Minutes of DfT Executive Committee

Date: Tuesday 8 June 2010
Time: 0915-1045
Venue: Room 5/13, Great Minster House

ExCo Members

Robert Devereux (Chair)
Mike Mitchell
Bronwyn Hill
Richard Hatfield
Steve Gooding
Clare Moriarty
Christopher Muttukumaru

Apologies

None.

Attendees for Papers

John Faulkner (Item 1)
Carolyn Green (Item 1)
Robin Groth (Item 1(i))
Michele Wong (Item 1(i))

Other Attendees

Peter Lee (Item 1(ii))
Richard Buckley (Item 1(iii))

Item 1: Outstanding Discovery Projects

1. John Faulkner introduced his covering paper, explaining that ExCo was being invited to consider the results of the Discovery Projects that DfT Board had been unable to discuss at its 30 April meeting.

   i) Realising Commercial Opportunities

2. Robin Groth introduced the paper, which covered some potential asset sales, along with other revenue-raising ideas. It was agreed that potential asset sales should continue to be taken forward as an integrated programme, led by Kate Mingay’s Corporate Finance Directorate but with clear policy leads for each individual sale.

3. Bronwyn Hill agreed to ask Kate Mingay to put together a revised list of possible asset sales based on the work of the discovery project. Kate would be encouraged to set out the benefits of taking forward the work of any or all of the sales and the costs of doing so, including the resource implications of a significant asset sales programme for her own team, policy teams and Legal Services Directorate. This might include a view on priorities. She would present this to ExCo once she had completed the work, so that advice to Ministers could take account of the resources necessary to deliver sales. It was noted that the SoS had asked for information on non-operational assets by the end of the week.

Action: Bronwyn Hill to ask Kate Mingay to undertake this work and to contact the Board Secretariat for a date for coming to ExCo to present it.

The names of non-SCS staff have been redacted in accordance with DfT’s publication policy.
4. Robin provided ExCo with his team’s feedback from taking part in this Discovery Project. He warned against the danger of the grid on the front page of Discovery Project reports encouraging “spurious accuracy”. He emphasised the need to integrate with relevant policy leads and felt that the exercise had been useful to participants in making them aware of the need to think about radical options. His team had found the exercise interesting and fun.

ii) Revenue Raising

5. Peter Lee introduced the paper, saying that his team had not uncovered significant untapped revenue streams for DfT. It had, however, found evidence of services provided by DfT which were somewhat discretionary and where it would be worthwhile considering a) whether the service needed to be provided at all; b) if so, whether it could be undertaken by a third party and c) if the answer to b) was “no”, whether DfT should consider charging a fee for the activity.

6. Robert Devereux emphasised the importance of the three questions set out in Para 4 being applied to all existing and future activities considered by DfT. Clare Moriarty agreed to build this into the Organisational Change Programme.

Action: Clare Moriarty

7. As options were developed and depending on the legal framework that applied in each case, Christopher Muttukumaru agreed to look at the possibility of legislation being drafted that would enable DfT to charge for appropriate tasks generically rather than having to draft separate legislation for charging for each individual activity.

Action: Christopher Muttukumaru

iii) Using Data Effectively

8. Richard Buckley introduced the paper, which considered the possibility of DfT providing a data storage and retrieval facility that would enable road users to populate and share information. This would, it was argued be particularly useful for users of local roads, where there was not currently the available information provided by the Highways Agency and others to users of the national road network.

9. Richard argued that this proposal would assist the development of a ‘road user community’ and combat the perceived isolation of car drivers. He argued also that the concept, of DfT providing a facility that would then be populated and maintained by road users, was in line with the coalition government’s “Big Society” concept and with its technical innovation and de-centralisation themes.

10. The set-up costs were expected to be below the new £1m limit for new IT projects.

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11. The ExCo discussion centred on the issue of whether DfT should be setting up this information-sharing facility itself or whether its role should be limited to providing the necessary data and inviting private companies to bid to set up the facility. Steve Gooding agreed to consider this and to take forward the proposal.

Action: Steve Gooding

Item 2: Any Other Business

12. Forthcoming meetings of senior DfT staff were discussed. ExCo was informed that all DfT SCS staff would be invited to a 2-hour session, addressed by the Secretary of State, at the 6-8 July “Civil Service Live” event at Olympia. It was agreed that there would not be a need to go ahead with the scheduled meeting of directors only a week later on 16 July.

Action: Private Office to cancel 16 July Directors’ meeting

13. It was agreed, however, that the SCS Conference scheduled for September should go ahead, as by then it was hoped that the shape of the Organisational Change programme would have been agreed with Ministers.

14. The content of the forthcoming SCS briefings was discussed. It was agreed that Steve Gooding would invite people to feed back from their early meetings with the new Ministers; Bronwyn Hill would speak on working with the coalition government; Robert Devereux would speak briefly on Organisational Change and Clare Moriarty would speak on the forthcoming Spending Review.

Action: Steve Gooding/Bronwyn Hill/Robert Devereux/Clare Moriarty