

Minutes of the Wales Office Management Board
Friday 26th June ~~2010~~ at Gwydyr House

2009

Present:

Alan Cogbill	Chair
David Crawley	Non executive member
Stephen Knight	Head of Corporate Services
Amanda Latham	Head of Corporate Governance
Andrew Mathias	Head of Press Office
Kim Tester	HR Manager
Glynne Jones	Deputy Director, Legislation and Cabinet Support
John Williams	Deputy Director, Strategy, Economy and Policy
[REDACTED]	Legal Adviser
[REDACTED]	Head of Strategic Policy
[REDACTED]	Private Secretary
[REDACTED]	Secretariat

Apologies

Simon Morris Principal Private Secretary

Alan welcomed Kim Tester to her first Management board meeting as New HR Manager.

1. Minutes of last meeting

The Board formally accepted the minutes of the last meeting held on 26th March 2009 as a true record.

Outstanding action points

- **HR Issues** – HR has still not received staff training plans from Private Office (PO).
- **Action Point:** Simon, Andrew and [REDACTED] need to inform HR of any training staff have had, and of any present training requirements, by the end of July.
- **Corporate Governance** – Operational Risks need to be completed for PO and Press by the end of September 09.
- **Action Point:** PO to send their branch risk register to be amalgamated into the Strategic Risk Register.
- **Correspondence Process** – Stephen updated the Board that Simon felt that the 2 working days time frame for PO to consider action or advice on correspondence was right. The Board agreed that the normal time should be the same day unless there is an exceptional circumstance. The Board recommended that a statement of expectation should be drawn up of same day attention, even if the target stayed at 2 days; and that reports should show performance against both 1 day expectation and 2 day target.

- **Action Point:** - Stephen and Rhiannon to implement protocol, as amended.

- **Financial Position** – Amanda updated the board that the EYF figures contained in the papers were presented to the Treasury for 2008-09.

- **Action Point:** Amanda to check the EYF figures with the resource accounts.

2. Performance Reports

- **Financial Position** – Amanda reported that the EYF is more accurate and easier to calculate now that it is being done through COINS. The budget forecast shows currently planned spend, but it is not fixed; it allows for increased or unexpected costs. The Board noted both the end of year Outturn for 2008-09 and the spend to date for 2009 –10 [REDACTED]. The question of whether the refurbishment would now go ahead was raised and the answer was probably not however it has been indicated that works may need to be done to improve the reception area.

- **Action Point:** Amanda to amend the charts to reflect the missing slice of the under spend, rename the headings and if possible to make the variance report larger. [REDACTED]

- **Performance Statistics** – The Board noted the current statistics and that there has been a dip in performance. It discussed whether there was the right balance of resource e.g. enough staffing or whether there was the need for a change in how work was managed. It was affirmed that action owners should take appropriate action, if they see that the deadline may be missed, to get back on target.

- **Corporate Services** – Stephen updated the Board on Information Assurance. There is a need for a culture change within the office and even though the office is trying to encourage a clear desk policy the main importance is locking away restricted/confidential or personal documents. Corporate Services have now replaced ununlockable pedestals with lockable ones.
On accommodation, there is a new management team dealing with the works in the basement at an estimated cost less than expected. With Ministers' approval the security upgrade can go ahead in summer recess. John raised concerns about the IT transition to XP which left some of his team unable to conduct urgent work. The chair expressed his disappointment with the project manager of the transition and had asked for an e-DG report into what went wrong, considering the amount of preparation and information that Wales Office had done.
Stephen updated the Board on the UK flu epidemic. Advice was to plan for half our staff to be off sick for a week at a time, for a period of 3 weeks. Business Continuity plans should be in place by September and all managers should have their staffs contact numbers in case of an emergency.

3. Head of Branch Presentation on Risks

[REDACTED] kindly gave a presentation on the risks that Strategic Policy branch faces and an overview of the branch objectives. The main risk was not getting information from other government departments which was accurate and on time. The counter measure was to build good relationships with other departments to make them more aware of WO interests. The Board found the presentation very useful and thanked Claire for her time and effort.

4. Review of Risk Management

Amanda has met other departments and has found that our risk format is roughly the same. It was agreed that relationship risk needs to be assessed continually as it is always changing. Amanda updated the Board on the risk management workshops to be held in both London and Cardiff. The Board formally approved the new Strategic Risk Register format.

- **Action Point:** Amanda to arrange a meeting with John and Glynne before next meeting regarding risk management.

