

House of Commons Commission

**Thirty-first report and report of the Administration
Estimate Audit Committee**

Financial Year 2008/09

Report presented to the House of Commons in pursuance of section 1(3) of the House of Commons Administration Act 1978

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FOREWORD BY THE SPEAKER

Recent months have been turbulent for the House. This report covers a slightly calmer period – financial year 2008/09 – and relates to the administration of the House, rather than the matters which have caused public anger recently. But no aspect of the House should be viewed in isolation. If the House is to regain public confidence, it needs among other things to demonstrate that it is an effective and modern Parliament, not only forceful in holding the executive to account and scrutinising its activities but also run in a professional and accountable manner. Much of the evidence for that professionalism and accountability can be found in this report.

The report also shows that the House administration is willing and able to play its part in modernising this highly complex organisation, to meet the needs of the public as well as of Members. Examples of engaging better with the public in 2008/09 include the improved website, the new outreach service and the new scheme for subsidised transport for school visits to Westminster. The Members' Centre, a one-stop shop for advice and assistance opened in July 2008, is an example of improving the service to Members. The Visitor Reception Building, opened in April 2008, illustrates the updating of the estate. The addition of an external member to the Management Board demonstrates the openness of the House Service to external advice. There has been further progress in making the unified House Service a reality.

There is much more to do. I am determined that during my Speakership, so far as lies in my power and that of the Commission, we will continue to improve the ways in which the House engages with the public and administers its affairs.

I would like to thank the staff of the House, as well as my colleagues on the Commission, for all the hard work which is recorded in this report. The report provides reasons for confidence that the challenges which face us can be met.



INTRODUCTION BY THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

This Report covers a very full year for the House Service during which considerable improvements in delivery and organisation were achieved. It is important not to lose sight of what has been successfully done in the financial year 2008/09 because of recent events affecting the House.

When the financial year began in April 2008, the four new departments of the House had only been in existence for three months. Even at that early stage, the commitment of staff across the House to facing the challenge of what had been a major reorganisation was evident and proved a sound basis for building success.

As a result of the restructuring, we are now better organised to deliver services to Members and the public. A new way of working — with close co-operation across the House departments — has emerged and is beginning to show results in the quality of delivery that we can now provide for Members, staff, the public and visitors to Parliament. Let me single out a few examples.

The new Members' Centre is a major step forward in ensuring that we deliver our services in the way that is most accessible and enabling Members and their staff to get immediate, face-to-face help with issues they face, and its high usage levels suggest that it has been well received.

The Votes and Proceedings (V&P) project was a good example of the House Service working with PICT to improve the way in which we deliver a traditional service. The delivery of this project on time has both facilitated the more efficient drafting of the V&P, and improved the accessibility of the finished product on the internet for Members and the public. As the PICT health check emphasised, engaging PICT positively in the House Service's work is essential to ensure that information and communication technology supports the business. Integrating technology into the parliamentary business is a major strategic objective over the next few years.

Staff in the Department of Resources co-ordinated responses to a record number of FOI requests and worked with colleagues in other Departments to prepare for publication detailed information about Members' allowances claims, to the exacting timetable agreed by the House.

There has also been an improvement in the marketing of our services. A good example is the increasing number of Members regularly using the House of Commons Library, which was 75% last year. Given the backdrop of the increasing resources available to Members, and the availability of alternative sources such as the internet, this achievement demonstrates the confidence Members place in the advice of the House Service.

There has been real progress during the year in coordinating communications to both Members and their staff, and the third "Parliament Open Day" for constituency staff was an important outreach event for the House Service.

Significant improvements were made to public engagement this year. The work of the Education Service expanded, with a record number of young people visiting the House of Commons through the Service's education programmes. The Service also successfully began piloting the transport subsidy scheme, the early results of which are encouraging in terms of improved outreach across the country. In addition, the opening of the new Visitor Reception Building has improved the welcome for all visitors and improved security in the Palace of Westminster. I am proud of the improvements made in these vital areas of contact with the public.

There has also been continuing work to maintain and improve the Parliamentary Estate, to adapt our high quality catering and retail services to changing demands, and to improve information management.

These improvements in service delivery have been underpinned by improvements in our management and business planning. The changes to the Management Board, assisted by the recruitment of an external member, has given strategic direction, and made for more effective decision-making across all the areas of the House Service.

The year 2008/09 is a record of considerable achievement. But the pace of change, far from slackening, is accelerating. I am confident that the House Service is better placed than it has ever been to succeed in meeting the undoubtedly serious challenges that lie ahead.

Commission



John Bercow MP
Chair
The Speaker



Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP



Alan Duncan MP



Sir Stuart Bell MP



Rt Hon David Maclean MP



Nick Harvey MP
Spokesman

Management Board



Dr Malcolm Jack
Chair
Chief Executive and Clerk
of the House



Douglas Millar
Director General,
Chamber and Committee
Services



John Borley
Director General,
Facilities



John Pullinger
Director General,
Information Services



Andrew Walker
Director General,
Resources



Joan Miller
Director, PICT
Joint Department



Alex Jablonowski
External Board Member

HOW THE HOUSE IS GOVERNED



The framework for the governance of the House of Commons was established by the *House of Commons (Administration) Act 1978* which set up the House of Commons Commission. The Commission employs the staff of the House, ensures that their terms and conditions remain broadly in line with those of civil servants, appoints an Accounting Officer, lays the Estimate (budget) for House of Commons services and determines the structure and functions of the departments of the House.

It is also required by the Act to publish this annual report. Members of the Commission are also members of the Members Estimate Committee (MEC), which is responsible for oversight of expenditure on Members' salaries and allowances, for which a separate report and accounts is published.

The membership of the House of Commons Commission is composed according to section 1(2) of the *House of Commons (Administration) Act*. At the start of the financial year 2008/09 the membership was as follows:

- The Speaker, The Rt Hon Michael J Martin MP (by virtue of his office) (Chairman)
- The Leader of the House, The Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC MP (by virtue of her office)
- The Rt Hon Mrs Theresa May MP (Shadow Leader of the House of Commons, nominated by the Leader of the Opposition)
- Sir Stuart Bell MP (also Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee)
- Nick Harvey MP (Commission Spokesman)
- The Rt Hon David Maclean MP

Alan Duncan MP, Shadow Leader of the House of Commons, replaced the Rt Hon Theresa May MP as the Member nominated by the Leader of the Opposition on 26 January 2009 and was a member of the Commission for the remainder of the financial year. The Commission is attended by the Clerk of the House, who is the Chief Executive and Accounting Officer of the House of Commons Service. Dr Malcolm Jack served in this capacity throughout the year. Andrew Kennon was the Secretary of the Commission until he was succeeded by Dorian Gerhold on 1 November 2008. Jenny McCullough was the Assistant Secretary throughout.



Activities of the Commission

The Commission met 12 times during the year. Minutes of Commission meetings are available through its internet pages. During the year, it:

- continued to monitor the implementation of the proposals made following Sir Kevin Tebbit's 2007 review of the House's administration;
- considered the lessons to be learnt from problems over the Visitor Reception Building;
- commissioned a feasibility study to investigate the options for a possible decant from the Palace of Westminster during the planned large-scale maintenance work; and
- arranged for a review of the travel expenses of select committees and delegations to international assemblies to ensure that the principles in the revised Green Book relating to Members' expenses were applied in these cases.

For 2009/10, an Administration Estimate of £258 million was agreed. This was a 2% increase over 2008/09 plus the usual inflation uplift. For the first time the Management Board had put forward three options (a 5% increase, a 3% increase and no increase). On the recommendation of the Finance and Services Committee, the Commission chose the middle option, minus the funding planned for e-petitions. This option involved no change in the proposed service improvements and infrastructure provision, but greater efficiency savings and reduced contingency sums (and therefore a higher level of risk).

Questions to the Commission

Parliamentary questions addressed to the Commission are answered by Nick Harvey MP. During the year he replied to five oral questions and gave 198 written answers.

On 23 October 2008 there was a debate in government time in Westminster Hall on the 2007/08 annual report of the Commission (HC 710 2007/08), the fifth such debate.

Finance and Services Committee

The Finance and Services Committee of the House of Commons is established under Standing Order No. 144. It has responsibility for detailed scrutiny of the draft budgets for the House Administration and advises the Commission on the financial and administrative implications of the recommendations by the Administration Committee.

The Committee is chaired by a member of the Commission, Sir Stuart Bell MP, and has 10 other members, including the Chairman of Ways and Means and the Chairman of the Administration Committee.

The Committee's principal business has been considering regular reports on works, security-related expenditure and catering finances, as well as the annual cycle of reviewing spending plans and outturn. It also considered the project for improving the parliamentary website, education facilities, regional committees, the 25-year estate strategy, the Speaker's Conference, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association centenary conference and the proposed reorganisation of Department of Resources staff dealing with Members' expenses.

Administration Estimate Audit Committee

The Commission appoints the members of the AEAC and approves its terms of reference. The AEAC's annual report can be found on pages XXX to XXX.

Management Board

Management of the House of Commons Service is delegated by the Commission to the House of Commons Management Board under the leadership of the Clerk of the House and Chief Executive, Dr Malcolm Jack. His functions also include accounting officer and corporate officer, and he is responsible for ensuring proper stewardship of resources and for establishing an appropriate system of internal controls through a system of delegations.

The Management Board's role is to lead the House of Commons Service by setting its strategic aims, priorities, values and standards, in accordance with the decisions of the House of Commons Commission; approving business and financial plans, ensuring controls, managing risk, monitoring performance and making corporate policy decisions.



PRIMARY OBJECTIVE 1

To provide the advice and services that enable the House and its committees to conduct their business effectively

- 149 sitting days
- 6,058 amendments to Bills tabled
- 404 General Committee meetings supported
- 229 Departmental Select Committee reports published
- 88 Library Research Papers (RPs) published
- 52,530 Vote Bundle pages printed

Supporting the legislative process

Through the Public and Private Bill Offices (PBO and PrBO), the Commons Service supports the House's consideration of legislation. The PBO examines every bill before introduction to ensure that it complies with the rules of the House. At the committee and report stages of a bill, the PBO receives amendments (and helps Members to draft them) and advises the Chair on selection and grouping.

During 2008/09, the House considered 25 Government bills, and 98 private Members' bills (although most of these did not progress beyond second reading stage) and 1 private bill. The PBO achieved its objective of a 100% rate in processing and printing Government bills in accordance with instructions from Parliamentary Counsel. The PBO and PrBO jointly handled 6,058 new amendments, clauses and schedules to bills at committee and report stages, and achieved its objective of printing all of them on the day they were handed in.

Members wishing to table a private Members' bill can call on the advice of the PBO; this advice can extend to drafting a bill in consultation with the Member. During 2008/09, all Members who requested this service reported that they were satisfied with the PBO's work.

A number of improvements to support the legislative process were achieved during 2008/09. During the 2007-08 session, the PBO undertook a limited experiment with explanatory statements on amendments to three Bills in Committee. The trial was renewed from February 2009 for all Public Bill Committees (except the Finance Bill which benefits from separate arrangements for Government amendments).

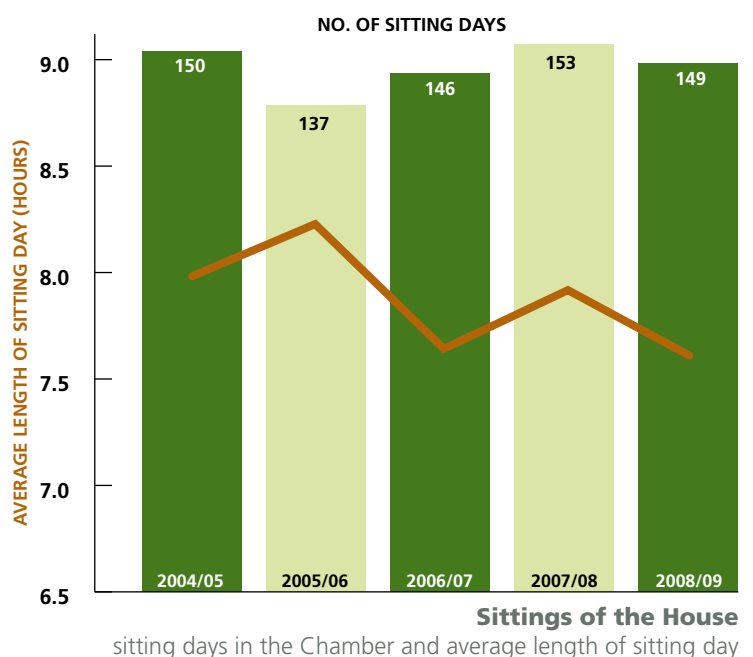
The PBO also supported the use of laptops by Members in the Public Bill Committee on the *Climate Change Bill*, and made preparations to support Regional Grand Committees.

Informing debate by the House

For every major Government bill and the private Members' bills of the first seven Members in the ballot, the Library achieved its objective of producing a comprehensive Research Paper in time for second reading. The Library also produced briefings for report stage of all of these bills (except those where report stage immediately followed Committee). These committee stage reports inform the House of the issues raised at second reading and committee stage, and of any amendments made. These reports were introduced in response to a recommendation in the 2006 Modernisation Committee report, *The Legislative Process*.

The Library also produced 200 Debate Packs in 2008/09 (an increase of 7% from 2007/08) to help inform the House in advance of non-legislative debates held in the Chamber and in Westminster Hall.

The Vote Office provides the House with the papers necessary for the conduct of its business, and also obtains other papers on request from Members.





During 2008/09, the Vote Office succeeded in operating a no-fail policy in providing papers to support the House's work, meaning that there were no suspensions of the House or its committees because of the unavailability of the correct documents.

In terms of availability, current papers were immediately available from the main Vote Office 99.99% of the time, just missing its 100% target. However, the target of 98% for the other Vote Office outlets was exceeded, with 99.99% availability. In regard to timeliness, requests for non-parliamentary papers were processed within 24 hours 99.3% of the time.

In addition, the Vote Office's Print Services arm continued to provide the capability to print essential business papers for the House, and meet the domestic needs of the House Service. In 2008/09, Print Services opened an additional facility at 7 Millbank to provide more capacity and to help ensure the availability of select committee reports for the House

DURING 2008/09, THE TO PROCESSED 84,761 QUESTIONS (OF WHICH 46% WERE SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY USING THE E-TABLING SYSTEM), WHICH WAS HIGHER THAN IN 2007/08.

Recording the House's work

The Journal Office (JO) is the procedural guardian of the House of Commons. It receives all papers formally laid before the House and advises on their orderliness, and advises on parliamentary privilege and freedom of information.

Every decision of the House is recorded by the JO, which produces the formal record of the House's proceedings: the Votes and Proceedings. During 2008/09, the JO made only five significant errors in the Votes and Proceedings, which represented 0.09% of all numbered entries.

Working jointly with PICT, the JO undertook a project to deliver new software for the Votes and Proceedings. The project was delivered on time for the start of the 2008-09 session, and the new software allows the Vote to be published both in hard copy and in a more interactive way on the internet.

