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03 June 2021

Rt Hon. Meg Hillier MP
Chair, Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Chair,

RE: Recommendation 1 Forty-Eighth report of the 2019-2021 – Digital Services at the Border

I am writing to you in relation to recommendation 1 of the Forty-Eighth report of the 2019-2021 session of the Public Accounts Committee report into the Digital Services at the Border, which was published on 12 March 2021.

The recommendation asked that I should review the major technology programmes within the Home Office portfolio and write to the Committee within three months with my updated assessment of each programme's progress alongside the impact I expect each programme to have.

The Home Office is currently responsible for nine major technology programmes that fall within the scope of the Government Major Projects Portfolio. These complex and high value programmes are delivering for significant numbers of user groups across multiple organisations, often replacing legacy systems that are critical to day to day services. The programmes are key to maintaining essential services or delivering the Government's priorities. As such they are subject to a rigorous internal and external scrutiny regime and each programme benefits from regular independent assurance from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority.

In November 2019 we stood up a programme of work to improve the overall delivery confidence of our portfolio of major change. This work aligns with our One Home Office Transformation programme and focuses on:

1. Alignment with strategy – ensuring that our portfolio aligns with our published Outcome Delivery Plan and the Home Secretary's priorities.
2. Effective prioritisation of the portfolio – working with Ministers to ensure our portfolio reflects their priorities but is also deliverable within the resources we have available.

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3. Doing the basics of project management well – through implementation of best practice tools and standards.
4. Increasing project delivery skills and capability across the Department in leading and delivering major programmes.
5. Ensuring an open culture in which project leaders are open about risks, work collaboratively across boundaries and seek input from stakeholders throughout the project.

Across the portfolio we are making progress in delivery of these major technology programmes. Due to their complexity, significant risks and issues do emerge, which need to be carefully managed. I encourage all Senior Responsible Owners (SROs) to be open about the risks and to seek support in taking mitigating actions. As part of this process I am personally leading deep-dive reviews of several programmes supported by non-executive directors who bring private sector expertise in large scale technology delivery.

An assessment of programme progress for each of the nine programmes can be found in the annex to this letter. I hope this information provides the update which the committee is seeking, and I would of course be happy to answer any questions in future PAC hearings.

Yours sincerely,


Matthew Rycroft CBE

Annex: Major technology programmes within the Home Office portfolio

1. Cerberus

Border Force is making a transformative change to its analytics and targeting capabilities, better securing the border with improved operational outcomes, driving operational efficiencies, and therefore achieving considerable cashable savings through the decommissioning of expensive legacy systems. Delivery is progressing largely as planned and to date has delivered a live capability that is in operational use, albeit in a limited capacity. The programme is carrying some resource, governance and technical delivery risks, but these are unlikely to affect key deliverables or lead to a significant increase in cost.

Delivery confidence assessment Amber as at March 2021.

2. Digital Services at the Border (DSaB)

The programme will deliver digital services that will provide systems capable of transforming the way that Border Force (BF) and its partners operate. DSaB is making good progress and on schedule to complete by 31 March 2022; the new digital checking system went live on 20 November 2020 and as at the end of March 2021 is live at 15 of the 56 air, maritime and Juxtaposed ports in scope (including 4 of the UK's busiest airports).

Delivery confidence assessment Amber as at March 2021.

3. Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP)

I last wrote to you on 6 April 2021. The Programme will replace the mobile communications service used by the 3 Emergency Services and other public safety users. This will be done with a new service called the 'Emergency Services Network' (ESN). The programme underwent a long period of re-planning and resetting of the Full Business Case (FBC). The arrival of a new full time SRO and the subsequent approval of the revised FBC by the Programme Board on 28 April have been positive steps in improving confidence. The Department's Investment Committee will consider the updated FBC in June before a Cabinet Office Major Projects Review Group (MPRG) meeting in July.

Delivery confidence assessment Amber Red as at March 2021.

