

Meeting: Wednesday, 30 November 2022 at 10.00am

MINUTES

Members:	<p>Denis McMahon</p> <p>Alex Gordon</p> <p>Gareth Johnston</p> <p>Karen Pearson</p> <p>Ronan Murtagh</p> <p>Neelia Lloyd</p> <p>Jo Aston</p> <p>Claire Keatinge</p>	<p>Permanent Secretary, TEO (Chair)</p> <p>First Legislative Counsel</p> <p>Deputy Secretary, Good Relations and Inclusion Group</p> <p>Deputy Secretary, Covid Strategy & 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>
Apologies:	<p>Claire Archbold</p> <p>Tom Reid</p> <p>Chris Stewart</p> <p>Marcella Phillips</p>	<p>Deputy Secretary, Ending Violence Against Woman and Girls Group</p> <p>Deputy Secretary, International Relations & EU Exit</p> <p>Deputy Secretary, Executive Support</p> <p>Strategic Business Partner, NICS HR</p>
In Attendance:	<p>Janet Heath</p> <p>Siobhan Broderick</p> <p>Eoin Mullan</p> <p>Paul McKenna</p>	<p>Strategic Business Partner, NICS HR</p> <p>Director of Equality Rights and Identity</p> <p>Equality Rights and Identity Division</p> <p>Equality Rights and Identity Division</p>
Secretariat:	<p>Patricia McIntyre</p> <p>Tara Kennedy</p> <p>Lisa Murray</p> <p>Nicole Gibson</p>	<p>Office of the Permanent Secretary</p>

Item	Description	Action
1	Welcome	
	<p>The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming Claire Keatinge, Siobhan Broderick and Janet Heath. This was Claire's first Board meeting in her new role as non-executive Director; Siobhan is attending in an observational capacity and Janet is deputising for Marcella Phillips.</p> <p>The Chair noted that with the new additions to the board membership, the Secretariat are carrying out an exercise to refresh the Board Operating Framework (BOF). While doing so the Chair would like the Board to consider the inclusion of guidance in relation to the issue of irregular attendance at the Board by Board members. Over the previous year there has been instances where Board members were unable to attend regularly.</p> <p>The Board minutes are published monthly on the internet and Board attendance is detailed in the annual accounts. The Chair has suggested that In the forthcoming year if Board members could not commit to attendance to eight out of the subsequent ten scheduled meetings then they would temporarily step from membership of the Board until they are in a position to commit to this level of attendance. (This would not in the meantime prevent officials attending as non-members). Board members were in agreement on this proposal. The BOF will be updated and circulated to Board members to review and agree.</p>	Secretariat
1(a)	Declaration of Interest	
	No interests relating to the agenda were declared.	
1(b)	Escalation of Health & Safety/Whistleblowing Concerns to the Board	
	<p>No Health & Safety/Whistleblowing concerns over and above those already being managed through existing governance processes, were escalated to board level at this time.</p> <p>Gareth provided an update on the Racial Equality Strategy that has been featured in the media. Internal Audit had been instructed earlier in the year to review allegations of whistleblowing and have confirmed that the Department has taken an appropriate approach in line with the Department's policy on raising concerns.</p> <p>The Chair advised that there are two strands to the issue: 1. recognition that we need to do more on the delivery of the racial equality strategy, building on a lot of very good work that is already in place; and (2) any associated human resource issues. A Racial Equality Delivery Unit will be created to focus on the implementation of the strategy. This piece of work has commenced with the arrival of new staffing to the unit, who will take this work forward.</p>	

