillian Keegan; Shabana Mahmood; Nigel Mills; Gareth Snell.

Sir Amyas Morse, Comptroller and Auditor General, Adrian Jenner, Director of Parliamentary Relations, National Audit Office, Tom McDonald, Director, NAO, and Marius Gallaher, Alternate Treasury Officer of Accounts, HM Treasury, were in attendance.

Questions 1-49

Witnesses

I: Philip Rutnam, Permanent Secretary, Home Office, and Stephen Webb, Senior Responsible Owner, Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme, Home Office.

Written evidence from witnesses:

– [Add names of witnesses and hyperlink to submissions]

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Philip Rutnam and Stephen Webb.

Chair: Good afternoon and welcome to the Public Accounts Committee on Monday 13 November 2017. We have two hearings today. I am chairing the first one, on the Emergency Services Network—a subject that has been before the Committee a number of times. The system our emergency services currently use to communicate with each other, Airwave, will be replaced by the Emergency Services Network, using mobile technology.

Our witnesses today are Philip Rutnam, the permanent secretary at the Home Office, and Stephen Webb, the senior responsible owner for the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme at the Home Office. Our hashtag for this session is #ESN, for those following on Twitter.

Q1 **Nigel Mills:** Mr Rutnam, how delayed is this programme now?

Philip Rutnam: As the Committee knows, earlier this year we announced that there would be a nine-month delay in the programme and that it would not begin transition before June 2018. We are now reviewing the timetable for the programme—both schedule and cost—because since the Department came to the Committee last, there have been further delays. It is clear that the programme will take longer, but I am afraid I cannot give you a date now for when the programme transition will begin, because we are in the midst of that review. What I will say is that the strategic case for this programme remains completely compelling, both in terms of the gains in functionality for emergency services and savings—

Chair: Sorry to cut you off, but we were asking about the delay. Mr Mills, do you want to continue?

Q2 **Nigel Mills:** We can assume that it is longer than nine months.

Philip Rutnam: It is clearly going to be more than nine months. I am afraid I cannot give you a timetable, but the programme continues to make good progress on a whole range of fronts.

Q3 **Nigel Mills:** What is its risk rating now? Is it a scarlet red flashing light?

Philip Rutnam: As you know, the Government's policy is to publish the risk ratings on GMPP programmes roughly six months after the MPA has completed its reviews. I do not think it would be appropriate for me to say the risk rating at this hearing, because the Government's policy is to publish those six months in arrears. It will be published in due course. However—

Q4 **Chair:** Can you give us a date for the next publication? When did the MPA last look at it?

Philip Rutnam: I am afraid I cannot give you a date for when the MPA last looked at it. There will be—



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Q5 **Chair:** Could you write to us with that? It is useful for us to know when we are expecting it.

Philip Rutnam: Of course I can write to you. Mr Webb, who has been on the programme much longer than me, may have something to add in terms of when the MPA last reviewed the programme.

Q6 **Chair:** Do you know that off the top of your head, Mr Webb?

Stephen Webb: The last full review was around this time last year, and then we had a follow-up review. Back then, it was rated an amber/red.

Q7 **Chair:** We are wondering when the last MPA review was. If there is a six-month delay in it coming out, we would like to know when the next one will be.

Stephen Webb: The last full one was about a year ago—it was around this time last year.

Q8 **Chair:** So we have had the most recent one, and there has not been one since then.

Stephen Webb: Yes.

Philip Rutnam: We can write to you as to when the next publication of the IPA's rating will be—sorry, I referred to the MPA, but it is the IPA.

Chair: We make that mistake too.

Q9 **Nigel Mills:** This is our third session on this topic. We have long been concerned about how risky this project is and how likely it was to go wrong. Mr Rutnam, it looks, from your letter of 31 October, like it was only you turning up in the Department that prompted this to be looked at a bit more closely. Is that the case, or were the alarm bells ringing before you got there?

Philip Rutnam: No, I don't accept that. That is not correct. This is, as you say—or as you imply—a challenging programme. It is also a necessary programme. Since my arrival in the Department, as I said in that letter, I have sought to take a close personal interest in the matter, which I think can only be helpful. This programme has been right at the top of the Department's agenda in terms of the scale and complexity of our own change programmes for a number of years, and the Department has consistently sought to put a lot of effort into it.

