



House of Commons  
Commission

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# Response to Sir Kevin Tebbit's Review of the Management and Services of the House of Commons

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## The House of Commons Commission

The Commission is the overall supervisory body of the House of Commons Administration. It prepares and lays before the House the Estimates for the House of Commons Service; it decides most matters of policy; and it appoints staff of the House, and determines their pay, pensions and other conditions of service. The Commission may from time to time increase or reduce the number of House Departments and allocate functions to any House Department.

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The Speaker, Rt Hon Michael J Martin MP (*Labour, Glasgow North East*)

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Leader of the House, Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP (*Labour, Camberwell & Peckham*)

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# Management and Services of the House of Commons

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The Commission announced on 19 October 2006 the appointment of Sir Kevin Tebbit KCB CMG to review the management and services of the House. His report was received by the Commission in June 2007 and published on 25 June 2007 as House of Commons paper HC 685 of Session 2006–07.

The Commission agreed on 12 March 2007 an initial recommendation from the review to re-organise the estates and works functions into a single body. On receipt of the Tebbit review on 18 June 2007, the Commission instructed the Clerk of the House to take steps to begin implementation of recommendations relating to the Office of the Chief Executive in order to prepare for possible implementation of other recommendations.

The report was debated with the Commission's Annual Report in Westminster Hall on 18 October 2007. The Commission has also taken into account the views of the Administration, Audit and Finance and Services Committees and the Board of Management.

Since then the Commission has approved the composition of the new Management Board, organised on functional lines, and the creation of four new departments of the House—Chamber and Committee Services; Information Services; Resources; and Facilities—into which the existing departments will be merged. A new Instrument of Delegation giving effect to these changes to the House of Commons service was approved on 22 October 2007.

This paper provides a full response to all the recommendations in the Tebbit review. The Commission is very grateful to Sir Kevin and his team of House officials for their full and comprehensive report.

## Response

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### Audit Committee

#### ***Recommendation 1***

*A suitably qualified external member of the Audit Committee should become its Chairman. (Paragraph 74)*

The issues raised by this recommendation are not clear cut. While a qualified external Chairman, expert in audit matters, might bring some benefits, these would be offset by the fact that such a Chairman would no longer be able to provide a direct linkage between the two Audit Committees and their parent bodies (the Commission in the case of the Administration Estimate Audit Committee and the Members Estimate Committee in the case of the Members Estimate Audit Committee). The Members Estimate Audit Committee, being a sub-committee of a committee of the House, could not have an external Chairman without a decision of the House. Given the effective way in which the

audit committees are currently working, the Commission and MEC have decided not to make any immediate change to the chairmanship, but will re-examine this recommendation when it next falls vacant.

### **Recommendation 2**

*A rolling programme of NAO value-for-money audits should be instituted. (Paragraph 74)*

The Commission supports the principle of continuing with a strong element of value-for-money (VFM) audits within the overall internal audit programme. Given the NAO's role as the House's external auditor, it is more appropriate if these studies are, as now, conducted by the House's Internal Review Service (IRS) and its audit partner (currently PricewaterhouseCoopers) with technical expertise being sought from the NAO where necessary. The Audit Committee will be working with IRS to develop a three-year rolling plan for VFM studies, to ensure that this work planned and carried out more systematically.

## **Finance and Services Committee**

### **Recommendation 3**

*The Finance and Services Committee should operate more as an arm of the Commission, acting under a clear mandate giving the Committee substantial authority on the Commission's behalf to cover the more routine supervisory issues. (Paragraph 77)*

This recommendation, which reflects the existing position, is accepted.

### **Recommendation 4**

*The Finance and Services Committee should be mandated to scrutinise proposals made by Member Committees or House officials, where these need to be reconciled, before they are considered by the Commission. (Paragraph 78)*

This recommendation, which reflects the existing position, is accepted. The Finance and Services Committee has asked to have drawn to its attention cases where there is a need for such reconciliation or where significant new spending is planned.

### **Recommendation 5**

*The Chairman of Ways and Means should be appointed to the Finance and Services Committee. (Paragraph 79)*

This recommendation is accepted but the suggestion earlier in paragraph 79 that the Chairman of Ways and Means should eventually become the Chairman of the Finance and Services Committee would add unduly to the burdens of that office and is not accepted.

