

- 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. It was expected that the VSS would be protected and experience no further cuts on their opening budget. This was yet to be formally confirmed by OFMDFM.
- 5.3. **JT** acknowledged that budgets would be cut due to the current financial climate but that requests for additional outputs from the Department may require additional financial resource. It was agreed to arrange a meeting with the Director of Social Investment and Victims Directive.

ACTION: SB

- 5.4. **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.
- 5.5. **JT** acknowledged the commitment and work carried out by staff to progress work priorities and procure resources in order to fully utilise the available budget for 2015/16.
- 5.6. It was noted that a small overspend of £6,000 was currently projected which would be within tolerance. Areas of budget risk were queried by **JT** and assurance was provided by **JB**.

Update on Business Cases and Procurement (Delegated decisions)

- 5.7. The schedule was reviewed and new projects noted.

Performance Report

- 5.8. The Business Plan was discussed. Targets that have been completed were noted and it was advised all remaining targets were on track for delivery. It was noted that updates had been made in December 2015 for quarter 3 and the Business Plan and Risk Register had been updated for the ARC and Accountability meetings, week commencing 18 January 2016.
- 5.9. It was noted that the Business Plan 2015/16 was still under review by Ministers.
- 5.10. **JT** advised that at the meeting on 24 September 2015, the Forum had agreed that Dealing with the Past issues were too contentious and wider consultation with the whole Forum would be most useful, replacing the Dealing with the Past working group.
- 5.11. **JT** queried the figure listed in the 2015-16 Business Plan for Group Engagements. It was noted that, as per the SMT update from 12 January 2016, 32 Group Engagements had taken place since the Commissioner took up post in September 2015.
- 5.12. A discussion took place regarding Responding to Consultations. **JT** advised that she wanted the Commission to be more proactive, raising issues in advance, not just reactive. It was noted that additional work, including Advice Papers, had previously been recorded as additional outputs.
- 5.13. A discussion took place regarding the draft Corporate Plan 2016-19 and the draft Business Plan 2016/17. **CG** highlighted that, as per the MSFM, the Commissioner is required to submit a draft Corporate Plan and Business Plan by 31 January 2016.
- 5.14. It was noted that outcome based accountability had been added to the draft Business Plan 2016/17.
- 5.15. Options for Consultation on the draft Corporate Plan 2016-19 and the draft Business Plan 2016/17 were discussed. **JB** suggested the use of the Commission's new website for Consultation once live.
- 5.16. It was agreed to consult with staff on 25 January 2016 and the Forum on 11 February 2016.

ACTION: AMN and CG

Risk Management

- 5.17. The changes to the Risk Register were agreed. It was noted that there were 3 medium risks with amber status and 2 low risks with green status.
- 5.18. It was noted that the Pay Remit 2014 had been added to the Risk Register. **JB** provided background and advised that the issue had been raised at the Accountability Meeting on 11 January 2016 and would be raised at 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.
- 5.19. **JT** discussed monitoring and oversight of services, relating to CR1 Failure to keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness of services, law and practice provided for victims and survivors. It was noted that there were still some issues with receiving timely and quality information from the VSS and **JT** highlighted the need to agree the Commission's role going forward, after the completion of all Independent Assessment recommendations, in oversight of services. It was noted that there was a need to achieve steady state monitoring. Controls on the Risk Register to mitigate this risk were discussed. **JT** suggested the possibility of a six monthly Assurance Statement with an Annual Review by the Commission.
- 5.20. **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

Audit Recommendations

- 5.21. The update on Audit Recommendations was discussed.
- 5.22. **JT** asked for clarification on the requirement to carry out a full test of the Business Continuity Plan which was scheduled for 25 January 2016. **CG** confirmed that this was an Internal Audit recommendation. Although Satisfactory Assurance had been received, Internal Auditors noted that the plan had not been tested in its entirety.
- 5.23. Internal Audit Reports were discussed. It was noted that Internal Audit reports would be tabled at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting on 20 January 2016. Satisfactory Assurance had been received in relation to Financial Reporting and Budgetary Control and Information Management and Security.

Staffing

- 5.24. It was noted that temporary members of staff were being sought to fill the role of Policy Support Officer following her resignation and to electronically archive Commission documents.
- 5.25. It was noted that HR Connect had been contacted to arrange meetings regarding the Recruitment of ARAC Members and Head of Engagement and Communication and Policy Support Officer posts.

Review of the Commission

- 5.26. **JT** asked for clarification on when the next triennial review would take place. It was noted that no date had been confirmed.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

- 5.27. It was noted that the easement in the January 2016 Monitoring Round would be discussed at the Audit and Risk Committee meeting on 20 January 2016.
- 5.28. It was noted that the Audit and Risk Committee would be invited to the Staff/Forum Planning Day on 11 February 2016.

ACTION: JB

Gifts & Hospitality

- 5.29. 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.
- 5.30. All Registers for the last quarter were available on the Commission's website.

Fraud

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

Freedom of Information

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

Complaints

- 5.33. No Complaints had been received this quarter.

6. Internal Audit Reports

- 7.1. As per the Accounting Officers update.

7. PACEC- Evaluation Personalised Budget Pilot

- 7.1. The Personalised Budget Pilot final draft report was discussed. **AMN** provided background on the project.
- 7.2. It was noted that feedback from the Health and Social Care Board and the Executive Summary were outstanding in the report tabled.
- 7.3. **AMN** highlighted the report's conclusions and a discussion took place on whether or not the VSS would be a transactional service or transformational service for clients.
- 7.4. A discussion took place on the need for clarification on changes to Eligibility and the need for comprehensive Commission advice on this.

8. Conference on the Review of the Strategy Agenda

- 8.1. The draft Agenda for the Conference was discussed.
- 8.2. It was agreed to follow up on an invitation to Lord Alderdice to speak at the Conference.
- ACTION: AMN**
- 8.3. **AMN** highlighted that elections were due to take place in Ireland at the end of February 2016.
- 8.4. **AMN** queried the sensitivity around the sharing of the stage at the Conference, based on the current Agenda.
- 8.5. It was agreed to draft a letter to the Commissioner for Children and Young People, inviting the Commissioner to speak at the Conference on 10 March 2016.

ACTION: AMN

- 8.6. It was agreed to seek an introductory meeting with the First Minister.

ACTION: SB

9. AOB

Safeguarding Vulnerable Children Policy

- 9.1. **JT** queried the status of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Children Policy. It was noted that the Policy was being progressed and would be tabled at the February 2016 Board meeting.

ACTION: CG

Review of SMT Minutes by the Department

- 9.2. It was noted that the Department would no longer be reviewing the Commission's weekly SMT Minutes now that the Board was back in place under normal governance arrangements.

NAME: **Judith Thompson**

SIGNED:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judith Thompson", written on a small, light-colored rectangular piece of paper that is slightly tilted and placed over the "SIGNED:" label.

DATE: 09/02/16