



BOARD MEETING
10 November 2015 @ 10.00am

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
Laura Kennedy (**LK**) - 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 13 October 2015 were approved.

4. Matters Arising

- 4.1. It was confirmed that options for a managing or communicating with people in distress and personal resilience training for staff, remained on the SMT agenda and would be arranged as and when required.
- 4.2. It was noted the 2015/16 Business Plan was still under review by Ministers.
- 4.3. It was advised the meeting with the NI Affairs Committee was to be rescheduled.

5. Annual Report and Accounts

- 5.1. **JB** confirmed the Annual Report and Accounts had been laid before the Assembly on 22 October 2015, within 2 weeks of the C&AG's signature
- 5.2. The Annual Report and Accounts would be printed in hard copy and would be published on the Commission's website. NIAO had reviewed and approved the document prior to its publication.
- 5.3. The Draft Report to those Charged with Governance had been finalised and presented by NIAO, with all recommendations noted for implementation.

ACTION: SMT

6. Accounting Officer Update

Budget

- 6.1. **JB** noted that Mark Browne, Departmental Accounting Officer had confirmed there would be no further budget cuts in year.

- 6.2. It was advised the October Monitoring Round had been called at short notice for submission on 21 October 2015. The Commission had made no bids or easements.
- 6.3. The Commission had also received formal confirmation of the 2015/16 budget which had increased by £31,000 (£14,000 Resource and £17,000 Capital).
- 6.4. It was noted this increase in the Commissions budget combined with savings realised through the Commissions relocation exercise resulted in unallocated funding of up to £90,000 which was available for expenditure before year end. It was noted that the Budget Report indicated no variances at year end.
- 6.5. Options 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.
- 6.6. Commitment was made to progress work priorities and procure resources in order to fully utilise the available budget for 2015/16.
- 6.7. It was agreed that procurement for all proposed expenditure should, where possible, be implemented by the end of November 2015, whereupon the budget would be reviewed and, if required, any easements in the January Monitoring Round agreed.
- 6.8. It was agreed that in Quarter 4 the Budget Report would be presented in order to reflect expenditure, including staff time and salaries, across all relevant budget lines, primarily programme costs.

ACTION: CG

Update on Business Cases and Procurement (Delegated decisions)

- 6.9. The schedule was reviewed and new projects noted.
- 6.10. **JB** advised that in October 2015 the Commission had undertaken a Direct Award Contract for Communications Services until the end of March 2016.

Performance Report

- 6.11. Targets that have been completed were noted and it was advised all remaining targets were on track for delivery. Pervious queries over the target of the Forum were no longer a concern and new projects identified (see point 6.5) would need to be added to the Business Plan
- 6.12. It was advised that planning for the Corporate Plan 2016-19 and Business Plan 2016/17 would begin in December 2015.

Internal Audit

- 6.13. It was noted that ASM fieldwork was to begin on the follow up review for Financial Reporting and Budgetary Control in the week commencing 30 November 2015 and fieldwork on Information Management and Security was to begin in the week commencing 7 December 2015.

Risk Management

- 6.14. At the request of the Board in October 2015 it was noted that Corporate Risks 1 & 2 had been reviewed by SMT and the targets amended from 2 (green) to 3 (amber). SMT had also reviewed the assessment and current risks and the Risk Register had been updated accordingly.
- 6.15. The changes to the Risk Register were agreed.

Decisions referred to Board from SMT

- 6.16. The Unacceptable Behaviour Policy was noted for consideration later in the agenda.

Accommodation

- 6.17. It was noted the Commission had moved to new premises on 9 November 2015 and that approvals and a MOTO agreement were in place.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) – New Members Recruitment

- 6.18. **JB** advised he had approved a Business Case to progress recruitment for new members of the ARAC to be in position from May 2016, in order to facilitate their first meeting in July 2016.
- 6.19. It was noted the Commission was also using this opportunity to review and update the Terms of Reference for the ARAC and would liaise with OFMDFM throughout this process.

Recruitment – Head of Engagement and Communication

- 6.20. **JB** advised he had approved a Business Case to progress recruitment for a Head of Engagement and Communication to be in post from April 2016.
- 6.21. The Job Description was currently under review and recruitment would be progressed once it had been approved and indicative Job Evaluation Grading had been completed.

Communications Strategy

- 6.22. **JB** advised the Commission was progressing procurement to obtain services to draft a Communications Strategy for the Commission in line with the 2016-19 Corporate Plan.
- 6.23. As part of the procurement exercise the Commission would be seeking a review of the organisations branding and recommendations for appropriate updating.
- 6.24. **JB** expressed concern that expenditure indicated in the approved DAC for Communications Services until year end was not sufficient to cover upcoming work around the Stormont House Agreement.
- 6.25. It was noted that the DAC had been initiated and extended in order to ensure there was continuity of Communications Services upon the appointment of a new Commissioner.
- 6.26. **JT** advised she considered these services were imperative in order to manage any reputational risks and to provide guidance to her in the first year of her new role.
- 6.27. It was agreed to consult with CPD in order to determine how to extend expenditure within the timeframe of the DAC.

ACTION: CG

Forum

- 6.28. It was noted that options for selection of Forum members were currently being identified and a Business Case being prepared to identify the best value for money option.
- 6.29. The next meeting of the Forum would be a residential meeting on 19 & 20 November 2015.

Gifts & Hospitality

- 6.30. 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.
- 6.31. All Registers for the last quarter were available on the Commission's website.

Fraud

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

Freedom of Information

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

Complaints

- 6.34. No Complaints had been received this quarter.

Review of the Commission

6.35. It was advised the next triennial review would take place in early 2016/17.

7. Business Plan 2015-16

7.1. As per the Accounting Officers update.

8. Risk Register

8.1. As per the Accounting Officers update.

9. Restructure and Staff Recruitment

9.1. It was agreed to seek advice from the Commission's HR services with regards to the organisational restructuring and impact on existing job descriptions.

ACTION: CG

10. Unacceptable Behaviour Policy

10.1. **JB** provided a background overview of the policy and its review to the Commissioner.

10.2. **JT** noted the policy tried to encourage acceptable behaviour of both staff and members of the public, rather than negatively focusing on unacceptable behaviour.

10.3. It was agreed to approve the Policy subject to some amendments suggested by the Commissioner.

10.4. It was agreed to provide refresher training on the policy to staff at the same time as Disability Awareness Training which was currently being arranged.

ACTION: CG

11. Consideration of Research Proposals

11.1. **AMN** provided a background overview to the undertaking of research at the Commission and the current proposal. This proposal was from a victims group, asking the Commission to undertake and fund research they had identified.

11.2. Discussion on the future of research at the Commission took place, with consideration of potential funding from Peace IV, in partnership with the VSS and the Commission's current programme of work.

11.3. It was agreed that the upcoming Review of the Victims Strategy would have bearing on the research strategy of the Commission and any potential ways of undertaking research would be influenced by its recommendations.

11.4. It was agreed to respond to the proposal and advise that it would be considered within that context at a later date.

ACTION: AMN

12. AOB

12.1. Protocol for Party Conferences – It was agreed that the Commission would take a stand at NI Executive Party Conferences from the start of the next political cycle commencing Autumn 2016. The stands would be manned by Commission staff and the VSS would be invited to participate in order to ensure all queries with regards to the roles of both organisations would be answered.

ACTION: SMT

12.2. It was noted that the Equal Opportunities Policy was under review.

NAME: **Judith Thompson**

SIGNED:



DATE: 15/12/2015