

Minutes of the Wales Office Management Board  
Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at Gwydyr House

**Present:**

Fiona Adams - Jones	Chair
David Crawley	Non executive member
Tim Hemmings	Deputy Director Policy
Stephen Knight	Head of Corporate Services
Kim Tester	Head of HR
	Secretariat
Amanda Latham	Head of Finance and Corporate Governance
<b><u>Apologies</u></b>	
Andrew Mathias	Head of Communications
Stephen Hillcoat	Principal Private Secretary
Glynne Jones	Deputy Director

**1. Introduction and apologies received**

Apologies - Andrew Mathias, Stephen Hillcoat, Glynne Jones

**2. Minutes of last meeting**

With a small amendment to the wording in 7.1, the board formally accepted the minutes of the last meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> June as a true and accurate record.

**Outstanding action points**

The Chair ran through the action points of the previous meeting. All had been completed and agreed, with the exception of;

- The still ongoing business continuity cards. The Chair made a firm request to Stephen Knight to complete this as a matter of urgency; and
- The issue of Government Cars. Stephen Hillcoat had been unable to produce a paper due to a change in remit, following discussions with the Secretary of State.

**Action Point:**

- Stephen Knight to distribute outstanding business continuity cards as a matter of urgency.
- Stephen Hillcoat to produce a paper on Government Cars for the next Board meeting.

## **Management Information**

### **2.1 Performance Statistics**

The board considered the correspondence statistics, it was widely felt that any issues arising were due to the change of Government and Secretary of State naturally increasing the number TO's passing through the office. David Crawley felt that this was merely a teething problem and the position would naturally level off. The Chair added that it would be most helpful to go back to the original format and asked if Amanda Latham would look into this. David added that the target seemed reasonable and looked forward to seeing an improvement.

PQ stats were also reviewed; The Chair felt that these were really quite good for the first few months of a new administration. David agreed.

Also due to the new administration the number of FOI requests had increased greatly. Stephen explained all request were turned around on time and in the main felt that the office was coping well. Stephen was asked by The Chair to let the board know how many FOI's were up for review in future. Tim felt that this would give the board a better oversight as to how FOI 's were working. David congratulated the board on the FOI stats.

The Chair stated that it would be interesting to keep an eye on these statistics once Transparency figures were published on line.

#### **Action Points:**

- Amanda to make the necessary enquiries to ensure Performance Statistics return to there original format.
- Stephen to include the number of FOI's under review at all future meetings.

### **2.2 Financial Position**

Amanda opened by stating she would produce a paper with reference to forecasting and re-profiling in November after the Spending Review (SR) settlement and Winter Supplementary Estimates round had all been finalised.

Amanda moved onto the Transparency paper stating that data for all invoices over £500 will be released in date order on the Wales Office website. Press Office will look into any issues that may arise from their publication before they go live, and to ensure that the format is consistent with Cabinet Office guidelines. David stated that it was wise to be ahead of the game on this matter, with all departments needing to comply to this in the near future.

Amanda moved onto the National Loan Funds (NLF) accounts which had been approved early by National Audit Office, nothing to report.



[REDACTED]

Kim Tester stated that the subject of flexi working was a difficult one as there were different rules for Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and Ministry of Justice (MoJ) staff; she asked flexi work sheets could be modified so that all staff could work from the same page. Kim asked if she should consider writing a Flexible Working Pattern policy for the Wales Office. Amanda responded that there was such a policy in existence that may need to be re-addressed [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

#### **Action Points:**

- Kim to readdress the Flexible Working Pattern policy to bring it up to date.
- The Chair to send a notice to all staff announcing the ban on overtime working.

#### **2.3 Corporate Services Update**

Stephen reported that the quadrennial report had been completed, whilst this had brought up no major issues, it did state that the building was a bit tired looking. Stephen told the board that now the floor had been fixed the Secretary of State was keen to return the building to its former glory, by way of a 4 year plan. David explained that the quadrennial report would support the Secretary of States plan to do so. Stephen told the board that he was in the process of setting up a working group, which included English Heritage to look at the best way to implement a program of improvements. The Chair thought that having everyone on board at an early stage would be very helpful and would ensure the process ran more smoothly.

