

COMPANIES HOUSE STEERING BOARD

Minutes of meeting held on 24 May 2007

Present

Andrew Summers	Chairman
Gareth Jones	Chief Executive
Mike Hathorn	Independent member
Nigel Paul	Independent member
Alex Jablonowski	Independent member
Dan Bernard	Independent member
Geoff Dart	Director of CLG, DTI
Peter Mason	Director of FRM, DTI
Tom Smith	Director of Customer Delivery
Tim Knighton	Director of Finance
Kevan Robinson	Interim Director of e-Transformation and Technology
Phil Bushby	Director of Human Resources

Apologies

John Alty	Director General, of FM, DTI
Tim Moss	Director of Corporate Strategy

Chairman's introduction

1. Andrew Summers formally welcomed Gareth Jones as new Chief Executive of Companies House and Phil Bushby as new Director of Human Resources.
2. The Steering Board had held a very productive away day, which had helped to consolidate the Board as a group and to focus attention on a customer-centred approach for the longer term. Tim Moss would produce a pack based on the away day's output, which would provide a framework for the future work of the Board.
3. Gareth felt that the away day had highlighted external members' appetite to look at governance issues. Geoff Dart agreed that this was relevant in the light of the Capability Review. The relationship between Companies House and CLG offered a model on legislation and its application. Gareth and Geoff would look at this relationship in the wider DTI and Whitehall contexts. Gareth would also consider in the longer term the question of Companies House governance in light of possible machinery of government changes and other future developments.

Minutes of the last meeting

4. Agreed as a true record.
5. Mike Hathorn gave a brief introduction to the Audit Committee's meeting, which would follow the Steering Board. The main topic would be the end of year accounts for 2006/07, which would be looked at from a pre-audit point of view.
6. The Audit Committee would also look at the internal audit report and the statement of internal control.

Steering Board briefs

7. Dan Bernard raised the issue of STAR and Companies House's target for e-take-up. It was important to maintain momentum, to ensure that Companies House maintained its position as an innovator in providing government services, and that its goals should not be undermined by the government service transformation agenda. Tim Moss and Tom Smith would provide an update on STAR and it would be included in the agenda for the Steering Board's next meeting.
Action: Tim Moss/Tom Smith
8. Nigel Paul sought reassurance that Companies House had sufficiently qualified staff to cope with all the change it was facing. Phil Bushby and Kevan Robinson outlined arrangements for change management at Companies House, which were based around portfolio management for projects. Gareth emphasised that it was essential to maintain a culture which embraced change at more junior levels. The Board accepted that arrangements were sufficiently robust.
9. Tim Knighton outlined the financial position. May had been a good month, with income up and costs under control. Earlier measures for control were bearing fruit. The cash position was positive and future briefs would include a line to show contingency arrangements.
Action: Tim Knighton
10. Peter Mason said that Companies House's request for a loan from DTI had been included in the department's bid to Treasury and would be discussed as part of CSR 07 negotiations.

CHIPS/Companies Act implementation

11. Tim Knighton outlined measures to monitor progress on the development of CHIPS and to ensure effective decision making across a series of evidence based criteria. The governing principles were to keep things simple: to minimise change and risk. Where choices were made it was important to avoid over-commitment.
12. The programme had now completed its work on requirements and was looking at solutions. A decision would be made in June about the platform CHIPS would provide for the Companies Register. The decision would be based on evidence of the ability to deliver without compromising quality, and on the timing of CHIPS to support implementation of the Companies Act 2006. The decision would be informed by a detailed review of go-live criteria by Internal Audit and the Office for Government Commerce. CHIPS remained on track for delivery in October.
13. Dan pointed out that the hardware platform for CHIPS was now four years old. Would a refresh help with testing and reduce risk? Kevan said that we are in the process of reviewing our hardware to determine if improvements could be possible. Alex received reassurance that arrangements were in place to provide strong support during the days following cut-over to CHIPS.
14. Andrew concluded that the Board was satisfied that a process was in place to come to an initial decision by the end of June on the platform for the companies register. The Board would like to see a paper on arrangements for handling issues which might arise post-cut-over.
Action: Tim Knighton

Annual Report

15. The Board discussed the draft Annual Report and members put forward suggestions for amendment. These would be actioned and a revised text circulated. All figures in the draft were pre-audit and would be finalised for the Audit Committee meeting on 27 June.

Action: Tim Moss

Any other business

16. The Steering Board would meet in London on 27 June and Mike suggested that Board members also attend the Audit Committee on that day.

17. The next full meeting would be on 12 September in Edinburgh. Gareth pointed out that Companies House would be piloting CHIPS in Edinburgh during September and Steering Board members would be able to speak to staff about their experience with the new system.

18. The meeting in London in December would be moved from the first week of the month to the second. Dates were needed for 2008 and it would be useful to hold the away day and a meeting back-to-back again.

19. Mike, who would stand down as Chair of the Audit Committee after the meeting in September, pointed out that internal and external audit would be meeting on 6 November. It would be useful if a new Chair of the Audit Committee could have been selected by then, as this meeting would be a good opportunity to become familiar with relevant issues.

Companies House May 2007