

Management Board

Redesigning the staff magazine

Take note paper from the Internal Communications Manager

1. Purpose

This note outlines the proposals to redevelop the staff magazine *inHouse* to ensure it meets the need of both Houses and is a respected internal communication channel.

2. Why does the House need a staff magazine?

- 2.1 The staff magazine is the only House-wide channel of communication that is available to approximately 500 staff who do not have immediate access to the Parliamentary Network and therefore global emails and the intranet.
- 2.2 It is also a widely-held view in the field of internal or employee communications that there is still a role for a printed internal magazine or newspaper. According to a recent Work Foundation study, 91% of UK organisations have some form of newsletter or magazine. When focusing on the public sector, that percentage rises to 95%.

3. Audiences

- 3.1 The staff magazine is produced for staff in both houses, to foster positive relations and, importantly, so that staff in PICT (who serve both Houses and who have been drawn from both) still feel included and involved with the Commons and the Lords.

The communications team has considered whether or not *inHouse* should be sent to Members' staff in the spirit of making them feel part of the parliament-wide community. On balance, they suggest not, as Members' staff are on different terms and conditions to House staff and many of the 'management' stories relate to issues like liP, staff surveys and the Equality Scheme – which would not cover Members' staff. More importantly, it might serve to highlight what is not available to Members' staff which might provoke dissatisfaction.

4. Proposed changes

- 4.1 The overall aim is to create a magazine which provides value for money as a corporate internal communication channel. This will involve making its content more relevant, up to date, personal (friendly,

approachable editorial), readable (mixture of short and longer features) and timely (content relates to the recent past, present or near future).

4.2 Currently, the magazine contains a lot about the ceremonial side of Parliament. It is also quite retrospective in nature. Many stories are about events that have happened and there is not a lot of current or forward-looking articles and this is due to the long process needed to produce a glossy magazine.

4.3 *Update the name/look and feel*

4.3.1 The main objective is to attract staff to read/browse the staff magazine and to promote a sense of community across the Houses. The redesign will also reflect a new corporate style that is currently being developed by the House.

4.4 *Frequency*

4.4.1 We propose increasing production from one issue every two months (while the House is sitting) to 10 times a year (monthly while the House is sitting). We would not produce an issue in the August/September recess period as it would be difficult to source contributions from staff during this time.

4.5 *Cover Style*

4.5.1 The cover style will be designed to allow a more flexible use of images e.g. - full photo/cut-out/graphic will be used to illustrate the cover story. This means an engaging and attractive cover can always be achieved even when a photo is not available or appropriate

Text section

4.5.2 A suitable typographic look will be established for the text sections using a range of fonts and the magazine will have clearly defined sections in all issues. The design will ensure that the needs of those with sight and cognitive disabilities are considered.

4.5.3 A style for story introductions and quotes will be used and contributors will be encouraged to use them to make their pieces more accessible and interesting. The use of well written, accurate photo captions is another way of engaging the reader.

Imagery

It is important that pictures of staff predominate to reinforce and create a sense of community and, at this, *inHouse* is successful. However,

alternative imagery such as graphics, cut-out photography or even illustration should also be used and a variation of the scale of images would create further interest for the reader.

4.6 *Content*

4.6.1 An Internal Audit carried out by PriceWaterhouseCooper on Internal Communications in the House of Commons in 2006 stated that the magazine needs to be 'revitalised'.

4.6.2 Content should be defined by the key issues facing both the Commons Service and Lords Service and there will be a distinction made between management and social news. A typical issue should probably have a mix of:

5. News stories – short articles, brief update stories (Any messages from management would be clearly signposted so that readers would be able to distinguish management content from general or social content.

- a. Project stories, sharing best practice, major initiatives – in depth features (often cover stories)
- b. Focus on a function – a spotlight feature on a specific area, outlining what they do professionally at the HoC/HoL and a brief insight into them as individuals
- c. Staff stories – to generate a sense of community by covering: starters, leavers, remembrance, babies, awards, weddings, promotions, holidays

5.2 *Editing/sub editing*

5.2.1 The editing and photography in the magazine is carried out by one person at the moment, which is too onerous. The communications team intend that, in the future, the two functions will be split, allowing more time to be given to editing.

5.2.2 At the moment articles are submitted by a wide range of staff in a wide range of styles and in different tenses. An editor, with sufficient time to devote to this task, would help rectify this and make the magazine easier to read.

5.2.3 It is proposed that the work of editor should be done either internally within the OCE communications team, or by a volunteer in another Department working part-time with OCE.

5.3 *Production costs*

At present *inHouse* is designed and printed externally, at a cost of £35k per annum of which the Commons pays 70% and the Lords 30%. This excludes the staff costs relating to editorial time.

5.3.1 It is proposed to offset the cost of increased frequency by designing the new magazine in-house. The only element of magazine production that will be external is printing.

5.3.2 By designing the magazine in house, we will save between £20-25k per annum, though there would be a cost associated with staff time (10% of the time of a B1 would cost around £3500. Printing of the magazine currently costs between £8k-10k for 5 or 6 issues per annum. We are working to print 10 issues per annum on recycled paper for £13k.

5.4 *House of Lords*

5.4.1 Informal consultation on these proposals has taken place with the Lords who have expressed their support for this approach.

[s.40]

**Internal Communications Manager
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