Q10 **Nigel Mills:** Do you not understand that we are slightly concerned to have had a hearing on this a year ago and a follow-up hearing, and still it goes further wrong and you have to bring in a new independent person to oversee it? Does it not look like the Department was a little bit over-confident on this for quite a while and is now playing catch-up?

Philip Rutnam: I can see why you might feel that. I repeat that this is a challenging programme. It is very complex in terms of the range of stakeholders involved and the number of different component parts. It is

also, in certain important but limited respects, technically innovative, so it is a complex and challenging programme.

It is also a programme that will bring the emergency services and the country as a whole some very significant benefits. Throughout this replan and reset, we are seeking to keep our eyes firmly focused on the prize. In reviewing the programme, we are going to bring every possible degree of rigour, scrutiny and expertise to bear on the programme so we emerge from the replan with an envelope, in relation to schedule and cost, in which we can have a very high degree of confidence. That is the enterprise we are embarked on now.

- Q11 Nigel Mills:** That all sounds very sensible, but it implies that you didn't have a rigorous plan in which you could have confidence, or that you still don't have one. This project was supposed to be rolling out relatively soon, wasn't it?

Philip Rutnam: There are always things to be learned and things to be improved upon. The Department has recognised the challenge of the programme throughout, but as time has gone on—in particular, during this year, as we learned more about the challenges relating to the software design and as our relationship with our suppliers evolved—we have come to see clearly the need for not just a nine-month delay but a new approach to schedule and cost, in which we can have lasting confidence.

- Q12 Nigel Mills:** So whose fault is this? Is it that EE has not got the network capability on time, is it that Motorola has not been able to produce the software and the handsets, or is it just a general failure of the project? Who is paying the bill for this long delay, which I suspect will prove quite expensive?

Philip Rutnam: Ultimately, the Home Office is the client for the programme and has got the lead responsibility. I do not think that going through something like this with a view that we need to attribute fault here, there and everywhere is the right approach. I think the right approach is to focus on what needs to be done to create an environment for this programme that gives it the greatest possible chance of success.

- Q13 Nigel Mills:** But you are contracting with pretty large, well-established businesses to deliver something on a timetable. We understand that the cost of extending Airwave by another year is £475 million. Are you saying that the taxpayer should bear that to be nice to the suppliers, or should we be trying to work out who is actually at fault for this lengthy delay and making them pay for it?

Philip Rutnam: Obviously, an important set of contracts underpins the programme. You are right that, in a whole series of respects, our suppliers have given us contractual commitments, and we will be holding them to those contractual commitments. I do not want to imply that we will not be taking a robust approach with our suppliers—we absolutely will. I am trying to make the more general point that, in order to resolve this, to give the programme the greatest possible prospect and to create the right environment for it, I want to focus on how we sort it.



- Q14 Nigel Mills:** The project has been a little bit close, hasn't it? You have ended up with Motorola owning the existing Airwave and the new one. Do you have any concerns about having the same company on both sides? That is not a contractual situation that we generally like to get into. Has that exacerbated the issue or is it just one of those coincidental things?

Philip Rutnam: Mr Webb may want to comment on that. In fact, the implications of that are quite nuanced. I think there are some advantages for us, but there are also, as you implied, some commercial risks. I am clear that we need to use the advantages while managing the commercial risks. We will be taking a very robust approach in our relationship with Motorola, for whom this is an absolutely critical programme. At the same time, I want to approach those discussions and that relationship in a constructive and collaborative, rather than adversarial, spirit.

Stephen Webb: I might just give an example of the advantages. Having the same supplier providing the old solution and the new has enabled it to develop the interworking solution, which will make the transition process considerably easier than it might otherwise have been if you had two completely different suppliers. There are risks, but there are also, as the permanent secretary said, benefits.

- Q15 Nigel Mills:** Speaking of that transition, have we given notice to Airwave or Motorola yet that we need to extend Airwave for longer than we expected? Has that decision been taken?

Stephen Webb: No, we have a contractual requirement to give them that sort of notice by the end of 2018. Obviously we are involved in some discussions and will want to look at these things in the round, looking at both ESN and the Airwave part of the solution, but we have not made any final decisions yet. That will obviously depend on the plan.

- Q16 Nigel Mills:** How confident are you that Airwave can be extended nationwide for as long as it might be needed?

