

**Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting
held on Thursday 10 September 2015 at 3.30pm**

Those present: David Natzler (Clerk of the House) (Chair)
Myfanwy Barrett (Director of Finance)
John Bengner (Clerk Assistant and Director General of Chamber and Committee Services)
John Borley CB (Director General of Facilities)
Rob Greig (Director of the Parliamentary Digital Service)
Penny Young (Librarian and Director General, Department of Information Services)
Andrew Walker (Director General of HR and Change)

In attendance: Marianne Cwynarski (Committee Secretary)
Lloyd Owen (Assistant Secretary)
Amanda Colledge (items 4, 5 and 6)
David Vere and Huw Yardley (item 7)
Paul Dillon-Robinson (item 8)

1. Matters arising

- 1.1. **Penny Young** noted that the terms of Reference for the Parliamentary Visitors Group were being updated. She also noted that she had held discussions with Martin Fenlon about training for IMF rota Golds.
- 1.2. The Chair asked about communications on fire evacuation arrangements. **Marianne Cwynarski** said that the fire team were intending to produce their communications at the beginning of October, with a further push at the beginning of the next term, and that there would also be exercises to test the new arrangements. John Borley suggested that the Clerk write to Members to explain the new arrangements and remind them of the need to complete fire safety training. The Chair agreed. The Board discussed the new arrangements.

2. Updates from Board Members

- 2.1. **John Bengner** noted that the post of Hansard editor would be advertised the following day. The Principal Doorkeeper, Robin Fell, was also leaving at the end of the year. The Petitions Committee was very busy and there had been 1,200 petitions that had reached the threshold since the new site's launch.
- 2.2. **Andrew Walker** noted that the announcement about the new DG of the House of Commons would be made by the Speaker the following Monday. He also noted that Senior Pay Governance was being reviewed by Susan Haird, and a report would go to the Commission at the November meeting. He noted the potential impact of the Government's proposals in relation to public sector employees in the Immigration Bill.

- 2.3. **John Borley** said that the Finance Committee had discussed the Northern Estate Programme in detail at its most recent meeting. The Committee wished to consider the options outlined in relation to the project in more detail, and a further paper would be presented to the Finance Committee later in the autumn.
- 2.4. **Penny Young** said that Edward Wood would be moving to the position of Director of Planning and Strategy. Lee Bridges would therefore be confirmed in post as Director of External Communications. A Head of Departmental Services would also be recruited.
- 2.5. **Rob Greig** updated the Committee on staffing changes in the Digital Service. A new head of Cyber Security had been appointed. Cyber Security had been discussed at both the Administration Committee and the Joint Audit Committee. He also reported changes being introduced to the service desk to create an overflow route for calls. There would also be a facility for Members to book a slot with an engineer.
- 2.6. The Chair noted that the Joint Audit Committee meeting had been very productive. The Committee discussed the role of the Joint Committee under the new governance structure.

3. Performance and Risk Report

- 3.1. The Committee discussed the paper. During the discussion, the following points were made:
 - The Committee discussed the highlighted risks from PDS.
 - On HAIS, **Myfanwy Barrett** noted that there was a recovery plan in place, but it would take a long time to implement. There were issues about the use of workarounds during that time. It was important to communicate with staff about what was happening. **Andrew Walker** noted that there was also a strategic review underway of what was required from the system in the longer term. **Myfanwy Barrett** noted that the HAIS issues were key to implementing some outstanding audit actions and that this issue would be raised with Internal Audit.
 - **Penny Young** noted that the performance metric from the library that was reporting red was due to the impact of the election period – relative performance was good.
 - The Chair highlighted two incidents in relation to the same automatic revolving door. **John Borley** said that the door in question had been examined carefully, and no faults found. Andrew Walker noted that there had been no serious incidents in recent health and safety reports.
 - **Penny Young** noted that there was an error in relation to visitor numbers in July 2015, the true figure was 16,397.

- The Committee discussed completion rates on PDM and how to drive improvement.
- 3.2. The Committee discussed communications to staff about Northern Estate decant options and agreed to send a further message to staff about developments.

4. Financial Monitoring Report

- 4.1. **Amanda Colledge** introduced the paper. There was a £1.1 - £1.7m underspend forecast on the resource side. There was £2.7m still held in contingency. Some of this money would be allocated to additional security costs due to transfer dates of insourced security staff. Some of the money was also held against infrastructure projects in PDS and the completion of the office365 rollout. There was sufficient contingency to manage existing risks, but at some point some contingency would likely be released, which would increase the underspend.
- 4.2. **Amanda Colledge** said that on capital, Facilities were reporting a £3.3m overspend, which had come down considerably since earlier months. There was a £2m contingency so the true figure was £1.4m. On the Members Estimate, a Supplementary Estimate might be required to account for a technical amendment arising from the transfer of the liability of the Members Pension Fund, if this was completed. On the Administration Estimate the impact of the estates valuation would not be known until October and the pension transfer value was still to be confirmed.
- 4.3. The Committee discussed factors affecting the currently level of underspend and how any potential underspend could be reallocated.
- 4.4. *The Committee agreed to the virement in relation to the R&R board resource requirement.*

5. Financial Health Check and the Q1 Performance Report

- 5.1. **Myfanwy Barrett** introduced the papers. The Financial Health Check was a new scorecard covering finance and procurement. There were different levels of detail for the ExCo, for Departments, and for the Finance Department as the delivery body. The health check could identify areas where forecasting was not operating effectively, and other relevant information. There were issues with data provision from HAIS, but the Health Check would be improved when better data was available. The reports would show that performance dropped during recesses due to staff absence and the Department would need to consider how to address this.
- 5.2. The Committee welcomed the introduction of the health check and noted that

the information would be very valuable to departments.

