

MINUTES OF THE WILTON PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL (WPAC) SUMMER MEETING

3 JULY 2008, WISTON HOUSE

Present

WILTON PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL:

Chair (Dr Farhan Nizami)
Ms Rachel Briggs
Dr David Bryer
Mr Janusz Heath
Mr Rupert Robson
Mr Michael Leigh
Sir Michael Quinlan
Prof Philippe Sands
Sir Stephen Wall
Prof Myles Wickstead

FCO:

Mr Jolyon Welsh, Public Diplomacy Group
Ms Holly Tett, Head, Public Diplomacy Group
Mr Gary Truman, Public Diplomacy External Relations Team

WILTON PARK:

Donald Lamont
Nick Hopkinson
Robin Hart
Isobelle Jaques
Adela Gooch
Robert Grant
Stephen Pullinger
Julia Purcell
Mark Smith
Roger Williamson

Regrets: Sir Patrick Cormack, Mr Nik Gowing, Mr David Heath, Mr Reijo Kemppinen, Lord Skidelsky, Dr Ray Cunningham, Sir Rodric Braithwaite, Mr Nik Gowing, Professor Anand Menon, Baroness Quin, Hon Ms Mary Jo Jacobi, Professor Shamit Saggur, Camilla Fenning (WP),

1. Sir Patrick Cormack had written to Donald saying that he wished to remain a member of WPAC but was finding it difficult to attend meetings. He was, however, happy to help Wilton Park in any way possible.
2. Sir Rodric Braithwaite also indicated he was finding it difficult to attend meetings. The Chair indicated that he would write to both of them to encourage their continued participation.
3. Two members of the Council had requested to stand down - Andrew Vickerman and David Bryer. The Chair indicated that he would write to both of them to thank them for their contribution to WPAC while they were members.

Introductory Remarks

The Chair welcomed Robert Grant and Stephen Pullinger as new members of Wilton Park. He also welcomed new members attending from the FCO.

Items 1 and 2: Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the last meeting were approved by the Council.

Item 3: Chief Executive's Report

1. Discussions at the Departmental Board meeting held earlier this year had prompted the reflection that the current deficit is due to fundamental problems with the current funding model. The Chief Executive had been invited to prepare a paper on how to get Wilton Park out of its current situation, and in this paper he argued that the current model cannot be effective any longer. This ad hoc model of funding puts huge strains on the organisation and he outlined other organisations in Whitehall that function differently. The FCO have asked for a more detailed paper with a clearer picture of what is required, including costings and different options for moving forward. The Business Plan, which the Chief Executive and Programme Directors had put together in the latter half of last year, had identified the financial position as the main obstacle to fulfilling the ambitions set out in the Business Plan.

2. The Chief Executive submitted a paper to the Advisory Council setting out his recommendations for addressing the funding issues. This paper identified three priorities in order that Wilton Park should meet its financial targets from 2009-2010 onwards. Firstly, Wilton Park must continue to strengthen its management disciplines and culture; secondly, the FCO must accept the added cost of acquiring marketing and business development skills through the creation of a Business Development Unit is a necessary investment in future success and, thirdly, the FCO and Wilton Park must agree a more official financial framework providing stable, multi-year funding for that part of Wilton Park activity most closely aligned with FCO priorities.

Mr Welsh commented that two issues will need to be overcome in order to change the current financial model. The first of these is structural. FCO allocations work on three year periods. These have just been made and therefore acquiring any extra funding will mean diverting funds, already committed to other budgets, to Wilton Park. The second issue was philosophical and centres on the argument that the ad hoc model does not give continuity of funding. It does require Wilton Park to focus its funding bids on what Departments and Directorates actually want. It will be argued that Departments and Directorates are currently giving as much as they think are necessary or affordable, and that there is no reason why the FCO should pull money away from other budgets and put it into Wilton Park.

In response to a question about whether the FCO appreciated the value to it of Wilton Park, Mr Welsh responded that there was a good *general* sense of value but perhaps less sense of specific value: What is the difference a Wilton Park conference can make? The FCO will require hard evidence of the value of conferences and the Chief Executive's paper will need to do this and to provide evidence.

Mr Robson responded that he had not yet seen evaluation of the work that Wilton Park does for the FCO, what objectives were met by Wilton Park and what the costs of meeting them without Wilton Park. Sir Stephen Wall noted that conferences were indeed important but Wilton Park was also an investment in people who were going to be in foreign service for many years. It was therefore a long-term investment. He felt the paper was a good means of addressing the underlying financial problem if the Financing Committee could be persuaded to endorse it. The Chief Executive had noted the way DFID deals with its key NGOs and key partners in its multi-year funding programme. However, David Bryer noted that NGOs rarely depend on their DFID

agreements for their existence, and so therefore we ought to be careful about pitching this to the FCO.

