

## MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

MB2009.MIN.02

### Minutes of the Management Board meeting held on Thursday 26 February 2009

**Those present:** Malcolm Jack (Chief Executive) (Chairman)  
Douglas Millar CB (Director General of Chamber and  
Committee Services)  
Andrew Walker (Director General of Resources)  
John Pullinger (Director General of Information  
Services)  
John Borley CB (Director General of Facilities)  
Joan Miller (PICT, external member)

**In attendance:** Philippa Helme (Board Secretary)  
Hannah Weston (Private Secretary to the Clerk of the  
House)

**In attendance for item 8:** Terry Bird (Director, Operations Directorate,  
Department of Resources)

Apologies had been received from Alex Jablonowski (external member).

#### 1. Matters arising from previous meetings

1.1. Further to item 4 **Andrew Walker** reported that a summary of Janet Rissen's report on HAIS would be circulated to the Board shortly.

#### 2. Risk and performance

2.1. The Board discussed corporate risk 10 (data and information systems). The Board noted that although data security was currently a high priority, it was only one aspect of the risk. It agreed that Andrew Walker and John Pullinger should report to the Board the conclusion of their discussion on the ownership of corporate risk 10.

2.2. *Action: Andrew Walker and John Pullinger to report as soon as possible to the Board their decision on the ownership of Corporate Risk 10.*

2.3. The Board considered corporate risk 5 (legal, audit and accounting requirements) which had been highlighted following recent internal audits

of the Parliamentary Estates Directorate. The Board noted the risk and agreed that no new Board level action was required at this point.

**2.4.** The Board considered the risks which had been escalated to the Board from PICT. **Joan Miller** said that she hoped the risk relating to governance of PICT would be mitigated by the outcome of the joint meeting of the Management Boards of the Commons and Lords scheduled for 27 March. **Philippa Helme** confirmed that proposals on the governance of PICT and Parliamentary Estates would be brought to each Management Board in March before, it was hoped, being agreed at the joint meeting. **Joan Miller** said that the position of PICT was different from that of Estates, because much of its work supported the business of other Departments. **Andrew Walker** said that both PEB and JBSB had struggled to deliver a single programme driven by two Houses with sometimes differing interests. The Board noted the risk and agreed that no other Board level action was required at this point.

**2.5.** **Joan Miller** highlighted the ongoing risk of supplier failure due to the prevailing economic climate and the mitigations which were in place in PICT. **Andrew Walker** said that the Commercial Director had been working with each Department to assist them in monitoring the position of their suppliers. The Board noted the risk and agreed that no new Board level action was required at this point.

**2.6.** The Board considered the quarterly corporate risk update. **John Borley** drew the Board's attention to the re-evaluation of the impact of the risk of fire on the Estate (corporate risk 2a). It was considered that the potential loss of the Palace, as a heritage building, should be considered "catastrophic" (level 5) rather than "major" (level 4).

**2.7.** **Joan Miller** noted that the Administration Estimate Audit Committee had recommended that corporate risk 3 be divided into two sub-risks: 3a: disruption to the work of the House or other services as a result of an IT breakdown, and 3b: failure to develop IT systems to meet business needs. She was content with this, but noted that to date she had focused on mitigating disruption to the House. **Douglas Millar** said that a server failure which had affected the DCCS during February had been an example of risk 3a.

**2.8.** The Board considered the latest performance information. The Board noted the upward trend in the number of FOI requests received by the House. **Andrew Walker** said that the Information Commissioner's Office had contacted his Department in relation to several cases.

### **3. Oral up-dates from Director Generals**

**3.1. Douglas Millar** said that:

- 3.3.1** the Board should pass him any comments on the take note paper regarding the re-letting of the transcription services contract from August 2010.
- 3.3.2** the Procedure Committee would be meeting to consider revising its proposed specification for e-petitions, to allow the development of lower cost proposals than those previously considered.
- 3.3.3** it was possible that Regional Committees would be nominated before the Easter recess.

**3.2. Joan Miller** said that:

- 3.2.1.** a trial of Blackberrys had been conducted inside the Parliamentary firewall. Subject to the evaluation of the trial, which would be completed by the end of April, a business case would be prepared for the provision of Blackberrys by PICT. The evaluation would also assess the possibility of providing iPhones.
- 3.2.2.** the PICT Training Team had won third place in the Public Sector Training Department category of the annual awards of the Institute of IT Trainers and British Computer Society. PICT's Training Manager had achieved first place in the Training Manager category. They had been pleased to receive acknowledgement of their achievement from the Clerk.

**3.4 John Borley** said that:

- 3.4.1** following John Greenaway's appointment as Director of Business Management, the Department of Facilities' business plan was progressing well.
- 3.4.2** the lack of fire marshals on the Estate had been identified as a serious problem, particularly in areas occupied only by Members and their staff. He intended to come forward with proposals to remedy this situation in the near future.