In addition, a parallel project to update the style of the Votes and Proceedings was also completed in time for the start of 2008-09 session; this project entailed collaboration by the JO with other parts of DCCS, involving the Committee, Official Report and Legislation Directorates. As well as modernising the content of the Vote, this project delivered greater consistency of minuting across a number of House papers.

The Official Report Directorate (Hansard) is responsible for providing accurate and timely edited verbatim reports of the proceedings of the House, Westminster Hall and Committees, processing



and printing written answers to questions, written ministerial statements, petitions and ministerial corrections and operating the annunciator service.

During 2008/09, Hansard staff achieved its targets for accuracy, for example, in recording the debates of the House they made only one error per 22 columns (target: one error in 13 columns) in its total output of 18,938 columns.

In addition, Hansard staff worked with an external company to devise and implement an improved scanning process for Divisions, written answers and other material, which resulted in a speedier and more reliable process.

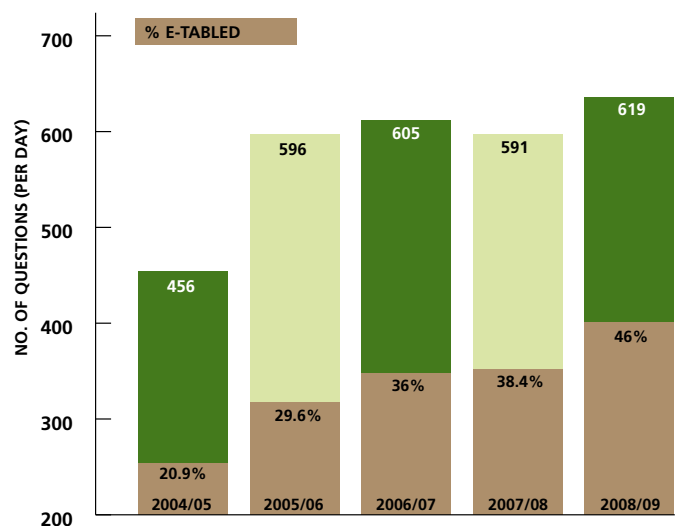
Preparations to implement an online system of submitting and signing petitions (e-petitions) continued to be undertaken by the House Service in 2008/09. Discussions are ongoing regarding the cost of the system.

The Vote Office manages the contract with the Stationery Office to meet the House's printing and publishing requirements, including the publication of Hansard and the daily Vote Bundle. Good relations were supported through weekly liaison meetings, while the ring-fenced printing and publishing expenditure was below the budget forecast.

Assisting scrutiny by the House

The House's role in scrutinising the work of Government is assisted by the Table Office (TO), through which Members submit parliamentary questions to ministers. The TO receives and processes questions, and offers advice to Members. Early Day Motions (EDMs) are also tabled and signatures are added in the TO.

During 2008/09, the TO processed 84,761 questions (of which 46% were submitted electronically using the e-tabling system), which was higher than in 2007/08. In particular, the number of questions tabled during the three tabling days during recess in September was almost twice as many compared to 2007. The TO also handled 2,513 EDMs with 120,158 added names. In 2008/09, all questions and EDMs were dealt with by the TO on the day of receipt.



Questions tabled
average number of questions per sitting day and % of questions e-tabled



Supporting scrutiny by select committees

Once a question or EDM is tabled, it is then prepared for printing by the Editorial Supervisor of the Vote and indexed by the Library.

The TO is also responsible for producing the daily Order Paper, which sets out the business of the House. During 2008/09, this and other business papers were produced on time every day, and only two significant errors were made which required the Chair to be notified.

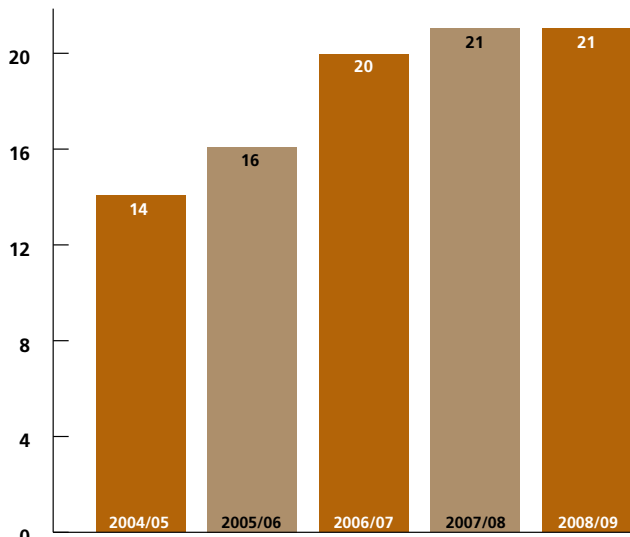
Through the Committee Office, the House Service provides secretariats to the House’s select committees. While a small number of committees cross departmental boundaries (e.g. Public Accounts Committee), the majority shadow a government department and consider its spending, policies and administration.

During 2008/09, following the establishment of the Department for Energy and Climate Change and the House’s decision to create a new select committee to shadow it, the Committee Directorate moved swiftly to establish a secretariat to support the new Committee.

The committee secretariats include specialists who provide the committee with in-depth knowledge of their subject area. The committee specialists on the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR), for example, set up liaison arrangements with the key Council of Europe institutions in order to better support the JCHR’s work in this area, so helping the Committee in its work on ECHR judgments; the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly described this as a model for parliamentary scrutiny.

The secretariats are aided by the Scrutiny Unit which provides additional resource when requested, and specialist support on financial matters and pre-legislative scrutiny.

During 2008/09, there were 1,123 select committees meetings (broadly the same as 2007/08), and 229 reports were published by the departmental select committees.



Debate report columns without significant error (target 13)

In addition to drafting reports and providing briefings, the secretariats also organise fact-finding visits for their select committee, both in the UK and overseas. Additional support was provided in 2008/09 by DIS outreach officers to select committees for their UK visits.

A series of such visits was undertaken by the Treasury Committee during its banking inquiry, for which it decided to hold innovative “town hall” style meetings in order to hear the views of the public across the country. The secretariat organised visits to Belfast, Edinburgh and Halifax, while continuing to support the committee’s busy ongoing work schedule. The meetings attracted considerable media attention and prompted interest in the inquiry that has been sustained.

At Westminster and during evidence gathering sessions elsewhere, staff from Gurneys (under contract) and Hansard staff take verbatim records of committee meetings.

A major challenge concerned the establishment of regional select committees, which the Modernisation Committee had recommended be established in its report, *Regional Accountability*, of July 2008. In preparation, the Committee Office established a core staff team to support the eight nominated committee clerks and made co-ordinated arrangements with the Official Report Directorate for the transcription of meetings, many of which were expected to take place away from Westminster. This work ensured that, following the House’s decision to establish regional select committees in March 2009, the secretariats were able to help them swiftly commence their work programmes.

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology continued to provide briefing to the House about matters in its field. During 2008/09, it produced a record 26 “POSTnotes” that provided briefings on a wide range of subjects, and also supported the work of select committees.

Broader support to the House

The House Service provides support to the House’s work, by informing the House of developments regarding European Union legislation. In 2008/09, the House’s National Parliament Office in Brussels developed its study visits programme. This enabled staff from select committees and the Library to visit some of their counterparts in the EU institutions, and so improve the quality of support they provided to the House.

The Overseas Office’s European Section provided support to Members appointed by the House to international assemblies, including the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly (PA), and the Assembly of the Western European Union (WEU). This included making 400 hotel bookings and 250 travel arrangements for UK delegation members, including for visits to Afghanistan and Tajikistan (NATO PA), and Chad (WEU).

The Overseas Office also played a role in promoting co-operation with other parliaments and assemblies (see supporting task 6, pXXX).

The Serjeant at Arms Directorate ensured that security of the House and its committees was maintained during 2008/09. This involved close working with other staff in DCCS to ensure that the level of security was appropriate for debates and committee meetings to prevent interruption (see supporting task 2, pXXX).

The Department of Facilities maintained the chamber and committee rooms, as part of its wider remit to maintain the Estate (see supporting task 4, pXXX).



PRIMARY OBJECTIVE 2

To provide the advice and services that enable individual Members (and their staff) to perform their parliamentary duties effectively

- 16,539 research enquiries to the Library
- 3,332 Standard Notes available online
- 98.9% availability of Parliamentary Network during core hours
- 86.1% PICT Service Desk cases completed within deadline

Delivering information and research

In addition to the services provided to the House relating to legislation and briefing for debates (see pages XXX and XXX), the House of Commons Library provides research, information and specialist briefing services for Members and their staff to help them perform their parliamentary duties.

During 2008/09, the Library recorded that it had contact with 97% of all Members, and that 75% of Members used the Library on at least 10 occasions, matching the Library’s target for reach of its services, and improving on the 70% achieved in 2007/08. This is particularly noteworthy given that many of the more straightforward requests previously dealt with by the Library can now be readily answered via the Internet.

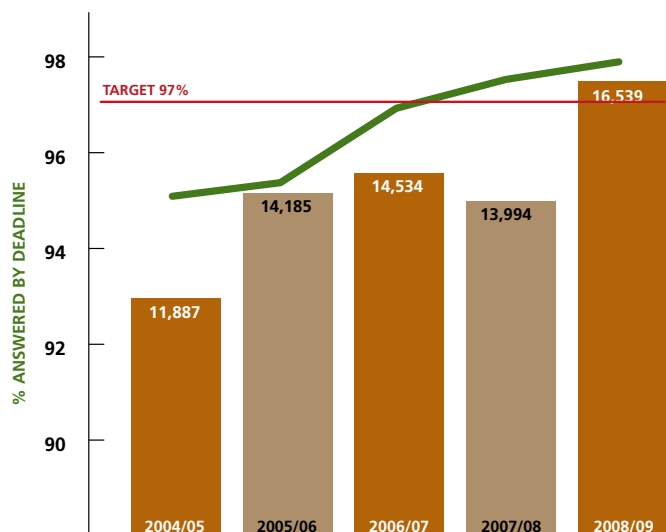
In 2008/09 the Library received over 16,500 enquiries: 18% more than in 2007/08. The targets for answering deadlined enquiries on time and other enquiries within 10 working days were exceeded.

In addition, the Library organised 27 talks to Members and their staff on topics, given by Library specialists and external speakers. Among the topics covered were the proposed expansion of Heathrow, the situation in the Horn of Africa, and a talk on the role of the Public Bill Office, which was given by the Clerk of Legislation.

The Library offers a book and video loan service, and other reference services such as a very broad

range of national, local and foreign newspapers and magazines. During 2008/09, the Library undertook a review of its reading rooms and reference service staffing: it led to a number of enhancements including de-cluttering of the reading rooms, improved lighting and friendlier welcomes.

The quality of the Library’s services is founded on its team of around 80 subject and information specialists. The Library reported that almost all of the feedback it had received during 2008/09 was positive, and that there had no been substantial complaints during the year.



Enquiries to Library
total number of recorded enquiries, % answered by deadline

PICT HAS ALSO IMPLEMENTED A NUMBER OF INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS, SUCH AS THE FURTHER EXPANSION OF WI-FI IN COMMUNAL AREAS WHICH NOW ALLOWS GUEST ACCESS.

Improving ICT services

PICT, which is a joint department of the Commons and Lords, is responsible for providing the IT infrastructure and support to help Members and their staff. It also provides laptops, printers and PDAs for Members, although funding for these is from the Members' Estimate.

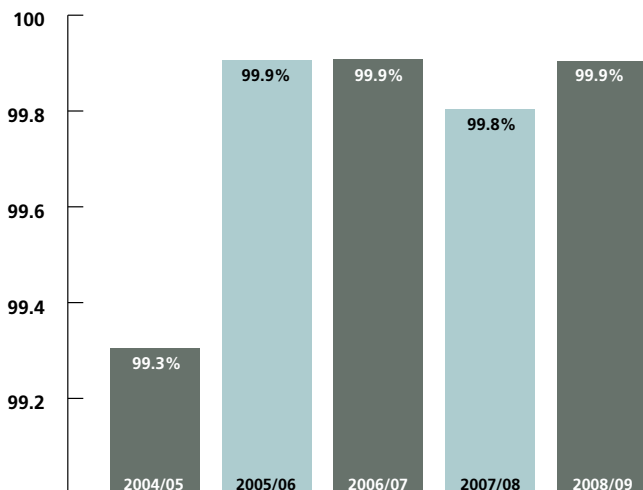
During 2008/09, PICT met its core network availability target of 99% during office hours (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday) in all but one month, when there was an unplanned outage that lasted two hours.

PICT is currently undertaking a major project to renew and improve the technical infrastructure of the Parliamentary Network, and good progress was made in 2008/09 towards completing on time by March 2011. This included designing and building a resilient and consolidated storage infrastructure

and migrating data from 53 retired servers to the new infrastructure. Additional planning and testing was undertaken in readiness for future work.

PICT has also implemented a number of infrastructure improvements, such as the further expansion of Wi-Fi in communal areas which now allows guest access.

The PICT Service Desk responded to any IT issues that Members of their staff might have, and customer services have been enhanced during 2008/09. An Extended Business Service team is in place to provide improved support outside of core hours, while PICT staff are also available in the Members Centre (see box, ppXXX), so building on the success of PICT Local. The impact of these improvements is reflected in the downward trend in the number of recorded complaints and the upward trend in the number of compliments during 2008/09.



Parliamentary Network
availability during core hours



Keeping Members informed

The Central Communications Team in the Office of the Chief Executive is responsible for communications from the House Service to Members and their staff. One key aim is to promote the services available. A new guide called *What's on* was launched in May 2008, setting out a programme of events, presentations and training available to Members and their staff

The Team also organised the third Parliament Open Day for constituency-based staff in November 2008 to promote the House Service; very positive feedback was received from delegates and contributors.

Other improvements were advanced by the Team to improve the flow of communications to Members, such as:

- establishing new guidelines for sending out global emails — the Team is now the single point of distribution for global emails;
- improving House-wide coordination of publications, displays and distribution of publicity material, as well as contact with and feedback from Members.
- providing communication advice and assistance to departments with major projects, such as the *New Green Book* (March 2009);
- helping to set up and being responsible for publicising the Members' Centre (see box).

Essential services on the Estate

The House Service also provides a number of other services to support Members and their staff while they are on the Parliamentary Estate, for example:

- catering;
- accommodation and related services, and;
- medical services.

There is now greater capacity for Members to book functions on Wednesday and Thursday evenings. On the advice of the Catering and Retail Services (CRS) Directorate the Administration Committee recommended that the Churchill Room be made available for larger functions organised by Members, rather than dining, on Wednesday and Thursday evening following a change in patterns of demand. CRS subsequently implemented these new arrangements after the Easter recess in 2009, which are expected to increase revenues.

