

Meeting: Wednesday, 25 September 2024 at 10:00am

**MINUTES**

<b>Members:</b>	<p>Gareth Johnston (GJ)</p> <p>Alex Gordon (AG)</p> <p>Tom Reid (TR)</p> <p>Claire Archbold (CA)</p> <p>Karen Pearson (KP)</p> <p>Ronan Murtagh (RM)</p> <p>Gary Fair (GF)</p> <p>Jo Aston (JA)</p> <p>Claire Keatinge (CK)</p>	<p>Deputy Secretary, Good Relations and Inclusion Group, The Chair</p> <p>First Legislative Counsel</p> <p>Deputy Secretary Intergovernmental &amp; International Relations</p> <p>Deputy Secretary, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Group</p> <p>Deputy Secretary, Covid Strategy &amp; Contingency Planning Group</p> <p>Director of Finance</p> <p>Director of Corporate Services</p> <p>Non-Executive Member (NEM)</p> <p>Non-Executive Member (NEM)</p>
<b>Apologies:</b>	<p>David Malcolm (DM)</p> <p>Jayne Brady (JB)</p>	<p>Interim Permanent Secretary, Accounting Officer</p> <p>Head of Civil Service</p>
<b>In Attendance:</b>	<p>Marcella Phillips (MP)</p>	<p>Strategic Business Partner, NICS HR</p>
<b>Secretariat:</b>	<p>Nicole Gibson (NG)</p> <p>Adam Steed (AS)</p>	<p>Office of the Permanent Secretary</p> <p>Office of the Permanent Secretary</p>

Item	Description	Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome</b>	
	<p>GJ welcomed the Board members to the meeting which took place at the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) premises in Armagh.</p> <p>Richard Hill, Sean Kerr and Julieann McIntosh from NSMCC attended the meeting to deliver a presentation.</p>	
<b>1(a)</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
	No interests relating to the agenda were declared.	
<b>1 (b)</b>	<b>Escalation of Health &amp; Safety/Whistleblowing Concerns to the Board</b>	
	GJ provided information regarding a Health & Safety issue with Castle Buildings, stating that investigations are underway, and repair work will be completed as soon as possible.	
<b>2 (a)</b>	<b>Minutes of the Previous Meeting</b>	
	Minutes of the meeting held on 28 August 2024 were agreed.	
<b>2 (b)</b>	<b>Matters Arising from Previous Board Meetings</b>	
	<p>There were 12 action points. 18 have now been completed and 4 are pending.</p> <p>AP 1 - TEO Reconfiguration submission has now been approved by Ministers and will be added to the Departmental Board October agenda.</p> <p>AP 6 - The process for clearing ALB business plans was raised with Directors and it was agreed that they would be approved by the sponsorship branch, rather than going to Board. GJ agreed to contact sponsor branches to clarify the legislative position regarding business plans, to raise the process for Business Plans at the next ALB Forum and to bring paper to the Board setting out the new process for approval of ALB Business Plans.</p> <p>AP 8 - Ministers' approval has not yet been received but GF agreed to share it with the Departmental Board members.</p>	<p><b>NG</b></p> <p><b>GJ</b></p> <p><b>GJ</b></p> <p><b>GF</b></p>
<b>ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION</b>		
<b>3</b>	<b>Finance Report</b>	
	<p>RM took the paper as read which provided an update on the 2024-25 Financial Position, Information Gathering Exercise, October Monitoring and Retrospective Spend. The Department is forecasting a total non-earmarked resource DEL Resource pressure of £1.2m and a total earmarked DEL Resource overspend of £9m, with a potential for this to rise to an overspend of £15m.</p> <p>October Monitoring has not yet been officially commissioned by DoF but is imminent.</p> <p>The information gathering exercise to inform Executive decisions to manage forecast departmental overcommitments resulted in no reduced requirements registered for TEO.</p>	

	A discussion took place regarding October Monitoring and current business cases.	
<b>4.</b>	<b>ARAC</b>	
	<p>JA introduced the paper and provided an overview of the June ARAC meeting. A key issue discussed at the June meeting was retrospective approvals.</p> <p>RM raised an issue relating to the overseas offices and their contact with the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO), requesting that a single point of contact be suggested at the next ARAC meeting.</p>	<b>NG</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>EVAWG Update</b>	
	<p>CA took the paper as read and gave an overview of the EVAWG Strategy which launched recently. The strategy consists of 3 main strands:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Community investment</li> <li>2) Change fund</li> <li>3) Campaigns in conjunction with DoJ and PSNI.</li> </ol> <p>There are plans to set up an Oversight Board with the key challenges being around funding and staffing.</p> <p>A discussion took place regarding when a team will be in place and the role of the Departmental Board in the work and delivery of EVAWG.</p>	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Corporate Risk Register</b>	
	<p>GF took the paper as read.</p> <p>A query was raised regarding the 'red' status for Delivery, as new staff have recently started in the Department and further discussion took place amongst the Board members.</p> <p>GF provided an update on the Risk Register format, advising that a framework document has been circulated for comments with the aim to make the register more focused.</p> <p>JA highlighted the bigger areas of risk, including the Covid Inquiry and EVAWG and enquired about how to best manage long standing risks such as MLKDC. JA also mentioned Civil Contingencies as a key risk and the risk of not realising opportunities for example regarding the European strategy.</p> <p>CK suggested adding a section on outcomes to the register and a discussion followed around how best to identify the right range of risks for the Departmental Board and what happens after a concern has been raised. The need for clarity on the vision and purpose of the Risk Register was highlighted.</p> <p>GF advised that an electronic system was being considered for updating the Risk Register once the new register was established.</p> <p>JA also mentioned CCD as a key risk and the risk of not realising opportunities for example regarding the European strategy.</p> <p>Richard Hill, Sean Kerr and Julieann McIntosh joined the meeting at 11.50am.</p>	

<b>7.</b>	<b>Quarterly Assurance Paper</b>	
	<p>RM gave an overview of the Quarterly Assurance paper including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resourcing.</li> <li>• Audit recommendations and the need to ensure good governance practices are in place.</li> <li>• Retrospective expenditure - Progress continues on the completion of these cases and steps have been taken to prevent a recurrence, therefore cases will reduce as the year progresses.</li> <li>• Urban Villages.</li> </ul> <p>JA voiced a concern regarding Community Relations Council (CRC) and Board members discussed it. GJ agreed to contact the CRC Chair to request the review be carried out and inquire about a timeline. He also agreed to write to the CRC ARAC Chair regarding the review and associated risk.</p>	<p><b>GJ</b></p> <p><b>GJ</b></p>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Contracts Register</b>	
	The Contracts Register was noted by the Departmental Board members.	
<b>9.</b>	<b>2025/26 Business Plan Timeline</b>	
	The Board members noted the 2025/26 Business Plan timeline, having been provided following an action point from August's meeting.	
<b>10.</b>	<b>NSMC Presentation</b>	
	<p>RH delivered a presentation, providing information on the history, structure and purpose of the NSMC. The presentation also gave details of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The NSMC areas of cooperation.</li> <li>- The 6 Implementation Bodies.</li> <li>- Recent Plenary Meetings that took place at NSMC premises in Armagh.</li> </ul> <p>RH agreed that the PowerPoint presentation could be sent to Board members.</p> <p>Board members enquired about the best ways to engage with the NSMC and thanked RH for inviting them to Armagh.</p> <p>RH, SK and JM left the meeting at 12.22pm.</p>	<p><b>NG</b></p>
	The meeting ended at 1.00 pm.	
	<b>Next Meeting: 27 November 2024 at 10am in The Executive Room, Stormont Castle</b>	