Stephen pointed out that work on a Health and Safety Policy and action plan was underway, the document needed to be refined before circulation. Stephen hoped that this would be completed before the next Management Board meeting.

Stephen went on to say that he was pressing ahead with formation of a Health and Safety Committee, formed of representatives from across the department and to be chaired by Tim Hemmings.

The Chair requested that the board had sight of the Policy paper at the next meeting, and asked that the Health and Safety Policy Committee update the Board at each meeting. The Chair went on to thank Tim Hemmings for agreeing to chair these Health and Safety Committee meetings.

Stephen explained that there had been no Information and data security incidents. The Chair requested an update on a previous Information and data Security disciplinary at the next meeting.

**Action Points:**

- Stephen to provide a Health and Safety Policy and Action Plan paper for next meeting.
- Stephen to update the board on progress made at each Health and Safety Committee meeting.
- Stephen to provide an update regarding the Information Security disciplinary update for next meeting.

**2.4 HR Update**

Kim started by saying that low applications and poor candidates applying for advertised posts meant the MoJ HR Director was to attend a meeting on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October with the Head of HR at WAG to discuss how better recruitment field can be achieved in future. The Chair stated WAG should look at secondment for high calibre individuals as a development opportunity, WAG have agreed to target high potential candidates for the Wales Office. David agreed that that WAG should “market” these positions especially the Economic Policy post as economic issues were a top priority on the update Risk Register.

Kim reminded the board it was mid year review time, these are to be completed by the end of October 2010. Kim asked that during these staff consider there own learning and development along with there achievement for the year. The Chair stated that all staff will be asked to fulfil a corporate objective. The Chair added that emphasis be put on corporate contributions such ranging from H & S Coordinators or DSE assessors.

Kim moved onto Loan Issues, [REDACTED]

The board were told that the Staff Engagement Survey 2010 – 2011 was already under way; Kim aimed to send a reminder email to all staff every Monday to encourage its completion.

[REDACTED]

Following the Internal Audit of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) Kim reported that talks were underway with WAG and the MoJ HR Director about having a MoU for the services they provide this will also take place at the October meeting. All other audit recommendations had been accepted.

Kim stated that she was awaiting advice form Cabinet Office over Special Advisors grading and annual leave entitlement.

### **3. Valuing Others Report.**

Senior Management team had already considered the feedback arising from Dr Karen Mc Ivor's report. It was decided actions to be taken will be added to the Staff Engagement Survey as a rolling programme of work. The Chair had already agreed to chair a meeting to take this forward.

Kim commented that the work life balance survey was next to be undertaken. Tim thought it important to address this issue and get hard data which The Chair also echoed. Kim stated that many of the problems stemmed from staff having Blackberries and the fact that staff were constantly receiving emails whilst away from work. The Chair asked for a review of the number of Blackberries distributed throughout the office although, it was felt that in some cases they were in fact necessary regardless of grade. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Tim felt that the office had an email heavy culture and that sometimes a quick chat would serve purpose. David added that the report had shown that the Wales Office had done everything to show concern to its staff and that there was a lot of good sense within the report.

### **4. Business Plan**

The board considered the new draft Business plan which in light of the SR announcement on 20 October 2010 will need to be amended further, and circulated to the board at a later date. The Chair went on to explain in more detail she expected that the 3 territorial offices would move from the MoJ to fall under the Cabinet Office umbrella, with the three directors becoming Principle Accounting Officers in their own right. The Chair continued that staff would remain on MoJ and WAG terms and conditions. None of this was confirmed, The Chair was still awaiting a letter of confirmation. The Chair added that when the Wales Office became responsible for its own resource accounts the office would require cast iron guarantees in the shape of SLAs and MoUs the Chair continued that she would have more information at the next meeting and would send an email to all staff when all was confirmed. David commented so far this was an excellent plan and awaited the final document when all forward planning was finalised.

- Tim to review Business Plan once all announcements have been made.

