



## MANAGEMENT BOARD

Wednesday 2 October, 10am – midday, in Room 1-02, Millbank House

### Agenda

1. **Palace of Westminster Restoration and Renewal - update** **MB/2013/70**  
[Carl Woodall, 10 minutes] **& 70A**  
*RESTRICTED ACCESS: MANAGEMENT*
2. **Workplace Equality Networks** **MB/2013/68**  
[David Beamish, 15 minutes]
3. **Unified Parliamentary Procurement Function** **MB/2013/67**  
[Andrew Makower, 15 minutes]  
*RESTRICTED ACCESS: MANAGEMENT*
4. **Estates Strategy development and outbuilding refurbishment** **MB/2013/69**  
[Carl Woodall, 5 minutes] **& 69A**  
*RESTRICTED ACCESS: MANAGEMENT*
5. **First quarter reports:**
  - **Finance report** [Andrew Makower] **MB/2013/72**
  - **Performance report** [Michael Torrance] **MB/2013/71**  
[15 minutes] **& 71A***RESTRICTED ACCESS: MANAGEMENT*
6. **Corporate risk register as of 24 September** **MB/2013/73**  
[10 minutes]  
*RESTRICTED ACCESS: MANAGEMENT*
7. **Any other business:**
  - Oral updates
  - House Committee agenda, 22 October
  - Audit Committee agenda, 14 October

The following minutes are circulated electronically only for information:

- House of Commons Management Board, 11 July
- House Committee minutes,
  - 18 June
  - 16 July
  - 23 July
- Audit Committee, 15 July
- Joint Audit Committee, 10 July
- PEB, 24 June and 22 July



## Workplace Equality Networks

*Responsible Board Member(s)* David Beamish, Clerk of the Parliaments  
*Paper prepared by* Alison Couch, Internal Communications Manager  
Mary Ollard, Change Manager  
David Beamish  
*Date* 19 September 2013

*Summary  
of actions  
requested:*

1. To agree that the four Workplace Equality Networks (WENs) should be put on a properly Parliament-wide basis and, subject to that,
2. To support the delivery of a plan for engaging with the WENs and promoting them to House of Lords members and staff;
3. To agree that the next edition of the Staff Handbook should make reference to the WENs in the section dealing with equality, diversity and inclusion.

## Engaging members and staff with the Workplace Equality Networks

### Introduction

1. In March 2012 the House of Commons launched a [Diversity and Inclusion Scheme](#), endorsed by the House of Commons Commission, Management Board and trade union side. Four [Workplace Equality Networks](#) (WENs) are described on the intranet as forming “an action within the House of Commons Diversity and Inclusion Scheme”, though they are open to all who work on the Parliamentary Estate: staff, members, members’ staff and contractors.
2. Lords staff and members are already involved in some of the WENs, and the purpose of this paper is to invite the Management Board to agree that we should seek to put the WENs on a properly Parliament-wide footing. It comes from me rather than from Tom Mohan to emphasise that the WENs are not just for staff but also for Members and their staff, and indeed others such as Metropolitan Police Service staff who work in Parliament.

### Background

3. There are currently four WENs: [ParliAble](#) (disability), [Parliagender](#) (gender equality), [ParliOUT](#) (lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans) and [ParliREACH](#) (race, ethnicity and cultural heritage). Some Administration staff, Lords members and Lords members’ staff are involved in the WENs as committee members and as members. However, the House of Lords Administration has not been involved formally in the development of the initiative, which is currently presented as part of the House of Commons Diversity and Inclusion Scheme.
4. The WENs are at varying stages of development. Each has its own volunteer committee, arranges its own activities and events, and maintains its own membership records. The WENs also offer information and guidance services which vary in style (e.g. an informal

monthly 'turn-up and talk' session or a more structured telephone and email advisory service). There are no qualifying criteria for membership – anyone can be a member of any group.

