

Meeting: Wednesday, 29 June 2022 at 10.00 am

MINUTES

Members:	Denis McMahon Alexander Gordon Gareth Johnston Claire Archbold Karen Pearson Tom Reid Chris Stewart Tara Kennedy Neelia Lloyd Denis Power	Permanent Secretary, TEO (Chair) First Legislative Counsel Deputy Secretary, Good Relations and Inclusion Group Deputy Secretary, Ending Violence Against Woman and Girls Group Deputy Secretary, Covid Strategy & Contingency Planning Group Deputy Secretary, International Relations & EU Exit Deputy Secretary, Executive Support Director of Finance (Acting) Director of Corporate Services Non-Executive Member (NEM)
Apologies:		None
In Attendance:	Marcella Phillips Siobhan Broderick	Strategic Business Partner, NICS HR Director of Equality, Rights and Identity Division
Secretariat:	Patricia McIntyre Lisa Murray	Head, Office of the Permanent Secretary Office of the Permanent Secretary

Item	Description	Action
1	Welcome	
	The Chair opened the meeting by providing an update on the ongoing weekly meetings being held with political leaders and party members. The meetings are centred on discussions regarding how NICS could progress 3 key Missions which would support wellbeing across society. The chair also congratulated Claire Archbold on her teams successful launch of the Bystander Conference and invited Claire to give an update.	

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>An update was provided on the following ongoing and concluded Departmental complaints which are all being dealt with in line with existing governance processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A complaint about how an FOI had been handled within the Department. • A member of staff raising a range of concerns and appeared at a Parliamentary Committee. A report had been commissioned from Internal Audit to review allegations. • NIAO currently reviewing an area of concern in NIJAC 	Copy of report to issue to Denis Power
2(a)	Minutes of the Previous Meeting	
	Minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 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All previous action points were either completed / superseded or on target with the following exceptions: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> <p>(1) Action points 2 to 5 of March 2022 – all cyber-security related: Updates as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff webinar on cyber security scheduled for 29 June. Ethical phishing exercise has been carried out and the results are concerning. • Version 1 contract has come to an end. The results of the tender process will be made available in a few weeks. Neelia having ongoing discussions with DSS regarding next steps. • Incident Plan – this is being taken forward with input from Civil Contingencies team. <p>(2) Action Point 3 - April 2022 – Senior Management to progress prospective vacancies onto the system – Exercise has now completed.</p> <p>(3) Action Point 1 - May 2022 – Paper to be brought to ARAC to update of the current position in relation to the Departments ICT Unit and requirements – Paper to issue for October Meeting.</p>	

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION

3	Finance Report	
	<p>Tara Kennedy provided an overview of the Finance Report which contained the provisional outturn at 31 May 2022.</p> <p>Tara advised that all Departments are currently working from a contingency planning envelope until such times as a budget for 2022-23 can be agreed. In light of this the accounts are currently forecasting a deficit in resource of around £11m. However if this was put into context the draft proposed budget would give an additional £13m which will cover the deficit.</p> <p>Denis Power thanked Tara for the update and for the work of the finance team in managing the budget across the various business areas in challenging circumstances. Denis queried if the Department were at risk from not delivering on commitments due to a lack of funding.</p> <p>Gareth advised that TEO were in the fortunate position that the schemes which TEO were delivering on were long standing commitments and funding was available. It would however impact on TEO's ability to do commit to any new schemes / programmes.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Tara and her team for producing a high quality piece of work and noted that if the budget provision of £12 million was allocated then this would be a significant achievement and the team were to be commended for the work they had carried out to achieve this.</p> <p>Tara informed the board that the annual report and accounts have not yet been signed off as there has been ongoing discussions in relation to the HIA provision. This has now almost concluded satisfactorily however the accounts may not be laid before the Assembly prior to summer recess, but that this would not have a negative impact on the standing of the accounts.</p>	
4	HR Report	
	<p>Marcella Phillips introduced the paper, noting the vacancy position across TEO had been critically reviewed and that there was now a clearer understanding of the vacancy position.</p> <p>Marcella noted the encouraging position of the performance management figures which currently stood at 66% completed. This was a great improvement on the position from the previous year.</p> <p>Marcella also advised that she has had sight of the sick absence figures and it would appear that they have returned to pre-covid levels.</p>	

