



BOARD MEETING

19 December 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
Claire Trimble (**CT**) - minutes

1. Introduction and Apologies

1.1. There were no apologies to note.

2. Declaration of Interests

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

3. External Audit/Annual Report and Accounts

- 3.1. It was agreed to move the Annual Report and Accounts to the top of the Agenda due to the urgent requirement for the approved version to be returned to the NIAO.
- 3.2. It was noted that the final Annual report and Accounts had been approved by the NIAO, circulated to ARAC members and were tabled for Board Approval.
- 3.3. **JB** advised that the adjusted accounts reported a small underspend of £327 which was within tolerance.
- 3.4. **JB** advised that he would carry out an internal review in relation to the quality of the accounts for both the ARAC and Board for their meetings in January 2017.

ACTION: JB

- 3.5. Following discussion, the Board approved the Annual Report and Accounts.
- 3.6. It was noted that NIAO certification would take place before the Christmas holidays leaving 2 weeks to lay the Annual Report and Accounts before the Assembly.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

4.1. The minutes of the meeting on 14 November 2016 were agreed.

5. Action notes

Queen's Birthday Honours 2017

- 5.1. **JT** advised that the Commission should consider changing their policy position on the nomination of individuals for the Queen's Birthday Honours noting that it would be a way of recognising exceptional contributions to work with Victims and Survivors.

- 5.2. Following discussion, it was agreed that the policy of not nominating should change and **JT** would seek information on the President's Awards from Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as an additional way of recognising exceptional contributions to work with Victims and Survivors.

ACTION: JT

- 5.3. It was agreed that SMT would consider a process for nominating and selecting of Forum Members where appropriate going forward.

ACTION: SMT

Web tool for Standards

- 5.4. It was agreed that the Web Tool for Standards would not be progressed by the Web Bureau until they had completed requested amendments/updates and resolved the remaining technical issues with the website.

Review of Information Security Policy

- 5.5. **JB** advised that Legal Services Provider confirmed that both Partners agreed the advice provided to the Commission on the Information Security Policy.

6. Accounting Officer's Update

Performance Report

- 6.1. **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.
- 6.2. It was noted that Outcomes Based Accountability Training for Senior Management and the Commission's Staff Officer's had taken place on 14 December 2016.
- 6.3. It was noted that a workshop on Outcomes Based Accountability had taken place with staff as part of the Corporate Planning Day on 02 December 2016.
- 6.4. It was noted that the Commission would progress the integration of Outcomes Based Accountability when drafting the Corporate Plan 2017-20.
- 6.5. **JB** also advised that he was working on a Strategic Outcomes paper with the Chief Executive of the VSS.
- 6.6. **CG** advised that the Commission were required to submit the Corporate Plan 2017-20 and 2017/18 Business Plan to the Executive Office by 31 January 2017.
- 6.7. **JT** noted the importance of prioritising drafting of the Corporate Plan 2017-20 and 2017/18 Business Plan and including Outcomes Based Accountability.
- 6.8. **JB** advised that the 2016/17 Business Plan had been updated at the end of Quarter 3 (end of December 2016).
- 6.9. **JB** highlighted red/amber targets and advised of mitigation measures currently being applied to return red/amber targets to green.

Budget Report

- 6.10. **CG** provided an update on the current Resource Budget
- 6.11. It was noted that the Commission was awaiting formal notification from ECNI following a rent review at Equality House. **CG** advised that the Budget would be reanalysed in light of the impending increase. The increase was expected to be in the region of 30% and would be backdated to August 2016.
- 6.12. **JB** noted the financial implications for the Commission. He advised that planned procurement to assist in the development of the new Forum Business Case had been

postponed so that the budget could be reallocated to cover some of the costs of the rent increase.

