



From MARTIN STANLEY
Director, Better Regulation Unit
.....
Date 7 January 1999

THE BETTER GOVERNMENT PROJECT

1. You asked for a note to add detail to my comment that colleagues are focusing too much on the Better Government White Paper, and too little on the Better Government project.

The Better Government Project

2. I take it that we are agreed that there is something which might be described as a Better Government project which is challenging, ambitious and large-scale. If so, then, like any large and/or complex project, it should have:

- clear objectives,
- a clearly accountable project leader,
- a clear plan, with milestones,
- supported by a clear and accountable management structure.

3. Furthermore, as the project involves major change, it will need to address what the management schools call “the five Cs”:- these are the five elements of any organisation, none of which can be changed without simultaneously causing change in the others.:-

- **capacity**:- i.e. resources, and in particular staff numbers
- **capability** (or competence):- i.e. staff skills, training, experience and motivation
- **communications**:- including not only communications whilst the change programme is being implemented, but also new ways of communicating once the changes have been implemented
- **culture**:- new relationships, attitudes to innovation etc
- **constitution**:- i.e. organisational structure, reporting lines etc.

Commentary

4. As far as I am aware, the project:

- does not have clear objectives,
- does not have a project manager (although ... sounded as though he is de facto assuming this role when he spoke at Robin's meeting on Tuesday evening),
- does not have a plan or milestones,
- does not have a management structure (although, again, ... seems to be putting one into place within his command) and
- is tackling, in a piecemeal fashion, some (but not all) of the things that need to change, but little attempt is being made to co-ordinate the changes, or relate them to one another.

5. Indeed, almost all activity is, on the face of it, going into preparing the White Paper, which is but a small part of what should be a much wider communication strategy.

6. As I dictate this, I hope that I am being very unfair and am exaggerating the extent of the problem. But I fear that I am not. The track record so far is certainly not good:

- The Government will soon have been in power for nearly two years, but the Better Government project will have achieved nothing, save possibly for the publication of a White Paper. It was you, I think, who told me that the PM believes that we have wasted 18 months.
- The new Civil Service Management Committee will not be making any significant input into the White Paper.
- The CMPS (announced last July) does not yet have a leader or any resources.
- The PIU, announced at the same time, is similarly under-resourced and over-stretched.
- The teams that are looking at the various cross-cutting issues are uncoordinated (they report in two different directions), work in different ways and have vague objectives.
- Ministers and officials do not yet seem to be of a single mind as to the focus, style and content of the White Paper.
- IT is being dealt with as a separate strand, rather than something which supports Better Government more generally.
- And the Cabinet Office has no resource allocation for the CMPS, and the PIU, so they are going to have to be found by running down other activities in a currently unplanned way.

7. I would, of course, be glad to discuss. Indeed, I would like help, for I have relevant knowledge and experience. I would also like to see my Unit more involved in the cultural elements of the project, as they will heavily impact upon Whitehall's ability to develop effective and well-appraised policies. But I recognise that the principal problems with the project lie some way outside my current area of responsibility.

MARTIN STANLEY