Postal services for Members, and the House of Commons more generally, are provided under contract by Royal Mail. During 2008/09, the contract was re-tendered with revised key performance indicators, including the delivery of 62% of mail by 8am, 77% by 10am and all mail by 2pm. While the 8am target was exceeded in every month bar one, performance against the other targets has been less consistent. Improvements to the service will be sought during 2009/10.

More information about services such as catering and accommodation can be found in the section on supporting task 2.



Processing pay and allowances

An acute GP service is available, offering help to Members who suffer health problems and are not able to access their own GP due to their work in Parliament. In addition, the House Service provided 112 medical screenings for Members in 2008/09. The practice nurse, based in the Palace on each working day, offers minor treatments and health and lifestyle advice to Members on a drop-in basis.

Members who are travelling overseas on parliamentary business are able to obtain general advice, vaccinations and medication from the travel clinic at St Thomas' Hospital.

The Operations Directorate is responsible for validating and processing allowances claims submitted by Members, the House's Administration's invoices and all payroll services. It also administers pensions and provides HR advice to Members.

On average, the Enquiries and Advice Team dealt with 2,500 calls each month from Members and their staff.

The House Service's target to pay 99% of Members' claims within 8 days was achieved in six of the twelve months during 2008/09. From April to July, performance was affected by the requirement to input more data relating to each claim, as well as more claims being submitted after the threshold for claims requiring receipts being reduced from £250 to £25. During this period, the workload of the processing team doubled.

The requirements of Freedom of Information (FoI) also impacted heavily on the pressure of work (see primary objective 3, ppXXX-XXX).

Altogether, 2008/09 was a challenging year for the Department of Resources and in particular, the Operations Directorate.



Marianne Cwynarski
Head of Central Communications



MEMBERS' CENTRE

The Members' Centre opened on 1 July 2008 in Portcullis House in the space previously occupied by the e-Library. Its purpose is to provide face-to-face access to a wide range of House services in a location convenient to most Members. It followed the recommendation of the 2007 "Tebbit report" that a one-stop-shop should be established.

Visitors to the Members' Centre are welcomed at the reception desk and directed to the appropriate service desk, who can, for example:

- provide advice and guidance on pay and allowances;
- deal with Library enquiries;
- provide information on tours and online resources, and;
- offer advice and assistance with ICT issues.

In addition, the Members' Centre includes a mini business centre for Members, including:

PCs and hot-desking facilities, WiFi, fax and telephones, as well as a reading area and newspapers.

From July 2008 to March 2009, there were 2,017 recorded visits by Members, and 5,080 recorded visits from Members' staff, with usage in the last month of 2008/09 being the highest recorded for both groups, indicating the increasing popularity of the Members' Centre. The Centre opens at 9am every weekday, and closes at 7pm on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 6pm on Thursdays and 4pm on Fridays.



PRIMARY OBJECTIVE 3

To promote public knowledge and understanding of the work and role of Parliament through the provision of information and access

- 117,482 visitors to the Chamber galleries
- 90,835 visitors to the Summer Opening
- 41,083 enquiries to the Information Office
- 29,064 young people came on education visits
- 51 million website requests
- 365 Freedom of Information requests



Promoting Parliament in schools

Parliament's Education Service enabled a record number of students to visit Parliament in 2008/09 through its programmes: the figure of 36,211 exceeded the target of 32,000, and represented an increase of almost 25% compared to 2007/08 and was three times the number of visitors in 2005/06. This represents almost full-capacity: the currently available accommodation means the number of places for student visits through the Education Service is limited to around 37,000, although demand is much higher. Work was undertaken on a feasibility study for a dedicated Education Centre during 2008/09, which is expected to come into operation in 2012/13.

The Educational Outreach Team continued to train teachers and produce resources to support the political literacy element of the citizenship curriculum. For young people visiting Parliament, a new guide was published in April 2008. Other educational resources, including films, games and lessons plans were developed and updated.

A pilot transport subsidy scheme for schools, as recommended by the Administration Committee, was launched for the spring term 2009, and all places for this first pilot period were booked on the first day. The aim of the scheme is to encourage more visits from schools outside of London and the south east. Initial indications from the pilot indicate that the number of schools from outside of the south east visiting has increased dramatically, and that more state schools are visiting. The scheme has also encouraged new schools to visit: 80% of those

state schools who have booked in the pilot period have not visited Parliament in the past two years. The pilot will be completed during 2009/10, when an analysis of the full results will inform decisions on the future of the scheme.



Mark Ellerbeck
Carpenter and Joiner



Welcoming visitors

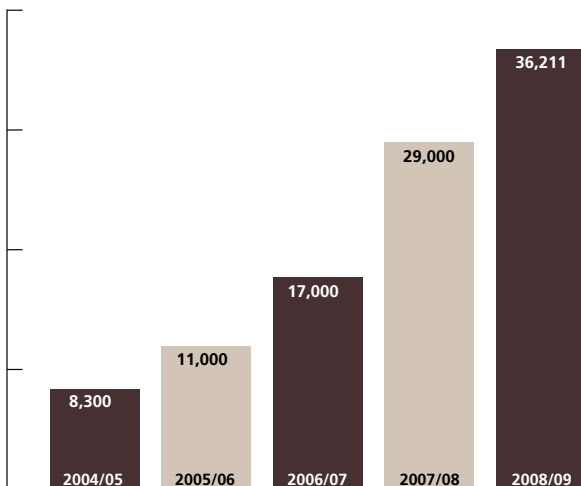
Around a million people visit Parliament each year, most of whom enter through the new Cromwell Green Entrance which opened in April 2008 as the main public entrance. Once through the security checks, all visitors are given a temporary photopass, and their first stop is the new Information Desk in Westminster Hall.

The desk is staffed by HCIO staff and Visitor Assistants, who provide help and guidance inside the Palace, including managing queues and access to the public galleries, and helping lead tours. Other support comes from the Central Tours Office which organises tours, the Admission Order Office responsible for tickets for guests and access to the Chamber’s galleries, while cafes and souvenir shops provide services to visitors.

The self-financing summer opening programme attracted 90,835 visitors, just above the 90,000 target, while 129,865 people undertook Member-sponsored tours, although demand is higher and is limited only by capacity.

The nature of visitors varies widely: some visit committees and meetings, others lobby. Attending tours, education programmes or banqueting functions are also popular reasons to visit. These different types of visitors, and the volume of visitors, requires a sensitive approach to balance their needs. This prompted a thorough review of visitor demand and capacity, and a report was produced in February 2009. The review, agreed by the Administration Committee, had given rise to nine workstreams which will be taken forward in 2009/10.

Visitors are also able to visit exhibitions, such as the Curator’s Office’s successful exhibition on the political caricature of Gerald Scarfe in Portcullis House. This was open to the public over the Open House Weekend and subsequently in a series of pre-booked tours.



Number of Education Service visitors



Taking Parliament into the regions

While continuing to welcome visitors – of all ages – to Westminster, Parliament established an Outreach Service during 2008 with regional outreach officers working in partnership with national and local organisations to explain the work and role of Parliament and to promote engagement with it.

Launched in October 2008 and initially working in two start-up regions – the East of England, and Yorkshire and the Humber – outreach officers ran generic training sessions for voluntary sector organisations. A total of 93 training sessions were held (compared to a target of 20) and 1,837 people attended. Other work included working in the museums, libraries and archives sector and collaborating on traveling exhibitions. It is planned that further outreach officers will be recruited over the next two years in order to provide and consolidate nationwide coverage.

Improving information on the internet

The importance of the internet has continued to grow as a means of communicating to and engaging with the public, and further improvements were made to the Parliamentary website.

The addition of the YouTube channel was one of a series of initiatives designed to attract and engage new audiences. Podcasts, photograph collections on Flickr, and a news and internet highlights service on Twitter were also launched in 2008/09

Work on the information architecture and other development work was undertaken during 2008/09 to rework the main www.parliament.uk website. This included designing a fresh, new, look to the internet site, and adding significant new content. The new website was successfully launched in April 2009.

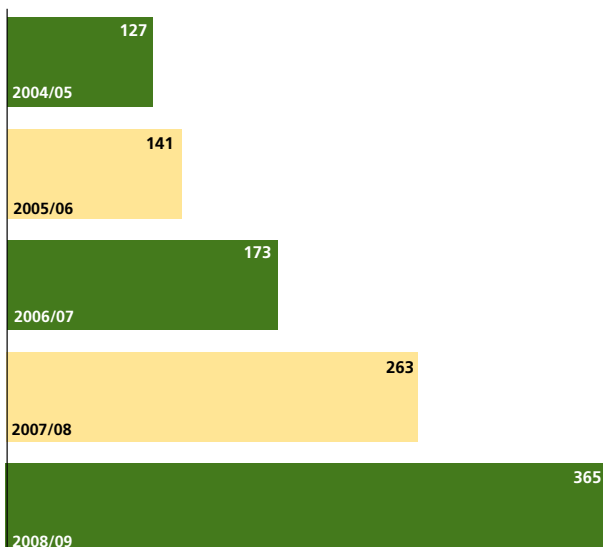
The work of the Education Service is supported and supplemented by webpages to provide access to the range of its resources including publications, video, virtual tours and training resources. New web pages were launched in October 2008, replacing the “Explore Parliament” website, and a revised version of *You’ve Got the Power* and the new film *Democracy? You Decide* were added to Parliament’s YouTube channel in March 2009.



Making information about the House accessible

The House Service provides a number of information services that complement the www.parliament.uk website, including the House of Commons Information Office (HCIO), Media and Communications Service (MCS), its Freedom of Information (FoI) publication scheme, and the Broadcasting Unit.

The success of the Parliamentary website in allowing the public to find information for themselves has seen a decline in inquiries to the HCIO, although it still handled 35,766 phone inquiries and 4,975 email inquiries (down 12% and up 19% respectively from 2007/08).



Freedom of Information requests

The Office also produces information about the House in print and in the website, and manages the production of the new voters' guide, called Voting Times. Over a million copies have now been sent to young people around the time of their 18th birthday.

The MCS team has cross-House responsibility, with a particular focus on select committees. During 2008/09, the MCS actively promoted 149 select committee reports and 568 evidence sessions. The MCS team worked with the outreach officers to promote select committee visits as well as more general promotion of select committee inquiries, and worked closely with the Web Centre to produce more and better news content for the Parliamentary website.

A new media monitoring service was procured, and the design and photography service expanded.

In addition, the MCS launched a new strand of work, aiming to improve public understanding of the work, role and history of the House, and the role and day-to-day working lives of Members, focusing on features, documentaries, and other explanatory (rather than news) material in print, broadcast and online media.

The Information Rights and Information Security Service team handled a significant increase in the

ONCE THROUGH THE SECURITY CHECKS, ALL VISITORS ARE GIVEN A TEMPORARY PHOTOPASS, AND THEIR FIRST STOP IS THE NEW INFORMATION DESK IN WESTMINSTER HALL.

number of FoI requests in 2008/09, compared to 2007/08, largely because of widespread interest in Members' expenses. The figure of 365 was 39% higher than 2007/08, which itself was 50% more than the previous year. The high levels of requests were a direct result of the outcome of Information Tribunal and High Court decisions at the start of the financial year, with many requests relating to Members' allowances in advance of their publication.

Notwithstanding the increase in volume, 91% of FoI inquiries were answered "in time", meaning that they either received an answer within the standard 20 working day deadline or within an agreed extension period, compared to the target for Government departments of 87%.

The Broadcasting Unit oversees the broadcasting of Parliamentary proceedings including webcasting. In 2008/09, unattended web cameras were installed in six further committee rooms on time and within budget during the summer. Although there have been some teething issues, these are being addressed by the contractor and wider coverage of select committees through the internet has been achieved.

These webcams can be viewed through www.parliamentlive.tv, which also provides coverage of proceedings of other committees, the Chamber and Westminster Hall. In November 2008, the Broadcasting Unit increased the webcasting archive from 28 days to 12 months. This change is being kept under review; the intention is to increase the retention period even longer.

Making the history of Parliament accessible

The Parliamentary Archives, a joint service of both Houses, is responsible for archiving Parliamentary material and making that information available to the public. In 2008/09, there were 980 visits to the Archives' search room, and 5,621 enquiries were answered. In addition, its online catalogue received 126,495 visits.

The Parliamentary Archives also raised the profile of its service by collaborating with the BBC for its programme, *Who Do You Think You Are?*. The service featured prominently in an episode that explored the ancestry of the model Jodie Kidd.

They also contributed material to the exhibitions *A Changing House: The Life Peerages Act 1958* in the Royal Gallery in the House of Lords, and *Taking Liberties: The Struggle for Britain's Freedoms and Rights* at the British Library, which included a loan of the Bill of Rights.

Further information about the work of the Parliamentary Archives can be found under supporting task 4 (ppXXX-XXX).



SUPPORTING TASK 1

To provide a skilled and motivated workforce; giving recognition and reward for achievement and ensuring that all staff realise their full potential regardless of level or background; and promoting diversity

- 1,741 full-time equivalent Commons Service staff (average)
- 200 recruitment exercises
- 20.3% of staff from an ethnic minority
- 45.6% of staff female

Creating unified HR and finance services

In response to the Tebbit report of June 2007, *Review of Management and Services of the House of Commons* (HC 685 2006-07), and the subsequent realignment of the House Service into four new departments, work was undertaken to change the delivery of HR, as well as finance and procurement services, to create a unified model.

A remodelling project was established composed of five main streams:

- training and guidance to managers to complement their new responsibilities;
- streamlining human resources;
- clarifying finance roles within departments;
- creation of a single procurement team, and;
- establishing real and measurable benefits from the changes.

On streamlining human resources, additional

responsibilities were clarified to line managers. New training courses were held to provide support from the start of the new financial year. In particular a mandatory course, *Maximising Performance*, was run in addition to ongoing management training; 50 workshops were held with attendance of 97%.

New departmental HR teams, as well as finance and commercial were established, with competence profiles developed for each post. Appointments to the HR teams were completed by March 2009.

Providing training to House staff

In addition to the training provided for line managers, Corporate Learning and Development worked with departmental HR teams to provide targeted training for House staff.

The *Learning at Work* event in 2008 was called "Our House"; a three day programme of events

giving staff (and others) an opportunity to find out more about the knowledge and skills of the House Service. Presentations were given on a wide range of topics including State Opening, security and the management of works of art.

The Senior Management Development Programme (SMDP) entered its fourth and final year, starting in October 2008. The programme continued to provide coaching, tailored courses and more general support to participants.

The Managing for Excellence (M4E) programme entered its second year. Just under 100 managers completed the programme which was run over 40 days. A number have progressed further to achieve their Introductory Certificate in Management (CMI) Level 4.

Participants on the M4E programme benefited from the mentoring scheme. Access to this scheme was broadened in 2008/09 to all House staff and now more than 70 staff have been trained and are acting as mentors to around 90 staff.

A number of new courses were introduced such as *Facilitation Skills* and *Managing Change*, as well as courses on diversity (see below); others were revised such as the *Recruiting for Excellence*. This resulted in increased demand and 198 training days were held during 2008/09.