Stephen Webb: In technical terms, very confident. In February we discussed the TDM issue, and we know that a solution has been agreed that will enable that to be replaced with something similar, working over IP—internet protocol. There will need to be some other investment in the network, but in principle we do not see any reason why it cannot be extended.

- Q17 Nigel Mills:** Who pays for that?

Stephen Webb: Obviously the actual investment in it falls to Airwave—to Motorola. We will have a negotiation about the price, but we would not be paying for the whole service and for the investment as well.

- Q18 Nigel Mills:** There is a contractual price to extend Airwave region by region, if you do the whole country: £475 million a year. Is that the right number?

Stephen Webb: No, that is a slightly different calculation that the NAO did, which reflects the full cost of both Airwave and the existing broadband



HOUSE OF COMMONS

services that people have. Roughly, for the three emergency services, it will be up to £360 million a year.

- Q19 **Nigel Mills:** And you will not have to pay, on top of that, the costs of changing that technology to internet protocol, or whatever you were just talking about?

Stephen Webb: No, indeed, because the cost of the Airwave system at the moment reflects all the capital investment that was done to build this in the first place.

- Q20 **Nigel Mills:** So if you have to make more capital investment to keep it functioning after it was meant to be, that is just recovered through the £360 million or £475 million a year that we have to pay—it is not on top of that.

Stephen Webb: We would be looking for considerably less than that, because we would argue that there are very considerable margins in the business and that the level of investment would be nothing like the level of investment that was required to build the network in the first place. That is obviously something that there will have to be commercial negotiations on.

- Q21 **Chair:** Thank you. Mr Mills has a question in the House, so he will be leaving us, but that does not mean that he is not interested or will not be following us remotely. Mr Webb, you said in response to Mr Mills's question about the extension of Airwave that you were confident that it could be delivered. Has Motorola yet confirmed how it will extend Airwave?

Stephen Webb: Commercially or on the TDM issue?

Chair: Technically.

Stephen Webb: A route has been identified with Vodafone on that particular issue, so they know how they are going to do it. It is then a question of finalising the deal with them as part of a wider commercial discussion that they are looking to have with us.

- Q22 **Chair:** So you think you are on top of it, both with the commercial discussions and the technical discussions.

Stephen Webb: I think so, yes.

- Q23 **Chair:** Given that Motorola is responsible for determining how Airwave will continue, what is the role of the Home Office in that negotiation? If they do not agree—if they cannot work it out—do you step in, Mr Rutnam?

Philip Rutnam: The Home Office has a contract with Motorola, or a subsidiary of Motorola, for the provision of the Airwave service, which includes the ability on our part to require that service to be extended beyond December 2019. It has a very significant contractual commitment to us in relation to the provision of Airwave. Vodafone is a supplier to Airwave. I would expect, first, to hold Motorola to account for delivery of the extension of Airwave, and to do so on the best commercial terms we



HOUSE OF COMMONS

can achieve, as per Mr Webb's answer. I think that we have significant leverage there, in fact. Secondly, if Motorola needs support in its negotiations with Vodafone, or if it needs to be clear from the Government that we expect those two parties to agree, then we can make that clear. But I do think that they are two large, grown-up organisations that ought to be able to resolve it between themselves.

- Q24 **Chair:** Well, it is great that you sit there and say that, but we have seen other projects over the years where perhaps it has not worked quite so smoothly. Is that the approach you would take, if you are making a statement like that—you expect them to work together?

Philip Rutnam: There is a range of things we can do. My first expectation is that these two large parties—significant, well-resourced telecoms operations—would be able to resolve the issue between themselves. They have already identified the technical route to doing this. The commercials, I believe, will follow.

- Q25 **Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:** Are you confident, Mr Rutnam, that this will work in all difficult environments? On the tube, in air ambulance situations in the air, in extremely rural locations—are you confident that this new system will be able to operate in all those environments?

Philip Rutnam: We have a specification for the programme that includes requirements for it to operate in all those sorts of environments. We have contractual arrangements in place that already address most of those—we need to do more work, for example, on the air-to-ground solution. What we are doing through the way in which the programme is being implemented is, step by step, reducing the level of risk associated with delivery.

To give you a practical example in relation to coverage—the coverage of the signal that will support this service, which is absolutely fundamental—it is being delivered for us by EE, another very important supplier alongside Motorola. EE has, with us, demonstrated the ability of this new network to provide the kind of capacity needed in surge situations, such as in the response to something like the Westminster Bridge attack or the Manchester Arena attack. That is a significant piece of technical testing that has taken place over the last few months and it has had very satisfactory results. A whole series of other technical tests will take place over time.