6. Future Financial Remit

- 6.1. **Myfanwy Barrett** introduced the papers. The Finance Committee had agreed its advice to the Commission on the remit at its most recent meeting.
- 6.2. The Committee discussed the process of approval by the Commission.
- 6.3. **Myfanwy Barrett** noted that if the remit was agreed, the House was absorbing £1m in extra NI contributions, and £4.5m from other growth pressures. There was £4.2m that was outside the remit. There were savings of £3.5m, rising to £5.8m, coming primarily from printing, and this would be invested in the Digital Service, but there was a £0.7m funding gap in 2016/17 and so further savings would be sought. There were also risks, for example in relation to the impact of the senior management review, which would need to be monitored. The paper suggested potential avenues for exploring further savings.
- 6.4. The Committee discussed the papers:
 - **Rob Greig** noted that there was a tension between the work that the Digital Service was trying to do, and the need to drive savings. An external review of where efficiencies could be found would be welcome. PDS would also be able to assist other departments with making savings. The Committee discussed options for making savings due to better use of digital.
 - The Committee discussed the importance of seeking efficiencies as part of the MTFP and how these could be achieved. The Committee discussed the impact of alternative business arrangements on both savings and performance.
 - **Andrew Walker** asked about the calculations in relation to staff pay. The Committee discussed the matter.

7. Time Recording

- 7.1. **Andrew Walker** gave an oral update on time recording. Staff had been communicated to about the issues with the Time Recording Project. The project team were in the process of managing the situation.
- 7.2. The Committee discussed the importance communicating with staff and how this would be managed. **The Chair** said that this project and other small scale IT projects would be looked at to see what lessons could be learned.

8. Internal Audit Annual Report

- 8.1. **Paul Dillon-Robinson** introduced the paper. The issues highlighted in the report impacted the delivery of objectives. The overall opinion showed that the necessary control systems were in place, but that they were not always fully effective.
- 8.2. The Committee discussed the paper. During the discussion, the following points were made:
- **The Chair** asked about the compliance culture report. **Paul Dillon-Robinson** said that the themes were accurate management information, access to systems, and priorities coming down from the top. Often managers' attitudes had a negative impact on staff. The Committee discussed the compliance culture report and how to address the findings. **Myfanwy Barrett** noted that managers taking responsibility for action would be key to success in this area.
 - The Committee discussed the operation of control systems and how to manage mandatory activities, such as fire safety training. **John Benger** suggested that behavioural analysis should be undertaken on why people did or didn't undertake mandatory activities.
 - **John Borley** asked about the paper's comments regarding safety management, which he felt overlooked the raft of safety initiatives taken by PED senior management during the year. **Paul Dillon-Robinson** said that the issue was about whether or not management action plans were sufficiently comprehensive. **Andrew Walker** noted that this review had been commissioned by the Parliamentary Safety Assurance Committee (PSAC) as part of the wider reform of safety management. The Committee discussed the matter.
 - The Committee discussed the implementation of audit recommendations, which was improving but could be further improved.
 - **Paul Dillon-Robinson** asked the Committee to consider whether there were any departmental action plans that the Committee should take a special interest in. **The Chair** said that the key issues included the lack of trust in information systems, compliance culture and the practical impact of risk registers. The Committee discussed how to address the issues raised.

9. Staff survey results

- 9.1. **Andrew Walker** introduced the paper. The headline results were encouraging. Departmental results would be available the following week. BMG would be analysing the results and the Committee could provide feedback to that discussion. DHRC was working with DIS on the approach to future staff surveys, particularly looking at raising participation in areas with non- desk based staff.
- 9.2. The Committee discussed the paper. During the discussion, the following points were made:

- **John Bengler** noted the success of qualitative surveys with Members, and suggested that pulse surveys or focus groups be used to gather views from staff.
- **Penny Young** noted the issues with response rates and suggested that future contractors should be required to provide an improvement in this area. The results, particularly in Finance, were very encouraging, and departments should be proud of their achievements. The issues to focus on were the drop in satisfaction rates with individuals' managers and managers' ability to help staff improve their performance. **Andrew Walker** said that future surveys would hopefully provide more detail on these issues.
- **John Borley** noted that a survey of this type was not the most effective means of engaging with some staff. There was also an issue with the time between the survey taking place and the results coming out, in terms of staff reaction to the survey.

9.3. The Committee agreed the proposed timetable.

AOB

None