

**OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING
17 DECEMBER 2014, GLASSHOUSE, STORMONT CASTLE**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Mark Browne (Chair), George Thorley, Stephen Boyd, Siobhan Broderick, Stephen Grimason, Neill Jackson, Brenda King, Denis McMahon, Colm Shannon

APOLOGIES: Malcolm McKibbin, Richard Bullick and Dara O'Hagan

IN ATTENDANCE: Olive Maybin

The Board noted apologies from Malcolm McKibbin, Richard Bullick and Dara O'Hagan.

1. Minutes of 26 November meeting

The minutes of the November Board meeting were agreed without amendment.

2. Matters Arising

The Board noted the position on matters arising all of which had been completed.

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no new declarations of interests.

4. 16/16 Digitalisation Projects

Mark Browne welcomed Paul Wickens and Caron Alexander to the Board. They presented an overview of the Digital Transformation Programme including progress on the 16 x 16 programme and the scope of the Digital Transformation Service. Following discussion the Board confirmed its support for the programme and encouraged more ambition in terms of scope and scale. Denis McMahon said he would be keen to engage with Paul on the development of social policy. Caron agreed to provide Denis with a copy of the research underpinning the programme. The Board welcomed the update and thanked Paul and Caron for the presentation.

5. Current Issues

Mark gave the Board a brief update on the Beijing appointment. Denis McMahon referred to the latest statistics on 2013/14 GCSE examination performance which suggested that school improvement policies, including the Delivering Social Change signature project were working well.

Colm Shannon reported that the 17 December NSMC meeting, at which the 2015 Business Plans for the six North South Bodies were to be approved, had been rescheduled due to a family bereavement.

6. Directors' Updates

Social Investment Fund

Denis provided a verbal update on work underway in his directorate to identify lessons learned as requested by the Board following his staff's presentation to the September Board meeting. The Board noted those elements that had worked particularly well and asked that, once the work was complete it should be integrated into OFMDFM's learning and development plans for project management staff. Denis would also include it in his lunchtime policy seminars.

OFMDFM Digital Action Plan Update

Siobhan Broderick introduced the revised plan including a range of actions and targets which had been developed around the themes of processes, people and leadership. The Board welcomed the update in light of the presentation from Paul Wickens. Following discussion the Board approved the plan and asked for further work to identify and scope out potential opportunities in relation to the department's ALBs.

[Action: Mark Browne]

7. Governance & Financial Management

Guidance on Policy and Procedures for Approval of OFMDFM Expenditure

Stephen Boyd presented the key changes to OFMDFM's expenditure approval guidance. The Board noted the changes and welcomed the additional advice and clarification on procurement. Concern was raised that business cases could be overlooked during the approvals process if they had not been allocated a unique identifier. Stephen agreed to do some further work to identify the potential scale of the problem and ways of addressing the issue.

[Action: Stephen Boyd]

Fraud Prevention Policy and Response Plan

Stephen also presented the revised Fraud Prevention Policy and Response Plan which had been approved by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. The Board noted the Plan and agreed that it should be issued to all OFMDFM staff and ALBs subject to clarification about who should be the Fraud Oversight Manager.

[Action: Stephen Boyd]

Finance Report

Stephen introduced the monthly Finance Report which showed a 1% total DEL underspend of the current budget allocation. He outlined the emerging pressures which included a liability for untaken holidays due to a technical change in the calculation of

annual leave. There was also some uncertainty around potential fluctuations in exchange rates in the last quarter of the year. Stephen also explained that he was considering allocating a small emerging easement to VSS in the event that the January monitoring was not met. On the capital budget position he reported a small underspend which he was confident would be spent before year end. All January monitoring bids and easements had to be notified to DFP by 2 January 2015.

The Board noted that the Department had published its consultation document on the draft Budget for 2015-16. On the matter of Spring Supplementary Estimates business areas had been asked to confirm that the current ambit covered all spend by OFMDFM. On prompt payment OFMDFM had achieved over 94% and 98% on 10 and 30 days respectively which was above the departmental average. The Board noted the position.

Audit and Risk Committee Meeting

George Thorley updated the Board on the meeting which had taken place on 17 November. He reported that update on the recommendations register had been very positive. The annual test drilling report had also been exemplary. He also reported that the mid-year internal audit report was satisfactory. Following discussion it was agreed that, in future the final RTTCWG from the NI Audit Office should come annually to the Board.

[Action: Stephen Boyd]

The Board welcomed the overall positive report.

8. Strategic Planning

Corporate Risk Register Q3

Mark introduced the Q3 report. He said there were still some issues about consistency in reporting particularly around the mitigating actions and the overall risk assessment. He suggested that he and Denis would discuss this separately.

[Action: Mark Browne, Denis McMahon]

The Board discussed each of the corporate risks and was satisfied with the mitigating action being taken. On the matter of civil contingencies there was some discussion relating to local emergency preparedness groups and the transition arrangements to the new councils. The Board received an assurance that DOE were working on this issue. The Board noted the current status of each of the risks and, subject to one amendment agreed that the register accurately reflected the current position.

Business Improvement Plan 2014-16

Siobhan Broderick introduced the Business Improvement Plan aimed at leadership and engagement with staff and stakeholders; delivery capability; and culture, communication and change. The Board welcomed the plan particularly at a time when OFMDFM was

facing significant change and downward financial pressures. It was agreed that the Board would receive a quarterly progress report which would be shared with staff. The plan was approved subject to further work to identify measures/outcomes against which progress could be measured.

[Action: Siobhan Broderick]

Revised MLKDC 2014-15 Business Plan

Mark introduced a revised version of the 2014-15 business plan which had been submitted by the MLK Development Corporation. Following discussion the Board agreed that it should be sent to Ministers for their consideration.

9. Human Resource Issues

HR Corporate Performance Report Q3

Siobhan introduced a revised HR report which included a departmental progress report on Learning and Development priorities. George proposed that it should be expanded to take account of emerging training needs as a result of the digital action plan. This was agreed.

[Action: Siobhan Broderick]

The Board also welcomed the new dashboard report which outlined the number of vacant posts, outstanding performance reports, sick absence and casework. The Board noted the current estimate of 8.8 against the 7.5 day target. It also noted that 89% of staff had no sick absence during the quarter. Siobhan agreed to amend the report to include the monthly absence rate.

[Action: Siobhan Broderick]

10. Communication

Draft December Departmental Brief

The Board agreed the December brief.

China Bureau Update

The Board noted the latest update from Tim Losty in which he reported that the lease for office accommodation had been agreed. He expected it to be operational early in the New Year. The Board welcomed the report and noted the good progress that Tim had made in a number of areas including developing relationships and increasing trade and investment.

11. Forward Plan

It was agreed that the Forward Plan should be amended to include the annual RTTCWG report, the quarterly business improvement plan and the monthly workforce planning report.

12. AOB

There were no items of any other business.

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting would be on Wednesday 28 January 2015 in the Glasshouse, Stormont Castle. The meeting closed.

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18 December 2014