Recognising and rewarding achievements

A new pay system was introduced for the majority of House staff in February 2009, following detailed discussions with the trade unions. In addition to a multi-year pay deal, a new planning and appraisal system for staff was launched in time for the 2009/10 reporting year.

The House Service has relatively high staff retention rates. The staff recognition scheme, which celebrates the contribution of long-serving staff, continued in 2008/09. In March 2009, the Clerk of the House hosted an event for 39 staff to mark the occasion of their 20th, 30th and 40th anniversaries of working for the House of Commons.

Supporting diversity

In 2007/08 the House of Commons Commission decided that the House should develop and implement a Single Equality Scheme. It was developed throughout 2008-09, culminating in the approval of the Scheme by the Management Board (and subsequently by the Commission in June 2009).

The Single Equality Scheme is a strategy demonstrating how the House Service will build equality into its activities, and monitor and evaluate its performance. Following extensive consultation, nine target areas were identified and an action plan drawn up to address the findings of the consultation. The Action Plan will effectively support the application of the Scheme in the

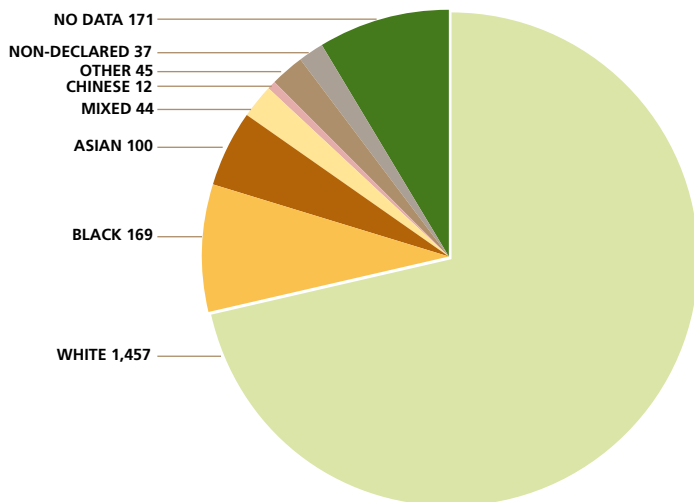
House, by providing a good practice model to follow.

A development in 2008/09 was the introduction of new diversity workshops for all staff. There is also a specific workshop on disability for staff who meet the public, including doorkeepers and Visitor Assistants.

In addition, the House Service has completed an assessment against the *Disability Standard 2009* which will benchmark the House against other organisations in areas such as policies, commitment, accessibility and communications. The results will be available in July 2009 supported by an action plan for the future.

The House Service continued its partnership with “Toucan” in providing work experience for adults with learning difficulties. During the last year, three ‘Toucan’ employees were made permanent staff of the House.

The House Service also supported Mr Speaker Martin’s apprenticeship scheme in 2008/09, and one of the young apprentices successfully applied for a permanent position as an Attendant.



Ethnic diversity of staff

Improving employee relations

The management of the House Service has continued to seek constructive engagement with the trade unions. Regular departmental meetings between the two have complemented the formal Whitley Committee meetings.

In 2007/08 a working group of both management and trade union representatives proposed 19 recommendations to improve employee relations. These were agreed at the 2008 Whitley Committee meeting and work undertaken during 2008/09 to agree an implementation plan. Detailed discussions on the pay settlement hindered its progress. Further work in this area is expected in 2009/10.

A new staff publication called *Parliamentary News* was launched in February 2009, in place of the quarterly *inHouse*. In addition, a new monthly electronic newsletter called *Commons Digest* was launched; although it is aimed at managers, it is available to all staff via the intranet and a subscription list.

A staff survey was conducted in June 2008, with 53% responding to the survey; 88% of staff responding said that they were proud to work for the House of Commons Service. A number of areas for improvement were identified by respondents:

- leadership and management
- involvement and co-operation
- fairness and respect
- performance and reward

In response, an action plan was drawn up and a further survey conducted in June 2009 which will help to indicate the rate of progress in addressing these issues.

In addition, the House Service and PICT will seek Investors in People (IiP) reaccreditation, with the process starting in November 2009. The House Service undertook a number of preparations in 2008/09, including an internal “health check” involving 8 reviewers who interviewed around 130 staff.



SUPPORTING TASK 2

To provide a healthy, safe and secure physical environment in which the business of the House can be effectively conducted; this includes accommodation, office services, catering and security

- 1,599,873 catering covers
- 1,684 treatments by the nursing sister
- 274 staff referrals to a physician

Meeting accommodation needs

The Accommodation Services Directorate is responsible for providing high quality accommodation services to Members and their staff in their offices on the Parliamentary Estate, including cleaning and mail (also see primary objective 2, pXXX).

In September 2008, a new cleaning contractor commenced work, to work alongside the House Service's own cleaners. This change was in part prompted by the findings of the 2007 Survey of Services. A new contract with revised specification and key performance indicators was implemented in September 2008, and both cleaning teams have met their monthly quality targets.

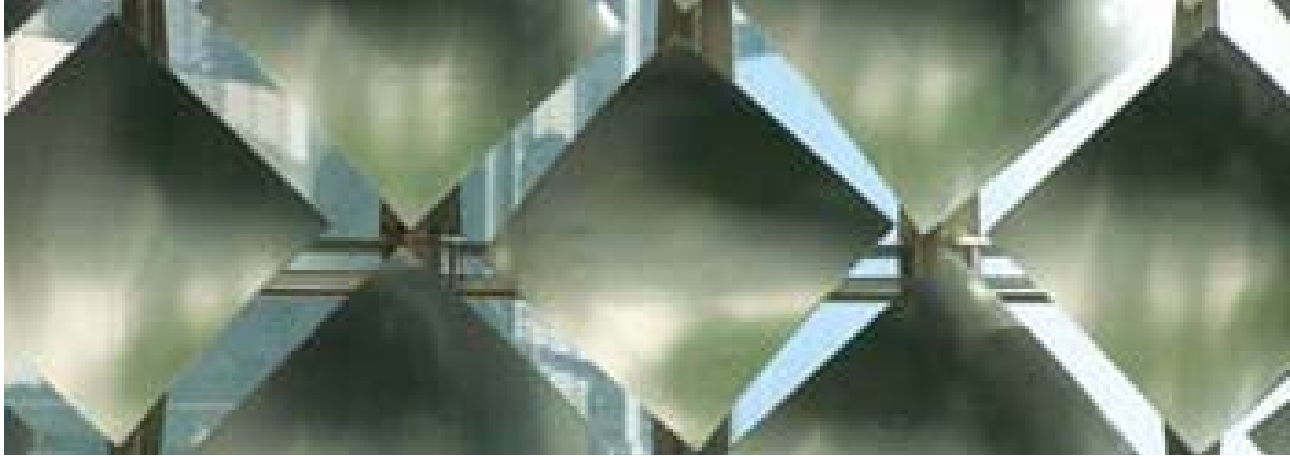
During 2008/09, preparation continued for the occupation of a new site in Tothill Street. The addition of this accommodation to the Parliamentary Estate will lead to a series of related moves, a key impact of which will be to increase the amount of accommodation near the Palace available to Members and their staff.

Catering to the needs of the House

The Catering and Retail Services (CRS) Directorate runs a range of food outlets and shops across the Parliamentary Estate, in addition to services for Members (see primary objective 2, ppXXX-XXX).

While the target subsidy level of 45% was achieved in 2008/09 through efficiencies, a new pricing strategy was developed that will see the target subsidy level fall to 41% in 2009/10.

The Customer Service Project continued, and is on target to be completed by September 2009. Two groups have been established to allow customer feedback to be collated; these have proved very successful and will continue beyond the life of the project.



Providing security and reassurance

Given the status of the Palace and its inhabitants, a high level of security is required around the clock. The Serjeant of Arms Directorate is responsible for the House's own security staff, including the doorkeepers, who work closely with members of the Metropolitan Police Service, as well as fire officers and security officers, who are provided under contract, while the Pass Office is responsible for issuing passes.

Training was provided throughout the year to ensure a high level of professionalism. The doorkeepers received training in a wide range of areas to enable them to manage various situations. This training included disability awareness, fire safety, first aid including attaining a qualification in using a defibrillator, and restraint techniques.

The new Cromwell Green Entrance (also see primary objective 3, ppXXX-XXX) has enhanced the security screening of visitors in a building specifically designed for the purpose, although there are some issues of capacity at busy periods. Access for disabled visitors was a key design feature of the new Entrance.

Each visitor entering the Parliamentary Estate now receives a temporary photo-pass, which further enhances security. The new Access Control system for full passholders, introduced in 2007/08, was fully implemented in 2008/09, and improvements were made to the information management of the system.

There was considerable concern among Members following the search of a Member's office on the Parliamentary Estate; in response, the Speaker announced immediate measures to prevent such a situation occurring again, and the Serjeant at Arms has implemented these new measures.

In view of the ever-present threats to the security of data and systems from the internet and other sources, a comprehensive review of the House-wide ICT security policy was progressed; consultation and agreement on the policy will be sought in 2009/10. Subsidiary policies and methods for assessing the risks inherent in new systems and applications were also put in place. An ICT Security risk register has been developed with a view to identifying and monitoring key ICT risks.

Preventing accidents on the Estate

The Safety Health and Wellbeing Service (SHWS) provides assistance to the House of Commons (and House of Lords), including a professional, independent and confidential advisory service on all aspects of occupational health and safety to directly employed staff.

The SHWS's role includes ensuring that:

- the House complies with occupational health and safety legislation and is in the forefront of recognised good practice;
- good quality information is provided to support operations and management decision making across both Houses;
- occupational health, safety and welfare policy and practice meets the needs of both Houses.

The number of reported accidents on the parliamentary estate fell slightly, when compared with previous years, although the overall rate and severity remains low. There were 101 incidents reported during 2008/09, the most frequently occurring accidents relate to a slip or fall, whilst injuries caused by lifting and carrying were also regularly reported.

Early intervention and referral to SHWS helped reduce sickness absence: approximately one fifth of referrals relate to attendance.

The Parliamentary Medical Panel, comprising medically-qualified Members of both Houses and senior officials, supported a number of awareness raising activities undertaken by the SHWS team, including Stroke Awareness and Mole watch. The blood donor sessions were well attended, and in 2008/09 there were three sessions.



Anne Foster
Trade Union Side Administrator



SUPPORTING TASK 3

To plan and manage all of the House's resources to a high standard, achieving value for money and matching current public service standards including in the areas of risk and change management and environmental protection

■ 19 internal audits ■ XXX% less energy used
■ XXX tonnes less CO2 emitted ■ XXX of waste recycled

Taking a strategic approach

The new Strategy, Planning and Performance team in the Office of the Chief Executive, working closely with the Financial Management Directorate in the Department of Resources, helped introduce a new approach to the planning for the House Service. The new style Corporate Business Plan 2009/10 was drafted during 2008/09 and published in time for the start of the new financial year. The plan clearly linked business plans to financial plans, and set out detailed information on key projects.

In addition, a balanced scorecard was developed for the Management Board in line with a recommendation of the Tebbit review. The purpose is to ensure that the Board is able to monitor performance (past, current and expected) and that resources are directed towards areas of greatest priority.

The scorecard was produced following consultation with the Management Board and discussion with departments, and was based on the five goals that

the Management Board adopted in September 2008 for the Corporate Business Plan 2009/10, namely:

- to make Members feel they are receiving an excellent service from all parts of the House Service;
- to deliver continuous and measurable improvement in the services we provide;
- to ensure that we have the capability to deliver the services required now and in the future;
- to make all staff feel that they are valued and work for a first-class organisation;
- to increase and demonstrate the value for money and the environmental sustainability of the services we deliver.

The Management Board appointed its first external member, Alex Jablonowski, who attended his first Board meeting in September 2008. Support to the Board, and other high level groups including the Whitley Committee and the Administration Estimate Audit Committee, were provided by the Office of the Chief Executive.

Robust financial systems

The 2007/08 Administration Resource Accounts (2007-08 HC 974) received a clean audit opinion from the National Audit Office (NAO) and were laid before the House on 17 July 2008.

During the 2008/09 financial year, the Financial Management Directorate (FMD) continued to provide the Management Board with regular finance planning and monitoring papers.

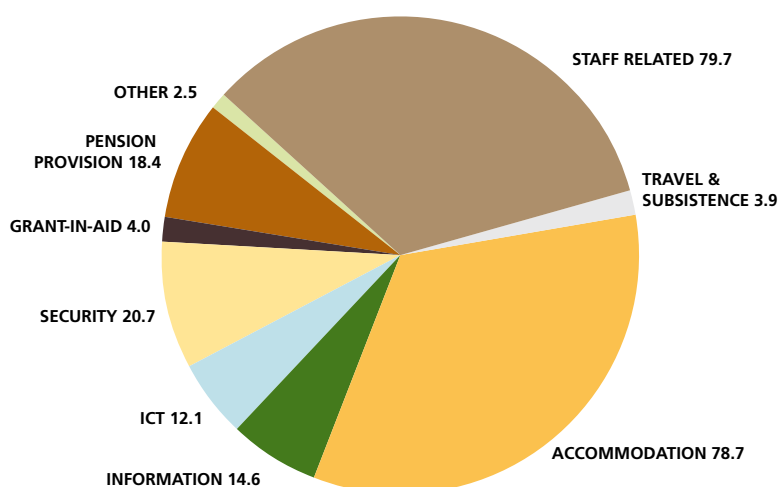
In addition to undertaking a reorganisation of the deployment of finance staff following the Tebbit report (see supporting task 1, ppXXX-XXX), a number of major finance projects were undertaken.

This included developing generic competence profiles for finance staff across the House Service. As a result, it was possible to conduct a skills gap analysis, and suitable training was organised for 2009/10 for finance staff.

The business case guidance was updated and is due to be launched in October 2009, while work continued to revise the Resource Framework, which concerns governance, planning and budgeting.

The costing model was also progressed during 2008/09, with a prototype being shared with departmental finance teams in December 2008. It is expected that the costing model will be launched in 2009/10.

The House Service continued its work to introduce International Accounting Standards, and the NAO reported in January 2009 that the project was on target. An internal audit report on budget management highlighted areas for future development.



Administration Resource outturn
(£ million)



Achieving value for money

The House Service met its medium-term financial strategy in 2008/09 by ensuring that expenditure on core services was at the same level as 2006/07 (adjusted for inflation).

In January 2009 the new Commercial Services Directorate (CSD) was established and incorporated the former Central Procurement Office. Its objective is to help improve the House Service's procurement and thereby deliver cost savings.

During 2008/09, planning was undertaken to merge the procurement functions of the Department of Facilities and Department of Resources into the new CSD. This major step forward will be accompanied by a number of other initiatives in 2009/10.

