HOUSE OF LORDS

MANAGEMENT BOARD

Wednesday 13 February, 10am to 12 noon in Room 1-09, Millbank House

Agenda

1. **Draft House of Lords corporate business plan 2013/14**   MB/2013/4
   [Rhodri Walters, 30 minutes]   **4A**
   RESTRICTED ACCESS: MANAGEMENT

2. **Housekeeper pay RESERVED**   MB/2013/5
3. **London Living Wage RESERVED** *[Paper to follow]*   MB/2013/6
   [Tom Mohan, 15 minutes]
   RESTRICTED ACCESS: MANAGEMENT

4. **Review of corporate groups**   MB/2013/7
   [David Beamish, 15 minutes]

5. **Corporate risk register as at 6 February**   MB/2013/8
   Discussion of risk register entry for risk 6 and paper on risk appetite   MB/2013/9
   [15 minutes]
   RESTRICTED ACCESS: MANAGEMENT

6. **Risk report: Finance RESERVED**   MB/2013/10
   [Andrew Makower, 10 minutes]   **10A**
   RESTRICTED ACCESS: MANAGEMENT

7. **Third quarter reports:**
   - **Performance report** [Rob Whiteway]   MB/2013/11
   - **Period 9 finance report** [Andrew Makower]   MB/2013/12
   - **CRS Profitability group update Apr – Dec 2012** [Jake Vaughan]   MB/2013/13
   [15 minutes]
   RESTRICTED ACCESS: MANAGEMENT/ COMMERCIAL

8. **Any other business:**
   - **Draft House Committee agenda, 26 February:**
     o House of Lords corporate business plan
   - **Oral updates**

   For information:

9. **Security SSA renewal programme update**   MB/2013/14
   RESTRICTED ACCESS: SECURITY

10. **Minutes of the meeting on 16 January**
    [Previously agreed by correspondence, circulated electronically only]
    RESTRICTED ACCESS: MANAGEMENT

HOUSE OF LORDS

The following minutes are circulated electronically only for information:

- Audit Committee, 14 January 2013 (draft)
- House of Commons Management Board, 17 January 2013
- House Committee, 11 December 2012
- PED, 17 December 2012
- PICTAB, 10 December 2012

Review of Corporate Groups

Responsible Board Member(s)   David Beamish, Clerk of the Parliaments
Paper prepared by   Duncan Sagar, EU Liaison Officer
Date   3 December 2012

1.   The review of the Administration by Andrew Makower and Mike Thomas in 2011 noted the degree of "clutter" in the structure and operation of corporate groups. In July 2011, I established a "light-touch review of the group structure, together with their remits, membership, delegated authority and accountability, with a view to rationalising and streamlining the groups where appropriate." I attach the report of this review, conducted by Duncan Sagar, for the consideration of the Board. I am most grateful to Duncan for all the work that went into this.

2.   The review contains a number of recommendations, which I will invite the Board to consider in a second reading style discussion at the Board meeting. Following this discussion, I will propose specific changes to be agreed by the Board at a future meeting.

4 February 2013   **David Beamish**
                                          Clerk of the Parliaments

Annex: Review of corporate groups

Summary of recommendations:

1. Consideration should be given to merging the Staff Communications, Training Liaison Officers' and Record Officers' groups into a more general Corporate Guidance Group. The new group would have oversight of the communication and implementation of corporate initiatives in offices. This would mean allocating greater responsibility to one member of staff in each office rather than dispersing it between a number of staff within an office.

2. An annual, light-touch, review of all corporate groups should be held. Group chairmen should be asked, having consulted the other members of the group, to send a short report on the groups activity and a recommendation for its future. The Board could consider this annually, perhaps at its October meeting, without spending an undue amount of time on it. This should help to avoid the gradual proliferation of groups over time.

3. Someone in the Clerk of the Parliaments' Office should be given responsibility for co-ordinating group activity.

4. Review the intranet list of Lords and bicameral groups, and at the first annual review consider asking groups to ensure that their name conforms with a Board-approved naming convention, which might be drafted by the Board Secretary.

5. A full list of all groups, their terms of reference and membership should be included as an annex to the Management Board handbook, which will act as the authoritative list of all Management groups. This should be maintained by the co-ordinator of group activity.