**3.5 John Pullinger** said that:

- 3.5.1** Rob Clements had been appointed as the new Service Delivery Director in the Department of Information Services.
- 3.5.2** the report of the Visitor Management Review conducted by the Parliamentary Visitor Board had been considered and the recommendations endorsed by the Administration Committee and the House Committee in the House of Lords. The recommendations set out in the report, which had been circulated as a take note paper to the Board, would now be taken forward.

**3.5.3** a further take note paper circulated to the Board detailed progress on the intranet Members' portal. He hoped that this would be launched by 1 July, the first anniversary of the launch of the Members' Centre. There was demand from Members to be able to access the intranet from their mobile devices. It was hoped that in the future further services could be provided through the intranet, such as the booking of banqueting facilities.

**3.6 The Chairman** said that the Official Opposition had started to show an interest in matters relating to the next general election. Preparations were well advanced.

#### **4. Business Continuity**

**4.1.** The Board considered a paper from the Chairman of the Business Risk and Resilience Group detailing lessons learned from recent BCDR incidents.

**4.2.** *In discussion the following points were made:*

- the gas leak had demonstrated the lack of an established method of identifying incident controllers.
- the role of the duty Director General and the role of the chairman of gold were different.
- there should be a checklist of actions for gold beyond the first hour of an incident.
- two key problem areas during the gas leak incident had been communications and finding alternative locations for staff to work.
- in the Clerk's and Speaker's offices there had never been any doubt that the House would sit on the day of the heavy snow fall.
- Members had appreciated the commitment of staff to ensure that business should continue as normal.
- all the communication mechanisms identified in the paper for use in an emergency relied on electricity. Alternatives should be developed.
- Mark Harvey and Bob Norris had conducted a BCDR scenario workshop for senior managers in the DIS. This was commended to other Departments.
- it was very important to learn lessons but also essential not to establish overly complex systems when much had been achieved through common sense and simple systems.
- fire marshals could be used to assist evacuations.
- during the recent bad weather, more staff had attempted to work through Citrix than the system could support. The cost of increasing the capacity of the system would depend on the total number of staff who might need to work from home at any one time.

**4.3.** *Action: Joan Miller to circulate questions required to evaluate use of Citrix to Directors General. Directors General to provide data to PICT.*

**4.4.** The Board noted the paper and agreed that the recommended actions should be followed up by the Business Risk and Resilience Group.

## **5. Records Management**

**5.1. John Pullinger** said that an audit of records management had been carried out. On a risk basis this had commenced in the Departments of Facilities and Resources. The paper was critical of records management in the first two Departments to be audited. There was now an action plan in place to improve matters.

**5.2.** The Departments of Chamber and Committee Services and Information Services would be next to be audited, followed by PICT, before a final report was brought to the Board in July. It was already clear that further work on the House's records management policy was required, in coordination with the SPIRE project. A robust culture of records management was not well established in the House. There was a need to provide training so that better practices could be built into normal working patterns.

**5.3.** *In discussion the following points were made:*

- The outcome of the audit was disappointing. Follow-up action would be required. One option was for a follow-up audit to be conducted, another was for the implementation of the actions recommended in the audit to be followed up.
- The priority given to records management needed to be balanced with the other demands on Departments. The action plan and its timescales were appropriate and had been negotiated with the staff concerned.
- Most staff would benefit from a short training session on records management, with key staff receiving more in depth training.
- The percentage of documents which were records varied significantly between Departments.
- There was a distinction between records held in the short term by Departments and records which would be kept permanently by the Parliamentary Archives.
- There were risks associated with sensitive data held electronically, even if only for a relatively short time, which were often inadequately managed. It was to be hoped that SPIRE would solve this problem.

**5.4.** The Board agreed that the proposed response was practical and agreed that the findings of the audit should be followed up in 12 months' time. The Board thanked the team who had conducted the audit.

*5.5. Action: John Pullinger to report to the Board on the full records audit in July and to initiate a follow-up audit in spring 2010.*

## **6. Whistleblowing**

**6.1.** The Board considered a paper from the Director of Human Resources Management and Development on whistleblowing.

**6.2. Andrew Walker** said that the House's policy on whistleblowing had been raised in the Administration Estimate Audit Committee following its examination of the findings of an internal audit of the Parliamentary Estates Directorate. The staff handbook currently dealt with a relatively limited range of circumstances; the proposal was to make the guidance more comprehensive.

