MOBILE RADIO NETWORK SERVICES MARKET INVESTIGATION

Summary of hearing with the Independent Assurance Panel (IAP) held on 24 February 2022

Panel background

1. The chair of the IAP, Simon Ricketts, explained that successive programme Boards, in 2016 and 2017, had noted the Emergency Services Network (ESN) programme was having difficulties. As a result he was invited by the then Permanent Secretary, Sir Philip Rutnam, to undertake an independent review of the ESN programme. The independent review, was published in October 2017. (This report pre-dated the establishment of the IAP).

2. The IAP explained that in 2018, fellow IAP member, Michael Hurn from the Nichols Group, was asked by Sir Philip Rutnam to produce an independent report on what cross-government, joined-up assurance should look like and this was set out in a summary report. One of the recommendations from the report was to form an independent assurance panel for the ESN programme. One of the proposed IAP objectives was to look at the detail of the programme's schedule, as regularly as was warranted, and to report back to the Home Office and the Cabinet Office on the status of the ESN programme identifying difficulties and challenges.

3. The IAP explained that from time to time the IAP produces reports on the programme, which are provided to the Permanent Secretary at the Home Office, the Cabinet Office's Infrastructure and Projects Authority, the government internal audit agency, and the to the National Audit Office. While the IAP liaises extensively with these bodies, its reports provide independent, challenging views on the status of the ESN programme.

2017 review

4. The IAP explained that in 2017 there had been multiple issues that were affecting the delivery of the ESN programme and as such that there was no one sole cause of delays. The IAP noted that, since 2017, the ESN programme has moved on and progress had been made with the delivery of

some elements, for example coverage. The IAP also noted that delivery of the remaining components (ie the Kodiak application and infrastructure that Motorola[1] is to deliver) largely fell within Motorola's responsibility.

5.   The IAP explained that some of the concerns may be to do with resourcing issues and escalating concerns to the right seniority, so as to bring in capabilities required to fix things when they went wrong.

Transition from LMR to LTE

6.   The IAP stated that from a technical perspective, it is credible that the Airwave network could continue for a number of years. The IAP noted that a plan to switch off at some point would be needed and then separately, there was the question of the commercial terms on which it would continue.

7.   The IAP explained that the credibility of keeping the Airwave network going beyond 2026 would be dependent on the extent to which some of the technical debt and legacy issues were addressed through investment. In the IAP's view, to keep the Airwave network going beyond 2030 would get increasingly difficult due to underlying technologies no longer being supported in the same way.

8.   The IAP was of the view (February 2022), that the proposed switch off date for the Airwave network of 2026 was ambitious but not impossible, provided there were no further slippages.

9.   The IAP explained that, in general, what the UK was doing with ESN was not too dissimilar from what other countries were trying to do with their public safety networks. The IAP noted that the UK was slightly ahead of other countries.

User confidence

10.   The IAP noted that one of the key elements to the transition to ESN was user confidence that the technology was available. The IAP said that users had become more confident that the technology underpinning ESN (i.e. 4G LTE) was viable but were concerned about on-going slippages in the deployment of Kodiak and stability issues with the environment on which it is to run. Also, there was still more to be done to develop a robust transition plan that user groups could sign off.

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[1] In this document the term Motorola refers to Motorola Solutions, Inc. and its subsidiaries.

ESN delays

11.   The IAP noted that projects of this scale will always face a number of issues and that even more collaboration between the Home Office, users and suppliers as part of a "one team" approach would be needed.