5. Update of the Travel and Subsistence Policy

Amanda had contacted all staff asking for feedback and has responded to comments and questions. She has also asked if there are any queries in response to her answers. The Board felt that the statement is repetitive between overall policy, and working manual. It favoured a broad introductory statement, followed by detailed guidance. It was noted that most of the rules exist now: the statement brings them together, with some modifications. The Board wanted to see a couple of open sessions to explain why and what has changed in the policy. The Policy will need senior managers' support to implement and it needs to comply with the new HMRC rules. The Board aims to approve the Policy in final form at the next meeting so that it can be implemented from 1 October.

- **Action point:** Amanda to amend the policy to reflect the Boards comments.
- **Action Point:** Amanda to arrange a couple of open house sessions, which will be led at each of Cardiff and London by the Director or Deputy Director.
- **Acton Point:** Amanda to produce a table of comparison between WAG & MOJ and past and present WO Policies.

6. HR Issues

Kim reported that end of year reviews were completed and passed to HR on time so that the required information could be sent to MOJ within the deadline set. Kim needs to be informed of staff sickness to be able to keep accurate records and to identify trends. On Staff Engagement, some action has been taken to increase communication within the office in the form of "The Directors Cut". Branch Heads were asked to discuss communication and other issues with teams.

- **Action Point:** Kim to take out % on the Monitoring statistics, replying on nos.
- **Action Point:** Kim to correct organogram on split site staff.

7. **Audit Committee Update and Chair's Annual Report**

David informed the Board that the report reflects an overall good year. The only problem was the journal miss posting which proved productive as it helped to improve controls. The Audit Committee looked at WO risk management which is now very comprehensive and is pleased with the Office's readiness to implement the Committee's actions and recommendations. The Report flagged two concerns. Within WO, information assurance needs continuing work. Outside WO, MoJ's supply of corporate services causes WO various difficulties. The Board thanked David for his update and thought that the report was good.

8. **Issues chiefly to note: Departmental Annual Report (DAR) – how it went, Business Plan and Statement of Internal Control.**

Departmental Annual Report – Andrew thought that the project went well according to schedule and budget. The Board congratulated Andrew's team on an excellent job. Noted that there needs to be a management discussion who will lead project management for next years DAR.

Business Plan – The Chair updated that he with Deputy Directors had concluded that this year WO should rely on the branch plans in place already. We had been too late to set about a plan to connect branch plans to WO's top level objectives. He and the DDs had resolved to launch a project, to be completed this calendar year, to plug the gap before the end of the 'financial year'. There needs to be a cross team project between Corporate Governance, Legislation and Policy in place by September 09. Amanda will write a scoping plan after meetings with Glynne and John. The Business Plan needs to be in place before 1 April 2010.

- **Action Point:** Amanda to set up meetings with Glynne and John to discuss the Business Plan, and to draft the project scoping done by September 09.

Statement of Internal Control – The Board formally noted the signed Statement of Internal Control.



9. **AOB**

None.

Next Meeting 15th September - to be held in Cardiff.

Minutes of the Wales Office Management Board
Thursday 1st October 2009 at Gwydyr House

Present:


Alan Cogbill	Chair
Fiona Adams-Jones	Chair
David Crawley	Non executive member
Stephen Knight	Head of Corporate Services
Amanda Latham	Head of Corporate Governance
Andrew Mathias	Head of Press Office
Kim Tester	HR Manager
Glynne Jones	Deputy Director, Legislation and Cabinet Support
Sarah Rees	Principal Private Secretary
Tim Hemmings	Head of Strategy, Economy and Policy
	Head of Economy and Finance Policy
	Secretariat

Alan officially left the office on 30th September, but for continuity purposes he chaired the meeting jointly with his replacement Fiona Adams-Jones. Alan started the meeting by welcoming Fiona as the new Director of the Office, Sarah Rees as the new Principal Private Secretary and Tim Hemmings as the new Head of Strategy, Economy and Policy. The Board congratulated Glynne Jones for his appointment as Deputy Director of the Office. The Board also thanked Alan for his role as Director and wished him all the best for the future.

1. Minutes of last meeting

The Board formally accepted the minutes of the last meeting held on 26th June 2009 as a true record.