**6.3.** *In discussion the following points were made:*

- The intention of the policy should not be to encourage whistleblowing but to make sure an internal mechanism was in place so that staff felt that matters could be raised. This should reduce the likelihood of leaks.
- There was concern that the term "whistleblowing" was inappropriate, and could encourage wrong behaviours.
- Staff who reported matters of concern should be aware of their own responsibilities and the need to avoid ill-founded accusations.
- There was a need for the policy to be carefully communicated to staff as it was a sensitive issue.
- Some institutions had identified a member of the Audit Committee as the figure to be approached by staff who wished to report matters outside the usual line management structure. It was felt that the Head of Internal Audit fulfilled this role.

**6.4.** The Board agreed the approach set out in the paper but decided that a simple term other than whistleblowing should be used. The revised guidance should be included in the October edition of the staff handbook, induction courses should cover the policy and awareness of the revisions should be transmitted by managers to their teams.

## **7. Prompt Payment Targets**

**7.1.** The Board considered a paper from the Director General of Resources on prompt payment targets.

**7.2. Andrew Walker** said that the payment of 80% of invoices from SMEs within the Government recommended target of 10 working days could be

achieved relatively simply and at minimal cost. Public sector organisations should be excluded from this measure. The accelerated payment of invoices would not be possible in certain areas such as catering where invoices were paid through a different system.

**7.3.** *In discussion the following points were made:*

- There was a risk that staff might feel under pressure to sign off too quickly invoices about which they had concerns. This risk should be mitigated by careful advice from Departmental Business Managers.
- Invoices should be subject to a purchase order, which would speed up the process of payment.
- Where possible, Departments could also encourage earlier authorisation of invoices on Agresso.

**7.4.** The Board agreed that the House should align itself to the prompt payment initiative being adopted by government departments. It accepted that this was unlikely to be possible immediately for catering which had a different schedule of invoice payments.

## **8. Members' Allowances**

**8.1.** The Board considered a paper on the actions being undertaken to implement the changes agreed by the House on Members' allowances, from the Director General of Resources.

**8.2. Andrew Walker** said that the Board had identified Members' allowances as a priority area, and that the paper was intended to keep the Board up to date on the Department of Resources' actions. He was grateful for the support provided by other Departments to the Department of Resources in relation to Members' allowances. Terry Bird was the Senior Responsible Owner for the programme to deliver the changes agreed by the House, which would involve remodelling parts of the Department and also affect other Departments. Paul Smith, a professional project manager, had been appointed to manage the project. He would report to a Project Director who would be the head of the new Operational Assurance Unit (OAU), who would report to Terry Bird. Recruitment was underway for this position. The governance of Members' allowances had undergone significant changes and Member Committees had undertaken new roles, which they were still in the process of defining.

**8.3. Terry Bird** said that Members were now receiving a greater value of allowances than at any time before. The recent changes provided an opportunity for the Department to renew its focus on the needs of Members as customers.

**8.4.** The Board discussed the revised Green Book and the roles of the new Committee on Members' Allowances (MAC), the Administration Estimate Audit Committee and the Department of Resources in delivering good service for Members.

**8.5. Terry Bird** said that he anticipated that by the autumn the role of the MAC would be clearer and the OAU would be well established. At that point he would report to the Board with greater clarity on what might be achieved and timescales for the work. The Board noted the paper and thanked staff for their work towards implementing the new system of Members' allowances.

**8.6. Action:** *Department of Resources to report on progress towards implementing new system of Members' allowances to October Board meeting.*

## **9. Estates**

**9.1.** The Board considered a paper from the Director General of Facilities on the implementation of lessons learned from past projects.

**9.2. The Chairman** said that the Commission was taking an interest in the application of lessons learned to future projects. **John Borley** said that the paper foreshadowed wider work on governance in the area of estates, which the Board would have a chance to consider at its next meeting. This paper sought the Board's view on a draft paper which would go to the Commission at the end of March. The purpose of the paper was to satisfy the Commission that the lessons learned from the Visitor Reception Building were being applied, particularly to the Mechanical and Electrical programme.

**9.3. In discussion the following points were made:**

- Lessons had not always been learnt from past projects.
- Lessons learnt from projects should be applied across all House Departments.
- The governance structure of the Mechanical and Electrical programme would reflect past lessons.

**9.4.** The Board noted the paper and agreed that the proposed paper for the Commission should include a detailed table showing progress against individual recommendations. The Board agreed that the Internal Audit service should report annually to the Board on progress against lessons learnt.



**9.5.** *Action: Internal Audit service to report annually to the Board on progress against lessons learned from the VRB project.*

**10. Any Other Business**

**10.1.** **Douglas Millar** raised the difficulty for managers posed by the requirement to identify staff likely to receive a box mark four, ahead of the usual reporting cycle.

[adjourned at 5.53 pm

**Philippa Helme**  
**Secretary**

**Malcolm Jack**  
**Chairman**

06 March 2009