An effective audit function

A new Director of Internal Audit was appointed in July 2008 following an external competition. The Internal Audit team, working with its strategic partner PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), delivered the agreed audit programme in full and early, thereby allowing an additional half-dozen audits to be added to the plan. In client satisfaction interviews following audits, the team achieved a positive response rate of more than 70%.

The team's 19 audits were submitted to the Administration Estimate Audit Committee (AEAC), whose report can be found on ppXXX-XXX.

The team has sought to raise its profile through planned meetings with managers and staff across the House. It also improved relations with the Lords Service and the National Audit Office to facilitate liaison, planning and communication.

Monitoring and mitigating risks

The Risk Facilitation team in the Office of the Chief Executive continued its work to enhance risk management activities within the House.

Quarterly review meetings with the corporate risk owners continued. A full review of corporate risks was undertaken between October and December 2008 to ensure they remained relevant in light of the adoption of the five corporate goals. As a result of this review changes were made to the risk wording and two new risks identified.

The team has also undertaken work to link and improve corporate and departmental risk management registers to reflect the new unified structure of the House Service, and to ensure that management actions identified were 'SMART'.

A Departmental Risk Forum was created in December 2008 to bring together departmental risk co-ordinators on a monthly basis to discuss the management of their risks, to share information and to ensure departmental cross-cutting risks are identified.

A greener House

The House faces significant challenges to reduce its energy consumption, and performance to date has been very disappointing. Against a target of reducing consumption by 15 per cent compared to 1999/2000, energy usage is up 6 per cent although this is partly due to increases in the size of the Parliamentary Estate.

New, more detailed, targets and reports were introduced in 2008/09 with monthly reporting, in order to improve the House's environmental performance in relation to energy, as well as carbon emissions, water usage and recycling. These will be accompanied by a new environmental policy statement and challenging, yet realistic, objectives, which will be submitted to the Commission in 2009/10.

During 2008/09, the installation of new remote energy meters, and energy efficient lighting and movement sensors, as well as building energy surveys have been some of the initiatives undertaken in order to reduce energy consumption.

Business resilience

Work was undertaken in 2008/08 to develop an Incident Management Framework across the two Houses, to help ensure a rapid and professional response to incidents which threaten business continuity. An exercise was conducted which fed into the development of the Framework, while lessons were also learnt from real events such as the disruption caused by the February snow.



Rugie Jalloh
Assistant Validation Officer



SUPPORTING TASK 4

To maintain the heritage and integrity of the Palace of Westminster and other buildings, objects and documents for the benefit of future generations

■ 89 Estates works projects undertaken ■ £5.5 million invested in works projects

Working to maintain the Estate

The Parliamentary Estate at Westminster is more than just the Palace of Westminster; it includes a number of outbuildings which together provide the working space necessary for the House of Commons to function. The Palace is also a major tourist attraction, as well as a Grade One listed building and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Maintaining and updating it, for example to install IT communication wiring, is therefore an immense challenge.

Further work was undertaken on the development of the 25 year Estate strategy. Asset liability surveys were completed and fed into the strategy in order to determine what needed to be done and when.

Work commenced in 2008/09 to replace the cast iron roofs which, apart from minor repairs, are the original roofs installed over 160 years ago. The project is proceeding to plan, starting with the roofs in the Speaker's Court area.

Further project planning was undertaken in respect of the replacement of the mechanical and electrical systems (primary services) in the Palace, which is expected to be a significant matter with potentially wider implications.

Projects that were completed during 2008/09 included extensive maintenance for two lifts, refurbishing Bellamy's Bar restaurant, and a variety of measures to improve compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Following the Tebbit review, the integration of the Estates and Works directorates to form the new Parliamentary Estates Directorate within the Department of Facilities was completed, and the population of the management structure achieved.

Preserving Parliamentary records

The advent of digitisation has enabled Parliament to improve the storage of, and access to, its historic records by users although it is also important to ensure that they, and other digital information, are sustainable despite various hardware and software becoming obsolete over time. The first year of a four-year project to preserve all Parliament's long-term digital resources was successfully completed by the Parliamentary Archives.

A digital preservation policy was developed and agreed, and new procedures implemented to ensure that preservation requirements are addressed when new projects are initiated. The Archives' selection and acquisition policy was also revised to take fuller account of digital resources. Initial preservation was undertaken to secure digital materials previously identified as vulnerable.

Following the digitisation of the complete series of Hansard from 1803 to the 2005 general election, substantial progress was made to make it publicly available. By the end of 2008/09, almost all of the content had been loaded onto a prototype website. Further material will soon be available following the completion of digitising select committee debates.

Managing works of art

Working to the Speaker's Advisory Committee on Works of Art, staff of the Curator's Office carried out a wide range of duties related to the Parliamentary Art Collection. During 2008/09, a

number of important commissions were initiated, including portraits of Rt Hon Michael Howard MP by Richard Stone, Rt Hon Sir Menzies Campbell MP by Victoria Crowe, and Rt Hon Ian Paisley MP by Mark Shields. A portrait photographer, Amit Lennon, was commissioned to produce a series of photographs of Members of Parliament.

An exhibition of works by Gerald Scarfe, loaned by the artist, was held in the Atrium of Portcullis House during and after the Summer Recess, and proved very popular with the public, Members and staff. Three members of the Visitors Services team provided guided tours of the works, using briefing provided by the Curator's Office, and their own research on the contextual history.

A permanent public display on the suffragettes and votes for women campaign was installed in the Admissions Order Office corridor and is accompanied by an explanatory booklet.

A selection of over 230 political commemoratives and works of art about British Prime Ministers was donated to the Commons by the family of the late Jeremy Willoughby. A selection of these items was put on public display, following the installation of three new exhibition cases on the first floor of Portcullis House.

Acquisitions included a watercolour view of Old Palace Yard by Thomas Malton, a portrait of Gladstone by Franz von Lenbach, a set of photographs of women MPs, and a portrait bust of Sir Robert Peel by Matthew Noble.



SUPPORTING TASK 5

To ensure that information is well-managed in pursuit of the primary objectives, by exploiting technology effectively

■ 188,851 items added to PIMS ■ 99.7% PIMS availability during core hours ■ 3,216 new Parliamentary Archive catalogue entries created

Delivering ICT services

In 2008/09, the information and communication technology (ICT) needs of the House of Commons (and across Parliament) were provided by PICT. In addition to the services delivered to Members from the Administration Estimate (see primary objective 2, ppXXX-XXX), such as ICT infrastructure, PICT also provided services to House staff such as the provision of desktop and laptop computers.

In addition to supporting the business-as-usual needs of the House Service, PICT has collaborated on a number of business-led projects. Examples include:

- a new authoring tool for the Votes and Proceedings (see Primary Objective 1, ppXXX-XXX);
- improved accessibility of Library Standard Notes on the intranet;
- launch of historic editions of Hansard on the internet.

PICT has also undertaken preparatory work for the

House-wide roll-out of Windows Vista, scheduled for 2009/10. In addition to launching the current Microsoft operating system, it is vital to ensure that all the software used by departments is compatible for this work to be successful, and considerable preparatory work took place in 2008/09.

Planning for future ICT demand

Following the development of the ICT strategy in 2007/08, an external review of PICT, known as the healthcheck, was undertaken in order to determine the joint department's capacity to deliver the strategy.

The healthcheck noted that since its establishment, PICT had initially focused on stabilising existing system platforms and laying the foundations of a more professional ICT operation. It found that the ratio of ICT staff to users was broadly appropriate, although expenditure on projects and service developments is slightly lower than one might expect to see. The healthcheck found that

there were issues of trust between PICT and its key stakeholders, and there was concern regarding financial management and governance.

A response was agreed by the Commons Services Management Board and its Lords counterpart. Several actions have already been implemented, including having Business Relationship Managers and Account Managers in place for all areas of the business. This has enabled PICT to work more closely with colleagues in both Houses so that, collectively, a more responsive service to Members can be provided. Further work to address the findings of the healthcheck will take place in 2009/10.

Managing information needs

The Library's Information Management Directorate is responsible for managing many of the key information requirements, including Library services, such as books and online resources, and the Parliamentary Information Management Services (PIMS).

During 2008/09, 188,851 items were added to PIMS, while work with PICT to improve the stability of the system ensured that its availability was 99.7%.

PIMS is approaching the end of its life, and work was progressed during the year on planning for a replacement. This included a review of the original PIMS project and a report on future user requirements.

Work progressed on developing an information management strategy, although the target for the completion of this work was missed.

The Supporting Parliamentary Information and Records (SPIRE) programme continued in 2008/09. The programme will create a system that manages documents and records electronically from creation to disposal or archiving.

Over the year, the programme analysed user requirements by setting up 11 project sites across the House, while 20 people took part in an email management initiative. In addition, pilots of software were completed with the secretariat of the Justice (formerly Constitutional Affairs) Committee and staff of the Scrutiny Unit, and a survey was conducted of users of the Hummingbird document management software.

The programme also looked outside to examine best practice in other organisations through a number of visits and consultations.

This work contributed to the draft business case which was submitted to the SPIRE programme board in April 2009.



Handling and storing data appropriately

The Management Board has underlined the importance of information security and identified it as key risk for the House Service

During 2008/09, steps were taken to strengthen the data security of the House Service. The new Information Rights and Information Security service (IRIS) team was formed, combining the work of the Freedom of Information (FoI) and data protection teams and taking on new responsibilities leading on the House-wide data security policies and practice.

During the year, the IRIS service expanded the House's publication scheme and met the statutory requirement to renew it by 1 January 2009. The data protection policy and guidance were also redrafted.

The IRIS team processed 2 formal data protection requests and advised Members and departments on the handling of data protection enquiries. They provided training for House staff and worked with Capita to provide training for Members and their staff.

A major challenge for the new team was the detailed Members' allowances information publication by scanned receipt. This work started in summer 2008 with the publication of four years of allowances (2004/05 to 2007/08 inclusive) in June 2009.



Jill Pay
Serjeant at Arms



SUPPORTING TASK 6

To maintain a good working relationship with the House of Lords, particularly in the provision of shared services; share information and best practice with other parliaments and assemblies, and co-operate with other organisations that can assist the House Service in its work

■ 124 inward visits through the Overseas Office

Working together with the House of Lords

Although the Commons Service is distinct from the Lords Service, there are close relations between the two. Indeed, some services are shared between the two Houses, with the most obvious example being PICT, which is a joint department of both Houses. In many other areas though, such as security, estates, archives and records, broadcasting, education, and visitor services and tours, services are provided jointly with most shared services located in the Commons Service.

In addition, two joint committees on draft bills were appointed, and, given its greater pool of resources, the Commons Service provided legal specialists and administration support from the Scrutiny Unit, as well as the Commons Clerks.

In addition to formally shared services, there have also been some notable examples of good working relations between the two services. At the highest level, the Clerk of the House continued to hold

regular meetings with his counterpart from the Lords Service, the Clerk of Parliaments, and the Management Boards of the two services met in March 2009 to agree new arrangements for decision making on shared services.

In terms of operational delivery, there were many notable achievements, for example:

- close cooperation and ready agreement between the two Public Bill Offices on complex issues arising from the Government's legislative programme;
- a review was completed of joint working between the Department of Information Services and its Lords Service equivalent;
- working together on the Business Risk and Resilience Group.

Working with other parliaments, assemblies and organizations

The Overseas Office is the House Service's main interface with other Parliaments and Assemblies. As well as supporting Members who travel overseas on Parliamentary business (see primary objective 1, ppXXX-XXX), the Office is also responsible for organising the support that the House Service gives to overseas plenary meetings of bodies such as the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Assembly of the Western European Union, and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. This support is provided primarily by Clerks, Reporters and other staff from DCCS.

The Office also continued planning and preparatory work for the forthcoming NATO Parliamentary Assembly Conference in Edinburgh, due to take place in November 2009.

The Office also supported inward visits from overseas parliamentarians and officials. During 2008/09, it assisted in 124 inward visits, including six professional development programmes for overseas parliamentary staff.

Staff across the House Service worked closely with their colleagues in other legislative bodies, sharing best practice and experience and fostering good relations.

For example, staff of the Committee Directorate participated in the Committee Secretariats Network and held two meetings with staff of scrutiny committees from the other UK parliaments and assemblies, as well as the Irish Parliament. Issues

raised included recruitment of scrutiny staff, public engagement and access to specialist advice.

The Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology (POST) increased its capacity-building assistance to African Parliaments, including the development of a scientist-MP pairing scheme at the Ugandan Parliament and the securing of a Commonwealth Professional Fellowship that enabled a senior research staff member from that Parliament to be based at Westminster for three months in early 2009.

PICT participated in the World e-Parliament conference which focused on how ICT can support Parliamentary processes, and built relations with the Canadian Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly to share knowledge of using ICT to assist Parliament.

The Official Report Directorate hosted the ninth triennial conference of the Commonwealth Hansard Editors Association, which was attended by more than 100 delegates from around the Commonwealth and the United Kingdom.

The responsibility for the grants in aid to the UK Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly and the British American Parliamentary Group was transferred from the Treasury to Parliament in April 2008. There was a smooth transition to the new funding arrangements thanks to planning undertaken in 2007/08, and the new funding arrangements mean that the House Service works more closely with these organisations.