5. One of the House of Lords Administration's guiding values is "fairness and respect for all staff" and we have an Equal Opportunities and Diversity Officer based in the Human Resources Office. The broad aim of the WENs – to integrate equality, diversity and inclusion into the mainstream working environment – is in line with the Administration's existing policies. In their report of the 2012 All Staff Survey (p35), BMG Research advised that "fairness and respect for all staff is a priority area for improvement" because 32% of staff felt that the Administration was not performing well in achieving that value.
6. So it seems to me that the case for full House of Lords participation in the WENs is a strong one. Initial informal soundings indicate that such a move would be welcomed by the House of Commons and by the WEN committees. On the intranet, a new status could be indicated by the creation of a shared page on equality, diversity and inclusion, with shared links to the WENs and separate links to areas specific to one House or the other.

### **Financial implications**

7. The House of Commons Service, through the Diversity and Inclusion Scheme, currently provides £5,000 a year to each WEN to support educational and awareness-raising activities. Contributing a share of such small sums would incur disproportionate accounting overheads, so no financial contribution from the House of Lords Administration is proposed, unless an activity were to be planned for the benefit of Lords members and staff only. However, support in kind, for example through access to facilities for WEN events, would be welcomed by the House of Commons.

### **Risks**

8. Communications from the House of Commons about the work of the WENs openly invite interest from Administration staff, Lords Members and Members' staff. There is a risk that if the Board does not support active engagement with the WENs, it will appear to staff that the Administration is less committed to equality and diversity than are the Commons and PICT.
9. On the other hand, the WENs' current status as "an action within the House of Commons Diversity and Inclusion Scheme" has the potential to cause confusion among our staff. Although the aims of the Commons Diversity and Inclusion Scheme are very similar to the Lords Administration's current policy aims, there are some differences in how the policies are put into effect. For example, the Commons Scheme is committed to "undertaking consistent equality analyses when developing or revising policies, practices and functions." At least one of the WENs makes specific reference in its terms of reference to supporting the Commons Diversity and Inclusion Scheme, and there is some risk that those of our staff involved in the WENs may assume that the Commons Scheme, and the Commons level of resourcing, apply in the Lords by analogy.

### **Recommendation**

10. I invite the Management Board to agree that the WENs should be put on a properly Parliament-wide basis, with reference to their support of the policy aims of the House of Lords Administration as well as the House of Commons' Diversity and Inclusion Scheme.

Subject to that, I further invite the Board to support the delivery of a proposed plan (see Annex) for engaging with the WENs and promoting them to House of Lords members and staff, and to agree that the next edition of the Staff Handbook should make reference to the WENs in the section dealing with equality, diversity and inclusion.

**19 September 2013**

**David Beamish**

## **Annex**

### **Proposed Workplace Equality Networks Engagement Plan**

#### **Aim**

To improve staff and member awareness and understanding of the Workplace Equality Networks (WENs) by arranging a number of promotional activities from autumn 2013.

#### **Objectives:**

1. To demonstrate to staff and members that the Management Board actively endorses the WENs.
2. To increase awareness of WEN activities amongst staff, members and members' staff, and to further the understanding that WENs are for them as well as Commons staff, members and members' staff.
3. To facilitate opportunities for the WENs to have a dialogue with staff and members.

#### **Engagement activities**

Working with the WENs, the following activities will be arranged by the Internal Communications Manager working with the HR Diversity Officer and the HR Training Manager:

##### **1. For staff**

- All Staff Seminar with committee members from the four WENs – Management Board members and members of the Staff Communication Group (SCG) are asked to attend.
- Red Carpet News interviews WEN committee members (with reference to WEN information on intranet).
- SCG to be a communication channel for the WENs to continue the engagement process.

##### **2. For members**

- WEN committee members, and any Lords members involved in the WENs, are invited to meet the Lord Speaker and the Clerk of the Parliaments over coffee.
- The meeting is reported in Red Benches (with reference to WEN information on intranet).
- The WENs to have a presence at the Members' Open Day on 6 November
- Information about the WENs is included in next edition of the members' handbook.

##### **3. WEN committee members**

- Are invited to the annual All Staff Meeting, All Staff Seminars and staff socials.