

**Minutes of the Management Board meeting
held on Thursday 21 February 2008**

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

In attendance: Philippa Helme (Head of the Office of the Chief
Executive)
[s.40] (Private Secretary to the Clerk of the House)
Richard Russell (Director of Internal Audit, for item 2)
Catherine Fogarty (Central Change Co-ordinator, for
item 4)

1. Matters arising from previous meetings

- 1.1. Further to item 7 **Sue Harrison** reported that a colder winter had led to increased gas usage for the heating system compared to the same period in 2006. This did not entirely explain the increase in energy usage shown in the monthly reports. Further work was being undertaken and would be reported to the Board when it considered environmental targets in March.
- 1.2. Further to item 8 **Philippa Helme** said that the précis of Estates Board minutes had been circulated. It was proposed that a précis would be circulated shortly after each Estate Board meeting.

2. Risk and performance

- 2.1. **Chairman** drew the Board's attention to those items listed for discussion in the Board's monthly performance report. **Andrew Walker** said that staff shortages had led to the target for meeting Members' claims within eight days not being met in January. February's figures would show an improvement and he was monitoring the situation.
- 2.2. The Board noted the marked improvement on the target of 100% delivery

of mail by 2pm. Regarding sick absence **Andrew Walker** confirmed that the reported absence level for the year to January compared favourably with external benchmarks, although Board members should remain vigilant. He reminded Director Generals that departments should make arrangements for the payment of undisputed invoices during periods of absence to ensure that 100% of invoices were paid within 30 days. **Joan Miller** said that she hoped that the average wait time for the PICT Service Desk, which had been affected by the introduction of a new handling system, would show improvement by April at the latest. **Sue Harrison** clarified that a pension adjustment had caused the seeming variance against target on the subsidy level in refreshment services.

- 2.3. The Board then considered a paper from Richard Russell regarding an outline audit programme for 2008/09 and the revised audit charter.
- 2.4. **Richard Russell** said that the outline programme did not represent the final position, and he planned to discuss audits with Director Generals bilaterally, to ensure that internal audit gained assurance from the full range of activity undertaken in business areas, such as the planned PICT healthcheck and ongoing project governance.
- 2.5. The **Chairman** said that it was important that the audit programme was matched to the resource available to internal audit. **Richard Russell** said that he understood the need to devise a programme which was capable of being delivered in the year, and that this was a priority of the Audit Committees. He hoped that there would be more joint working between internal audit and its partner PricewaterhouseCoopers, rather than them producing separate reviews.
- 2.6. Board members gave Richard feedback on the possible audits for 2008/09 that he had so far identified. **Andrew Walker** suggested, and the Board agreed, that, as the House's audit programme was risk-based and should link to the identified corporate and departmental risks, when the Board considered a draft programme in future it should also see the risk-based analysis that led to topics for audit being selected.
- 2.7. The Board noted that for the first time audit of joint areas of expenditure would be agreed by both the House of Commons and House of Lords, and both Houses' Audit Committees would receive the same reports.
- 2.8. Regarding the internal audit charter **Richard Russell** said that the charter did not yet include performance measures. Work was taking place to identify measures that could be applied both to internal audit itself and to its internal audit partner's work. The charter contained a number of revisions to reflect the new structure of the House Service, and it was agreed that any detailed comments on the revised audit charter should be

sent to Richard.

2.9. Action: Board members to give comments on the draft internal audit charter to Richard Russell.

3. Oral up-dates from Director Generals

3.1. Andrew Walker:

3.1.1. Gave the Board an update on FoI matters.

3.1.2. Reported that the inquiry by the Members Estimate Committee into Members' allowances would have major resource implications for his Department. This taken together with the work to be led by the Department of Resources regarding HR, finance and procurement would mean that he would be talking to other Director Generals regarding provision of extra staff resource to assist his Department.

3.2. Douglas Millar:

3.2.1. Said that the Procedure Committee was coming to a conclusion regarding its recommendations on e-petitions.

3.2.2. Updated the Board regarding the Modernisation Committee's inquiry into regional accountability and the expectation that it would recommend Regional Select Committees.

3.3. Joan Miller:

3.3.1. Said that the desktop refresh was coming to a conclusion. It was likely to be completed in all departments apart from Chamber and Committee Services by the end of February.

