

**Minutes of the Executive Committee Quarterly Performance Review meeting
held on Thursday 22 October 2015 at 3.30pm**

Those present: David Natzler (Clerk of the House) (Chair)
Myfanwy Barrett (Director of Finance)
John Benger (Clerk Assistant and Director General of Chamber
and Committee Services)
John Borley CB (Director General of Facilities)
Rob Greig (Director of the Parliamentary Digital Service)
Penny Young (Librarian and Director General, Department of
Information Services)
Andrew Walker (Director General of HR and Change)

In attendance: Marianne Cwynarski (Committee Secretary)
Lloyd Owen (Assistant Secretary)
Tom Goldsmith (Head of the Governance Office)
Jane Hough
Rachel Harrison
Amanda Colledge (item 1)

1. Finance

1.1. **Amanda Colledge** introduced the paper, which reported an estimated underspend of £250,000. Since the paper had been drafted further figures had become available; the projection was a £1m underspend, and there was an increasing certainty that the contingency would not be required, leading to an overall underspend of £3.3m. The post-election shadow had been accounted for, but things had been slower than had anticipated and the increased costs of the new Committees had been absorbed by this delay. Digital projects and programmes were also likely to underspend, rather than requiring the contingency predicted, as a result of the hosting project being cancelled. Once the digital strategy was up and running the position would be very different. With the oncoming senior management review and other staffing changes there would be other pressures in 2015/16 as well. It was worth discussing the level of contingency that the House needed to hold.

1.2. The Committee discussed the paper:

- The Committee discussed whether the underspend could be absorbed elsewhere. The likely direction of travel was that the underspend would grow rather than fall. **The Chair** said that this was the correct point in the year for departments with worthwhile bids to come forward with suggestions to bring things forward from 2016/17 where possible. **Rob Greig** noted that the General Election programme was taking up a large amount of PDS resource, which would create challenges in terms of delivering projects during the current financial year. There was a desire in both Houses to make better use of digital, but the service was not in a

position to deliver at present. The most challenging year would be 2016/17.

- **Myfanwy Barrett** noted that planned investment over the next few years was now £1bn. The Committee discussed the capacity of the House Service to concurrently manage the projects involved. The Change Team would be asked to look at the issue. It was important to adopt a strategic approach to recruitment for these major programmes.
- **Amanda Colledge** noted that departmental forecast position was fairly close to the target. It was a positive outcome that the contingency would not be required. **Penny Young** noted that DIS was in a challenging position relating to the overall financial outturn.
- The Committee discussed the future financial remit. **Rob Greig** noted that the Digital Service was preparing for a major programme of works which would be starting in 2016. **Myfanwy Barrett** noted that because of the size of the planned programmes, in digital and elsewhere, a small delay could have a big impact on the forecast. **Amanda Colledge** said that £6m of savings were being made in 16/17. It was important to make sure that good budgetary practice was employed. The Committee discussed how the projected underspend might be absorbed during the current year. **Myfanwy Barrett** said that specific discrete projects, with clear deliverables, could be established to make use of the underspend.

1.3. **The Chair** asked about the capital budget. **Amanda Colledge** said that the current forecast underspend was £6m, of which £3.3 was from the Department of Facilities. The figure had been stable from August to September, but there were some continuing uncertainties. **John Borley** noted that forecasting had improved, and there had been much more stringent discounting in the current year.

1.4. The Committee noted the paper and the forthcoming decision by the Commission on the financial remit.

2. Risk Management

2.1. **Rachel Harrison** introduced the paper. A rewording of Corporate Risk 3 had been proposed. The Committee was also being asked to agree a mandate for the Corporate Risk Management Team. The scores for Committee level risks were the same as at the previous meeting. There were some issues in finance and procurement the Committee would wish to monitor, but these had not been escalated to the Committee at this stage. The quality of some of the data underlying the risks reported to the Committee was a concern, and this was being addressed by the Corporate Risk Management Team.

2.2. The Committee discussed the proposed rewording the risk:

- Penny Young said the existing wording of the risk did not cover all the

potential impacts on the House's reputation. The new wording made clear that the Committee were focusing on the reputation of the House as a whole. It highlighted the lack of a formal external communications strategy

