Dear Kathryn

**Airwave and Windows 7 – Upgrades and Continued Service Support**

I’m writing following the Public Accounts Committee hearing on the delivery of the Emergency Services Network (ESN) on the 22nd May, which I attended alongside the Permanent Secretary Sir Philip Rutnam and Joanna Davinson, head of DDaT.

During the hearing Ms Shabana Mahmood, Member for Birmingham, Ladywood, mentioned that the committee had received a note from you, on behalf of the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire police. I understand the letter discussed Airwave Upgrades, the impending ceasing of support that Microsoft will provide for Windows 7 and the potential security risks this poses for the emergency services.

In order to make the Airwave network and service sustainable to the revised running date of December 2022, Motorola / Airwave have commenced a programme of network refresh activities. The Home Office has established a Project Board which includes representation from end user communities as well as Motorola / Airwave. This board is responsible for ensuring robust planning, appropriate communications and accountable decision making.

The core infrastructure update programme includes upgrades to several network switches, base station refreshes and a replacement for the Airwave kit that interfaces into the Integrated Communication Control Systems (ICCS) used by force control rooms. This work will remove the dependency on any particular version of Microsoft Windows within the control rooms. The Home Office is working with Airwave to ensure that these new interfaces meet requirements and are introduced in a manner that minimises impact on service for end user organisations.

Motorola will be fully responsible for the costs of provision of the new interfaces themselves as part of the Airwave contract extension agreement and the Home Office will oversee the deployment of the new infrastructure (DCS) into the Airwave network.
User Organisations will, however, need to provide resources to oversee local implementation and will be responsible for funding and overseeing any changes to their control room systems that are required as a result of this Airwave network upgrade. We expect the new interfaces will be ready for deployment to start in Q2 2020. There is a requirement to upgrade 140 plus control rooms across police, fire and ambulance and the deployment is expected to be completed by the end of 2022.

The Home Office and Airwave are also currently reviewing risk mitigations for the existing kit and its reliance on Windows 7. The Home Office have recently asked Airwave to produce a Security Management Plan for management of Windows 7 within the Airwave Network beyond the end of support period (Jan 2020) and Airwave have been asked to additionally include advice and clarification regarding the measures that are proposed to ensure the security of the Airwave service and supportability of control room systems between the point at which Microsoft withdraw support and the point at which all control rooms can be expected to have fully migrated to the new interface technology. Once advice is available this will be briefed out to end user organisations via the normal Airwave management channels.

I hope this letter clarifies the current situation and I am happy to meet should you have any further queries. I am copying this to Meg Hillier, Sir Philip Rutnam and Joanna Davinson.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Webb
Director, Law Enforcement Programmes