



## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

### Central Communications

*Paper from: Vasilis Gialias*  
*Paper prepared by: Vasilis Gialias*  
*For the meeting on: 14 January 2016*

The paper is for information only.

#### **Purpose**

1. This paper updates the Committee about the Central Communication Team's (CCT) plans for developing an internal communications strategy, researching the communications needs of our internal audiences, and refreshing our corporate internal communications channels.

#### **Action for the Committee**

2. The Committee is asked to take note of Annex A (Researching communications needs) and Annex B (Communications channels refresh).

#### **Responsibility**

3. The Clerk, in his capacity as head of communications for the House Service, is responsible for central communications and has approved a phased interim introduction of the CCT's proposals on refreshing our communications channels (Annex B), starting as soon as possible.
4. Vasilis Gialias, Head of Central Communications, is responsible for taking forward the actions in Annex B. He will be working closely with Penny Young, Librarian and Director General of Information Services, on researching audiences' needs (Annex A) and with Lee Bridges, Director of External Communications, on an even more joined up approach in our internal and external communications.

#### **Strategic link and customer impact**

5. The development of an internal communications strategy for the House Service would support the Director General's review, our future Strategy, and our customer service. Furthermore, working towards joining up our internal and external communications strategies would support the new strategic direction of the House Service.
6. Ongoing research of the communications needs of our three internal audiences (Members, Members' staff and House Service staff) would help inform our strategic decisions on future communications and our customer service approach.

#### **Consultation**

7. All Executive Committee members have been consulted about the proposals in both Annex A and Annex B between September and November 2015. Proposals have been improved based on feedback received.

8. The Head of the Governance Office, the Deputy Director of the Digital Service, and various internal communications practitioners, including colleagues in both the Digital Service and the Lords, have also been consulted and have contributed to these proposals.

### **Equality analysis**

9. The CCT and the Diversity and Inclusion Team have agreed that, given the interim nature of the proposed actions, an equality analysis would be carried out at a later stage (during the pilot phase and the development of an internal communications strategy).

### **Improving our internal communications**

10. As agreed by the Management Board at its meeting on 16 April, the CCT has developed a plan for refreshing our corporate internal communications channels. Full details are available in Annex B.
11. Key developments include the Team's proposals on:
  - improving the visibility of the Executive Committee (work in progress, see Annex B, para 5).
  - discontinuing *CAPS News*, separating business messages from profiles and social news by introducing new solutions for communicating these (see Annex B, para 7).
  - increasing the frequency of the *Managers' Briefing* (monthly instead of quarterly) and extending its circulation to all managers (see Annex B, para 15).
  - experimenting with digital communications channels and developing our intranet, working closely with the Digital Service (see Annex B, para 5, 9, 23 and 24).
  - further developing our Member communications channels as well as our communications to Members' staff, (see Annex B, para 20-34).
12. Following recent developments (Director General's Review and plans for a new Strategy) and consultation with all Executive Committee members it has been agreed that the CCT would:
  - proceed with a phased interim introduction of its proposals, starting as soon as possible and as the team's resources permit;
  - develop an internal communications strategy;
  - work closely with the External Communications Team in Information Services on joining up our future internal and external communications strategies for the House Service.
13. During the same period, the CCT will be researching the communications needs of our internal audiences, working closely with the Department of Information Services. This should have the benefit of informing our strategic decisions on communications, consulting audiences on the introduction of new channels and testing the effectiveness of our communications approach. Details of the CCT's research plans are provided in Annex A.

### **Financial and procurement implications**

14. There are no financial or procurement implications arising from this proposal.

### **Risk implications**

15. There are no risk implications arising from this proposal.

**Vasilis Gialias**  
**Head of Central Communications**  
**7 January 2016**

## Annex A: Researching the communications needs of our internal audiences

### Purpose

1. Researching the communications needs of our internal audiences (staff, Members, Members' staff) should precede and inform our internal communications strategy. The Central Communications Team (CCT) proposes going through a diagnostic stage to gather evidence about our existing communications approach and channels. This Annex provides the Executive Committee (ExCo) with a detailed plan about how the CCT is planning to achieve this over the coming months, with assistance from the Department of Information Services (DIS).

