

**Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting
held on Thursday 15 October 2015 at 3.30pm**

Those present: David Natzler (Clerk of the House) (Chair)
Myfanwy Barrett (Director of Finance)
John Bengler (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)
Tom Goldsmith (Head of the Governance Office)
Jane Hough (item 3)
Paul Martin (item 4)
Anne Foster (item 5)

1. Matters arising

- 1.1. **Penny Young** noted that IMF training was progressing.
- 1.2. **The Chair** noted that Sarah Petit would be joining the Governance Office as the Director General's Private Secretary.

2. Updates from Board Members

- 2.1. **Penny Young** said that a new Director of Departmental Services had been appointed and strategy planning was now progressing
- 2.2. **John Borley** noted that 26 new staff had attended a departmental induction earlier that day. Staff were very pleased to have joined the House service and he was very pleased to welcome them.
- 2.3. **Rob Greig** reported that the restructure of the Digital Service had commenced with a workshop with senior managers. He asked Committee members to report any feedback that they received about the process to him. An all staff meeting had taken place with PDS staff to engage them in the process. There would be some disruption and some impact on staff over the next few months. **The Chair** noted that funding for the Government Digital Service was being cut, which would provide opportunities for recruitment for the House. **Rob Greig** noted that the staff involved at senior level in the GDS had recently changed, and there was a change in thinking in Government about how the service should operate.

- 2.4. **Myfanwy Barrett** gave an update from the Finance Committee meeting the previous day. The principal discussion had been about the future financial remit. The paper on the remit had been clear that the Finance Committee had already given advice to the Commission about the remit. Some Members of the Committee were looking to re-open the discussion on this decision. The issue would be raised with the Commission. Member Committees would benefit from advice about their roles in engaging with programmes and projects. **The Chair** said that papers to these Committees should be clear about exactly what was being asked of the Committees.
- 2.5. **John Benger** reported that Andrew Tyrie MP had been elected Chair of the Liaison Committee. Two members of staff had been promoted to Deputy Principal Clerk following an assessment centre. An appointment had been made to the post of Editor of the Official Report. He reported that he would be communicating to DCCS about his personal D&I objective. WEN representatives had emphasised the importance of visible leadership.
- 2.6. **Andrew Walker** reported that the post of Serjeant-at-Arms was being recruited for. He asked Committee Members to encourage any potential candidates to approach him for a briefing and also to approach the external recruitment consultants. The panel would consist of the Speaker, three other Members and Andrew himself. The process would take place during the course of November and December.

3. Departmental Business Planning

- 3.1. **Jane Hough** introduced the paper. Effective business planning was key to delivering the Corporate Strategy. The paper set out options for improving business planning.
- 3.2. The Committee discussed the papers:
- There was a question about how D&I was incorporated into business plans, and whether they should be more widely integrated. Departmental business plans in aggregate should by and large deliver the D&I strategy.
 - **Myfanwy Barrett** noted that efforts would be made to try and bring the financial challenge timetables in the two Houses in line with each other.
 - It was important to incorporate the DG's views on the overall strategy and take account of these in the business planning process.
 - Staff at a senior leadership group meeting had suggested that "business as usual" needed to be included in business plans alongside new developments.
 - Individual departments could review their own KPIs and make changes as needed. The staffing plans should not be overly deterministic, enabling departments to adapt and be agile.
 - There was a risk that the assurance role of the business plans could

potentially discourage Departments from changing their approach during the year. The Committee discussed the interaction between letters of delegation, business plans and the annual assurance process. Business plans should be about doing business better.

- There was also a risk that a focus on the financial aspect of business plans, rather than on services provided, might discourage staff from connecting their own work with business plans. The Committee discussed how to engage staff in the business plan process and the role that the business plan itself would play in this process. There were challenges in making the documents engaging.
- It was clear that the business planning and the financial challenge process should be combined, enabling the business to look at both aspects together. The Committee discussed the role of the challenge process and the likelihood that the Director General of the House of Commons would want to oversee it.
- The Committee discussed the role of departmental annual reports in terms of reporting performance and, alongside other assurance reporting methods, considered whether information could be collected and presented in a more effective manner.

