WEB AND INTRANET CONTENT POLICY

Background

1. This paper introduces the web content policy on retention and disposal, originally referred to as a draft archiving policy in OMG/008/09, and seeks OMG approval for the policy and its implementation as part of the web project.

2. OMG/008/09, previous OMG meetings, and a redweb presentation on 13 February 2009, have already highlighted the need for a comprehensive content review as part of the web project. This policy provides a framework for this review, and for managing the retention of website content thereafter.

3. The policy categorises web content and recommends retention periods based on the principles of good information and records management, and web usability. The policy has also been developed to facilitate the website’s compliance with the legislative requirements of FoI. Implementation will require the deletion of significant amounts of content from the current sites, without losing important and current content, and retaining material that is considered an official record. This latter category of material will remain accessible on the website from 1999 onwards. Other categories of material have been identified, and retention periods assigned that adequately reflects the purpose of the information.

4. The draft archiving policy was approved by the Web Board and IMS panel in April 2009, and has been reviewed and expanded following a comprehensive content audit of both the website and SPEIR in June 2009.

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Timing

6. If OMG approves the policy it will be implemented following content review meetings which are scheduled to take place September to October 2009. Following these meetings there will be some content that can be deleted from the sites ahead of content migration (target end 2009). Other content to be deleted will be removed during the delivery phase of the project, which does not as yet have an agreed timescale.

7. The policy will continue to be applied after the new website is launched and will be developed over time to reflect content on the site and to
comply with any new legislative requirements and records management good practice.

8. This policy will be part of a wider content policy that will be developed during the course of the project and beyond, and will include good and acceptable practice in terms of publishing material to our website. This will cover design and branding, metadata, page identification details, quality criteria, style and language, usability and accessibility. The policy will build on current guidance covering these areas which is available on SPEIR at: http://intranet/organisation/offices-h-z/spice/pubGuide/guidance.aspx. As new roles and responsibilities, including workflows and approvals are discussed and put in place, these will also be added to the documents.

9. The web content policy will be reviewed and updated annually.

Discussion

10. The current websites currently have around 50,000 pages, which makes them difficult to navigate and reduces their searchability. There is a significant amount of outdated content which clutters the sites and reduces the trust users have in the accuracy of the information found. Storing too much information slows a website down and makes the search function more likely to return too many results which are out of date or not relevant, obscuring the actual information sought.

11. As well as the usability context, migrating the existing amount of content onto a new site will approximately double the cost of the project, based on an estimate from redweb in March 2009.

12. It was agreed by SLT and OMG that the project provided the opportunity to undertake a content review and develop a migration strategy, with a view to rationalising the amount of quantity and improving the quality of the content to be migrated to the new site. Reducing the amount of material before and during migration will reduce the time and costs involved in this process and result in a more navigable and searchable site.

13. The policy has been developed to assist this process by providing guidance on the information we will present on our website, and for how long. It will provide a platform for managing retention of content on the website thereafter.

14. The basic premise is that we will only keep information on our websites for as long as it is current or we consider our website users need such ready access and it is cost-effective to provide this online. When it is out of date or no longer required to be on our website it will either be disposed of or, if it is a corporate record and not already captured
elsewhere, it must be saved according to our records management policy.

15. SPCB records are currently created and maintained in network shared drives in order to ensure all records are managed according to corporate policies and to avoid unnecessary duplication. Copies of records on the website are treated as convenience copies, with the original being maintained on network shared drives along with other records.

16. If approved it will be introduced to business areas during meetings with Office Heads from July to September, and content review meetings with content owners in September and October. A migration strategy will be drawn up following this activity. This in turn will feed contract negotiations with redweb and will allow us to agree a realistic fixed cost for migration, allowing us to plan effectively for the work that will need to be undertaken in-house.

17. It will be the responsibility of the Web Manager to keep the policy up to date following its initial implementation, reporting to the Web Board.

Resource Implications

18. As noted above, migrating the existing amount of content onto a new site could approximately double the cost of the project. There is no available budget for such a rise in cost, which would compromise the overall success of the project by increasing its timeline or launching a website that cannot realise the benefits of improved user experience, search and accessibility. There are major cost savings to be found from reducing the amount of content on the website at this stage, and this policy provides a framework for achieving that.

19. The content review phase of the project, which will enable the policy to be implemented, is expected to take 5 months and will require significant staff time from all business areas. In the first instance the web project team and eServices Team have spent almost 2 months over the summer recess planning the reviews and conducting initial assessment of web content, following a comprehensive audit of content and ownership.

20. During this period the Project Manager and other team members have been speaking to Office Heads to provide a project update and further information about the content review process, including the time commitment required from content owners at this and in future stages of the project. A small team comprising staff from SPICe and members of the web project team has been convened to conduct the content review meetings with content owners in September and October. Each meeting is expected to take approximately 2 hours.
21. Implementing the policy over the course of the project will be the responsibility of the eServices Team and content owners (who will be expected to update remaining pages by checking and updating or removing links), although there will be a resource requirement from the Production Applications Team for the actual deletion of content from our servers. Once the policy is approved, the team working on the content review will be able to quantify the amount of content that will require attention at this phase, and the required level of resource will be requested from BIT.

22. OMG has already noted the requirement to involve staff, notably content owners, further into the project, particularly just before and during migration when a much more detailed review of content will be undertaken. The level of involvement required for each business area will be discussed during the initial content review meetings.

23. There will be an ongoing resource requirement post project. Business areas are being asked to review content annually as good practice, even if it is subject to a defined retention period. If the content falls into the category of material that must always be current, then it should be reviewed and updated, or the content should be confirmed as still up to date and relevant. Otherwise it will be deleted. The Web Editor has ongoing responsibility for implementation of the policy.

Dependencies

24. The major dependency will be commitment from business areas to examine their areas of content. Successful implementation of the policy is dependent on staff availability between July and September, and further into the project, to ensure that all stakeholders are aware of any changes that impact on their business areas. It is also important that content owners and their line managers are aware of and committed to their role in the process.

Equalities Implications

25. Implementation of the policy will allow us to apply good information and records management and to web content which will improve the accessibility and openness of the parliament’s information and therefore of the parliament itself.

26. The web project has a clear objective to improve accessibility of the website. Being selective with migration of content provides a clear opportunity to review language and format, to maximise the proportion of the site that meets AA accessibility standards. What is left will be more relevant and easily navigable for all website users.

Publication Scheme
27. This paper should not be published until a phase 2 contract is awarded.

**Next Steps**

28. The content review work package has been initiated and will be taken forward, using the policy as a tool to assist in the initial assessment of content prior to the content review meetings. The policy and its implications will be introduced to business areas in meetings with Office Heads as well as the content review meetings themselves.

**Decision**

29. OMG is invited to approve the policy and delegate the responsibility for its implementation and maintenance to the Web Board.

Web Board  
July 2009