Professor Sands asked who was the community that the FCO was hoping to reach out to and to what extent Wilton Park was reaching them itself, and whether there were other ways in which Wilton Park could do this? Mr Welsh responded by saying that this community that the FCO wants to reach out to is changing. It had once been a very small group of elites but was now much more diverse. More people influence foreign policy decisions. He felt that Wilton Park was reaching it to a degree, but that Wilton Park and the FCO needed to be clearer about who it was trying to reach out to.

Janusz Heath argued that the pitch to the Finance Committee must say why the FCO would get greater value for money by increasing and changing its funding. Wilton Park would only get one bite at the cherry and it was very important to get it right and to say why stable funding was required and what it would change. On the subject of the BDU, he agreed that Wilton Park must focus business development activity but must get the right person for the job, and he stressed that this person would not come cheap. He also stressed that he felt the Finance Committee paper must give a very clear runway to how Wilton Park might be self-sustaining. He felt that funding might be much tighter in the coming global recession and that the paper would therefore have to make its case very, very clearly.

Sir Michael Quinlan asked whether the FCO regarded Wilton Park as an instrument of influence or of learning. Michael Leigh echoed Janusz Heath in arguing that the role of the Chief Executive Officer is fundamental to a sound fund-raising policy. It was the Chief Executive who was the one who would share the vision of Wilton Park with sources and potential sources of funding and the BDU director who should come in on implementation. It was the Chief Executive Officer who embodies Wilton Park as an institution and he was the one who should take the lead.

Rachel Briggs argued that bringing in one person was not going to resolve the problem and that a BDU would need to be made up of more than just one individual. She felt that the FCO does not always know exactly what it wants from Wilton Park and felt that WPAC ought to press for the FCO to give more clarity.

Item 6: Developing the role of the Advisory Council (brought forward)

The Chair noted that the role of WPAC has increased recently and that it was now involved with responses to the Business Plan, among other things. Members of the Council had asked for clarity on what their role was. The Chair said he felt that role should be about maintaining the academic independence of Wilton Park but invited comments from other members. Professor Myles Wickstead says he saw his role as working with Programme Directors to map the landscape in areas of which he had special expertise, to point out current policy concerns and to help find funding sources. He felt that WPAC needs a broad skill-set drawn from business, government, academia, NGOs and so on.

Janusz Heath said he thought he had been invited onto WPAC for his commercial expertise. He argued that Wilton Park was a business and in that light, dialogue at WPAC has limited impact because, if the job of WPAC is at least partly to give business advice and advise on finance, the people who ought to be there, are not. He felt that the FCO needed to set up parameters for WPAC and its role, whether that role was to intellectualise or to give advice on business strategy.

Philippe Sands said he agreed up to a point. WPAC, he felt, should not be debating finance. It is there to advise on key policy issues and how Wilton Park could address them. WPAC, he argued, ought to be a forum for debating what the crucial issues over the next five to ten years would be and how they might be addressed. It has no competence on finance issues. He argued that Wilton Park is not a business in the usual sense and not a commercial conference institution. He proposed that WPAC never again look at issues of finance.

Sir Stephen Wall said he felt it hard to think of single discussion while he had been on WPAC that had had any impact at all on FCO thinking. This was partly because of the expertise that was contained in WPAC and also who was invited to the meetings.

Janusz Heath said he felt that WPAC itself had let the management down in not giving Wilton Park clear advice on where funding avenues and opportunities are. WPAC, he said, had not offered it but Wilton Park had not yet asked for it. The Chair summarised by saying that it was clear the role of the Council needed to be clarified.

Item 4: Forward look from the FCO

Jolyon Welsh divided this into long run issues, medium run issues and short run immediate ones. The long run issues were partly set out in the Strategy Refresh exercise and the objectives that it set. The Foreign Secretary wanted to highlight key areas where the FCO wanted to make a difference. It had identified four and the focus would be on these goals for the foreseeable future. But he also pointed out that the FCO is a platform for the whole of the British government in its overseas operation. He felt that there was a clear division emerging between the operations of London and the operations of the FCO global network.

The London end of the FCO would be focusing on the four goals set out in the Strategy Refresh while the FCO network would support the work of the other government departments. He also said that the FCO was aiming to be more of a campaigning organisation to set objectives and a date for when they wanted to achieve them. Medium run issues in the forward look were driven by the goals set out in the Strategy Refresh. These are Counter-Terrorism and Counter Proliferation, Conflict, a Low Carbon Economy and International Institutions. In the first of these fields, Afghanistan and Pakistan would be the top priorities in counter-terrorism, with Iran the top priority in counter proliferation. They also wanted to explore the agendas for disarmament and non-proliferation and their respective futures.

