

**Minutes of the Management Board meeting
held on Wednesday 21 May 2008**

Those present: Malcolm Jack (Chief Executive) (Chairman)
Douglas Millar CB (Director General of Chamber and
Committee Services)
John Pullinger (Director General of Information
Services)
Andrew Walker (Director General of Resources)
John Borley CB (Director General of Facilities)
Joan Miller (Director of PICT, external member)

In attendance: Philippa Helme (Board Secretary)
[s.40] (Private Secretary to the Clerk of the House)
Chris Ridley (Director of Financial Management, for
items 4 and 5)

1. Matters arising from previous meetings

1.1. Further to item 1 **Philippa Helme** said that [s.40] had undertaken to deliver his report on data and information security shortly after the recess.

1.2. Further to item 3 **John Borley** said that good progress was being made on developing an Estates Strategy. Detailed work on condition surveys had been commissioned to underpin the strategy, and would be completed by January 2009. The **Chairman** noted that a high-level draft had been promised to the Commission before the summer.

1.3. Further to item 4, **John Borley** said that he had initiated work to identify, for each building, the capacity to meet current and future demand for electricity; to agree a priority list of services to be maintained, if supply was inadequate; and to explore additional backup supply, if necessary to maintain critical services. He would present a paper to the June Board. The **Chairman** emphasised the importance of ensuring back-up for Tothill Street.

2. Risk and performance

2.1. **Andrew Walker** said that payment of Members' claims had become worse in April but was now much improved. The Department of Resources was facing tremendous strain with a large amount of work to be done in the coming months to prepare information for release under Freedom of Information requirements. It was agreed that this work was a priority and that the DEO of the Department of Resources should discuss

with DEOs from other departments what types of staffing help were needed and for what periods, with a view to seeking volunteers to assist with this work.

2.2. [s.36(2)(b) and s.36(2)(c)]

2.3. Joan Miller said that a number of vacancies on the PICT service desk had led to a dip in call answering time in March. Figures for April were more encouraging and data so far for May showed a further improvement.

2.4. Changes in the corporate risks were discussed, and in particular how best to mitigate the risk to the reputation of the House Service posed by the current problems with payment of Members' claims.

3. Oral up-dates from Director Generals

3.1. John Borley said that:

3.1.1. The cleaning contract would be awarded in September. He was expecting to receive a business case indicating a preferred bidder later in the week.

3.1.2. The House of Lords had agreed the approach to catering in Tothill Street previously agreed by the Commons Management Board.

3.1.3. Mr Speaker had agreed to the recommendation of the Administration Committee that a commercial solution should be sought for the sandwich service in Annie's Bar.

3.1.4. Progress was being made in filling posts in the merged Parliamentary Estates Directorate.

3.2. John Pullinger said that:

3.2.1. He was co-operating with colleagues in Department of Facilities and Chamber and Committee Services to ensure that arrangements for the Summer opening and "Open House" weekend went smoothly. Previously those staff involved would all have been located in the Serjeant at Arms' Department.

3.2.2. The new Outreach Service would shortly be launched. John would be presenting a paper to the Modernisation Committee and the Administration Committee to keep them informed of how this new public-facing service was developing. There would also be a display in Portcullis House.

3.3. Joan Miller said that:

3.3.1. Back-up costs were increasing. She proposed that retention periods for deleted material should be reduced to six weeks for

emails for all users, and to four weeks to files and folders for House Service staff. The Board agreed to this approach.

- 3.3.2. Elizabeth Honer would join PICT as Director of Resources, on secondment from the Department of Resources, at the beginning of the summer recess.

3.4. Douglas Millar said that:

- 3.4.1. The first issue of DCCS news had been issued, and the DCCS business plan and a short guide to the plan had been circulated to staff.
- 3.4.2. Invitations had been sent to 64 senior managers from both Houses to attend BCDR training. The Board agreed that, rather than a separate session for the Board, Board members would attend one of the four sessions for managers. A full contingency exercise would be held on the morning of 18 July.

- 3.5. **Andrew Walker** gave an update following the Board's discussion on Remodelling HR, Finance and Procurement. 120 line managers had so far attended open meetings to discuss the ideas contained in the paper. Andrew also proposed to set up a Programme Board to lead the programme, with four workstreams under it (Business, Finance, HR and Commercial) led by specific business representatives. The Board agreed that the Programme Board should be set up and begin its work, that Andrew should take forward recruitment of a Commercial Director to lead that workstream, and that departments could get on with appointing people to relevant senior positions.

