



The Commission for  
Victims & Survivors

## **BOARD MEETING**

### **14 November 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

Tina McCann (**TMC**)

Head of Communications and Engagement

Karyn Millar (**KM**)

Engagement Support Officer

Sarah Beare (**SB**) - minutes

### **1. Introduction and Apologies**

1.1. There were apologies from **TMC**.

### **2. Declaration of Interests**

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

### **3. Website Review**

3.1. **JT** welcomed **KM** to the meeting.

3.2. **KM** provided an update on the snag list following a meeting with the Web Bureau on 07 November 2016 and highlighted outstanding issues. **KM** demonstrated a number of problems to the Board and attendees using the content management system.

3.3. **KM** advised that the Forum login section had not been progressed by the Web Bureau. It was noted that a meeting would be arranged to progress this.

#### **ACTION: TMC**

3.4. **KM** explained that the Banner Menu could not be amended by the Commission.

3.5. **AMN** advised the Executive Office and VSS did not belong under the heading 'what we do'. **KM** explained that the title had been amended but as per the snag list, the menu would not update and the Web Bureau would address the issue.

3.6. A discussion took place around the lack of imagery.

3.7. **JT** noted that the structure and appearance of the new website was not fit for the purpose of delivering the Communications Strategy. **JT** acknowledged the work **KM** had put into the content management and noted that the design issues were beyond **KM**'s control.

3.8. **JT** noted that she would like the Forum to feature more prominently on the homepage. **KM** suggested the amendment of a menu button on the homepage to 'Forum'. The suggestion was accepted by the Board and **KM** actioned the change.

3.9. A discussion took place regarding the Forum landing page. It was agreed to land on member profiles initially and further amendments were discussed.

#### **ACTION: KM**

3.10. It was noted that SMT would meet to review the website on 17 November 2016.

- 3.11. It was agreed to add the Review of the Website to the Agenda for the next Board meeting on 16 December 2016.

**ACTION: SB**

- 3.12. **JT** thanked **KM** for her demonstration of the website and update.  
3.13. **KM** left the meeting.

#### **4. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

- 4.1. The minutes of the meeting on 18 October 2016 were agreed.

#### **5. Action Notes**

##### **PPE's for Washington Trip & VSE Conference**

- 5.1. **JT** asked for an update on this action. **JB** advised that he had raised the business benefit of international engagement with the Executive Office at the Accountability meeting on 01 November 2016 and had made them aware that PPE's for the Washington Trip and VSE Conference were available for review should they be required.

##### **Web Tool for Standards**

- 5.2. **JT** asked for an update on this action. **AMN** advised that this action was ongoing and had not been progressed in light of other work priorities.
- 5.3. **JB** noted the functionality issues with the new website, advising that these would need to be resolved by the Web Bureau before the integration of a web based tool.
- 5.4. **JT** acknowledged the pressures on the Policy and Research Team and asked if there were any alternative ways of progressing the web based tool. **AMN** and **JB** advised that a scoping exercise would need to be carried out by the Policy and Research Team to identify costs and options before a Business Case could be prepared. The cost would then be considered within the Commission's budget as costs were unknown at present.
- JT** noted her concern regarding the accessibility of the Standards for the opening of the VSP at the end of November 2016. **AMN** advised that the Standards would be available in hard copy and could be uploaded to the Commission's website as a document until such times as a web based tool was available. **AMN** also suggested amending another of the menu buttons on the Commission's website to 'Standards' for the duration of the VSP application process.

**ACTION: AMN**

- 5.5. It was agreed to arrange a meeting to discuss the web based tool following the submission of the Standards on 21 November 2016. The meeting would be attended by **JT, JB, AMN, CG** and the Policy Officer.

**ACTION: SB**

- 5.6. It was noted that a meeting with the VSS and the Executive Office regarding the Standards would take place following the Co-Design meeting on 14 November 2016.

##### **Review of Information Security Policy**

- 5.7. **JB** advised that he would follow up with the Legal Services Provider to ensure that both Partners agreed the advice provided to the Commission on the Information Security Policy.