In conflict, the top priorities would be Zimbabwe, Sudan and the Russia-Georgia relationship. In the goal of low carbon high growth, the price of oil and food and the supply of oil and food, plus poverty, would remain the top priorities. In the field of institutions, the future of the UN over the next ten years and its development, plus where Europe and EU are going, would be the top priorities.

Short run issues were driven by bi-lateral relations. The most important of these were the US elections and, in particular, their impact on international policy on climate change and disarmament and non-proliferation plus UK relations with Russia and with China, especially on Olympic politics. He said that the foreign policy agenda was going to be less focused on national issues because very few political issues are now purely bi-lateral. Rather, he felt the agenda would be much more focused on global problems that affect everybody, for example, climate change, conflict and international terrorism.

Item 5: Conference Programmes - Proposals for 2009

Suggestions on themes and general comments were as follows:

Climate Change Programme

Sir Stephen Wall suggested a conference on energy supply and democracy. He said that rising prices of energy and possibly food as well, may mean an increase in the number of undemocratic states.

Janusz Heath argued for a conference on water security. He said the Bill Gates Foundation were working on this issue and might be a potential source of funding. Another suggested was that sources of alternative energy and now becoming commercially viable and are available to the individual in a way they have not been hitherto and a conference on how an individual might take advantage of this would be useful. Finally he mentioned food supply and suggested a conference on approaching GM food with an open mind.

Rachel Briggs argued that it might be possible to have clusters of conferences. She pointed out that a cluster called the Politics of Security could include a lot of the conferences that are currently planned, for example, on food, on oil and on energy supply. The current conference programme titles that we use were useful, but we might want to think about using clusters of themes to link conferences together from different programmes.

Philippe Sands pointed out that the post-Kyoto conference would be next year and suggested a conference that would bring key players together to interact informally.

Defence and Security Programme

Michael Leigh suggested a conference on NATO at 60, focusing on issues such as enlargement, NATO-EU issues, the French re-entry to the military structure.

Janusz Heath suggested a conference on whether the model of warfare had changed from large to small conflicts.

Philippe Sands and Sir Michael Quinlan both pointed out that the programme is currently rather focused on micro-issues rather than macro ones and suggested a conference looking at wider issues such as those identified by Philip Bobbit (??) in his recent book. Sir Michael Quinlan also suggested a conference on nuclear disarmament and also one on the defence industry. With regard to the latter, he asked whether it mattered that we had a European defence industry. He asked: are we exchanging national protection for regional protection? Also on the subject of macro rather than micro, Rachel Briggs suggested a season of conferences on big ideas.

EU and its Neighbours Programme

Sir Stephen Wall suggested a conference on Turkey. If the PK party there is declared illegal, what are the implications of this?

Michael Leigh came up with a number of suggestions. They were the Lisbon Treaty and its future - does it have one? Secondly, why European publics were reluctant to buy into the EU and its future and the nature of communication between the EU as an institution and its citizens? Member state building, especially in Bulgaria and Romania; Cyprus; West Balkans conferences and visas and migration issues.

Global Governance Programme

Philippe Sands suggested a conference on Southern and Central American issues. States there, he said, were leaving international institutions and setting up their own.

Janusz Heath suggested a conference on the currency of power. This would be an educational or developmental conference on emerging, non-democratic actors and what sort of norms of behaviour we might want them to subscribe to.

Rupert Robson suggested conferences on Sovereign Wealth Funds, how they could be a force for good and also a conference on hedge funds.

Sir Stephen Wall suggested a conference on malaria. He said that the Blair Foundation was working on this and may be a source of funding.

Justice and Home

Philippe Sands suggested one on corruption.

Janusz Heath suggested one on the balance between liberty and security. For example, the 42 days proposal.

Key Countries

Janusz Heath suggested one on Zimbabwe and also, in light of the fact that Africa was so clearly determined to police itself, whether a conference on macro-international relations in Africa would be a good idea.

David Bryer suggested a conference on future dynamics in the Middle East, and also a conference on Afghanistan, focusing on what sort of state might be possible there.

Rupert Robson and a number of other suggested a conference on the future direction of the United States after the presidential elections in 2008

Item 7: AOB

Michael Leigh asked whether it was possible to bring an element of training into the regular work of Wilton Park, to bring in a more hands-on approach to use trainers and facilitators in our conferences.

Rachel Briggs suggested expanding the Youth Forum programme to, for example, a British-Chinese Youth Forum or a British-African Youth Forum.

Item 8: Date of the next meeting

To be advised

July 2008