



BOARD MEETING
09 February 2016 @ 10.30am

PRESENT:

Judith Thompson (Chair - **JT**)

Commissioner

IN ATTENDANCE:

John Beggs (**JB**)

Secretary to the Commission

Adrian McNamee (**AMN**)

Head of Policy and Research

Craig Gartley (**CG**)

Head of Corporate Services

Sarah Beare (**SB**) - minutes

1. Apologies

1.1. There were no apologies.

2. Declaration of Interests

2.1. All attendees confirmed they had no conflict of interests.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

3.1. The minutes of the meeting on 09 February 2016 were agreed.

4. Matters Arising

Meeting with Director of Social Investment and Victims Division

4.1. It was noted that the Commissioner's would meet with the Director of Social Investment and Victims Division on 10 March 2016.

European Contacts

4.2. **JT** advised that she had applied for Associate Membership with Victims Support Europe (VSE). She outlined a telephone conversation with Levent Altan, Executive Director on 04 March 2016. **JT** advised that she would attend the VSE conference in the Netherlands on 25 and 26 May 2016 and a discussion took place around Forum Members also attending. It was noted that VSE were interested in gaining a better understanding of the Troubles/Conflict and had discussed a Commission/Forum workshop at the 2017 conference.

4.3. It was agreed to contact the European Commission to obtain contacts after the Commission's conference.

ACTION: AMN

Basque Visit

4.4. **AMN** advised that the four sectors who had visited the Basque region in 2015 had been asked to host visitors from the region during a visit to Northern Ireland on 10-13 May 2016.

A partners meeting would take place at Equality House on 16 March 2016 and further information would be available following this meeting.

Funding

- 4.5. **JT** asked if the Commission could access funding from Ireland. **AMN** advised that this would be possible as a Junior Partner.

File Storage Review

- 4.6. It was agreed to progress the File Storage Review with the VSS. **JT** highlighted the need to log issues with responses from the VSS.

ACTION: JB

5. Accounting Officer Update

Budget

- 5.1. **JB** advised that the Commission previously completed a submission to OFMDFM detailing the impact of 5% and 10% budget reduction scenarios for the 2016/17 opening budget with the overarching conclusion that the Forum and Research expenditure could ultimately absorb the 5% cut, but 10% would have a major impact on the Commission's ability to fulfil its statutory duties.
- 5.2. **JB** advised that the Commission had been informed of an indicative budget reduction of 4% on the opening budget for the 2016/17 financial year but this was yet to be formally confirmed by OFMDFM. A letter confirming the Commission's budget for 2016/17 had been expected by the end of January 2016 but had not yet been received.
- 5.3. **CG** highlighted fixed costs and cumulative spend to date. Each budget line was reviewed and plans to undertake expenditure of all available funds were discussed, in the context of pressures on the capacity of staff and the time left until the end of the year to undertake and complete any proposed work. This included research plans which may straddle 2015/16 – 2016/17 and legal advice that may be required in response to emerging events.
- 5.4. A query from the Department regarding the Forum Budget received in 2015 was discussed. **JT** asked for information on the response received, if any. It was agreed to focus the presentation of the Forum budget on outcomes and activities.
- 5.5. It was noted that the CIPFA Governance Mark of Excellence had been deferred to 2016/17 due to lack of internal resources.
- 5.6. It was noted that a refund of £8,400 was received from NIJAC for overpayments in relation to Headline Building.
- 5.7. **JB** highlighted the need to monitor the budget going forward to ensure spend would come in on target and the risk of carry over commitments against the 2016/17 budget.

Update on Business Cases and Procurement (Delegated decisions)

- 5.8. The update on Business Cases and Procurement included all delegated decisions taken by the Accounting Officer since the last Board meeting. The Schedule was reviewed and new projects were noted.
- 5.9. It was noted that Board approval would be required for additional expenditure of £9,600 (£8,000 + VAT) on the Business Case for the Appointment of a Panel to Sustain Victims and Survivors Forum Membership 2016-19. This would be discussed later on the agenda.

Performance Report

- 5.10. **JB** advised that a first working draft Business Plan 2016/17 was submitted to the Department on 29 January 2016. Following consultation with the Forum and staff on 11 February 2016, the draft Business Plan 2016/17 and Corporate Plan 2016-19 would be

tabled at the March 2016 Board meeting for approval. They would then be formally submitted to the Department.