**ACTION: JB**

##### **Birthday Honours 2017**

- 5.8. At the meeting on 18 October 2016, **JT** requested that the Commission's policy on nominations for Birthday Honours be reviewed prior to receipt of the next Commissioning Note and noted the importance of recognition. **JB** advised that SMT had not yet had the opportunity to review the Policy and explained the Commission's historical position on

nominations. It was agreed to add Birthday Honours to the SMT agenda for 22 November 2016.

**ACTION: SB**

- 5.9. **AMN** noted the substantial administrative requirement in the evidence gathering and completion of a nomination form. **JT** suggested that this could be carried out by the Engagement Support Officer.
- 5.10. Following discussion, it was agreed that **JT** would seek information on the President's Awards from DFA as an alternative way of recognising exceptional contributions to work with Victims and Survivors.

**ACTION: JT**

**Safeguarding Training**

- 5.11. **CG** advised that dates for Safeguarding Training had been identified in early February 2017 and had been held in staff diaries.

**Review of the Strategy Report**

- 5.12. **JB** advised that further comments had been sent to PACEC on 11 November 2016 and a final report was expected by 18 November 2016. Following review, if satisfactory in addressing the issues raised, a Steering Group meeting would then be arranged.

## **6. Accounting Officer's Update**

**Performance Report**

- 6.1. **JB** advised that, as requested by **JT**, the Commission's Corporate Plan, Business Plan, Risk Register and Communications Strategy were now under review and would be updated by the end of November 2016.
- 6.2. **JB** advised that, following Board approval on 18 October 2016, the Corporate Plan 2016-19 had been submitted to the Executive Office to be tabled at the Departmental Board meeting for approval. However, at the Accountability meeting on 01 November 2016, the Executive Office advised that the Departmental Board would not approve ALB plans until Outcomes Based Accountability had been integrated.
- 6.3. **JB** advised that a meeting had been arranged for **JT** and SMT to prepare for the Commission's Corporate Planning Day on 02 December 2016. It was noted that a workshop on Outcomes Based Accountability with staff would take place at the Corporate Planning Day and that training with the VSS and the Executive Office would take place on 15 December 2016. **JB** also advised that he was working on a Strategic Outcomes paper with the Chief Executive of the VSS.
- 6.4. **JB** advised that the Business Plan 2016/17 had been updated at the end of quarter 2 (end of September 2016) and would be updated again by the end of quarter 3 (end of December 2016).
- 6.5. **JT** acknowledged that a substantial shift would be required to move to Outcomes Based Accountability and was content with the planning scheduled.
- 6.6. **CG** advised that the Commission were required to submit the Corporate Plan 2017-20 and Business Plan 2017/18 to the Executive Office by 31 January 2017.
- 6.7. **JB** noted that **JT** had requested wider stakeholder consultation on the Commission's Corporate Plan 2017-20.  
**JT** requested that staff profiles, outlining skills, be included in the Corporate Plan 2017-20.

**ACTION: CG**

**Budget Report**

- 6.8. **CG** provided an update on the current Resource Budget.

- 6.9. **AMN** sought clarification on the remaining budget in 2016/17 for the Population-based Survey. **CG** advised that £10k had been allocated to this project in the 2016/17 year and that it would likely overlap 2017/18.
- 6.10. It was noted that an underspend on the Forum budget was expected as meetings had been suspended due to the Appointment of a Panel to Sustain Victims and Survivors Forum membership and the time without a Commissioner in post.
- 6.11. A discussion took place regarding the Commission's annual Conference. It was noted that dates in March 2017 had been identified. It was agreed to proceed with a Business Case and venue procurement and to add the Conference to the December 2016 Board Agenda. Possible themes were discussed.

**ACTION: SB**

**Update on Business Cases and Procurement**

- 6.12. The update on Business Cases and Procurement was discussed. **JB** advised that a Business Case for Infographics was being progressed and that a Business Case for Independent Advice on the preparation of a Business Case for the Future of the Forum had been approved. A procurement exercise would be undertaken.
- 6.13. **CG** advised that the Finance Assets and Premises Officer was preparing a Business Case for the Internal Audit contract. **CG** also noted that a number of low level contracts would come to an end in March 2017.
- 6.14. **JB** noted that 1 year remained on the Communications Services contract. **CG** advised that the contract would be reviewed prior to its expiry in March 2018 with a view to reducing the Budget going forward as the Head of Communications and Engagement was now in post.

