

ANNEX D: GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

The current arrangement of responsibilities and relationships involving futures works has developed organically over many years and reflects individual department's policy needs. There are many networks, groupings and departments working on futures and their inter-actions are complex. As already mentioned in the literature review there have been many reviews recommending that the work of these networks and departments is 'better co-ordinated' at a strategic level. However, this has never effectively been achieved and the last effort to co-ordinated futures work was the Cabinet Office's Strategic Horizons Unit, which focused on national security horizon scanning.

Because oversight and governance structures are complex, there is no clearly defined role or place for futures work to feed into strategic policymaking forums, like the National Security Council or Cabinet. However, this does not mean that policy doesn't benefit from futures analysis, there are well-established networks and Cross Government Centres that have excelled at spreading best practice, creating training programmes for analysts, or linking up departments for specific futures products such as the Horizon Scanning Centre in Go-Science. Many of these networks and departments have created policy based on Horizon Scanning.

Many of the stakeholders we talked to felt that the current arrangement is suitable for current needs and reflects the reality of policy development, which is driven by single issues which may involve a handful of departments e.g. obesity policy. But the current arrangements do not meet with the strategic policy agenda that the Cabinet might express, nor does it take into account other futures projects in government, missing opportunities to share knowledge or avoid duplication. Stakeholders felt that better co-ordination of futures across government would improve its usefulness and impact to policy.

This is not the first time this issue has been raised and past attempts to better co-ordinate this work, most notably the Strategic Horizons Unit in Cabinet Office, failed because of a lack of purpose and a set of requirements from senior policy makers. Without a credible requirement to engage with the unit departments continued to focus on their own futures work.

Workshops and interviews with stakeholders confirm that there is an appetite for a more centralised and co-ordinated approach to futures work. This would allow for the development of clear requirements, precise gap analysis, and create a need for departments to co-ordinate their work to drive a strategic vision or requirement. Stakeholder felt that in order to succeed there should some for of senior, maybe Director level, group that would provide senior challenge and direction for futures work. They also felt that there would need to be some form of working level co-ordination, though stakeholders emphasised that this should be overly bureaucratic or process heavy.

There are a number of different ways this could be implemented:

- 1) Re-create the Strategic Horizons Unit. The Unit was previously staffed by five full time staff and provided, not only cross Whitehall co-ordination, but

also was able to conduct their own horizon scans. However, this would not address the issue of senior oversight and direction setting. The unit previously used the Joint Intelligence Committee as a senior group, but the Committee's remit was not suited to looking at futures given its intelligence focus. It also struggled to have policy discussions given its role as a policy natural analytical body. Another issue would be the significant extra resource to establish and run it.

- 2) Create an independent Senior review group, properly at Director level, the group would be tasked specifically with reviewing and challenging existing futures products, setting strategic direction, and discussing policy implications. The group could be supported by a small co-ordination hub consisting of one or two members of staff tasked with joining up existing futures networks and bring members of the futures community together. This would require less resource than option one, but would still require some investment to make it work effectively. The challenge would be to ensure that this has buy-in from both the domestic and security futures communities, finding a suitable location within the Cabinet Office to host the hub would need further consideration.
- 3) Make use of existing senior groups. Either through a sub-committee of the Joint Intelligence Committee or the National Security Council Officials informal meeting, to co-ordinate a strategic vision and requirements. Although this would be less resource intensive it would require the existing structures are their support mechanisms to accommodate futures into their already busy agendas, and as already been shown with the Strategic Horizons Unit this could risk the existing structures not assimilating the new role effectively.