The review - introduction

1. The larger review of the Administration carried out in 2011 made the following observations and recommendation on the various sub-groups in existence in the House of Lords Administration:

   > "Sub-groups
   >
   > 68. Annex 2 contains a note on sub-groups, of which there are many (30 in the Annex, three more according to a list maintained by the internal communications team). These are useful as mechanisms for engagement, and to prepare or prevent Board papers; but they are also part of the administration's "clutter".
   >
   > 69. Apart from our observations above concerning the BPG, we have not considered the sub-groups in the detail they deserve. We recommend a separate review of the remits, membership, delegated authority and accountability of all these groups, after the current round of senior staff moves. This was agreed in principle in 2007 and in more detail in 2009; it is time for it to happen. We would observe only that all groups should support the Board's agenda and the corporate priorities, rather than developing agendas of their own."

2. In conducting this review, I have had regard to the larger review's recommendation that all groups should support the Board's agenda and priorities and that, where possible, they should be de-cluttered. I have also borne in mind the joint Treasury and Cabinet Office "Code of good practice 2011" on corporate governance and its accompanying guidance.[1]

3. Using this guidance and the Makower-Thomas review I have applied the following principles:

   - All Management Board sub-groups should be identified as such. They should have a clear role in respect of the Board and a clear level of delegated authority from it.
   - The structure of these groups and their role need to be clear, identifiable and able to be communicated in a straightforward way, so too do those of all groups.
   - Because of the correlating cost in staff time, including very senior staff, new groups should not be formed without a clear direction from the Board. If established groups are simply a list of offices or individuals identified as necessary to consult on any given issue, they do not necessarily need to meet; much time can be saved by working in writing.

4. I have interviewed a large number of colleagues from various areas of the Lords and Commons administrations and am grateful for their time. The work itself took

---

[1] Both are available on the HM Treasury website: http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/psr_governance_corporate.htm

longer than I anticipated. Operating from Brussels, the need to conduct these interviews has inevitably made the review rather "stop start" and one drawback is that my initial work in the summer and early autumn last year to produce a comprehensive list of groups is already slightly out of date, which perhaps proves a point a point about their proliferation! I hope that nonetheless the recommendations will apply equally usefully to any groups which I have not been able to identify.

PART ONE: An overview of the current structure

What's covered in the review?

5. Simon Blackburn's excellent note on Management Board sub-groups, which was appended to the Makower-Thomas review, identified four tiers of groups, based on the closeness (or obviousness) of their links to the Management Board. Interestingly the closeness to the Board does not always correlate to the concentration of senior staff.

6. The first category ("category one") are the groups appointed by the Board with terms of reference:

      i.   •   PICT Advisory Board (PICTAB) (bicameral)
      ii.   •   Parliamentary Estates Board (PEB) (bicameral)
      iii.   •   Business Planning Group (BPG)
      iv.   •   Human Resources Strategy Group (HRSG)
      v.   •   Catering Profitability Sub-Group (CPSG)
      vi.   •   Staff Communications Group (SCG)

7. The second category ("category two") are bicameral groups which involve Board members but have no formal links with the Board. They have tended to be established by those at director-level in the relevant field to bring together staff from across the two Houses, sometimes with reference to the Board or following a paper to it. Category two groups include:

      vii.   •   Group on Information Management (GIM)
      viii.   •   Group on Information for the Public (GIP)
      ix.   •   Parliamentary Visitors Board
      x.   •   Business Resilience Group
      xi.   •   Web Policy Board
      xii.   •   Web Advisory Group

8. The third category ("category three") consists of Lords staff groups which involve Board members but which have no formal links with the Board. The seniority of staff on these groups is very variable. Category three groups include:

      xiii.   •   Training Liaison Officers' Group
      xiv.   •   Lords Records Officers' Group
      xv.   •   Lords FoI, DPA and Information Security Coordinators Group
      xvi.   •   Members Communications Group
      xvii.   •   Parliamentary Services Group

7. These three categories of groups are dealt with in turn in parts two to four of the report.

What's not covered?

8. Both Houses also make extensive use of programme and project boards. Programme Boards are established to oversee multiple projects linked by type, location and interdependencies. Project Boards govern single projects and in some cases they have been set up to oversee multiple projects of a similar type, but not linked by physical location or interdependencies.

