**THE BETTER GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE**

**Executive Committee**

**Minutes of the Meeting held at the Institute for Government on 9th May 2014**

**Present:** Tom Legg (Chair)

 Penny Boys

 Christopher Foster

 Peter Owen

 Martin Stanley

 Phillip Ward

**Apologies:** Robin Butler

 Geoffrey Chipperfield

 Roger Dawe

 Richard Mottram

 Peter Makeham

 Aaron Ritchie

The Chair welcomed Penny Boys, attending for the first time. Attendance had been severely affected by the need to change the date of the meeting to avoid a threatened tube strike.

**Minutes of the meeting on 8th April 2014**

Agreed

**Updates**

It was noted that the appointment of a former Special Adviser as Joint Director of Policy in DfE had been procedurally correct.

**Ditchley attendance update**

The names of Lord Finkelstein and Andrew Blick (who would be replacing Nat le Roux as Director of the Constitution Society) and the status of David Howarth (who is no longer an MP) should be corrected in future documents. Tessa Jowell would now be attending, but Lord Hennessy would not.

**Ditchley Programme**

Peter Owen said that the draft had been produced as a "King Charles's head". The format followed precisely the previous Ditchley event. The content of the sessions was based on the list of issues to be considered that had been included in the invitation to attend.

In discussion the broad content and sequence of the sessions was agreed (it was noted that Margaret Hodge would be unable to take part in the discussion on "blunders" if it were moved to Thursday).

Decisions on the individual sessions were as follows:

**Session 1** (welcome). Agreed.

**Session 2.** Amend the title to "The coalition experience".

**Session 3.** Amend the title to "BGI's recommendations". Martin Stanley will provide a redraft condensing the bullet points into a few major topics. Alan Downey (KPMG) should be approached as lead speaker.

**Session 4.** Robert Hazell to chair. Bernard Jenkin to be additional lead speaker.

**Session 5.** Tom Legg to chair. Peter Owen will provide a redraft drawing attention to emerging issues on the relationship between different parts of the UK and broaden the reference to judicial review to tensions between ministers and the judiciary.

**Session 6.** Paul Britton to chair. Oliver Robbins as additional lead speaker. Additional bullet point on ministerial induction. Add a reference to fair access to civil service advice.

**Session 7.** Margaret Hodge to be additional lead speaker.

**Session 8** (summary). Agreed

Other points raised in discussion were as follows:

* We should confirm that Richard Mottram is content to handle Sessions 1 and 8.
* Requests to non-BGI members to speak or chair sessions should generally take the form of letters from Richard Mottram.

**Patrick Diamond’s book**

Christopher Foster said that the book was unlikely to be widely read, but Patrick Diamond was well regarded in Labour Party circles and could be influential.

In discussion it was noted that the book reflected a strand of opinion among the political class that (perhaps because of a failure to understand the degree of consent required in a democratic society to implement major complex changes) tended to blame the civil service for slowness in delivering policies.

It was agreed that Patrick Diamond should be invited to the Ditchley conference.

**Request for evidence on delegated powers**

 It was agreed that the matters on which evidence was sought were too detailed for comment by BGI

**Other business**

Phillip Ward will contact Paul Britton about amending a recent document prepared for Labour into a piece for the website.

A recent IfG report had highlighted difficulties arising for the civil service in handling advice to Coalition partners even-handedly in the run up to the election.

A survey by the Russell Group had shown that senior civil servants made extensive use of academic advice.

Christopher Foster may attend Christopher Hall’s valedictory lecture, which will focus on the limited achievements of changes in government over the past 30 years.

**Next meeting**

The next meeting will be held at the Institute for Government at 10.15 am on Tuesday 20th May.

PFO

10th May 2014