

Management Board

Progress in implementing the new Vista desktop and related projects

Note from Richard Ware, Director of Programmes and Project Development (PICT)

Purpose

1. This paper reports progress on implementation of the Vista desktop and related projects, on which both management boards were consulted in January 2009.
2. It remains the case that at this stage the new desktop environment will affect the staff of both Houses, but not Members. Members' desktops will also be updated in due course, enabling PICT to manage a technical environment which is as standard as possible. Engagement and consultation with Members on these issues is out of scope of this paper.

Actions for the Board

3. The Management Board is invited to take note of the information presented in the paper.

Consultation and communication

4. Engagement with users and consultation has proceeded as was proposed in January. A *User Engagement Project Board* has worked closely with the implementation team and has helped to identify a larger network of 39 senior users (18 Commons, 17 Lords, 4 PICT and others) drawn from all departments and offices. Annex C lists the senior users.
5. Successful "open day" events were held on 5 March and 11 June in order to demonstrate elements of the new desktop. The design has moved forward from the "out of the box" appearance of the components to something much closer to the "parliamentary build" that will be rolled out to all users in the autumn. Both events were well attended and well received by staff.
6. The project board has also approved user engagement, communication, training and testing strategies and ensured that these were acceptable to users at large, covered all the necessary issues, and were expressed in reasonably user friendly terminology.
7. For the next phase, the project board takes on a wider remit as the *User Experience Project Board*, with an additional responsibility for identifying the desired benefits for users and ensuring that they are realised. The project board also continues to play a major part in ensuring that the critical success factors for implementation are met.¹

¹ These were set out in the January 2009 paper to the Management Boards and are reproduced in annex A.

Progress of the programme as a whole

8. The current PICT infrastructure programme consists of eleven technical implementation projects, of which five are largely invisible to the user. These are:
- New virtualised and consolidated server environment
 - Exchange 2007 (e-mail direction and delivery)
 - SCOM (network monitoring)
 - SCCM (software and patch delivery)
 - Remote Data Centre
9. The first four of these are now implemented or in testing and due to go live before the summer recess. Once these environments are live, applications such as exchange and MS Office file stores will begin to be transferred into them, significantly improving the resilience of the Parliamentary IT service.
10. The Remote Data Centre, a large project in its own right, has achieved business case approval from both Houses following procurement and will proceed with the chosen supplier. The process of migrating applications and data to the off-site centre will continue into 2010/11.

Building, testing and piloting the new desktop

11. A further five technical implementation projects directly affect users at the desktop. These are:
- Vista (operating system, replacing Windows 2000)
 - Office 2007 (including updated versions of Word, Outlook, Excel, PowerPoint)
 - Office Communicator
 - SharePoint LaunchPad
 - SharePoint teamsites
12. These projects are also on track. A “near-final” Vista build has been created and is currently being rolled out to individual pilot users across Parliament. This includes Office 2007, Office Communicator (which has already been extensively and successively piloted in PICT, DIS and House of Lords IS) and a preliminary version of the LaunchPad portal. A second larger wave of pilots, also involving individuals rather than whole teams, is due to begin on 13 July. The third phase of the piloting will take place in September and, subject to the completion of user acceptance testing, is expected to involve the greater part of the Commons Department of Resources (excluding for the moment the operations directorate). User training and support arrangements for all three pilot phases are in place. One of the purposes of the September pilot is to test logistics ahead of the full-scale roll-out.
13. In the mean time PICT will identify a provisional schedule for the full rollout for further consultation with users before the summer recess. The rollout is planned to take place between late October 2009 and February 2010.
14. PICT has identified 220 business applications that need to be packaged, or in some cases upgraded, in order to work with Vista. The majority have been passed to a specialist company and, of these, 175 have already been returned for user testing with the new build, and of these 70 have so far completed user acceptance testing. Packaged and tested software will constitute a standardised software library which will provide a platform for further rationalisation in the future. Word templates are also being upgraded by a specialist contractor and tested with users.

