

To EURIM Members and Observers
From Philip Virgo, EURIM Secretary General
E-mail: virgo.philip@eurim.org

The Information
Society Alliance
EURIM



EURIM Newsletter February 2009

1) Changing the Culture of Public Service Planning, Procurement and Delivery

Removing the obstacles to the rapid and efficient procurement of flexibility

On 5th February the Procurement Sub-group agreed to work with the OGC, Audit Commission, NAO, LGA and others to organise high level briefings on the current state of guidance, including for the flexible delivery of cross-cutting services, such as community broadband.

The first briefings, for Select Committee members and Local Government leaders, are planned for before Easter. The group will meet on 27th February to agree the content, to be fully compatible with that delivered to permanent secretaries and business peers on 11th February and the recent Audit Commission note on current guidance. Links to the publicly available material are being placed on <http://www.eurim.org.uk/activities/pubproc/pubproc.php>. Links to additional material, especially on experience in other parts of the European Union, should be sent to davywright2@ntlworld.com.

The intention is to subsequently support players like SOCITM and Intellect in organising follow up programmes for policy advisors and programme planners and shared training in procurement and relationship management for those likely to have responsibility for implementation. In parallel EURIM will seek to educate the new intake of MPs (currently prospective parliamentary candidates and policy advisors) as to why this topic is not “boring detail” but “politically interesting”, as well as essential to get right, if the massive spend on public services is to achieve its objectives and also stimulate economic regeneration in the constituencies they are seeking to represent.

The meeting also agreed to recommend that the next round of Audit Commission studies cover: the pre-procurement stage, shared risk-reward mechanisms in contracts, how people use different routines for different sizes of procurement, and examples of successful procurement. The last of these should illustrate routines that can be copied directly and provide material on which to base future guidance and any recommendations for change. There are many departmental and agency exercises to improve processes for procurement, including framework agreements. Rationalisation is long overdue, especially to share accreditation and certification routines so that more suppliers from all sectors, small as well as large, can afford to bid. Even large players are now beginning to withdraw.

2) Practical Support for Innovation in Service Delivery

The Dragons’ Den for Innovation

11th March sees the next Dragons’ Den planning meeting with senior DWP officials in the group devising recommendations on how the DWP “Right to Bid” process could be structured: from how to involve small firms and the third sector, either directly or as sub-contractors, to how to protect the IPR of those proposing innovative solutions, large as well as small. Whilst the “Right to Bid” exercise is currently confined to DWP, there was a strong indication that “there are no constraints on ideas which can be proposed under Right to Bid”.

The Group also plans a wider exercise, drawing on the experience of EURIM’s corporate and associate members and those involved with similar exercises run by other departments and their suppliers. Those wishing to participate should e-mail eurim@eurim.org for details and an invitation.

3) Participation is the Key to Political Support

Ministerial interest in the EURIM e-participation programme

Four ministers, two in the Cabinet, have now welcomed the EURIM plans to look at experience to date with using e-participation techniques for consultation on policy, service delivery, performance monitoring and feedback. Particular concerns include the means of addressing security, accountability and inclusiveness, so that results accurately reflect the views of the audiences that are to be consulted, not just those of enthusiasts with access to a “traditional” screen, keyboard and browser.

The importance and interest of this topic to politicians is obvious. But better consultation, leading to the more accurate identification of concerns, is central to making better use of available resources as economic pressures increase - and therefore to mainstream service delivery for the foreseeable future.

The broad objective of the exercise is to enlist industry, professional and academic support for distilling experience from recent exercises (public, private and voluntary) so as to inform and support the plans of Cabinet Office and DCLG, including the Community Empowerment White Paper: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/communitiesincontrol> . In addition the group will use the material to help inform the Audit Commission exercise to update its guidance to Local Authorities and Agencies on consultation processes. It is also likely to be used in the programme of activities for Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (see below).

4) Setting the Information Governance Agenda

Summarising the basic principles

The meeting on 23rd January found confusion and duplication of effort caused by different terms being used to describe the same principles and the same terms being given different meanings. It agreed to begin by producing a diagram of “components”, cross-referenced to the definitions in use and sources of guidance available. The objective is a succinct guide for use by politicians, policymakers and suppliers. Suppliers particularly need publicly and professionally credible policy frameworks against which they can be seen to deliver. Information systems, security, legal, audit and other professionals were seen as partners: as opposed to being part of the “target audience”. There is a morass of material supposedly targeted at their needs.

Security by Design

The first meeting of this group (12th February) agreed the objective was to change market behaviour, not just produce recommendations, although these would be needed as part of the process. The current model of perimeter security is ingrained but outdated. It is inadequate for current threats, let alone those to come. The first task, now under way, is a review of the current situation: Government reports, regulations, industry practice, threat analyses, academic positions etc. In parallel a second group of volunteers will start looking at current and future trends and gap analyses. This second activity stream will accelerate after the Group’s next meeting, on 3rd March.