9. I have excluded from a 'group-by-group' analysis groups which are programme or project boards although these are listed - so far as I have been able to identify them - in Annex 1. Such boards tend to report directly to PEB or to PICTAB, with the odd exception (eg. SPIRE). It thus makes sense to leave PEB and PICTAB properly empowered to set up, monitor and wrap up these boards as necessary in line with best corporate governance practice.

10. Programme and project boards have a clear, business-related and time-limited purpose and are an essential part of good corporate governance. They should in all cases cease naturally at the end of the life of the programme or project. Nevertheless the more general recommendations of the review should be applied to them: each of these boards has implications for senior staff time and discipline is needed to ensure that they are wrapped up when their work is completed.

11. I have also excluded those groups which perform effectively a statutory function such as the Fire Safety, Whitley and Health and Safety Committees and the Senior Pay Panel. These groups should nevertheless continue to be listed as corporate groups and be subject to the regular light touch review outlined below.

PART TWO: Category one groups

PICT Advisory Board (PICTAB)

12. PICTAB has recently been subject to review by both Management Boards, which resulted in something of a strengthening of its role as a clearing house for both Boards.

13. In June 2011, the two Boards jointly considered a health check of PICT, and a management response from the chairman of PICTAB. The health check reported diverging views on whether or not the current arrangements for PICT worked and whilst suggesting a fairly radical structural change in management (re-casting the Director of PICT as a Chief Technology Officer for the two Houses, and creating a more recognisable Chief Information Officer elsewhere) detected little appetite for such significant change and noted that too often further structural change had been "invoked as a silver bullet solution to problems which do not, in practice, have their roots in structure". The health check also felt that the two Houses needed to give PICT more of a "coherent sense of direction".

14. PICTAB's role is essentially to provide this sense of direction, as well as to try to iron out the priorities in order to guide spending decisions. The management response to the health check accepted that "there appears to be broad agreement that PICTAB should do more to understand, prioritise, balance, plan, and monitor the portfolio of programmes and projects involving ICT."

15. Within PICT's area of activity, the lines of accountability between corporate groups and programme boards seems relatively clear-cut when compared to other areas of the Administration. All PICT programme boards report directly to PICTAB. PICTAB minutes are sent directly to all Board members by the secretariat, and indeed circulated with Board papers. The Chairman of PICTAB has issued standing invitations to all Board members to attend their meetings as observers. In practice this invitation has more frequently been accepted by Commons Board members.

Recommendation

16. **No change. PICTAB has been reviewed relatively recently in the wake of the PICT health check. Its relationships both up to the two Management Boards and down to the various programme boards are relatively clear-cut.**

Parliamentary Estates Board (PEB)

17. PEB is a sub-group of the Boards of the two Houses, preparing proposals from the Parliamentary Estates Directorate (PED) and providing assurance to the Boards on appropriate use of PED's resources. It also generates the long-term Estates Strategy for the approval of both boards. It also routinely prepares proposals for the relevant domestic committees of both Houses.

18. In terms of quantum of money and activity, it plays the biggest role in creating, supervising and terminating Programme and Project Boards.

19. PEB consists of the two Facilities Directors/Directors General, the two Finance Directors and up to two co-opted external members. PED staff also attend. Members of the two Boards receive PEB papers in advance of meetings and any member of either Board may attend its meetings.

20. Its chairing follows a unique model, agreed by the Clerks of both Houses, by which one of the internal members will act as Chairman of the PEB. The Chairmanship rotates between the two Houses every two years and the House of Lords Director of Facilities currently serves as chairman.

21. I understand that the arrangements for the chairmanship of PEB are currently under review, with one option under consideration for it to be chaired by someone external, partly to ensure neutrality where issues require mediation between the two Houses. Such an issue goes beyond the scope of this review, but those with whom I spoke who were involved in PEB from both Houses felt that the rotation of the chairmanship, and PED's own view of itself as serving the two Houses equally, meant that an independent chair may not be necessary and could at a critical time weaken the grip of "the business" on estates management.

Recommendation

22. **No change. I gather there is to be a health-check of PED in due course which will also consider the role and remit of PEB.**

Business Planning Group

23. Unlike the other groups, the BPG was considered in some detail by the Makower-Thomas review and its composition was changed in 2011 to reflect the review's findings. Therefore this review makes no recommendation for further change at such an early stage.

<u>Recommendation</u>

24. **No change.**

Human Resources Strategy Group

25. As currently composed, HRSG includes two Board members and representatives of PICT, the Finance Department and Parliamentary Services.

