



Public Accounts Committee

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Accounting Officer Assessments published in September 2022

Dear Permanent Secretary,

I am writing to you following your letter to the Comptroller and Auditor General of 6 September, providing Accounting Officer Assessments of ten Home Office programmes.

I am grateful to you for improving transparency in respect of these programmes, but it is concerning that so many of them are delayed, reporting scope changes and suffering from a lack of capacity in your Department to deliver them.

I would therefore like you to write back to the Committee with your assessment of the delivery risk that exists within your existing portfolio of major programmes, and how you expect to manage this alongside other operational pressures and your Department's response to the Government's efficiency agenda. I would also like further information on three specific programmes. All three programmes have been given either an Amber or Red delivery confidence rating by the IPA, and I would like to understand what plans are in place for each programme to address the key delivery issues identified.

I would appreciate a response before **Monday 28 November**. I shall share a copy of this letter with the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee, Dame Diana Johnson MP, the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Treasury Officer of Accounts.

Digital Services at the Border (DSAB)

The [DSAB Accounting Officer Assessment](#) explains that this programme is again delayed and not expected to close until 2023. Please explain whether the legacy contracts have been extended further, and if so at what cost, and what contingency plans are in place to manage the risk that the programme is not delivered before the contracts end.

Given that the DSAB programme is 'closing' I would also like to know whether there are resources and plans in place to ensure that the new system will continue to be developed to integrate with any new capabilities provided by the separate Cerberus programme.

I would be grateful for an explanation as to how you assessed that the programme has been value for money given the assessment states that the programme cost of £1 billion now exceeds the value of the expected benefits.

I would also like to see assurances that there is a plan to realise non-quantified benefits once the programme is closed.

In its December 2020 report, [Digital Services at the Border](#), the National Audit Office noted that the



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roll-out of an earlier version of the Border Crossing system was cancelled as it was not able to operate at scale. I would welcome some information on how you have satisfied yourself that these issues are now resolved.

Future Border and Immigration System (FBIS) & Future Supplier Services (FSS)

The [assessment for FBIS](#) notes that there is a risk of significant scope changes. I would like to understand what specific actions the Department is taking to manage this risk.

I would also value some detail on how the FBIS and FSS programmes are aligning their timetables and requirements, which I note is not addressed in either assessment. For example, if FBIS launches in 2025 as stated then does this leave the new centres procured by FSS sitting idle for two years, given the new FSS contract starts in 2023 and lasts at least four years?

The assessment of FBIS predicts a considerable economic benefit of £12 billion but gives little explanation about what this comprises or how it will be realised. Please provide a breakdown of the expected benefits and the key assumptions underlying the calculations, and details of how the programme will realise these benefits.

I would also like to understand how double-counting of benefits between FBIS and the Immigration Platform Technologies (IPT) programme is avoided, given that both FBIS and the IPT programme state that they aim to improve the efficiency of the visa applications.

Immigration Platform Technologies (IPT) programme

The [IPT assessment](#) notes that poor data quality in the legacy systems presents a risk to the successful adoption of the new systems, due to users' lack of trust in the data. Moreover, the assessment's conclusion that the programme is feasible is subject to there being 'a satisfactory resolution to the data validation issues'. Please provide more detail on your strategy for improving legacy data and the plans in place to ensure the successful adoption of the new Atlas system.

I would also like to know how you will protect the capacity to complete this programme, given that staff have previously been diverted to respond to other tasks including the Ukraine and Afghan resettlement schemes, the pressures on the Home Office as a result of the small boat Channel crossings and the current backlogs in the wider immigration system.

Finally, the assessment states that a large number of change requests have been generated for the programme. I would be grateful to know what actions you are taking to control the scope of this programme.

Yours sincerely

Dame Meg Hillier MP
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts