

**OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING
24 SEPTEMBER 2014, GLASSHOUSE, STORMONT CASTLE**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Malcolm McKibbin, George Thorley, Siobhan Broderick, Mark Browne, Richard Bullick, Stephen Grimason, Brenda King, Neill Jackson, Denis McMahon, Sinead McCartan for Stephen Boyd, Liz Elliott (Item 8a only)

APOLOGIES: Stephen Boyd, Dara O'Hagan and Colm Shannon

IN ATTENDANCE: Olive Maybin

The Board noted apologies from Stephen Boyd, Dara O'Hagan and Colm Shannon.

1. Minutes of 27 August meeting

The minutes of the August 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. Social Investment Fund

Orla McStravick attended the Board in the latest of a series of presentations giving staff the opportunity to showcase their work. She gave an overview of the Social Investment Fund Programme to date with particular emphasis on lessons learned and the challenges going forward. The Board thanked Orla for the presentation and passed on their appreciation to her staff and asked that the lessons learned from the programme should be rolled out to other departments.

[Action: Denis McMahon]

5. OFMDFM Digital Action Plan

Mark Browne introduced the draft action plan which he regarded as proportionate to OFMDFM's interaction with the public. Joe Beattie presented the plan which included a range of actions aimed at improving the Department's online services. Following discussion it was agreed that any proposed actions should be aligned with the relevant

business area. The Board agreed that the action plan should be developed further taking account of the views that had been expressed.

[Action: Mark Browne]

6. Current Context

Executive Business

Neill Jackson reported that the Executive would be meeting on 25 September. There were no OFDMFM papers for discussion.

Current Issues

Denis McMahon advised that a leave hearing was scheduled for 29 September regarding the judicial review by the Committee on the Administration of Justice. Mark Browne updated the Board on the upcoming recruitment competitions for the Grade 5 posts in Brussels and Beijing.

7. Directors' Updates on Strategic Programmes/Policies

There were no updates.

8. Governance & Financial Management

Finance Report

Mark introduced the Finance Report. He stated that the budget position had been adjusted to reflect June monitoring including planned budget cuts of 4.4% which had been applied to the Department and its ALBs. The current forecast outturn was showing an overspend of about £2m. Malcolm asked that this figure be revised to exclude the VSS pressure that had arisen following June Monitoring.

[Action: Stephen Boyd]

The Board discussed the proposed resource bids for submission as part of October Monitoring and the potential implications of Executive decisions. Mark and Denis gave an assurance that sponsor branches were maintaining ongoing engagement with ALBs to ensure that they delivered the required efficiencies. The Board noted the position; it agreed the proposed bids and agreed that, on programme funds there should be no further funding commitments.

On prompt payments the Board noted that performance had fallen to 88.49% and 95.31% in 10 and 30 days respectively. Business areas had been asked to account for the falling performance. Sinead McCartan agreed to check whether or not invoices in dispute were included in the late payment statistics.

[Action: Stephen Boyd]

Workforce Planning

Mark introduced plans which had been developed to meet current and anticipated budgetary pressures. He outlined the measures that were already in place in relation to vacancy management and set out a further range of proposed actions. It was agreed that each Grade 3 and Grade 5s in Private Offices and Executive Services should develop a plan to reshape their business areas to live within the anticipated 2015/16 staffing budget. These plans would be based on funded posts at the start of the 2014/15 year and approved vacancies, so actions that had already been taken to date by business areas would count towards the required level of savings. Plans would be submitted to the Accounting Officer by 3 November for consideration prior to submission for approval at the November Board meeting.

[Action: G3s, Private Office and Executive Services G5s, Mark Browne]

It was also agreed that agreed actions should be communicated to Trade Union Side and to staff via the Team Brief. The Board thanked Siobhan Broderick and Liz Elliott for their work to date.

[Action: Siobhan Broderick]

Draft revised Terms of Reference for Audit and Risk Committee

Mark brought forward proposed revisions to the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference in line with guidance contained in Corporate Governance in Government Departments: Code of Good Practice (NI). The Board noted the changes and approved the revised terms of reference subject to a minor amendment at paragraph 9 relating to the procurement of specialist advice.

PACWAC

Siobhan updated the Board on her budget meeting with the Chief and deputy Chief Commissioners at which the uncertainty around the inescapable cost of legal costs with regard to judicial reviews was discussed. The Board agreed that the situation should be kept under review and that Siobhan should explore further the benefits and risks of introducing a review process into the Commissioner's decision making process.

[Action: Siobhan Broderick]

9. Strategic Planning

VSS 2014/15 Revised Business Plan

The Board noted the revised 2014-17 corporate plan and 2014/15 business plan and agreed that the documents should be submitted to Ministers with a recommendation that the plan should be approved.

10. HR Corporate Performance Report Q2

Siobhan introduced the quarterly report with the exception of the workforce planning paper which had already been discussed. She reported that the external training budget was under pressure and only priority training should be requested. She also reported that absence levels remained a concern particularly the level of long term absence. On the latest estimates it was likely that the sick absence target of 7.5 days would not be achieved.

Regarding the format of the report Siobhan said she would be meeting with Directors with a view to bringing forward proposals on a new reporting framework.

[Action: Siobhan Broderick]

The Board noted the position.

11. Communication

Draft September Departmental Brief

The Board agreed the September brief.

12. Forward Plan

The Forward Plan was noted.

13. AOB

There were no items of any other business.

14. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 29 October 2014 in the Glasshouse, Stormont Castle.

The meeting closed.

OLIVE MAYBIN

29 September 2014