Outstanding action points

- **HR Issues** –HR were currently in the process of collating the required information into a training plan.
 - **Action Point:** Kim to produce for the next meeting.
- **Corporate Governance – T&S Policy** – The Board felt that there were still a few things to rectify in the Policy and Fiona wanted all branch heads to be involved in its introduction and implementation. David suggested that the last sentence of "A5 Making a Claim for Expenses" should be taken out. Alan raised concerns about the examples used in the Policy. The intention was then for the Board formally to approve the final version of the policy at the next meeting and to introduce in November.
 - **Action Point:**  to liaise with Fiona and Glynne regarding the delivery.

- **Action Point:** All comments regarding the policy to be forwarded to Amanda by 16th October in order for the Policy to be approved at the next meeting.
- **Wales Office (WO) Business Plan** – Glynne, Amanda and Tim agreed to meet as soon as possible to discuss further the draft 2010-11 Plan. The Board decided that it should be short and simple. Alan recommended that the plan should be completed by January 2010. Fiona requested that the Board have sight of a first draft for December's meeting.
- **Action Point:** - Glynne, Amanda and Tim to arrange a meeting as soon as possible.
- Action point:** [REDACTED] to add to agenda for December meeting.

2. Performance Reports

- **Strategic Risk Register** – For the information of the new members, Alan introduced the risk register and Glynne pointed to the successful delivery of the Welsh Language Order as an example of the benefits of having robust controls in place. The Board discussed the risks associated with relationships with other Government Departments and the implications of a change of Government. David noted that the register had evolved over the years and that it was now in reasonably good working format. David also noted that it was useful to compare our risk register with Scotland Office (SO), Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG). Amanda said that she would be holding regular meetings with other Government Departments regarding risks.
- **Expenditure Report** – Amanda reported on the current End Year Flexibility (EYF) position and on the projected position over the next 2 years. The Board noted the variance report and recognised that the senior team would need to review and drive down spending.
- **Action Point:** - Amanda to provide a break down of costs within teams, to help Heads of Division to reduce these costs.
- **Performance Statistics** – The Board noted that in the past there had been a few problems in certain policy areas and with Private Office (PO) clearance times, although this appeared to have improved. The board acknowledged that most requests required information from other departments and that this sometimes resulted in some deadlines being missed.

Corporate Services – Stephen reported that all the Prop work in the basement had been completed and most of the security cameras had been installed. Stephen also informed the Board that the video conference room would be finished by the 12th October.

3. Business Continuity Plan (BCP)

The Board noted and commented on the new BCP, which was drawn up to enable core business to continue in the event of major disruption. Stephen has been in contact with MoJ and Internal Audit to ensure that the plan met central requirements. The Board noted with concern that MoJ had been unable as yet to provide alternative accommodation for Wales Office ministers should an incident occur that rendered Gwydyr House inaccessible and asked Stephen to pursue with MOJ as a matter of importance. It was noted that the new IT system backed up both Gwydyr House and Discovery House servers. Stephen was producing a WO Staff Information Card which would summarise for staff the key instructions that they should follow in the event of major disruption. The Board recommended that the guidance on swine flu should be re-circulated as a reminder to staff on action that needs to be taken.

- **Action Point:** Stephen to disseminate a Business Continuity Information Card to each member of staff and to re-circulate the Swine Flu Guidance.
- **Action point:** Stephen to report back to next meeting on progress with MOJ on emergency accommodation

4. HR Issues

Kim updated the Board on the recent staff changes and recruitment exercises. The Board agreed that the overall staffing structure of the Wales Office needed to be reviewed. Kim reminded the Board that Mid Year Reports would be due shortly and that all staff needed to be made aware. The Board noted the paper.

- **Action point:** Kim to send out a reminder to all staff regarding Mid Year Reviews.
- **Action point:** Kim to circulate to Director and HODs an up-to-date staffing structure chart.
- **Action Point:** Kim to find out how many members of staff were able to speak, read or write Welsh and their level of ability.

5. Head of Branch Presentation on Risks

██████████ explained how the relatively new Economic and Finance Policy Branch came into existence and about the work that the team did. She considered that the branch's main risk was its limited resources and a shortage of some specialist skills e.g. economic advice. The Board's suggestions included the possibility of a skills audit across the organisation and/or establishing a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Welsh Assembly Government on provision of economic and statistical advice and social research. The Board thanked ██████████ for her presentation and her team for all their work.

6. Departmental Annual Report – Planning for 2010

Alan informed the Board that Stephen had been given lead responsibility for compiling next year's annual report, supported by Amanda. The Board agreed

that branch heads needed to start working on it now and that Press Office would need to be involved at an early stage.