### Research

2. Some of the key questions we need to ask about our audience and the effectiveness of our communications include the following:
  - *Do our messages meet the intended people?*
  - *Do our cascade mechanisms work?*
  - *Are our messages understood?*
  - *How do they go down with our audiences and why?*
  - *What information do our audiences need and how would they like to receive it?*
  - *When do they need/want it?*
  - *Are our feedback mechanisms working?*
  - *Which channels are most/least effective and what else should we be doing?*

### Audiences

3. The following are being proposed for researching the communications needs of *staff*:
  - Senior leadership discussion and focus groups: each group to hold a meeting on communications and report back to the CCT.
  - Leaders to discuss with their team(s) and report back to the CCT.
  - Mini questionnaire to be issued to all staff via CAPS News.
4. The following are being proposed for researching the communications needs of *Members*:
  - I. Short- term: informally consult the Administration Committee for their views.
  - II. Medium- and long-term: our corporate communications channels should be formally reviewed during the next Members' interview project to ensure they continue to meet Members' needs and to further develop them. More work needs to be carried out to find out about what Members need and think so that the right balance can be achieved between what they want to know about and what we want to tell them. The CCT would work more closely with the DIS Customer Service team to ensure that the right questions are being asked in the area of communications (forthcoming surveys).
5. The following are being proposed for researching the communications needs of *Members' staff*:
  - I. Short-term: The newly established programme of regional constituency events provides the ideal platform for researching the communication needs of Members' staff. The CCT aims to take advantage of research opportunities in this area throughout the year.
    - Constituency-based staff: focus groups on communications have been taking place since autumn 2015 (for example, at Sheffield, Lisburn and Bristol) and key findings will become available soon.
    - Westminster-based staff: focus groups.

II. Medium- and long-term: the CCT would tap into the DIS Customer Service Team's research plans to take advantage of opportunities, where possible.

III. The CCT will reflect on Judith Boyce's report of findings and her recommendations on the House Service's work for Members' staff (see Annex B, paragraph 32).

6. Since autumn 2015 the CCT has been visiting other organisations to exchange ideas and to find out about current communications practice in the outside world. One of the CCT's ambitions is to establish a network of communications professionals from all sectors (public/private/charity) and we would like to work closely with the external communications team and the Lords to achieve this.

#### **Channels' refresh – feedback**

7. The CCT will be testing, piloting and implementing a communications channels refresh (Annex B). Feedback from our audiences during this period will also be used to inform any future development of our communication channels.

#### **Next steps**

8. The Governance Office will be working together with Information Services on this initiative over the coming months. The starting point will be to pull together all the information we already have about our audiences. This would assist us with properly scoping our research project and focus, ensuring that we stay up-to-date with the communication needs of our audiences in future.

**Vasilis Gialias**  
**Head of Central Communications**  
**7 January 2016**

## **Annex B: Developing our internal communication channels**

### **Purpose**

1. This Annex outlines the Central Communications Team's (CCT) plans for refreshing our corporate communications channels and improving our engagement with our three internal audiences (staff, Members, Members' staff).

### **Background**

2. The Head of the Governance Office commissioned a paper from the CCT on how best to meet the challenges presented by recent key developments by refreshing our current corporate communication channels and developing new ones. The underlying principle and the team's key ambition is to develop communications channels we can use for tailoring our messages to our internal audiences, in line with best practice in the field. The presentation of proposed options in this paper is per target audience.
3. The resource required to deliver the options outlined in this paper would be covered by the current CCT (no additional resource required); however, the wider Governance Office would need to assist the CCT with delivery, where relevant (for example, the Director General's private office would be asked to assist with any activities related to Executive Committee (ExCo) visibility, the performance measurement/strategic planning team with any activities related to strategy communications, and the Domestic Committee Office with Commission-related communications). Relevant departmental resources would also be used for support with departmental communications initiatives.