## 5. Risk Register

Tim began by stating that the new Risk Register came out of the new business plan, which he and Glynne Jones had ownership of. David queried if that was the case why the register did not run in the same order. Tim stated the Risk Register could easily be reordered to bring it in line with the Business plan. David commented that Glynne and Tim had done an excellent job in making the Risk Register more fit for purpose. Tim went on to say that even after controls and mitigation risks are still higher in this transition period.

### Action Point:

- Amanda to re format the Risk Register to ensure consistency with the Business plan.

## 6. Audit Committee Update

The Chair opened by stating that the Audit Committee meeting had been held earlier on that morning. The Chair went to add that there will be a change of NAO Director with [REDACTED] leaving for pastures new, the committee were introduced to [REDACTED] replacement [REDACTED] who will take over as from the next Audit meeting. [REDACTED] an through the areas covered. The committee were very pleased with the outcome of the NLF accounts and MOU's and SLA's in relation to HR. Internal Audit were still awaiting the various items from the Accommodation Team. The Chair added that the office would need to build a closer relationship with Internal Audit if she was to become Principal Accounting Officer as Audit scrutiny would naturally increase. Audit would receive a paper notifying them of all changes when plans were finalised.

### Action Points:

- Stephen to produce Information Risk Policy by next meeting
- Stephen to strengthen Information Assurance governance arrangements and produce an evidence report to the committee at next meeting.
- Stephen to present Information Risk Register and Information Risk Review Report at next meeting.
- The Chair to update Internal and External Audit by way of a paper when plans are finalised.

## 7 .Any Other Business

David opened by asking the board if front sheets for papers were unnecessary. The board felt it was dependant on the information included within the document. The Chair was happy for the board to use there own discretion, however all future front sheets for papers must be numbered, have headers and footers with a bold first paragraph and explain the strategic/financial implications held with the paper.

Amanda raised the issue of a sending out key bullet points of interest raised with Management Board meetings to all staff. The board all agreed and asked for this to be an agenda item for the next meeting.

**Action Point:**

- [REDACTED] to add circulating key bullet points arising in Management Board meetings to staff as an agenda item for next meeting.

**Date of next meeting: November 18<sup>th</sup> 2010**

[REDACTED]  
**Finance & Corporate Governance Unit**  
**6<sup>th</sup> October 2010**

Minutes of the Wales Office Management Board  
Thursday 18th November 2010 at Gwydyr House

**Present:**

Fiona Adams – Jones	Chair
David Crawley	Non executive member
Tim Hemmings	Deputy Director Policy
Stephen Knight	Head of Corporate Services
Kim Tester	Head of HR
[REDACTED]	Secretariat
Amanda Latham	Head of Finance and Corporate Governance
Stephen Hillcoat	Principal Private Secretary
Glynne Jones	Deputy Director
<b>Observer</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Apologies</b>	
Andrew Mathias	Head of Communications

**1. Introduction and apologies received**

Apologies - Andrew Mathias

The Chair opened by welcoming [REDACTED]

**1.1 Minutes of last meeting**

The board formally accepted the minutes of the last meeting held on the 30<sup>th</sup> September as a true and accurate record. All action points had been completed

The Chair updated the board on the Machinery of Government changes, stating that there were still some aspects which needed further clarification and there would be more to report at the next meeting.

Work was underway to find a project manager to take forward the work on combining back room functions for all three Territorial Offices.



The chair concluded by informing the board that the Non Executive Directors had met the Secretary of State on October 28 to give her the opportunity to satisfy herself that the Office and its resources were being managed prudently. The meeting had gone well, and the Secretary of State had agreed to the proposal that she might meet the Non Executive Directors on an annual basis.

## **2. Management Information**

### **2.1 Performance Statistics**

The board considered the FOI statistics and noted the increase in FOI requests since the General Election in May. The board as a whole felt that it would be interesting to see if these numbers would alter once Transparency figures had been released.

The Chair stated that she would prefer the focus to remain on releasing consistently correct information rather than on slavishly meeting the reply targets. The board then considered the PQ statistics and noted that the figures were very satisfactory.

Stephen Hillcoat moved on to correspondence statistics, the figures presented were disappointing, with the numbers handled within the deadline falling to 67%. Stephen Hillcoat and Tim Hemmings would separately consider the branch level figures and decide what remedial action was to be taken.

