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Dear Sirs,

Transformational Government: Implementing the strategy requires a new framework for public services

Transformational Government is a bold vision that puts the citizen at the centre of public services. PA welcomes and supports this initiative whilst recognising that delivering it requires changing the way government interacts with the citizen and delivers services at every level. This will be uniquely challenging – government is structured around organisational boundaries that constrain joined-up policy-making and service delivery, and it uses disparate processes and heterogeneous technology.

To overcome these obstacles, government needs a framework for turning the strategy into practical programmes of sustainable change.

PA's experience of developing such a framework in our work with leading local authorities and central government bodies suggests that there is a need to create joint ownership between the citizen and the government of service outcomes. This means putting the citizen at the heart of each stage of the typical "journey" a citizen makes: identifying that they have a need, accessing the service, designing a package of services to meet their specific needs, and finally delivery ("co-production" with government) of the actual service itself. We have based our initial response to the *Transformational Government* paper around the following components of such a framework:

1. Unified citizen access provides the key to implementing citizen-focused services

Our view, founded on our experience particularly in leading local authorities, is that implementing this model should start with creating a single point of citizen access. This means creating a new citizen contact function, bringing together all access channels for a group of related services into one common "front office" which becomes the citizens' advocate as they progress through their journey – a logical extension of the UKOnline/DirectGov concept across all delivery channels. Service delivery operations become more arms length, delivered by the public bodies or their partners, and are re-engineered around the new citizen front office – providing the opportunity for substantial efficiencies.

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As well as transforming the citizen experience, this approach provides:

- a champion on behalf of the citizen to promote different and more diverse forms of supply, choice and personalisation. It thereby generates a permanent and continuous improvement in the quality and efficiency of public service delivery.
- information about citizens' use of services and their needs which can be used to develop better strategies and better targeting of services, just as the private sector uses market information to develop products that people want to buy. In this way, strategies become properly grounded in outcomes.

The measures outlined in paragraph 33 of *Transformational Government* will be essential elements of this function - in particular the rationalisation of the government's web presence and the move towards a mobile customer base.

2. A common platform of services maximises efficiency and deliverability

A key component of the Transformational Government strategy should be real progression towards a common platform of services thereby rationalising IT provision on a pan-Government scale. This rationalisation could be realised through the creation of a Government Service Catalogue specifying both operational and change services in terms of outputs, extending what has already been achieved through mechanisms such as Catalist and standards such as e-GIF. It would be accompanied by supporting technical standards and guidelines for contract and service management, with performance levels defined in terms of user experience.

Such a far-reaching initiative would need to focus initial efforts on one clearly defined service area to ensure success. It would also need a high degree of inbuilt flexibility to support differing requirements across the various parts of Government. We believe that such a move would allow the benefits that have already been realised within Departments to be harnessed on a much wider scale.

3. Strong central leadership and co-ordination ensures effective portfolio management

The creation of a strong and effective central government function, equipped with the necessary vision, talent, influence and resources to be able to deliver the implementation steps is likely to be required for such a large-scale change. This function should provide a range of services including, for example, the creation and enforcement of technical and professional standards and the maintenance of accurate data on current contracts and supplier performance. In addition it would use its influence both internally to shape the direction and investment in IT across government and externally to ensure the market invested to deliver the best results. The roles of the CIO Council, the Common Infrastructure Board and the Service Transformation Board must be carefully interwoven to ensure that all of these activities are undertaken effectively and without duplication. Departmental involvement may eventually require some degree of compulsion, but demonstrating the benefits of participation we believe would encourage voluntary participation.

4. Proactive talent management optimises the human contribution

PA believes that achieving technological success will require attracting and developing talented people both from within government and outside it in the supplier community. Internally this requires key roles, such as the Customer Group Directors and the Shared Service Director, to be clearly defined and resourced based on core competences. Attracting the right people requires these roles to be given the necessary profile with appropriate recruitment policies to ensure the appropriate response. On the supplier side, suppliers also need to be encouraged to attract the right people to ensure successful delivery of government contracts. We support the idea of an academy and defined qualifications and career structures in principle, but we

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also believe that the availability of talent must also be tackled head on in the short term to create a critical mass of the required skills, and attract others to the profession within Government.

5. Shared services form an essential part of the medium-term delivery timetable

Sharing support services is now a reality due to advances in systems, infrastructure and communications, however, maximising the benefits from projects both individually and across the public sector as a whole still presents significant challenges. The potential of shared services to deliver efficiency savings is now recognised at the highest levels. Taking advantage of technological solutions to deliver higher quality, more consistent and integrated support services to public sector organisations will contribute significantly to the efficiency agenda – both by releasing cashable savings and allowing professional staff to focus on higher value activities.

The public sector is potentially an enormous market for the supplier community and this should provide leverage to both improve value for money and re-use design work already undertaken. This will require more joined-up thinking both from individual projects and departments and strong central co-ordination. There are benefits from sharing across organisational boundaries in terms of economies of scale and also in commonality and standardisation of approaches and systems. We expect to see many of the smaller public sector bodies forming alliances, joint ventures and strategic partnerships to share in the benefits of shared services.

Simply implementing new ERP systems or centralising back-office activities will not deliver the wider objectives. The transformational aspect of this is vital. The fundamental redesign of how services are delivered, the channels used and the change in culture within support services are all essential to success. These areas are historically those that require significant support and have caused previous projects to fail to deliver the full benefits.

The real challenge for Government is how to deliver on these principles and actually make shared services happen. Otherwise the fundamental principles of the Efficiency Review, of cross-Departmental sharing to create a small number of effective back office operations, will remain an unfulfilled objective. Providing a *common platform of services* and *strong central leadership* will go a long way to addressing this.

Conclusion

By concentrating on these five core areas we believe the strategy will realise benefits far beyond those discussed in the paper and could deliver a positive impact on the UK technology economy as a whole, while simultaneously improving the citizen experience of interacting with government and reducing the costs of service delivery. If you would like to discuss any of these ideas, we would be happy to meet.

Yours sincerely



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