



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Mr Crispin Blunt MP
Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee
House of Commons

[by email: crispinbluntmp@parliament.uk]

21 July 2016

Dear Crispin

UPDATE ON FCO MANAGEMENT ISSUES: MARCH-JUNE 2016

Our main priority in the coming months will be to ensure we have the staff and capability to promote a Global Britain post-referendum.

The Diplomacy 20:20 programme, mentioned in my last management update to you, we shall re-orient to support this, placing a greater focus on expertise and on activity to promote Britain as a leading global player and a liberal, open, free-trading, tolerant society. Work is underway to develop recommendations around three pillars.

I attach the structure of the programme and the workstreams that underpin it. I shall present more detail about the programme to staff in the FCO in October and to you in my next update.

Policy

Christian Turner, DG Middle East and Africa, is the Board Champion for Programme Management. Dr Liane Saunders will be our new Director-level Strategic Programmes Co-ordinator with a mandate to improve and professionalise programme management in the FCO; building capability and expertise in Diplomacy 20:20. She will oversee a unit to provide support to front-line staff working on programme funds. We have a new risk-based assurance system around our highest

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risk and highest value projects. Our Executive Committee and Ministers will provide greater oversight of programme spend.

Similarly, on commercial capability we are working on a future commercial target model and blueprint in readiness for the creation of the Government Commercial Organisation and in line with the action plan for the FCO Commercial Capability Review 2015. In conjunction with this, the government procurement card initiative is also targeting a further 40% reduction in purchase order/invoice transactions to deliver a smaller, more efficient, back office function.

People

The Diplomacy 20:20 programme includes work on Human Resources that was already on track, which includes the delivery of the Workforce Strategy in October and its implementation through to 2020. This work will also review FCO staffing needs following the EU referendum result.

The April 2016 target level attainment (TLA) for language capabilities across FCO Posts had increased to 45% from 39% in December 2015. We will use the performance management process to take action if officers have not reached their TLA.

Foundation Level marked its first full year of operation in April 2016. Four Faculties have launched their Practitioner Level offers (Europe; Languages; International Policy; and Consular and Crisis Management) with the other seven Faculties scheduled to launch this year. The Academy is now working to ensure that it meets the changed demands following the referendum, including on trade policy and negotiation.

Our Diversity & Inclusion work continued to focus on Black and Minority Ethnic staff. We have run a campaign on inclusivity, under the auspices of the Good Line Manager Guide; and we are participating in a Cabinet Office exercise to identify metrics for measuring social mobility in the UK workforce.

Network

One HMG Overseas

The One HMG Network Board – which is chaired by the FCO's Chief Operating Officer – has continued to work well, with an objective to run collectively One HMG overseas in a way that maximises the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of all HMG activity overseas. We have been working with all 33 partners who use the FCO platform overseas to agree a new Memorandum of Understanding that formalises the services provided to FCO and partner staff at our Posts. This aligns with the new charging regime we agreed with partners in 2015. We expect all partners to sign the new MOU by the end of July.

Some elements of One HMG have been in operation for some time. The One HMG Overseas Healthcare Contract has been in operation since March 2015 and covers the healthcare needs of 23,000 staff and family members from 14 government departments. The most recent review of the contract noted the clinical assessment of the service was that it was of a gold standard globally, as no other sovereign state has such a cross-government scheme that provides a consistent service and supporting high quality clinical information.

Estates

Our UK Estates Reform project is on track. The final groups of staff are now moving into their new offices, the temporary accommodation units in the courtyard are due to be removed by the autumn. This may change if the FCO main building houses more than just the ministerial team of the Department for International Trade.

The occupation date of our new High Commission in Abuja will now be spring 2017 owing to local delays with the main contractor. I attach our quarterly update on sales and purchases. I would be grateful if, as usual, you would treat this as confidential as it is commercially sensitive.

We now have 27 co-location arrangements in 24 locations. We have just agreed a licence for the US to co-locate with us in Wellington and the Canadians will move on to our platform in Lusaka in September. Negotiations are also progressing for us to co-locate with Canada in Santo Domingo, and with the Poles to move on to our platform in Chisinau.

Security

Security incidents related to terrorism continue to proliferate across the global network with attacks, often inspired by Daesh, taking place in Kabul, Mogadishu, Baghdad, Turkey (Istanbul, Ankara, and Gaziantep), Paris and Orlando. Istanbul saw two attacks in June, one in a popular tourist area and the second at Ataturk Airport. There have now been six major terrorist attacks in Turkey this year and while the PKK is still considered by the Turkish Government to be the greatest threat, there has been a marked shift towards considering the threat from Daesh, which was not the case six months ago. Also in June, a mini bus carrying members of our Ghurkha guarding contingent in Kabul passed the location where, only minutes later, an IED exploded, killing 15 members of the Canadian Ghurkha guard force. We continue to keep our posture and mitigation measures against all forms of threat – terrorism, crime, civil disorder, conflict, and espionage – particularly in response to threat reporting. The attempted coup in Turkey has had an impact on staff morale.

We are on track to meet the SDSR commitment of moving to a Single Vetting Unit. Our IT investigations into leaked Diptels prior to the referendum established that these leaks did not come from FCO IT. Linking across to the Knowledge and

Technology portfolio, a campaign to help staff work appropriately at the 'Official' classification launches this month.

Information Technology

Our focus remains on delivering a world-class global platform, now one of the core elements of Diplomacy 20:20, and we are making steady progress on the Tech Overhaul programme. In King Charles Street, we have upgraded audio-visual equipment in meeting rooms, launched a new room booking system, installed Digital Communication screens installed throughout the building, and deployed Wi-Fi 50% of the building; 2017 remains the main deployment year for the new laptops and desktops in the UK and overseas. Early pilots are underway, with the new devices and the functionality that comes with them being well received by staff. Our programme to roll out monitored Wi-Fi to overseas posts is progressing, with the Brazil network live in time for the Olympics. Following the successful UK roll-out of our record-keeping initiative Easyfile, it is now rolling out overseas.

We have started recruitment for a Data Director, initially for six months but with the potential for a permanent position once fully scoped. This is in response to the increasing challenges inherent in FCO data management, and the opportunities presented by open source big data for policy making and service delivery.

Your sincerely


Simon McDonald