



BOARD MEETING
23 September 2016 @ 9.15am

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. Introduction and Apologies

1.1. There were apologies from Tina McCann (**TMC**), Head of Communications and Engagement.

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 15 August 2016 were agreed.

4. Action Notes

OBA Training

4.1. **CG** advised that the Executive Office anticipated training taking place late November/early December 2016.

Conference Dates

4.2. **AMN** advised that SMT had agreed to release dates held for a Conference in November 2016 and dates had been held in February 2017. **AMN** advised that a topic would be required before **CG** could progress the Business Case further.

PPE's for Washington Trip & VSE Conference

4.3. **CG** advised that PPE's had been prepared as requested by **JT**, noting that these would not be requested by the Executive Office. **JT** highlighted the importance and business benefits of the international engagement. It was agreed to raise this at the next Accountability meeting on 28 October 2016.

ACTION: JB, CG

Pension Related Queries from Individuals/Organisations April-June 2016

4.4. It was agreed that advice would be sought from a member of the Commission's Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Commission's Legal services provider.

ACTION: JB

5. Accounting Officer's Update

Performance Report

- 5.1. A discussion took place regarding the latest draft of the Commission's Corporate Plan 2016-19. **JB** advised that the Corporate Plan had been updated with comments received from the Executive Office and required Board approval before resubmission to the Executive Office. **JT** noted that this was an interim position pending work on the 2017-20 plan to align the Commission and VSS plans to each other and to the final Programme for Government.
- 5.2. **JB** advised that a budget analysis table had been added to the Corporate Plan and outlined other minor updates.
- 5.3. The Board approved the Corporate Plan 2016-19 for submission to the Executive Office and it was agreed that a cover letter would be drafted.

ACTION: CG

- 5.4. **JB** advised that the Business Plan 2016/17 would be updated at the end of the quarter (end of September 2016).
- 5.5. **JB** advised that the RAG Status relating to the Review of the Strategy would be amended to Red as the deadline of the end of September 2016 would not be met due to issues with the Report.

ACTION: AMN

- 5.6. **JB** advised that the RAG Status of 2.1 Forum contribution to raising the awareness of the impact of the past remained Amber as previously agreed due to the Appointment of a Panel to sustain Victims and Survivors Forum Membership. **JB** questioned if this should remain Amber until the Forum had begun to meet and produce advice.
- 5.7. Following discussion, it was agreed to change the RAG Status of 1.1, 2.1 and 3.1 from Amber to Green to reflect the appointment of 10 new members to the Victims and Survivors Forum and the achievability of the time frame in the plan.

ACTION: AMN

- 5.8. It was noted that the RAG Status of 1.5 Research was currently Green. **JT** advised that the Executive Office had changed their RAG Status in relation to Standards to Red as the project timeline was not in line with PEACE IV. **AMN** advised that the dependencies had emerged during the year and that the Standards project did not feature as a standalone item within the Commission's Business Plan.
- 5.9. **JT** noted reputational and Business Risks.
- 5.10. Following discussion, it was agreed to amend the RAG Status of 1.5 Research from Green to Amber to reflect the current position of the Standards project.

ACTION: AMN

- 5.11. It was noted that Engagement was on target with the preparation of a Communications Strategy and the Head of Communication and Engagement taking up post. **AMN** also advised that 3 Seminars/Consultation workshops would take place during October 2016.

Budget Report

- 5.12. **CG** provided an update on the current Resource Budget, noting that it would be reviewed following decisions on Research Proposals tabled under item 6. **CG** advised that there was currently £40k unallocated.

Update on Business Cases and Procurement

- 5.13. The update on Business Cases and Procurement was discussed. **CG** advised that there had been no significant committed expenditure in the last month.

External Audit/Annual Report and Accounts

- 5.14. **CG** advised that NIAO had completed external audit fieldwork and the Commission would receive a draft RTTCWG by 07 October 2016.
- 5.15. Final accounts and annual report would be presented at an Extraordinary Board Meeting in for approval.

Internal Audit

- 5.16. **CG** advised that ASM had completed fieldwork on HR and Performance Management and a report was expected by 07 October 2016. **CG** noted that he had been verbally advised that the Commission would receive satisfactory assurance.

Risk Management

- 5.17. **JB** outlined updates to the Risk Register, noting that 'ongoing' had been replaced, where possible, with target completion dates, incorporating timelines and mitigating actions as requested by an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee member.
- 5.18. Following discussion, it was agreed to revise CR3 Failure to engage effectively with the Forum and the victims and survivors sector and to reflect the views of victims and survivors from Red to Amber as the Commission had appointed 10 new Forum Members.

