



Note of Meeting of Licensing Forum

8 November

Fire Service College, Moreton in Marsh

Present:

Murial Adamson	UKHO
Jean Alexander	BGS
John Beaufoy	DSA
Ken Dearman	UKHO
Caroline De Cruz	HMRC
Sue Evans	Welsh Assembly
Graham Farnsworth	MoD
Margaret Fuller	Fire Service College
Susan Gambles	Land Registry
Fiona Gedge	Met Office
Ela Ginalska	DFT
Antoinette Graves	OFT (Speaking)
Peter Hill	OFT (Speaking)
Nicola Hunt	MoD
Marcia Jackson	OPSI
Tony Jardine	OS
Anna Jeremiah	OPSI
Oliver Lendrum	Home Office
Laura Merris	Fire Service College
Diane Murgatroyd	FCO
Dominic Murphy	Met Office
Adrian Nuttall	Environment Agency
Mike Rose	Environment Agency
Andrew Ryan	QCA
John Sheridan	OPSI (Speaking)
Eileen Walsh	Land Registry
Sue Warrington	Treasury
Helen Westhall	OPSI
Melanie Young	DSA

1. Introductions

- The Chair welcomed members to Fire Service College and Helen outlined the format of the event and welcomed new members and the first speaker.

2. Commercial Use of Public Sector Information

Introduced by Antoinette Graves, Office of Fair Trading (OFT)

- Antoinette introduced the Markets and Policy Initiatives Division and outlined the market study into 'Commercial Use of Public Information'. Antoinette explained why market studies were necessary and went on to explain that lack of information can be a real problem. Antoinette then described how markets were chosen.
- Antoinette described some possible outcomes of studies and explained that the OFT approaches studies with an open mind. They will look at markets where there appear to be problems and find out whether they really exist. A clean bill of health is, therefore, one of the possible outcomes. Antoinette gave some examples of types of recommendations: information campaigns, better regulation, de-regulation and reference to the Competition Commission. She explained that they try to be imaginative in their recommendations to address issues which do not lend themselves to traditional enforcement solutions, which is why these are named 'studies'.
- One of the OFT's priority themes is to look at the interaction between Government and Markets. It is an area of considerable importance and this study is one of the activities which relates to that. There is a very large amount of information collected by public sector bodies, and the study will attempt to quantify this in relation to some sectors, which will be a difficult task. The study will look at some key terms such as 'Public Task' and 'Value Added'.
- The OFT has sent questionnaires to FOI Officers in organisations holding public information to gain an accurate picture of activities in a wide range of sectors. The OFT will also send questionnaires to businesses and commission case studies. There will be consultation with key stakeholders throughout. The OFT is not assuming problems, but wishes to understand how this sector works and will publish findings and make recommendations for change.
- This is a huge and complex area and the report is expected late summer 2006.

3. Discussion

A member questioned how the OFT would identify businesses to be targeted. Antoinette said they would be speaking to organisations that have membership among the business communities and have databases etc. They are also interested in hearing from organisations that have lists of stakeholders. In addition, the PSIH questionnaire asks for main customers. The OFT would like a wide spread and will not just focus on key players.

- A member asked how wide the definition of 'information' was, and asked whether software and knowhow would be covered. Antoinette explained that they had opted to adopt the definition in the Directive, which is broad.
- A member asked why there was another study into this area, and Antoinette explained that with the Regulations now in place it is the right time to see how this is working. The study will assess how well organisations understand the Regulations and tackles the subject from a different angle.
- Antoinette explained that it would be very ambitious to look at Local Government and NHS in any detail, but this is a potential growth area.

4. The future of the Information Asset Register

Introduced by John Sheridan, Office of Public Sector Information

- John outlined the benefits of managing information assets in a structured way in terms of keeping track of your own information assets and knowing what others hold. The Regulations state that public sector bodies should have a list of main documents available for re-use, and an ideal way would be using an Information Asset Register (IAR).
- The IAR will help facilitate the integration of diverse information assets and will be a resource discovery system. The existing IAR was developed in 1999 but with technology developments, it is time to move this forward.
- The IAR can be adopted by any public sector body and there is merit in having an IAR. IAR technology will be rolled out to the wider public sector and will cover published and unpublished material available for re-use. The focus will be on material that can be re-used.
- John outlined the relationship with Publication Schemes, explaining that these describe classes of information and it is not easy to achieve a holistic approach by using this method of classification. The IAR is based around the Integrated Public Sector Vocabulary (IPSV) which describes subject not type of information.

- John explained that there would be a search engine to facilitate resource discovery and that there would be three stages of development, which he outlined.
- John told the group that a research project led by Southampton University would be assisting the project. This project (Advanced Knowledge Technologies) would look at how technology can be used in understanding information assets. John asked members of the group to contact him if they were interested in participating in this project.

5. Discussion

- A member asked how to deal with Rights Management and John explained that the development of the e-Government Metadata Standard was on hold and this would be looked into in further detail.
- John defined the meaning of metadata and ontology.
- A member asked for clarification on what should go into an IAR as something may not be published but could be re-used. In the first instance, the IAR should be used to describe information assets that can be re-used, but it is possible to put everything in. This could encourage challenge if you do not allow re-use.
- A member asked if there will be a Welsh version, and John explained that IPSV is currently being translated into Welsh, which could lead to the development of a Welsh language IAR.

6. Focus on...Licensing at the Fire Service College

Introduced by Margaret Fuller, Fire Service College

- Margaret outlined the Fire Service College's public task as 'working with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to drive down global risk by working with the UK Fire and Rescue Services in developing people'.
- Margaret described some of the activities carried out by the FSC, which included Incident Management, Community Safety, Specialist Training and Civil Resilience
- Margaret gave some background to the licensing activities at FSC and explained the stages the FSC undertook to gain IFTS Accreditation in May 2005 following initial invitation to join IFTS in February 2004. She mentioned drawing up a Prince2 project plan and talking to other IFTS members for advice. FSC then wrote policies and procedures and communicated these with key members of staff.
- Margaret described one of the main challenges as lack of awareness of licensing and the Regulations on the Re-use of Public Sector Information. She also explained that there could be health and safety implications if some of their information was taken out of context and this was a consideration when being open and transparent.

- Margaret also explained the considerations in terms of pricing and ensuring that prices were set at a level that would ensure a reasonable return on investment.

7. Discussion

- A member asked how the FSC checks how the information is being used. Margaret explained that there was an auditing process which will be described in the licence. The cost of this audit will also be covered by the cost of the licence.

Helen Westhall
Office of Public Sector Information
23 November 2005