LEADERSHIP GROUP

Alert Messaging System

Executive summary

1. As part of business continuity arrangements, the Parliament is subscribing to a web-based alert messaging system that allows messages to be sent by email and/or SMS text in the event of an incident or emergency to SPS.

2. The purpose of this paper is to remind LG of how the system works before we roll out further information about it to SPS and test its effectiveness as part of our business continuity arrangements.

Issues and Options

3. The primary function of the system is to push out messages to staff although responses to messages can also be collected. The alert messaging system is designed for use in the event of a significant disruption which invokes business continuity measures.

4. Data can be uploaded to the alert messaging system from the e-HR system. This relies on staff adding their contact details such as emails and mobile numbers and keeping these up-to-date for the Parliament to use in an emergency. A process is in place for updating the SPS details upload from the e-HR system regularly at the beginning of each month.

5. Limited trials of the alert messaging system have been successfully carried out but in order to ensure that it works properly it should now be tested with all staff. This would give a better indication of the likely response in a real emergency situation.

6. As things stand, SPS staff are not fully aware of the existence of the alert messaging system. A full explanation of the system will be important for staff buy-in so that they understand how it will be used and in which type of circumstance, and the way that contact details can be uploaded to it from e-HR.

7. Data can also be uploaded to the alert messaging system via spreadsheets and contact details have also been collected for other building users (e.g. Office of the Solicitor) whose details are not collected and stored via the e-HR system.

8. For a successful test of the alert messaging system, staff will need to be informed in advance and be given time to update their details on e-HR system. These updated contact details will be uploaded at the beginning of the month. The proposed timescales would therefore be:

   - 1 December – notice to staff and request to complete contact details on e-HR system
- 9 January – upload of e-HR information to alert messaging system
- 10/11 January – checking of data upload; reminders to staff of imminent test, notice on Intranet and in corporate bulletin
- 13 January – test messages issued
- Evaluation and next steps

**Resource Implications**

9. The alert messaging system is administered by Public Information and Publications and is part of the team’s day-to-day work and responsibility under Business Continuity.

10. The e-HR system is administered by the Human Resources Office and is part of the team’s day-to-day work and responsibility.

**Dependencies**

11. The alert messaging system is part of the Parliament’s Business Continuity response mechanism. It is password protected and can be operated externally through the web by a limited number of staff who are trained to do so as part of our BC arrangements.

**Governance issues**

12. The alert messaging system is operated by Groupcall who fully comply with UK Data Protection legislation.

13. Staff are already aware via the e-HR system that they are being asked to give contact details in case the Parliament needs to contact them in an emergency.

14. Aside from agreed testing purposes, the alert messaging system is only invoked via the Incident Communications Team with the agreement of the Incident Management Team.

**Publication Scheme**

15. This paper can be published.

**Next steps**

16. Staff will need to be informed of the purpose of the alert messaging system and encouraged to complete and update their details on the e-HR system for that purpose. An email to all SPS staff and a notice in the Corporate Bulletin would be the recommended route to begin this process. A dedicated page on the intranet for business continuity matters would also be useful as a more permanent point of reference.
Decision

17. The Leadership Group is invited to note the next steps in the roll out of the alert messaging system and consider the timing of such an announcement and test for their business areas.

Public Information and Publications/Human Resources
November 2011