



THE BETTER GOVERNMENT PROJECT

1. You asked for a note to add detail to my comment that colleagues are focusing too much on the Better Government White Paper [*name later changed to 'Modernising Government'*], and too little on the Better Government project.

The Better Government Project

2. I take it that we are agreed that there is something which might be described as a Better Government project which is challenging, ambitious and large-scale. If so, then, like any large and/or complex project, it should have:

- clear objectives,
- a clearly accountable project leader,
- a clear plan, with milestones,
- supported by a clear and accountable management structure.

3. Furthermore, as the project involves major change, it will need to address what the management schools call “the five Cs”:- these are the five elements of any organisation, none of which can be changed without simultaneously causing change in the others.:-

- **capacity**:- i.e. resources, and in particular staff numbers
- **capability** (or competence):- i.e. staff skills, training, experience and motivation
- **communications**:- including not only communications whilst the change programme is being implemented, but also new ways of communicating once the changes have been implemented
- **culture**:- new relationships, attitudes to innovation etc
- **constitution**:- i.e. organisational structure, reporting lines etc.

Commentary

4. As far as I am aware, the project:

- does not have clear objectives,
- does not have a project manager (although ... sounded as though he is de facto assuming this role when he spoke at ...’s meeting on Tuesday evening),
- does not have a plan or milestones,
- does not have a management structure (although, again, ... seems to be putting one into place within his command) and

- is tackling, in a piecemeal fashion, some (but not all) of the things that need to change, but little attempt is being made to co-ordinate the changes, or relate them to one another.

5. Indeed, almost all activity is, on the face of it, going into preparing the White Paper, which is but a small part of what should be a much wider communication strategy.

6. As I dictate this, I hope that I am being very unfair and am exaggerating the extent of the problem. But I fear that I am not. The track record so far is certainly not good:

- The Government will soon have been in power for nearly two years, but the Better Government project will have achieved nothing, save possibly for the publication of a White Paper. It was you, I think, who told me that the PM believes that we have wasted 18 months.
- The new Civil Service Management Committee will not be making any significant input into the White Paper.
- The Centre for Management and Policy Studies (announced last July) does not yet have a leader or any resources.
- The Policy and Innovation Unit, announced at the same time, is similarly under-resourced and over-stretched.
- The teams that are looking at the various cross-cutting issues are uncoordinated (they report in two different directions), work in different ways and have vague objectives.
- Ministers and officials do not yet seem to be of a single mind as to the focus, style and content of the White Paper.
- IT is being dealt with as a separate strand, rather than something which supports Better Government more generally.
- And the Cabinet Office has no resource allocation for the CMPS, and the PIU, so they are going to have to be found by running down other activities in a currently unplanned way.

7. I would, of course, be glad to discuss. Indeed, I would like help, for I have relevant knowledge and experience. I would also like to see my Unit more involved in the cultural elements of the project, as they will heavily impact upon Whitehall's ability to develop effective and well-appraised policies. But I recognise that the principal problems with the project lie some way outside my current area of responsibility.

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[Cabinet Office
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