**External Audit/Annual Report and Accounts**

- 6.15. **JB** advised that External audit fieldwork by NIAO completed on 02 September 2016. Draft accounts were tabled for consideration at the ARAC Meeting on 14 October at which further adjustments to the accounts were identified.
- 6.16. Adjusted accounts which reported an underspend of £327 and a revised annual report were submitted to NIAO on 04 November 2016. The NIAO advised that they were not in a position to complete audit work until w/c 21 November 2016.
- 6.17. It was noted that the audited annual report and accounts required circulation to ARAC before Board approval. A provisional date of 01 December 2016 had therefore been set aside for an extra-ordinary Board meeting .
- 6.18. **JB** advised that he would carry out an internal review in relation to the quality of the accounts for both the ARAC and Board by the end of December 2016.

**ACTION: JB**

- 6.19. **JT** notes that significant concerns had been raised by the ARAC regarding the Annual Report and Accounts. **JT** asked for clarification of the Commission's position should the NIAO not accept the adjustments to the accounts. **JB** explained that should the adjustments not be accepted by NIAO, the Commission would revert to a small overspend which would be reported to the ARAC and the Executive Office.
- 6.20. **JB** advised that he had attempted to contact the Chair of the ARAC and would update her once his call was returned.

**Internal Audit**

- 6.21. **CG** advised that ASM completed fieldwork on 01 September on the Human Resource & Performance Management assignment. Satisfactory assurance was provided with three priority 3 recommendations accepted with management responses.
- 6.22. It was noted that audit work on Purchasing and Procurement had been completed and a follow-up report would be issued w/c 21st November 2016.

- 6.23. **JB** advised that ASM would complete their work programme with a review of financial reporting and accounts as requested at the last ARAC meeting. As a result, Programme/Project Management would be carried out under the new Internal Audit contract.
- 6.24. It was noted that timelines for Complaints and Freedom of Information Handling and the Review of Programme/Project Management had changed and new Terms of Reference had been approved.

### **Risk Management**

- 6.25. **JB** advised that as per 6.1. the Risk Register was under review.
- 6.26. **JB** advised that **JT** had requested that the Commission be more aware of external dependencies and articulate these in a different way.
- 6.27. **AMN** advised that Outcomes Based Accountability should be taken into consideration when determining outputs. For example, impacts measured at a population level and those which are performance related.
- 6.28. **JT** noted that the Commission could not shoulder risks which were outside of their control and risks should reflect the Commission's expected performance.
- 6.29. **JT** asked if the ARAC would attend the Corporate Planning Day on 02 December 2016. **CG** advised that as an independent oversight body, it would not be appropriate for the ARAC to be involved in the development of the Commission's Corporate Plan or Risk Register. **JB** advised that consultation with the ARAC on a draft plan could be arranged in early January 2016.

### **ACTION: CG**

- 6.30. At the meeting on 18 October 2016, **JT** asked if there were any plans for the ARAC to meet the Forum. **JB** provided an update, advising that 2 members would attend the Forum meeting on 09 December 2016.

### **Communications and Engagement Strategy**

- 6.31. **JB** provided an update on the Communications and Engagement Strategy, highlighting the Commission's attendance at Party Conferences in October 2016 and noting a number of meetings which had taken place or were being progressed as a result of attendance. These included meetings with the Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and meetings with MLA's, local councils and Assembly groups.
- 6.32. It was noted that the Commission would attend the remaining Party Conferences in quarter 4.
- 6.33. **JB** advised that the Stakeholder Engagement Plan was under development and that the Communications Strategy was under review (see 6.1).
- 6.34. It was noted that the Commission's Social Media Policy was due for review in December 2016.
- 6.35. **JT** noted that the Communications and Engagement Strategy would be a standing item on the Board Agenda along with the Commission's other key corporate documents.
- 6.36. **JT** acknowledged that the Communications Strategy had been developed before **TMC** took up post and asked that, as part of the review, stakeholder engagement, mapping of gaps and the alignment to the Corporate Plan be considered.
- 6.37. A discussion took place regarding the media awareness audit carried out by MCE PR.