3.3.2. Informed Board members that the PICT banding review was nearing completion, and would be finished before PICT became a joint department in April.

3.3.3. Reported that two key focuses for PICT in the year 2008/09 would be IT infrastructure and customer services.

3.4. John Pullinger said that new PCs had been installed in Members Library. He was grateful for the co-operation of Works and PICT in enabling this.

3.5. Sue Harrison:

3.5.1. Said that she had appeared before the Administration Committee.

3.5.2. Informed the Board that the Department of Facilities had established a newsletter for its staff, and the first edition had been published.

4. Tebbit implementation

- 4.1. The **Chairman** welcomed Catherine Fogarty, Central Change Co-ordinator.
- 4.2. **Catherine Fogarty** said that at a Departmental level change was progressing well. At a corporate level she believed that the Board needed to communicate clearly to staff what it wished to achieve through a unified House Service and how it would be achieved cross-departmentally. The **Chairman** said that he agreed and that this should be a focus of the Board's away day the following week.
- 4.3. The Board agreed that it would consider its leadership of the unified House Service at its away day, as well as considering its own methods of working, interaction and objectives.
- 4.4. **Douglas Millar** said that he had tabled a letter recommending that there should be common recruitment to the FastStream graduate programme, and he hoped that this, and other tangible identified changes, would enable staff to identify the difference that the Tebbit changes had made.
- 4.5. The Board endorsed the principle that there should be common recruitment to the FastStream in 2009. It was agreed that detailed work on this matter would be taken forward by Andrew Walker together with Helen Irwin. It was hoped that proposals for how a common scheme would work in practice would be presented to the Board in July. It was noted that an SMDP action group was considering a related topic "FastStream for the future".
- 4.6. *Action: Board to consider a paper regarding common recruitment to the FastStream at its July meeting.*

5. Staffing

- 5.1. **Andrew Walker** introduced his paper. He hoped that the Board would agree to his proposals for four regular reports of staff numbers. He also suggested that the Board should compile information on staff substitutes and that he should discuss methodology for this with Director Generals bilaterally. Work was also in hand to establish departmental space costs as recommended in the Tebbit report. The Board agreed to the measures Andrew proposed, and agreed that in addition the Department of Resources should co-operate with Departments to undertake an audit of desk and computer usage by staff working for the House Service.
- 5.2. The Board also considered overall staffing numbers, and agreed to the principle that all Director Generals would seek to meet new demands

from existing resources, through consideration of value-for-money and efficiency savings and having regard both to numbers of directly-employed staff and staff substitutes, and to labour cost.

5.3. The Board then discussed the staff pay remit for A-E and catering staff. **Andrew Walker** explained that the Treasury had not yet published its guidance for the pay remit and negotiation, and the Board agreed that the Commission should not be asked to agree a remit until that guidance had been published. It was agreed that comments from Board members on the draft remit should be sent to Andrew and Harun Musho'd.

5.4. *Action: Board members to give comments on the draft pay remit to Andrew Walker and Harun Musho'd.*

6. Staff accommodation

6.1. **Sue Harrison** said that this paper was tabled further to the Board's January discussion. It proposed how the Board could take initial steps towards the formulation of an accommodation strategy. It also updated the Board on progress with the feasibility studies relating to Upper Committee corridor and the location of an Education facility which had been commissioned by the Administration Committee.

6.2. The Board agreed to the proposed zero-based review of staff accommodation, with a report to the Board by the summer recess, with the assumptions listed at paragraph six as the starting point. The report of the review team was for the Board only and it was agreed that this should be emphasised to those undertaking the review process.

6.3. Regarding the provision of decant accommodation for Members on the secure Estate the Board noted that Derby Gate appeared to be the only feasible option. It would be included in the feasibility studies for the Administration Committee's consideration. The current project planning was that the work on the windowless offices would begin in 2012, although the Accommodation Service was working on options for shortening this timeframe. Shortening the timeframe would have consequences both for cost and disruption.

7. Surveys

7.1. The Board considered a paper from the Office of the Chief Executive regarding regular surveying of Members and their staff and agreed to recommend this approach in a paper to the Administration Committee.

8. Any other business

8.1. None.

[adjourned at 5.55pm

**Philippa Helme
Secretary**

**Malcolm Jack
Chairman**

28 February 2008