Categorisation of the Parliamentary Digital Service feedback

Parliamentary Process
- Very few respondents disagreed with the decision to set up a parliamentary Digital Service.
- Many respondents were concerned that the change might amount to little more than a reorganisation of PICT. In order to achieve increasing satisfaction with Parliament's digital services, other parts of Parliament needed to change.
- There are lessons to learn from the creation of the Government Digital Service, but our Digital Service will not be a replica. We have different users and different aims.
- Many respondents assumed that the Head of Digital would sit on the Management Boards; some argued that the HoD should not do so. There were also different views about line management arrangements.
- The new arrangements must strike a balance between how the two Houses specify and prioritise the projects they want to see implemented and the Head of Digital's strategic oversight of what will work best for end users (whatever their level of involvement or prior knowledge).
- Can governance structures be simplified?
- Decision making must be less opaque, with clearer prioritisation of projects, particularly projects which are not bicameral in nature.
- What does accountability to the public look like?
- How will the new Service be structured? How will it relate to other parts of the two Houses with a stake in digital services, or to other interested parties (eg PED)? Can silos (within the department and across Parliament) be knocked down?
- Several respondents took issue with the limited attention to the non-web aspects of PICT's work in the mySociety report, echoing points made in the response of the two Clerks to that report.
- Should the Digital Service operate with pay and conditions aligned to Parliament or to the market?
- What technical skills will the post require?

Management
- Impact of uncertainty on financial planning, HR, accommodation moves and training
- Significant impediments to moving away from the Joint Department model were noted, as were concerns about how this model has worked in practice. For example, it was suggested that setting up PICT as a separate entity to the two Houses it supports had added bureaucracy and complexity.
- Change fatigue: people need assurance about roles, jobs, terms and conditions.
- What do other Parliaments do?
- One respondent argued that the UK Parliament's web services are significantly under-resourced compared to other parties. Does "broadly cost neutral" mean there will be cuts in some areas later to pay for more web staff?

Delivery

- Collaboration, trust and closer working with staff in other parts of the two Houses were highlighted as key issues.
- How will the changes assist both Houses in agreeing on how to exploit the website and other digital platforms?
- Digital ways of working in supporting the internal functions of the two Houses need to be acknowledged. These do not necessarily involve the internet. "Legacy software" is often fundamental to the work of Parliament and should not be dismissed as out-of-date.
- There should be recognition of the variety of users of Parliament's digital services, including internal users, with different needs and priorities.
- The Digital Service must work in line with information management best practice.
- Parliament needs better information about who uses its website and what they want from it.
- There need to be clearer governance arrangements for the website. Who is its editor?
- What will be the timetable for recruitment of the new HoD and the launch of the new Service? Will there need to be an interim appointment to cover any gap after D-PICT retires?
- How will the momentum of the project and staff morale be maintained: importance of continuing communications about what is happening.
- Decisions have to be implemented: too often, decisions are not fully implemented or there is an unclear differentiation between policy decision and discussion.
- Don't forget that some people aren't or won't be digital – Parliament needs to cater for their needs as well.
- Should the new Service be set up alongside PICT and WIS and built up gradually, following the GDS model?
- What is digital? Can we move away from digital being seen as an add-on to print?
- What does it all mean? How can we respond when we don't know what is going to happen?
- More flexible working methods, including internal project application rounds for staff. Can we make projects and assurance requirements less bureaucratic? What can we learn from the Government Digital Service?
- Induction arrangements: how will we ensure that the Head of Digital understands how we work and what we want from them?
- Could the Digital Service make more use of cheap technology solutions eg open source?
- Should the Digital Service have a monopoly of supply of IT services?
- Skills required in the Digital Service. Importance of user experience skills.
- Should we plan now for a further review, in case it doesn't work out?

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