4. Future Borders and Immigration Service (FBIS)

FBIS will enable the UK to take back control of our border; it will simplify, enable and digitise our systems to put customers at the heart of a firmer, fairer and easier to navigate border and immigration system. Following an IPA Review in January 2021 the programme is working to address the recommendations. A new baselined delivery plan for 2021/22 and significant work has been completed to better understand scope, benefits and dependencies as part of the business case refresh which will come to the departments Investment Committee in July. A further IPA assessment will take place in August when confidence is forecast to return to Amber.

Delivery confidence assessment Amber Red as at March 2021.

5. Her Majesty's Passport Office (HMPO) Transformation

The programme aims to modernise the passport business by digitising the end to end process and by automating much of the application assessment work. This will provide Her Majesty's Passport Office with cashable savings and improve the customer experience. HMPO are currently planning for a significant surge in passport applications in the second half of 2021 or 2022. In order to protect our operational delivery and ensure customers receive their passports in a timely manner we may need to defer some elements of the transformation programme.

Delivery confidence assessment Amber Red as at March 2021.

6. Home Office Biometrics (HOB)

This programme provides continuation, convergence and enhancement of Home Office biometrics within Government, covering border security, law enforcement and intelligence. The programme has delivered some key components to Policing and Immigration which support police vetting, exclusions and victim identifications; and of particular note this year is the delivery of an upgraded National DNA Database and the delivery of the Prüm Fingerprints capability which has enabled the sharing of fingerprints with Germany allowing for greater identification of offenders and an increase in crime clear ups. However, the programme has experienced delays to delivery of its Strategic Matcher capability - Strategic Matcher is a single system that will provide the flexibility to support different data sets (police, immigration), algorithms, and requesting systems, offering more accurate and efficient fingerprint and facial matching services.

Delivery confidence assessment Amber Red as at March 2021.

7. Immigration Platform Technology (IPT)

The programme is delivering the technology and information systems to support the immigration service through delivery of a set of integrated modern technology services that are more flexible, more scalable and cheaper to operate than those they replace. The majority of the programme scope has been successfully delivered. The programme has been impacted by several delays, meaning that the delivery of the remaining scope of IPT and the decommissioning of the final legacy system will be later than planned. Reasons for these delays include additional system scope arising during the life of the programme as well as other Migration and Borders priorities (such as EUSS) taking priority in software release pipelines. COVID 19 has also resulted in delays to the rollout of Atlas.

A Red Team Review commissioned by the Home Office Chief Portfolio Officer has set out a series of recommendations that should lead to a reliable plan for completion of IPT. These will be addressed in a revised plan which will confirm the timeline for completion of the programme.

Delivery confidence assessment Amber Red as at March 2021.

8. National Law Enforcement Data Programme (NLEDP)

NLEDP will replace the current Police National Computer (PNC) and Police National Database (PND) systems with one modernised solution: The Law Enforcement Data Service (LEDS). An internal review in spring/summer 2020 identified that the growing scope of work needed to deliver all policing requirements and functionality. The

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programme subsequently self-rated as rated Red and went in to reset. In November 2020 an independent Red Team Review identified several recommendations that, when implemented, would put the programme in a better place to deliver successfully. These are being worked through and, if they are successfully addressed, the programme will come out of reset in July 2021.

Delivery confidence assessment Red as at March 2021.

9. Suspicious Activity Reports (SARS) Reform

The Programme will strengthen the UK's response to money laundering and terrorism financing, and to improve policing outcomes across all crimes by use of the information captured. The outcome will be delivered through modern technology and analytics; improved feedback and collaboration; efficient and effective reporting; and a staff uplift in both the National Crime Agency and police Regional Organised Crime Units. Following an IPA review last year which highlighted some issues around the technology aspects of the programme, considerable work has been done by the programme and our partner in the National Crime Agency to address the issues identified. The programme now has an improved delivery confidence and has successfully piloted new functionality with banks, with a view to further rollout.

Delivery confidence assessment Amber as at March 2021.