### **Staff**

4. The following communication activities are being proposed in order to improve existing communications with staff. Most of these could be implemented quickly across the House in the short- and medium-term and can be introduced as pilots locally (within specific departments) before we apply them at corporate level.
5. The visibility of the ex-Management Board has historically been an area of relative weakness (evidenced through annual staff survey results, including this year's survey). More can be done to ensure staff know who are the new Executive Committee members and their work. The CCT recommends that we use a selection of the tools proposed below to increase ExCo visibility and to engage staff:
  - Establish all staff meetings led by the Clerk of the House and the Director General (DG), twice annually as a minimum, with input from other ExCo members as appropriate. Exact formats would be determined but the meetings might appear less staged and more interactive if a panel (staff members) were offered the opportunity to interview the DG and Committee members on key issues, recent and forthcoming developments. Staff and leaders could volunteer to do this. All staff would have the chance to ask questions. Meetings would take place on various week days/times, and in different buildings, in order to facilitate attendance. The CCT would report back on the staff meetings for those who are unable to attend, while the team would also explore the possibility of filming these events and making them available on the intranet.

- Establish a rolling programme of departmental meetings working closely with the Business Management Group and departmental communications representatives. These meetings would be led by the head of each department; although there would be a meeting taking place each month, departments would take turns in hosting these meetings (so in practice each department would only have to host such meetings about twice annually). The DG and other ExCo members would be encouraged to attend these meetings, on rotation. In addition, it is recommended that ExCo members establish a programme of visiting different work areas throughout the year, meeting and talking to staff informally; the Governance Office will facilitate this approach.
- Revamp the monthly ExCo update to all staff (previously known as the monthly Management Board update)<sup>1</sup>. Since November 2015 a message on key ExCo meeting decisions has been distributed to all staff the day after the meeting (previously this was circulated to leaders). This is followed up by the update when minutes are ready, with ExCo members taking turns to report on meetings. The update has improved recently and includes latest news, key messages from the Clerk and the DG, and is cascaded via a global email to all staff. It is also made available on the intranet and in hard copy by managers or departmental communications representatives (for staff without access to a PC).
- Pilot video messages by the DG (completed in December 2015) and other members of the Committee (following the successful video message delivered to all staff by the Clerk of the House at the start of the new Parliament<sup>2</sup>). Our aim for the future is to use this channel in an interactive way, launching news ideas and initiating a dialogue with staff, seeking feedback and suggestions; it should not be used as a top-down approach. Other teams across the House assist with the production of videos, which are labour intensive, so we need to use this channel sparingly and only when we have important messages to share with staff.
- Pilot blogs: we could explore the use of blogs to strengthen the relationship between staff, the DG/ExCo and leaders/managers. Blogs can sometimes be a lot of work for little return so we would need to monitor the effectiveness of this communications tool during the pilot period. Different managers/leaders should take turns to do a blog each week, writing about issues/developments and expressing viewpoints, encouraging comments/consultation; a business-wide blog could be used by the DG/ExCo members as and when it is helpful. The [Librarian and DG of DIS](#) has used blogging and there are [further good examples from PDS](#) and the Committee Office.
- Refresh the Ask the Management Board initiative by combining it with a new staff suggestion scheme, on an ad hoc basis. We need a mechanism for new ideas as well as for feedback. The recently established new ideas mailbox, set up by the DG ([ideas@parliament.uk](mailto:ideas@parliament.uk)) and communicated in his welcome message to all staff, should be strengthened further.
  - Although our past suggestion schemes have not been very successful, feedback mechanisms are very important: we could try out a scheme that is strictly time-limited (for example, over a month or two), which would lead to a published outcome. Staff would be encouraged to ask questions, offer

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<sup>1</sup> The online Executive Committee update homepages have achieved the following unique page views since ExCo first met: *July*: 551 page views; *September*: 516 page views; *October*: 572 page views; *November*: 470 page views; *December*: 434 page views.