	Consideration to be given as to how the importance of Whistleblowing and raising concerns is promulgated throughout the Department. Gareth advised that DoF are currently reviewing the whistleblowing procedures, to be published next year. A staff webinar could then focus on these issues.	
2(a)	Minutes of the Previous Meeting	
	Minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2022 were agreed by Board Members.	
2(b)	Matters Arising from Previous Board Meetings	
	<p>All previous action points were either completed/superseded or on target with the following exceptions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Action Point 1 of 26 October - If Health and Safety issues in relation to DSE assessments / Fire warden cover remain unresolved paper to be brought to next board highlighting non-compliant teams [Completed - AOB agenda item]. (2) Action Point 3 of 26 October - Risk register to come to January Board for agreement . (3) Action Point 6 of 28 September - SIB's consultation on the Draft Investment Strategy 2050 – summary to be presented to Board in January. (4) Action Point 4 of June 2022 - Second/corporate roles to be considered for G3 members in core TEO team – [Completed - each Grade 3 allocated a Champion for a risk on the risk register]. 	
PRESENTATION – IDENTITY & LANGUAGE BILL		
	<p>Eoin Mullan and Paul McKenna joined the meeting to jointly deliver a presentation regarding the Identity & Language Bill.</p> <p>Eoin and Paul provided background to the introduction of the legislation, the implications the Bill would have on the Department which included setting up three new separate Arms Length Bodies (ALBs) and the risks and mitigations that were being worked through in order to deliver the Bill.</p> <p>The team are building on the lessons learned from the establishment of the most recently formed TEO ALB – Commissioners Office for the Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA) and from the various Board Appointment competitions that have been held across TEO. The team are still very much in the gathering of information stage and will require Ministerial direction to proceed further when this stage has completed.</p>	

	<p>The legislation which has been delivered by the Secretary of State (SOS) is in a heavily contested political space. The team are building on the experience of DoH who have had similar experience with the SOS delivering legislation outside of the Executive.</p> <p>The Board members agreed that TEO need to look at the opportunities that the Bill presents which could include offering language courses to TEO colleagues to help build on and promote the rich cultural diversity of where we live.</p> <p>The legislation will directly impact and feed into the work being carried out in the Good Relations Team and the imminent review of the T:BUC strategy should reflect this.</p> <p>Communications and stakeholder engagement will be key to the successful delivery of the programme.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the team for the presentation which evidently demonstrated that the team were very cognisant of the inherent risks of the implementation and delivery of the programme of work and thanked the team for the progress that they had made in getting the programme to this point.</p> <p>Eoin and Paul left the meeting.</p>	
ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION		
3.	Finance Report	
	<p>Ronan introduced the paper advising that the finance position had moved on since the paper was produced, with the introduction of the budget set by the Secretary of State.</p> <p>TEO colleagues have been working hard at reviewing the financial position of their teams and identifying potential pressures and easements across the Department. TEO have been in a position to return funds to the centre in this financial year owing to the ongoing uncertainty in relation to Victims Payments which is very much a demand driven fund.</p> <p>As it stands, TEO will be able to operate within their budget in this financial year and there may be a possibility of further easements which is being monitored very closely. Ronan to check with DoF regarding the possibility of surrendering further easements with a view to reducing the risk of underspend at the end of the year.</p> <p>Ronan raised concerns that TEO may not be able to operate within its budget in the forthcoming 2023/24 financial year and difficult decisions would have to be taken across the Department.</p>	Ronan Murtagh

	<p>All agreed that a more radical approach would have to be taken at business planning for the coming year. Gareth to review business structures and determine if the right structures are in place for the Department to take forward its programme of work. Business Planning is underway and will be the focus of both the ALB and Grade 5 Forums which are scheduled to take place in the coming weeks.</p> <p>The Chair and the Board members thanked Ronan and his team for the work that they have carried out to progress the accounts to their current position, acknowledging the tremendous effort it had taken to appraise the financial position in such a short timeframe.</p>	<p>Gareth Johnston</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Departmental Quarterly Assurance statement Qtr 2</p>	
	<p>Ronan presented the paper, advising that a key element of the system of internal control in TEO is the Departmental Assurance Statement process. This process requires each Director (and Accounting Officer/Senior Accountable Officer in the Department's ALBs) to provide a quarterly assurance statement informed by those prepared at Head of Branch and Division level and by Accounting Officers/Senior Accountable Officers in ALBs; confirming that they are actively managing risk in their Directorates or ALBs.</p> <p>The assurance statement has been reviewed at the Audit and Risk Committee on 15 November and it was agreed to raise the issue of the accounting treatment for the Financial Transactions Capital (FTC) to the Board.</p> <p>The Strategic Investment Board (SIB), one of Departments ALBs – are the only entity within Northern Ireland who have the legislative powers to administer FTC on behalf of the Treasury. As SIB have no control or oversight of the FTC they have been previously recorded as a schedule in their accounts which has meant that the SIB accounts have a registered qualification for the previous year.</p> <p>TEO will consolidate their accounts at the end of the financial year for the first time meaning that TEO will now have a technical qualification in their accounts at the end of the year in relation to FTC.</p> <p>The solution is the drafting of legislation to allow all other Departments to administer their own FTC and record the FTC for which they have oversight and control in in their own accounts . DoF and NIAO are aware of the issue, and have advised that legislation is pending to correct the issue. Ronan to draft further correspondence to DoF with a view to seeking clarification on the specific timescale for legislation, specifying that this clarification will be necessary prior to TEO agreeing to administer any further FTC through the Strategic Investment Board.</p>	<p>Ronan Murtagh</p>