3.3. **Jane Hough** noted that the link between business plans and the assurance process was not intended to prevent departments from being flexible. How such issues were reported and dealt with by the Governance Office could be reviewed. Guidance on completing the new business plans would be shared with members of the Committee.

4. D&I Update

4.1. **Anne Foster** introduced the paper and noted that the Role Models guide would soon be published. BMG had done some excellent work in assisting the D&I team with the application for the Stonewall equality index. A talent manager had been appointed which would allow work on developing internal staff to progress. The diversity monitoring report would be published soon. A meeting with BMG had been held to look at issues around workforce planning. Following on from that meeting a complete plan would be produced to address the strategy.

4.2. The Committee discussed the paper:

- **Myfanwy Barrett** asked about progress on recruitment monitoring. Targets on SCS BME appointments were not sufficiently ambitious. **Anne Foster** agreed that the targets needed to be revisited, but it was important to recognise the milestones that were achieved along the way.
- Recruitment targets should be more ambitious over the longer term, with short term steps towards the longer goal. It was important to recognise the hard work that had gone into the progress that had been made so far.

Anne Foster noted that the creation of an advisory group was being proposed to the Commission to consider the wider issues in terms of recruitment. **Andrew Walker** noted that in relation to Commons recruitment processes, the sample data showed that BME and women candidates did as well as other candidates in recruitments, but tended to pull out more frequently than others.

- There were still issues identifying what the root causes were of the challenges faced on D&I. It was important to gather information about staff experiences at different levels and in different parts of the business, it needed to be considered at a granular level.
- **John Bengier** noted that he had had a positive meeting with staff about this, who had made a point that lack of declaration by staff was really unhelpful, and it was important to address misconceptions about why these data were collected. One of the WEN reps had said that in the Department of Health every senior manager was associated with a D&I objective and all staff knew who was responsible for these targets. The current approach in the House was not as effective.
- There were issues about developing junior BME staff in order to ensure that these staff felt encouraged to take the next step. ExCo members and other senior managers should provide support to staff to assist with this. In relation to the Fast Stream, the work that had been undertaken by the Fast Stream Talent Managers in terms of plans to improve diversity of entry was really positive.
- **Anne Foster** said that increasing rates of self-declaration was a really important issue. There had been barriers but work would be done to encourage more staff to self-declare. On objectives, it was very important for ExCo Members to publish their objectives. Permanent Secretaries in Government Departments were now publishing their objectives and this was a very positive step. In terms of talent management, senior staff in the Home Office were required to sponsor a more junior member of staff; the House might consider a similar initiative. **Andrew Walker** said that talent management was about unlocking the potential of individuals in underrepresented groups, of which sponsorship might be an element. The Committee discussed how to encourage staff to meet their potential.
- **The Chair** suggested that the definition of senior management was focused on the SCS, but many A1s and some A2s were in positions of senior management and this should be reflected in the definition. **Penny Young** noted that there was a challenge to work out why the House did not attract a more diverse range of individuals. The Committee discussed how to make the staff who undertook different roles more heterogeneous and how to make the organisation attractive to BME staff. **Anne Foster** noted that the Role Models campaign was in some way designed to address this.

5. AOB

- 5.1. **Andrew Walker** noted that the time recording system would not be launched in November due to the termination of the contract with the supplier by the project board, but the underlying policies had been developed and it would be undesirable to delay the introduction of the flexitime policy as a result. PDS were developing a temporary recording solution, which would be used to underpin the introduction of the policy in May on the move to 36 hours, following a pilot in DIS in January. Departments and the TUS had been consulted. No decision had been taken on changing the annual leave year which would be considered at a later date.
- 5.2. The Committee discussed the impact of the proposed approach. **John Bengner** suggested that messaging to staff should include information about the problems encountered with the supplier, as this would address some staff concerns about the situation.
- 5.3. The Committee considered the paper on the Staff Survey Open Comments.