- 5.11. The Business Plan was discussed. Targets that had been completed were noted.
- 5.12. **AMN** advised that due to work on the Appointment of a Panel to Sustain Victims and Survivors Forum Membership, 2 Forum papers were outstanding at the deadline of 31 January 2016. As a result the RAG status of 2.1 and 3.1 had gone red. It was expected that this would revert to green by the end of March 2016.
- 5.13. **JT** acknowledged that 2.1 and 3.1 were behind schedule but was reassured in terms of results and impacts, noting that the Forum's Key Guiding Principles for the Establishment of new Organisations to Effectively Deal with the Past had been circulated following a number of recent meeting and feedback had been obtained.
- 5.14. **JT** queried the RAG status of 4.5 International Engagement. It was agreed to contact the European Commission and Victims Support to obtain contacts with whom meetings could be considered.

ACTION: JT and AMN

- 5.15. It was noted that the Commission had been asked to consider hosting visitors from the Basque region in May 2016.
- 5.16. It was noted that the Business Plan 2015/16 was still under review by Ministers.
- 5.17. A discussion took place regarding the possibility of merging 2.2 and 2.3 in the 2016/17 Business Plan. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the planning meeting on 11 February 2016.

Risk Management

- 5.18. It was noted that the Corporate Risk Register had been tabled at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting on 20 January 2016. **JB** advised that the Audit and Risk Committee requested that CR3, Failure to engage effectively with Forum and the victims and survivors sector to reflect the view of victims and survivors, should change from amber to red. The Audit and Risk Committee were conscious of the impact the Appointment of a Panel to Sustain Victims and Survivors Forum Membership would have on existing Forum members and the risks in relation to the appointment process. At the meeting, **JB** highlighted the Commission's actions to mitigate the risks.
- 5.19. The Board approved changes to the Risk Register, including elevating CR3 from amber to red and was content with the actions outlined by **JB** to mitigate the risks. It was noted that there was 1 high rated risk with red status and 2 low rated risks with green status.
- 5.20. **JT** requested that the Risk Register summary narrative be amended to reflect that the process for the Appointment of a Panel to Sustain Victims and Survivors Forum Membership 2016-19, while risky, was the only way to achieve the effectiveness of the Forum and ensure that it is representative of all sides of the community. She also asked that high levels of activity and impact following meets with Groups, Officials and other organisations be captured under CR3 also.

ACTION: CG

- 5.21. Under CR1, **JB** advised that the Commission had requested a meeting with the VSS in house Psychologist, dating back to October 2015, regarding a review of file storage. The meeting had previously been postponed due to sickness absence in the VSS and the review had yet to take place. It was noted that the in house Psychologist was no longer in post so the Commission had been unable to progress the review. It was agreed that **JB** would request a meeting with the VSS.

ACTION: JB

Pay Award 2014

- 5.22. It was noted that the Pay Remit 2014 remained on the Risk Register. **JB** provided background and advised that the issue had been raised at the Accountability Meeting on 11

January 2016 and the Audit and Risk Committee meeting on 20 January 2016. **JB** highlighted the impact on staff morale and advised that NICS had agreed the Pay Remit for 2015 for civil servants. It was noted that **CG** requested an update from the Department on 08 February 2016 and would follow up on a response.

ACTION: CG

Staffing

- 5.23. It was noted that temporary members of staff had commenced work, filling the role of Policy Support Officer following her resignation and to electronically archive Commission documents.
- 5.24. A meeting with HR Connect in relation to progressing the Recruitment of ARAC Members, the Head of Engagement and Communications and the Policy Support Officer, took place on 29 January 2016. It was noted that three recruitment campaigns would take place within one exercise in relation to the ARAC Members, therefore this would be more expensive than the other recruitment campaigns. **CG** advised that the timeline would be 10 weeks from approvals were received.
- 5.25. A discussion took place on Panel members for each campaign. It was agreed that **JT** and **JB** would sit on the Panel for the appointment of ARAC Members.
- 5.26. It was agreed that Independent Panel Members would be sought and that an Independent Panel Member with Communications experience would be required for the appointment of the Head of Engagement and Communications.
- 5.27. It was agreed that Independent Panel Members could be remunerated if necessary to secure the correct skills and experience.

Review of the Commission

- 5.28. It was noted that no date had been confirmed for the triennial review in 2016/17.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

- 5.29. It was noted that the Audit and Risk Committee had been invited to the Staff/Forum Planning Day on 11 February 2016 but the Chair was unable to attend.