5.	Cyber Security / Version 1	
	<p>Neelia introduced the paper advising that good progress has been made in identifying TEO ICT systems and any associated risks including system failure and GDPR.</p> <p>Neelia also acknowledged her frustration in the progress that had been made to date to secure ICT staffing to take forward the programme of work. Conversations are ongoing with Version1 in relation to temporary resourcing.</p> <p>The Board members noted the current position highlighting the necessity of IT to the everyday operations of the business and the importance of cyber security on consideration of global security issues.</p> <p>The Chair congratulated Neelia on the piece of work that has been carried out to get the ICT position clarified. This has been a huge step forward from the starting position whereby TEO now know what systems are in place, what their status is and what resources are required to take forward the programme of work.</p>	
6.	Review of SIB	
	<p>Gareth introduced the paper and asked the Board members noted the contents which could be taken as read.</p> <p>The Board members noted the paper.</p>	
ITEMS TO NOTE - DISCUSSION BY EXCEPTION ONLY		
7.	HR Report	
	<p>Board members noted the paper.</p> <p>Janet Heath advised the Board of the temporary hold which has been placed on the launch of the recruitment campaign for Grade 6s and Grade 7s. the note from NICS HR advised that it was hoped that there would be a merit list for these competitions by the end of Quarter 1.</p> <p>TEO are facing challenges across the system due to the shortage in supply at Grade 6 and 7. Many of TEO's vacancies at Grade 6 & 7 are specialised posts. It was agreed to seek clarification from NICSHR regarding the proposed timescale for the launch of the competitions, so as TEO could consider its position and next steps.</p>	Gareth Johnston

8.	Office of Legislative Council/Statutory Publications Office: Legislation and Corporate update	
	<p>Alex provided the Board with an updated position on two staffing issues.</p> <p>Karen raised an issues regarding training on the drafting of secondary legislation which is the responsibility of individual Departments. Alex has been working with a colleague in HPO to develop training in regards to the completion of templates. Karen will link up with Alex to consider further.</p>	
CLOSING ITEMS		
9.	Forward Look Agenda	
	Agreed	
ANY OTHER BUSINESS		
10.	Diversity in TEO	
	<p>Siobhan provided an update on the ongoing strategies across NICS to promote a diverse and inclusive work force, which included the focus of diversity champions working across the thematic groups of LGBTQ, Gender, Ethnicity and Disability.</p>	
11.	Health & Safety	
	<p>Neelia updated on an ongoing issue across TEO and the NICS in general in relation to the supply of Fire wardens across the estates. Neelia advised that good progress had been made to increase the supply however there was still an issue due to the now hybrid style of working.</p> <p>Neelia advised that they were exploring the issue of making Fire warden training mandatory to all staff. The Board were supportive of the suggestion and Neelia is to explore further.</p>	
12.	Update from Gareth / Jo regarding their meeting in relation to the ALB update reports	
	<p>Jo and Gareth have met and agreed that further work is required in this area. This work will be reflected in the risk register which is to be presented to the January Board.</p>	

13.	Update from Gareth / Jo regarding their meeting in relation to the Risk Register	
	Jo and Gareth have met and agreed that further work is required in this area. This work will be reflected in the risk register which is to be presented to the January Board.	
14.	Close	
	The meeting ended at 12.40pm	
	Next Meeting: 25 January 2023, at 10am in the Executive Room, Stormont Castle	