

Minutes of seventy-first meeting of the Board of the Public Appointments Service held in Chapter House, 26-30 Abbey Street Upper, Dublin 1, at 11am on 21st April 2017

Present: Ms. Judith Eve (Chairman), Ms. Fiona Tierney, Ms. Anne-Marie Taylor, Dr. Eddie Molloy, Mr. David Cagney, Mr. Damien McCallion, Ms. Oonagh McPhillips, Ms. Catherine Dobbins (Secretary).

Apologies: Mr. Paul Lemass, Ms. Eimear Kenny.

Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

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

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Annual Report from the Internal Audit Committee

The Chairperson of the Internal Audit Committee, Mr Tom Moran, presented the 2016 Internal Audit Annual Report to the Board. The Chairperson briefed the Board on his background of relevance to his role as Chairperson of the Committee, and outlined the Committee's risk based approach to internal audit. The Chairperson discussed the Committee's interaction with the Risk Management Group and the Internal Audit Function in PAS and expressed the Committee's satisfaction with how risk management and internal audit operates in PAS. The Chairperson expressed the view that the new Internal Audit Committee has excellent relevant experience and should prove to be very effective in their roles. The Chairperson informed the Board of the new focus on exploring a specific risk in detail at each Committee meeting, in addition to ensuring the audit work programme, as set out in the 2016-18 Strategic Audit Plan, is completed, highlighting the areas of audit planned for 2017. The Chairperson expressed the Committee's satisfaction with the report given by the C&AG's representative at the meeting in December 2016, and with the quality of audits being produced by Mazars, the Internal Auditors. The Chairperson also acknowledged the level of support the Committee has received from the staff in PAS. The Board expressed satisfaction with the Internal Audit Annual Report and was pleased to have external endorsement of the governance systems in place in PAS.

CEO's Report for the Board

Operational Report

The CEO provided an update on the recruitment levels in quarter one which are showing an increase over the high levels of recruitment conducted in 2016. Positive feedback has been received on the quality of work, the increased engagement with clients and the support provided to candidates. The area for improvement continues to be the timescale to fill posts. The Board discussed the extent of posts being filled from outside the civil and public service at all levels, and the impact of opening up interdepartmental recruitment to all grades and having to run parallel open and interdepartmental campaigns for some general service grades. The Board discussed potential reasons why external candidates are not always successful in their applications, and agreed on the need to attract the right people at the right level in order to continue to get the best person for the job. The Board agreed that there may be a need for a strategic review of open recruitment by D/PER, acknowledging that some of the issues may be addressed in the Civil Service People Strategy currently being developed.

The CEO discussed the increased focus on the local authority sector in quarter one and the work to reduce backlogs in this area.

The CEO updated the Board on engagement with managers and staff on strategy implementation, and the development of business plans with appropriate and challenging goals and targets.

The CEO discussed the recent review of the STAR platform and discussed the various potential options for an enhanced recruitment platform for PAS to allow for increased complexity in operations. The CEO highlighted the need for increased harmonisation of processes in advance of sourcing a new platform. The final report will be given detailed consideration by the Management Board and discussed further with the Board.

The CEO updated the Board on the recent meeting on 14 March 2017 with the Civil Service Commissioners for Northern Ireland and agreed that it was a useful exercise. The Board noted the plans for the CEO and Chairperson of the Board to schedule a meeting with the Commissioner for Public Appointments (OCPA(NI)) in Northern Ireland.

The Board discussed the recent event held by PAS for International Women's Day and was pleased that it was such a success.

The CEO informed the Board that she would be engaging with D/PER in relation to the terms of office of the Board which are coming to an end in October 2017.

Risk Management

The CEO updated the Board on the use of video interviewing as part of a recent recruitment campaign and circulated the positive feedback report produced on this pilot. The CEO informed the Board that PAS was currently trialing the use of remote proctoring. The Board noted the increasing level of appeals and FOI requests and acknowledged that, while very time consuming, it represents a low percentage of all applicants.

The Board noted the paper on how PAS is addressing all risks in the area of Information Governance.

Financial Position

The Board noted that the vote for 2017 will be very tight due to the increased demands and that discussions will take place with D/PER in this regard.

Internal Audit Update

The Board noted the minutes of the last Audit Committee meeting on 2nd March and the Internal Auditor's report on the Review of Legislative Compliance (dated February 2017) - noting the four low priority recommendations made in that audit report. The Board welcomed the new e-learning Board Member Training which is due to be rolled out shortly.

Annual Report 2016

The Board noted the draft report and agreed to respond with any observations within two weeks. It was agreed that an opportunity should be taken to officially launch the Annual Report once agreed.

Corporate Risk Register

The three highest rated risks were discussed and the controls and mitigations in these areas were also explored. The Board was satisfied that these risks are being adequately controlled.

Update on Strategy and Business Planning

The CEO updated the Board on the briefing provided to staff on how the strategy will be implemented over the next three years and, specifically, whether each objective will be addressed through a cross-functional strategic project or through team operational business plans, with specific members of the Management Board being given responsibility for delivery in each area. The Board noted the two-page summary of these arrangements and welcomed the regular proposed updates on strategic projects.

Agenda for Strategy Session

The Board agreed the agenda and structure for the strategy session to be held on 16th June.

Next Meeting

16th June