	<p>There was a discussion on the importance of promoting wellbeing across the Department and it was agreed that this would be picked up by the newly formed People Development sub-committee. The first meeting is scheduled to take place on 6 July.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Marcella for the work on the HR paper and for her commitment to the Department, noting that Marcella was present in the office one to two days per week to provide critical support to colleagues on their return to working in the office.</p> <p>The Chair remarked that the work on staff engagement across the Department was very encouraging particularly on consideration that the Department had recently been awarded the silver accreditation IIP award. The Chair asked that the boards congratulations be passed on to all involved.</p>	
5	People Development Sub-committee Draft TOR	
	<p><i>Change to the agenda – paper moved forward</i></p> <p>Gareth Johnston introduced the paper and invited the board to agree the terms of reference for the People Development Sub Committee and to endorse the areas of focus for the first three planned meetings.</p> <p>The board members agreed the recommendations and it was noted that the TOR could be adjusted in line with the boards requirements at a later date if necessary.</p>	
6	TEO Board Effectiveness Review	
	<p>Denis Power introduced the paper and thanked the board members for their participation in the review, noting that the survey had received a 90% response rate.</p> <p>Denis and the Chair have had a meeting to discuss the report and while noting that the report was generally positive, there were a few areas of improvement which would benefit the governance of the board. The board members were in agreement and the general consensus on areas of improvement were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The appointment of a second Non-Executive board Member (recruitment competition has launched 27 June 2022). • An away day and a (re)induction for all board members. • A proposed portfolio board (not yet established) could provide assurance on strategy and policy to the board. • The agenda could be re-structured to provide space for TEO colleagues across the department to provide presentations to the board. • Second / corporate roles to be considered for G3 members in core TEO team. • A grade 5 observer to be invited to each board meeting. • Future meetings to return to in person meetings in line with NICS 	Board Secretariat

	<p>board</p> <p>The Chair thanked Denis for the report and welcomed the instructive discussion from the Board members.</p>	
7	<p>Office of the Legislative Counsel Risk Register</p> <p><i>Change to the agenda – paper moved forward</i></p> <p>Alex Gordon introduced the paper advising that he had refreshed the risk register two years prior and found it a useful tool for monitoring and mitigating against risks across his division. Alex sought feedback from the board members.</p> <p>The board members agreed that it was an excellent register and would appear to be a really useful tool.</p>	
8 8a	<p>ECNI Annual Business Plan for 2022-2023 ECNI Corporate Plan for 2022-2025</p> <p>Siobhan Broderick joined the meeting and introduced both papers. Siobhan advised that The Corporate Plan 2022 – 2025 has been consulted upon and sets out five clear strategic priorities each with the aim of promoting an equal society. The Annual Business Plan for 22/23 sets out a significant programme of work under the strategic priorities outlined in the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>The ECNI's Management Statement / Financial Memorandum (MSFM) provides that Ministers approve the Corporate and Business Plans. In advance of submitting the plans to Ministers, when available, this submission is seeking approval from the Departmental Board. If the plans are approved by the board, a letter will be sent to ECNI to advise that the department is content that ECNI continues to operate under the draft Corporate Plan and Business Plan until Ministerial approval can be secured.</p> <p>The Board members agreed the recommendations in both papers.</p>	
9	<p>Revised TEO Fraud Policy</p> <p>Tara Kennedy introduced the paper advising that In line with best practice, the Executive Office's (TEO) Fraud Prevention Policy and Fraud Response Plan has been revised and updated.</p> <p>Tara recommended the Departmental Board reviews and approves the revised TEO Fraud Prevention Policy and Fraud Response Plan.</p> <p>The Board members agreed the recommendations.</p>	

10.	Raising Concerns update	
	<p><i>Change to the agenda – paper moved forward</i></p> <p>Tara Kennedy introduced the paper advising that in line with best practice, the Executive Office's (TEO) Raising Concerns Policy and Procedures have been revised and updated. The last update was approved by the board in November 2019.</p> <p>The board is recommended to approve the following revised TEO Raising Concerns Policy and Procedures and asked to decide which board member's details are included in the policy.</p> <p>The board members agreed the recommendations in the paper and agreed that Tara Kennedy would be recorded in the policy as the point of contact for raising concerns.</p>	
ITEMS TO NOTE - DISCUSSION BY EXCEPTION ONLY		
11.	Appointments to ALB Boards	
	The board members noted the paper.	
12.	Health and Safety Report	
	<p>The board members noted the paper.</p> <p>Karen Pearson raised the issue of plant maintenance and how in the return to office working that colleagues would need to be made aware of the planned maintenance and the Health & safety risks this could pose.</p> <p>It was agreed to focus a staff webinar on Health & Safety in the Autumn.</p>	Neelia Lloyd
13	Stormont Estate Security Review	
	The board members noted the paper.	
14	Executive's Legislative Programme	
	The board members noted the paper.	
15	Audit and Risk Assurance Committee Update	
	<p>The board members noted the paper.</p> <p>Denis Power advised that with the cancellation of the July ARAC he would appreciate a final meeting of ARAC prior to his term coming to an end in September</p>	Tara Kennedy

CLOSING ITEMS		
16	Forward Look Agenda	
	Agreed	
17	Any Other Business	
	<p>Management of the EY Contract</p> <p>Karen provided an update to the board on the status of the EY contract that had been set-up during the Omicron surge to support programmes across the NICS. The contract is still ongoing and measures have been put in place to monitor and review.</p> <p>It was agreed that Karen would bring a paper to ARAC to update.</p> <p>New Ways of Working</p> <p>Gareth advised that a staff webinar would be taking place this afternoon to update staff on the implementation plan for the New Ways of Working.</p>	Karen Pearson
	Close	
	The meeting ended at 12.05pm	
	Next Meeting: 31 August 2022, at 10am Location to be confirmed	