Draft Minutes of the Basic Principles sub-group meeting held on 1st May 2009, 1000-1200 hours, Room 'P', Portcullis House, Westminster

Chair: Stephen Darvill (Logica)
Rapporteur: Dave Wright (EURIM)

SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

- The Subgroup's aim was to produce a set of 'basic principles' of information governance, including a checklist and illustrative diagram. This would be aimed at MPs and political advisors for them to consider in drafting and reviewing legislation.

- The Subgroup decided to abandon the conventional checklist approach of ticking boxes in favour of 'core package' comprising an animated Powerpoint presentation with a 'Voice Over Script and an accompanying summary text. This will constitute the core message for the other Information Governance subgroups. The main aim is to foster understanding of the information governance issues that have to be taken into account prior to policy making.

- It was suggested that a good way to educate the target audience of parliamentarians and prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs) and the 'Class of 2010' about the elements of Information Governance was to run a competition, for which they will be the judges, on how to portray the issues. The core package, once approved by the Subgroup, should be sent to companies specialising in visualisation techniques as an example, with an invitation for them to improve it.

- Such a competition would oblige the PPCs to study both the techniques and the issues, and may be the best way to foster understanding. The prize for them is a lottery draw to choose who will have the right to invite the winner of the competition to help build their campaign website. The contestants would also receive kudos, contacts and publicity.

- Prospective 'contestants' will be identified and invited to compete, while PPCs will also be alerted to the competition through EURIM contact lists. It is hoped that videos produced by the animators can be posted on the EURIM website, and the PPCs asked to vote electronically in judging them.

1.   Introduction

1.1   The Chair welcomed those present, and invited them to introduce themselves.

1.2   All present were reminded that the ToR for the Basic Principles Subgroup were to prepare a short briefing document for Parliamentarians, prospective parliamentary candidates (PPCs), policy advisers and policy makers that provides a clear understanding of what information governance (IG) is, to help them understand their role as policy makers.

2.   Application of draft 'Words for Diagram'

2.1   The 'Words for the Diagram' document, circulated to Subgroup members in advance of the meeting, is an attempt to encapsulate on one page the essential message we wished to convey, in association with the concept diagram. Only one comment was received in feedback, and this, along with any other approved suggestions, would be incorporated in a revised version. Most found the words succinct and potentially suitable for the proposed voice-over video, and/or could be printed out to read in association with a video clip.

2.2   There appeared to be some confusion about the proposed actions. While some thought that the words should reinforce the visual message, and that the words were intended to be developed for the basic set of principles, others held that the slides may provide the 'wallpaper' behind a presentation, and that that we should not get into providing exact definitions – there were simply too many of them. It was agreed that the key messages may be conveyed differently.

2.3   Once we are content that the Powerpoint slide plus the words is the basis for the exercise, this will constitute our core message for the other subgroups, who should choose their own words. The point was made that the subgroups might expect to use a common terminology, but it was acknowledged that this would not help achieve our aim of producing a succinct briefing, and there is a danger that if we do create a common terminology, people would not look at it.

2.4   In the political context, preparations are being made for the presentation of manifestos at approaching party conferences, by which time high-level policy commitments would be confirmed. Information passed to those drafting the manifestos during the next few weeks is therefore extremely important, as anything received after July will be unlikely to affect the top level decisions. Messages permeating round the 'political village' will prepare people for recommendations that cross-refer to actions: we should ensure that information governance (IG) material should as soon as possible be part of that circulating information, so that it could contribute to understanding the relevant issues in the various debates.

3.   Feedback on Leonard Anderson's concept diagram

3.1   The other subgroups in the Concept Diagram were added as examples; the 7 Concepts slides were the main ones, and the video clip would be restricted to these. A printed postcard version was noted, and seen as an ideal 'aide memoire'. It was noted that this is potentially very useful to politicians, because it can be easily carried in a pocket for reference when needed. However, this should not be oversimplified: IG is a complex issue with several elements, and should be conveyed as such.

3.2   A suggestion was made that the term 'concept' might be replaced by 'dimension'. A debate ensued on what the diagram should be called, culminating in agreement that a title was needed for ready reference. People will ideally use it to challenge policy initiatives against it. A suitable descriptor might be 'guide', e.g. 'the Illustrated Guide to Information Governance' – shortened to IG[2]! But a title was needed that implies a guide to the use of the reader's critical faculties.

4.   Video-clip, visualisation techniques

4.1   A sequence of slides was presented to illustrate the Debategraph technique, which combines argument visualisation with collaborative wiki debate. This enables the breakdown of information into granular pieces which can then be connected in meaningful ways with different positions and arguments clearly juxtaposed in a consistent structure that reflects sound argumentation principles.

4.2   The technique was applied to the 7 concepts diagram as an example of how it might be treated, while a flash video was also shown, as an additional or alternative approach. This structure can be embedded in an iPhone or a website to be distributed as required. The 7 concepts were explored

through an hierarchical structure of separate linked component spheres (an example can be seen at http://debategraph.org/). Text can be layered and links to other documents can be added to the different components as required, and every aspect of the structure can be directly addressed.

4.3   A potential problem is that the distilled structure of the Concept Diagram is not easily decompressible for someone looking at the issues for the first time, and therefore the meaning may be obscure. At some point, definitions and detail would need to be added, but at this stage we should focus on the overall process and sense of direction.