15. The new Vista build is also designed to implement agreed parliamentary security standards, including anti virus measures and malware protection.

Improving remote connections

16. Finally, the eleventh project improves the way in which users can connect to the Parliamentary network when working away from the Westminster estate. This project has begun to move existing remote access users to new connectivity hardware and create a simpler and more consistent and secure approach to logging in from broadband lines or from locations such as internet cafes.

The “LaunchPad”

17. Microsoft SharePoint provides numerous “web parts” and settings which can be built up in different ways to link information sources at the desktop. Depending on how it is set up, SharePoint can offer new ways of communicating and collaborating at the level of the “whole organisation” or at any group level ranging from entire departments to small teams. This would include cross-organisational teams such as professional networks or project boards. It therefore supports the “unified” style of working which both Management Boards wish to promote.
18. The LaunchPad concept uses these tools to provide each individual on the network with an overview and entry point to information that they access through the desktop. Depending on how we wish to use it, the LaunchPad can provide benefits to induction, training and support and the potential to support corporate communications, but it can also allow individuals to configure it to their own requirements, incorporating favourite links and adding feeds from the intranet or internet.² The concept is sufficiently flexible to allow some components that are corporate and mandatory and others that are entirely down to the individual to design and determine. For those who wish there can be suggested designs as a starting point for particular roles or departments.
19. Annex B provides an illustration of what an individual LaunchPad might look like. The User Experience Project Board will continue to evaluate the LaunchPad and use the initial piloting waves of implementation to test different approaches with a view to making informed recommendations about mandatory elements and aspects of “look and feel”, such as backdrops and screen-savers, ahead of full roll-out in the autumn.

Impact on other programmes

20. The PICT infrastructure programme has been running in parallel with a number of other related programmes and initiatives in both Houses, including the intranet project, the SPIRE programme, initiatives on data security and other initiatives sponsored by the two Directors of Information Services to introduce improved information management generally. This has involved liaising closely with those responsible for these initiatives and understanding how the work and objectives of the infrastructure programme could support and sit alongside them in a beneficial way. The chairman of the Parliament-wide intranet project board ([s.40]) and the Programme Director of SPIRE ([s.40]) have been key members of the user engagement project board for this reason.

² These would be existing RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds, now widely available from many websites.

21. The main area of interdependency with the intranet project concerns the nature and level of integration between the desktop "LaunchPad" (see above) and the intranet home page, for the purposes of corporate communication. Communications can be carried by either or both of these media, by one linking to the other, or by targeted RSS feeds to the desktop. During the early pilots PICT is testing options for the LaunchPad to be a default view on login and will ask the User Experience and Intranet Boards to evaluate their impact.
22. Interdependencies with the SPIRE programme have been complex to manage because that programme has been assessing requirements and technologies for electronic document and records management on a different timetable to that of the infrastructure programme. Now that the SPIRE Board has decided to recommend an approach which would combine supporting cultural change with the use of specialist tools for EDRM, integrating with Office 2007 and SharePoint on the desktop, the way forward has become clearer.
23. Joint Infrastructure/SPIRE workshops held during May have clarified how the different tools are likely to support different phases in the information cycle (creating; storing; securing; sharing). It has been agreed that the LaunchPad (which utilises functionality from SharePoint, but does not provide opportunities to create or save documents) remains part of the infrastructure programme and will be implemented on the same timetable as the Vista desktop. SharePoint team-sites will be developed and piloted under the joint sponsorship of the infrastructure and SPIRE programmes. Joint objectives for this project have been agreed and there is now a single project board (chaired by Bob Twigger) and project team managing pilots which will test the benefits to be obtained by using the SharePoint concept and technology. Some pilots will focus on the potential for collaborative drafting and shared access to documents and how this would work alongside an EDRM system. Others will exclude documents as such and focus on other aspects of collaboration, such as wikis, "white pages" and team calendars.
24. As reported to the management boards in January, there is significant evidence from other organisations that Microsoft SharePoint technology requires strong governance and information management policies. It can bring clear benefits to collaboration within and between teams and across organisations, but unmanaged proliferation of SharePoint sites can exacerbate information and records management problems. The joint approach now being implemented by PICT and SPIRE in partnership will be subject to a "health check" review by Gartner at the earliest practical opportunity. This will look at governance and wider information management objectives, and also advise from a technical perspective on how best to integrate SharePoint with the future EDRM system, if the SPIRE business case is approved.
25. The project to manage pilots of SharePoint "teamsites" will run until the end of November 2009 and will be followed by a full evaluation and report to both Management Boards on the benefits of rolling out SharePoint collaboration tools more widely, taking into account progress made by the SPIRE programme. Further development will therefore take place beyond the conclusion of the Vista rollout.

