

**Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting
held on Thursday 5 November 2015 at 3.30pm**

Those present: Ian Ailles (Director General) (Chair)
David Natzler (Clerk of the House)
Myfanwy Barrett (Director of Finance)
John Benger (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)
Sarah Petit (Assistant Secretary)
Tom Goldsmith (Head of the Governance Office)
Amanda Colledge (item 3)
Alix Langley (item 4)
David Vere (item 5)
John Owen (item 6)

1. Matters Arising

- 1.1 The **Committee Secretary** confirmed that the Quarterly Performance Review packs would be produced in a different format for future meetings.
- 1.2 **John Borley** noted that the new fire evacuation arrangements were not yet bedded in, and would be tested to ensure they are working effectively.
- 1.3 **David Natzler** undertook to obtain an update from the Parliamentary Security Director in relation to governance arrangements.

***Action:** David Natzler to provide an update to the next meeting.*

- 1.4 **John Borley** confirmed that his action in relation to estates had been completed.

2. Updates from Board members

- 2.1 **Myfanwy Barrett** reported that the House of Commons Commission had agreed the proposed Financial Remit; and that the House of Commons (Administration) Bill had been introduced as a Ten Minute Rule Bill by Sir Paul Beresford the previous day, to reform the House of Commons Members' Fund and to pave the way for a merger of the two Commons Estimates. She also noted the discussion of estates issues at the Finance Committee meeting the previous day. The Committee agreed to explore the creation of a forum to allow Members of the relevant Committees to discuss the join-up between the various estates-related initiatives.

***Action:** David Natzler to initiate a Member forum for discussion of estates-related issues.*

- 2.2 **Penny Young** noted that DIS had held a good discussion on the draft strategy that morning.

- 2.3 **John Borley** provided an update on the recent meeting of the Restoration and Renewal Committee. The Finance Committee had agreed to the proposal for the Elizabeth Tower, which would now go to the Commission.
- 2.4 **David Natzler** provided an update on Lord Strathclyde's review of the relationship between the Commons and the Lords.
- 2.5 **Rob Greig** reported on the actions he is taking in response to the large number of complaints received by PDS from Members of both Houses; on the agreed solution to manage risk in relation to administration rights; on recent loss of internet outage; and on positive developments in relation to dual service and the digital strategy.
- 2.6 **John Benger** reported that the Speaker had undertaken the first certification under English Votes for English Laws (EVEL). He commended the work undertaken by staff across DCCS, DIS and PDS to implement the EVEL proposals. An e-division under the new procedure was not expected until late November at the earliest.
- 2.7 **Andrew Walker** reported that the impact of the London Living Wage announcement on the House service would be minor. The Procurement team would write to all contractors. He had received the report on senior pay governance, which would go to the Commission in December, following consideration by the Executive Committee. All staff would shortly receive an email in relation to self-declaration of protected characteristics and the Committee expected senior leaders to encourage staff to engage with it.

***Action: Andrew Walker** to consult Executive Committee members on all-staff email on self-declaration of protected characteristics prior to wider distribution, and use senior leaders to maximise staff engagement.*

3. Financial Management Report

- 3.1 **Amanda Colledge** presented the report. The forecast underspend on the operating position was between £1.8m and £2.0m. Two Supplementary Estimates would potentially be required to fund technical adjustments linked to the pension transfer and estates valuation on the Administration Estate; and the potential transfer of the Historic Pension Liability from the Members' Estimate.
- 3.2 The Committee discussed the report:
- **Penny Young** updated the Committee on her actions in relation to the commercial budget. The Committee **agreed** to fund the costs relating to the Education Centre, in order for DIS to deliver other public engagement activity.
 - The Committee discussed the potential to use the available funds to address Members' immediate IT support needs. **Myfanwy Barrett** confirmed that contingency would be made available for this if PDS could use it effectively within the timescales.
 - **Amanda Colledge** confirmed that the overspend on agency staff was due to the number of open permanent vacancies and an issue regarding blue badge guides.

4. Whistleblowing policy

- 4.1 **Alix Langley** presented the paper. The policy had been revised slightly to take account of legislative changes and best practice. It had been further revised following feedback from the Audit Committee. The main change to the policy was to simplify

the route to raising concerns. The key finding from the review process was the importance of communicating the policy effectively to staff.

