Minutes of DfT Executive Committee

Date: Tuesday 29 September 2009  
Time: 0900-1015  
Venue: Room 5/13, Great Minster House

Attendees:  
Robert Devereux (Chair)  
Mike Mitchell  
Bronwyn Hill  
Richard Hatfield  
Steve Gooding  
Clare Moriarty  
Christopher Muttukumaru  
Phil West (Items 1 and 2)  
xxxx (Item 3)  
Laurence Eaton (Item 4)  
xxxx (Private Office)  
xxxx (Secretariat)

Apologies:  
None.

Item 1: Publication of Board Meeting Minutes  
EC(09)54

1. Phil West introduced the paper, which addressed the issue of DfT’s compliance with the Information Commissioner’s Office’s Model Publication Scheme. This stipulated certain categories of information that must be published by departments as a matter of course, including minutes from senior level meetings.

2. ExCo decided:

   i) that future minutes of Board and ExCo minutes would set out for each agenda item the issue under discussion, the decision made and the rationale behind the decision;

      Action: Secretariat

   ii) that minutes of Board meetings starting from the 25 September 2009 meeting, and ExCo meetings starting from the 29 September 2009 meeting, would be published on the DfT website once they had been agreed by the Board/ExCo;

      Action: Secretariat

   iii) that, before publication, the Board/ExCo would agree any redactions necessary, within any exemptions under the Freedom of Information Act.

      Action: Board/ExCo/Secretariat

The names of non-SCS staff have been redacted in accordance with DfT’s publication policy.
iv) that the minutes of future Board meetings of DfT’s Executive Agencies would be similarly drafted and published;

   **Action:** Agency Chief Executives and Board Secretariats

v) that Phil West would, in conjunction with Steve Gooding, draft a note for the Chief Executives of the Executive Agencies advising them of this.

   **Action:** Steve Gooding/Phil West

**Item 2: Freedom of Information**

3. Phil West introduced the paper, which noted the steps taken to improve the Department’s FOI performance against the 93% business plan target and focused on improving the system for allocating and handling complaints. It explained how, currently, complaints were initially reviewed by the SCS officer who had originally signed off the decision letter. If that SCS officer upheld the original decision wholly or partially, he/she was then responsible for finding an independent SCS officer to review the decision.

4. ExCo noted the relatively small number of complaints and the consequent challenge in developing familiarity amongst those handling them. This suggested that the Department should identify a small number of suitable FOI appeals officers, but enough to manage peaks of business recognising other calls on their time. It was agreed that Phil West should explore the scope for developing the requisite expertise amongst the cadre of recently-retired senior civil servants in the In-House Policy Consultancy, and report back to ExCo with a revised proposal.

   **Action:** Phil West

**Item 3: Carbon Reduction Strategy**

5. This paper sought a decision on how DfT will operate within the Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) initiative introduced by the Department of Energy and Climate Change. The CRC initiative had been designed to encourage improvements in energy efficiency in a manner that could save organisations money. It would tackle CO₂ emissions not already covered by Climate Change Agreements and the EU Emissions Trading System.

6. The main question for ExCo was whether DfT should operate within CRC as a Department with Trading Fund Executive Agencies covering their proportion of the costs through an internal charging mechanism, a disaggregated organisation with the Executive Agencies acting independently of the two central Departments, or a blend of the first two options.

7. ExCo asked for the following work to be carried out before it considered the matter further:

   **The names of non-SCS staff have been redacted in accordance with DfT’s publication policy.**
i) clarification over the legislative basis for the scheme, in particular the provisions for permitting the imposition of financial penalties on defaulting departments;

   **Action:** Christopher Muttukumaru/xxxx

ii) further analysis by operational researchers of the financial and reputational implications of the various disaggregation options;

   **Action:** xxxx

8. Once this work had been carried out, ExCo would consider the matter again. In doing so it would need to balance the need to provide executive agencies with an incentive to reduce their own CO₂ emissions, acknowledgement of the reputational risk to the department arising from the agencies’ performance, and the desire to avoid each agency having to run its own back office functions for the scheme.

**Item 4: GMH Refurbishment Programme**

9. Laurence Eaton introduced the paper, which focused on the need to decant staff from some parts of GMH that had yet to be refurbished, in order to undertake works to the air conditioning and lighting systems necessitating removal of the ceilings. It was expected that teams would be decanted for a period of eight weeks, on a rolling basis. There were two options for managing this decant: to move staff to vacant space in 55 Victoria Street or to clear and re-fit the first floor conference suite of GMH as a decant area.

10. Separately, ExCo was being asked to choose between two options for displaying real-time information on rail performance and, at a later date, on strategic road network congestion. One option was to set up new additional screens in reception that would be permanently linked to the Network Rail website; the other was to display this information as part of the existing electronic news service on the new screens that were due to replace the existing plasma screens in reception. The second option would cost less than half the first option.

11. ExCo decided:

   i) to go for the 1st Floor, Great Minster House decanting option; because the lower costs involved and the desirability of officials being close to Ministers in an election year outweighed the slight increase to the programme’ length that would be caused by fewer staff being able to be relocated at one time;

   **Action:** Lawrence Eaton

   ii) that it would be important for the special needs of disabled staff to be taken into account early in the process for moving people to the 1st floor. Lawrence Eaton was asked to ensure, in planning with groups of staff for the move, to ensure that this happens;

   **Action:** Lawrence Eaton

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iii) to ask Laurence Eaton to see whether vacant space on the 9th Floor or Southside could be used to avoid 1st Floor staff in the ‘decant area’ having to be relocated to the lower ground floor of GMH so soon after having been moved out;

Action: Laurence Eaton

iv) to ask Laurence Eaton to ensure that the list of local meeting rooms would be made available for central booking, to compensate for the temporary loss of the 1st Floor meeting rooms, and to communicate this to staff;

Action: Laurence Eaton

v) that the decant programme should be phased to ensure that the spring eight-week decant period ran from the weekend of 24/25 April to avoid unnecessary disruption over the likely general election period.

Action: Laurence Eaton

vi) that Laurence Eaton should submit a paper to the Change and Internal Communications sub-committee setting out in as much detail as possible who would be disrupted and when, so that CICC could decide the best way of communicating this information to staff.

Action: Laurence Eaton/CICC

vii) that, due to the significantly lower cost involved, real-time information on rail performance and, in time, strategic road performance, would be displayed as part of the existing electronic news service on the new screens that were due to replace the existing plasma screens in reception.

Action: Laurence Eaton

Any Other Business

12. Concern was expressed regarding a recent GMH evacuation exercise, where it had taken around 15 minutes to evacuate the building. The problem was identified as being people’s gravitation towards the centre stairways used for routine exits from the building.

13. Clare Moriarty agreed to ask Laurence Eaton to draw up an evacuation plan for GMH, which would encourage people to use the stairway closest to their desk in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Clare Moriarty

Board Secretariat
1 October 2009