Risks

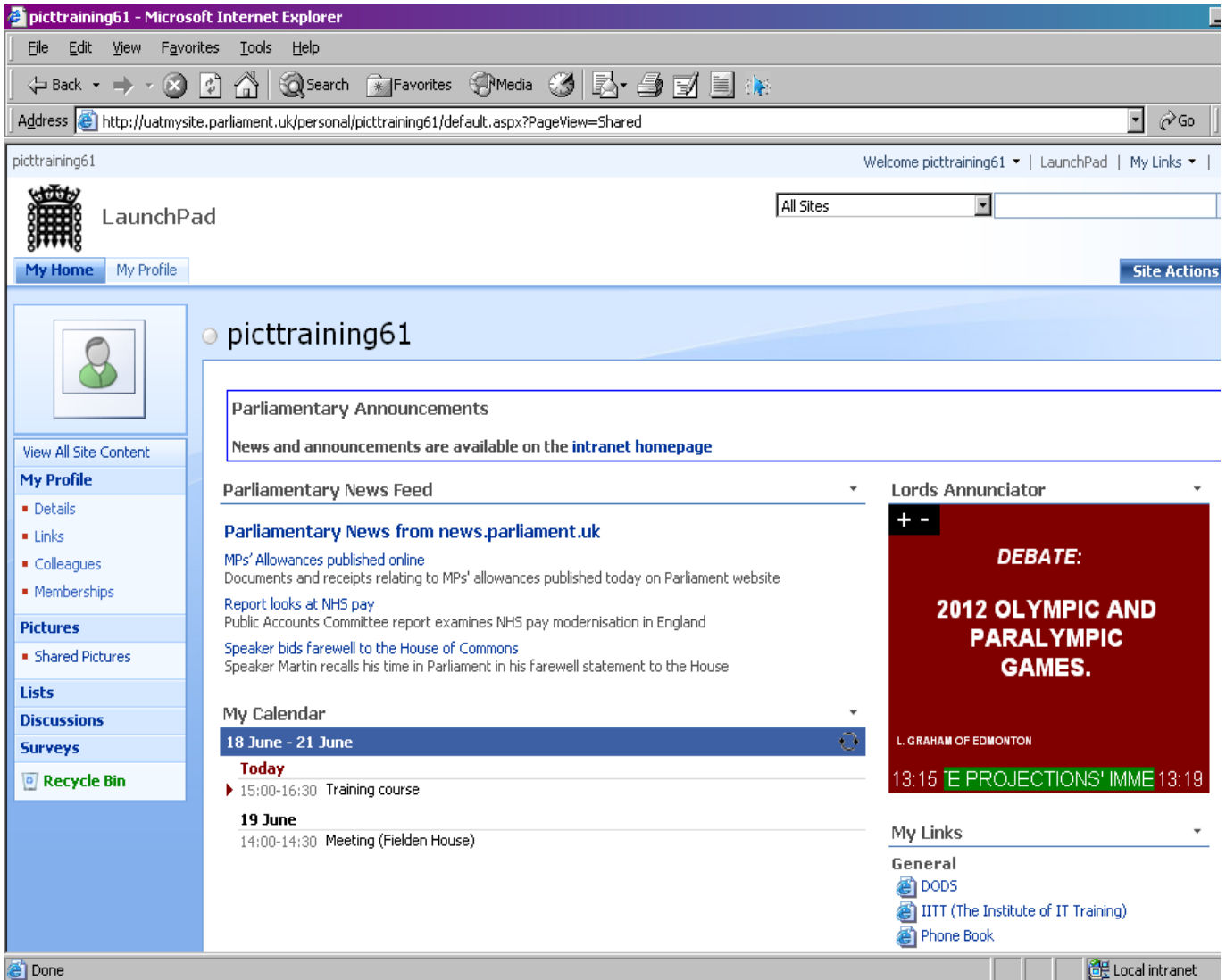
26. The PICT Infrastructure Board is actively managing risks to the programme and will escalate these to the PICTAB or the Management Boards should the need arise. Identified risks include slippage of activity into next financial year with budgetary implications; uncertainty arising from election timing; interdependencies with other programmes. At this stage none of these is seen as threatening the success of the programme.

