



BOARD MEETING

16 January 2017 @ 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
Tina McCann (**TMC**) Head of Communications and Engagement
Claire Trimble (**CT**) - minutes

1. Introduction and Apologies

1.1. Apologies noted from Sarah Beare (minutes).

2. Declaration of Interests

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

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

3.1. The minutes of the meeting on 19 December 2016 were agreed.

4. Action notes

Queen's Birthday Honours 2017

- 4.1. **JT** noted that at the previous Board Meeting in December 2016 the policy position on the nomination of individuals for the Queen's Birthday Honours had changed. In light of this she proposed that this should be considered as a way of recognising exceptional contributions to work with Victims and Survivors.
- 4.2. **JT** requested that SMT consider a process and criteria for selecting individuals who would merit nomination.

ACTION: SMT

- 4.3. **JT** advised that she had sought information on the President's Awards from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The response advised that the President's Awards were restricted to those living outside of the island of Ireland but that the President would consider other ways of acknowledging exceptional contributions to work with Victims and Survivors
- 4.4. The recent MBE awarded to an outgoing Forum Member was recognised and commended by the Board.

Web tool for Standards

- 4.5. It had previously been 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. It was agreed that a contract extension would be issued for the Web Tool for Standards upon confirmation that work on the Website was completed to required standards.

ACTION: CG

5. Accounting Officer's Update

Performance Report

- 5.1. **JB** advised that the Commission's Corporate Plan 2016-19 and Business Plan 2016/17 had been approved by the Departmental Board but would not receive Ministerial approval on account of the new Programme for Government.
- 5.2. **JB** advised that a draft 2017-20 Corporate Plan was being prepared and noted that it would be condensed and would incorporate outcomes based accountability. It was noted that a public consultation on the Corporate Plan 2017-20 would take place.
- 5.3. **JT** asked for clarification on the timeline for consultation and was advised that this was 8 weeks.
- 5.4. **JT** noted that one of the outcomes of Forum activity would be Policy Advice, shaped by consultation with the Forum on their views and experiences as victims and survivors.
- 5.5. **JT** noted that the Commission should aim to submit a final 2017-20 Corporate Plan and 2017/18 Business Plan to the Executive Office by the end of March 2017.
- 5.6. **JT** endorsed the move to an outcomes based plan and also welcomed the simplified plan and public consultation.
- 5.7. It was noted that **JB** would make a presentation to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee on 18 January 2017 on direction of travel with the Corporate Plan 2017-20 and the Business Plan 2017/18.
- 5.8. It was noted that the 2016/17 Business Plan had been updated at the end of Quarter 3 (end of December 2016).
- 5.9. A discussion took place regarding the RAG status of the Review of the Strategy.
- 5.10. **AMN** advised that he and the PDR team were currently drafting three Forum Advice Papers and advised that the Attitudinal Survey was being progressed.
- 5.11. **JT** requested that **AMN** set a completion date for the Attitudinal Survey and table the Research Strategy at the next Board Meeting on 14 February 2017.

ACTION: AMN

Budget Report

- 5.12. It was noted that the Commission were awaiting formal notification from ECNI following a rent review at Equality House. The Budget had been reanalysed in light of the impending increase, which was expected to be in the region of 30% and would be backdated to August 2016.
- 5.13. **JT** asked if the Commission being based at Equality House was still value for money in light of the rent increase. **CG** advised that it was and noted that the structure of the MOU had not changed and that costs were per head, based on occupancy.
- 5.14. **CG** provided an update on the Budget and advised that spend was on track with Salaries updated to include the temporary Communications Officer who it was anticipated would take up post during January 2017.
- 5.15. It was noted that the Commission were awaiting notification of its opening budget for 2017/18.

Risk Management

- 5.16. It was noted that the Commission's Corporate Risk Register currently contained 1 high rated risk with red status, 2 medium rated risks with amber status and 2 low rated risks with green status.

- 5.17. **CG** advised that a review of the Risk Register was currently underway to better reflect the breadth of statutory duties and to also to set parameters for risk within the control of the Commission noting the complex external dependencies impacting the work programme.

Update on Business Cases and Procurement

- 5.18. The update on Business Cases and Procurement was discussed.

External Audit/Annual Report and Accounts

- 5.19. It was noted that the final annual report and accounts had been approved by the NIAO and were laid before NI Assembly 23rd December 2016.
- 5.20. **JB** advised that the Report to Those Charged with Governance (RTTCWG) had been received and included 4 Recommendations. **JB** advised that the recommendations had been accepted and noted an additional audit fee of £5k.
- 5.21. **JB** advised that he had completed an Internal Review on Preparation of the Annual Report and Accounts which would be tabled at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting on 18 January 2017.
- 5.22. It was noted that external support would be sought to perform the year end process on Sage Accounts.
- 5.23. **JT** thanked **JB** and **CG**, noting lessons learned and advised that she would await the Audit and Risk Assurance Committees responses.

