

Management Board
General Election Planning Update

Paper by the Head of the Office of the Chief Executive

Purpose

1. This paper is to update the Board on the progress made by the General Election Planning Group (GEPG) on election planning and to alert the Board to the risk that the House Service will not be ready for an Election in the Autumn.

Actions for the Board

2. The Board is asked to note
 - 2.1. the progress made by the GEPG in election planning
 - 2.2. how the GEPG is reappraising its planning, in the light of recent events
 - 2.3. how the GEPG has responded to the Board's extension of its remit to include mitigation of Corporate Risk 9.
3. The Board is asked to note the risk that, given the potential high turnover of Members, the House Service will not be ready for an Election in the Autumn, and that additional staff time and funding is likely to be required to mitigate this risk.
4. The Board is asked whether, as part of the discussions on the Parliamentary Standards Authority, the House Service should press for the funding for Members' IT to be transferred to the Administration Estimate.

Consultation

5. This paper was circulated to members of the GEPG¹ in draft.

Introduction

6. The terms of reference for the GEPG are:

“To oversee the strategic direction of the provision of House services around the time of a General Election, with regard to relevant and timely provision of information and services both in advance of polling day (in particular retiring Members) and in the period after (in particular

¹ Philippa Helme – *Chair* (OCE); [s.40] – *Secretary* (DCCS); Rob Clements (DIS); Marianne [s.40] (OCE); James Davies (DCCS); Kate Emms (DCCS); Andrew Kennon (DCCS); Mike Naworynsky (DCCS); James Robertson (DF); [s.40] (DR); Paul Silk (DR); [s.40](PICT)

to new Members, and also defeated Members). The Group is also to provide assurance to the Management Board.”

7. From 23 February to 2 April Duma Langton was seconded from DCCS to the OCE as project manager in order to help develop a workable General Election plan.

Update on progress

8. The work of the group is currently organised into nine work-streams as follows:

	Title	Work-stream lead
1	Written communications	[s.40]
2	Induction programme and accommodation for new Members	James Robertson
3	Providing IT services for new Members	[s.40]
4	Dissolution work	[s.40]
5	Results & information	Rob Clements
6	Services for defeated Members	Paul Silk
7	Training in the post-election period	James Davies
8	Liaison with political parties	Andrew Kennon
9	Anticipating Members' future needs	Philippa Helme

9. The outputs and activities of each work-stream have been defined, with target dates applied. The majority of outcomes and outputs originally identified and documented by the project manager have been completed – those still outstanding will be delivered by the **end of June**.
10. The work-streams will then be brought together to form a workable plan (that is, a high-level representation of all work-streams against time; any outstanding actions, outcomes or outputs; and associated staff responsible for these) by the **end of July**.
11. Once a workable plan is complete, the group will continue to refine and revise the plan, as time allows, **until the Election**.
12. The group is currently focussed on reviewing and revising all plans and existing materials in light of recent events, which have led to substantial upward revisions in our expectations for the number of new Members. **The Board should be aware of the risk that the House Service will not be ready for an Election in the Autumn.**