- 6.13. **TMC** asked if ECNI would be able to bring in additional tenants to reduce the cost of the rent increase on the organisations already based in Equality House. **CG** advised that he had not been made aware of any plans to bring in new tenants.
- 6.14. The Commission was awaiting notification of its opening budget for 2017/18. Confirmation would be expected during January 2017.
- 6.15. A discussion took place around the implications of an expected Budget reduction of up to 5% on the prior years' Budget. **CG** advised that the Commission could expect Budget reductions annually going forward.
- 6.16. A discussion took place regarding the PEACE IV Project with **JT** requesting that the implications of the additional workload/resource requirement be monitored. **JB** advised that the Internal Review of the Organisational Structure conducted by CIPFA (Agenda item 9), highlighted the impact on current resources.
- 6.17. At **JT**'s request, **AMN** provided an update on the Omnibus Survey and the developing questions.
- 6.18. **JB** noted that this was a sensitive piece of work and stressed the importance of having a robust methodology and of finalising timeframes as soon as possible. It was noted that the Executive Office would be apprised of progress.
- 6.19. It was noted that **AMN** was progressing the Business Case and would identify the preferred option to enable the Commission to proceed with the Omnibus Survey.
- 6.20. **JT** advised that identifying the preferred option and addressing concerns raised were a priority.

Update on Business Cases and Procurement

- 6.21. The update on Business Cases and Procurement was discussed.
- 6.22. **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.
- 6.23. **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.
- 6.24. **JB** advised that a Business Case for Infographics was being progressed.

External Audit/Annual Report and Accounts

- 6.25. See notes at 3.1. - 3.6.

Internal Audit

- 6.26. The update on Internal Audit was discussed.
- 6.27. **CG** advised that the draft reports for Follow Up and Purchasing and Procurement were received on 06 December 2016 and management responses would be issued.
- 6.28. Satisfactory assurance had been received for Purchasing and Procurement with the Follow Up report confirming that a total of 17 out of 18 recommendations had been fully implemented.
- 6.29. It was noted that the Review on Complaints and Freedom of Information Handling and the Review of Programme/Project Management had been completed with draft reports expected during December 2016.
- 6.30. **CG** advised that close out meetings for both assignments were completed on 13 December 2016.

Risk Management

- 6.31. **JB** advised that a review of the Risk Register was currently underway to better reflect the breadth of statutory duties and to set parameters for risk within the control of the Commission, taking into account the complex external dependencies impacting the Business Plan.
- 6.32. The Commission's Corporate Risk Register currently contains 1 high rated risk with red status, 2 medium rated risks with amber status and 2 low rated risk with green status.
- 6.33. **JT** requested that the Communications Strategy be incorporated in the Revised Risk Register.

ACTION: CG

Communications and Engagement Strategy including the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Group Meetings

- 6.34. **TMC** provided an update 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.
- 6.35. It was noted that the Commission would attend the remaining Party Conferences in quarter 4.
- 6.36. **JB** noted that the Communications Strategy was a critical piece of work for the Commission.
- 6.37. **JT** asked if the targets within the Communications Strategy were being met. **TMC** advised that the Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Group meeting schedule was currently under development to create a co-ordinated, strategic approach, addressing gaps. **TMC** noted that there were some regional gaps and that smaller groups would also be targeted in the engagement plan.
- 6.38. **JT** asked **TMC** to ensure that the impact and strategic outcomes of engagements were captured and articulated.
- 6.39. It was noted that core messages, outcomes based accountability and the ability to promote awareness should be considered when developing the engagement plan.
- 6.40. It was agreed to forward a finalised Engagement Plan to **JT** by end of January 2017 for review.

ACTION: TMC

- 6.41. **TMC** provided an overview of engagement during the reporting period. In the reporting period the Commissioner met with 3 individuals, 8 groups and 21 external stakeholders and 6 engagements with internal stakeholders.
- 6.42. It was noted that the Commissioner would make a key note address at the Conference on Mental Health Provision in Northern Ireland on 17 January 2017.

Website and Social Media

- 6.43. **JT** asked **TMC** for an update on the development of the Commission's Website.
- 6.44. A discussion took place regarding the need for key information and platform pieces with **TMC** highlighting the importance of tailoring the content to the target audience.
- 6.45. **TMC** advised that a meeting with the Web Bureau had taken place on the 12 December 2016 to discuss the ongoing development of the website including the status of the snag list and other technical issues, the search function and the ability to upload imagery.
- 6.46. It was noted that the Web Bureau would provide options on the upload of imagery within the existing Content Management System. **TMC** advised that the Web Bureau would continue to work on the agreed amendments and would keep the Engagement Support Officer

informed of their progress. Feedback would be provided to the Web Bureau on an ongoing basis.

