

Speech [1] by Ruth Evans, Chair of the Payments Strategy Forum, at the launch event for the final Strategy of the Payments Strategy Forum on 29 November 2016 in London

This is the text of the speech as drafted and may differ from the delivered version

Welcome

Good morning everyone! Welcome to the launch of the final Strategy of the Payments Strategy Forum.

I am sure you all know by now, I am Ruth Evans, the Chair of the Payments Strategy Forum. I must say it's good to see so many of you here this morning.

And, it certainly seems that every time we meet, the number of people who are interested in our work has grown. I don't feel like I am looking out at the same old faces all the time anyway.

I take this as a sign of just how interested the wider Community is in our work and the extent to which our Strategy could and should have a positive impact on all of you.

Today's agenda

We have a great agenda today and I hope you will all find it both enjoyable and informative.

If you want to share your views on twitter we have created the very catchy hash tag – 'payments strategy forum' – all one word. I know the team pay close attention to your tweets and use the feedback to shape our work. So please tweet away!

We've split the morning into two sessions.

The first hour will be an opportunity for the PSR; the Bank of England; the FCA and the UK Government to discuss their views on our Strategy. The Forum has made a great effort to seek their input and, where possible, ensure that they are aligned with our thinking. I look forward to hearing from Hannah, Andrew, Chris and Simon Kirby MP over the next hour.

We also have a video that I hope will capture both the hard work and the enthusiasm that has gone into the work over the last year.

In the second hour, the Chairs of the Forum's four working groups will provide an overview of our Strategy and share some personal views on our work. There will also be an opportunity for you ask questions.

Acknowledging the importance of the Payments Community

I'd like briefly to set the context. I was brought in by the PSR as an independent Chair with no links to the Financial Services industry. Whilst this means that I've had a pretty steep learning curve, getting to grips with an incredibly dynamic sector in the midst of huge change, it also presented an exciting challenge.

I saw this role as a unique opportunity to do something that has never been done before in Payments. That is, to bring both providers and users of this vast and complex industry around the table, in one forum, with one objective – to set a strategy for collaborative industry-wide innovation with the needs of users at the heart.

From the start, the Forum agreed a fundamental principle: that it would be a place where the voice of the user was heard by the providers and operators of payment services. I am confident, that we have achieved that.

We've also achieved it within a timeline that I was told was 'impossible' - just under a year. But the reason we succeeded was because of the hard work of the people sitting here today: the secretariat, the Forum members, and you – the Payments Community.

As you all know, this Forum is unique. It's the first time that experts from all parts of the payments sector and beyond, have come together as equal voices in one process to plan the future of the UK's Payment Systems.

You may have heard me say that the Payments Community has done the real hard graft for the Forum – it's true. You are the group who have provided the invaluable resource, expertise and enthusiasm to bring us to this point.

In spite of low expectations, historic inertia and aggressive timelines, you are the ones who have attended the roundtables and launch events, engaged in one-to-one meetings, and submitted detailed consultation responses. Over 200 of you have participated in our 4 working groups and many have voluntarily put out your own communications to help the wider industry understand this work. Not only that, some of you have even contributed your own funding and resources to support these activities.

The Secretariat tells me that whenever they send out an email to you, there's is always a flurry of people getting in touch asking to join this Community because you have forwarded these emails to colleagues and friends. The numbers confirm this - the Community has grown from 304 individuals from 208 organisations in September last year, to 534 individuals from 326 organisations today.

This represents an unprecedented level of collaboration and commitment from the entire payments industry and from consumer groups, retailers and government into making Payments in the UK truly world class. Businesses have worked with consumers, large banks have worked with their challengers, and the industry has worked with the regulator.

The Forum has been listening to you through the Consultation

When we last met I said that we were going into listening mode. We asked for your feedback on our draft proposals and we committed to incorporate this into our final iteration of the Strategy.

So, for those of you who haven't had a chance to read through the whole 80 pages over breakfast, let me tell you what has changed since we last met.

The answer is – not a great deal!

The consultation very much validated our thinking, which is why there were no big surprises or show stoppers in what you told us. We were very pleased with this outcome as it has proved that this has not been an exercise of a few boffins hunkering down in a bunker to tell us all what's best.

We received more than 60 responses from all corners of the Community which expressed, in great detail, your thoughts and feelings on the Strategy.

And as I have said, the responses were overwhelmingly positive. The process worked!

I will be giving you an overview of the Strategy when I next speak. But for now, I want to give you a couple of words on what has changed as a result of your feedback.

Some solutions had as much as a 100% approval rate. The lowest approval for a solution was 70%. This is a testament to the on-going engagement I have just described.

Three key themes emerged from your responses across all solutions. There was feedback on data privacy and security, governance of the implementation and the requirement for more information on the costs and benefits of the solutions.

On the first theme of data privacy and security implications, you highlighted the risks involved in solutions which involve the creation of databases and sharing of personal information.

As a result we will establish a stream of activity to address data security and privacy concerns across all solutions.

For the second theme, there was general consensus on the governance of the design and implementation of the solutions. The majority of you favoured the PSR for this oversight role, and made a number of constructive comments.

As such, as a signal of their confidence, the PSR has asked the Forum to continue until 2017. We will be taking up oversight of the governance arrangements and maintaining a strong and active role during implementation.

The third theme highlighted the importance of providing further information on the solutions, and undertaking proper cost-benefit analysis during the detailed design and implementation phase.

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Well, since the draft, we have undertaken the immense task of business case evaluation and have done a great deal of thinking about implementation which you can find in today's document. And we have committed to assess the feasibility of financial implementation models in the next stage of the process.

There were, of course, a high number of comments on individual solutions, which have fed into our thinking and helped us to refine them further. The strategy still proposes solutions for greater control and customer assurance and for the provision of more data with payments, as well as ways for the industry to work together better to tackle financial crime. And the simplification agenda remains in place.

As you can see – our listening mode has been very busy indeed!

Next Steps

We now intend to move into full blown implementation mode. I want to keep this momentum, I want to keep this enthusiasm and I want to see the Payments Community continue to grow.

We cannot stand still. We need to press on. A number of you have said to me that the greatest tragedy would be for all this work to just become a bunch of slides that gathers dust. Well, don't worry – both Hannah and I are totally committed to acting on this Strategy.

So now, onto our video.

The Forum has been a collaborative endeavour and it is therefore fitting that we open this event with the words of those most directly involved.

***** VIDEO *****

I hope you all enjoyed that. On that note I'll now handover to Hannah who will share with us the PSR view on the FINAL Strategy.