

MANAGEMENT BOARD
PROACTIVE PUBLICATION
Note by DG HR & Change

Purpose

1. This note outlines progress on proactive publication, and seeks a steer.

Issues for the Board

2. The Board is asked to give a steer to the head of IRIS on whether we should continue to increase proactive publication in addition to the decisions on payments over £25K and salaries at SCS2 and above which have already been agreed.

Detail

3. I attach Bob Castle's excellent valedictory note to the Board. Over a number of years in charge of Fol and data protection, Bob has developed an outstanding knowledge of the issues. He and I both went through the expenses scandal and became convinced that information that would be disclosed on request under the Fol Act was better disclosed proactively, placed in context and clearly explained.
4. Bob's note sets out good progress, with significant amounts of information added to the website, and better signposting on the website itself (www.parliament.uk/business/commons/ is a good portal). Two specific items we promised are forthcoming shortly:
 - Details of payments over £25k
 - Salaries (in £5k bands) for staff at SCS2 and above.

Questions for the Board

5. The general issues are set out in Bob's final paragraph. Two specific questions are:
 - Further progress has been restricted by some reluctance to co-operate in some business areas. This has been a challenge for Bob & his team: it may reflect a concern about the impact of disclosure, or pressure of work, or both. *Should we continue to press for more openness, as canvassed in paragraphs 6D and 7 of Bob's note?*
 - *One of the items Government departments have published, in a somewhat variable fashion, is organisation charts with numbers and costs of staff. Do*

we want to do this? There is much to be said for it, but it is a lot of work, and would require regular updating (though HAIS 5.5 will help).

A J Walker

DG HR & Change

April 2012

ANNEX:**PROACTIVE PUBLICATION – UPDATE AND PROSPECTS**

Note by Bob Castle.

Purpose and aims

1. The purpose of this note is to provide an update on progress towards adoption and implementation of the Management Board's transparency agenda. The aims of the proactive publication programme are attached as an annex (Annex A)

Summary

2. Following the February RMG meeting a questionnaire was sent to all departmental representatives for a response by 2 March (Annex B). This asked for progress reports and made suggestions for data that might be published. Four departments made responses. At the meeting of 14 March, RMG members who had not already responded were asked to report progress by 21 March. As at 28 March, no further responses had been received.

Where we are

3. Proactive publication is both a success and a problem area.
4. The House of Commons Commission and Management Board both signed up to transparency and Andrew Walker leads for the Board. But House Departments appear reluctant to engage and, perhaps see the policy as an unwelcome burden and certainly not a priority. We already have a website that, to a significant degree, explains what we do and how we work and departmental managers do not necessarily share the vision of anticipating further information needs, and, understandably, fear the bad news stories that lurk in the information that might be published. Departments are happy to await FOI requests before committing to publishing more. However, that said, Finance, OCE, DCCS and Facilities have taken steps and more is expected.

Summary of RMG responses and general update

5. Responses have been received from DFin, OCE and DCCS. In addition a meeting was held with DHRS managers to discuss options for reporting staff pay and organisation charts. Our FOI team has also engaged with Facilities which has taken steps to publish answers to frequent requests about catering costs and subsidies. Otherwise no returns have been received.

6. From the returns and recent activity, the position is:

A. Categories of information added to the public web pages in the last 12 months

- Delegation details - purpose of visits, travel and costs (DCCS)
- Management Board papers (OCE)
- Tenders for contracts (D-Fin)
- Banqueting – sponsorship of external organisations (Facilities)
- Statements on catering subsidies (Facilities)
- Publication of FOI responses (DHRC)

B. Categories of information in production for future publication

- Payments over £25k (DFin)
- Statistics relating to crimes on the Estate (MPS will publish - SAA and Black Rod leading on policy) (DCCS)
- Procedural data base (DCCS)
- Annual report of Members' use of stationery (Facilities)
- Senior staff pay (named staff SCS2 and above within £5K bands)

C. Categories of information under consideration for future publication

- Staff pay below SCS2 (numbers of staff in each band SCS 1A and below and relevant pay range), organisation charts identifying departments, offices and numbers of staff reporting to SCS staff (DHRC – proposals and timetable for consultation under development)
- More information about HoC contracts (D-Fin)

