

Management Board

Survey of Services: Presentation of draft report

Paper by the Chair of the Survey of Services Project Board

Purpose

1. This paper accompanies the draft report of the 2009 Survey of Services. It covers a number of process issues – the results themselves will be presented orally by Charlotte Cornish of FDS International.

Action

2. The Board are asked to:
 - take note of the results;
 - agree that the report (as with the 2007 results) should be published on the Parliament website;
 - agree that an action plan should be developed by the Office of the Chief Executive; and
 - agree that the results and the action plan should be presented to the Administration Committee at its meeting on 20 October.

Consultation

3. The Survey of services project board was sent the results and first draft of the report for comment. The results and final draft report will be considered by the Survey of services Project Board on 15 July. Any significant issues raised will be reported orally to the Management Board.

Background

4. In the light of the recommendation of the Tebbit Review that there should be "...more regular 'rolling' surveys of a proportion of Members", the Administration Committee agreed in March 2008 that:
 - the next survey of services should be tendered out;
 - surveys should be run once a year; and
 - all Members, and a sample of Members' staff, should be surveyed.
5. Following a competitive tender procedure, FDS International Ltd was appointed as the supplier for three surveys (with the possibility of a fourth) to be conducted at roughly annual intervals. This is the same company that undertook the 2007 survey.

Approach

6. After taking the advice of FDS, the Project Board agreed that, given the modest impact on cost and the potential adverse effects of using a sample, all Members staff paid via the House would be included.
7. The survey approach was much the same as in 2007. The main difference was that the initial contact with most Members' staff was by email rather than letter. This was in line with evidence from the 2007 survey that indicated that this was the preferred means of communication for this group.
8. The questionnaire was reviewed and simplified following extensive consultation with Departments. The total number of possible answers was reduced from around 280 to 180. A number of topics were dropped completely (e.g. detailed questions of the Travel Office), while some new questions, for example those designed to inform the Board's balanced scorecard, were added.

Response rate

9. The survey period was set as 27 April to 15 May, but was extended to provide respondents with a greater opportunity to participate. Overall, 160 Members (25%) completed the questionnaire, and those Members responding were broadly representative of the House (by party, role, age and service). This response rate compares favourably to that achieved in the 2003 survey, but is below response rates from surveys conducted in 1999 and 2007, despite an identical communications strategy to 2007's and an additional follow-up email from the Chairman of the Administration Committee. It is thought that the lower than anticipated response rate is due in large part to press reporting of Members' allowances, which started part way through the fieldwork period. Nevertheless, there is no reason to doubt the general direction of the results.

Next steps

10. The proposed next steps are:
 - the results are published on the Parliament Website (this was the approach taken in 2007);
 - an action plan is developed under the auspices of the Office of the Chief Executive for agreement by the Management Board in the autumn;
 - the Project Board has a final meeting to agree a project closure report and ensure that lessons learned are captured to inform future surveys; and
 - the results and the action plan are presented to the Administration Committee at its meeting on 20 October.

Future Surveys

11. The timing of the 2010 and subsequent surveys will in part be determined by the date of the general election. Assuming an election on 6 May 2010, the next three surveys might be in November 2010, June 2011 and April/May 2012. A new project board would need to be constituted at least five months prior to the commencement of the first of these.

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