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Chair, Independent Scheme Assurance Panel

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ISAP Summary Report: December 2009

First, let me thank you on behalf of the Identity and Passport Service for the work of the Independent Scheme Assurance Panel over the last four years. It is evident that the Panel have diligently reviewed the work being undertaken to deliver the National Identity Scheme (NIS), distilling their findings for regular annual reports and culminating in this summary. I am extremely grateful for the work undertaken.

The report recognises our progress in building a capability to record biometric data and to offer identity cards in limited numbers, with the first UK Identity Cards issued on time and budget in 2009. It endorses the small-scale launch as a prudent approach to the design of the full-scale NIS and recognises our increasing capability to develop the infrastructure which will enable 'second-biometric' passports and replace current passport systems.

The report then offers observations on the key challenges and priorities in the next phase of our development namely the need for benefits realisation and the stimulation of demand, maintaining public trust as well as keeping the implementation programme achievable and driven by benefits. These are acknowledged and I have summarised below the work we are doing in these areas, picking up some of the specific points made in the report.

Benefit and Value

I recognise the points raised in the report about the ‘development of identity services’. IPS have progressed this work significantly in recent months, providing an articulation of potential developments that could add significant value to a range of users across a number of sectors – both public and private. In doing this, we have engaged both government departments and the marketplace to understand latest developments, areas of opportunity and how and where IPS can add real value. As a result, we are in the process of developing a number of service concepts that we believe can provide real utility and added value across a number of key sectors providing improved assurance in areas where the validation of individuals’ identities is vital to everyday business process.

I broadly agree with the Panel’s analysis on ‘data storage’ put forward in the report. In the ‘Safeguarding Identity’ Strategy published in 2009, IPS recognised the difficulty posed by the existence of multiple sets of identity data held across government and proposed a two step approach. First, that the information individuals use to establish their identity should be based on an agreed minimum set of trusted data and second, that government departments should move towards a common definition of identity, based on the minimum identity data set. Good progress is being made towards these goals, which are necessary and practical steps towards the use by government departments of a single set of identity information held on the NIS, and which in themselves will help deliver the early benefits envisaged in ‘Safeguarding Identity’.

Trust

I understand the importance of transparency around the protection of personal data and the approach to data sharing. Our aim is to detail a clear outline of our approach over the coming months after discussion with the Public Panel and Experts Group.

Implementation

I acknowledge the Panel’s observation that there is a significant risk to the successful implementation of the programme as a result of the complexity of the Scheme and support the recommendation to simplify and prioritise releases according to their

benefits. We have now developed and adopted a revised release landscape whereby the revised schedule protects and delivers the key business outcomes for IPS (and UKBA) in an uncertain political environment, and addresses the known challenges with regard to delivery complexity, scope, cost and timelines. The revised approach prioritises the known business requirements and calls for integration of the technical platform after the business requirements are resolved. Thus, with a reduced integration requirement, the overall release profile has been measurably simplified. A significant number of known Scheme design issues have been addressed in the revised roadmap and any remaining will continue to be worked through as part of the ongoing design activity. A rigorous change process is also in place which ensures our approval of change requests is driven by benefits.

I am pleased to confirm that our Test and Readiness Centre is in the final stages of being established. In preparation, we have completed our Release Integration Testing approach definition for cases where there is limited or no cross supplier integration. For cross supplier releases, such as the Next Generation Passport release, we propose to use one of the suppliers as the lead supplier and for that supplier to take responsibility for much of the management of the testing activity. This will alleviate some of the pressure on IPS to supply scarce resource. Progress reporting and Earned Value reporting is under discussion with suppliers and it is our intention to use the latter increasingly throughout build and test phases. We will agree the scope of testing with suppliers at the appropriate time and we have noted the Panel's comments on non-functional tests.

I recognise the challenge highlighted in the report of amalgamating the new operating model for IPS with the existing passport model and agree that the challenge of management attention being diverted away from the future by issues of today is a real one. The vision and design for the new operating model, which will agree the 'to be' and consider the transition from the 'as is', will be re-validated in the first half of 2010 and this will inform the final implementation strategy. The people related aspects of the transformation, both customers, staff and suppliers/data providers, are a key dimension of our business change approach and we are developing activity plans for completion in the next 12-18 months, although I do agree that this will be an area that demands significant attention and skill.

The Panel's recommendations for improving the focus of NIS governance and management are welcome and timely. I recognize the fact that our present governance structures, versus the requirements on delivery, necessitate a re-focusing of approach. Whilst the Panel's recommendations specify a new approach to the Scheme Management Board, we are, in fact, undertaking a review across both central and programme level governance which will strengthen focus both operationally and strategically, and I anticipate we will implement the new approach within the next three months.

Finally, I fully agree that a robust and clearly articulated assurance framework should continue to support our work moving forward so we will continue to refine and improve our processes to fulfil this undertaking.

James