Action point: Glynne, Tim and Sarah to ensure that action was underway and to report back to the Board at its next meeting

7. Audit Committee Update

David updated the Board on the recent Audit Committee meeting held in Cardiff on 15th September. He reported that NAO had updated the Committee on current issues arising with MoJ that might affect the Wales Office. The Committee also discussed the importance of relationship risks to be recorded on the Strategic Risk Register. David formally informed the Board that Glynne Jones would be replacing John Williams on the Committee and that his membership was in a personal capacity and not as a representative of the Management Board. David recorded his thanks to John Williams for his contribution to the Committee.

8. Staff Engagement Survey

Kim updated the Board on the action taken as a result of the 2008-09 survey including a research study commissioned by Alan Cogbill to inform the development of a Code of Values and Behaviours for Wales Office staff. The Board noted that the 2009-10 survey would run from 8-29 October and that [REDACTED] would continue to be the Wales Office Engagement Champion. Kim would undertake the HR role as Results into Action Facilitator. The Results were expected in January 2010.

- **Action Point:** Heads of Division to ask all branch heads to ensure that their teams complete the 2009-10 survey.
- **Action Point:** Kim to update the Board at the next meeting.

9. AOB

Gift and Hospitality Register – Amanda informed the Board that she would be circulating out of committee the new Wales Office Gift and Hospitality Policy for Board approval. The information would be published as part of the MoJ resource accounts.

Wales Office Christmas Cards 2009 – The Board suggested that, subject to Ministers' agreement, it might be a good idea to run a small competition with LATCH (daffodil kids) to design this year's Cards. The Board decided that the Officials' card would be designed as an e-card.

- **Action Point:** [REDACTED] to liaise with press office to establish time scales.

Bonus Recommendation – The Board discussed bonus recommendations.

Next meeting 17th December - London

Minutes of the Wales Office Management Board
Thursday 17th December 2009 at Gwydyr House

Present:

Fiona Adams-Jones
David Crawley
Glynne Jones

Sarah Rees
Tim Hemmings

Stephen Knight
Amanda Latham

Andrew Mathias

Chair
Non executive member
Deputy Director, Legislation and
Cabinet Support
Principal Private Secretary
Deputy Director, Head of Strategy,
Economy and Policy
Head of Corporate Services
Head of Finance and Corporate
Governance
Head of Communications

Secretariat
Observer

Apologies

Kim Tester

HR Manager
Legal Advisor
Legal Advisor

Fiona welcomed everyone to her first Management Board meeting as chair; she also welcomed [REDACTED] who was attending as an observer and deputising for Kim Tester.

1. Minutes of last meeting

The Board formally accepted the minutes of the last meeting held on 1st October 2009 as a true record.

Outstanding action points

The Chair requested an update on the progress of the business continuity guidance cards for staff. Stephen reported to the Board that the cards had been printed incorrectly and needed to be redone. Once complete they would be circulated.

The Chair announced that the three Heads of Division had agreed to undertake additional corporate roles and responsibilities. Sarah would be responsible for overseeing the content and format of the management information provided to the Board. Glynne along with Stephen would be scenario planning for different issues and outcomes that might occur before and after the general election. Tim would be act as Internal Communications champion and would be responsible for quality assuring all-staff emails and other guidance material before issue to Wales Office staff.

2. Performance Reports

- **Strategic Risk Register** – Amanda informed the Board that the risk register has been amended to reflect amendments made by Glynne and Tim. David felt that the risk that stated the failure to deliver objectives was too general and that the specific risk would be the failure to manage the lack of knowledge that would contribute the failure to deliver the objectives. The Board agreed that the Referendum and a possible change of Government needed to be added as key risks.

Action Point

- Tim to provide Amanda with amended wording for his areas of responsibility by end of January 2010.
- **Performance statistics** – Stephen took the Board through the Correspondence statistics. Tim asked what the policy was on interim holding replies for Freedom of Information (Fol) requests as all too often information is difficult to obtain from other government departments. The Board decided that the practice of issuing interim holding replies should be adopted as long as this complied with Cabinet Office guidelines. The Board also asked that guidance be circulated to staff explaining the circumstances in which interim holding letters could be issued.