### **Recommendation 6**

*A member of the Finance and Services Committee, selected on the basis of interest and experience, should be appointed to the Audit Committee, 'balanced' by an additional external member. (Paragraph 80)*

This recommendation is accepted. The Commission will ask the Finance and Services Committee to nominate one of its members—preferably with skills and an interest in the audit area—who can be co-opted to the Administration Estimate Audit Committee. A third external member will be sought for the Audit Committee.

## **Administration Committee**

### **Recommendation 7**

*Individual Members on the Administration Committee should be invited to track particular services—for example, catering or IT—on behalf of the Committee as a whole. (Paragraph 81)*

The Administration Committee has considered and rejected this idea in the past, but will reconsider it shortly.

### **Recommendation 8**

*The size of membership of the Administration Committee and of the Finance and Services Committee should be reviewed, on the basis that smaller bodies of Committee members are likely to be more effective. (Paragraph 82)*

The Administration Committee is not convinced that a smaller Committee could represent a wide enough cross-section of the views held by Members. Any reduction in the size of the Committee would remove the representation of smaller parties on the Committee.

## **Clerk of the House/Chief Executive**

### **Recommendation 9**

*The Clerk of the House should continue to perform the dual role of Clerk of the House and Chief Executive/Accounting Officer. (Paragraph 88)*

This recommendation is accepted.

### **Recommendation 10**

*Succession planning at the most senior level should address the need for potential Clerks of the House/Chief Executives to gain senior management experience. (Paragraph 89)*

This recommendation is accepted.

### **Recommendation 11**

*The method of appointment for the Clerk of the House/Chief Executive should, in future, be by means of competition, open to the (inevitably limited) group of suitably qualified candidates, with a Selection Board similar to those employed for Permanent Secretaries to Government Departments. (Paragraph 90)*

This recommendation is noted. The method of appointment for a future Clerk of the House will be kept under review.

## Office of the Chief Executive

### **Recommendation 12**

*The scope of the activities of the Office of the Chief Executive should be expanded to embrace planning and performance management functions in relation to the House Service's objectives and targets, together with an increased communication co-ordination role. (Paragraph 96)*

### **Recommendation 13**

*The Office of the Chief Executive's staffing numbers should be increased, and the post of the Head of the Office should be upgraded, in the light of these additional functions and responsibilities. (Paragraph 98)*

Recommendations 12 and 13 were accepted and fast-tracked by the Commission in July 2007. A head of the new Office has been appointed and the Office will come into effect from 1 January 2008. The Administration Estimate Audit Committee has endorsed the Accounting Officer's recommendation that the expanded role for the Office should include internal audit as well as the functions identified in recommendation 12.

## Delegations

### **Recommendation 14**

*Each Head of Department should receive an annual delegation letter, setting out the objectives and targets to be achieved during the year, the budget allocation for the purpose and the common policies, systems and processes to be used and observed in delivery. (Paragraph 99)*

This recommendation is accepted in principle. The Management Board intends to introduce a new, more integrated, business planning system during 2008/09 that will reflect the unified nature of the new House Service. The resulting plan will cover both corporate and departmental activities, giving a better balance between core services and strategic developments. The plan will incorporate the elements enumerated in this recommendation.

## Performance Management

### **Recommendation 15**

*The House Service should adopt a performance management system based on the Balanced Scorecard and with clear criteria for achieving success, drawn up by the Management Board and the House of Commons Commission. (Paragraph 105)*

Accepted. The Management Board will be considering proposals for the adoption of a performance management system in early 2008. The Board will need to consider how the Balanced Scorecard can be adapted to the particular circumstances of the House Service. The Administration and Finance and Services Committees will be kept informed of progress and consulted where appropriate (see recommendation 16).

### **Recommendation 16**

*One such success criterion should be improved Members' satisfaction with services, measured by more regular 'rolling' surveys of a proportion of Members. (Paragraph 106)*

This recommendation is accepted. The Administration Committee will be consulted in early 2008 on a proposal to introduce a rolling survey of Members. It is anticipated that the survey would also include Members' staff (see recommendation 54)

### **Recommendation 17**

*The performance management system should be underpinned by an activity and functional costing system, together with benchmarking against 'peer' organisations and areas. (Paragraph 107)*

Accepted. Work has begun on development of a functional costing system—the results will be available during 2008/09. The Director General of Resources is working with his counterparts in other parliaments and assemblies in the British Isles to identify areas of parliamentary activity which are suitable for benchmarking.