The Chair went on to add that dealing with correspondence was a very important performance indicator, as this was a public facing aspect of the Wales Office and she asked that future reports broke down the performance statistics to individual branch level.

- Stephen Hillcoat and Tim Hemmings to investigate position underlying disappointing performance on correspondence and report back at next meeting.

### **2.2 Financial Position**

Amanda Latham talked the Board through the financial tables she had provided.

Amanda was in the process of re profiling the budget. Realistically the budget would not be amended with draw downs in the Spring estimates. Amanda added that she would need to clarify staffing costs and estimated costs for Ministerial cars.

Following a brief discussion about likely capital spend, Amanda was asked to clarify the likely outturn on the capital budget, [REDACTED]

- Amanda to produce a note for the Board regarding Capital spend to circulate out of Board.

### **2.3 Corporate Services Update**

Stephen summarised the key points in his paper.

The Chair stated she would have further discussions with the Secretary of State with reference to art work for the hallway.

All other issues were discussed as separate items.

### **Annex A**

#### **Terms of reference for Health and Safety Committee**

Tim Hemmings, as Chair of the new Health and Safety Committee gave a brief outline to the Board as to the structure and purpose of the new body, which was a sub-committee of the full Board.

Tim drew the Board's attention to the terms of reference for the committee, which had been submitted for the Board's formal endorsement, and reported that the committee would meet next in February.

There were no accidents or near misses to report.

The Chair thanked Tim Hemmings and Stephen Knight for producing such a clear and concise terms of reference, and she asked that an update from the H&S Committee Chair be included as an agenda item for future meetings.

The Board were content and formally agreed the committee's terms of reference.

- [REDACTED] to include an update from the Health and Safety Committee as an agenda item at each meeting.

### **2.4 HR Update**

Kim Tester summarised the key points in her paper. The following actions were identified in the general discussion which followed:-

- Kim would chase outstanding Mid Year reviews, and then produce a short report for the Senior Management Team (before the next Management Board meeting) on a) consistency of standards and b) quality –

and measurability – of individual objectives.

- Kim to distribute her analysis of the Work Life Balance survey paper outside Management Board.
- Kim to modify the Wales Office Sickness and Absence data to include the Cabinet Office benchmarks and averages.

### **3. Information Assurance**

Stephen Knight invited questions in relation to the Information Assurance paper. He pointed out that there had only one incident to date, and that systems had been strengthened to stop any recurrence.

The Chair reported that, in respect of the Safe Desk policy, she along with Glynne Jones and Tim Hemmings had carried out a number of spot checks on both offices and that compliance with the policy had been generally very good.

Senior Management would be undertaking further checks over the coming weeks.

The Board noted the position on information assurance and were content.

### **Annex B Information Risk Policy**

The Board discussed and approved the Information Risk Policy, with members commenting that it was a clear concise document.

### **4. Gwydyr House Programme of Improvements.**

The Board considered the proposals for a programme of pressing and unavoidable improvements to Gwydyr House.

### **Annex A The Proposed Refurbishment of Gwydyr House Reception**

The Board had noted and approved out of committee the plans for improving the reception area, including introduction of a DDA-compliant reception desk, during the Christmas Recess period.

### **Annex B Proposed Staircase Safety Work and Refurbishment**

Stephen Knight outlined the work required, on urgent health and safety grounds, to renew the safety film on the skylight at the top of the stairwell and associated

work. The staircase would be repainted whilst the complex scaffolding was in place in the stairwell, as this would be both labour saving and cost effective

The work would be scheduled to be undertaken during parliamentary recess in February 2011.

The Board agreed the proposed refurbishment.

## **5. Ministerial Subsistence Rates**

Amanda Latham had asked the Board to consider bringing Ministerial Travel and Subsistence rates in line with current Wales Office rates for its civil servants.

The Board agreed with the proposals but stipulated that Ministers would qualify for standard mileage rate if travelling on official business with official papers.

## **6. Government Car Service**

Stephen Hillcoat presented his initial paper in respect of a more cost-effective and efficient provision of cars for Ministers.