<sup>2</sup> Within two and a half weeks of issuing the Clerk's video message we had 321 YouTube views. For Ian's introductory messages we had 185 YouTube views in December 2015 (all three messages combined).

feedback and make suggestions, especially when reviews of services are carried out or when we want to find out staff views about a specific area. If this scheme is successful, we could run it again.

- We could introduce a new [feedback@parliament.uk](mailto:feedback@parliament.uk) email account for feedback from staff and promote it on a regular basis.
- A new initiative 'Ask the Director General' could be established, giving staff access to the Director General, asking questions/offering feedback/suggesting ideas.
- Another, more interactive option, would be to introduce a staff suggestion scheme similar to one used by other organisations: staff posting suggestions on a Facebook-like page, other staff submitting 'likes' or equivalent, with management responses being prompt (currently a pilot is being explored for the Department of Chamber and Committee Services).

All these tools will be used to support the ExCo's visibility during the implementation period of the Director General's Review.

6. At its first meeting, the new Commission was invited to consider how it might communicate with staff, but no firm decisions were made about how to take this forward. The Commission Secretary intends to raise this with the Commission again when all the external and official members are in post, and to include a more attractive range of possible communications tools, likely to include:
  - Workshop-style meetings to consider how the values required of House staff should be translated into everyday behaviours. These should be small scale seminars/events led by a member of the Commission.
  - Participation at all staff meetings (see para 5) and leadership events. Commission members could take turns appearing at meetings, offering the opportunity for staff to meet them and ask them questions. Meetings will be based on themes agreed by the ExCo.
  - Visits at work areas, especially during the development of new products or services.
  
7. Our monthly staff newsletter, *CAPS News*<sup>3</sup>, a mix of business and social news, was established in 2012. It needs refreshing: at the moment it is produced on a monthly basis, its content is a selection of business messages, profiles and social news. The Head of the Governance Office has recommended that we replace it with two new platforms:
  - *Platform one (House Service news and messages)*: a new enewsletter, distributed to all staff every two weeks; this would be used exclusively for communicating key business news, corporate and departmental (two or three key items to be included in each issue)<sup>4</sup>. This would ensure that messages reach staff in a timely manner (currently, news can wait up to a month before being communicated to staff). Decluttering, prioritising and limiting news to two or three key items would improve the effectiveness of this communications channel. News will be brief, linking to more information for those who would like to find out more about specific news. Copy will be incorporated in the body of an email without the need of an enewsletter as such

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<sup>3</sup> *CAPS News* is viewed by staff online and hard copies are distributed to all staff without access to a PC. Below is a statistical breakdown of all the *CAPS News* intranet homepage unique page views since the first issue of the 2015 Parliament (staff without access to a PC receive a hard copy version): *May*: 972 page views; *June*: 946 page views; *July*: 1085 page views; *September*: 934 page views; *October*: 970 page views; *November*: 734 page views (188 article views); *December*: 628 page views.

<sup>4</sup> Staff Notices will continue as a separate brand due to their specific and well recognised HR purpose, for example, in communicating key changes to terms and conditions.

(reducing the risk of losing the reader between the alert and clicking to reach the newsletter). A new newsletter template is already available should we decide to proceed; a print-friendly version will also be available for staff without access to a computer (an archive on SPIRE or SharePoint will also be established).

- *Platform two (strengthening our unified service)*: a 'supplement' newsletter designed to increase knowledge of and interaction between staff across the House Service. This could include items similar to those already in *CAPS News*, such as 'A week in the life of', 'Interview' and 'Team Profile'. However, it could also include: social news; stories about staff contributions to events, such as State Opening; items designed to enhance understanding of parliamentary activities, such as quizzes or competitions. Staff could be consulted on other ideas for inclusion. The key test for any item appearing in this newsletter would be: will it help build a unified House Service by increasing understanding about the different work which goes on here? Platform one is intended for authoritative management messages, while platform two would be more informal but still support the key theme of a unified House Service.