Annex A: Critical Success Factors

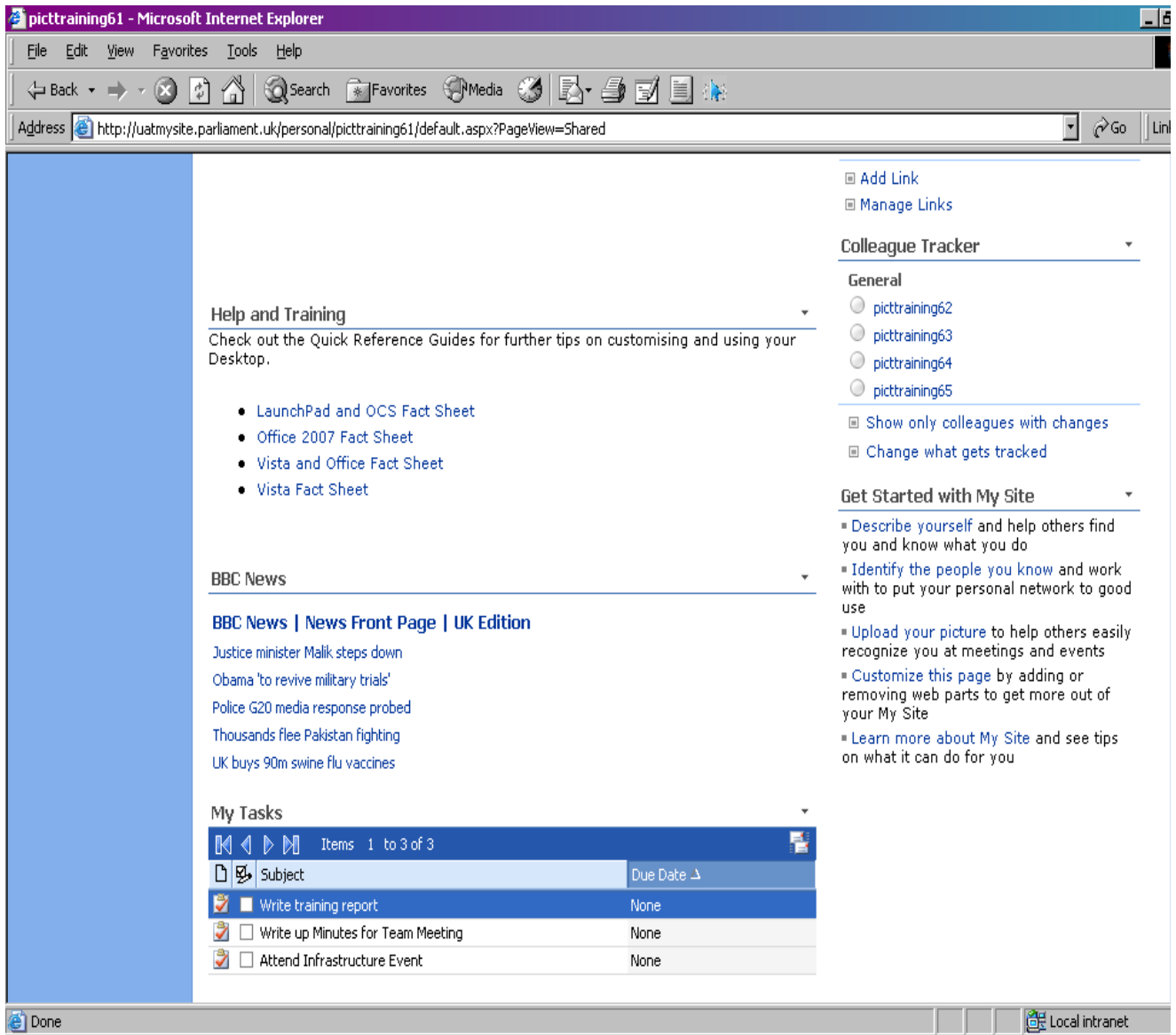
There are certain conditions which we see as being critical to the success of the programme and will therefore manage very actively. These include:

