Dear Chair,

Re: Disclosure and Barring Service: progress review

In March, the Committee invited the Home Office and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) to provide an update on progress made on modernising the services provided by DBS since the Committee’s report in May 2018. The Committee made several recommendations in its latest report published on 1st May, I am writing to update on progress made against those recommendations.

1: PAC recommendation: The Home Office should write to us before Parliament’s summer recess with an update on progress in transitioning between suppliers, the details of the new supplier and contract arrangements, expectations of deliverables and costs, the TCS exit strategy at the end of the transition period, and the outcomes of the negotiations with TCS over commercial disputes with the DBS.

The DBS is responsible for the procurement process for new suppliers, which is subject to Home Office, Cabinet Office and HM Treasury approvals. DBS will, at the end of July 2019, be awarding contracts for Contact Centre and Technology Services and the transfer of TCS services to the new suppliers is planned to commence from August 2019. DBS are expecting the new suppliers to have started to deliver services, and for TCS to have stopped delivering, by the end of March 2020. Minimal disruption to live DBS services is expected during transition. The financial detail is commercially sensitive and cannot be shared at this stage.

The Contact Centre Services contract will be awarded for an initial period of three and half years, with an option to extend for a maximum two years; and will deliver telephony, email, web-chat and back office functions. The Technology Services contract will be awarded for a period of two and a half years, with an option to extend for up to a maximum two years. Technology Services contract deliverables include: technology strategy and service
design; end user services; technical, application and data management and service integration.

DBS have arranged for additional sub contracts to transition in-house to ensure business as usual with standard and enhanced disclosure services, and mail and print services.

Regarding the outcomes of the negotiations with TCS over commercial disputes with the DBS, there is no change in the disputed cause of delay since TCS gave notice of its intention to bring court proceedings in September 2018.

1a: PAC recommendation: In the same letter, the Home Office should also assess the strength of the DBS’s confidence expressed at the evidence session that the new supplier will be able to pick up TCS's role quickly and effectively.

The Home Office will continue to support the DBS Board and the DBS Transition Programme team with informal assurance and guidance, which is delivered through a monthly sub-group of the Portfolio and Investment Committee, where programme, technical, commercial and legal, plans, risks and issues are reviewed and challenged. In addition, where necessary, the Home Office will provide dedicated support to the service transition programme team to ensure a safe transition to new suppliers.

The Government Commercial Function will engage with the three suppliers in question to encourage the right actions to be taken to deliver a successful transition, recognising some of the complexities of this programme, within the context of our wider strategic relationship with those suppliers.

4: PAC recommendation: The Department should write to us before Parliament’s summer recess setting out what it has done to oversee, monitor and challenge the ongoing work at DBS to improve services and transition to the new contractor.

The DBS Service Transition Programme is in place to manage the operational exit from the TCS contract and transition the services that were outsourced to TCS to replacement service providers. This is overseen by a sub-group of the Home Office Portfolio and Investment Committee (PIC), membership of which consists of senior representatives from the department’s project Delivery, Commercial, Digital Data and Technology, Economist functions, and from the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA). The sub-group meet monthly to review progress, challenge plans, unblock issues and, as necessary, broker wider support. The programme is also subject to the IPA’s Gateway Review process; and its business case is subject to approval by PIC and by Cabinet Office and HM Treasury under their spending controls.
4b: PAC recommendation: In the same letter, the Home Office should also provide the Committee with an update on the progress it is making to reduce the fees to the users of the DBS’s services.

The Police Act 1997 (Criminal Records) (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2019, which amend the fees payable, was laid in Parliament on 15 July 2019. The new fees will come into effect on 1 October 2019. The fees for the DBS disclosure certificates will be reduced as follows:

- Enhanced certificate from £44 to £40
- Standard certificate from £26 to £23
- Basic certificate from £25 to £23

Yours sincerely,

Sir Philip Rutnam
Permanent Secretary