In addition, a SharePoint site will be trialled as an electronic noticeboard. The CCT receives many requests from staff to include networking opportunities, social messages and club events in *CAPS News*. While newsletters can be used for social news, the information can appear trivial and, often, such requests are made at short notice and are time specific and, therefore, do not meet the constraints of newsletter production. The team, as a rule, does not include any such submissions. SharePoint can be used to provide a satisfactory solution to this communications gap: an electronic noticeboard providing a discrete online space for individuals to post networking opportunities, community messages and club events, and to encourage social interaction between staff (no commercial activity will be permitted). A SharePoint page can be set up easily, quickly and will require minimum effort centrally (apart from developing a clear set of rules for submissions and monitoring the site from time to time). It is recommended that we pilot a small SharePoint site focusing on social messages/events to assess the staff appetite for such an initiative. We will link to and promote the site from our monthly edition (more detail above). It is important that we work closely with our colleagues in the Digital Service to ensure that any new SharePoint site (and this applies to all SharePoint sites) fits in with the intranet and with their plans to replace it with a new internet/intranet platform next year.

By separating business messages from individual and team profiles and social news and by providing solutions with a clear purpose for these different communications needs we will be strengthening the effectiveness of our efforts and encouraging staff participation and interaction. Special newsletter editions (monthly) could also be produced exploring specific themes the Committee would like to promote (for example, Diversity & Inclusion, personal development and career progression, Continuous Improvement). An editorial team, including communications professionals across the House Service, would be established to plan themes over a period of six months, inviting colleagues across the House Service to act as guest editors. We will launch a competition for name suggestions for the new staff newsletters to announce this development and to consult/engage staff with the initiative.

8. The Clerk Assistant has proposed the establishment of a programme of events at Westminster led by inspirational external speakers (provisional title '*Commons inspired*'). These events (talks/presentations/lectures/open discussion forums) will be thought-provoking and stimulating, encouraging interaction with the world outside Parliament. They will be open to all staff. The CCT will work closely with the Clerk Assistant and other key



teams (for example, D&I, Continuous Improvement, Public Information and Public Engagement teams) to develop, manage and promote this idea over the coming months.

9. The CCT is also working closely with the recently established Digital Advocates Group and the Head of Strategy (Digital Service) exploring effective digital communications initiatives available in other organisations and piloting them at Parliament. Subject to technology developments we may be able to broaden our digital communications offering in the future.

### **Leaders and managers**

10. The CCT manages the senior leadership group by organising events and delivering communications to the group. The programme of activities aims to:

- engage senior staff creatively in corporate level problems/issues.
- facilitate discussion on ExCo policy/decisions.
- provide a platform for generating, discussing and developing new ideas.
- enable senior staff to support each other.

11. There are currently two leadership groups:

- Core group – members include all ExCo members, their direct reportees plus all staff who are SCS1A or above. In addition, heads of departments nominate specific colleagues to be part of this group. About 70 members currently.
- Extended group – members include all core group members plus all remaining staff of SCS and any specific individuals (mainly staff of Band A) who are nominated directly by heads of departments. About 170 members currently.

Both lists are kept up-to-date by the CCT. All heads of departments were asked to update their leadership lists in December (a regular, annual exercise to ensure currency and consistency).

12. All leaders:

- have access to ExCo papers (special folder on SPIRE) where unredacted versions of papers are also available.
- are invited to quarterly leadership events discussing current issues.
- receive a quarterly Managers' Briefing which they can use for staff briefings.
- receive communications from the ExCo by email on an ad hoc basis (urgent messages or briefing material).

