

**NICS BOARD**  
**30 OCTOBER 2015, GLASSHOUSE, STORMONT CASTLE**

**MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Malcolm McKibbin (Chair), Heather Cousins (for Derek Baker) Andrew Hamilton, Brenda King, Noel Lavery, Peter May, Andrew McCormick, Denis McMahon, Leo O'Reilly, Richard Pengelly, Nick Perry, David Sterling, Paul Sweeney, Hugh Widdis

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Colin Lewis, Kellie Sprott (Secretariat)

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were noted from Derek Baker and Olive Maybin.

**2. Minutes of 25 September meeting**

The minutes of 25 September meeting were agreed subject to minor amendment.

**3. Matters Arising**

Progress on each of the actions was noted.

**4. Stormont Talks Update**

Malcolm updated the Board on the talks process and the four main areas of discussion. He said that the talks had intensified and that there was pressure to reach a conclusion soon.

**5. NICS of the Future**

David Sterling took the lead for this agenda item and advised the Board that the revised Terms of Reference would be circulated next week. He asked the Board to let HOCS know if there was a particular subgroup that they wanted to be in by COP today, otherwise David and Malcolm will assign people to sub-groups and send out notification next week.

**Action: NICS Board**

David notified the Board that CHR will provide the secretariat to the Leadership Group.

David said that whilst there were no firm plans for a SCS away day next year preparations for this will be made soon. He also suggested that PSG should hold a half away day early in January. The Board agreed. David will organise.

**Action: David Sterling**

David updated the Board on the good progress being made on the establishment of an HR Centre of Excellence. He advised that he would have a paper for next month's Board on the 360 degree performance appraisal proposal. David suggested that PSG should introduce the 360 degree appraisal first followed by the SCS when the new departmental structures are in place.

## 6. Budget Update

David provided an assessment of the current in-year position and reminded colleagues to submit their 15-16 November monitoring returns. He discussed the 2016/17 forecast and agreed process including the Treasury's assessment of the 16/17 forecast. He suggested to the Board that an evaluation should be completed on what has been done already within departments to cut costs showing how the cuts have impacted on outcomes/outputs. This evaluation could be used to show Ministers what has been done up to now.

**Action: NICS Board**

David advised the Board that plans are being made to set a date and rate for the reduction in Corporation Tax.

David also said that DFP is monitoring the drawdown of voluntary exit funds. He asked departments to let DFP know when they want to draw down these funds.

**Action: NICS Board**

## 7. Departmental Restructuring Programme Update

Heather Cousins updated the Board on the restructuring programme. The Board noted the progress made to date and the issues that now require political decisions. The Board will consider the proposals for the disposition of Grade 3 staff in the nine department structure later in the meeting.

## 8. Corporate HR Issues

Colin Lewis provided an update on:

- the review of legal grades indicating that a draft report is anticipated at the end of January 2016;
- proposed limitation on public sector exit payments and its potential impact in NI if introduced;
- the implementation of the voluntary exit scheme and most up to date data regarding up-take for tranche 3 and plans for tranche 4. The need to make full use of tranche 4, consider if a final tranche 5 is required and consideration of any need for further paybill reductions in 2016-17. Andrew Hamilton advised the Board that he would be bringing a paper to PSG about the effect of implementation of welfare reform (if agreed) on the resource requirement in DSD. The Board agreed to look at this corporately. Andrew Hamilton, Leo O'Reilly, Colin Lewis and Derek Baker agreed to meet initially to discuss.

**Action: Relevant Permanent Secretaries**

The Board agreed to discuss this again at the November Board meeting.

- a judicial review of NICS security vetting policy;
- the evaluation of a work experience pilot for people with disabilities. The NICS Board noted the findings of the pilot, endorsed the permanent embedding of the scheme and instructed CHR to implement the next steps in the paper; and
- the NICS Staff Survey which closes today. Colin advised that currently 47% of staff have responded.

## **9. NICS Cross Cutting Reform Programme**

David Sterling updated the Board on the Cross Cutting Reform Programme. He advised the Board that the savings identified were indicative at this stage and that work needs to be completed on benefits realisation. The Board noted the progress to date and agreed the suggested modifications, governance arrangements and proposed next steps. It was agreed that the NICS Board would receive reports on the Reform Programme on a quarterly basis.

**Action: DFP**

## **10. NICS Cash Management and Forecasting**

David Sterling provided an update on the NICS cash management and forecasting for the period 1 April 2015 to 30 September 2015. The Board noted the update for each department and agreed to continue to work to improve the NICS performance.

**Action: NICS Board**

## **11. AOB**

Malcolm McKibbin reminded colleagues that he had circulated the more detailed note about the University of Ulster Board Apprenticeship Programme. He asked the Board to submit names of Boards willing to participate by Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November.

**Action: NICS Board**

Andrew McCormick discussed briefly with the Board the recent good news announced by Bombardier.

David Sterling advised the Board that he would be bringing a paper to PSG soon about the NI Skills Gap and how we can fill a skills gap for a short period of time.

Nick Perry informed the Board that a report on Maghaberry Prison and the outcome of the judicial review on legal aid were expected soon.

## **12. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will be on Friday 27 November 2015 in the Glasshouse.

**KELLIE SPROTT**

**19 November 2015**