

PAB, our purpose and future

24th March 2002 - Gordon Dick <nominet-pab@gordon.me.uk>

Thanks to all those who provided input.

Background information

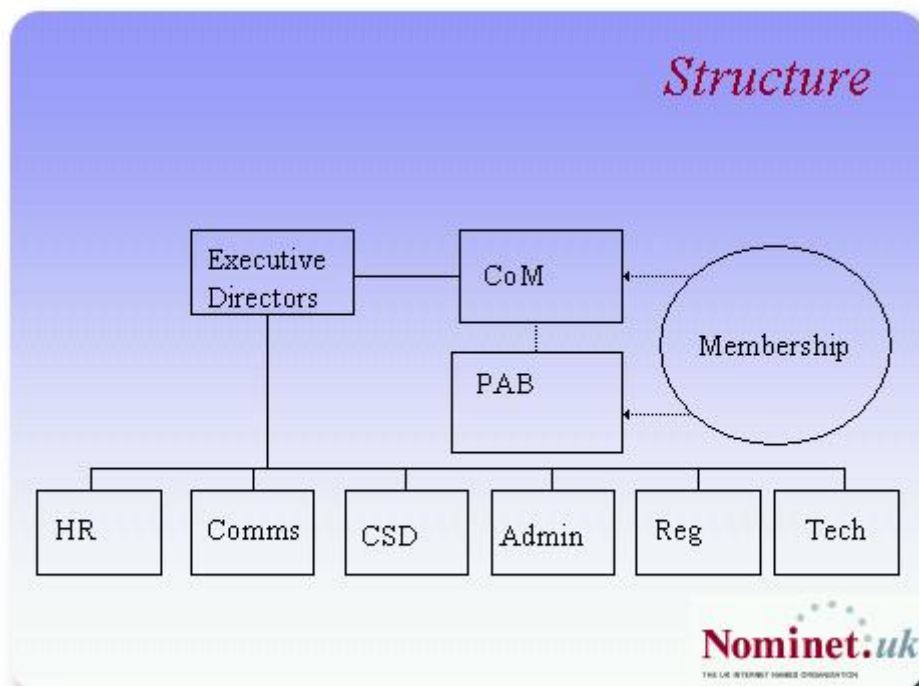
"Legislated" Role

From the Policy Advisory Board rules our "legislated" role with regards to Nominet UK is:

Role

- A.
- a. The PAB represents the interests of the different stakeholders in the .uk Top Level Domain. Many of it's members are likely to be (individuals) associated with the (corporate) members of Nominet UK.
 - b. The PAB will operate in addition to the existing executive staff, Council of Management and Steering Committee, but will replace any former sub-committees (of the Steering Committee). A reference to any of these bodies in these Rules assumes that they are the bodies pertaining to Nominet UK.
 - c. The PAB will develop proposals for policies and rules, for consideration by the membership of Nominet UK and/or the Council of Management.

Position in Nominet UK structure



Research

The following comments have been taken from discussions with some PAB members, Nominet Executive and Managers in order to consider where the PAB currently does not work quite so well and how we can address any problems that occur - nobody should take the views personally but use them as constructive to look at the future! It is intended as a starting point for discussion on what the PAB problems are and how they can be addressed and how we can focus for the PAB year ahead.

PAB DEFINITION

- The PAB is hampered by lack of definition of policy, there are some legitimate areas that the PAB may have an interest in that can also be classed as operational. There is sometimes tension on this issue. It is arguable that the rules already allow the PAB to look at issues that are not purely policy.
- The PAB might consider help rubber stamp or suggest alterations to implementation issues where there are issues the stakeholders will be particularly concerned about method.
- PAB must be clearer on the fact it as a whole represents all stakeholders not just the members.

PAB COMPOSITION

- Clarify the role of the CoM members on the PAB are they representing the CoM or their own views on the PAB. What is their overall role?
- Concerns over industry members outnumbering members representing other stakeholders. That theory therefore extends also to how the appointed members are appointed.
- Appointed members could more represent views of their constituencies rather than just their organisations. Sometimes appears their only participation is in attending meetings.
- Given that PAB meetings happen every two months then PAB elections could perhaps be timed to ensure the result is known a month in advance of the first PAB meeting.
- New PAB members might feel a better introduction could be provided to them than in previous years perhaps some form of training or introductory session.