- The programme must give priority to the continuity of work at the desktop, so that the transition is as smooth as possible, potential pitfalls having been identified through prior planning and testing, with sufficient resources available to deal at short notice with any unanticipated difficulties; on past experience compatibility with applications will be the major issue;
- Support areas (service desk and engineers, technical services, PICT training team) must have received sufficient training and documentation to take the platforms into business as usual operations before project resources are withdrawn; this must include support for those working late at night;
- The programme must at every stage understand and implement learning from the previous desktop rationalisation project in Parliament and from the experience of other organisations in implementing the new software;
- The new added value functionality should at all times be implemented with a view to achieving organisational benefits – not just deploying new technology because we can.

Annex B: Illustrative configuration of the launchpad for a typical user. With the exception of the “Parliamentary Announcements” at the top of the page, individuals will be able to choose the information sources most useful to them personally or to their team. By the autumn the Commons annunciator will also be available if required.



NB Screenshot continues on next page – users would scroll downwards.



Annex C: Senior users**(a) On User Experience Project Board:**

[s.40]

(b) Senior User Group:

Commons	Office of Chief Executive	[s.40]
Commons	Speakers Office	[s.40]
Commons	DCCS Legal Services	[s.40]
Commons	DCCS Table Office	[s.40]
Commons	DCCS Table Office	[s.40]
Commons	DCCS Legislation (+ PPS to CWM)	[s.40]
Commons	DCCS Journal Office	[s.40]
Commons	DCCS Committee Office	[s.40]
Commons	DCCS Overseas Office	[s.40]
Commons	DCCS Serjeant at Arms	[s.40]
Commons	DCCS Hansard	[s.40]
Commons	DCCS Clerk Assistant & Departmental Services	[s.40]
Commons	DCCS Vote Office	[s.40]
Commons	DCCS Office of Parliamentary Standards	[s.40]
Commons	Dept of Resources	[s.40]
Commons	Dept of Resources	[s.40]
Commons	DIS	[s.40]
Commons	Facilities	[s.40]
Lords	Clerk of the Parliaments	[s.40]
Lords	Parliamentary Archives	[s.40]
Lords	Lord Speakers Office	[s.40]
Lords	Catering Services	[s.40]
Lords	Finance	[s.40]
Lords	PPO	[s.40]
Lords	Journal Office	[s.40]
Lords	Black Rods Office	[s.40]
Lords	Facilities	[s.40]
Lords	Information Services (Library)	[s.40]
Lords	Information Services (Research Services)	[s.40]
Lords	Information Office	[s.40]
Lords	Committee	[s.40]
Lords	HR	[s.40]
Lords	Hansard	[s.40]
Lords	Delegated legislation	[s.40]
Lords	Public Bill Office & Private Bill Office	[s.40]
PICT Operations & Members		[s.40]
PICT Technology		[s.40]
PICT Programmes & Resources		[s.40]
Joint IPU		[s.40]