Action Point

- Stephen to circulate guidance on Fol holding letters by 29th January.
- **Financial Position** – Amanda explained to the Board that the variance report had been profiled more closely to the actual costs. There were currently no areas of concern, although staff costs were tighter than previously. The Board noted that the senior team and Amanda had reviewed overtime costs and had discussed and agreed a way forward on controlling these costs, placing the onus on the Heads of Division/Branch to authorise overtime only where there was clear business need. Amanda also reported that the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) re-charges looked likely to increase due mainly to the IT upgrade and conversion to the DOM1server. Tim asked for a breakdown of the accommodation costs, Amanda explained that these figures included maintenance contracts and managing agent's costs. For the 2010-11 budget, Amanda confirmed that the HM Treasury's (HMT's) helpful position remained unchanged in respect of the availability and accessibility of Wales Office EYF. Amanda was preparing a scoping business case for HMT to outline where the Boards commitments and pressures lay going forward beyond 2010-11 for the next Spending Review. .
- **Corporate Services** - Stephen updated the Board on the upgrading of the Video Conference Room and the installation of the security cameras, all of which had been completed.

3. Information Assurance

Stephen gave a brief update on his work to strengthen our Information Assurance measures. It was recognised that the Wales Office's major risk in this area was loss of sensitive information e.g. leaving papers on public transport or on desks with visitors or unauthorised persons seeing the contents. The Board agreed Stephen's proposal that the safe desk policy should be more actively enforced, with Branch and Divisional Heads taking responsibility for spot checks in their work areas. The Board requested a progress report for the next meeting. The Board agreed that in the longer term the Office should aim for a clear desk policy and the Board agreed to revisit the issue in 3 months. The Board noted that the G Drive will be closed and documents will be view only from 1st February.

- **Action point:** Stephen to provide an Information Assurance Progress report for the next meeting scheduled for 25th February

4. Gift and Hospitality Policy

Amanda introduced the final draft of the policy, which had been circulated to the Board out of Committee, and addressed some of the comments made in particular the reference to Alcohol. The Board accepted Amanda's advice that the policy needed to refer to Alcohol as it was provided at Ministerial functions, and it approved the Policy subject to the final amendments set out below. The Board thanked Amanda for her work on the Policy.

Action point

- Amanda to make the following amendments to the Policy
- In section 1.6 mention that the policy for Ministers was covered in the Ministerial Code.
- Reword section 3.6 to make it simpler
- Remove table 2 and just list the unacceptable gifts
- Update with authorising officers
- Summarise the policy to into the key rules that staff needed to know and send to Tim for clearance

5. Travel and Subsistence Policy

Amanda reported the latest position on Travel and Subsistence.

The Board noted the new MoJ hotel contracts which promise to provide 80% of hotels within MoJ rates. The Board agreed that it staffs were to be expected, where possible, to book hotels in advance and to obtain approval from their branch head or head of division before breaching the overnight subsistence limit.

Amanda updated the Board on the current review being undertaken by the Cabinet Office on Travel and Subsistence rates across Government and the Board agreed that the Wales Office's current T&S rates would remain unchanged pending the outcome of the full review.

The Board formally approved the updated T&S policy, which had been circulated and agreed out of committee. The Board recognised the importance of making staff aware of the new policy and of some of the changes initiated by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

Action Point

- Amanda to discuss with Tim how the policy will be communicated to staff.

6. HR Issues

The Board noted the HR papers and asked for a further update at the next meeting, along with a separate proposals paper on Learning and Development.

After a discussion of the need for moderation of performance markings, the Board asked that staff guidance for the end of year assessments be circulated, informed by a scoping and benchmarking meeting of the senior team in February 2010. The guidance would need to include advice to line managers who would be assessing both MoJ and Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) staff.

The Board noted and agreed the Privilege days as per Kim's recommendation.

Action Point

- Kim to provide the Board with an HR update and a Learning & Development proposals paper at the next meeting.
- Kim to arrange PDP Guidance meeting in February with Tim.
- Kim to arrange moderating meeting in late April to discuss box markings.
- Kim to disseminate the Board's decision on privilege days

7. Major Strategic Risks

Following on from the discussion of the Strategic Risk Register (at paragraph 2), it was agreed that both the Referendum and a possible change of Administration following the General Election were major strategic risks. The Board asked how other departments were recording this risk.

Action Point

- Amanda, Tim and Glynne to have a meeting in January to discuss other government department's relationship risks.

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8. Annual Programme of Business

Following a discussion, the Board amended and agreed its Annual Programme of Business

Action Point

- [REDACTED] to amend to reflect Board's comments and re-circulate.
- Amanda to explore further the branch presentations.

9. AOB

The Board discussed the draft 2010-11 Business Plan and agreed that any comments should be sent to Amanda by 15th January 2010.

Date of next meeting – 25th February 2010