2.3. The Committee agreed the revised wording.

2.4. The Committee discussed the draft mandate for the Corporate Risk Management Team:

- **Rachel Harrison** explained that the draft mandate had arisen following an Internal Audit review of risk management in 2014/15. It set out the role of the Corporate Risk Management Team in working with departments on their risks, and would empower the team to set targets with departments for implementing changes and follow them up.
- The Committee discussed whether the mandate should also include programme and project risks. The Committee agreed that the Corporate Risk Management Team should provide an overview of all risks, but work was needed to agree how this would be approached. Work being undertaken on a potential enterprise programme management office would assist in this area.
- The Committee discussed how risks were managed. Work was required to make clear to managers about where responsibility lay for ensuring that risks were managed correctly. It was important to engage more staff in the process. The proposed role for the Corporate Risk Management Team of encouraging best practice was important. **Rachel Harrison** said that the next deep dive might focus on red risks, particularly those that had been raised by Internal Audit, and engage staff in a discussion about why risks were red and whether these were really important. This could be reported at the January QPR. The Committee agreed.
- The Committee discussed the complexity of the risk framework and whether it should be simplified.
- The Committee discussed the Executive Committee level risks and considered whether the current risk scores were still appropriate. **The Chair** noted that further work was required in relation to security risks, which was being taken forward by the Parliamentary Security Director. The Committee discussed risk four in the context of having the resource capacity to deliver major programmes. The Committee agreed that the scoring of this risk would be reviewed.

2.5. The Committee agreed the mandate and suggested that the longer term aspiration should be for the Corporate Risk Management Team to provide oversight of risk management for projects and programmes.

3. Transactional systems

3.1. **John Benger** said that there were a number of transactional systems which

caused problems for staff. There was an NHS project to make transactional systems more human, which might provide useful information for the House. It was worth considering about how testing was done in terms of staff usability and how this could be addressed.

3.2. The Committee discussed the issue:

- **The Chair** noted that this also included Members, it was about transactions between staff and Members, staff and staff, and staff and the public.
- The Director General would be able to bring lots of experience to bear on this issue. Culture change was required as well as interface tweaks. Where systems were seen as unwieldy or unhelpful, it was worth reviewing why these systems were in place.
- The interaction of Members with House services, particularly in terms of the range of phone numbers that were provided to members to access services should be reviewed.
- Many of the issues with transactional systems were historic, and the generality of the customer experience was something that would be considered in future.
- The Committee agreed to consider how to approach seemingly unhelpful systems and processes, and whether the CI team or other initiatives could be used to improve day to day transactions.

4. AOB

4.1. The Committee discussed the performance information in the QPR reports:

- **Penny Young** noted that Member interactions with the Library compared favourably with the same position in the previous parliament.
- **John Borley** noted that the reference to fire safety being on hold was misleading, as it was incorporated into the Northern Estate Programme. Rob Greig also commented that he was reviewing the SPIRE contract. **The Chair** asked about issues in relation to Canon Row. **John Borley** said that this was in relation to connecting utilities in Whitehall. **The Chair** asked if there were any concerns about the cast iron roofs project. **John Borley** said that he wasn't.

4.2. **The Chair** noted that the two catering departments had agreed to have a joint catering procurement manager. **The Chair** asked about the issue relating to Members bank details. **John Bengler** said that it had not been possible to get information from IPSA and this had required lots of manual intervention.

5. Flexible working policy

5.1. **Andrew Walker** introduced the paper. In November the House would

continue with the current time recording system. A revised annual spreadsheet would be used by all staff from May 2016. This would be piloted by DIS from January. The flexible working policy would begin to be adopted in the meantime. The paper set out the draft policy. It was still in discussion with the Unions but he hoped that this was close to being completed. The policy applied to A-E staff; other staff such as rostered staff and catering staff were not included. The corporate services programme had agreed to an early project on rostering software to introduce this where needed. This was being speeded up as a result of the needs of the incoming security officers. The second part of this project would be long term time recording, which would take at least a year to be implemented. Flexi-time was the third element of the programme. This was now a business change project. It was about teasing out teething problems and getting it to be part of business as usual.

5.2. The Committee discussed the paper:

- **The Chair** asked how staff were allocated to the different groups. **Andrew Walker** said that departments would work together on this. Individual staff would not be able to make a choice, but it was important to be consistent across the House. Decisions would be made within departments about which staff would fall into which group, rather than centrally.
- **Penny Young** asked about the impact of this policy on current arrangements on TOIL. **Andrew Walker** said that flexi-leave was generally instead of TOIL, but for example an unusual requirement to work at weekends could still acquire TOIL. The new policy would replace informal toil; most TOIL arrangements would be covered by this system although there might be some arrangements that would be outside it. The first year of operation would tease out issues such as staff who worked significantly more than their contracted hours.
- **The Chair** asked about staff managing their hours during the week. **Andrew Walker** explained that staff could manage their hours during the week, but flexi-leave only covered circumstances where a half day or more was taken. **John Bengner** asked about the minimum lunch break periods, particularly in relation to staff who worked compressed hours. **Andrew Walker** said that this issue would be raised with BMG.
- **The Chair** asked about the impact of the policy on leave arrangements. **Andrew Walker** said that there had been discussions, particularly with DCCS, about how this would be dealt with. **John Bengner** reported that there had been a communication to staff about making use of leave in light of the ability to transfer some flexi-hours. **Andrew Walker** said that it was for departmental managements to assess how far personal leave requests could be granted in the light of business need.