26. Its existing terms of reference from the Board are "To discuss Human Resources strategy and related issues and to make recommendations to the Management Board". At a Board meeting in January 2012, the Human Resources Director agreed "to propose terms of reference and membership for a reconstituted Human Resources Steering Group at a future meeting. It was suggested that the Group should take less of a strategic role, instead focusing on the operation of core HR functions."

27. Feedback from those interviewed suggests that this was a necessary step; a number suggested that in previous years the HRSG had not really acted as a clearing house or a strategy setter for the Board and seldom put recommendations to the Board which would be endorsed without substantive discussion in the Board itself, often going back to first principles.

28. I understand that the new HR Steering Group has yet to be established.

<u>Recommendation</u>

29. **Because of the Board's current attention to the HRSG, and the intention of the Human Resources Director to bring forward new proposals, this review makes no specific recommendation on HRSG, although the new focus for the successor group requested by the Board would pave the way for related recommendations on the Training Liaison Officers' Group below.**

Catering Profitability Sub-Group

30. The CPSG is chaired by a non-board member, although it has a member with board level responsibility for Catering and Retail Services. The Sub-Group's role is "to assist Catering and Retail Services management to achieve their objective to reduce the overall cost of providing refreshment services to the House (the subsidy), in 2011/12 to achieve a subsidy of not more than £1,206,107 (including depreciation and excluding capital expenditure), and in 2012/13 not more than £1,140,290, with a view to continuing to bear down on the subsidy year-on-year thereafter; to monitor implementation of the recommendations of the Catering Review; and to report quarterly to the Management Board on progress."

31. It has over the past three years evolved into a permanent sub-group, with a clear remit. Feedback from the responsible board member and other board members about the sub-group is very positive and it has obviously played a useful role in providing support and, where necessary, challenge to the CRS management in modernising catering services and delivering reductions in the subsidy.

32. Its role is still cast essentially as remedial and over time, once new practices in CRS have bedded down and the subsidy trend is locked in, consideration should be given to whether it is necessary to have such a body continuing to perform this function or whether CRS itself can deliver without the assistance of a dedicated sub-group.

33. The case was made by several interviewees that the level of subsidy was of sufficient reputational concern to the Administration as a whole for catering services to be singled out in this way.

34. I am aware that there has recently been a new drive at a political level towards improving the quality of the outlets, rather than focussing solely on reducing the subsidy. If this does happen, the group's terms of reference may need adjusting to ensure that it can help CRS to meet Members' priorities in addition to further reducing the subsidy.

Recommendation

35. **Those interviewed were universal in their praise for the sub-group and it is clearly playing a positive part in helping CRS to meet its targets. It should be part of the regular annual audit of groups (see below) and in the longer term should be phased out as and when CRS itself demonstrates the capacity to meet its targets under its own steam.**

Staff Communications Group

36. The SCG was appointed by the Board and reports directly to it. It is a consultative body rather than a decision making forum, and also plays a quality control role in ensuring that all staff communications methods are appropriate to the needs of offices and departments and operate within the guidelines set by the Board.

37. It meets around six times a year. Membership is rotated every two to three years and comprises staff of a range of grades up to middle management and represents all offices.

38. The SCG has been a key body in delivering the improvements to staff communications which the Board has been seeking over recent years and is designed to ensure that issues can be sounded out with staff from all offices. In theory, those on the SCG also act as champions for corporate communications initiatives in their departments, ensuring that others in the office are fully sighted of forthcoming changes and, where necessary, persuaded of their benefits.

39. In practice, it seems that the members of SCG have been rather variable in the degree to which they have assumed this "championing" role and the degree to which they consult others in their departments in preparing for the meetings.

40. One way of addressing this problem, and also to rationalise the number of groups at mid management level, would be to combine the group with a number of other office-level groups (which currently do not report to the Board) creating a new "Corporate Guidance Group". The SCG's remit could be broadened to include the functions currently carried out by the similar Training Liaison Officers Group and Lords Record Officers Group (keeping the separate FOI, DPA and Information Security Coordinators Group to develop policies). The more HR policy specific work of the TLO network is likely to be subsumed into the recast Human Resources Steering Group, leaving only the office communications role to the TLOs. Similarly, the record officers' group is essentially a forum for passing on corporate best practice to individual offices. The new combined group would serve as a general user group from offices for all corporate initiatives and take on the explicit role of communicating these initiatives to the members' colleagues.

