

Management Board

Guidelines for Board papers

Office of the Clerk

1. Annexed to this note is a guidance note for authors of Board papers on the format, structure and length of such papers.
2. The Office of the Clerk has circulated the guidance to relevant staff across the House and will monitor compliance. The guidance has also been published on the Management Board's intranet page.
3. The Board is asked to note this guidance.

Office of the Clerk
November 2007

Management Board papers: guidance note

Office of the Chief Executive

Purpose

1. This paper is intended to provide guidance on the structure, length and format of Board papers.

Format

2. Board papers must be provided electronically to the Office of the Chief Executive.
3. Paragraphs and pages must be numbered.
4. Board papers are normally distributed electronically. Not all recipients have immediate access to a colour printer. Colour should therefore only be used where it significantly adds to understanding and authors should be prepared to supply paper copy on request.

Structure

5. Board papers must include the elements set out below.

Headings

6. A Board paper should begin with a clear statement of the intended audience; the subject; and the author or originating office. For example:

“Management Board

Strategic planning 2006-2011

Office of the Chief Executive”

7. There is no need to add a header including a Management Board paper number: this will be inserted by the Office of the Chief Executive.

Purpose

8. Board papers must begin with a short, clear statement of purpose. For example:

“1.1 This paper is intended to update the Board on progress with the HAIS 2 programme.” OR

“1.1 This paper sets out options for extending the webcasting service and suggests an option for the Board to recommend to the Commission”.

Conclusion and Decisions

9. Following the purpose section should be a short précis of the paper’s conclusions and an indication of whether the Board is asked to reach decisions, and if so what those decisions are, or take note. Each decision should be listed separately. For example:

“2.1 It is recommended that webcasting is introduced in Committee rooms throughout the Principal Floor.

2.2 The Board is invited to:

2.2.1 note that it is proposed that work should be carried out in the 2008 summer recess;

2.2.2 note that the cost is estimated to be in the region of £xm;

2.2.3 note that if agreed to by the Commission this project will be subject to business case approval by the Accounting Officer; and

2.2.4 agree to recommend this option to the Commission.” OR

“2.1 The Board is invited to take note of progress with HAIS 2. The Board does not need to take decisions at this time.”

Main body

10. The main body of the paper should contain the points which the Board is being asked to consider. Sub-headings should be used to divide issues where appropriate. Points for decision, or particularly important issues for the Board to note, should be emboldened.

Ending

11. There is no need to summarise the paper at the end. A cross-reference to the paragraph listing decisions should be made.
12. The author of the paper, or originating office, should be indicated at the end of the paper. The date, or month of submission, must be included at the end of the paper.

Annexes

13. Annexes should be used for any detailed or extraneous information which supports the points made in the main paper. There must be a clear reference to each annex in the main paper, including a short description of what it covers.

14. It may be helpful to include background to the specific issues which the Board are being asked to take decisions on for the Board's information. If so this should be in the form of an annex following the main body of the paper. Background information could include a brief account of how an issue has developed – for example, the outcome of consideration by other management groups – or key facts relating to the issue under discussion. For example:

“Following representations by the Commons Advisory Committee on Works of Art, the Commission asked for a review to be instigated of the work of the Curator's Office and the skills and resources available to it. The review was conducted during 2004 by Jura Consultants, who were overseen by a steering group chaired by the Lords Principal Finance Officer, and included an external member. The consultants interviewed a number of officials as well as members of the Commons Advisory Committee and the Lords Works of Art Committee during the course of their work.”

15. An alternative to including extra information in an annex is to mention the existence of the information and how it can be obtained in the main paper (for example, “the report of Jura Consultants is available on request from the Curator”).

Length

16. Board papers should be succinct and, in any case, should not normally exceed six sides in length, excluding annexes.

Action

17. This guidance has been endorsed by the Management Board. Prospective authors of Board papers should seek to implement this guidance. Any points for clarification should be addressed to the Head of the Office of the Chief Executive. The Office is always ready to advise on the drafting of papers for the Board and other management groups.
18. Board papers must be submitted to the Office of the Chief Executive no later than eight days before a meeting of the Board unless a matter of urgency arises (such exceptional cases being agreed with the Office of the Chief Executive).