## **Management Board**

### **Recommendation 18**

*The changes to the composition of the Management Board should be made soon, but with appropriate action taken to ensure that it is not perceived as downgrading the importance of the services provided by those no longer 'on the Board' or their Departments. (Paragraph 112)*

### **Recommendation 19**

*A more strategic Management Board with a slimmed-down executive membership should be created, to comprise: the Clerk of the House/Chief Executive; Deputy Clerk/Chief Operating Officer; Serjeant at Arms/Director of Facilities and Support; Librarian/Director of Information and Communications; Director of Finance and Administration; and Director of Human Resources. (Paragraph 113)*

### **Recommendation 20**

*Two external advisers (non-executive directors) should be appointed to the Management Board, in the expectation that this will prove as successful as it has in Government Departments, in supporting the role of the Chief Executive, as well as in helping the Management Board more generally. (Paragraph 116)*

### **Recommendation 21**

*Individual Heads of Department should have responsibility for delivering agreed cross-cutting objectives or processes on behalf of the Management Board as a whole, acting as senior responsible owners or process owners, on the basis of wide powers granted by the Management Board. (Paragraph 118)*

Recommendations 18–21 have been accepted in principle. In October 2007 the Commission agreed, with immediate effect, to establish a new Management Board to

replace the existing Board of Management. This consists of the Clerk of the House, as Chief Executive and Chairman, four directors general with functional responsibilities and up to two external advisors. The Director of PICT will also attend the Board with executive responsibility for PICT. This latter arrangement will be reviewed in 2009/10.

The Commission also agreed that the six House departments other than PICT should be merged into four new departments broadly aligned with the responsibilities of the Directors General. These will be:

- Chamber and Committee Services—to provide advisory and other services that support the work of the Chamber and Committees (including security and ceremonial).
- Information Services—to inform the work of the House and its Members, and to provide information and access to the public.
- Resources—to provide HR and finance support to the House Service and to administer Members' pay, pensions and allowances.
- Facilities—to provide the accommodation, catering and other facilities required by the House and to maintain the fabric of the buildings.

The aim of the Commission and the Board is to create a fully unified House Service that will provide Members and others with the highest standards of service. Although the full change process will take some time to complete, the new Departments will come into existence on 1 January 2008.

### **Recommendation 22**

*Co-ordinating and cross-cutting groups should be reviewed with the objective of reducing their number and maintaining control over growth in future. (Paragraph 119)*

Accepted. The Office of the Chief Executive will be conducting a review of these groups on behalf on the Management Board.

## **Financial Management**

### **Recommendation 23**

*The Department of Finance and Administration should be strengthened, including by the addition of a management accountant, either by redeployment of staff currently in Departments or by additional external recruitment. (Paragraph 133)*

Accepted. An additional management accountant will be appointed to the new Department of Resources.

### **Recommendation 24**

*Existing financial delegations should be amended to give the Director of Finance and Administration and his senior staff greater control over finance staff in Departments, in terms of performance, professional development and deployment. (Paragraph 133)*

### **Recommendation 25**

*Finance staff in Departments should have a reporting line to the Department of Finance and Administration, as second reporting or countersigning officers for the reports of Departmental finance staff. (Paragraph 133)*

Recommendations 24 & 25 are accepted in principle. Following on from implementation of recommendations 18–21, the Director General of Resources has begun a review of the organisation of finance and procurement that will address the issues raised in these recommendations.