13. In addition, leaders participate in:

- Discussion groups – all core group leaders are members of a discussion group. They meet monthly to discuss forthcoming ExCo papers, key topical issues/concerns, areas of interest and any other business. Each group is led by an ExCo member and membership is cross-departmental.
- Focus groups – extended group leaders are members of a focus group. They meet every two/three months as part of this initiative to discuss centrally-proposed themes (consultation on key issues). Each group is led by a discussion group leader (volunteers) and membership is cross-departmental.

14. While the discussion groups have been very successful, the focus groups have had a slow start. Attendance at focus groups is voluntary and some groups are better attended than others. We will aim to relaunch the scheme in the New Year to give it another push. If this initiative is successful there might be a case for extending it to middle managers in the future, but if it is unsuccessful we should be prepared to discontinue it.

15. The frequency of the Managers' Briefing should be increased in order to improve its timeliness as a management communications tool. There is also anecdotal evidence that leaders don't always pass on information from these briefings to their teams or brief their managers about key issues. The Briefing should be made a monthly publication and should be circulated to all managers, not just leaders (encouraging them to use it for staff updates and team meetings). Emailing the Managers' Briefing to all managers would assist the Department of HR and Change's (DHRC) and ExCo's efforts in improving managers' capability and the consistency with which management is applied across the House Service (also ensuring consistency of message when managers update their staff). We will work closely with DHRC on this task to ensure news to all managers is brief and easy to digest (with links to more information), while editorial guidelines will be made available to all contributors to improve the quality and relevance of the information.
16. Although the quarterly leadership events are well attended and offer a useful engagement format among the leadership group, leaders have not been proactive in suggesting themes and delivering sessions at the meetings. In the past, the Governance Office has been suggesting themes, planning and delivering the meetings with help from members of the Management Board. Longer-term planning of these events with more substantial content is necessary in order to improve them. ExCo members should work closely with the CCT in the planning of the events by: suggesting themes for the meetings, encouraging their leaders to be more involved and taking turns in suggesting leaders to deliver sessions. Discussion and focus groups should be asked to suggest themes/topics for future senior leadership events, which could be then put to electronic vote by all leaders when developing our quarterly leadership programme. A five- or ten-minute slot should be included in the programme of these events for 'stop press' news.
17. The CCT is currently working closely with the Learning and Development team (L&D) on the development of the future leadership training programme. The two teams look after complementary elements of a leadership programme, so there is a mutual benefit from getting this right for our leaders. The teams are currently planning some research into the learning and communications needs of our leaders.
18. It is important to strike the right balance between 'telling' and 'listening'. For example, we could ask leaders and managers to discuss specific issues/areas with their teams and collect staff views within a specific timeframe. This would promote a two-way communication between senior managers and staff. The leadership group provides the ideal platform for achieving a down-top communications approach and we could use our leaders when piloting such schemes.
19. An annual (or twice annually) management conference could be established for all managers, to discuss current issues and new developments, examine case studies and highlight key areas/messages from the staff handbook, and disseminate good practice. The CCT would work with DHRC to plan appropriate content and deliver the conference, possibly timed as a follow up to a staff survey, when communicating its findings.

