

**THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING
27 NOVEMBER 2019, EXECUTIVE ROOM, STORMONT CASTLE**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Karen Pearson, (Chair), Peter Toogood, Denis Power, Sarah Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE: Alex Gordon

Hannah Cavalleros (Secretary)

1(a). Apologies

Apologies received from David Sterling, Brenda King, Andrew McCormick, Mark Browne and Chris Stewart.

b (i). Minutes of 30 October 2019 meeting

The minutes as amended were agreed.

(c). Matters Arising

Board members reviewed the matters arising and noted the current position.

(d). Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

2(a). Political Update

Karen Pearson provided an update on the current political situation both locally and nationally, and the options available when the EFEF expires on 13 January 2020.

(b). Legislative Programme

Alex Gordon spoke to the paper circulated and updated the Board on the current position in relation to OLC's workload. In relation to the legislative position regarding the possible range of impacts as a result of exiting the EU, Karen Pearson offered to give a presentation to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee.

[ACTION: Karen Pearson]

3 (a) Intergovernmental Relations, International Relations & EU Exit

Karen Pearson provided an update in relation to the paper circulated, including an update on the Director posts in the Washington, China and Brussels offices. Sarah Wilson noted that due process should be followed in terms of addressing the personnel needs of the international offices, including the completion of business cases where necessary.

Karen also provided an update on the C3 structures, indicating that a further stand up may be required following the outcome of the general election. Sarah Wilson noted that there may be difficulties in obtaining sufficient numbers of volunteers.

4. Budget/Finance report

Peter Toogood spoke in relation to the paper provided. He noted that the internal January monitoring exercise had recently completed and it was likely that the outcome of that exercise would impact on the figures presented. He advised that DoF was leading on a pre-budget engagement exercise which all NICS departments would feed into. It was agreed that TEO's input to this exercise would be shared with Board members by correspondence given the cancellation of the December Board meeting.

[ACTION: Peter Toogood]

There was also discussion around Brexit related staffing needs, and the uncertainty around funding from Whitehall for these posts. It was agreed that Karen, Peter and Sarah would meet to further discuss the range of potential

EU Exit workforce resource needs, which may result following the outcome of the general election.

[ACTION: Sarah Wilson, Peter Toogood, Karen Pearson]

Denis advised that given the rapidly changing nature of the Brexit work, and resultant staffing risks, that the Departmental risk register should be regularly updated to reflect the latest position.

5. NICS HR

Sarah Wilson provided an update on TEO people management which included ongoing recruitment and resourcing issues, employee relations, pay and reward, and learning and development. She reminded Board members of the JAM initiative and encouraged staff to complete the associated online training. Sarah also drew attention to TEO's position regarding completion of End of Year reports for 18/19, as well as 19/20 in year review targets for completion, encouraging staff to carry out in year reviews as soon as possible.

Karen Pearson reminded everyone to complete the NICS People Survey.

6. Governance Issues

(a). TEO Whistleblowing Guidance

Peter Toogood provided an update on the review of TEO Whistleblowing guidance drawing attention to the changes in the guidance. He advised that the ARAC had considered and approved the revisions and Board approval is now being sought. Sarah Wilson indicated that NICS HR may not always be the correct referral route for a whistle blowing issue, and noted that work is ongoing across the NICs regarding whistleblowing guidance which may impact on this guidance in the future. The Board approved this revised guidance.

(b). Sensitivity Review

Neill Jackson and David Lammey spoke to the paper provided outlining the background to the sensitivity review and the Departments statutory obligations. The Board noted the work that had taken place to date, and agreed that officials should explore further the options outlined in the paper and bring recommendations to the February departmental board meeting. It was agreed that any recommendations should go to the ARAC for consideration before coming to the Departmental Board.

[ACTION: Neill Jackson, David Lammey]

(c) Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Update

Denis Power provided a summary of the issues discussed at the ARAC, including the TEO Annual Report and Accounts and the Report to those Charged with Governance (RTTCWG) stating that the proposed audit opinion was unqualified and without modification. The Board noted these minutes. Denis also provided a verbal update of the ARAC meeting on the 5th November, indicating that the issues discussed included the management of fraud, ALB assurance statements and the need for the TEO corporate risk register to be regularly revisited. The NIAO presented the final RTTCWG, and this will be circulated to Board members to note.

[ACTION: Denis Power]

(d). Forward Planner

Board members noted the forward planner.

(e). Papers issued between Meetings

Members noted the papers issued by correspondence since the board meeting on 30 October.

(f). A Guide to Good Record Keeping

The Board noted the guide to good record keeping provided.

9. Date of next meeting

There will be no Board meeting in December. The next Board meeting is therefore scheduled to take place on Wednesday 29th January 2020.

HANNAH CAVALLEROS

27 NOVEMBER 2019