Gifts & Hospitality

- 5.30. All Gifts and Hospitality for the last quarter had been recorded and approved by the Accounting Officer. No exceptional gifts or hospitality had been received or provided.
- 5.31. All Registers for the last quarter were available on the Commission's website.

Fraud

- 5.32. There had been no reported instances of fraud during the reported period.

Freedom of Information

- 5.33. No FOI requests had been received this quarter.

Complaints

- 5.34. No Complaints had been received this quarter.

6. Business Case for the Appointment of a Panel to Sustain Victims and Survivors Forum Membership 2016-19

- 6.1. The amended Business Case was discussed. **JB** advised that Pricewaterhouse LLB had been appointed as Specialist Human Resource Advisors to work on the Appointment of a Panel to Sustain Victims and Survivors Forum Membership 2016-19. The use of the Commission's existing website to support an online portal for applications had been

- investigated but a proposal from PWC to use their Candidate Management System would be a more suitable option and would mitigate risks, especially in terms of Data Protection.
- 6.2. The Candidate Management System would also lessen the administrative burden on Commission staff in relation to the appointment process.
 - 6.3. **JT** noted that the Candidate Management System would provide assurance and would enable the Commission to easily supply evidence of Equality in the application process.
 - 6.4. Board approval would be required for the additional Expenditure of £9,600 (£8,000 + VAT). The additional expenditure would take the approval beyond the Accounting Officer's delegated limit of £30,000 and would also require Departmental approval.
 - 6.5. The Board approved the additional expenditure of £9,600 on the Business Case for the Appointment of a Panel to Sustain Victims and Survivors Forum Membership.
 - 6.6. It was agreed that **JB** would proceed with obtaining approval from the Department as soon as possible, minimising any delay to the agreed timeline.

ACTION: JB

7. Update on the Appointment of a Panel to Sustain Victims and Survivors Forum Membership 2016-19

- 7.1. Pricewaterhouse LLB had been appointed as Specialist Human Resource Advisors to work on the Appointment of a Panel to Sustain Victims and Survivors Forum Membership 2016-19.
- 7.2. Approval would be sought from the Department for the procurement of a Candidate Management System.
- 7.3. Final Comments on the Competency Framework were to be submitted to Pricewaterhouse LLB by 09 February 2016.
- 7.4. The Project Initiation document was issued on 04 February 2016 and Pricewaterhouse LLB will forward a weekly project report containing an updated risk register.
- 7.5. Design of the Assessment Approach would commence on 08 February 2016. A discussion took place regarding Pricewaterhouse LLB's role in the assessment of skills and competencies.
- 7.6. It was agreed that Pricewaterhouse LLB would meet with MCE PR, the Communications Company regarding advertising and the communication strategy.

ACTION: JB and CG

- 7.7. It was agreed to contact Amanda Stewart in the Northern Ireland Policing Board to request a copy of her evaluation document for a recent appointment process.

ACTION: AMN

- 7.8. It was noted that the update on the appointment process would be a standing item on the Board Agenda until complete.

8. Conference on the Review of the Strategy Agenda

- 8.1. The draft Agenda and programme for the Conference was discussed.
- 8.2. It was agreed that Wendy Austin would Chair/MC on day 1 of the Conference and that Susan McKay would Chair/MC on the 2nd day.
- 8.3. Group involvement in the Conference was discussed. It was noted that the Commission were following up on outstanding invitations to a number of Groups to participate in the Conference and were trying to achieve balance.
- 8.4. **JB's** role in the Conference was confirmed as per the Agenda/programme.
- 8.5. It was noted that the Conference invitation would go out on 09 February 2016.

9. Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy

- 9.1. The Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy was discussed. **CG** had identified that the Commission did not currently have a policy in place and provided a background on the need for one.

- 9.2. **JT** sought clarification on a Corporate Offense and asked for an example.
- 9.3. The Board approved the Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy.

10. Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy

- 10.1. **CG** advised that a draft Policy had been prepared and the Policy Officer was currently comparing it to the VSS Policy to ensure consistency.
- 10.2. It was noted that the Commissioner would meet a representative from the Safeguarding Board on 12 February 2016 to seek advice. It was agreed to invite the Policy Officer to the meeting.

ACTION: SB

- 10.3. It was agreed that the Policy would be sent to Marcella Leonard for review once complete.

ACTION: CG

11. AOB

None.

NAME: **Judith Thompson**

SIGNED: 

DATE: 08/03/16