



.gov.uk Naming and Approvals Committee Minutes

19 June 2008, Hercules House, London

Attendees

Elaine Adu-Poku, COI (Secretary)
Adam Bailin, COI (Chair)
David Pullinger, COI
Sarajane Brock, UKERNA (Ja.net)
Damian Shaw, UKERNA (Ja.net)
Elliot Atkins, CESG
David Hall, Scottish Executive
Richard Steel, LB Newham/ Socitm

Apologies

Lucky Afzal, CSIA
Matthew Newton, Defence
Stephen Boulcott, Wales

Transformational Government

1. David Pullinger (DP) Head of Digital Policy at COI provided the Committee with the contextual background to Transformational Government (TG), stressing that cost reduction and the enhancement of findability were of paramount importance. This would support the notion that audience expectation is paramount as well as the reconstruction of what the audience expects.
2. DP is in the process of drafting a Treasury Minute, that will be signed off by the named departments and the Prime Minister, in response to the Public Accounts Report published in April 2008. This minute will reiterate that there will be no .gov.uk new websites originating from central government (including executive agencies or non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs)) without the express permission of the Government Chief Information Officer. The current TG policy excludes devolved administrations and local government. However, in the future, there may be an extension of the TG principles, as has occurred with nhs.uk and mod.uk.
3. The aim is to close approximately 90% of central government websites and migrate public facing material onto Direct.gov and Business Link. 450 sites were closed in the last year. In addition, it is envisaged that every government website should have a .gov.uk domain, thus sites on other domains (.orgs, .co.uk, .coms, etc) will need to be migrated onto .gov.uk domains. The migration from other domains onto .gov.uk domains will have to work in tandem with the Web Rationalisation Programme over the next three years.
4. Following website rationalisation, approximately 150 websites will remain centrally. These are as follows:
 - Direct.gov, Business Link and NHS Choices
 - Workforce sites- NHS, Civil Service, Teachers, etc

- (Non) Ministerial department websites
- Public corporations and Levy Boards

They are not all hosted on the same platform, but it is envisaged that there may be a shared hosting service, which will facilitate monitoring sites from a security perspective.

5. The latest guidance recommends the use of top level directories over the use of sub domains. Sub domains may only be used in exceptional circumstances, such as extranets or for a public facing service can not be placed onto an existing site, e.g. due to a difference in the site structure.

Transformational Government and Local Authorities – including Freedom of Information

6. Turning to the issue of local area partnerships, best value to the tax payer or audience must be considered at all times. Thus you must consider the purpose and what the audience expects. It was felt that the Department for Communities and Local Government and/ or Socitm would be best placed to develop the policy on this issue.
7. It was clarified that a more strategic approach should be adopted with regards to TG and local authorities, as it was beyond the remit of this committee, as they have differing issues from central government. This would need more evidence and research. Consequently Richard Steel (RS) stated that Socitm would ensure that the committee continued to have local government representation following the departure of Bill Parslow.

Summary of applications

8. Elaine Adu-Poku provided a snapshot of the type of applications that were rejected and thanked David Hall for his contribution to the resolution of the request for sears.gov.uk. The use of acronyms was discussed, as it was felt that a more pragmatic approach should be adopted. It was stressed that this could only occur with the input from those at ground level.

Process review

9. Sarajane clarified that if COI were to take over the receipt of all domain applications from Ja.net, it would result in COI having to manage the relationship with all ISPs, which could be quite time consuming.
10. Turning to the reference numbers allocated to each application, Ja.net is not able to allocate one reference number to the domain name, throughout the entire application process, due to the way statistics are collated. It was also noted that an applicant could appeal as many times as they wanted

Role of Committee

11. It was decided that if an appeal related to a local authority or a devolved administration it would be flagged for the attention of the relevant committee member. They would still be sent to all members as is the current practice.
12. Due to the changing scope of the committee – all government websites it was decided that those responsible for .police and .nhs.uk should also be approached for committee representation in addition to the MOD representative.

DNS security extensions

13. Damian gave a brief overview of the work being undertaken on the extension of the DNS protocol in order to authenticate responses. This will go live in upcoming months.

AOB

14. RS asked if he could blog about his attendance at this meeting. It was felt that this was not an issue, as all information discussed at the meeting was available on request.

Actions

1. EAP- Send Committee Members the Public Sector Online document
2. EAP- Send Committee Members details of how to join Digital People @ COP
3. EAP- Provide examples of approved and rejected domain names
4. COI- Arrange representation from NHS and the Police