**THE BETTER GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE**

**Executive Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting held at the Institute for Government on 6th October 2015**

**Present:** Richard Mottram (Chair)

Robin Butler

Roger Dawe

Christopher Foster

Tom Legg

Leigh Lewis

Peter Owen

Aaron Ritchie

Adam Sharples

**Apologies:** Penny Boys

Paul Britton

Geoffrey Chipperfield

Alun Evans

Peter Makeham

Barbara Moorhouse

Martin Stanley

Phillip Ward

**Minutes of the Meeting on 8th September 2015 and matters arising**

The minutes were agreed.

Paul Britton was completing the final draft of the third sector paper which would be shown to Mind and St. Mungo’s before publication. Leigh Lewis asked for the copy for St. Mungo’s to be sent via him; he would consider who might be best placed to comment. (It was also agreed at the 8th September meeting that a copy of the revised paper would be sent to the Comptroller and Auditor General seeking information about whether there was a body of information on achieving consistency of treatment in the commissioning process between charities and private companies.)

**Updates**

* Robin Butler’s preliminary discussion with Lord Burns had indicated some concern that the relatively junior supporting staff dealing with the FOI Act inquiry might not grasp some significant aspects. The focus seemed to be concentrated too narrowly on ministers, disregarding the inhibiting effect on officials of knowing that written advice, however tentative or speculative, might be published. One option that was likely to be considered was a time limitation similar to the arrangements for Cabinet papers.
* It was agreed that we should not at this stage seek to submit evidence to PACAC’s Kids Company inquiry. We should however keep an eye on its progress and be ready to comment if that seemed necessary.
* Sir Jeremy Heywood had delivered a very competent lecture at the IfG on the role of the Cabinet Secretary. The overall tone seemed consistent with BGI’s approach. It was clear that the re-combined duties of Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service would not allow him to devote much time to civil service matters, but he had pointed out that the appointment of a CEO for the civil service would be helpful in that regard.

**Blog: “The Omnipresent Osborne”**

After some discussion of the risk that the piece might seem too personalised it was agreed on balance that it should be published in its present form with some minor amendments, including the adoption of a more eye-catching title. **Richard Mottram** will bring it to the attention of a contact at the Financial Times.

**Contacts with potential fund raisers**

Peter Owen said that the paper briefly reported the stage that had now been reached.

In discussion the following main points were made:

* Arguably some of the big funding organisations we were now approaching might be inclined to favour a more ambitious structure with a larger permanent staff than suggested in the prospectus. However that might be seen as an attempt to replicate the IfG’s role; our key selling point was that we were practitioners, not theorists. It was always envisaged that the outline in the prospectus might develop in discussion with potential funders.
* It would be helpful in taking matters forward with the Gulbenkian foundation to let the Director have some dates when Leigh Lewis, Richard Mottram and Robin Butler would be available for the dinner he had offered to host. **Leigh Lewis** will clear some dates with the other two.
* Alun Evans had asked for advice on which of our members might be able to make contact with Eliza Manningham-Buller, the incoming chair of the Wellcome Foundation. **Richard Mottram** said that he would do this at the appropriate stage.

**Alun Evans’ lecture on home rule for Scotland**

It was noted that the lecture had been well reported in the media.

**Enquiry from RIPA International**

**Richard Mottram** said that he would follow up the request for a former Permanent Secretary to co-present a development course for non-UK permanent secretaries.

**Other business**

The following issues were discussed under other business:

* It seemed odd that the Kids Company inquiry should be undertaken by PACAC rather than the PAC. The PAC had seemed strangely reluctant to inquire into the circumstances surrounding the seeking of a formal direction by Accounting Officers. **Robin Butler** undertook to ask the House of Lords library to carry out some research into the frequency with which the PAC had considered such matters
* Michael Gove’s appointment as Secretary of State for Justice had been well received by the judiciary.
* It would be appropriate to seek to make contact with the restructured Labour opposition. It was agreed, after considering approaches through individual contacts, that **Richard Mottram** should write to Tom Watson, the Shadow Minister for the Cabinet Office.
* Sir Bob Kerslake has been asked by the Labour opposition to undertake a review of the Treasury. We had a number of concerns about the focus of the Treasury on policy development outside its area of expertise and the weakening of its traditional role as a ministry of finance. **Peter Owen** will draft a letter for Richard Mottram to send suggesting that it might be useful for some of us to have an informal chat with Sir Bob Kerslake as he embarks on his inquiry.
* **Richard Mottram** will mention our concerns about developments at the Treasury to Sir Amyas Morse when he sees him shortly.
* Rumour had it that the government intended to proceed swiftly with dealing with the EVEL issue by amending the standing orders of the House of Commons notwithstanding the objections that had been raised.
* Phillip Ward had agreed to write a paper on hidden subsidies and had asked for advice on sources of information from **Adam Sharples** and **Martin Stanley**.

The next meeting will be held at 10.15 am on Tuesday 3rd November.

6th October 2015