Minutes of DfT Executive Committee

Date: Tuesday 15 December 2009
Time: 0900-10.10
Venue: Room 5/13, Great Minster House

Attendees:
Robert Devereux (Chair)
Steve Gooding
Richard Hatfield
Bronwyn Hill
Mike Mitchell
Clare Moriarty
Christopher Muttukumaru
Alison Rutherford (Board Secretariat)

Attending for papers:
Item 2: Jenni Borg, Paul Collins, John Faulkner, Kieran Rix
Items 3 and 4: Mervyn Thomas and Louise White
Item 4: ****, ****
Item 5: Kieran Rix, ****

Item 1: Update from Directors General and the Legal Services Director

1. ExCo was updated on the week’s developments within the DfT Groups and the Legal Services Directorate.

Item 2: General Election Briefing

2. ExCo on 8 December had agreed to develop a co-ordinated approach to General Election planning, and in particular had commissioned more work on workstream 4, including on sub sections d-f (potential high level changes in policy and finance; making use of the central strategic resource; making use of central strategic resource; and engaging input from DG groups). Kieran Rix (SR2010), Paul Collins (policy/finance interaction), Jenni Borg (Operational Efficiency Plan and Business Process Improvement) and John Faulkner (Strategy Unit) had worked together to prepare a short paper.

3. It suggested that much of the work required was already in hand and had a natural “home” within a DG group. However, there were questions about a) what work need to be done, and against what assumptions; and b) the governance model to supervise cross cutting or over-arching issues – eg should it be a sub-committee of Strategy Committee.

4. After discussion, ExCo agreed:
   ExCo was the proper body to oversee and sign off this work;
   the team of 4 (see paragraph 2 above) should continue to work up a plan, focusing on what preparations needed to be in place and what key questions the Department needed to be able to answer;
   this should include a project/programme delivery plan;
   the first draft should be submitted to ExCo members for discussion on 22 December even if not all ExCo members would be present for the discussion;
   the plan should be finalised by end January latest, and substantive work should proceed in parallel wherever possible;

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the plan should include a list of additional work to be done, with a named person responsible; this should identify essential as opposed to desirable tasks, on the assumptions of an Election in a) March and b) May; the plan should make proposals for allocating specific tasks and responsibilities to ensure delivery of those areas of work currently not in hand; the plan should include suggestions for and/or exemplifications of the range of key assumptions (eg about cost reductions or pay bill); it should also identify key information that was needed, and by whom, in order to deliver the actions in the list; the plan, its priority actions, delivery plan and underlying assumptions, or range of assumptions, were all subject to ratification by ExCo.

**Action:** Clare Moriarty and Richard Hatfield, supported by Jenni Borg, Paul Collins, John Faulkner, Kieran Rix

**Item 3: Workforce Strategy**

5. This paper had been intended to update ExCo on current law and practice on managing organisational change. It had now been overtaken by “Smarter Government” (with its commitment to reduce SCS pay bill by 20% over 3 years) and by the changes to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme recently announced.

6. ExCo noted that the Civil Service Selection Board was to consider a paper on aspects of the Smarter Government agenda this week. ExCo agreed they would look with interest at any information emerging from the centre or from other departments about how best to identify and fill key SCS roles; while noting their reservations about the scope for reviewing SCS roles and responsibilities without also looking at the impact any resulting changes might have on the Department’s capacity, structure and organisation below SCS.

**Item 4: Employee Relations Casework**

7. The paper on Employee Relations casework advised ExCo of recent improvements in management of grievance, discipline and other complex case work. New grievance and discipline procedures had been introduced earlier this year, and a Case Review Board had been set up to determine strategy for resolving particularly difficult cases. The paper noted that the number of formal cases had been reduced, and the number of line managers seeking early advice had grown. All cases were now “actively managed” and had target timescales for resolution.

8. ExCo noted and welcomed the approach, and the progress, reported in the paper; and agreed that HR should make this information more widely available. Individual ExCo members recorded their thanks to HR for the positive help that had been given to their team members in managing cases. ExCo agreed that the Case Review Board should receive data about staff who had been absent for a month or more, and that HR would work with their line managers to manage these absences proactively, reflecting the available evidence that it was markedly more difficult to

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help employees back to work after this length of absence. **Action: Mervyn Thomas and all DGs**

**Item 5: Strategy for Business Planning 2010**  
Oral update

9. Clare Moriarty gave an update on the work Finance had been doing to quantify the scale of the Department’s financial difficulties in the coming year and beyond. There were additional pressures of unfunded requirements that would demand offsetting savings.

10. All were asked to ensure that in advance of Finance’s assessment of how best to bridge the remaining funding gap, they did not commit, or encourage or allow others to commit, any additional funds. They should highlight to Clare Moriarty as a matter of urgency any areas where such decisions were imminent. **Action: All DGs**

Board Secretariat  
16 December 2009