## **Procurement**

### **Recommendation 26**

*The Management Board should conduct a budgetary exercise, led by the Director of Finance and Administration, under which each department would be required to present its plans to the Finance and Services Committee on the basis of alternative funding assumptions, to inform decisions on future financial allocations. (Paragraph 138)*

This recommendation is accepted in principle. Given the re-alignment of departments that is underway, it would not be feasible to undertake such an exercise this year, as reliable budgetary baselines will need to be re-established. However, once the new departments are bedded in, the Director General of Resources and the Office of the Chief Executive will bring to the Commission proposals for implementing this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 27**

*The emphasis of the effort to improve the House's procurement activity as a whole should be on building the expertise of contracts managers in Departments to ensure through life value for money is achieved, and accountability for delivering it pinned down, rather than focus predominantly on initial purchase costs. (Paragraph 146)*

This recommendation is accepted in principle. Following on from implementation of recommendations 18–21, the Director General of Resources has begun a review of the organisation of procurement and contract management, with the aim of making the best use of the House's procurement expertise.

## **Human Resources**

### **Recommendation 28**

*The delegated model in respect of HR functions should be reconsidered, with a view to strengthening strategic and corporate HR functions and removing duplication and diseconomies in the present system. (Paragraph 156)*

This recommendation is accepted in principle. Following on from implementation of recommendations 18-21, the Director General of Resources has begun a review of the organisation of HR (including learning and development) that that will address the issues raised in this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 29**

*A scheme should be introduced to identify and develop internal talent on a House-wide basis, administered by central HR. (Paragraph 156)*

This recommendation is accepted. Steps have already been taken to encourage more cross-departmental careers (in both number and variety). For example a new internal transfer scheme was launched in November 2007. The Director General of Resources will also bring forward proposals for managing the careers of senior staff on a House-wide basis, with the aim of making the best use of the extensive skills and talent available.

### **Recommendation 30**

*The Management Board should include a professionally qualified Director of Human Resources. (Paragraph 157)*

Following on from implementation of recommendations 18–21, the Director General of Resources will be responsible for both HR and finance matters at Board level. He is advised by a professionally-qualified Director of Human Resources Management.

## **Estates and Works**

### **Recommendation 31**

*The Estates and Works Services Directorates should be re-integrated under one Director who would provide overall leadership and ensure coherence, consistency, team working, professionalism and delivery. (Paragraph 169.i)*

Recommendation 31 was accepted and fast-tracked by the Commission in March 2007. A head of the new directorate has been appointed and will be in post full-time from 7 January 2008. Although the full change process will not be complete, the re-integrated directorate will come into existence as part of the new Department of Facilities on 1 January 2008.

### **Recommendation 32**

*A Programme Office should be set up, the functions of which should be worked up in the light of the external adviser's recommendations. (Paragraph 169.iii)*

Accepted. The re-merged directorate will include a programming and planning function, the head of which will report directly to the Parliamentary Director of Estates.

### **Recommendation 33**

*Ownership of the Estates/Works budget and ownership of the Estate strategy should be pinned down clearly so that financial authority and operational responsibilities are fully aligned. (Paragraph 169.v)*

Accepted. It is proposed that, once the Parliamentary Director of Estates is in post, the responsibilities of the post and the associated finance delegations are incorporated in a formal delegation from the Director General of Facilities.

### **Recommendation 34**

*The Serjeant's Finance Unit (SFU) should remain outside the new combined Directorate, as a separate organisation reporting to the Serjeant at Arms: facilitating the works programme in general; assisting the Serjeant at Arms in financial control and governance; and providing the necessary transparency and separation of duties. (Paragraph 169.vi)*

### **Recommendation 35**

*The SFU should be strengthened beyond its existing advisory function. (Paragraph 169.vii)*

Recommendations 34 & 35 are accepted in principle. Most of the functions of the Serjeant's Finance Unit are being incorporated into a new finance unit within the Department of Facilities. This will be separate from the Parliamentary Directorate of Estates, and the head of the finance unit will report directly to the Director General of Facilities. A broader review of business case procedures is currently being undertaken and will take account of these recommendations.

### **Recommendation 36**

*Levels of delegation for works expenditure should be reviewed and harmonised as between the House of Commons and House of Lords to facilitate synchronisation of decision-making on joint projects. (Paragraph 169.viii)*

### **Recommendation 37**

*The House's Resource Framework guidance should be revised in respect of project approval processes, with clarification of what constitutes 'works', 'leases', 'consultancy', etc. (Paragraph 169.ix)*

Recommendations 36 & 37 are accepted, and work is in progress.

