

## **Management Board**

### **General Election Planning Update**

*Paper from the Acting Head of the Department of Information Services  
and the General Election Project Manager*

#### **Purpose**

1. This paper is to update the Management Board on the progress of General Election planning and on the outcome of the Director of Internal Audit's review.

#### **Actions for the Board**

2. The Board is asked to
  - 1) note the outcome of the Director of Internal Audit's review of General Election Planning (Annex A)
  - 2) endorse the operational decision-making arrangements proposed by GEPG in response to this review (para 6)
  - 3) endorse the priority of GEPG activities (para 9)
  - 4) endorse proposals for recruitment to short term election roles (para 12)
  - 5) note the GEPG update on planned activities (para 14–17)

#### **Consultation and equality analysis**

3. All products and activities of GEPG are currently subject to an equality impact assessment in addition to reviews by the workplace equality networks.

#### **Director of Internal Audit's review**

4. As part of the preparation for the General Election the Director of Internal Audit was requested to carry out a light touch review of the preparations to date. The outcome of the light touch review is attached as Annex A.
5. The review will be considered by GEPG at the next meeting in January. The project welcomed the constructive feedback gained from the review and the recognition of the appropriate and significant planning that has been carried out to date. The frequency of meetings for GEPG

will increase in the run up to the Election along with the appropriate project controls to ensure delivery stays on track. The Board are requested to consider the recommendations below which will help support this process.

**Operational decision-making and escalation**

- 6. The review, alongside the lessons learnt from 2010, highlighted the need for clear decision making and a defined method of escalation.
- 7. In response, GEPG recommends the following arrangements during dissolution and the early phase of the new Parliament:
  - 1) GEPG will meet weekly during dissolution and until the first week in May. GEPG will meet briefly on a daily basis from Friday 8 May until Friday 22 May.
  - 2) The following staff should have decision-making authority for their areas of delivery:

<b>Area of work / delivery</b>
Results and Information
Contact Centre
New Members' Reception Area (NMRA)
Liaison with Political Parties / delayed political decision making
Security
Written communications
Temporary & permanent accommodation
ICT provision

Services for defeated Members
Personnel Advice
Induction and Training
Chamber briefing
Online Services
Services for Members' staff

- 3) GEPG agrees that one person should have responsibility and decision-making authority, and propose that John Benger should take on this responsibility as Chair of GEPG, with Kate Emms having equivalent authority in order to mitigate the risk of delayed decision making / supporting negotiations.
- 4) To manage the risk of GEPG members being bypassed by other senior managers, it is requested that Director Generals and other senior staff consult with GEPG if issues relating to the delivery of the election plan have been brought directly to them. The Board are asked to agree that senior staff should, in the event that matters within the remit of GEPG are brought to their attention directly, consult with John Benger.

**8. The Board is asked to endorse these proposals and agree that they should be communicated to senior staff.**

**Project reporting, reliance on departments and dependencies**

9. The Audit also highlighted aspects of the planning that could be further improved with respects to how departments work in support of the election and the way this information is communicated to GEPG. It is not proposed to move away from the light touch project approach, however it is recommended that in the run up to the election GEPG deadlines and activities should be considered the priority against departmental ones.

**10. The Board is asked to endorse this proposal and agree that GEPG activities should be considered the priority.**

## Remaining risk—risk management

11. GEPG has compiled a risk register which is updated and considered at each meeting. It will continue to review its plans and take action to mitigate risks where necessary.
12. Resourcing is likely to pose a challenge, specifically during the delivery phase of the project. The recruitment of the buddies will assist in mitigating this, however additional resources may be required to support specific areas of work. It is proposed that recruitment for specific roles will take place from February 2015, with placements lasting on average 1–2 weeks post-election. As with 2010 it is suggested that staff should continue to be funded by their parent department during the period, with no changes to their employment arrangements.
13. **The Board is asked to endorse this proposal and agree that GEPG can advertise for short term election posts, with successful candidates remaining in their current roles.**

## Financial and procurement implications

14. Financial requirements for the next financial year have already been assessed and a business case approved.

## GEPG activities—narrative

15. Before Parliament dissolves

All MPs and their staff are issued with guidance explaining key facts about dissolution, including what House Services are available to them and what rules apply in respect of campaigning and constituency case work. For Members who are standing down, meetings are arranged with the Personnel Advice Service (PAS) and Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) to advise on winding up their parliamentary affairs and making their staff redundant. The House Service will continue to communicate with Members and their staff during this time regarding arrangements after the Election and seeking key information such as alternative contact details and ICT changes.

16. During dissolution

Members' passes and those of their staff and spouses/partners cease working; this will happen on the day of dissolution if they're standing for re-election, or five days after if they are not (to allow them time to clear their offices). Accommodation Services will clean and refresh offices during this time, with a selected number being redecorated. The Parliament website also changes to reflect dissolution, as Members' biography pages are removed (to be replaced with a list of former MPs) and committee pages are updated.

New pages will be published on the intranet for new Members and their staff. A new homepage for Commons Members' staff will also be launched.

#### 17. Immediately after the Election

Returning Officers hand welcome packs to new and returning Members which include a letter from the Clerk and information on what to do next. Over the Friday, Saturday and Sunday, a contact centre staffed by buddies and managed by the New Members' Reception Area (NMRA) team will attempt to contact all new Members to congratulate them, provide information on the NMRA and offer to arrange transport and accommodation (where applicable) in conjunction with the Travel Office and IPSA. They will also seek to find out when the new Member is likely to first arrive at Parliament so that staff and buddies can be allocated to meet demand; new Members will be encouraged to arrive on Monday 11 and Tuesday 12 May between 8am and 8pm (before the 13 May induction day). An inbound number for the contact centre will also be included in the welcome pack.

For Members who were not returned at the Election, winding up information will be left in their offices and Doorkeepers will be given copies to hand out. They will also receive information about the post-election services available by email. Catering facilities will be available over the weekend for former Members if they come in to clear their offices, and PAS and IPSA will be available on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of 7 Millbank to advise Members who were not returned about how to wind up their offices.

On Friday 8 May the NMRA opens on the first floor of Portcullis House for two weeks (although this will be reduced if necessary). Doorkeepers greet Members at the entrance to Portcullis House, take them through security and bring them to meet their House buddy at the NMRA. Buddies are House staff who will be a dedicated single point of contact between new Members and the House Service. They will support by answering questions and sorting out issues for the Member in their first days and weeks.

The buddy gives their Member an induction pack and accompanies the new Member through the NMRA where they are set up with a Parliamentary Network account and receive a tablet and/or laptop, receive their parliamentary pass, and are set up on systems for IPSA and the Travel Office. Doorkeepers will then take them on a tour of the essential business areas of the House. Accommodation is a matter for the whips, but until this is sorted a number of shared-desk facilities will be available for new Members.

On Wednesday 13 May an induction day for new Members will be held, where they are given a Chamber briefing followed by an official photograph taken in the Chamber and training sessions on setting up their office and complying with expected standards of behaviour.

## 18. In the weeks and months after the Election

Further work is undertaken to help Members and their staff understand the House services available to them. Buddies will continue to be a resource for Members. PAS will be available to provide one to one advice about recruitment and other HR matters, and IPSA will provide each Member with a one to one training session on their Scheme and online system. There will be an exhibition of services, as well as constituency roadshows in 12 locations around the UK which will advertise key services to constituency staff including PICT, the Library, IPSA, security advice and Learning and Development. There will also be further training sessions for new Members on select committees, effective questioning and how to be a good employer.

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