41. A further possible merger would be to incorporate the Member Communications Group although this has a fundamentally different focus, on relations with Members rather than internal organisation.

42. The effect of this would be to make the person attending the Corporate Developments Group a key person within their office for all corporate initiatives, rather than spreading the roles sometimes rather arbitrarily between different individuals. It would have several advantages: that of visibility, being more obvious to others in the office in which the person is responsible for these issues; there would be more incentive for the individuals to perform their roles as champions if it was a more obvious and "meaty" part of their day job to do so; and it would help to ensure some coherence to the way different initiatives in training, communications and record management are communicated. It would also be a fairly straightforward

way to de-clutter a number of separate groups, whose memberships already overlap to a degree, and to save staff time.

43. There would also be some drawbacks. Currently one benefit to having a number of these corporate groups is that they provide experience to staff at a range of grades of participating in group/board meetings. It would also mean some restructuring of individuals' roles within offices to take account of the more significant contribution they would be expected to make. However the benefits of coherence and streamlining would, in my view, outweigh these disadvantages.

Recommendation

44. **Turn the SCG into a more general Corporate Guidance Group, incorporating the work of the Training Liaison Officers and the Record Officers' Groups to create a general group with oversight for the communication and implementation of corporate initiatives in offices. This would mean allocating greater responsibility to one member of staff in each office rather than dispersing it between a number of others. The composition of the new CDG would have to be considered as a part of a new routine process for reviewing groups (see paragraph 77 below).**

PART THREE: Category two groups

Business Resilience Group (formerly Business Risk and Resilience Group)

45. BRG is a sub-group of the two Boards and monitors and makes recommendations to the Boards on the two Administrations' contingency arrangements.

46. Some questions were raised by interviewees over the clarity of its remit: was it a clearing house for the two boards; did it have any executive power? Others reported that the group had improved its focus over the last year or so and was now "firing on all cylinders".

47. Interviewees were clear that because of the obvious interdependencies between the two Houses some sort of bicameral group was necessary - it appears that BRG is becoming more of a clearing house for the two Boards over time. The recent recruitment of a new bicameral Head of Relocation Planning will enable the development of more robust bicameral relocation plans below the level of the two Boards.

Recommendation

48. **No change. The BRG is still developing but the potentially critical consequences of not having effective bicameral contingency plans, which are too detailed for the Boards to consider, seem to necessitate a high-level bicameral group along the lines of the BRG.**

Group on Information for the Public (GIP)

49. GIP is a bicameral group chaired by the Director General of Information Services in the Commons which proposes a strategy for public engagement for the two Houses. This strategy covers the work of a number of offices and services: the education service; visitor services and onsite facilities; online and broadcasting services; Outreach and media services; Parliamentary Archives, information offices and publications (including the Official Report).

50. As well as holding the chair, its composition is predominantly drawn from the Commons: five senior staff from Commons DIS; five from its DCCS; and one from its Finance Department. There is one representative from PICT and there are two from the Lords.

51. Those involved in GIP from the Lords side expressed some unease over the lack of clarity about the purpose of the group and noted that it did not produce output for the two Boards, but instead functioned more as a user group. Although it did spend much of its time discussing the priority of resources it was often unclear whether discussion was of existing or new money. One interviewee suggested that it was a group of people who should be brought together to discuss large outreach projects when necessary but was not a body which should meet (at least bicamerally) for general issues. There were also broader concerns about the value which the Lords side got from attending these meetings and a fear that their participation in the group might in future present the inaccurate impression that the Lords

Administration had been consulted on issues, such as elements of the House of Commons Saving Programme, which would be better dealt with through separate formal channels.

52. The Exhibitions Advisory Group is a sub-committee of GIP and advises it on the feasibility of any proposed exhibitions in Westminster Hall as well as dealing with outside bodies - it only convenes when there is a proposal to consider.