### **Recommendation 38**

*Training of project managers should be given high priority; greater reliance on bringing in project managers from the private sector may be required. (Paragraph 169.x)*

Agreed. Project management is recognised as a skills requirement across Parliament. If internal resources have a good grounding in project management skills and experience, then they have the advantage over external recruits as they can recognise the specific issues relating to the organisation that can affect the ability of projects to deliver their objectives. Following an internal audit in 2006, actions to strengthen project management capacity are already in hand with the aim of creating a pool of experienced internal project managers for the longer term. In the short term, experienced external project managers will be required and part of their duties will include mentoring internal staff in order to assist the development of an internal skills base.

## Connecting Parliament with the Public

### **Recommendation 39**

*The House should endorse the Administration Committee's proposals for a dedicated space for learning. (Paragraph 188)*

On 12 June 2007 the House resolved that...

...this House approves the First Report of the Administration Committee, on Improving Facilities for Educational Visitors to Parliament (House of Commons Paper No. 434); and endorses the Committee's proposals, including a dedicated space for educational visitors to be provided on or off the Estate complemented by engagement with those who do not visit Westminster.

Options for how to provide the enhanced education facilities were considered by the Administration Committee in November. The Committee agreed that a fuller feasibility study should be carried out on one of the options.

### **Recommendation 40**

*The Parliamentary website and the internet generally should be regarded as a key element in fostering close connections between Parliament and the public, and crucially the younger generation, and should be developed and funded accordingly as a priority. (Paragraph 196)*

This recommendation is accepted. The key role of the website in connecting with the public is recognised and underpins recent work to improve the site. Appropriate funding will be provided.

### **Recommendation 41**

*The Group on Information for the Public should remain the official-led organisation responsible for developing policy and programmes in this area, but should be given a stronger executive role under the chairmanship of the Director of Information and Communications, mandated by the Management Boards of both Houses and allocated a budget for this purpose. (Paragraph 202)*

This recommendation is accepted in principle. The re-alignment of the departments that is taking place in response to recommendations 18–21, will bring a number of major elements of the GIP programme together within the new Department of Information Services. This will give the Director General of Information Services greater executive and budgetary control of the programme. In future, the role of GIP will be to advise the Director General of Information Services on the development of policy and programmes in this area.

### **Recommendation 42**

*The House Service should actively support Members in making best use of the Communications Allowance, facilitating where possible savings in joint procurement of capital equipment and top-of-the-line software for publishing hard copy newsletters as well as the design of modern interactive websites. (Paragraph 206)*

This recommendation is noted and will be taken into account when the operation of the Allowance is reviewed by the Members Estimate Committee.

## **Service Delivery**

### **Recommendation 43**

*The Clerk of the House should delegate authority to one or more principal deputies to take on more of the task of running the Clerk's Department. (Paragraph 217)*

This recommendation is accepted in principle. As part of the implementation of recommendations 18-21, the Clerk Assistant has been designated as the Director General of Chamber and Committee Services.

### **Recommendation 44**

*Closer working between the Clerk's Department and the Library in support of select committees should be developed further. (Paragraph 217)*

Accepted. A project is under way to develop a new staffing model for the House's researchers and policy analysts that will provide a better and more flexible service to committees and individual Members.

### **Recommendation 45**

*The broader issue of a more proactive House service, to facilitate services to Members and consider the provision of new services, should be examined, in terms of both style and content. This may be a suitable issue for the Management Board. (Paragraph 217)*

This recommendation is accepted in principle. The new, more integrated, business planning system referred to under recommendation 14, combined with a performance management system, should provide a framework within which both the Board and departments can review the services provided to Members, and consider how they might be developed and enhanced. The Board will continue to consult the Administration Committee and Members more generally through, amongst other mechanisms, the proposed rolling surveys, to ensure that the House Service is aware of Members views on services and of their evolving needs.

### **Recommendation 46**

*The Library should continue to shift resources from areas where demand is lessening to those where demand is growing, based on a developing cost-effectiveness programme. (Paragraph 221)*

This recommendation is accepted.