ACTION: AMN

- 5.19. It was agreed to propose this change at the next Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting on 14 October 2016.

ACTION: JB

- 5.20. **JT** noted that there were items which were outside of the Commission's control and that it would only be possible to monitor and respond to external factors.
- 5.21. The Commission's Corporate Risk Register currently contains 1 high rated risk with Red status, 2 medium rate risks with Amber status and 2 low rate risks with Green status.

Staffing

- 5.22. **CG** advised that the Head of Communications and Engagement had taken up post on 19 September 2016.
- 5.23. It was noted that the Commission currently had one vacancy.
- 5.24. A discussion took place regarding resources with **JT** asking if the Policy and Research Team could meet demands should PEACE IV be secured. **AMN** advised that additional resources may be required should PEACE IV proceed.
- 5.25. It was agreed to source an Agency worker who could assist both the Communications and Engagement and Policy and Research Teams. SMT would consider the specification further.

ACTION: JB, AMN, CG, TMC

- 5.26. **JT** requested that SMT consider the Commission's current organisational structure, particularly in relation to the Policy and Research Team and the level of projected demand on that team.

ACTION: JB, AMN, CG, TMC

Complaint

- 5.27. It was noted that no complaints had been received.

Freedom of Information

- 5.28. It was noted that 2 Freedom of Information requests were received in the last quarter with 1 relating to the Recruitment of the Head of Communications and Engagement.

Gifts and Hospitality

- 5.29. It was noted that all Gifts and Hospitality for the last quarter had been recorded and approved by the Accounting Officer and would be available on the Commission's new website.

Review of the Commission

- 5.30. It was noted that the next Review of the Commission would take place later in the year and would cover 2011 – 2016. **JT** advised that the review was likely to commence before December 2016.

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

- 5.31. **CG** advised that the next Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting would take place on 14 October 2016.

Pay Award 2015/16

- 5.32. **CG** advised that queries had been received from the Executive Office on 22 September 2016 which related to Employer National Insurance Contributions. **CG** advised that he would respond on 23 September 2016 and would follow up with the Executive Office weekly.

6. Research Proposal Options

- 6.1. **AMN** advised that he had provided options for current Budget expenditure for the remainder of the 2016/17 year as £40k was currently unallocated to Research projects.

Option 1: A Population-based Survey

- 6.2. A discussion took place regarding a Population-based Survey. **AMN** provided an overview of the proposal and advised that costs were estimated to be between £20-£25k with one of the potential suppliers advertising a two week turnaround for the survey and findings.
- 6.3. Options for Methodology including face-to-face, online or telephone surveys were discussed.
- 6.4. **AMN** noted that the Commission need to use the E-tenders system for procurement. **CG** advised that this would be an open process, dependent upon suppliers registered on the system.
- 6.5. **AMN** noted that costs were estimated but that through the preparation of a Business Case, accurate costs could be identified.
- 6.6. **JT** noted a strong proposal and the benefit to the Commission of an objective, independent view.
- 6.7. It was agreed to proceed with a Business Case for a Population-based Survey.

ACTION: AMN

- 6.8. A discussion took place regarding the possibility of the survey results being delivered at a Commission Conference.

Option 2: Web Tool for Standards

- 6.9. **AMN** advised that the consultation on the draft Standards had begun. It was noted that the VSS would be kept informed of responses as they were received.
- 6.10. **JT** noted that electronic surveys were more presentable and had better analysis tools. She requested that this be considered for future surveys/consultations.
- 6.11. **CG** advised that the Commission's new website had the functionality for surveys and analysis.
- 6.12. A discussion took place regarding online survey facilities. **AMN** advised that the Commission had a license for Survey Monkey.

- 6.13. **AMN** provided an overview of the proposal for a Web Tool to make the final agreed Standards accessible, noting a model used by the Canadian Ombudsman as an example.
- 6.14. **JT** advised that she was happy with the proposal in principle but timelines and associated costs would need to be considered.
- 6.15. It was noted that the use of a Web Tool would be the only effective way to ensure the Standards were accessible.
- 6.16. It was agreed that this proposal would be explored further and reported to SMT and the Board.

ACTION: AMN

Option 3: Social Return on Investment/Outcome Based Accountability

- 6.17. **AMN** outlined the proposal for a joint project on Social Return on Investment/ Outcome Based Accountability.
- 6.18. It was noted that Outcome Based Accountability Training would take place with the Executive Office late November/December 2016.
- 6.19. It was noted that targets from the Programme for Government would need to be known in advance of proceeding with/developing the proposal.
- 6.20. It was agreed to price check facilitators for a potential workshop with the VSS and Executive Office to agree strategic outcomes for victims and survivors.

