



**Fol publication scheme: follow-up to Management Board meeting
on 10 March**

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Date 12 April 2010

Summary: This paper follows up the Board's consideration of paper MB/2010/29 on 10 March, and invites the Board to resolve the points left undecided at that meeting.

Summary of actions requested:

- Retrospective claim forms to be used to record the details of currency issued in advance for overseas travel.
- Hospitality and gifts received by Management Board members to be declared and published on the web if their value is estimated as £25+.

Background

1. The following decisions were taken by the Board on 10 March and are being implemented:
 - Procurement information on the web to be improved and expanded.
 - Non-reserved Cabinet-style agreed minutes, agendas and papers to be published as PDFs.
2. The following points were agreed subject to clarification on certain points:
 - Publication on the web of expense claim forms of Management Board members together with their corporate credit card statements.
 - Publication on the web of a register of hospitality and gifts received by Management Board members.
3. This paper invites the Board to agree the details of the publication of expense claims and hospitality/gifts.

Board members' expenses

4. At the Board meeting on 10 March I was asked to "provide further guidance regarding expenses accruing during overseas visits for which allowances are issued in advance".
5. The issue here is that typically currency will be ordered from the Travel Office and no claim form is needed, so that publication of claim forms would not ensure publication of all expenses received. The solution seems to me to be straightforward: in all such cases a claim form should be completed after the event, recording the amount of currency issued and the amount (if any) returned. The claim form can be used for any appropriate explanations of the use made of the currency (in particular if it covers expenses of a peer or peers being accompanied by a Board member).

Threshold for declaration of hospitality and gifts

6. At the Board meeting on 10 March I “was asked to provide further guidance regarding what should be registered (for example the level of hospitality received from overseas Parliaments)” and “further guidance on the value of gifts that were required to be registered: it was proposed that a higher limit might be set for gifts from other Parliaments”.
7. The aim of the publication of details of hospitality and gifts is to provide transparency and thus assurance to the outside world, and the Information Commissioner in particular, that Board members are behaving with honesty and integrity. Against that background I think it would be difficult to justify exempting certain categories on the ground that the bodies concerned are not seeking to influence us in the same way as a commercial organisation might. If we are confident that we are doing the right thing, we should have no qualms about disclosure. Non-disclosure might be suspected of hiding a culture of spending lavishly on entertainment for overseas visitors in the expectation that they will do the same for us.
8. On the other hand, seeking to put a value on hospitality and gifts from overseas visitors can be invidious: if we were to set a threshold of £10 it could be awkward to know whether to declare (say) a decorative plate or a pair of cuff links. I therefore propose that we set a higher threshold of £25 as the value below which gifts and hospitality need not be declared. This would be on the basis that one should declare if in doubt. With such a threshold, relatively few meals or gifts would in practice be declarable, so the bureaucracy required would not be great.

12 April 2010

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