Dear Norman

UPDATE ON THE BIOMETRICS STRATEGY AND FORENSIC SCIENCE REVIEW

As indicated in my last return to you, I am writing to provide you with an update on the Biometrics Strategy and Forensics Review.

**Biometrics**

Since the publication of the Biometrics Strategy, we have been working to ensure the delivery of better public services, whilst maintaining public trust. In particular, we have:

- established the Law Enforcement Facial Images and New Biometrics Oversight Board. The board which has met three times, is chaired by Chief Constable Mike Barton, and brings together operational and regulatory parties. To promote transparency, we will be publishing the minutes of the meetings shortly.

- published an overarching Home Office Biometrics Programme (HOB) Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) on GOV.UK, alongside five of the HOB project PIAs. The programme continues to make good progress.

- continued work to enable the more efficient review and automatic deletion of custody images by linking them to conviction status.

- started the review of governance and oversight of biometrics, with input from subject matter experts. We will engage with other interested parties shortly.
• operationally, we have started work to improve the automation of fingerprint enrolment at visa application centres for foreign nationals applying for visas to come to the UK and increased ePassport gates to 259 in 22 locations allowing for more accurate verification of individuals at ports of entry.

**Forensics**

Recognising concerns raised earlier this year by policing, CJS partners and the Forensic Science Regulator, notably on the need to improve quality standards and stabilise the forensics market, we asked the chairs of the NPCC and APCC to collaboratively review provision of forensic services into the CJS with the Home Office.

The review considered the provision of forensic science to criminal investigations in England and Wales, ‘in-house’ police and private provision, across all forms of forensic science.

The findings of the review are currently under consideration and stakeholders are being consulted on the next steps. Thematically, the recommendations will cover quality standards; commercial policy and research and development.

The findings of the review will be published in due course. However, the most urgent actions relating to the capabilities required in policing to manage the market effectively are already being implemented.

I will update you and the committee again on progress in due course.

Baroness Williams of Trafford