

Minutes of eighty-third meeting of the Board of the Public Appointments Service held in the IAA, at 9.30am on 9th October 2019

Present: Mr. Tom Moran (Chairman), Ms. Anne-Marie Taylor, Ms. Shirley Comerford, Mr. John O'Callaghan, Dr. Eddie Molloy, Ms. Mary Connaughton, Mr. David Cagney, Ms. Catherine Dobbins (Secretary).

Apologies: Nominees of the Minister for Health and the Minister for Local Government to be appointed.

Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes were agreed.

Declarations of Interest

David Cagney declared that he knew one of the candidates taking a legal case against PAS and he left the room during the update on legal cases. There were no other declarations of interest.

CEO's Report for the Board and Operational Report

The Board noted the Operational Activity Report which was circulated in advance of the meeting, noting that activity levels are up in terms of recruitment campaigns run in comparison to 2018 but applications are down due to part to the nature of campaigns being run and the tightening labour market. The reduction in supervised tests was discussed, and it was agreed that the report will include the use of remote proctoring and video interviews in future, where available, in order to highlight the increase in alternative assessment methods. The Board welcomed the increasing attendance rates at interview.

The Board discussed the update on Medical Consultant recruitment and noted the improvements in the length of time taken to advertise posts, and in numbers recommended compared to 2018.

The Board discussed trends in terms of investment in technology and the potential impact on the numbers of clerical staff, both in PAS and in the wider civil service. The Board agreed that this is one of the areas where PAS could contribute, in terms of strategic thinking in relation to future skills, and the need for strategic workforce planning by clients to identify those skills.

The Board noted the additional narrative around appeals and the low numbers of appeals in comparison to the number of applications processed. It was agreed that PAS would build on this narrative in future reports and outline some of the learning being implemented from such appeals.

The Board discussed the current legal cases against PAS and noted the decision taken by PAS in relation to one of the cases, noting that the case being pursued is an employment matter and not a recruitment issue.

The Board noted the Terms of Reference for the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Advisory Group and a discussion was held into the constitution of the Group and how visibly reflective it is of society and of the actual groups covered by Equality legislation. The CEO outlined how relevant organisations had been approached to provide input and nominated

representatives to participate on the group. The CEO acknowledged the views of the Board in this regard and stated that it was not envisaged that this group would oversee the implementation of the strategy and would meet on three occasions only. The CEO would welcome feedback from the Board in relation to the composition of the strategy oversight group being established to drive the implementation of the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. The CEO updated the Board on work PAS is doing, in conjunction with D/PER, in the area of D&I and the initiatives underway to attract candidates from various diverse groups to roles in the public service.

The CEO gave a presentation to the Board on a number of key areas as part of the CEO's Report for the Board. This included an update on preparations for Brexit. The CEO also updated the Board on the situation in relation to the additional work that AGS have requested PAS to undertake. This work has not been funded in the 2020 budget allocation from D/PER and the funding will have to be sourced elsewhere if PAS is to take on this work; discussions will be held with AGS in this regard. The CEO also updated the Board on the PAS response to provisional findings in the NDPT Report in terms of Medical Consultant recruitment and its failure to consult PAS as part of their review process and to take on board developments in the recruitment process in PAS in respect of Medical Consultant recruitment. The CEO updated the Board on the new graduate recruitment model and the Board complimented all involved in the development and implementation of the new process.

Financial Position

The Board noted the financial position to date in 2019. It was noted that PAS is above profile on both A1 and A2 subheads due to the level of additional recruitment activity and the staffing levels required to deliver on this activity; PAS is below profile on capital expenditure. The Board noted that PAS is in the process of engaging with D/PER in relation to this. The Board discussed the process for projecting expenditure and acknowledged that it may be difficult to predict expenditure when it is demand driven. It was noted that professional and technical recruitment had increased above projections, in part due to Brexit related demands. The cost of the new CO model has also been higher than that of the previous approach, however it has seen improvements in service delivery for both candidates and clients. The Board noted the budget received from D/PER for 2020 and acknowledged the additional funds being recouped from clients to allow PAS deliver the required level of services.

Internal Audit Update

The Board noted the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting of 27th June 2019. Anne Marie Taylor gave an update on the Audit Committee meeting on 26th September, and provided feedback from the Audit Committee on the current and previous Procurement Audits. The Board noted the Audit Committee's request for a detailed follow-up on all recommendations in the Procurement Audit for the next Audit Committee meeting, including rolling out the Strategic Procurement Plan. The Audit Committee had also requested that a Project NOVA Gantt Chart be made available to the Board and the Audit Committee. The Board noted that the Gantt Chart had been provided in advance of the Board meeting. The Committee had asked that a Memo on Financial Reporting be made available to the Board and this was issued in advance of the Board meetings and the actions to be taken were noted.

Key Risk Theme (Cyber Security)

The Board noted the Report on Cyber Security in PAS, and welcomed the level of assurance provided. The Board agreed that consistent reinforcement of the required behaviours on an ongoing basis amongst PAS staff would be critical.

Report on Progress of KPIs from Strategy Statement focusing on Objective 1 – “*the provision of quality, timely recruitment and resourcing service to our core clients*”

Lisa Keyes made a presentation to the Board on the above topic. The Board acknowledged the work underway in this area and recognised that the development of KPIs particularly targeted to specific clients would be a significant undertaking which might be done on an incremental basis. It was noted that the KPIs being developed for the new Strategy would be at a higher aggregated level (with more detailed KPIs set for each business area) and that by the end of Q1 2020, PAS should have agreed KPIs with clients. The Board agreed that more accurate KPIs and a clarity around expectations would help PAS increase the level of trust with clients and would help to reinforce good workforce planning behaviours. It was agreed that benchmarking would be conducted with other recruitment organisations in relation to the KPIs being set.

Marketing and Communications

Michelle Noone made a presentation to the Board on the outcome of a review of PAS Marketing and Communications, and highlighted the recommendations to be implemented over the next three years.

Report on implementation of business plans and progress on strategic projects (including overview of progress on Project NOVA)

This item was postponed until the next meeting.

Board Evaluation Update

It was agreed to discuss this further at the next meeting.

Next meeting

13th November at 2.30pm.

Strategy Session

The Board held a strategy session after the Board meeting; the members of the Management Board also attended. The session also involved an external speaker and an overview of the strategy development process to date including the external context, stakeholder engagement, the development of the mission, vision and values and the key strategic issues arising from PAS. The Board provided their input into the process, and it was agreed that this topic would be discussed further at the next Board meeting.