- Q26 **Geoffrey Clifton-Brown:** Finally, exactly on that surge question, it is not only about surge in a specific location—Westminster Bridge, for example. If, God forbid, there were any form of natural event or terrorist offence in multiple locations, are you ensuring that the system will work with capacity in that type of situation?

Philip Rutnam: I will ask Mr Webb to speak to that.

Stephen Webb: I think we would be very confident about that, because the total number of emergency service users, compared with the 30 million subscribers on the network, is relatively small. What EE is able to



HOUSE OF COMMONS

demonstrate is a series of routes of prioritisation that would ensure that those emergency service users always got the coverage they needed and, even in the most extreme scenarios, with relatively little impact on the wider general public. Actually, this approach of doing it over a commercial network probably gives you more confidence that that would be possible than if you had a massive surge on the existing Airwave network, which is limited in its capacity and in its bandwidth.

- Q27 **Chair:** May I go back to the point that Mr Clifton-Brown made about provision on the underground? With Transport for London, I think you are getting close to a deal. You have now committed to delivering this by December of next year, so in about a year's time—13 months. How realistic is it to expect that all the technical design and solutions will be in place and that it will really be active on the underground?

Philip Rutnam: Again, we have made good progress at a number of levels with Transport for London. I have met the commissioner twice, including last week—

- Q28 **Chair:** Sorry, but may we cut to the chase? Meeting the commissioner is fine, but are you confident that this will be delivered in—

Philip Rutnam: Yes, we are confident. There is a technical solution, which is now well defined, for extending coverage through the tube. Eighteen kilometres of what is known as leaky feeder have already been installed; 64 km in total should be installed by the end of this year. A technical roll-out is happening and, at the same time, other tests are taking place. So the programme with TfL is well under way—the first phase of it already happening, the second phase starting procurement—

- Q29 **Chair:** So by next December it will all be in place.

Philip Rutnam: The schedule actually involves some deliverables by December and others, I think, by mid-2019. I do not want to pin everything on the December 2018 date, but there is a programme with TfL. I have to say that TfL's level of co-operation with this programme is very good and we have significantly intensified our work with it over the last several months.

- Q30 **Chair:** What about the other metros in the UK, such as Glasgow and Newcastle?

Stephen Webb: They are all in the existing EE core contract, so they are due to be done by the end of next spring—specifically, Merseyside, Glasgow, Tyne and Wear.

- Q31 **Chair:** On the issue of air service, I am a London MP and we are all concerned about the underground, but I understand from colleagues in other constituencies that the use of air-to-ground is a great issue for many of them, and that there is still no agreed solution as to how to use the new ESN in circumstances where, as Mr Clifton-Brown has said, the air ambulance or the National Police Air Service has to communicate with those on the ground.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Philip Rutnam: We will maintain the current functionality under all circumstances, but you are right that we need to do more work on how the new solution gets deployed in aircraft.

Q32 **Chair:** You say you need to do some more work. Where are we at with that now, Mr Webb?

Stephen Webb: Again, we have a sense of how this will work. EE will help us on the masts and with providing the coverage. We then shortly need to launch a procurement for the actual 4G devices.

Q33 **Chair:** Is it possible? Very basically, when we travel on an aircraft, we have to turn our phones off; we cannot use the signal. Will this work for aircraft?

Stephen Webb: Yes. The planes at the moment obviously have Tetra and Airwave coverage, and they have airborne data links that bring these—the film imagery that they do bring it down. It needs to go through certain sorts of testing to be able to work in aircraft. This is something that will happen towards the end of the transition period, because, obviously, they can continue to use the interworking solution with their existing Airwave solution while interacting with the people using ESN on the ground. This is something we need to finish before we shut Airwave down, rather than before we start transitioning.

Q34 **Chair:** This has not really got very far yet, so you will have to keep Airwave going for some time—longer in aircraft than for on the ground, by the sounds of it.

Stephen Webb: No, there would actually be a possibility of keeping Tetra as an interim. That is one of the things we are looking at. We would rather find a way of speeding up the process of installing them in the airframes and not have to essentially create two different systems running in parallel.