4. Stewardship Report 2007/08

- 4.1. The **Chairman** welcomed Chris Ridley, Director of Financial Management.
- 4.2. **Chris Ridley** said that two issues had caused uncertainty in 2007/08: the restructuring of House departments and late changes to pension assumptions. Despite this departmental forecasting had shown a marked improvement compared to previous years, and the House's underspend both in resource and cash terms was well within the 5% of total tolerance level that the public sector attempted to adhere to. Numbers were still changing and the final underspend figure was likely to be slightly below that reported in the paper. The Board agreed that in the next financial year it should consider the Stewardship Report in June to allow time for dialogue with departments on the final figures.
- 4.3. There was still room to engage managers further to improve their financial management, and ensure that the information and reports that they were

sent by the Department of Resources were useful and relevant to assist with managing the business. **Douglas Millar** suggested that clearer guidance on handling business areas where recharges were made to the House of Lords would be helpful.

5. Corporate planning and performance management

- 5.1. Philippa Helme** said that the paper had been prepared jointly by the Office of the Chief Executive and the Department of Resources. It proposed to take an integrated approach to business and financial planning and invited the Board to set the strategic direction to this plan, and to consider how they wished to do so. The paper also considered the continued relevance of the Commission's Strategic Plan for 2006-11 and asked the Board to consider whether it wished to seek the Commission's agreement to any amendments to it. Finally it suggested that consideration of the most appropriate methodology for performance management should be taken forward through discussions between the Office of the Chief Executive and Departments during the business and financial planning process.
- 5.2. The Chairman** said that he felt that the Board did need to take a lead in identifying strategic objectives and plans. He suggested that the highest priority areas were works and estates, where work was ongoing to develop a 25 year plan, and ICT, where there needed to be a proper integration between IT and the business. To achieve overarching objectives in these areas might prove costly, would be in addition to business as usual currently undertaken by the House Service and strategic goals and plans would need to be presented to the Commission. There would need to be co-operation with the House of Lords Management Board who also had an interest in these areas.
- 5.3. Chris Ridley** emphasised that the Tebbit review had recommended presenting alternative funding assumptions to the Finance and Services Committee. The Board agreed that proposals for 2009/10 should be developed on a current, lesser and greater funding basis with value for money and efficiency as important elements of discussions with Departments.
- 5.4. Andrew Walker** said that an effective performance management system should assist the Board in making decisions relating to strategic direction, allocation of resources and management effort. He advocated that the Board should take an early decision on which system it wished to use.
- 5.5. John Borley** suggested that improving environmental management should replace security on the list of priority areas in the strategic plan. The Board recognised the importance of environmental matters, but

agreed that for the moment that and other priorities could be taken forward within the current strategic framework.

- 5.6.** It was agreed that the Office of the Chief Executive and the Department of Resources should begin discussions with Departments on this basis. The planning timetable should assume that the draft Corporate Business Plan would be presented to the Finance and Services Committee for information at the same time as presentation of financial plans. It was noted that account needed to be taken of PICT's position as a Joint Department, and that the House of Lords had a different timeframe for business planning.

6. Management of information

- 6.1. John Pullinger** presented his paper which was the result of work he had been asked to undertake at the April Board. The paper contained information and invited decisions on a number of strands of work being undertaken relating to records management, knowledge and information management and digital preservation. It proposed that there should be a compliance audit to ensure that records management policies were being adhered to across the House Service, and that a specification for the audit should be agreed with Director Generals by the end of June with a view to delivering compliance with the current policy by the end of October, and a systematic audit taking place after this.

- 6.2.** The **Chairman** asked what consideration had been given to the amount of staff time that the proposed approach would take. **John Pullinger** said that this would be time intensive, but the fact that Director Generals would agree the specification should allow them to weigh up the proposal against other business priorities, and consider what was possible in the timetable. The Board agreed that records management was a priority, and the aim should be to achieve good progress by October and further improvements thereafter.

7. Social network sites and blogging

- 7.1. Andrew Walker** apologised for providing only a short covering note to the HRG paper, rather than a full paper reflecting comments made at the April Board. HRG had recommended blocking access to social networking sites for House staff using the Parliamentary network, except where there was specific business need, on the grounds of the cost of the web traffic, the reputational risk and interference with staff productivity. **Joan Miller** said that there were also a number of security issues relating to social networking sites, such as phishing to seek information on Members or others or vulnerabilities from downloading software that contained viruses.

7.2. The Board agreed that the first step was to take management action to ensure that such sites were not being used by House Service staff in working time, except for business need. It was agreed that a staff notice would be issued. PICT would also include a warning on the dangers of social networking sites in its next edition of hints and tips for Members.

8. Marketing of services and charters of behaviour

8.1. The Board considered a paper from Paul Silk on developing a corporate policy on marketing services to Members and establishing standards of behaviour for staff and Members when dealing with one another.

8.2. The Board agreed that this was a serious issue and agreed that Paul should take this work forward with the Office of the Chief Executive and the Department of Resources, and that a further paper should be presented to the Board in July.

9. Any other business

9.1. None.

[adjourned at 5.56pm

Philippa Helme
Secretary

Malcolm Jack
Chairman

11 June 2008