Internal Audit

- 5.24. **JB** advised that the follow up review of Purchasing and Procurement and Complaints and FOI handling had been completed with the final reports received on 4th January 2017 with management responses. It was noted that Satisfactory assurance had been received.
- 5.25. **JB** noted that the Terms of Reference for the Review of the Annual Report and Accounts would be considered at the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee meeting on 18 January 2017.
- 5.26. It was noted that the review of Programme/Project Management would take place during w/c 30 January 2017.
- 5.27. It was noted that the Internal Audit contract would end on 31 March 2017. **CG** advised that that preparations for a new Internal Audit contract from 01 April 2017 were underway.

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

- 5.28. **TMC** advised that a Stakeholder Engagement Plan and Group meeting schedule were being developed to create a co-ordinated, strategic approach, addressing gaps in engagement. **TMC** advised that she had been asked to prioritise the development of the Commission's website and that the updated Communications Strategy and Stakeholder Engagement Plan would be progressed as soon as possible.

ACTION: TMC

- 5.29. It was noted that in the reporting period, the Commissioner met with 3 individuals, 8 groups, 21 external stakeholders and had 6 engagements with internal stakeholders.
- 5.30. **JT** acknowledged the pressures on the Communications and Engagement Team and thanked **TMC** for her contribution to date.
- 5.31. The remaining Party Conferences were discussed and it was noted that the Alliance Party Conference would take place on 25 March 2017. Dates for the Sinn Fein and SDLP Conferences had not yet been confirmed.

Forum

- 5.32. **TMC** advised that an exceptional Forum meeting would take place on 17 January 2017 to enable the Victims and Survivors Service and the Executive Office to consult with the Forum on changes to funding for individuals from April 2017.
- 5.33. It was noted that the next full Forum meeting would take place on 27 January 2017.
- 5.34. **JB** advised that the Business Case/Terms of Reference for Advice on the Preparation of Business Case for the Future of the Forum had been issued with one submission received. A decision to engage an external service provider had been delayed in light of budget pressures and would be addressed following confirmation of the 2017/18 Budget.

Pay Award 2015/16

- 5.35. It was noted that the Department of Finance and the Executive Office had approved the Commission's Pay Remit with the pay award included in the January salary payment run on 20 January 2017.

Staffing

- 5.36. It was noted that the Commission currently had one vacancy and the recruitment of a Permanent Staff Officer to fill the vacancy would not be progressed at present due to Budget pressures and uncertainty.
- 5.37. **CG** advised that he was currently reviewing candidate profiles with Van Rath and that interviews would be progressed during w/c 23 January 2017.

Independent Advice on Organisational Capability and Capacity

- 5.38. **JB** advised that the report on Organisational Capability and Capacity had been received and would be discussed under item 9 on the agenda.

Review of the Commission

- 5.39. It was noted that initial meetings with the Review Team had commenced and draft findings were expected March 2017.

Freedom of Information

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

Complaints

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

Gifts & Hospitality

- 5.42. It was noted that there had been no exceptional gifts or hospitality received or provided.
- 5.43. Registers for the last quarter were under review and would be made available on the Commission's website as soon as possible.

6. Realising the Best Outcomes for Victims and Survivors through new 'Steady State' Monitoring Arrangements

- 6.1. **JB** provided an overview and advised that significant changes would take effect from April 2017 in relation engagement with the Victims and Survivors Service and the Executive Office.
- 6.2. **JB** advised that the VSS would be considered as 'Steady State' operations with commensurate monitoring arrangements in place. **JB** noted that Tri-lateral meetings would now be held quarterly not monthly. A date for the next quarterly meeting had not yet been confirmed.

6.3. **JB** advised that all meetings going forward would be strategic outcomes based and advised that the new arrangements would be discussed with the VSS.

