

Minutes of seventy-sixth meeting of the Board of the Public Appointments Service held in Chapter House, at 4.30pm on 26th June 2018

Present: Mr. Tom Moran (Chairman), Ms. Anne-Marie Taylor, Ms. Fiona Tierney, Dr. Eddie Molloy, Mr. David Cagney, Mr. Damien McCallion, Mr. Paul Lemass, Ms. Mary Connaughton, Ms. Catherine Dobbins (Secretary).

Apologies: Mr. John O'Callaghan.

Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes were agreed and these will be published on the website.

The Board was informed that PAS is in the final stages of selecting a replacement CEO and are close to making an offer to the preferred candidate.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

CEO's Report for the Board

Operational Report

The Board noted the operational report which had been circulated in advance.

The Board noted that activity levels continue to be high, with some fall off in the number of candidates interviewed due in part to the days lost due to weather issues. It was noted that the percentage attending for interview is falling, as is the percentage taking up roles at some levels. It was agreed that PAS would keep this issue under review and continue to conduct analysis as to any potential reasons for this beyond wider labour market issues.

The Board noted the successful recruitment competition just completed for Garda Commissioner and welcomed the report published on publicjobs.ie on the process. The CEO informed the Board that PAS is currently recruiting a CEO and Chair of the HSE.

The CEO also provided an update on the attendance of PAS at the Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Mental Health Care.

The Board discussed the State Boards process and agreed that the new system is working well, although there has been slippage on dates leading to some delays which are often outside of PAS control. The Board welcomed the fact that PAS is now monitoring closely all dates and is measuring and reporting on same. The Board also noted how the process has evolved to include meetings with applicants for Commercial State Boards. The recent State Boards event in Athlone was highlighted and the plans to hold further such events in regional areas was also discussed.

The new publicjobs.ie website was welcomed and the Board noted the positive feedback it has received to date.

The CEO updated the Board on the standardisation project and the Board noted that the project is progressing well and that the development of the new PAS recruitment application platform will follow on from this work.

The Board welcomed the results of the Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey and the particularly high engagement scores for PAS.

Risk Management

The Board discussed some potential risks identified by PAS, including the planning permission being sought on an adjacent site which if granted will, during the length of the construction phase, potentially interrupt the business of PAS. There may be a need to source alternative venues for interviewing over the extensive period of the work on the site. PAS is liaising with OPW with regard to having its observations taken on board during the planning application phase.

The Board discussed the need to provide adequate ongoing resources for local authority recruitment and the risks involved in recruiting Hospital Consultants. The Board agreed that there may be a need to look strategically, within its statutory remit, at divesting some areas of recruitment in order to ensure PAS can deliver in key areas for the civil service and local authorities. The Board agreed to continue its previous discussion on core recruitment once the new CEO is appointed.

The Board noted the number of sensitive roles which PAS may have to fill in 2018, but was satisfied that PAS had the processes in place to run these competitions to a high standard.

The Board noted the ongoing equality cases and the High Court case, including the successful outcome of one of the equality cases since the report issued to the Board.

The Board discussed the paper on the key risk of compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation and noted the revised Code on the Protection of Personal Data in PAS. The Board welcomed the revised procedures and published policies and that PAS has procured training for all staff on this area. The risk of selection board members retaining data was noted and the Board suggested additional follow up correspondence with selection board members in this regard.

The Board noted the steady level of requests for review, FOI, and data protection requests and welcomed the centralisation of these functions in order to enhance learning from issues arising. The CEO informed the Board that a number of CPSA Section 8 Reports had been received by PAS this week and that all upheld the PAS processes used.

Financial Position

The Board noted the financial report for 2018 to date. It was noted that PAS expenditure to date in 2018 is generally on budget but this will be reviewed in detail at the end of June. This review will form the basis of PAS engagement with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform around resourcing needs and expenditure levels required in other areas.

The Board noted that PAS has engaged with a number of clients to provide funding for staff to work in PAS as a means of achieving the staffing levels required to deal with the demands of clients. The Board noted that capital expenditure is behind schedule due to delays in getting the development work started in PAS; PAS is currently engaging with OPW on this issue.

The Board discussed the potential for charging clients for some aspects of some competitions, and agreed that it would be useful to have a costing mechanism in place.

Internal Audit Update

The Board noted that the new CEO will appoint a Chairperson of the Internal Audit Committee. The CEO thanked Paul Lemass for taking on this role at the last meeting of the Internal Audit Committee on 20th June.

The Board noted the Audit Report on Test Providers and the assurance provided in this area by the audit. The Board also noted that the final version of the report on compliance with the CPSA Codes is with the outsourced internal auditors for additional work. The terms of reference have been agreed for the upcoming payroll audit and the audit on compliance with PAS published documentation (i.e. Statement of Strategy and Customer Action Plan).

The Board noted the updated Audit and Assurance Arrangements and the draft Strategic Audit Plan which had also been discussed with the Internal Audit Committee. The Board was advised that the Internal Audit Committee has requested clarification on their role in relation to risk management. The Board agreed that the Management Team were ultimately responsible for risk management and that the Risk Management Group are required to inform the Audit Committee about key risks and to offer assurance in relation to risk management. The Internal Audit Committee is then required to oversee an audit programme to manage those risks.

The Board noted that the Internal Audit Committee is satisfied with management responses to audit recommendations which are appropriate and timely.

Draft Annual Report

It was agreed that the Board would review the draft annual report which was circulated at the meeting and revert to the Secretary to the Board by mid-July with any observations.

Update on KPIs from the Statement of Strategy

The CEO made a presentation to the Board with an update on the KPIs from the Strategy Statement; it was agreed that the presentation would issue to the Board. It was agreed that the impending appointment of a new Finance Officer would be an appropriate time to develop economic literacy at all management levels in order to ensure optimum engagement with the vote allocation and use of public funds.

Action Plan from Board Evaluation

It was agreed that the Board would meet without the executive present in advance of the next meeting (for approximately 20 minutes). The Board will consider the other recommendations from the board evaluation exercise at the next meeting.

Any Other Business

The Board thanked Fiona for her outstanding contribution as CEO and wished her well in the future. The CEO thanked the Board for their support throughout her tenure.

Next Meeting

TBA. It was agreed that the Board would meet in early September and would agree dates for the remaining meetings in 2018 at that meeting.