### **Recommendation 47**

*The Library should review the prospects for more joint working with the House of Lords Library. (Paragraph 222)*

Accepted. Regular meetings between the two Libraries to discuss issues of common interest already take place. The Librarians of the two Houses will establish a working party tasked with making recommendations on further joint working during 2008/09.

### **Recommendation 48**

*The Editor of the Official Report should review the means by which Members are given the opportunity to check the texts of their speeches prior to publication. (Paragraph 224)*

This recommendation is accepted. Members can now request that the Hansard text of a speech is emailed to their parliamentary account for pre-publication checking. This facility is available for “timed” speeches in the Chamber and in Westminster Hall other than those made in the Adjournment debate at the end of the day.

### **Recommendation 49**

*A client relations group should be established within the Serjeant at Arms Department to provide a more responsive and integrated service to Members for accommodation and facilities, including a 'one-stop shop' service. It should be achieved by internal redeployment of staff and headed by a senior manager dedicated to this Member-facing role. (Paragraph 234)*

### **Recommendation 50**

*The head of the client relations group would underpin the role of the Serjeant at Arms as Facilities Director at Management Board level, which will be crucial in ensuring that a positive engagement with Members' day-to-day requirements is drawn upon to inform corporate planning. (Paragraph 235)*

Recommendations 49 & 50 are accepted in principle. The new Department of Facilities will incorporate a client relations function whose head will report to the Director General of Facilities. Consideration will be given as to how this concept can be extended to provide a ‘one-stop shop’ covering a broad range of House services.

### **Recommendation 51**

*Improved on-line information should be provided to Members about their allowances and expenditure, subject to the outcome of a feasibility study. (Paragraph 245)*

This recommendation is accepted. A feasibility study has been conducted and the Advisory Panel on Members Allowances has been consulted on the outcome. A business case for the development of a system to provide this on-line information is being prepared.

### **Recommendation 52**

*Benchmarking of catering services should be conducted thoroughly in the interests of quality and value for money. (Paragraph 252)*

Accepted. An initial benchmarking exercise has already been undertaken, and the results reported to the Administration Committee. The results are being used to underpin development of a new catering strategy. Benchmarking will continue to be used to assess the performance of catering services and inform planning and decision-making.

### **Recommendation 53**

*The Cabinet Office Independent Reviewer and Central Sponsor for Information Assurance should be invited to conduct a health check of Parliamentary IT plans and delivery. (Paragraph 260)*

Accepted in principle. A health check of Parliamentary IT plans and delivery will be conducted during 2008. The Cabinet Office Independent Reviewer is advising on the conduct of this health check.

### **Recommendation 54**

*The rolling surveys of Members' satisfaction, which we have recommended as part of the Management Board's performance measurement system, should also seek the views of a representative cross-section of Members' staff. (Paragraph 264)*

Accepted—see response to recommendation 16.

## **House of Lords**

### **Recommendation 55**

*The possibility of providing more services jointly with the House of Lords should be explored, in the interests of efficiency, with a view to the eventual establishment of more joint Departments. (Paragraph 272)*

This recommendation is accepted in principle. The Commission recognises that joint working can be beneficial where it meets the requirements of both Houses. Many services are already provided on a shared basis, including works and estates, archives, security, education, visitor management and ICT. With the exception of ICT—where PICT is being created as a joint department, these services are delivered by one House on behalf of both. While specific proposals would be considered on their merit, active exploration of options would be better undertaken once the current re-organisation of the House departments is completed.

No further joint departments are planned at present, and any new joint department could only be created with the agreement of the House of Lords. The Commission has approved the formal vesting of PICT as a joint department on 1 April 2008. It would be prudent to review the success of PICT before extending this model to other services. In addition to the “health check” in recommendation 53, a wider review of the operation of the Parliamentary (Joint Departments) Act 2007 will be undertaken in 2009/10.

## **Grants to Inter-parliamentary Associations**

### **Recommendation 56**

*The House of Commons Commission should take over responsibility for making grants-in-aid to the four inter-parliamentary bodies. (Paragraph 275)*

In December 2007 the Commission agreed in principle to take on responsibility for making grants-in-aid to the four inter-parliamentary bodies from April 2008. Effective

mechanisms for managing this new relationship will need to be put in place. Under a grant-in-aid arrangement, the staff of the four groups would not become staff of the House.