## Members

20. Since the May General Election, *Commons Monthly* (Members' newsletter) has focused on information about key services. To improve its content and increase its readership<sup>5</sup>, it is recommended that the newsletter be revamped as follows:
- Editorial team meetings will be established to plan each issue, but also to look ahead and decide on themes for future issues. Departmental communications representatives would be invited to participate as guest editors, working closely with the CCT to add value and keep the publication fresh.
  - There would be regular articles on the Commission's work, as well as updates by the Finance and Administration Committees.
  - Departments would be asked to submit key messages of interest to Members, while the CCT would be even more proactive in commissioning copy from colleagues.
  - Members could be invited to write articles and offer their views on current services and their ideas for product development, on a monthly basis.
21. We will work with the Digital Service to establish a policy for sending out global messages to ensure that only important and emergency communications are cascaded to Members via global emails, from the centre; this will reduce email fatigue and strengthen the effectiveness of this communications channel. We will also be introducing dedicated email addresses for global messages to differentiate between the different types of messages, for events, urgent emails, newsletters.
22. We should continue to use a cascade by the Whips' offices for important messages as we did during the election period.
23. We will work with the Digital Service to further develop our intranet pages and provide solutions for accessing these from mobiles and tablets. A project to replace the internet/intranet platform will begin next year; the intranet is a powerful communications platform for our internal audiences and we will continue to work closely with the Head of Strategy in the Digital Service and the Web and Intranet Service on further developing it. As a stop gap solution while the new intranet work is being planned, the CCT recommends redesigning our news stories on the intranet homepages, so that we can distinguish between news, important messages, and access messages.
24. We should consider/explore the possibility of selected intranet news items appearing on users' screens/email accounts as soon as they get published online (like a breaking news service). The CCT publishes only selected news items so this should be acceptable (in combination with reducing global emails and differentiating between important and secondary news). This could be done in combination with a parliamentary news app which could be downloaded to parliamentary supplied iPads and mobiles, or downloaded by passholders. This should be an opt-in service for Members.

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<sup>5</sup> *Commons Monthly* has been viewed by few individuals, when accessed as a full newsletter from its homepage; however, the individual articles within the newsletter have a much longer life as they are discovered through the search function (therefore the older an issue the more its overall article views). Below is a statistical breakdown of all the *Commons Monthly* editions since the first issue of the 2015 Parliament: *May*: 21 homepage views (1,554 article views); *June*: 52 homepage views (1,274 article views); *July*: 139 homepage views (800 article views); *September*: 76 homepage views (314 article views); *October*: 44 homepage views (216 article views); *November*: 33 homepage views (188 article views). We don't know definitively how many of these views were from Members (possibly the homepage views).

25. The *What's on* monthly campaigns (newsletter, global email, posters and webpages) would be reviewed and further developed. This promotional medium remains one of the most popular communication channels with a steady increase in online views<sup>6</sup>. A key message to Members could be included on a monthly basis to highlight and raise awareness of key products/services. Key messages to Members could also be included in the All Party Group Notices, which is also very popular with Members. We should also take advantage of any opportunities of improving the All Party Group Notices.
26. A group should be put together with the remit of coordinating all promotional events for Members and developing a rolling programme of events (internal/external). This will ensure our events are better coordinated between departments, are well timed (planning ahead and avoiding clashes), are more effective and better advertised so that we can maximise attendance. However, we should wait until the DG review and its conclusions on groups before we proceed with establishing a new group.
27. A review of all our publications, displays and noticeboards throughout the Estate should be carried out. Most of these need updating and haven't been refreshed for many years, while a few of them are not being looked after and look unprofessional. The first step should be to identify clear responsibility for keeping them up-to-date (currently various teams are involved in their upkeep without clarity of ownership).
28. The Governance Committee reported that Members are often not aware of who does what in the House Service. We propose to increase the visibility of middle and senior management through regular promotional events, articles in newsletters, online communications and the use of displays throughout the Estate. The Governance Office and the Head of Customer Service in DIS have also been working together on improving the key contacts pages on the intranet, while a key contacts card will be distributed to Members and promoted via various channels in January 2016.
29. Work should be done on updating the House of Commons visual identity to ensure this reflects our new vision/strategy/purpose (when work in this area is completed). Committee and business papers, as well as our electronic communications, should be part of this project. We should also consider the establishment of visual identity guidelines for joint services with the Lords, where necessary. Ownership of any future visual identity projects should be discussed with and agreed by ExCo (also with the Lords, for bicameral services).
30. Email signatures should be formally introduced for all staff when they communicate with Members. Choosing a monthly theme/key message for all staff to use consistently and in an organised way (as part of a wider communications campaign) could prove a powerful tool.
31. Our existing feedback policy/procedure should be further promoted to Members, while other feedback ideas, such as the thumbs up/down Trip Advisor idea could be introduced for a quick and interactive way of collecting feedback from Members.