ACTIONS: JB

- 6.21. **JB** noted that the Population-based Survey was critical but suggested that following decisions on Research Proposals, unallocated monies would be best redirected to the implementation of the Communications Strategy.

7. Communications Strategy

- 7.1. **JB** provided an overview of the Communications Strategy and Implementation Plan noting that it would help deliver the Corporate Plan objectives and key messages within it.
- 7.2. **JB** advised that MCE PR had carried out a media audit and had set the context for the Communications Strategy.
- 7.3. The Implementation Plan had been developed by **CG** and **JB**.
- 7.4. **JB** advised that a Business Case was being progressed for infographics which would have an educative function and could be used on social media platforms. **JT** noted that this would strengthen the Commission's communication.
- 7.5. A discussion took place regarding media, social media and political monitoring.
- 7.6. **JB** advised that the Communications Service Provider would absorb additional costs relating to Emeritus' registration for VAT and there would be no effect on the contract with the Commission.
- 7.7. **JT** welcomed the Communication Strategy and Implementation Plan acknowledging the work involved in its preparation and the strategic approach developed.
- 7.8. **JT** asked that Forum members were kept in mind in terms of implementation. **JB** advised that **TMC** had proposed that interested members would participate in a Communications working group and that the Forum had discussed a Press Position as a final item on each meeting agenda to communicate their work.
- 7.9. The Communications Strategy was approved.

8. External Complaints Policy

- 8.1. **CG** advised that he had reviewed the Commission's current External Complaints Policy and recommended introducing a 3rd stage to the Policy.

- 8.2. **JT** noted her concern about the level of accountability from the complainant's perspective.
- 8.3. It was agreed to table a revised Policy at the next Board meeting on 11 October 2016.

ACTION: CG

9. Draft Standards

- 9.1. **AMN** advised that the consultation on the draft Standards had begun and would be open for a period of 8 weeks. The closing date was noted as 18 November 2016.
- 9.2. **JT** thanked **AMN** for the update and acknowledged the complexities of the project.
- 9.3. **JT** sought clarification on the achievement of timeframes and the associated risks.
- 9.4. **AMN** advised that consultation workshops would take place during October 2016 and noted that a Co-Design sub group meeting would take place on 29 September 2016.
- 9.5. **JT** sought clarification on the purpose of the Co-Design sub group. **AMN** advised that they would set the agenda for Co-Design workshops which would take place late October 2016.
- 9.6. **AMN** advised that a minimum of a half day would be required to consult on the Standards so it would not be possible to address this during the Co-Design workshops, separate events were required.

10. Advice on Future Funding and Eligibility

- 10.1. It was noted that Advice on Future Funding and Eligibility had been submitted to Ministers on 26 August 2016.

11. Update on Safeguarding Policy and Training

- 11.1. **CG** provided an update on the Safeguarding Policy and Training and an overview of the draft Policy.
- 11.2. It was noted that SMT had not had the opportunity to consider the draft.
- 11.3. **CG** highlighted an issue with reporting responsibilities and recommended that this not be the responsibility of the Engagement Support Officer.
- 11.4. **JT** advised that she was happier with the draft Policy and asked that SMT consider where it connects with the Commission's organisational structure. It was agreed to report back to the Board at the next meeting on 11 October 2016.

ACTION: JB, AMN, CG, TMC

- 11.5. **JT** requested that **CG** consider training for staff. **CG** advised that this had been included in the proposal from the External Consultant and would be progressed once the Policy had been approved.
- 11.6. It was agreed that **AMN** would seek a copy of a Safeguarding Policy used by Schools.

ACTION: AMN

12. Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference

- 12.1. **CG** provided information on the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference.
- 12.2. **JB** requested that a table to show the quarterly work programme and key decisions be included.

ACTION: CG

13.Data Protection/Information Security Policy

- 13.1. **CG** advised that he had reviewed the Commission's Information Security Policy and noted that Audit had recently reviewed the Policy as part of their fieldwork, advising that it met best practice.
- 13.2. It was agreed to review the Information Security Policy and provide training for staff.
- 13.3. It was agreed to ask the Commission's Legal Advisor to assist with the review of the Information Security Policy.

ACTION: JB, CG

14.Birthday 2017 Honours Round

- 14.1. It was noted that the Commission had received a Birthday 2017 Honours Round Commissioning note with a deadline for response of 07 October 2016.
- 14.2. It was noted that the Commission normally provided a nil response.
- 14.3. It was agreed that SMT would consider the Birthday 2017 Honours Round.

ACTION: JB, AMN, CG, TMC

15.AOB

- 15.1. None.

NAME: Judith Thompson

SIGNED:



DATE: 18/10/2016