The Value of Information

The Data Value sub-group met on 18th February and agreed to focus on the incentives and benefits that derive from treating information as an asset: to be maintained and used effectively, not just locked up. The group agreed deliverables for April and June with a final report in September covering the means of valuing information in order to help set budgets and justify investment in improving quality and security. The next meeting is on 5th March.

Frameworks for Co-operation

A briefing note on FAME (the framework for multi-agency sharing) and on the plans to produce and test “FAME-lite” (with the users seeing only what they need, not frightened off by the power and sophistication of the overall approach) has been requested by Ministers. The draft is being reviewed.

Information Quality

The aim is to submit plans to Audit Commission by 6th March as part of a submission to their National Studies Consultation <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/consultation.asp> . If agreed, this will enable a more comprehensive exercise and also provide an authoritative channel to market.

Identity Governance

We hope to circulate details of the scoping meeting for this sub-group by the end of the month. Some of our members have decades of experience in this space, internationally as well as in the UK. The first task will be to assemble a suitable leadership team.

5) An Industrial Strategy for Digital Britain?

Inputs to the Carter Review

On 4th March apComms has organised a meeting with Lord Carter, in co-operation with PITCOM and EURIM in advance of the deadline, 10th March, for submissions to his interim report. That report is at: http://www.culture.gov.uk/images/publications/digital_britain_interimreportjan09.pdf

On 9th February the EURIM Communications Group agreed to “volunteer” exercises covering:

- Authoritative (i.e. working with Audit Commission, NAO, OGC plus Intellect, LGA, SOCITM etc.) guidance and case studies/exemplars covering the funding and procurement of networks, including vis a vis state aid, pooled funding across scheme and public-private boundaries and business rates. That guidance should include the need for resilience, security and quality of service/support to be integral to planning/procurement and performance monitoring, not add-ons.
- Frameworks for identifying, stimulating and aggregating local demand: building on what was learned during the exercise done by BSG some years ago, including from the success or otherwise of previous aggregation initiatives. This could greatly reduce the risk element of investment and thus the cost of capital. Aggregating public sector spend is critical to ensuring that many projects get off the ground but success to date has been “patchy”. Others are less polite.
- Spectrum issues, in co-operation with Intellect and others, with the aim of ensuring timely decisions that enable the UK to be in the forefront of mixed technology solutions, making full use of fixed and mobile terrestrial and satellite services. Carter has flagged the importance of this - but rapid action is hampered by lack of consensus, not just complexity.

The group has also agreed to look at inputs to political studies on Next Generation Networks and Cybersecurity (defined to include the use of the Internet for terrorist recruitment and organisations as well as attacks on the Network itself), in co-operation with other EURIM Groups and Think Tanks, including the programme for new MPs planned by the Knowledge Economy Group.

Please e-mail eurim@eurim.org for an invitation to participate.

6) Attracting, Interesting and Educating the Class of 2010

Events programme for prospective parliamentary candidates and political researchers

On 4th February the EURIM Knowledge Economy Group (which includes BT, CISCO, IBM, Microsoft and Siemens) agreed to focus its forward programme on preparing would-be MPs for the opportunities, not just challenges, that await them. The aim is to interest them in taking active roles on policies that will enable their local employers to help lead the economic recovery of Britain.

The main events will put these into constituency context at the same time as showing they can be leveraged to help make political reputations. The intention is for each event to be introduced by a current or former Secretary of State: to say why the topic is important. They will be followed by lively but authoritative speakers with sharply contrasting views as an introduction to discussion.

The format builds on that tested successfully at IBM South Bank on November 26th in co-operation with the Bow Group and the Young Fabians. Five topics were identified for possible inclusion in an initial run of three events: April, June and October - with a possible add-on programme for the Party Conferences. One of the main criteria for selecting topics was that they be controversial but not along traditional party political dividing lines.

The Politician's Guide to Picking Winners

It was also agreed to co-operate with the Government Relations Group of the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists on their plans for a similar event for the same audience, on the pre-conditions for success in delivering major programmes. The working title is, "The Politician's Guide to Picking Winners": i.e. the questions to ask before hitching your reputation to a proposal.

It is expected that other EURIM groups may wish to add to the programme and some are already doing so. Please e-mail me c/o eurim@eurim.org if you are interested in participating, particularly if you are in a position to help with the organisation, hosting and hospitality budgets that will be needed.

7) Statutory Information

Three additional Directors were co-opted to the Board of EURIM on 27th January: Tim Boswell MP, Ian Stewart MP and Mark Todd MP. The company's Registered Office (which is provided by our Auditors and used for statutory purposes only) has moved to: Aquis Court, 31 Fishpool Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL3 4RF. EURIM's Annual General Meeting will be held on 6 May 2009; details will be circulated to all members next month.