Q35 **Chair:** If you've got Airwave and ESN, you will have to have interoperability. Unless you have that worked out now, there will surely be a delay in delivering the new system, which will add to the cost of keeping old equipment going and you won't have rolled out the new system according to the timetable.

Stephen Webb: We have interoperability at the moment. The Airwave equipment that they use in the planes will work with the ESN equipment on the ground through the interoperability solution. What we then need to do is put in a new ESN solution and replace the old Airwave one before we get to the point of shutting down Airwave.

Q36 **Chair:** You talk about the deadline for taking out Airwave, which is being extended. Does that include extension in the air as well, or do you see that as a separate project?

Stephen Webb: No, it would be part of the same thing.

Q37 **Chair:** So the final end date for Airwave will include the end date for all aircraft?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Stephen Webb: Yes, unless we created—there is one option that is still being considered that would involve a sort of continuity Tetra service, but our strongly preferred option would be to migrate to a 4G solution in the air as well.

- Q38 **Chair:** Your strongly preferred option? At this point, you do not know for sure that you can deliver ESN in the air or if that is the best option. Is that fair to say?

Stephen Webb: We are pretty confident we can do it; we have had a lot of market engagement with the suppliers. We know how we would do it. It would be a slightly different network from the one on the ground, because, obviously, the masts would be pointing in the air and you need slightly different devices on the planes, but it is not fundamentally new technology.

- Q39 **Chair:** That brings me to another question about who will pay for these delays. The National Police Air Service is now nationally supported, but individual forces buy into that. Air ambulances tend to be individual. Is there an additional cost to any of this for local forces, brigades and health services—not just for the air? On the issue of this whole delay, we talk about the global costs. Have you looked at the breakdown of the costs for individual areas and the individual services in those areas?

Philip Rutnam: Additional costs associated with a delay in the entire programme?

Chair: With a delay in the entire programme primarily, yes.

Philip Rutnam: There will be some additional costs associated with a delay in the programme. I would distinguish two types of cost, at least. One is the fact that, if it is more than a nine-month delay, as we discussed earlier, we will need to keep running Airwave for longer. We will obviously address commercial issues with Motorola, but none the less it will cost more to keep Airwave running for longer. That is one type of cost.

The other type of cost is the cost of the programme itself. We mentioned TfL coverage, for example. It will cost more to deploy the new solution on the tube. There are other areas where we hope to make some savings, compared with previous costs, but there are additional costs in the programme. There are also the costs of running the programme itself—the team and so on—which you need to keep running for longer.

- Q40 **Chair:** The thing is, there are all of these costs and the challenge of keeping old equipment going. We are hearing reports that it is hard to get spare parts, which are scarce now for some of the old Airwave equipment. Will the Home Office fund the cost to individual police forces, fire brigades and others for patching it all together, because the delays are centrally driven and nothing to do with local forces? They are having to look at their budgets now, especially in the current climate. Will you commit to make sure that they are covered for the extra costs?



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Philip Rutnam: The costs of Airwave at the moment are split several ways, as I understand it. The bulk of the costs are borne by the Home Office centrally. Then there are some costs—

- Q41 **Chair:** We expect some costs locally, but the issue of delays and keeping old equipment going will create extra costs. We are hearing a lot of concern from colleagues around the House about the additional costs to individual forces in their areas. Will you cover that?

Philip Rutnam: There are some costs for local emergency services associated with the present solution. Most of the costs are borne by the Home Office. It is all part of our aggregate funding, including for the police. We are not planning to provide additional funding to emergency services in relation to the individual costs that they may face if, say, they need to replace Airwave handsets or something like that.

- Q42 **Chair:** Even though the delay is because of central procurement.

Philip Rutnam: If we take a step back, what we seek to do through this programme is to bring additional gains in functionality and some very large savings.

- Q43 **Chair:** The problem is that they have to pay up front for the costs; they don't get the savings for a while. Jam tomorrow.

Philip Rutnam: If we were not doing anything, they would need to bear the costs of Airwave not just for however long the delay is—nine months or more—but for the indefinite future. What we seek to do through this ambitious programme is to bring them and the country big gains in functionality and also significant savings. The solution, which will then be robust and resilient to further—

- Q44 **Chair:** But you can appreciate the issue from their point of view, as you are an accounting officer. If you were running a budget at local level and you were hoping for—you were probably not so optimistic that you would actually have banked on the savings, given that it is a large, complex Government project—or you were banking on some savings much earlier, what if you now find there is a more than nine-month delay? Just to be absolutely clear, am I right that there will be no additional funding from the Home Office through a police grant or anything else to cover the extra costs because of the delays—yes or no?