The Chair asked if the Secretary of State and the Minister had seen the current costs, as it was imperative that they were aware of the sums involved when considering the proposals about future arrangements.

There was a brief discussion about how other Government Departments had dealt with the changes in the Government Car Service and how they were addressing the increasing prices. Amanda Latham asked if [REDACTED] would investigate this further.

The Chair stated that she and Stephen Hillcoat would hold a meeting with the Ministers to discuss costs and future options.

### **Action point**

- Stephen Hillcoat to arrange a meeting with both Ministers regarding the Government Car Service, the Director to also attend.
- [REDACTED] to research how other Government Departments are making efficiencies in terms of transportation.

## **7. Business Plan 2010-11**

After considering the revised Business plan the Board made the following key points:

- Glynne Jones had seen a copy of the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) Business plan, which was more detailed and was asked to circulate this to all Board members
- David Crawley felt that this could be an issue for discussion with Ministers at the Senior management Team away day in December.
- The Chair asked Kim Tester to proof a sample of individual staff objectives, as set out in their Performance Plans, against the overarching objectives set out in the Business Plan.

The Board agreed the paper in principle subject to the points made in discussion

- [REDACTED] to distribute the NIO Business Plan out of meeting.
- Kim Tester to proof a sample of staff objectives against the Business Plan.

## **8. Performance against Wales Office Welsh Language Scheme**

The Board considered the paper and the following points were made in the discussion:

- Kim Tester was thanked for taking forward the arrangements which ensured that Welsh Lessons had begun for London staff members, Cardiff to follow suit shortly.
- Private Office staff needed to be completely familiar with the Wales Office's Welsh Language Scheme commitments
- Welsh speaking receptionist [REDACTED] was available to record Welsh voicemail message for staff members if requested.

Stephen Knight was asked to break down figures of Welsh learners into beginners, intermediate and advanced learners in all future performance reports, which were to be submitted to the Board bi annually.

- Stephen Knight to produce statistics on levels of Welsh speaking

competency when the issue is revisited.

➤ Stephen Hillcoat to ensure that all existing PO staff and new starters were aware of and understood the WO Welsh Language Scheme and action plan.

## 9. Annual Report 2010-11

The Board considered [REDACTED] proposals for the next Annual Report. Sian aimed to produce a shorter more concise document structured around the Business Plan and it's objectives.

It was agreed that comments and outcomes from the Senior Management Team/Ministerial away day in December could also be fed into the document.

[REDACTED] added she hoped to have a very rough first draft ready for the next Management Board meeting in January.

### Action Point:

➤ [REDACTED] to produce a first rough draft of the Annual Report for the next Management Board meeting in January.

## 10. Any Other Business

Amanda Latham raised the subject of **Cross Government Financial System Risk** following a DAO letter received from HM Treasury. Amanda said that she would need help with this process and suggested [REDACTED]. The Board suggested that Amanda should discuss with [REDACTED] separately. David Crawley asked for this issue to be added to the agenda for the Audit Committee Meeting in March, and for this letter to be presented in December's Audit meeting.

Glynne Jones updated the Board on the arrangements for the 3 March 2011 **Referendum**, explaining all orders had now been drafted. Parliament would debate these on 23 and 24 November and the Privy Council would be asked for formal approval in December.

The Chair gave a steer on how she would like to see Board papers presented in the future:

- all should have their unique number included in the right-hand corner of each page.

- Kim Testers HR paper was to be converted by the Board secretariat into a template for all substantive Board papers and included in all future commissions for Board papers.

- the regular performance statistics should be given by the Secretariat a cover sheet containing the basic information on authorship etc

[REDACTED] to use Kim Testers paper as the basis for a template which will be issued to all future authors of substantive Board papers

- [REDACTED] to re introduce cover sheets for performance statistics papers.
- [REDACTED] to add the Financial Loss process as agenda item for March

#### 11. Date of next meeting

The date of the next scheduled Board meeting is 20<sup>th</sup> January 2011

[REDACTED]  
**Finance & Corporate Governance Unit**  
**21/11/10**