- 6.47. **JT** asked if all the new Forum member profiles had been added to the website. **TMC** confirmed that they had and advised that the Forum login section was also being progressed by the Web Bureau.
- 6.48. **TMC** advised that the Web Bureau contract would be extended to allow them to carry out the agreed updates and amendments to the Commission's website and to develop a web tool for the Standards.

ACTION: TMC/CG

- 6.49. **TMC** advised that the Engagement Support Officer would provide basic training for staff on the uploading of news articles and publications on 22 December 2016.
- 6.50. **TMC** also advised that further training would be required for the Engagement Support Officer and other staff to enable them to fully utilise the Content Management System and full functionality of the website.
- 6.51. **JT** noted that the main priorities in relation to the development of the website were to agree timeframes, identify training needs of staff on managing content, to ensure completion of the storyboard following a Website Planning Meeting with staff on 16 January 2017 and to extend the Web Bureau contract to allow updates/ amendments to be properly implemented.
- 6.52. It was agreed to keep the Review of the Website on the Board Agenda for the next meeting on 16 January 2017.

ACTION: SB

- 6.49. It was noted that the Social Media Policy was currently under review and would be presented to SMT and the Board in February 2017.

Forum

- 6.53. **TMC** advised that an exceptional Forum meeting would be held on the 17 January 2017 at the request of the Executive Office. This would enable the Victims and Survivors Service and the Executive Office to consult with the Forum on changes to funding for individuals.
- 6.54. It was noted that the next full Forum meeting would take place on 27 January 2017 with the Lord Chief Justice in attendance.
- 6.55. The Business Case for Advice on the Preparation of Business Case for the Future of the Forum was issued and one submission received. As per notes at 6.11, it was agreed to delay commencement of the project in light of budget pressures.

Pay Award 2015/16

- 6.56. The Executive Office advised that they had forwarded the pay remit to the Department of Finance for review on 25 November 2016.
- 6.57. It was noted that Department of Finance approval was expected before the Christmas break and payment to staff made in January's payment run.

Staffing

- 6.58. It was noted that the Commission currently had one vacancy.
- 6.59. 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.
- 6.60. It was noted that the agency worker had taken up post on 12 December 2016.

Organisational Structure

- 6.62. See Agenda item 9.

Review of the Commission

- 6.61. It was noted that initial meetings with the Review Team had commenced and draft findings were expected in March 2017.
- 6.62. **JB** advised that the Review Team would hold a workshop with staff in the new year.

Freedom of Information

- 6.64. No FOI requests were received in the last month.

Complaints

- 6.65. No complaints were received in the last month.

Gifts & Hospitality

- 6.66. It was noted that no exceptional gifts or hospitality received or provided.
- 6.36 **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.

7. Draft Review of the Strategy

- 7.1. **AMN** provided an update and advised that all members of the Steering Group had now submitted comments and suggested revisions to the Draft Review of the Strategy.

8. Annual Conference

- 8.1. A discussion took place regarding the Commission's annual Conference. It was noted that 08 March 2017 had been identified as a potential date and held in staff diaries.
- 8.2. Possible themes and potential speakers were discussed.
- 8.3. **JB** advised that SMT would discuss the Conference further.
- 8.4. Next steps would include finalising the Business Case, securing a venue and arranging a Conference Working Group to agree the date and identify invitees and speakers.

ACTION: AMN/JB

9. Internal Review of Organisational Structure

- 9.1. **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.
- 9.2. It was noted that CIPFA had met with SMT and **JT** and that a report had been received.
- 9.3. **JT** sought clarification on the wording around engagement and noted that the Commission do not provide 'Casework' Services.
- 9.4. **JB** acknowledged the importance of signposting when appropriate to do so, managing demand and seeking feedback.
- 9.5. **TMC** noted the Commission's statutory duty to engage with individuals and noted that clear procedures for interactions with individuals were required.
- 9.6. **JB** noted that clarification on the definition of Casework Management was required.
- 9.7. **JT** acknowledged that there appeared to be confusion around wording and asked that the Commission consider clarifying the scope of current interactions with individuals.
- 9.8. It was agreed to review the report and provide CIPFA with feedback.

ACTION: JB/AMN/CG/TMC

10.AOB

10.1. No AOB.

NAME: **Judith Thompson**

SIGNED:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Judith Thompson", is written on a light-colored rectangular background.

DATE: 16/01/17