Philip Rutnam: I can appreciate the concern—

- Q45 **Chair:** No, I am asking you to be absolutely clear that there is no additional money.

Philip Rutnam: It is a little bit more complex than that, I am afraid, because there are different categories of costs. There are costs that may be borne by individual police forces or fire and rescue services associated with, say, handsets, which I believe are borne locally. We would not propose to provide any funding specifically for those. Then there are the costs of the Airwave extension as a whole, which include the main costs



HOUSE OF COMMONS

associated with the programme and are borne centrally by the Home Office, so if the programme takes longer—

- Q46 **Chair:** So the answer is that if they are extending their equipment because of the delay, the Home Office will pay for that. We just need to be clear on that point.

Philip Rutnam: It is part of the costs of doing business.

Sir Amyas Morse: Excuse me for a second. I am sure you can answer this, Mr Webb. If memory serves me rightly, it was pretty clearly spelt out that if Airwave continued for any length of time, there would have to be a substantial additional investment in Airwave to equip it for longer running. I take it that has not changed. Have I remembered that correctly?

Stephen Webb: Yes.

Sir Amyas Morse: So that is not just continuing to pay for Airwave; that is a substantial capital contribution. That is correct, isn't it?

Stephen Webb: But that is the point—

Sir Amyas Morse: Did I get that right?

Stephen Webb: Not for us. It would fall to Airwave or Motorola.

Sir Amyas Morse: Do you think they will just pay for that?

Stephen Webb: The current money they get from us reflects all the capital investment. They did an enormous amount of capital investment early on, which has now dropped off and will have been written down to zero, so we would certainly argue that they should absorb that.

Sir Amyas Morse: I see.

Stephen Webb: Just one thing on the devices. Obviously, they have been looking to sweat the number of their assets at the moment and buy a few more. The delay means they may have to buy some more devices. The delay is also putting off the point at which they need to buy the new ones, so their total budget for devices will not necessarily go up.

- Q47 **Chair:** We had a suggestion that they may have to procure and deploy interim devices. If the old ones can no longer be patched up and the new system is not in place, they might have to go out into the market and get new equipment. Have you factored that in? These are all risks and costs locally. I just want to be clear whether it is understood at the centre.

Stephen Webb: We do understand. We are working with them to see to what extent we can pool devices for people who have very old ones, to see how we can help them. We have done that with one small niche group of users already, and we are looking at whether that can be done more broadly nationally.

- Q48 **Chair:** Have you got any idea, or when can you give local emergency services an idea, of what the costs of the new equipment will be? The



HOUSE OF COMMONS

delay is obviously delaying everything, but does it also delay any idea of the actual costs of these devices so that they can start budgeting for them?

Stephen Webb: For the handsets, we should be able to announce the award of the contract in a couple of weeks' time, and that will give people a sense of what the cost of that will be as well.

Q49 **Chair:** Do you have an understanding of how long it will take for those procurements to take place at local level, to make sure that everything is up and running? You have got delays built in centrally now, and there was always that double running time so that local areas, as I think you said to us, would be ready to take it on only when they felt ready to take on ESN. Have you got a handle at the centre about how long you will have to have double running, procurement of the new devices and so on with this delay, so that you can be clear about the roll-out deadline?

Stephen Webb: Yes. Broadly, we think that the transition period and the amount of double running will be the same. It is moving to the "right by" period that we have finally to determine. As for the local procurements, we are generally setting these things up as a framework that they should be able to call and make procurements from very quickly indeed.

Chair: Thank you very much. We are minded to call you back in January when the review that you are undertaking, Mr Rutnam, has taken place. It is obviously of great concern. I should add that there is a lot of interest from Members across the House, and not just those around this Committee table. This is obviously a crucial service that has got to be up and running, but we are also watching what it costs the taxpayer. We are keeping an eye on this and may write to you, Mr Rutnam, after this hearing with a summary of some of our questions and concerns resulting from what we have heard today. Thank you very much indeed. I am now going to relinquish the Chair and Mr Geoffrey Clifton-Brown will take over for the next session.