

MANAGEMENT BOARD**Outcome of SMDP Action Groups**

Paper from the Head of Corporate Learning & Diversity

Purpose

1. This paper informs Board members of the outcomes and possible further actions of the action groups in cohort 3 of the senior management development programme and summarises feedback on the programme from action groups in cohorts 1 and 2.

Background

2. In the past, Board members have discussed possible topics with SMDP groups and received feedback from them. The Board has written to participants, thanking them for their work and identifying actions that would be taken forward as a result. From this came schemes to encourage secondments and inter-departmental loans, the work of the *Information Exchange* and, more recently, the Members' Centre. The Board may wish to follow a similar pattern this year.

Summary of Groups

3. The appended notes in Annex A summarise the output so far from each of the groups and suggest some actions that the Board may wish to take. Summarised feedback on the programme from members of action groups in cohorts 1 and 2 is contained in Annex B.

Action

4. Board members are asked to indicate in pre-Board meetings which of the proposed actions they would or would not support. Those that are favoured will be initiated by the Office of the Chief Executive and a response will be sent to the SMDP participants.

[s.40]

July 2008

Annex A

Action Groups from Cohort 3

Wellbeing**Members:** [s.40]**Sponsor:** Andrew Walker**Purpose:** 'Helping Parliament become fit for purpose'**Aim :** To create a 'toolkit' of ideas, exercises, contacts and advice to encourage individuals and teams to find ways that fit into their daily lives to improve their physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing.**Progress:** The group presented their case for a Well Being Toolbox to other SMDP participants and Management Board members. This included a prototype of the proposed intranet site, the results on the Staff Survey on the House's approach to well being, some research they had undertaken and a log of what had been learned from these experiences.**Further Action:** Comments from the Action Group event have been taken on board e.g. staff with no intranet access or unable to use a computer. Well Being Toolkit to be taken forward by sending a copy of the business case and related materials to Mal McDougall, Head of OHSWS, inviting her comments at a meeting after the recess.**Possible action for the Board:**

- *Ask the group to report to the Office of the Chief Executive on proposed next steps when the business case has been considered by the Head of OHSWS*

Recreational Networking**Members:** [s.40]**Sponsor:** John Pullinger**Aim:** To pilot a number of recreational activities such as Tate Visit, Tours, Book Clubs, Community Service etc
To learn the best way of implementing a lasting legacy of a recreational networking forum which will enable staff to 'move out of their silo' and interact with other House staff outside normal working environment
To encourage free flow of information exchange and the establishment of enduring relationships that will assist in working life**Progress:** Various external visits booked and more planned
Guidance on how to set up small groups (in draft)
Volunteering – contract provisionally awarded
Possible establishment of cross-Parliament group of junior staff to continue this work in the future – discussed with internal communications staff**Further action:** Permission and funding (£1,500 + VAT) sought from the Board to run a pilot community service event for 15 staff from Cohort 3, based on the reasons set out in the paper to John Pullinger and Andrew Walker. If successful, the group proposes that this type of event is incorporated in the

Corporate Learning & Diversity portfolio of development options for staff.

Possible action for the Board:

- *Ask the Director General, Resources to consider the group's case to run a pilot community service event for 15 staff from Cohort 3*

Management of Political Risk

Members: [s.40]

Aim: To explore whether generic risk management techniques can be applied to political risk; if risk management tools can be applied to the management of political risk within the House; and to look at a range of projects undertaken by the House, identify where political risk has been well managed, what lessons can be learned etc

Findings:

- i) the senior responsible owner for the project takes direct responsibility for the management of political risk. This includes timely and close scrutiny of contractors
- ii) a range of people from across the House who are able to identify the objectives and potential risks of any given project are involved in the project from the outset. In this respect a unified House service should help to minimise political risk.
- iii) there is effective and planned communication, particularly with Members (including the management of expectations)
- iv) there are opportunities for 'friendly challenge' during the planning and implementation of a project.

Possible outputs:

Managing political risk should be an explicit and integral component of project and programme management:

Specific tools might include—

1. The creation of a checklist for identifying political risk
2. The creation of a (virtual) network of people who have experience of managing political risk.
3. The development of a network of 'mentors' to conduct 'friendly challenge'
4. A seminar/ event to introduce the concept of political risk to project managers, and to identify those who are included in the network.
5. The development of a hypothesis/ theoretical model for the effective management of political risk.

Possible action for the Board:

- *Note the relevance to work being done in the House Service on risk*
- *Ask the group to discuss its findings with the House Risk Facilitator and report to the Office of the Chief Executive on proposed next steps*

Fast stream for the future

Members: [s.40]

Sponsors: Andrew Walker and Helen Irwin

Aim: To take forward a study on a unified House-wide fast stream and deliver a series of recommendations for further consideration by the Board. This would be done in parallel with a separate study commissioned by the Board.

