

MUTUALS TASKFORCE (MTF): TERMS OF REFERENCE

Goal of the MTF

The MTF will support, engage with, challenge and promote the **policy development work** of the Cabinet Office and wider Government to help the Government achieve its commitments to:

- support the creation and expansion of mutuals and cooperatives – enabling these groups to have much greater involvement in the running of public services
- give public sector workers a new right to bid to take over the services they deliver

To assist the MTF to achieve this goal it is subject to these Terms of Reference.

Status

The MTF is an advisory and challenge body appointed by and directly advising the Minister for the Cabinet Office. The MTF has no decision-making functions in relation to Government policy or funding, and Cabinet Office is under no obligation to accept or act upon the advice, recommendations or any proposal made by the MTF.

The MTF may be dissolved at any time by the Minister for the Cabinet Office.

Aims

The MTF has agreed to pursue four key aims:

1. Engage with and learn from pathfinders' experiences
2. Support and engage directly in evidence gathering
3. Promote the concept of Public Service Mutuals with key stakeholders (inside and outside Government)
4. Deploy evidence and expertise to challenge and engage with the development and implementation of Government policy. To do this the MTF may draw on publicly available information and data emerging from the MIS and MSP.

To achieve these aims

The MTF will produce a report by July 2012.

The MTF will pursue specific actions to achieve these aims, including but not necessarily limited to:

- 'Buddying' with mutual pathfinders – glean the experiences and learning emerging within and across these projects;
- Hearing from expert witnesses to inform the MTF's understanding of the agenda and issues;
- Engaging directly with stakeholders, including speaking at events (e.g. conferences, seminars etc), within and outside of Government to promote and progress the agenda and stimulate the debate; and
- Writing and publishing briefings and working papers to contribute to the policy debate, understanding of the agenda and the progress of emerging mutualisation/spin out projects.

Taskforce structure and support

The MTF will comprise a Chair and Vice-Chair, appointed by the Minister for the Cabinet Office and members appointed by the Chair with the support of the Minister for the Cabinet Office. The members are appointed on the basis of their knowledge and experience of employee-led organisations and/or public sector workers setting up public service mutuals. The membership of the MTF may be reconsidered and changed over time according, for example, to changing priorities, needs for expertise/experience on the MTF, or to effectively manage conflicts of interest.

- The Taskforce may draw on expertise outside the taskforce membership as and when appropriate.
- The Chair is responsible for:
 - The overall work of and priorities for the MTF (working with Cabinet Office and MTF members);
 - Setting the agenda for and running MTF meetings and ensuring action points are followed up;
 - Leading the relationship between the MTF, the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Cabinet Office officials responsible for the mutuals programme of work;
 - Ensuring members of the Taskforce adhere to their obligations to declare their interests.
- The Vice-Chair shall deputise in these roles as necessary.

The work of the MTF will be supported by senior officials from the Office of Civil Society (OCS) as follows:

- Executive Director OCS
- Head of the Mutuals and Commissioning Team, OCS

Relationship between the Mutuals Taskforce and the Mutuals Support Programme/Mutuals Information Service

- The MTF may provide strategic advice to the Minister for the Cabinet Office on the overall impact or strategic direction of the MIS or MSP, so far as this pertains to the achievement of policy goals. However, the MTF has no role in relation to the use, operation, or management of the Mutuals Information Service (MIS) or the Mutual Support Programme (MSP). The Chair is responsible for stopping any discussion of use, operation or management of the MIS and/or MSP in MTF meetings. The Minister for the Cabinet Office will be made aware by OCS officials of any actual or potential conflicts of interest which have been disclosed which may be relevant to his consideration of this advice.
- Some individual members of the MTF are, or may be, suppliers or recipients of services provided under the MIS or the MSP. **Members have an obligation to declare, in an ongoing way, any actual or potential (personally or through any organisation they represent or have any other interest in) they have or may have in relation to funds/services provided under the MIS or MSP.**
- The MTF may discuss and use information and data arising from the MIS/MSP, that is in the public domain, to inform the development of policy recommendations and advice.
- The MTF will not have access to any information or data relating to or arising from the MIS or MSP that is not in the public domain.

- Individual members of the MTF will not share any information with the MTF as a whole, or other individual members, relating to the MIS or MSP, that is not already in the public domain.
- The Chair of the MTF is responsible for ensuring any discussion of the MIS/MSP pertains exclusively to the policy development role of the MTF – not the use, operation or management of the MIS or MSP.

A Register of MTF Member's Interests

- MTF members have an obligation to declare in an ongoing way any actual or potential interest (personally or through any organisation they represent or have any other interest in) they have, that is or may be of relevance to their work on the Mutuels Taskforce.
- The obligation MTF members to declare their relevant interests includes, but is not limited to, an obligation to declare any actual or potential interest they have in any procurement exercise relating to the MSP. The obligation also includes, but is not limited to, any interest members of the MTF have in any organisation that is or may be interested in delivering or bidding to deliver services under the MIS or MSP.
- The Chair and Cabinet Office officials will maintain and manage this process on an ongoing basis – maintaining a Register of MTF Member's interests, declarations, and seeking updates for the register of interests. Members will be required to sign a Declaration of Interests form.
- If members do not meet their obligations with regard to the declaration of interests the Chair may decide that they should leave the MTF permanently or for a limited period of time.
- If MTF members wish to seek advice relating to conflicts of interest they should do so from either the Chair and/or the senior officials in OCS referred to above.

The role of advisers to the MSP Board

- The role of Chair, Vice-Chair or MTF member, is a separate role to that of an adviser to the MSP Board.
- Advisers to the MSP Board will be subject to the terms of reference of the MSP Board, in particular in relation to conflicts of interest.
- If individual members of the MTF, in their separate roles, have views on the operation, management or use of the MIS or MSP they may only discuss these with the advisers to the MSP Board, officials, or any other member of the MSP Board outside of and separately from any MTF meeting/business.