Reappraisal

13. The possibility of a very high turnover at the next election presents a risk to our ability to provide accommodation and other services to all new Members within a month of the day after the election². To mitigate this risk, GEPG has revised its planning assumption of the maximum number of new Members from 150 to 350³.
14. In addition, we anticipate a larger number of “colour changes” (that is, a change in party) and possibly more independent Members. We may also see a change in the attitudes and expectations from new Members, which would present both risks and opportunities. (For example, there may be a different attitude to House staff and perhaps greater interest in training.)
15. **The Board should be aware that substantial further work is needed to prepare for such an influx of new Members.** GEPG is well aware of the importance of getting this right. Staff in certain departments – especially PICT, Facilities and Resources – will need to spend extra time in the near future to ensure that plans can accommodate a larger number of Members. Equally other departments may have to be asked to provide assistance during and after the election period. For instance:
- Reception of 350 new Members will require considerable numbers of trained staff
 - Moving 350 Members into their new offices within one month of the day after the election will require extra staff to support Facilities and PICT
 - Preparing and installing IT and telephony will require additional external engineers
 - Assisting 350 departing Members to tidy up their affairs will require substantial extra resources in DR.
16. In the past, staff in some Departments have been able to take additional leave in the Dissolution, and they may now have the expectation of doing so again. It is suggested that Departments should make clear to staff that they may be required to assist other areas during the Dissolution and period immediately after the Election. An SMDP group is looking at ways of matching appropriate staff to areas of need, but it may not be sufficient to rely on volunteers.
17. The GEPG has until now been working under the assumption that the costs of the election are to be met from existing Departmental budgets (except to the extent that new Members’ IT equipment is funded from the Members Estimate). However, given the possible scale and impact of change, it is now possible that additional funding will be required (for example to fund and train a greater number of contractors for office

² Based on past experience, GEPG assumes that this is an acceptable timeframe.

³ This assumption is informed by current analysis by the DIS Social & General Statistics section.

moves, or for administrative support). Work is underway to assess these requirements.

18. **The Board is asked to confirm that planning for the Election is a very high priority and that resources – staff and funding – should, if required, be diverted from other tasks to assist in planning for the Election and in delivering services at the Election time. Board members are asked to make clear to their Departments that staff in all areas may be required during the Dissolution to support election activities.**
19. The proposal for the Parliamentary Standards Authority to take over responsibility for the Members Estimate has implications for Election planning. For example, the centrally-provided package of IT equipment for Members is currently funded from the Members Estimate, on the basis of SSRB recommendation. It is not clear to the GEPG whether there is any scope for varying or extending this package of equipment, or whether the Committee on Standards in Public Life is looking at this area. **The Board is asked whether, as part of the discussions on the Parliamentary Standards Authority, the House Service should press for funding for Members' IT, and perhaps other services funded from the Members Estimate, to be transferred to the Administration Estimate.**
20. Another risk arising from the establishment of the PSA is that the House will still be in a period of transition in respect of the work currently conducted by the Operations Directorate of DR when the election occurs. There may be consequent uncertainty as to who should give advice to departing Members and new Members on allowances issues. Even if the function remains one for House staff, there is a risk that the Operations Directorate may have been so denuded of key staff and/or be so demoralised that its service will be poor.

Anticipating Members' future expectations

21. At its meeting on 19 March, following a discussion of Corporate Risk 9⁴, the Management Board charged the GEPG with developing plans for anticipating Members' needs and expectations in the next Parliament (though it recognised that some aspects would need to be addressed as part of strategic business planning). The group has agreed to take this forward, though it appreciates that it raises issues well beyond GEPG's current remit and will extend beyond the Election.
22. It is recognised that the GEPG's first priority is to complete its 'core' work, to ensure that timely, quality services can be provided to the anticipated high influx of new Members immediately after the next election. However, anticipating Members' needs cannot be left to one side. Failure to

⁴ Failure to meet the current and future needs of Members through inadequate understanding of Members' needs, inadequate marketing of services, or inadequate forward planning

anticipate Members' expectations for services around the Election would undermine all the work done. The GEPG has therefore identified six priority areas for *immediate* attention:

- Arrangements with political parties – to determine from the Whips what IT equipment (if any) will be provided by the parties to their new Members
- Analysis of candidates' backgrounds, which may reveal some trends.
- 'Horizon scanning' – monitoring statements by MPs/parties about intentions and commitments for the next Parliament
- Monitoring proposals for Members Estimate reform
- Investigating potential for variation to the currently agreed IT equipment allocation
- Investigating changing demands for accommodation.

The group is discussing other actions, and their timing, and how it would be best to take these forward. It may be that it is appropriate for the GEPG to focus on anticipating Members' expectations for services in, say, the first year of the new Parliament, but for horizon-scanning for the longer term to be carried out outwith the GEPG.

Philippa Helme
11 June 2009