To take the opportunity to treat the project as a personal learning experience

Findings: (i) While in recent years much progress has been made in improving staff development, the various schemes (e.g. Managing for Excellence, the SMDP) should be co-ordinated parts of a single strategy for delivering the people resources that the House Service requires. In terms of senior staff that vision might be: "The House will manage the recruitment and careers of its senior staff so that positions in Band A and the SCS are (or could be) filled by staff with the necessary skills and attributes, and that each individual is able to make the best contribution that they can to the House Service";

(ii) While it is recognised that there will often be reasons to invite external applications for top posts, good workforce planning and risk management would suggest that there should always be suitable internal applicants to compete against them;

(iii) More active career management, including the identification of talent, should be introduced at all levels. While this will involve some investment (e.g. in the appointment of grade managers), it should result in better focused spending on staff development and a reduced risk of unsatisfactory appointments;

(iv) Delivering a consistent and co-ordinated approach to developing staff is a key element in making a unified service a reality.

Possible action for the Board:

- *Note that further information around these conclusions together with proposals for taking this work forward have been provided as an Annex to the "Final Report to the Management Board of the working group on a unified House-wide fast stream" — see MB2008.P.61.*

Induction and short work-placements

Members: [s.40]

Aim: To examine certain means of breaking down barriers between staff working in different areas of the House service; providing opportunities to increase individuals' understanding of the ways in which their role is important to the service of the House overall; providing opportunities for staff to increase their understanding of the work done by others

Possible outputs:

1. Review of the ways in which House-wide induction processes facilitate or hinder the development of a unified service
2. Recommendations for improvement in House-wide induction processes
3. Review of the ways in which a structured, voluntary programme of short-term intra-House work placements may contribute to overall objectives
4. An implementation plan (and business case if appropriate) for a programme of short-term work placements, building on completed pilots.

Annex B

Action Groups from Cohorts 1 and 2**Feedback from cohorts 1 and 2 on the following:**

- what was most useful and least useful about the senior management development programme
- other opportunities that participants believe would be useful as part of a future management development programme
- the value of having action learning groups and what was/could be achieved through cross-departmental work activities of this type

Interviewees from action groups: Corporate Social Responsibility, External Secondments, A Greener House, Change in Action, Value for Money, Information Exchange, Commons Strategy/R&D Unit, Partners in Parliament, Parliament – 10 Years On, Carbon Neutral by 2012, Web 2.0

Number interviewed/responded to questionnaire: 20

Summary

1. Views expressed on the value of SMDP ranged from those who generally found the programme useful (the majority of interviewees) to those who considered much of it a waste of time or felt they had done similar activities previously. The opportunity to get to know people from across the House Service and to appreciate their issues and problems was considered by most to be hugely beneficial. Contacts were established that are still being used through various means: informal catch-up discussions with fellow learning set members, regular meetings with fellow action learning group members, and work-related exchanges of information.

2. Elements considered particularly helpful by many of those interviewed were 1-1 coaching, learning sets (support groups) and learning groups (particularly when sponsored by a senior manager) as well as the opportunity to do parts of the programme off-site without the distractions of normal work. Most of those interviewed found it difficult to identify individual modules that they particularly liked or disliked – this may have been because of the passage of time since they undertook the programme. Some criticised the “sheep-dip” approach, exposing participants to a wide range of modules, but considered it almost inevitable given the range of people taking part.

3. The main concerns related to the expense of the programme, with some people noting the lack of practical outcomes from group work, and others asking how the programme’s success was to be measured – promotion, transfers? Others were critical of what they saw as a focus on soft skills and theory, as opposed to obvious results, and of the ease with which it was possible to “hide” and not participate fully.

4. The following were among the suggestions from participants on useful approaches for any future management programmes:

- Focus on business processes
- Less theory, more practice
- Develop a programme/approach for those who are not new managers (and go on Managing for Excellence) and the band As and above who have been on SMDP
- Don't let people hide
- Shadow senior managers
- Expect practical results from group work
- Provide sponsorship/support for activities
- Measure outcomes of the programme
- Provide opportunity for in-depth study modules

5. The action groups had mixed success. Some continue, in different guises, e.g. Parliament – 10 Years On, and Information Exchange; some produced a report for the Board of Management; and for others there were no clear results. Some uncertainty was expressed about the groups' purpose — to learn about working together or to achieve results? — and the extent to which individuals were accountable for their work together. The groups that appeared to work best were small, met regularly, set specific objectives for individual members, took advantage of complementary skills within the group and had advice and support from senior managers or project leaders.