### **Pay Award 2015/16**

- 6.38. **CG** advised that responses to further queries regarding the Commission's 2015/16 pay remit had been submitted to the Executive Office and that approval of the pay remit had been raised at the Accountability meeting on 01 November 2016. At the meeting, the Executive Office agreed to raise the process for the approval of pay remits with their Finance team, acknowledging that this was not an isolated incident. **JB** advised that he

hoped to be able to process the 2015/16 pay remit in December 2016 with **CG** noting that an exceptional payment run could be arranged.

### **Staffing**

- 6.39. It was noted that the Commission currently had one vacancy.
- 6.40. It was noted that the Commission had deferred the permanent recruitment of an SO and had offered a 6 month contract with the possibility of further extension to a suitable agency worker in the interim.
- 6.41. It was noted that the agency worker had not been able to take up post as expected on 14 November 2016 due to sickness and it was anticipated that she would commence work on 21 November 2016. **JT** requested that alternative arrangements be progressed should the agency worker be unable to commence work on 21 November 2016 due to the significant pressure on the Communications and Engagement team.

### **Organisational Structure**

- 6.42. **JB** advised that a DAC had been awarded to CIPFA to review the Commission's Organisational Structure. **JB** noted that the Budget for the contract was £5k and was within his delegated limit as Accounting Officer.
- 6.43. It was noted that CIPFA had met with SMT and **JT** and that a final report was expected by the end of November 2016.

### **Review of the Commission**

- 6.44. It was noted that **JT** had requested that the Executive Office consider amendments to the Stakeholder engagement plan detailed in the Terms of Reference for the Review as key Stakeholders were not listed.
- 6.45. It was noted that dates for initial meetings with the Review Team had not yet been received.

### **Forum**

- 6.46. It was noted that the next Forum meeting would take place on 09 December 2016 with the panel in attendance. It was agreed to discuss the management of the meeting with **TMC**.

### **ACTION: JB**

- 6.47. It was noted that **TMC** and **SB** were liaising with the Secretary of State's office and Mr Boutcher's office to arrange meetings with the Forum as requested by **JT**. Mutually suitable dates had not yet been agreed.
- 6.48. It was noted that the Lord Chief Justice would meet with the Forum on 27 January 2017.

### **Complaint**

- 6.49. It was noted that no complaints had been received, pending the review of client correspondence by **JT**.

### **Freedom of Information**

- 6.50. It was noted that no Freedom of Information requests were received in the last quarter.

### **Gifts and Hospitality**

- 6.51. **JB** advised that registers for the last quarter were still under review and would be made available on the Commission's website as soon as possible. A query had been raised with the VSS to ensure consistency in reporting and the Commission were awaiting a response. It was agreed to follow up with the VSS and to provide an update to **JT** by 23 November 2016.

### **ACTION: CG**

## **Audit and Risk Assurance Committee**

- 6.52. It was noted that an Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) meeting took place on 14 October 2016.

## **7. External Complaints Procedure**

- 7.1. **CG** provided an update and highlighted revisions to the External Complaints Policy.  
7.2. **CG** advised that ASM were reviewing the External Complaints Policy and that he was awaiting their recommendations.  
7.3. **JT** suggested benchmarking the Policy against that of the VSS. **CG** advised that he had been unable to locate the VSS Policy. It was agreed that **SB** would forward the VSS Complaints Policy to **CG**.

**ACTION: CG, SB**

## **8. January Monitoring Round**

- 8.1. **JB** sought assurance from **CG** that no shortcomings had been identified, specifically in relation to depreciation.  
8.2. Following discussion, it was agreed to submit a nil return.

**ACTION: CG**

## **9. AOB**

### **PEACE IV**

- 9.1. It was noted that the PEACE IV application had been approved by the Steering Group on 02 November 2016. This included a 250K Research budget to be managed by the Commission.  
9.2. It was noted that a letter of offer was expected from the VSS, the lead Partner, in early December 2016.  
9.3. **AMN** noted that he required clarification on timeframes and that a detailed project plan would be progressed.  
9.4. **JT** requested that collaboration and a partnership approach be considered.

### **Policy Advice on Future Funding and Eligibility**

- 9.5. **JB** advised that Ministers had approved the Policy Advice on Future Funding and Eligibility and that the Executive Office were awaiting approval of their Business Case.  
9.6. **JT** acknowledged the work of Commission staff in the preparation of the Policy Advice.

NAME: **Judith Thompson**

SIGNED: 

DATE: 19/12/16