NOMINET ATTENDANCE

- The PAB should be more active in controlling which representatives of Nominet come to the meetings to give input on which topics being discussed.
- Guidelines for when management meetings should send issues to the PAB and rather than to the CoM, etc.
- Prepared papers for the PAB that are presented are generally more effective than others which again leads to a suggestion the relevant member of staff should be there to present it.

- Position of Nominet staff at the PAB meeting should be clarified.

PAB APPROACH TO WORK

- Technical oriented and does not reflect stakeholders, too much technical specific expertise.
- Decisions are sometimes made in a vacuum with not enough understanding of the implementation issues.
- Possibly appoint someone to ensure it follows any formalised procedures in place (for example in the discussions of SLDs).
- PAB should be chaired more formally and views elicited from everyone to ensure the quieter members have input especially on issues of particular importance.
- Legal input could be used more as drafting by committee can be problematic.
- PAB often looks too closely at the specifics.

WORK SCHEDULING

- PAB members have not been particularly pro-active with creating agenda items to date so it has been ratifying policy that Nominet requests rather than stakeholder issues.
- Some discussions should include more membership interaction by perhaps opening documentation up prior to the PAB meetings.

PRE/POST-PAB MEETING INTERACTION

- Relevant papers could be made available for public or member comment before meetings.
- There is no process in place to trace progress of PAB recommendations, they APPEAR to get lost in outer space after the PAB approve them and no timescales get reported back, etc, Peter's paper deals with this in detail.
- The PAB should publish an annual summary report of the years work to the stakeholders prior to PAB elections each year.
- The PAB rarely hears what business the CoM has been handling and a short report after CoM meetings stating what had been on the agenda might help the PAB see the fact things are progressing.

Recommendations

Now follows a few recommendations that might fall out from the comments made above:

PAB DEFINITION

1. Define policy and address the issue of tension over the PABs role.

PAB COMPOSITION

2. Decide on what role CoM members are intended to take on the PAB. Similarly ensure the issue of the role of Nominet staff at the meeting is clarified and remains clear in the future.
3. It would seem sensible to look at the issues involved to address concerns regarding the balance of industry/other stakeholder power on the PAB since it is currently 10:5. This may also have some issue with regards recommendation 2 above.
4. Alter Election or meeting schedules so they are scheduled better in relation to the election result and first meeting of the PAB for the following year. This can be achieved within the current meeting schedules and rules by having the call for nominations go out at the start of January and the deadline for votes to be set as the first working day of March.
5. Provide new PAB members with an introductory session.
6. Discuss the role of the appointed members to encourage them to look at the issues for their constituency as a whole rather than just their organisation.

NOMINET ATTENDANCE

7. In order to counter the issues of vacuum the PAB should call managers to meetings to deal with the papers relevant to their departments but minimize the staff members we require where possible.
8. Ask the Executive to draft guidelines on when they feel issues from management meetings should be sent to the PAB and which to the CoM, the PAB can then review these and suggest any appropriate alterations, etc.

PAB APPROACH TO WORK

9. Appoint somebody to ensure the PAB follows procedures correctly at meetings. Should this be someone from Nominet, the CoM or the PAB?
10. The Chair should try to stop discussion descending into specifics where it is not relevant.
11. The Chair should ensure all members have the opportunity to give their views on all topics ensuring that all PAB members are explicitly asked for opinions on points of most significance.
12. The fact that the minutes are taken by Nominet currently leave the PAB in the position where its advice is minuted by the body it is advising which presumably is questionable to an outsider looking in. Other options for minuting should perhaps be considered and the Chair should firstly approve minutes which should be circulated to the rest of the PAB and Nominet staff for additions or modifications prior to being published.
13. The PAB should minimize its drafting of documents and allow legal eagles to fill in the detail for us which we can then approve.

PRE/POST-PAB MEETING INTERACTION

14. The CoM should provide some level of reporting to the PAB as to its activities in order to keep it in touch with goings on.
15. The PAB should publish its own annual report.
16. The PAB should publish monthly communiques if possible - in months where no meeting has taken place it should be in a form that puts topics out for discussion on non-steer so they can be looked at by the PAB in the next meeting.