

MANAGEMENT BOARD

Information Management

Paper from the Director General Information Services

Purpose

1. This paper sets out the outcome of recent workshops on information management involving staff from all departments in both Houses, reports the results of the records management audit (see also paper P.77) and presents the business case for the SPIRE programme (see also paper P.78).

Action for the Board

2. The Board is invited to:
 - give “in principle” agreement to the policies outlined in paragraph 5
 - endorse the establishment of a Group on Information Management to manage dependencies and assist with issue resolution for programmes and activities operating in this area, consider policy development and be an enabler for new initiatives (see paragraph 7)
 - note the outcome of the records management audit and agree that a further records “healthcheck” is conducted in April 2010
 - give “outline planning permission” to the SPIRE programme, subject to financial approvals later in the year.

Information Management

3. The Board supported my proposal in February that I take forward the development of corporate information management policy, underneath which a number of existing “sub-policies” relating to the use of parliamentary information, including records management, would easily fit.
4. Since then I have been working with colleagues to take this forward. The touchstone has been to consider the strategic question: how could information (and technology) improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Parliament?
5. Following the preparation of a framework for information management, two workshops have been held looking at our objectives and the means to meet them (led respectively by me and Joan Miller). The workshops concluded that there is a need to take a stronger corporate lead in establishing policies on information management and made some specific suggestions. Subject to further consultation with those affected, the Board is invited to give in principle agreement to the following:
 - Deletion of emails after 3 months subject to a process of email management and an easy way of ensuring that what needs to be kept is not lost
 - Clear guidance on when and how to use various channels of communication e.g. email, intranet, instant messaging, shared drives
 - All information should have a named “owner” who takes responsibility for accuracy and custodianship

- The default for the future should be that information will be open access unless specified otherwise. This default can be built into future plans for information management (e.g. the SPIRE programme)
6. One of the reasons for holding the workshops was a concern that there are many activities related to information management (including SPIRE and the records audit) going on in Parliament. These activities are interdependent and sometimes seen to be uncoordinated. There are also gaps. The recent Gateway review of SPIRE suggested that an overarching super-programme might be established to manage these issues. My own view is that this would be unnecessarily bureaucratic and might hinder rather than facilitate action.
 7. The workshops concluded that an alternative bicameral “Group on Information Management” with a more flexible remit to champion and resolve issues might be more useful. This would act in a way analogous to the Group on Information for the Public in bringing the right people together, working out who needs to do what and escalating issues to the Boards as necessary. I am happy to convene such a group involving PICT, the House of Lords and colleagues in the House of Commons. Is the Board happy to endorse this proposal? If so I will convene the group, prepare terms of reference and get started.

Records Management Audit

8. I reported progress on the Records Management Audit to the Board in February and again in April. I promised a final report in July. Paper P.77 provides that report. I invite the Board to note the findings and also to confirm that a records management healthcheck should be conducted in April 2010. This proposal reflects the view expressed by the Board in February that it would be important to ensure that departmental action plans were being followed if the Board is to be assured that risks in this area are being reduced.

SPIRE

9. The SPIRE programme has now prepared a business case. This is progressing through the financial approvals process. Ahead of such approval the programme is keen to get “outline planning permission” from the Board to help it continue with preparatory work (within existing agreed budgets). Paper P.78 provides the details.
10. On the basis of the evidence I have seen, the SPIRE programme will form an important element in risk reduction and cost avoidance in the area of information management. I hope, therefore, that the Board can now give outline planning permission to the programme subject to financial approvals later in the year.

John Pullinger
July 2009