



Public Accounts Committee

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Cabinet Office Accounting Officer Assessments – Commercial/Procurement related

Dear Permanent Secretary,

I am writing to you following publication in September of your summary Accounting Officer assessment in respect of: the [Transforming Public Procurement Programme](#); [the Crown Commercial Service \(CCS\) Change Programme](#); and [the Commercial Capability Expansion Programme](#).

I have reviewed the Accounting Officer assessments with interest and have some lines of enquiry included in the Appendix.

I would be grateful if you could respond on these points by **Monday 28 November**.

Yours sincerely

Dame Meg Hillier MP
Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts



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Appendix

1. Transforming Public Procurement Programme

With the Procurement Bill as announced in the Queen's Speech now sat at the committee stage (following the completion of its second reading in the House of Lords) it appears to me that we are still at the early stages of this programme and, other than to acknowledge that the Bill and programme are progressing, there is little further information to add to that process at this stage.

However, I would like your reflections on the size of the estimated benefits (£205 million over 10 years - equating to about £20 million per year). This benefit seems rather modest in comparison to the government's over £200 billion of annual expenditure on goods and services. What confidence do you have that this net benefit will materialise, given the small margins for error?

2. The Crown Commercial Service (CCS) Change Programme

This Accounting Officer assessment was performed by Simon Tse, Chief Executive and Accounting Officer of the CCS.

I would be grateful if you could provide a response to the following queries:

- a) Please provide further explanation about the value for money assessment of the reduction in programme scope in September 2021 and the extent and impact of the change in scope on the anticipated benefits of the programme. This information will help provide some transparency over the reasons behind the decision to rescope the programme.
- b) Please provide an explanation of the concerns which led to your agreement with the Change Programme Board to allow for additional testing and possible remediation of the digitised commercial agreements.
- c) The GMPP data in March 2022 reported a delivery confidence rating of Amber due to digital products not being scheduled for deployment until May 2022. It is unclear from the assessment whether these are the same digital products that are now delayed into the autumn, and if so, what are the reasons behind these ongoing problems and what (if any) remain unresolved. Please provide clarity on this matter in your response.

3. Commercial Capability Expansion programme

Your assessment reports the delays to the programme caused by COVID-19, and while you note that the expansion of the programme to commercial specialists in central government was concluded in November 2019, you report the challenges you have faced progressing the programme to wider government bodies and contract managers in central government at the desired pace.

I would be grateful if you could respond to the following enquiries:



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- a) In your view, is the programme sufficiently agile to adapt to the possible challenges ahead and navigate any future uncertainty, as was experienced in the COVID-19 pandemic.
- b) Please provide details on the numbers of assessments and accreditations completed compared to expectations across each of the programme cohorts and/or any potential revisions to targets.
- c) Your assessment identifies Cabinet Office recruitment and spending controls as impacting on your ability to deliver the programme, and that an internal review is underway to align goals and resources. Please could you explain how these challenges are affecting the programme and what might then be deliverable by the programme's due date of March 2023.