

Management Board

Guidelines for Board papers

Paper from the Head of the Office of the Chief Executive

Purpose

1. To update the guidance provided to Departments on the submission of papers to the Management Board.

Action for the Board

2. The Board is asked to take note.

Consultation

3. This guidance reflects the views of the Board as expressed at the Board's away day in November 2008. A small selection of users were consulted on the final draft.

Guidance

4. Annexed to this note is a guidance note on Board papers which covers:
 - a) options to consider when deciding whether and how to submit a paper to the Board;
 - b) the timing of the submission of papers; and
 - c) the format, structure and length of such papers.
5. If the Board agrees, the Office of the Chief Executive will circulate the guidance to relevant staff across the House in January and will monitor compliance. The guidance will also be published on the Management Board's intranet page.

Office of the Chief Executive
January 2009

Papers for the House of Commons Management Board: guidance note

Office of the Chief Executive

Purpose

1. This paper is intended to provide guidance on:
 - a) issues to consider when deciding whether and how to submit a paper to the Management Board;
 - b) the timing of the submission of papers; and
 - c) the format, structure and length of such papers.

Issues to consider

2. The Board's agreed terms of reference are as follows:

The Management Board's role is to lead the House of Commons Service by setting its strategic aims, priorities, values and standards, in accordance with the decisions of the House of Commons Commission; approving business and financial plans, ensuring controls, managing risk, monitoring performance and making corporate policy decisions.

3. When deciding whether to submit a paper to the Board you should first consider the following questions:
 - a. Why are you bringing this issue to the Board? It is important to have a clear idea of why you think an issue needs to come to the Board. Is it for information only, or for decision?
 - b. Is it of sufficient significance to merit the Board's time? For example, is it an issue which has significance across the House Service, or which may have a significant impact on Members? Does it change House policy? Does it have significant cost implications?
 - c. Does the issue need to be decided by the Board or might it more properly be considered by someone else, for example by the Clerk (as Accounting Officer or Corporate Officer) or at Director General level? Even so, it might be sufficiently important to need collective discussion by the Board.
 - d. Does the issue need discussion by the Board? If not, it could be circulated as a take-note item.
 - e. Is the matter urgent? If necessary, papers can be agreed by the Board between Board meetings, by correspondence?

- f. Is the paper ready to come to the Board? A Board paper should not be a vehicle for securing cross-Departmental agreement on an issue – consultation should have taken place and – where possible - agreement secured, before the paper reaches the Board.
 - g. Is your Director General signed up to the paper? Papers should not come to the Board without being seen and approved by the relevant Director General.
4. It is helpful to discuss your proposed paper with the Office of the Chief Executive at an early stage in order to establish whether it is suitable for inclusion on the Board’s agenda, and how it should be presented.
 5. In any case, you should send a draft of your paper to the Office of the Chief Executive by the Friday two weeks before the Board meets.

Timing

6. The table below sets out the timing for the submission of Board papers (all deadlines are close of play). Exceptions to this timetable must be agreed with the Office of the Chief Executive.

As early as possible	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu
Discuss paper with OCE	Draft paper to OCE			Final paper submitted to OCE	Circulation of papers by OCE					Board meeting

Format

7. Board papers must be provided electronically to the Office of the Chief Executive.
8. Paragraphs and pages must be numbered. Papers should be in Arial font size 12.
9. Board papers are normally distributed electronically. Not all recipients have immediate access to a colour printer. Colour should therefore only be used where it significantly adds to understanding and authors should be prepared to supply paper copy on request.
10. The structure of a Board paper, with the elements it should include, is set out in Annex A to this paper. A model of good practice is set out in Annex B.

Length

11. Board papers should be succinct and, in any case, should not normally exceed six sides in length, excluding annexes. Clarity is more important than comprehensiveness.

Action

12. *This guidance has been endorsed by the Management Board.*
Prospective authors of Board papers should seek to implement this guidance. Any points for clarification should be addressed to the Head of the Office of the Chief Executive. The Office is always ready to advise on the drafting of papers for the Board and other management groups.

Office of the Chief Executive
January 2009

Annex A: Structure of a Board paper

1. Board papers must include the elements set out below.

Headings

2. A Board paper should begin with a clear statement of the intended audience; the subject; and the author or their post. For example:

“Management Board

Strategic planning 2006-2011

Paper by the Head of the Office of the Chief Executive”

3. There is no need to add a header including a Management Board paper number: this will be inserted by the Office of the Chief Executive.

Purpose

4. Board papers must begin with a short, clear statement of purpose. For example:

“1.1 This paper is intended to update the Board on progress with the HAIS 2 programme.” OR

“1.1 This paper sets out options for extending the webcasting service and suggests an option for the Board to recommend to the Commission”.