<u>Recommendation</u>

53. **There were clear reservations from the Lords participants about the efficacy of GIP and the lack of clarity over its locus. In principle, the idea of a bicameral clearing house for outreach and connected activities seems a sensible one - the two Boards should not be dealing with the detail; significant resources are being deployed in this area; and such activity is a key plank of both Administrations' strategic plans. I recommend that we seek a Memorandum of Understanding with the Commons on the role and composition of GIP which should give the key players from the Lords side the opportunity to recast the group in a way which gives greater clarity and value. In the event that a satisfactory MoU cannot be brokered, we might reflect on whether Lords participation in GIP is worthwhile in the long term, or whether it should be regarded as a body to set strategy only for the Commons. In the latter scenario, we could revert to the programme board model for any large scale outreach or public engagement projects.**

54. **The Exhibition Advisory Group, which reports to GIP, seems to work relatively well and is only convened when there is a proposal for an exhibition.**

Group on Information Management (GIM)

55. GIM is a consultative body rather than a clearing house, established by the two Boards "to support, facilitate and encourage knowledge and information management best practice" across the two Houses with a view to encouraging more efficient and compliant use of information. It reports to the Boards "as necessary". The group is large with 19 members, the majority of whom are from PICT, the Commons DIS, DCCS, DHRC and Department of Facilities. It is chaired by the Director General of Information Services in the Commons.

56. As with GIP, the Lords participants who were interviewed expressed some reservations about the utility of the group with one noting that it was largely discursive and over-sized for the purpose. They reported that its value lay in being able to feed general information handling policy advice into PICTAB. It was suggested that it would be more effective if reduced to a smaller size with less frequent, more focussed meetings.

<u>Recommendation</u>

57. **As with GIP, there are misgivings from the Lords participants about the value GIM provides to the House of Lords. Again it is a bicameral group but led from the Commons. As with GIP the degree of Lords participation in the group should be considered.**

Parliamentary Visitors Board

58. PVB's role is to provide "a periodic review of the overarching strategy for the better management of visitors now and in the future as well as ensuring that there is effective co-ordination between the work being done by other groups in this area and to oversee the work to improve services for visitors within the existing strategy for connecting Parliament with the public."

59. In particular it approves and oversees all major visitor-related plans and allocates resources to them, providing assurance to the two Boards that programmes are on course. It also serves as the interface between project teams and external bodies as well as controlling the way issues are communicated to Members. Part of its work is inherited from the now defunct Visitor Steering Group.

60. Although some Lords interviewees expressed concern at the degree to which the PVB reflected Commons priorities over those of the Lords, others said that it worked as "a good clearing house'" for the Boards. The issue of charging for tours of the Clock Tower was provided as an example of something quite complex and with reputational and legal ramifications, which was dealt with in the PVB without recourse to either Board.

Recommendation

61. **No change. In the context of the Commons Saving Programme and because of the potential sensitivity and importance to both Houses of providing appropriate visitor services to members of the public it seems rational to have a fairly high level bicameral group to act as a clearing house for the two Boards. The feedback is that the PVB is beginning to work well as such a forum.**

The Web Policy Board and the Web Advisory Board

62. WPB is responsible for exploring the use of the World Wide Web as "a strategic tool for internal and external communications and engagement". It seeks to ensure that the online services strategy is aligned with the business objectives of the two Houses, sometimes working in concert with GIP and GIM. WPB is chaired by the Commons Director General of Information Services and meets quarterly.

63. WPB is the decision making body on web policy, and is advised by a Web Advisory Board, which is one stage removed and offers the "business" input.

64. Those interviewed suggested that there were some areas of web and intranet policy where the two boards had proved increasingly difficult as vehicles to secure

agreement with the Commons - a common theme across all of the information related groups.

Recommendation

65. **No change unless it fits with a broader reconsideration over whether related bicameral groups with the Commons, such as GIP and GIM, are offering the Lords side sufficient value and control. If it was decided to change the level of Lords participation or recast those groups, the same logic would apply to the web policy and advisory boards.**

PART FOUR: Category Three groups

Training Liaison Officers and Record Officers' Group

66. The more HR policy specific work of the TLO network is likely to be subsumed into the recast Human Resources Steering Group, leaving only the office communications role to the TLOs. Similarly, the record officers' group is essentially a forum for passing on corporate best practice to individual offices.

<u>Recommendation</u>

67. **Merge both with Staff Communications Group (see paragraph 43).**

Lords FoI, DPA and Information Security Coordinators Group

68. This group brings together the freedom of information, data protection and information security coordinators from different offices. Because of the need for a consistent corporate approach in each office to complying with best practice it seems sensible to be able to assemble all of the coordinators in a single group. However rather than regular meetings, it only seems necessary to be able to convene the group when legislation or central government guidance changes or when cross cutting issues in data handling arise.