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE 1:**To provide the advice and services that enable the House and its committees to conduct their business effectively**

Sittings of the House	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Number of sitting days	151	137	146	153	149
Average length of sitting days	7hr 57min	8hr 13min	7hr 39min	7hr 51min	7hr 37min
Westminster Hall sitting days	100	86	93	99	97
Average length of Westminster Hall sitting days	4hr 4min	4hr 6min	3hr 53min	3hr 57min	3hr 54min
Hansard					
Total columns of debate reported (Chamber and Westminster Hall)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	24,508
Average columns published per sitting day	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	164
Debate report columns per significant error (target = 13)	14	14	16	21	21
Average daily print run	1,836	1,987	1,923	1,676	1,550
Daily vote bundle					
Average number of pages per sitting day	268	297	372	347	353
Printing and publishing					
Total expenditure (£m) (a) cash figure (b) resource figure	11.5(a)	9.2(a)	12.6(b)	12.7(b)†	12.5(b)
Questions, motions and answers	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Average number of questions dealt with by the Table Office per sitting day	456	596	605	591	619
Number of Members who have used e-tabling facility	153	300	334	268	255
Percentage of questions e-tabled	20.9%	29.6%	36.0%	38.4%	46.0%
Total number of written answers published	49,562	61,477	63,451	63,641	73,601
EDMs: average number tabled per week	60	76	76	74	85
EDMs: average number of signatures per week	3,090	4,222	4,345	3,707	3,884
Legislation	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Government bills	44	49	38	32	25
Private Members' bills	95	87	86	101	98
Private bills	6	5	5	12	1
General committee meetings	421	371	492	340	404
Total number of new amendments, new clauses and new schedules tabled	7,668	5,438	7,737	6,835	6,058
Average per sitting day	48.8	39.7	53.2	44.7	41.2
Hansard (Public bill and general committees)					
Total number of pages of debates published	7,236	6,059	7,208	6,816	6,754
Columns per significant error (target=13)	17	37	32	25	31
Statutory instruments					
Considered by Joint or Select Committee on Statutory Instruments	1,467	1,662	1,373	1,518	1,434
Special attention of House drawn to	74	100	85	75	56
Regulatory reform					
Draft Legislative Reform Orders reported on	18	4	8	7	9
European Scrutiny Committee					

EU Documents scrutinised	898	883	1,045	1,044	941
Reported as legally or politically important	431	437	484	472	443
Debates in European Standing Committee	38	32	42	34	32
Debates on the floor of the House	2	1	6	3	5
Joint Committee on Human Rights					
Bills considered	88	99	46	21	17
Special attention of the House drawn to	40	43	19	11	10
Select Committees	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Meetings	1,224	823	1,241	1,105†	1,123
Reports (departmental committees only)	286	147	215	250†	229
Information Services					
Research papers					
Research papers on major bills published before second reading	97%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of research papers published	94	82	80	92†	91
Research papers downloaded (internet and intranet) (i) Total excludes figures for Nov and Dec 2005 which are unavailable	887,000	1,051,000(i)	1,520,000	1,492,484	1,485,510

PRIMARY OBJECTIVE 2:

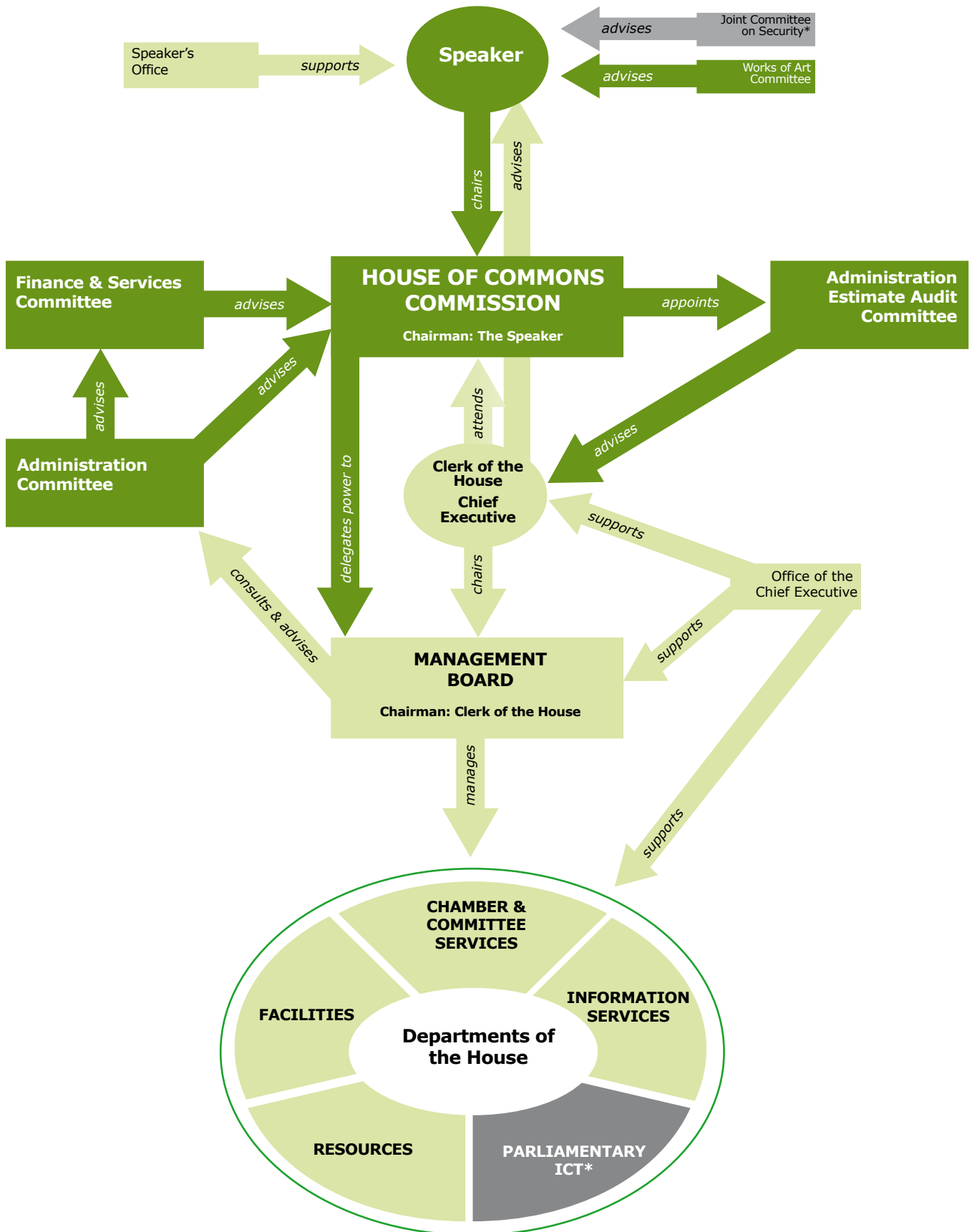
To provide the advice and services that enable individual Members (and their staff) to perform their parliamentary duties effectively

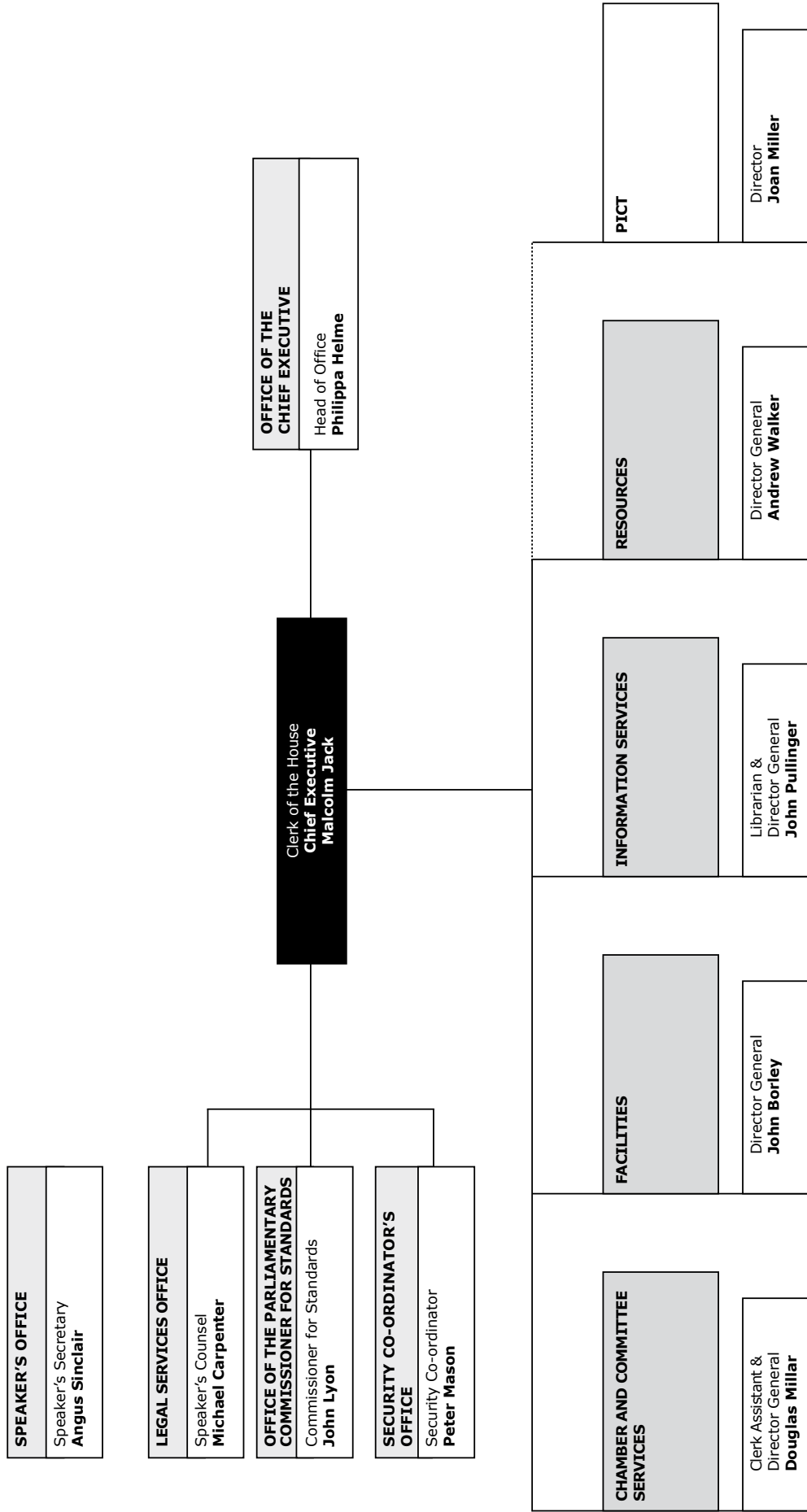
Information Services	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Fully-logged enquiries					
With deadline	6,941†	7,184†	7,448†	6,853†	8,439
answered by deadline (target: 97%)	95.1%†	95.3%†	96.8%†	97.3%†	97.6%
Without deadline	4,946†	7,001†	7,086†	7,141†	8,100
answered within two weeks (target: 90%)	73.6%†	97.3%†	97.2%†	98.0%†	98.4%
"Quick log" inquiries	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	11,126
Books and video loans					
Total	3,277	3,077	3,446	3,416	3,542
From stock	77%	81%	82%	80%	80%
Tapes and transcripts acquired	260	201	191	673	189
Items supplied by requested date	89%	90%	94%	84%	91%
Standard notes on intranet at year end	2,173	2,720	2,813	3,094(r)	3,332
Standard notes downloaded (intranet and internet) (a) Intranet and PIMS only	121,000	n/a	113,000	227,696	211,280(a)
Factsheets downloaded (intranet and internet) (n) Total excludes figure for Dec 2005, which are unavailable (b) Internet only	280,000	310,000	386,000 (n)	330,636	309,740(b)
POLIS/PIMS					
Items added	136,881	199,702	137,789	160,829	188,851
availability during scheduled hours	99.8%	96.5%	98.5%	98.2%	99.7%

Parliamentary Network	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Infrastructure availability (working hours) for 2008/09 figure is for availability at all times	99.3%	99.9%	99.9%	99.8%	98.9%
Support cases resolved within target More rigorous target introduced in 2006/07 2008/09 figure adjusted for delays caused by difficulty contacting the customer	97.6%	96.3%	80.1%	81.1%	86.1%
Members' staff					
Number of Members' staff on payroll at end of financial year	2,584	2,577	2,493	2,694	2,875
PRIMARY OBJECTIVE 3:					
promoting public knowledge and understanding of the work and role of Parliament through the provision of information and access					
Information Office	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Telephone enquiries	53,245	46,181	42,385	40,821	35,766
email and written enquiries	4,822	5,953	4,149	4,196	4,818
Total enquiries	58,067	52,134	46,534	45,017	41,083
Calls answered within 20 seconds	88%	88%	91%	85%	88%
Visitor numbers	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Visitors to Chamber galleries	126,781	100,254	116,714	123,768	117,482
Percentage entering via public queue	88.2%	76%	54%	77%	
Members' tours visitors	113,815†	108,089	129,940	131,754	129,865
Summer Opening	93,314	79,170	87,294	89,057	90,835
Education Service	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Publications sent out	96,128	78,617	83,492†	96,709	78,957
Parliamentary Broadcasting	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Archived videotape recordings of proceedings	2,078	1,253	1,283	1,407	1,458
Completed orders for recordings	780	814	800	837	791
Website					
Requests (million)	29.4	32.5	33.5	49.1	51.0
Supporting tasks	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Internal Communications					
Intranet 'requests' (million) (r) estimate	5.1	5.4	n/a	8.8 (r)	
Staff payroll	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Full-time equivalent House staff (average over year)	1,554	1,553	1,606	1,696	1,741
Data changes made to staff payroll	29,200	29,126	39,714	51,490	51,308
Recruitment	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09

Internal recruitment exercises	67	138	115	35	108
Internal/external or external only recruitment exercises	46	180	133	96	92
Total	113	318	248	131	200
Occupational health, safety and welfare					
Treatments provided by nursing sister	2,213	1,938	2,223	1,933	1,684
Medical screenings (Members)	101	83	130	106	112
Staff referrals to physician	452	369	356	244	274
Referrals to physiotherapy	288	334	292	221	150
Sickness absence referral	470	256	269	225	203
Accidents causing injury	125	151	178	111	142
Catering	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Total covers (thousands)	1,454	1,345	1,525	1,519	1,600
Environmental performance	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Energy use per square metre (kWh) (whole parliamentary estate)	320	359	358	344	
Waste recovered (%)	100	100	100	100	
Waste recycled (%)	29.0	35.9	40.2	45.7	
† figure revised					