Action for the Board

5. Following the purpose section should be a short statement of what you are asking the Board to do or decide. There should not be any issues for decision in a paper which are not listed at the start. Each decision should be listed separately. For example:

“2.1 The Board is invited to approve the approach taken in the draft Departmental Business Plans for 2009/10.” OR

“2.1 The Board is invited to:

2.2.1 note that it is proposed that work should be carried out in the 2008 summer recess;

2.2.2 note that the cost is estimated to be in the region of £xm;

2.2.3 note that if agreed to by the Commission this project will be subject to business case approval by the Accounting Officer; and

2.2.4 agree to recommend this option to the Commission.” OR

“2.1 The Board is invited to take note of progress with HAIS 2. The Board does not need to take decisions at this time.”

Consultation

6. Following the conclusions and decision section should be a list of those who have been substantially consulted on the paper in its preparation, with an indication of those who have been consulted on the final version of the paper (as it appears before the Board).

Main body

7. The main body of the paper should contain the points which the Board is being asked to consider. Sub-headings should be used to divide issues where appropriate. Points for decision, or particularly important issues for the Board to note, should be emboldened.

Ending

8. There is no need to summarise the paper at the end.
9. The author of the paper and their post should be indicated at the end of the paper. The date, or month of submission, must be included at the end of the paper.

Annexes

10. Annexes should be used for any detailed or extraneous information which supports the points made in the main paper. There must be a clear reference to each annex in the main paper, including a short description of what it covers.
11. It may be helpful to include background to the specific issues which the Board are being asked to take decisions on for the Board’s information. If so this should be in the form of an annex following the main body of the paper. Background information could include a brief account of how an issue has developed – for example, the outcome of consideration by other management groups – or key facts relating to the issue under discussion. For example:

“Following representations by the Commons Advisory Committee on Works of Art, the Commission asked for a review

to be instigated of the work of the Curator's Office and the skills and resources available to it. The review was conducted during 2004 by Jura Consultants, who were overseen by a steering group chaired by the Lords Principal Finance Officer, and included an external member. The consultants interviewed a number of officials as well as members of the Commons Advisory Committee and the Lords Works of Art Committee during the course of their work."

12. An alternative to including extra information in an annex is to mention the existence of the information and how it can be obtained in the main paper (for example, "the report of Jura Consultants is available on request from the Curator").

Annex B: Board paper: example of good practice**MANAGEMENT BOARD****Revised FOI Publication Scheme**

Paper from the Director General Resources

Purpose

1. This paper presents a revised version of the draft Publication Scheme, in compliance with the requirement under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for the House to update its Publication Scheme by 1 January 2009 to include all elements required by the Information Commissioner.

Action for the Board

2. The Board is invited to approve the revised FOI Publication Scheme (circulated as MB2008.P.103A) prior to its submission to the Commission in January.
3. Board Members are asked to respond to the Office of the Chief Executive by **Wednesday 14 January**.

Consultation

4. There has been extensive consultation with Departments on the scheme. This last version reflects comments made by members of the Management Board at, and since, its meeting in November.

Changes

5. Sections of the Scheme which may be of particular interest to the Board are highlighted in yellow:

Senior staff allowances and expenses (para 2.3) – it is proposed to provide on request pay and expenses for staff of SCS1A and above;

Financial statements for projects and events (para 2.7) – it is proposed to publish more financial information about projects and events than we currently issue. This is envisaged as an annual, unaudited statement and would be issued by both Houses. The Finance Officers for the Commons and the Lords (including Facilities and PICT) have confirmed that this approach is practical and reasonable.

Minutes and reports of the Management Board and the Commission (para 4.1) – it is proposed to consider requests for

both minutes and papers of the Board and the Commission on a case by case basis. Minutes for the Commission are published on www.parliament.uk and it is proposed that minutes of the Board are also published here in the future in the same way. In the interim before they are published, requests for minutes will be considered on a case by case basis.

Register of gifts for senior staff (para 6.2) – it is proposed to provide on request details of gifts to SCS1A and above.

House of Lords

6. The House of Lords FOI Officer has confirmed that there is nothing inconsistent between our draft Scheme and theirs, and that the level of senior staff is consistent with their current thinking. Their Board has approved the general principles of the Scheme, with the detail being circulated for agreement outside of the meeting.

Commission approval

7. A paper will be prepared for the Commission meeting in January for its approval of the Scheme, subject to any comments from the Board.
8. It is not proposed to include in the Scheme any information specifically about Members which is not currently publicly available.

A J Walker
Director General of Resources

December 2008