<u>Recommendation</u>

69. **No change, but the group should only meet when necessary rather than regularly.**

Member Communications Group

70. The MCG was established in 2010 by the Board in order to develop more coherent and standardised communications from the Administration to the Membership. It oversees all publications from the Administration to Members and takes decisions on the form of communications including open days and seminars for Members.

71. Those interviewed who are involved in the group were convinced of its impact in improving communications with members but questioned whether it was a body which needed to meet regularly or simply an identified group of contacts in different offices who should be consulted. It was reported that in practice, decisions only needed to be taken by three members of the group (the Clerk Assistant, the Private Secretary to the Chairman of Committees and the Internal Communications Manager) consulting others as necessary.

<u>Recommendation</u>

72. **Now that the MCG has successfully overhauled the old - very variable - arrangements and established common standards for member communications across different offices, consideration should be given to ending regular meetings but convening as necessary to consider new**

initiatives, and perhaps reviewing the new standards in light of a few years' experience.

Parliamentary Services Group

73. The PSG brings together the heads of office reporting to the Clerk Assistant. It has hitherto been considered as a corporate group, but I suggest that it does not need to have that status. Clerk Assistants have used the group in order to consult their heads of office on Board circulations and other issues so that their views can be represented at the Board. It is effectively therefore just a part of good management of the offices under the Clerk Assistant rather than requiring the status of a cross-cutting corporate group.

Recommendation

74. **There is no need for the heads of offices providing Parliamentary services to be considered a formal corporate group.**

PART FIVE: General Recommendations

Getting a grip on groups for the Board

75. As the review has shown, corporate groups in the Lords (and bicamerally) have tended to proliferate over time; tend to be driven by the individuals setting them up; and have varying relationships and degrees of accountability to the Board or, in the case of bicameral groups, Boards.

76. Two simple steps would give the Board more of a grip. In the first instance, it could create a light-touch annual review of sub-group activity. Each group would be asked to submit a paragraph to an activity report with a recommendation to the board that it be continued, wrapped up or altered. The Board would look at such a report once a year and be able to make a quick assessment of whether the groups as currently composed reflect its priorities and ask for changes as necessary. This would avoid the gradual building up of groups without proper attention from the Board and also be an opportunity for those whose time is spent in these meetings to send to the Board any messages about their usefulness.

Recommendation:

77. **Hold an annual, light-touch, review of all corporate groups asking the group chairman, having consulted the other members of the group, to send a short report on the group's activity and a recommendation for its future. The Board could consider this annually, perhaps at its October meeting, without spending an undue amount of time on it. This should help to avoid the gradual proliferation of groups over time.**

78. There should also be a greater role for someone in the Clerk of the Parliaments' Office (probably the board secretary if he is willing!) in being consulted on any new groups and their memberships and having the power to insist that any such decisions be taken only following approval by the Board. Over time, groups have sometimes simply been set up and assembled by senior staff on their own initiative which leads to cluttering and an uneven level of awareness of their existence and role. It can also lead to a tendency - which was observed by a number of interviewees - of the "usual suspects" being approached directly and asked to sit on groups. Having someone central, with a weather eye on which people are already on which group, and which people are not being fully utilised, would ameliorate this problem.

79. **Give someone in the Clerk of the Parliaments' Office responsibility for co-ordinating group activity.**

Tidying up the naming conventions and transparency

80. Another striking feature of the current structure of corporate groups is that there is no single, reliable list of them which accurately describes what they do. It would help greatly if a single description could be found for Steering and Advisory groups for example. Other than Programme or Project Boards, the names of most groups do not immediately shed light on their purpose.

81. On a house-keeping point, the intranet section covering corporate groups is in need of revision. Currently the logic of which group fits where does not seem obvious - the BPG is, for instance, described as a user group, and the CPSG is described as a bicameral group when neither is the case.

Recommendation:

82. **Review the intranet list of Lords and bicameral groups, and at the first annual review consider asking groups to ensure that their name conforms with a Board-approved naming convention, which might be drafted by the Board Secretary.**

83. **A full list of all groups, their terms of reference and membership should be included as an annex to the Management Board handbook, which will act as the authoritative list of all Management groups. This should be maintained by the coordinator of group activity (see paragraph 79).**