The Governance Structure of the House of Commons Administration

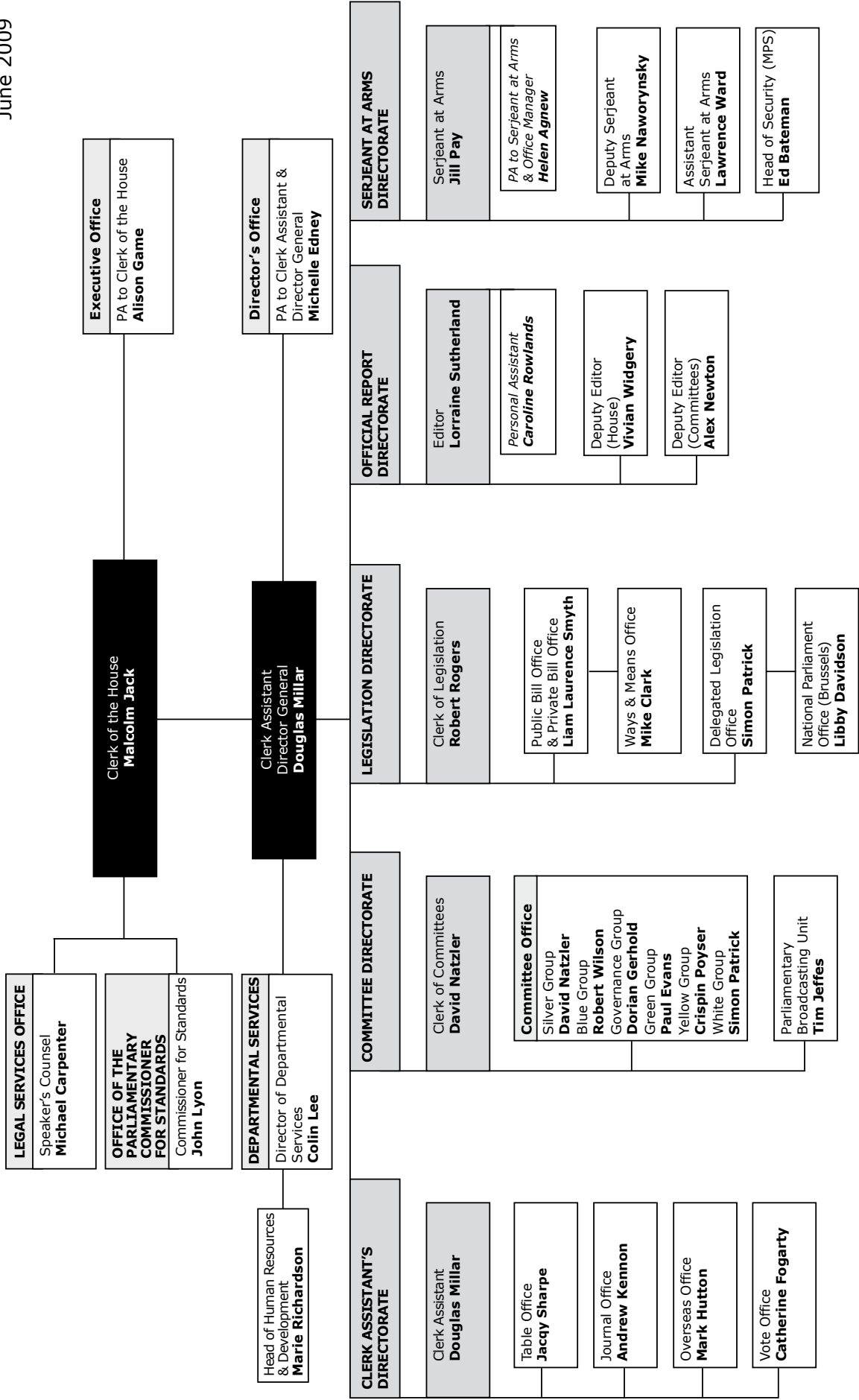


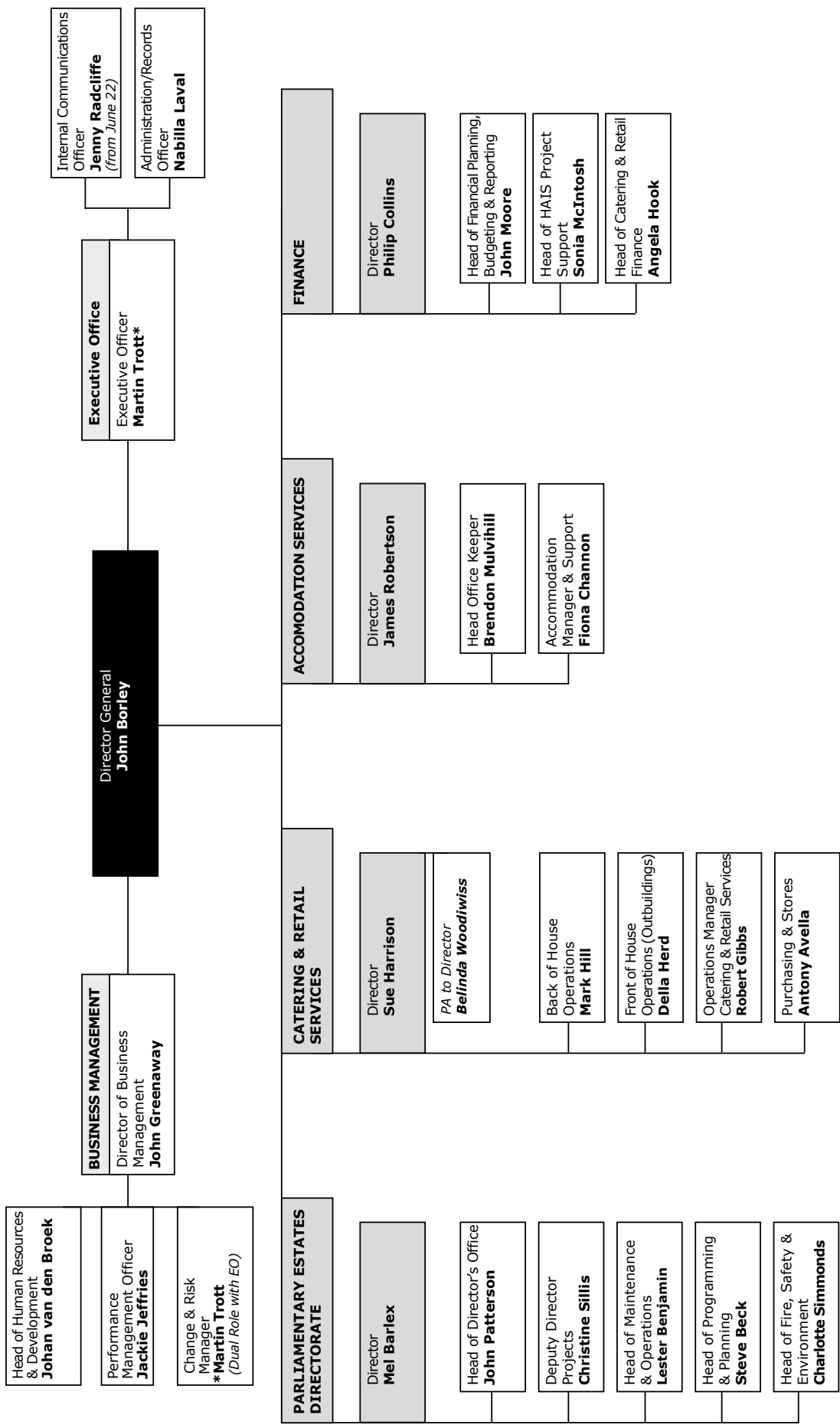


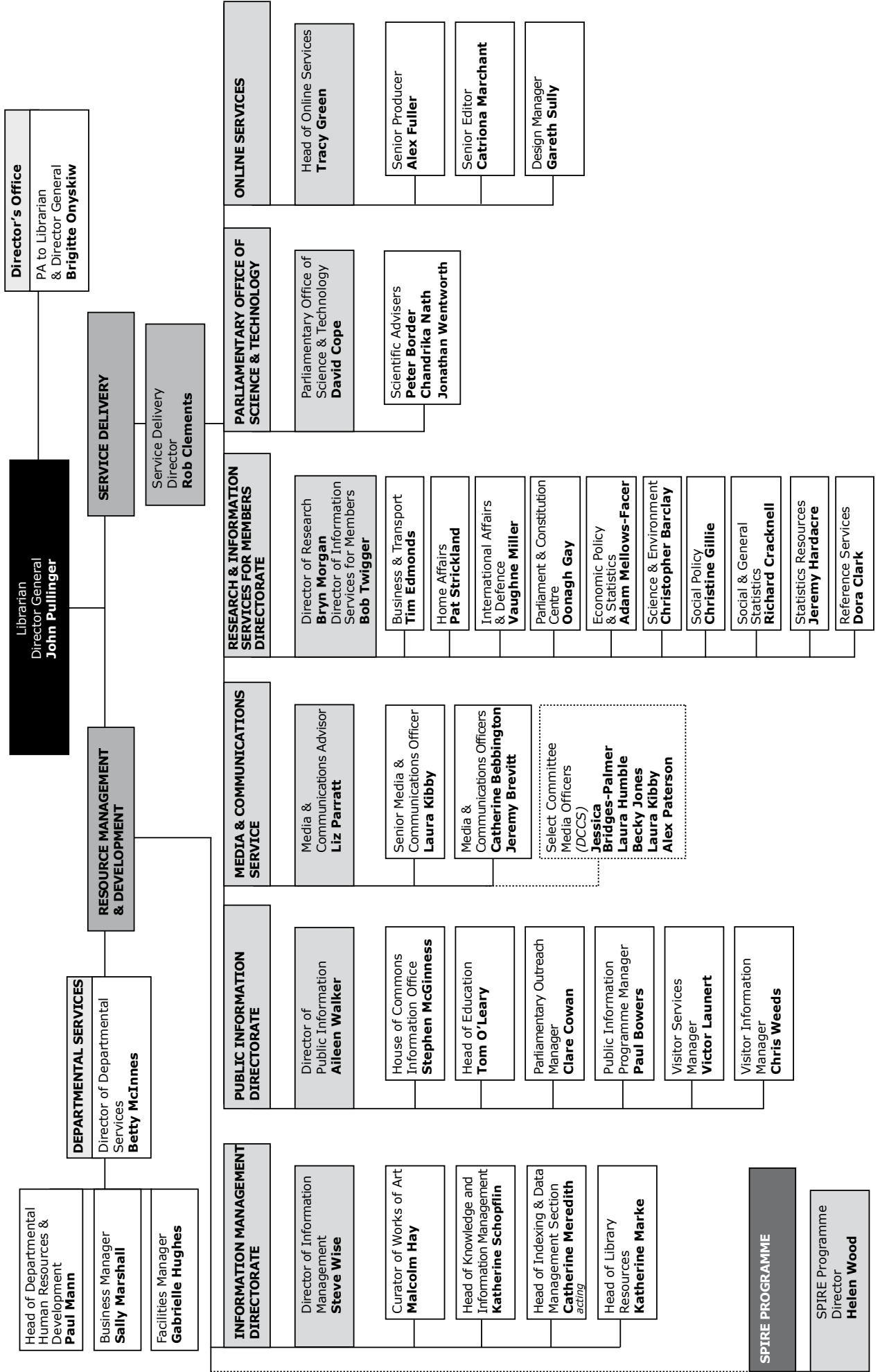


Department of Chamber & Committee Services

June 2009





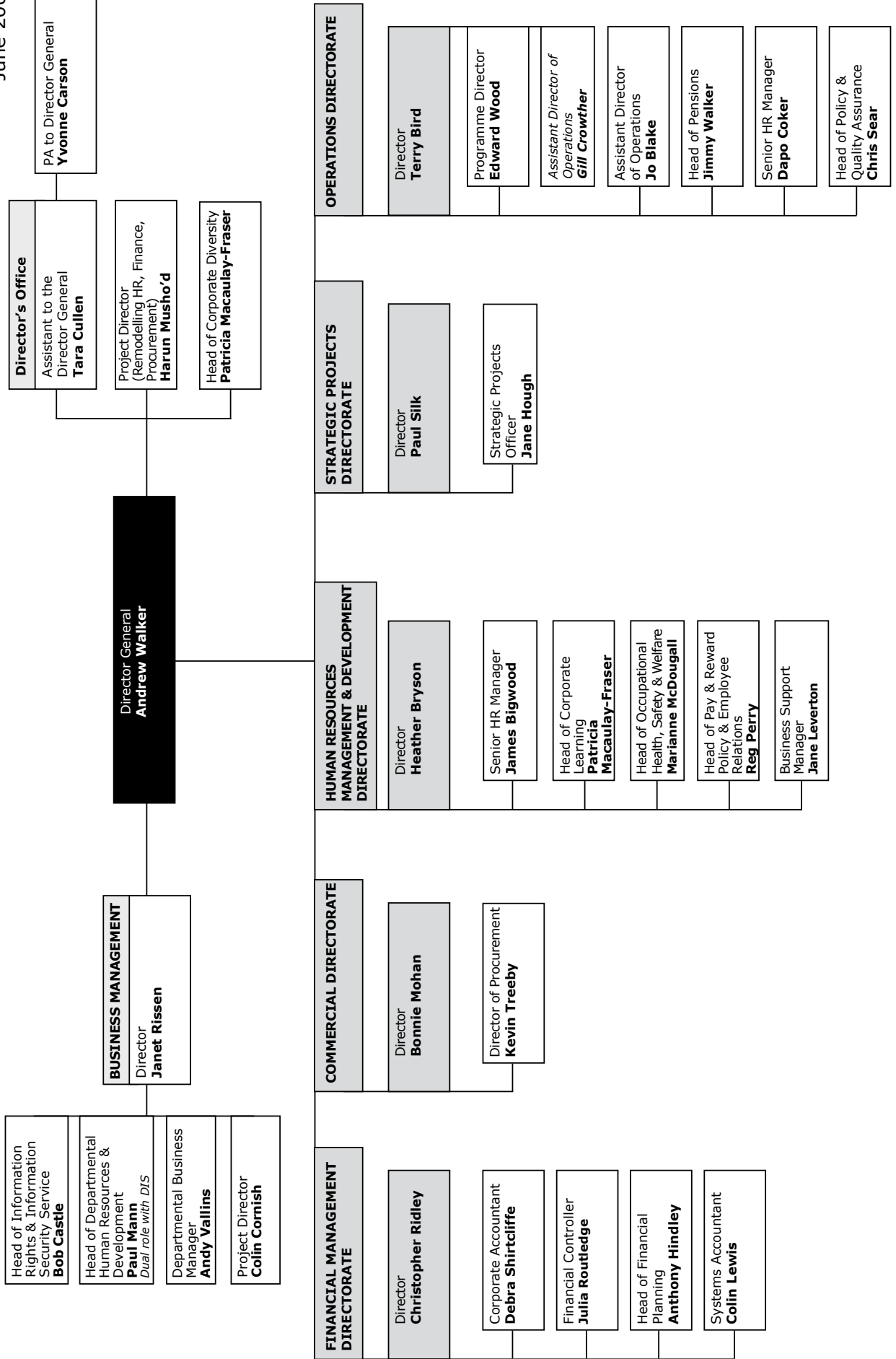


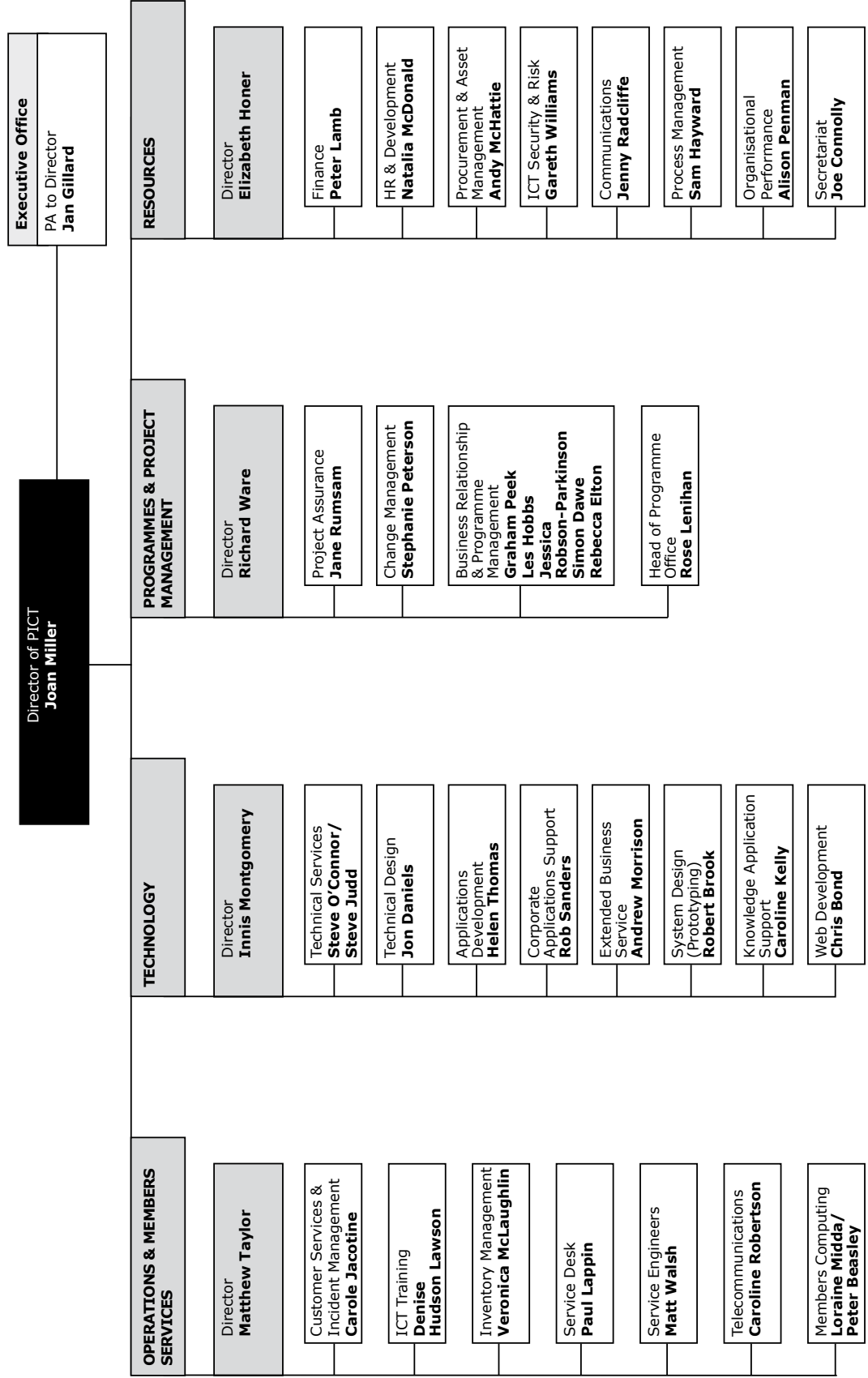
SPIRE PROGRAMME

SPIRE Programme Director
Helen Wood



June 2009





Administration Estimate Audit Committee Annual report 2008/09

Introduction

1. This is the ninth annual report of the House of Commons Administration Estimate Audit Committee, which was established by the House of Commons Commission on 15 May 2000.
2. The Committee was established on the recommendation of the 1999 Braithwaite review of the House of Commons Service. During 2007 Sir Kevin Tebbit KCB CMG led a further review of the management and services of the House of Commons on behalf of the House of Commons Commission, and made recommendations relating to the membership of the AEAC.

Membership

3. The Rt. Hon Theresa May MP served as Chairman of the Committee from the start of the financial year until 26 January 2009, when Alan Duncan MP was appointed Chairman. In appointing Mr Duncan the Commission declined to follow Sir Kevin's recommendation that one of the external members of the AEAC should act as its Chairman.
4. During 2008/09 Nick Harvey MP served as a member and Sir Thomas Legg KCB QC and David Taylor FCA as external members of the Committee. The Commission agreed to Sir Kevin's recommendation that a member of the Finance and Services Committee should be appointed to the AEAC, appointing Mr Clive Betts MP on 19 May 2008. It also agreed to the recommendation that a third external member should be appointed, appointing Alex Jablonowski, external member of the House of Commons Management Board on 17 November 2008. The membership of the Members Estimate Audit Committee also reflects these changes.
5. The Clerk of the House, the Director General, Resources, the Director of Internal Audit and the Secretary of the Management Board attend meetings, although they may withdraw for specific items at the Committee's, or their own request. Paul Dillon-Robinson replaced Richard Russell who retired as the Director of Internal Audit in July 2008.
6. The Committee's secretary is the Private Secretary to the Clerk of the House, Hannah Weston, who replaced Tracey Garratty in November 2008. A part time Committee Assistant came into post in October 2008, increasing the administrative support available to the Committee.
7. In January 2009 the Committee agreed to start the process of recruiting two new external members, to replace Sir Thomas Legg and David Taylor when their contracts end in August 2009 and June 2010 respectively. Six potential candidates were interviewed by the Chairman of the Committee, Alex Jablonowski, Andrew Walker (Director General, Resources), Malcolm McCaig (member of the House of Lords Audit Committee) and the Committee Secretary. At its first meeting in 2009/10 the Committee will be asked to agree the interview board's two recommendations to the Commission for appointment.

Terms of Reference

8. The Committee's terms of reference are appended to this report.

Meetings

9. The Committee met five times in the financial year 2008/09.

10. The external members of the Committee also held an informal meeting with their counterparts in the House of Lords in February 2009, and meetings with the NAO, Internal Audit (IA) and the strategic partners, PricewaterhouseCoopers, in early 2009.

Information about the Committee

11. The Committee has a page on the parliamentary website on which are published its membership, terms of reference and annual reports. Minutes of meetings from January 2005 are also published online.

Internal Audit

Internal Audit work and partnership

12. The Committee routinely receives an oral report at its meetings from the Director of the Internal Audit, supplemented by a paper showing progress against the annual work programme and the balance between core audit and the other work undertaken by IA. The Director also circulates a written monthly progress report both to Members of the Committee and to stakeholders across the House, enabling the Committee more precisely to track progress with each audit. In 2008/09 all management responses to audits except one were received within the three month deadline agreed by the Committee. The response which was not received by this deadline was delayed by one week due to the absence of a key staff member.

13. During 2008/09 the Committee has monitored progress against IA's target of 50% of staff time to be spent on audit work. It has noted that the audit team as a whole spent an average of 65% of their time on audit work, with the Principal Auditor and Review Manager respectively achieving 83% and 74%.

14. The Committee has noted with approval the efforts of IA to increase the value it adds to the House Service. Initiatives have included shorter and more focused reporting and consideration of alternative ways of testing for assurance. IA has also sought to raise its profile and increase its integration with the business through meetings with managers and staff across the House.

15. Following the review of the internal audit function undertaken by the House of Commons Scrutiny Unit during 2007, IA have continued their efforts to improve working arrangements with the strategic partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). The Committee has received assurance that the main findings of the review have been acted upon, particularly with regards to greater involvement of PwC in the audit planning and development areas. Regular monthly contract management meetings have been put in place and are being developed.

16. During 2007/08 the contract for the strategic partnership was extended until 30 September 2009, to allow the new contract to be let once Paul Dillon-Robinson had come into post. The tender process for the contract commenced in January 2009 and generated a high level of expressions of interest. The letting of the new contract is expected to be agreed by the Committee in July 2009.

17. There have been significant changes in the staffing of the Internal Audit team during 2008/09. Katharine Chappell was recruited to replace Dermot Woods as Assurance and Control auditor and Nalin Shah was recruited to a new Administration/Trainee post to commence early in 2009/10. As Chairman of the Committee, Mrs May supplemented the interview process for the recruitment of the new Director of Internal Audit by meeting candidates shortlisted for interview and forwarding her views to the appointment board.

Internal audits considered by the Committee

18. During 2008/09 the Committee was notified of 21 audits relating to the Administration Estimate at its five meetings, including three audits which were delivered up to the end of the previous financial year but after the

Committee's final meeting in 2007/08. One audit was received by the Committee after its final meeting of 2008/09 and will be considered at its April meeting.

19. Audit reports are usually considered first by the external members of the Committee, who may choose to bring matters to the attention of the full Committee. Of the 21 reports considered by the external members during the year, two were considered by the external members only, six were circulated in whole or part to the Committee as take note items, and thirteen audits were discussed by the Committee as a whole.

20. Audits discussed by the Committee dealt with a wide range of topics, covering core audit issues such as financial accounting for shared services and audits concerned with a number of corporate issues including disaster recovery arrangements in PICT and HAIS procure to pay.

21. Overall the Committee has been satisfied that management has taken action to address any shortcomings in procedures identified by the audits it has considered during the year. The Committee was pleased that an audit of professional education proved useful to management and fed into a process of remodelling HR, finance and procurement across the House Service.

22. The Committee has ongoing concerns arising from the findings of audits of control issues within the Parliamentary Estates Directorate (PED). No assurance was given in relation to an audit of works authorisation procedures. The Committee was concerned at historical management failure to tackle some of the issues raised and followed up the specific issue of segregation of duties at a subsequent meeting. No assurance was able to be given on audits of contract and financial management and inventory control in the interior design and furnishings group. Management has committed to address the issues raised by the audits including through the recruitment of a Commercial Director and reorganisation of procurement staff. The Committee hopes that this will strengthen procurement practice across the House service. It plans to continue monitoring the issues raised by the audits in PED during 2009/10.

