

**Minutes of the Management Board meeting  
held on Thursday 10 April 2014 at 3.30pm**

**Those present:** Sir Robert Rogers KCB (Clerk and Chief Executive) (Chair)  
Myfanwy Barrett (Director of Finance)  
John Borley CB (Director General of Facilities)  
Joan Miller (Director of PICT, external member)  
David Natzler (Clerk Assistant and Director General of  
Chamber and Committee Services)  
John Pullinger CB (Director General of Information Services)  
Andrew Walker (Director General of HR and Change)  
Dame Janet Gaymer DBE (non-executive member)  
Barbara Scott (non-executive member)

**In attendance:** Tom Goldsmith (Board Secretary)  
Ben Williams (Assistant Secretary)  
John Benger (Director of Service Delivery, DIS) (items 3 & 4  
only)

## **1. Actions arising**

1.1 **Tom Goldsmith** updated the Board on actions arising from the previous meetings.

**Action 1:** John Borley was working with the Business Resilience team to develop a narrative based scenario that Golds would be talked through as a form of training.

**Actions 4-8:** A draft template letter of appointment for SROs had been circulated to Board members for comments. **Myfanwy Barrett** would be leading a wider piece of work to bring together the range of activities to improve project and programme management arising from recent reviews. The **Chair** asked that the issue of staff being released from their main job to lead project and programme work, be considered as part of this work.

**Action 17:** A list of duties and responsibilities of managers was being compiled drawing on material already developed by departments. This would be circulated after the end of the appraisal process for the financial year that had just finished, in order to inform the next reporting cycle.

**Action 20:** The Q&A project would go live on Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September. This would delay the realising of the savings, but would allow the system to be robustly tested before launch and mitigate the risk of key users having a poor initial experience of the system.

## **2. Oral Updates**

2.1 **Joan Miller** reported that the rollout of Office 365 had restarted and had not had an observable impact on the network. The 60-day network stability

programme was progressing well and the proposals for the redesign of the network to further increase stability looked promising, although were likely to take longer than the initially planned 90 days.

- 2.2 **David Natzler** noted the uncertainty about the date of prorogation in May and that the date of State Opening had changed from 3 to 4 June.
- 2.3 **Andrew Walker** reported that guaranteed minimum hours contracts had been implemented in the Catering Service. The Commission had agreed that staff who did not want to enter into a minimum hours contract would be retained on their current arrangements, but no new staff would be engaged on a casual or “zero-hours” basis. A support service for Members’ staff was being set-up. The new Director of People Development would take up post on 6 May. Following a suggestion made at the Quarterly Performance meeting the company that provided the competency diagnostic tool would now run reports to identify staff who had started the competency diagnosis process but not completed it. HR would provide reports on staff member who had not registered.
- 2.4 The end of year staff appraisal system was discussed.
- 2.5 **Janet Gaymer** reported on the March meeting of the Audit Committee. The Committee: agreed the 2014/15 Audit plan; considered the report on the Network Refresh project and decided to return to some of the issues when it discusses unified procurement with the Lords Audit Committee in July; discussed General Election planning; received a report on the external members’ meeting with Andrew Walker to discuss the sickness absence reporting audit, where further action was planned; and noted the increased management activity in response to agreed actions arising from internal audit reports.
- 2.6 **John Borley** reported that a member of the Finance and Services Committee had recently visited PED staff had been impressed by the skill and professionalism of the staff he had met.
- 2.7 The **Chair** reported that at the last meeting of the Audit Committee the Chair of the Finance and Services Committee had made some extremely positive comments about the progress the House Service had made in the last three years.

### **3. Member Feedback**

- 3.1 **John Bengler** introduced the findings of the Member feedback project. This had produced a much richer set of data than previous year’s surveys. This work had been commissioned by the Administration Committee who would consider it at a future meeting. It was proposed that management would produce a broad response to the main findings and then individual Heads of Departments would be made available to brief the Committee on the actions they were taking to address key challenges identified in the report. Next year the intention was to focus on feedback activity on Members who were

standing down at the Election and to seek views on Member induction and other General Election arrangements.

#### **4. Respect Policy: oral update**

4.1 **John Benger** updated Board Members on the latest developments with the Respect Policy.

#### **5. Financial Remit and Financial Planning Round**

5.1 **Myfanwy Barrett** introduced her paper. This was the Board's first chance to consider the overall parameters for 2015-16 financial plans. The paper provided an update on changes in the House's financial management and financial culture; while improvements had been made there was still more that could be done. The paper also asked the Board to consider how to ensure continuous improvement work delivered its intended benefits and included a copy of the draft planning guidance.

5.2 The main purpose of the paper was to ask the Board how it should interpret the remit set by the Commission. On a stricter interpretation the remit would increase only if there was a transfer between Estimates or the House entered into a large property transaction. Under this interpretation the House Service might need to reduce expenditure by up to £5 million in 2015-16 growing to £10 million thereafter. However, developments on pay and pensions and the General Election's impact on House business might well reduce that figure. There were also a number of developments that would provide opportunities to realise further savings. The House Service needed to develop a strategy for the next Parliament but there was an argument that this should be done in the context of a restricted envelope rather than an assumption of further growth.

5.3 The Board considered the paper. In discussion the following points were made.

- The main issue was how the House Service chose to interpret the Commission's agreement that the remit could increase to support new activity that increased the House's scrutiny capacity.
- The Savings Programme had not been easy for staff; it had led to a reduction in posts by staff leaving through voluntary exit schemes.
- There was a risk that a wider interpretation of the remit would undermine the momentum to make the House Service more efficient and effective. This could be mitigated by being intellectually honest about what activity was deemed to be additional for the purposes of the Estimate.
- The House Service's approach to making savings had improved its standing with Member bodies by improving services at the same time as reducing cost. One way to ensure that this continued was through Continuous Improvement. However the desire to co-operate with the Lords on Continuous Improvement appeared to be reducing the House Service's

ability to communicate with Members about this continuing approach to improving services and finding efficiencies.

- The House Service needed to decide what kind of organisation it wanted to be. This needed to be articulated in the strategy for the next Parliament.
- The paper claimed that the House Service did not have a list of activities it was unable to do due to a lack of resources. However managers had not been coming forward with these proposals because they knew they would have been unable to take them forward at a time when savings were being made.
- In the majority of cases Continuous Improvement this would create savings, however it was important that this was not simply another savings programme. In the Health Service it was compulsory for all business areas to be subject to business improvement initiatives; while it was right that the pilot was looking for business areas to volunteer this could be revisited after the pilot.

5.4 The **Board agreed** to proceed on the basis of the current interpretation of the financial remit, **agreed** with the proposal for linking continuous improvement to the remit and **approved** the financial planning guidance.

6. **A.O.B.**

6.1 None.

[Adjourned at 17:45]

**Tom Goldsmith**  
**Secretary**

**Robert Rogers**  
**Chairman**