D. Categories of information falling within the aims of the scheme that might be added

- Finance and procurement rules if value of publication can be defined (D-Fin) (*my view is that they should be published in order to demonstrate due process and accountability for looking after public funds – Bob*)
- CAPS News (needs assessment of editorial impact) (OCE)
- Audit reports (following embargo and perhaps once management actions have been agreed) (OCE)
- Member guides not already published (OCE)
- DCCS office guides - but concern has been expressed about the nature of content if published in their raw, unedited form (DCCS)

7. We have made other suggestions to departments, but no feedback has yet been received. These include:

General

- Departmental plans

- Member and staff guides and pamphlets

Facilities

- Replication of intranet catering pages (venues, menus, rules etc) on external site
- Structural reports
- Estates Strategy and costs
- Works programme
- Environmental footprint, policies and use of resources (arguably mandatory under the EIRs)
- Accommodation strategy
- Meeting rooms – rules
- Exhibitions

DIS

- Catalogue of works of art, acquisitions, costs
- Education and Outreach activity reports
- Open access to PIMS?

PICT

- IT/IS strategy documents
- Catalogues of equipment available to Members and costs
- Lists of kit issued to Members and costs
- Environmental footprint (recycling/disposal details and costs)
- Guidance issued to Members and staff

DHRC

- Equality and inclusion policies and reports

8. To this list I would also add proactive publication of our hospitality registers [*forecast in the current draft of the Staff Handbook – now agreed by the Board, I think - AJW*] which apart from senior pay and organisation charts is the only remaining omission in our publication scheme when compared with the Information Commissioner's recommended template for public sector schemes.

The Challenge

9. Since 2005 we have moved from being an organisation struggling with the concept that the secrecy of information is not guaranteed to one which is actively telling the story of what we do. Our website is a fantastic resource and certainly comparable to or better than those operated by other public authorities (and it is getting easier to find information on it). We now have a policy that seeks to anticipate information needs rather than simply reacting to

information requests. However, while significant additions have been made to our scheme of publication we appear to have reached saturation point and for further progress, the Board may need to consider options ranging from encouragement to edict.

Bob Castle
Head of IRIS
March 2012

Annex A: Scheme Objectives and Criteria

Management Board Transparency Agenda

Publication criteria

1. The aim of the programme is to support the House of Commons' commitment to have an open and transparent way of doing business to add to the public's knowledge and understanding of the way the House works; to actively identify what would add to that pool of knowledge; and, to be proactive in providing information rather than always reacting to individual requests

2. It is expected that the information being considered for proactive publishing:
 - will add to the public's knowledge and understanding of the House
 - should not be of a trivial nature
 - includes information not otherwise available on the web
 - has already been disclosed or would have to be released under FOI Act if requested
 - will not breach the Data Protection Act
 - is not protectively marked
 - is not research carried out for individual Members

3. The types of information that could be fitting for proactive publishing:
 - contains information about expenditure
 - provides insight into how the House of Commons conducts its business
 - assists public scrutiny of parliamentary activities
 - is about the fabric of the estate or its impact on the environment
 - explains decisions made in relation to any of the above

Annex B – Email to RMG Members

As discussed at the RMG meeting I have been asked to prepare a report for the Management Board outlining progress towards proactive publication. It would assist greatly if you could contribute a brief outline of steps already taken, planned or under consideration by responding to the following questions. Based on our previous discussion, I have made a start to identifying progress and areas that might be under consideration (or might be considered).

Please also identify any barriers to publication that might be brought to the attention of the Board.

I would like to compile a draft for consideration by RMG in time for its meeting on 14 March so returns by 2 March will be much appreciated.

Bob

Department of xxx – Please revise at will!

1 - Categories of information added to the public web pages in the last twelve months:

2 - Categories of information in production for future publication:

3 - Categories of information under active consideration for future publication

4 - Categories of information falling within the aims of the scheme that might be added to (3)

(Suggestions for consideration)

Catalogue of works of Art, acquisitions, costs

Departmental plan

Education and Outreach activity reports

Open access to Pimms?

Member guides and pamphlets

?

5 – Possible barriers to publication