23. It was agreed by the Committee in April 2008 that IA should undertake follow up reviews when an audit had been issued for six months. This decision was implemented during the financial year and the Committee received a number of follow-up audits including on the Metropolitan Police Contract (an area of past concern for the Committee) and Parliamentary Questions. The Committee was concerned by the findings of follow-up audits on Change and Project Management in PICT, which detailed an unacceptable lack of progress in implementing the findings of the original audits. The Committee asked PICT for an action plan detailing how recommendations had been met, by October 2009.

24. Further information on specific audits is included in the minutes of the Committee's meetings which are available on the Committee's website.

Internal audit charter

25. The House's internal audit charter, setting out the purpose, role, responsibility, status and authority of internal auditing within the House of Commons, and outlining the scope of internal audit work, is reviewed annually by the Committee. The changes agreed in April 2008 reflected the changes in the structure of the House Service which had taken place following the Tebbit review. The Committee is satisfied that the scope and nature of the work of Internal Audit, supported by its partnership with PwC, and in parallel with the work of the NAO as the external auditors, adequately underpins the assessment of the Accounting Officer of the system of internal control.

Planning of the audit programme

26. The IA programme for 2008/09 was discussed by the Committee in April 2008 and finalised by correspondence thereafter. An update was presented by the new Director of IA at the Committee's October meeting, and amendments to the programme agreed. Over the course of the financial year, the Committee has noted with approval IA's increased focus on delivery, both in delivering the agreed audit programme and in timeliness of reporting. Despite the carryover of

audits from the previous financial year, the original audit programme was delivered in full, predominantly by Christmas, which enabled a number of additional audits to be added to the plan.

27. In January 2009 the Committee held a discussion of a draft work programme for IA during 2009/10, which will form part of a five year programme. The programme will be risk-based, with priorities determined through discussions with managers. As recommended by the Tebbit review, the programme will include value for money reviews to be undertaken in conjunction with the NAO and the strategic partner. The one and five year programmes will be approved by the Committee at its April 2009 meeting.

External audit

28. The National Audit Office (NAO) has continued to provide an external audit function for the House of Commons. NAO staff routinely attend meetings of the Committee and receive all of its papers and minutes, although the Committee continues from time to time to discuss certain items of business without auditors present.

29. The external members of the Committee met with NAO and Department of Resources staff in June 2008 to discuss the draft House of Commons: Administration Accounts for 2007/08. Following this the accounts were discussed by the full Committee on 9 July 2008 prior to being signed off by the Clerk of the House, as Accounting Officer. Amongst the issues noted by the Committee were the potentially significant effects on the resource accounts of small movements in land and building value and pension liabilities, the effect on the accounts of the restructuring of the House Service, and the fact that a Supplementary Estimate of £5.2m had been recommended to the Commission in February 2008, but had subsequently proved unnecessary.

30. A letter of engagement between the NAO and the House was agreed and signed in respect of the accounts for 2007/08, setting out the parameters of the House's interaction with the NAO, including the C&AG's position as an Officer of the House. A new letter will be agreed for each year's accounts.

31. The Committee received an audit completion memorandum for 2007/08 and a progress report from the NAO on the implementation of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS). It also discussed the NAO's planned approach to auditing the House of Commons Resource Accounts 2008/09, noting plans for the NAO to seek to place reliance on payroll and budget management in 2008/9, with the aim of moving to full reliance on financial systems and internal audit in 2009/10.

Risk Management

32. The Committee continued to fulfil its responsibility to monitor the management of risk. In April 2008 it reviewed the House Service's risk management policy and guidance for staff on the principles and concepts of risk management. It received assurances that risk management was being "mainstreamed" through the House's management training programmes. In January 2009 the Committee considered the revised corporate risks agreed by the Management Board.

33. As agreed in 2007/08, the Committee has invited a senior manager to each of its four regular meetings to discuss how they managed risk in their area and how this was linked to the corporate risks. The Committee has found the dialogue it has had with these managers informative and helpful in allowing it to monitor the management of risk across the House. The fifth such discussion, which is due to take place at the Committee's April 2009 meeting, will complete the set of managers from each of the four House Departments and PICT. The Committee will then review its oversight of the management of risk across the House later in 2009/10.

House of Lords Audit Committee

34. The Committee continues to share agendas and minutes with the House of Lords Audit Committee. The external members of the two Committees held an informal meeting in February 2009 to discuss matters of interest and concern. The Committee has noted the efforts made by IA to increase planning and communication with colleagues in the House of Lords, including regular communication with the Lords Director of Internal Audit and the appearance of the Commons Director of Internal Audit before the House of Lords Audit Committee in January 2009.

Other areas of work

35. The Committee received an update on work by IA to embed CRSA as a methodology for reviewing finance and human resource processes and procedures. It was concerned at ongoing evidence of management uncertainties about the value of the methodology but pleased that a new Business Management Director appointed in the Department of Resources would be working with internal audit to improve CRSA's usefulness to the organisation.

36. The Committee received a "lessons learned" review commissioned jointly by both Houses regarding delays to the completion of the Visitor Reception Building on Cromwell Green. It has agreed to monitor the implementation of these lessons in the course of future programmes (for example the forthcoming programme to renew the primary Mechanical and Electrical services in the Palace of Westminster) as an ongoing priority.

Members Estimate Audit Committee

37. A Members Estimate Audit Committee was established by the House's Members Estimate Committee on 14 June 2004. It has the same membership as the Administration Estimate Audit Committee and usually meets immediately after meetings of the AEAC. The annual report of the Members Estimate Audit Committee will be published with the House of Commons: Members Estimate Accounts 2008/09 in the summer.

Appendix

The Committee's current terms of reference are shown below:

On behalf of the Commission to:

- have general oversight of the work of internal audit and review, with particular emphasis on promoting economy, efficiency and effectiveness, on value-for-money studies, and on risk assessment and control assurance;
- receive and consider reports from Internal Audit (IA), together with management letters and other external audit material;
- monitor and review the external auditor's independence, objectivity and effectiveness, and to make recommendations to the Commission about the external auditor's appointment;
- advise the Accounting Officer in the exercise of his responsibilities;
- consider and recommend to the Accounting Officer the internal audit programme;
- encourage best financial practice, use of resources and governance in the House administration; and
- report annually, the report to be published with the Commission's Annual Report.