4.4   Discussion followed on the capabilities and advantages of the technique. It was considered that multi-layering hindered the full picture at the conceptual level of understanding that we sought to convey; we do not want a guide for a sequential process, but an illustration of a concept. It was agreed that the Debategraph technique might be more suitable for those subgroups that did need to provide more information for those wishing to drill down into detail.

4.5   A different approach was proposed, utilising a target audience of Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) of all parties to test the concept; PPCs are closely related to the audience we wish to educate. A competition might be a good way of illustrating a complex topical issue (i.e. IG), through a range of interested contestants. The PPCs would decide the winner by vote, and also run a lottery, the winner of which would pick the design team they wanted from the contestants to help the winning PPC with their website. Such a competition would oblige the PPCs to study both the techniques and the issues, and may be the best way to foster understanding. The contestants would also receive kudos, contacts and publicity, while the spin-off for the Subgroup would be a better understanding of how to convey complex messages to an audience.

4.6   An invitation might be circulated to attract the 3 or 4 contestants needed, and the PPCs themselves may be able to suggest some company names: a list of these is being compiled by the EURIM Knowledge Economy Group for planned events for PPCs. The Power of Information Task Force (http://powerofinformation.wordpress.com/) might be a suitable avenue, and CPHC (Council of Professors and Heads of Computing) might also help spread the message.

4.7   The animated Powerpoint Concept Diagram, supported by the words document, would convey a sense of the flow of ideas. A modern 'checklist' of questions linked to the topic areas might be an effective method. The key aim is to have the target audience thinking about how to present the IG agenda, but that message must be pitched at the high-level, not the underlying detail.

5.   Next steps
5.1   It was agreed that the Subgroup would abandon the conventional checklist approach of ticking boxes. It was further agreed to post to the IG part of the EURIM website a summary of the words to the Concept Diagram. Text would be added informing that the Subgroup was working on a (voice-over?) video. The Subgroup through EURIM would attempt to pull together a cross-party group that will judge the competition we are about to organise.

5.2   The competition needs an owner, and may fit into the Knowledge Economy Group programme for PPCs: IBM has agreed to host at least one event at which the target audience will be encouraged to organise the topic(s), speakers and format they want. Ownership of the competition will therefore be transferred (it was not agreed to whom) at some point, but until then the Basic Principles Subgroup should own it.

5.3   The main message is one which will help PPCs understand the issues that have to be taken into account on IG prior to policy making. The Concept Diagram/Words/Video will act as a crib sheet for those IG principles that apply to whatever system is under consideration, to help parliamentarians judge its merits before they commit to a policy that may be doomed.

5.4   The 'words' document would supply any necessary definitions, but the core message has to be applied to everything that has information flows or management within it – it is the governance of the IG elements of any system, whether this is a large central information database, or federated systems. The document will serve as a reminder of what has to be built in to the thinking from the outset, in order to avoid major problems: this might be described as 'IG by design'.

5.6   However, before proceeding further, the Subgroup has to be content that the intended message is adequately conveyed in any deliverable. Once content, the Subgroup can make its' proposal, but invite others to a competition for improving this. This is not about what Government should or should not do, but about understanding the problems that have to be addressed. The package should comprise an animated Powerpoint document trimmed to the core message, with associated explanatory words. The next stage is to invite animators to improve that package, possibly through EURIM channels, and we then need to consider how it will be judged.

5.8   The core package (including the revised words) should be sent to the animators as an example, with an invitation for them to improve it. **It was agreed to use email to communicate within the Subgroup about the final form of the core package**. The animators are not yet identified, but one route through to them might be CPHC, and/or an Intellect games group, or contacts via BCS and EURIM.

5.9   Concern was expressed that we might be asking people who are less familiar with the issues to improve the core package, and also to judge the competition. There is also the danger, unless there is some pre-judging by the group, given that these issues are complex and that the group has worked hard to represent them accurately, that they could be represented inaccurately by non-specialists.

However, back-up material can be made available in the public area of the EURIM website, so that if the animators need further information, they can access it. The Debategraph wiki debate visualization tool could also provide the means for drilling down to further layers of material, and for helping turn policy into deliverables. It might also be the best way for the other subgroups to put their material in order.

5.10   Discussion turned to how the process for getting the material to the animators, and persuading them to join a competition to be held within a month or so, would be driven. If an animator produced a compelling product, it could be used in many other scenarios, and a major attraction for the winner of the competition would be the publicity generated and brought to the attention of Government and other potential clients.

5.11   The Subgroup also has to alert the PPCs to the competition, and this could be done through EURIM contact lists. Videos produced by the animators could be posted on the EURIM website, and the PPCs asked to vote on them. Public Technology.net and Headstar could also be invited to help to promote the exercise. Margaret Moran is scheduled to meet Tom Watson, and in response to the Cabinet Office's "Show us a better way" competition, which makes use of voting software, an enquiry could be made as to whether Tom Steinberg might be interested in taking an initiative on this.

5.12   The immediate actions for the Subgroup are the production of the core package within 1 week, to be sent to the Subgroup by 8 May. Invitations will be distributed to PPCs via EURIM or jointly with All-Party groups. We also need to identify and consider the channels to use for inviting the contestants: these **invitations should be accompanied by an explanatory message.**

5.13   **We also need to produce a note on the mechanisms for judging the competition.** Companies who might be interested in providing feedback on the ideas for videos etc. are Delib and Team Rubber; the URLs are
http://www.teamrubber.com/companies_and_products and http://www.delib.co.uk/].

6.   Date of next meeting
6.1   The date of the next meeting is TBC.