

FOI Implementation Steering Committee Minutes

September 26 2007

In Attendance

- Mr. Richard Barton – Portfolio of Legal Affairs
- Mr. Orrett Conner – Cabinet Office
- Mrs. Janet Chisholm – Ministry of Education, Training, Employment, Youth, Sports, and Culture
- Ms. Felecia Deslandes – Portfolio of Finance (in for Jacqueline Jefferson – Ziemniak)
- Ms. Linda Evans – Portfolio, Internal & External Affairs Mr. Christopher Eakin – Immigration Department
- Ms. Tamara Ebanks – Ministry of Communications, Work & Infrastructure
- Mrs. Carole Excell – Freedom of Information Unit
- Mr. Ian Fenton – Portfolio of Civil the Service
- Mr. Tim Hubbell – Cabinet Office
- Mr. Chris Krohn – Port Authority
- Mr. Jan Liebaers – National Archive
- Mr. Gilbert McLaughlin – Computer Services
- Ms. Laura Neuman – International Consultant
- Mrs. Cornelia Oliver – Government Information Services
- Mr. Haroon Pandorhie – Planning Department
- Ms. Tracie Sewell – Computer Services
- Mr. George Alleyne- GIS

Introduction of International Consultant

Mrs. Carole Excell formally introduced Ms. Laura Neuman to the committee. Mrs. Excell also informed the committee that the official celebration of sunshine week in the Cayman Islands had begun.

Presentation on Importance of Freedom of Information

Mrs. Laura Neuman gave a brief PowerPoint presentation describing the challenges, solutions in the implementation of the FOI law, the importance of the law, and statistics of usage of freedom of information by other countries.

Question and Answers Proposed after Presentation

A question was raised about the difficulties that overseas territories may face in the release of information. In response to the question, Ms. Neuman stressed that the citizens needed to be informed of the UK Freedom of Information Act because not all information is the property of the Cayman Islands Government. It would be important to define clearly what are records that belong to the Government of the United Kingdom. Another question raised addressed the issue of which department would receive the most requests when implementation begins in January 2009. The response was that each country is different and often questions are topical to the issues of the day. It was also noted that usually when the law is first introduced only certain departments would receive many requests, but there usually is a decline. What is important is trying to define what success is. If success is provision of more information by government proactively there should eventually be a decline in FOI requests. It was noted that in the United States almost half of the requests were for personal information from veterans. Another question was in relation to the exemption for personal information and whether the fact that that personal information was exempt without limitation of time in fact would hinder the Archives in the release of personal information after 100 years. It was noted that the exemption only covered unreasonable disclosure of information and was in fact subject to the public interest test. A number of countries have utilized different timeframes but most of these are arbitrarily set e.g. 75 years vs. 100 years, what is more important is that there is no unreasonable disclosure of personal information and that personal information is only released when in the public interest.

Communications Committee

Mrs. Oliver explained the events taking place throughout Sunshine week, which includes, a civil society luncheon meeting, a meeting for all civil servants and a chief officer briefing.

Feedback Report IT Subcommittee

Mr. Gilbert Mclean gave feedback on the behalf of the committee stating the importance of the creation of a file plan by everyone to ensure the deadline of January 2009 can be achieved. Mr. Ian Fenton indicated that the model template action plan had been created to enable public authorities to monitor their work to achieve the targets.

Next Meeting

Mrs. Excell stated that subcommittee meeting would resume the normal schedule of meetings.