4.2 The Committee discussed the paper:

- There was general agreement that staff might find it intimidating to approach the Clerk or the Director General directly with concerns.
- **The Chair** supported the policy itself but expressed concern about the extent to which staff would access it. **Rob Greig** agreed that making staff aware of the policy would be key to its success. **Alix Langley** noted that her team had consulted the Central Communications Team and Public Concern at Work about creative and effective ways of communicating the policy to staff. **The Chair** suggested that the policy document be made more visually appealing. **Myfanwy Barrett** suggested learning from the successful cascade of the Respect policy. **David Natzler** further suggested adopting a narrative demonstrating the value of whistleblowing.

4.3 The Committee **agreed** to:

- Amend the draft policy to ensure the language around anonymous allegations reflected best practice; to clarify that staff could disclose concerns to any head of department; and to make it more visually appealing.
- Consider a more detailed implementation plan in light of the discussion.

Action: Andrew Walker to:

- *revise whistleblowing policy along these lines; and*
- *circulate an implementation plan to Executive Committee members for comment.*

5. Governance Report: Culture Change progress report

5.1 **David Vere** presented the paper and gave feedback from the leadership groups which had discussed the emerging core values for the House Service.

5.2 The Committee discussed the paper:

- **David Natzler** noted that the process to revise the core values stemmed from the report of the Governance Committee. The values were still in draft form.
- **John Benger** and **Rob Greig** noted the success of the Cass workshops in engaging staff in the values development process.
- **Penny Young** and **Myfanwy Barrett** emphasised that the values should be dynamic, memorable and strongly related to core business, with more detail required as to how they would be embedded across the organisation.
- **The Chair** suggested that the final version of the values should become clearer as a result of his Review.

5.3 The Committee **agreed** to pause the work to finalise core values for the House Service until after the Director General's Review had reported.

Action: Committee Secretary to communicate the decision to pause the values process to all staff following the meeting.

6. Lessons learnt from 2015 General Election

6.1 **John Owen** presented the paper, which highlighted key lessons learnt from the 2015 General Election activities. He drew particular attention to the liaison undertaken with

the political parties, without which, the project would not have achieved the success that it had.

6.2 The Committee discussed the paper:

- **John Bengier** reiterated the importance of Member engagement, including the rapporteurs from the Administration Committee. He stressed the need to retain and build on the legacy of the project, particularly in relation to the buddy system.
- **Rob Greig** noted that the process of delivering general election services was ongoing in PDS.
- The Committee discussed the extent to which the House service could and should support departing members.
- **Penny Young** congratulated House staff on the successful delivery of the project and asked how the House service could influence factors relating to the successful delivery of election services that were outwith its remit. John Owen noted that the House service had worked with IPSA and the Whips in planning election services.

6.3 The Committee **agreed** to consider a further paper from DHRC on proposals for continued use of the general election buddies; that a new SRO be appointed at least two years prior to the next general election; and that the Governance Office hold the a watching brief in this area until this appointment.

***Actions: John Bengier** to report to the Administration Committee on lessons learnt from the 2015 General Election when requested during the first quarter of 2016.*

***David Natzler** to propose to ExCo an SRO to lead the next General Election Planning Group by December 2017.*

***Andrew Walker** to provide an update to the Executive Committee meeting in January 2016 on how the 2015 general election buddies will be used for staff inductions until the next election period.*

7. Any Other Business

7.1 The Committee considered a proposal from **Myfanwy Barrett** to commission work to investigate capability and capacity to deliver the investment programme.

7.2 The Committee discussed issues relating to the Northern Estate programme.

7.3 The Committee discussed the agenda for their away day on 27 November.

***Action: Committee Secretary** to draft an agenda taking account of Committee discussions and arrange for a facilitator.*

7.4 **The Chair** asked for an update on action taken by departments in response to the results of the staff survey. **Andrew Walker** noted that the Business Management Group had asked each department to identify and report back on three things they would do in response, and the need to embed this work in departmental business plans. **Penny Young** said that DIS was tying this work into work on Diversity strategy. **Rob Greig** reported that PDS had run a workshop with the senior team, produced an action plan and published a list of assumptions for staff.

Committee Secretary
13 November 2015