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<sup>6</sup> The online *What's on* intranet homepages have achieved the following unique page views since the new Parliament: *What's on in May*: 356 page views; *What's on in June*: 729 page views; *What's on in July*: 548 page views; *What's on in August*: 532 page views; *What's on in September*: 564 page views; *What's on in October*: 707 page views; *What's on in November*: 737 page views; *What's on in December 2015 & January 2016*: 953 page views. This is in addition to the *What's on* global email message, the poster campaign throughout the Estate, targeted messages for specific events, and the intranet events listings.

**Members' staff**

32. Our offering to Members' staff has improved over the last couple of years. A new group (led by Judith Boyce in DCCS) has been put together to coordinate the House Service's work in this area.
33. The CCT currently leads on the regional constituency events (in collaboration with the Customer Service Team in DIS), produces a quarterly enewsletter for Members' staff (*Commons View*<sup>7</sup>), manages the recently introduced Members' staff portal on the intranet<sup>8</sup>, sends out notices and global emails, and coordinates the welcome email received by Members' staff as soon as they sign up to a parliamentary email account.
34. The CCT will review these channels and will work closely with Judith, L&D and the DIS Customer Service Team to identify and take advantage of opportunities for improving our communications with this specific audience. Judith's group is due to report its findings and make recommendations to the ExCo soon.

**Feedback**

35. Feedback from our audiences while piloting some of the proposals in this paper will be used for the research work that the CCT will be undertaking with our internal audiences, over the coming months (for full details see Annex A). Depending on feedback, the team may need to change the proposals in this paper to reflect our audiences' views. The CCT would consult the Committee again should this happen.

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<sup>7</sup> The *Commons View* intranet pages have achieved the following unique page views since the new Parliament: *May*: 191 homepage views; *June*: 369 homepage views; *October*: 173 homepage views.

<sup>8</sup> This is the most visited intranet page (apart from the homepage) with over 100,000 page views in November 2015.

## List of proposals

Summary of the proposed communications actions discussed with ExCo members:

### **ExCo visibility** (paragraph 5)

- Establish all staff meetings on a regular basis – at least twice annually.
- Establish a rolling programme of departmental meetings – on a rota (about two meetings per department annually).
- Revamp the monthly ExCo Update.
- Pilot video messages and blogs, and other digital channels.
- Introduce a staff suggestion scheme and revamp the Ask the ExCo initiative.

### **Enewsletters**

- Launch a new newsletter with business news from the House Service, every two weeks (paragraph 7).
- Introduce a new platform designed to increase knowledge of and interaction between staff across the House Service (paragraph 7).
- Pilot a SharePoint site focusing on social messages and networking events (paragraph 7).
- Increase the frequency of the Managers' Briefing – monthly instead of quarterly – and email it to all managers, not just senior leaders (paragraph 15).
- Strengthen *Commons Monthly* – ExCo to encourage their departments/leaders to submit news items in the newsletter on a regular basis (paragraph 20).

### **Events, displays, publications, campaigns**

- Consider establishing a House-wide events and promotions group to coordinate our work in this area – following the DG review (paragraph 26).
- Establish a programme of events at Westminster led by inspirational external speakers (paragraph 8).
- Ask all Leadership discussion and focus groups to suggest themes for leadership events (paragraph 16).
- Introduce an annual management conference for all managers (paragraph 19).
- Revisit our visual identity guidelines to reflect our new strategy/vision (paragraph 29).
- Introduce House-wide email signatures and key messages for monthly campaigns used by all staff (paragraph 30).

### **Digital**

- Use of videos, blog and other digital channels (paragraph 5 and 9).
- Develop the intranet (paragraph 23).
- Explore a 'breaking news' type of service for latest House Service news (paragraph 24).

**Vasilis Gialias**

**Head of Central Communications**

**7 January 2016**