

Minutes of sixty-first meeting of the Board of the Public Appointments Service held in Chapter House, 26-30 Abbey Street Upper, Dublin 1, at 11am on 4th September 2015

Present: Ms. Judith Eve (Chairman), Ms. Fiona Tierney, Mr. Paul Lemass, Dr. Eddie Molloy, Ms. Eimear Kenny, Mr. Damien McCallion, Ms. Oonagh McPhillips, Ms. Catherine Dobbins (Secretary).

Apologies: Ms. Anne-Marie Taylor. One appointment to the Board is outstanding (from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform).

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.

CEO's Report for the Board

Operational Report and Risk Management

The CEO discussed the operational report and highlighted certain areas for the Board in her CEO's Report (which she distributed at the meeting). The CEO provided an update on all large volume administrative grade campaigns and the garda trainee campaign. The Board recognised the need for accurate workforce planning in client organisations in order to predict the demand from such panels, in order that PAS can allocate scarce resources to areas of greatest demand.

The Board discussed the high level of work being conducted for the local authority sector. The CEO highlighted the challenges presented by the cultural shift involved in introducing psychometric tests for posts in this area and the difficulties involved in communicating with such a large number of clients.

The CEO informed the Board a clean management letter is expected from Comptroller and Auditor General in relation to the 2014 audit. The CEO informed the Board that PAS has made the case for a significant increase in budget in the 2016 estimates process, as the office is currently working above capacity, and there is a need for increased investment in our IT systems and in staff to work in areas such as client relationship management. Negotiations will also commence shortly with OPW in relation to getting additional space to accommodate the planned increase in staff.

The CEO updated the Board on difficulties emerging when conducting recruitment for clients which do not come under the CPSA Codes of Practice, including the ongoing legal case and external review of a senior executive campaign. The Board agreed that a review of the operation of the CPSA Codes (possibly in conjunction with other bodies) would be timely

The Board acknowledged the retention by PAS of Excellence Through People accreditation and the recent successful audit conducted by the Health and Safety Authority.

The CEO provided some background information to the two new board members in relation to the joint approach with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (D/PER) in relation to graduate recruitment, including the development of a new graduate recruitment website; and the Government decision which led to PAS taking on a central role in relation to the State Boards process. The Board agreed that the progress and contribution made by PAS in relation to State Boards has been very positive.

Financial Position

The Board noted the Financial Report and the level of expenditure to date. The CEO indicated that the budget is very tight (with high levels of expenditure related to the large increases in recruitment and selection) but that it will be managed carefully to ensure the organisation comes in under budget.

Internal Audit Update

The CEO provided an overview to the two new Board members on the role of the Internal Audit Committee in respect of the provision of advice to the CEO as the Accounting Officer.

Paul Lemass agreed to replace William Beausang as the Board nominee on the Internal Audit Committee.

Update on State Boards

The Board discussed the draft paper on State Boards (reviewing the first six months of operations) and agreed that it could be circulated to D/PER. The CEO informed the Board that should the budget allow, there will be a further publicity drive in relation to State Boards later this year. The Board agreed that it would be helpful for D/PER to take the lead in highlighting the success of the process to date and the large number of appointments being made from the PAS process. The CEO stated that there will be ongoing structured communication with staff at PO level in client organisations that have responsibilities in relation to State Boards.

Role of the Board

The Board agreed that the paper circulated on the role of the Board was very helpful.

Key Strategic Issue - Interviewing

The Board discussed the paper which had been circulated in advance. The Board agreed that it was an interesting paper which provided the evidence to support the developing evidence-informed approach adopted by PAS in this area. The CEO highlighted the work being done to ensure confidentiality of the process, and the benefits gained from the introduction of second interviews for all roles at PO level and above. The Board agreed that the recognition of the importance of values in the selection process is welcome.

Review of Strategy Statement and update on KPIs from Strategy Statement 2014-16

The CEO made a presentation to the Board on this area, providing an update on progress towards meeting all of the organisational objectives. The CEO highlighted the need for an enhanced client relations function in order to get better feedback on all appointments and to manage client expectations.

Corporate Governance Training Update

It was agreed to defer the decision in relation to the method of board evaluation to the meeting in December. The Board noted the circulated letter in relation to Board indemnification. The Board agreed to the revised Code of Business Conduct, which now includes various complaints and review procedures.

30% Club

The Board agreed to PAS signing up as a member (with D/PER already signed up) as it will provide an additional networking opportunity in relation to promoting the State Boards process.

Proposed Letter to Chief Parliamentary Counsel

The Board recognised that the inclusion of PAS in legislation without consultation can lead to difficulties for PAS. The Board agreed to defer the issuing of a letter until further consultation can take place with D/PER.

Any Other Business

The Board agreed to meet the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commissioners in Dublin on 16th February 2016.

Next Meeting

16th October at 11am.