ACTION: JB

- 6.4. **JT** advised that she had recently met with the Chair of the VSS Board to discuss the draft 'Steady State' monitoring proposals and noted agreement on the direction of travel.
- 6.5. **AMN** advised that it had been agreed to arrange a Co-Design planning day to consider the recommendations emerging from the Review of the Strategy.
- 6.6. **JB** advised that the new Service Delivery Model was being progressed with three engagement workshops planned with funded groups.
- 6.7. A discussion took place around Standards. **JT** emphasised the need for the Standards Working Group to be established and for work to commence on the gaps that had been identified, most importantly on the area of assessment. **AMN** indicated that he was in discussion with both the VSS and the PHA to progress this.
- 6.8. **AMN** indicated that going forward the VSS would require all service providers to provide assurance that they were able to meet the Standards. A report would be provided at regular intervals to the Commission as part of the steady state monitoring arrangements to update on compliance with the Standards and any areas of concern.
- 6.9. **JT** advised that the Commission should convene and Chair the Standards working group and asked for Terms of Reference to be tabled at the next Board meeting on 14 February 2017.

ACTION: AMN

6.10. **AMN** provided an update following recent meetings with the PHA.

7. Annual Conference

- 7.1. 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 had been held in staff diaries.
- 7.2. **JT** agreed that the topic would be Legacy as this was one of the Commission's biggest issues and suggested possible speakers.
- 7.3. It was noted that the format, venue and keynote speakers had not yet been confirmed.
- 7.4. It was noted that a Business Case would be finalised and procurement of a venue was being progressed.

ACTION: CG

- 7.5. It was noted that a Conference Working Group has been set up to finalise the date, format and identify keynote speakers.
- 7.6. **JT** requested that keynote speakers were identified and contacted with written invitations to be forwarded as soon as possible. **JT** advised that the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence was not available during March 2017.

ACTION: JT/TMC

7.7. A discussion took place regarding alternative Conference dates. It was agreed to provisionally hold 10 April 2017 and to seek the availability of UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

ACTION: JT

- 7.8. It was noted that 10 April 2017 was the anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement.
- 7.9. **JB** advised that a press release to articulate the Forum's position on Legacy issues would be drafted with Emeritus Communications on 17 January 2017.

8. Website

- 8.1. It was noted that, following a meeting on 12 December 2016, the Web Bureau were addressing requested amendments/updates and were resolving the remaining technical issues with the website.
- 8.2. It was noted that the content management system was satisfactory but that content based on the target audience and platform pieces required development. A team meeting would take place on 16 January 2016 to discuss the website content.
- 8.3. **JT** suggested adding short videos to the website and **JB** suggested the preparation and release of press statements to articulate the work of the Commission.
- 8.4. **TMC** advised that the Social Media Policy was under review and would be presented to the SMT in February 2017 for consideration.
- 8.5. It was noted that Infographics were being progressed with work expected to commence in January 2017.

9. Internal Review of Organisational Capability and Capacity (Final Report)

- 9.1. **JB** provided an overview of the Internal Review of the Commission's Organisational Capability and Capacity and advised that recommendations within the report were being considered by SMT.
- 9.2. A discussion took place around the Resource Budget and it was noted that the Commission were currently awaiting confirmation of their budget allocation for 2017/18.
- 9.3. A discussion took place regarding staff resources and it was agreed that **JB** would review all staff Job descriptions and identify training needs.

ACTION: JB

- 9.4. A discussion took place regarding the Commission's work with individual victims and survivors. It was noted that work to develop new procedures for engagement with individuals was required with **TMC** suggesting the inclusion of a flowchart.

ACTION: SMT

- 9.5. It was agreed that following review of the above, **JB** would provide an update to the Board.

ACTION: JB

10. Potential Collaboration with QUB on Research Project

- 10.1. **AMN** advised that he was a critical advisor to QUB on their Victims and Dealing with the Past research project.
- 10.2. It was noted that the project began on 16 August 2016 and would run for a period of two years, with a budget of £150k.
- 10.3. **AMN** noted that a survey would be carried out as part of the project fieldwork and that views on the Commission and the Forum featured within the questions.
- 10.4. **AMN** advised that as part of the project, QUB had a budget for a programme of bespoke media training workshops for representatives of victim organisations and that there may be an opportunity for the Commission and the Forum to collaborate with QUB on this.
- 10.5. **AMN** advised that his work as a critical advisor and the potential collaboration on media training workshops could be included in the Commission's Business Plan and noted that 2 major reports were expected at the end of the project.

10.6. **JB** sought clarification on the time commitment due to existing workloads within the Commission.

10.7. **JT** requested that **AMN** seek terms of reference for the role of Critical Advisor to ensure there was no conflict of interest.

ACTION: AMN

10.8. Following discussion, the Board approved **AMN's** participation as critical advisor and it was agreed to reference the project in the Commission's Research Strategy.

ACTION: AMN

11. AOB

11.1. There was no AOB.

NAME: **Judith Thompson**

SIGNED:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Judith R', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

DATE: 31/03/17