

PPS Management Board

10.00am Wednesday 25 October 2023

Belfast Chambers

Members: Stephen Herron
Michael Agnew
David Best
Glenn Houston
Peter Luney
JoAnne Quinn

In Attendance: Tom Murphy (Private Office)
Claire Harrison (Comms)
BCS Senior Consultant Item 2
BCS Consultant Item 2

Secretariat: Policy and Information Unit

1. Welcome.

Mr Herron welcomed members and the representatives from BCS to the October 2023 Management Board.

2. PPS Board Effectiveness Presentation

The BCS Consultants presented an overview of the findings and recommendations of the Board Effectiveness Review.

Members noted that the overall findings of the report are positive, with a few minor changes required to ensure improvements. Members discussed each of the recommendations and potential measures that could be implemented to address these. Members noted the challenges around the appropriate volume and presentation of information to the Board and the structure of the sub committees and the flow of information between these. Members acknowledged the importance of ensuring the focus of the Board should remain strategic and that members are refreshed on their roles and responsibilities. Mr Herron thanked the BCS consultants, and they left the meeting.

Mr Houston outlined that several recommendations had reflected discussions held recently at the Board and agreed that it would be beneficial to have separation of some of the ARC and Management Board meetings to allow sufficient time for consideration of papers. Mr Best highlighted the challenge in

developing a framework to present key information to the Board, which incorporates all the performance metrics, HR and finance matters.

Mr Luney agreed that discussions can get drawn into operational business and there was a need for a more strategic focus, aligned to the strategic objectives and incorporating the 2030 vision. Members agreed that an action plan should be drafted to take forward each of the recommendations and this should be presented to the January 2024 Board for consideration.

AP 08-23/24 Peter Luney to draft an action plan to address the recommendations from the Board Effectiveness review for the January Board meeting.

3. Apologies

Ms Marianne O’Kane

4. Declaration of Board Members’ Interests

None.

5. Management Board Minutes.

The previous minutes were agreed.

6. Actions from the Management Board Meeting of September 2023

AP 07-23/24 Mr Luney to invite NICSHR to attend the Management Board on an annual basis, or sooner if required.

Cleared – NICSHR will be invited to attend on an annual basis.

7. Reports from Management Board Committees.

Senior Management Group 19 October 2023.

Mr Agnew provided members with a verbal update on the matters discussed at the Senior Management Group Meeting of 19 October 2023.

Among the matters discussed included communications, resourcing and the capacity model and feedback from PA Consultancy.

People and Resources Committee – 5 October 2023

Mr Luney provided an overview of the matters discussed at the meeting of 5 October 2023.

The Principal Statistician presented an overview of the findings of the NICS People Survey. The PPS response rate was 36%, down from 47.5% in 2021. Of the nine themes in the survey, PPS scores increased (from 2021) in four (organisational objectives and purpose; my manager; my team and inclusion and fair treatment); decreased in four (my work; learning and development; pay & benefits; and leadership & managing change) and stayed the same in one resources and workload. There was a discussion around the results and the underpinning drivers. Mr Luney acknowledged that the impact of pay award was a factor outside of our control but that concerns around workloads and pressures were undoubtedly a key consideration. He noted that while the PPS 2030 programme and recommendations from the PA Consulting work would begin to address some of the issues being articulated in the survey results, staff hadn't yet been able to see or feel the positive impact of changes under development. It was vital that we build momentum around initiatives on reducing demand, file quality and CMS changes.

Miss Quinn provided an overview of the roles and governance responsibilities of the PRC, particularly regarding expenditure and the approval of business cases.

Mr Luney provided an update on progress of health and well-being training. Inspire have delivered several road shows to raise awareness of the service on offer and feedback to date is that it has been well attended and well received. More specific group therapeutic sessions and trauma themed training is still under development, with a further meeting scheduled with the AD, Inspire and RMT to take this forward.

Members were provided with an update on the New Ways of Working. It is noted that there are challenges in some areas and the final evaluation report will be available in the next few weeks. Members were advised of variances in operating models across the regions which are required to meet the differing business needs, and of ongoing engagement with TUS regarding this matter.

Mr Luney briefed members on the PA Consulting draft Report which will be available for the next Board meeting. There are recommendations cutting across different areas, three of these are a priority however it may be appropriate that some longer-term matters are reprioritised.

Performance and Delivery Committee 25 September 2023

Mr Houston highlighted the increase period of time in cases over 500 days and queried whether there was an explanation for this developing trend. Mr Agnew advised that these cases are continuously monitored and are discussed at the PAMS meeting. Ms O'Kane will provide an update to SMG on this matter.

8. Strategic Improvement Board

Strategic Improvement Dashboard October 2023

Mr Agnew provided members with an update on the progress of the key projects.

Members were advised the No File Decision project is progressing, with a joint PSNI/PPS stakeholder engagement event scheduled, with further briefings and updates to be provided to staff. The pilot phase will be managed carefully and will be the subject of ongoing evaluation to ensure it is operating effectively.

There has been no significant change in progress of the Content Manager project, with issues in resourcing a main factor in the delay. A revised rollout timetable has been drafted; however, this may have to be reviewed in light of the timings for recruitment of a resource to take this forward. Assurances have been received from IT Assist that there is no risk to the retention of emails arising from the delay.

The new RECs facility for Belfast has been opened and both Crown Room Staff and Panel Counsel have tours scheduled to raise awareness of the facility. A monitoring and evaluation group has been established to evaluate before possible expansion of further facilities.

Members were informed that the No prosecution letters have not progressed due to other priorities within PSNI.

Mr Agnew outlined that phase 3 of the DEMS project is now live, there were a few technical issues in respect of the validation process which have now been addressed. A detailed post project evaluation will be undertaken. PPS is currently liaising with the NICTS and Bar Library to find a resolution to the issue around displaying information in court.

9. Performance Summary.

Board members reviewed and discussed the Monthly Performance Summary, as of September 2023.

Mr Agnew advised that to date the overall files received has increased by approximately 2% in comparison to the same point in the previous financial year. Categories 1-4 are down slightly but are still higher than pre pandemic levels. Categories 5-8 are higher than last year and the baseline and these are presenting pressures on the business areas.

The figure for the overall caseload awaiting a decision at the end of September has increased, however there has been an improvement in the Cat 1-4 from the previous year. Mr Agnew advised that Ms O’Kane had produced an action plan

to manage the escalating caseloads which included overtime and redeployment of staff back to the business areas. Indications are that this is having a positive outcome with a significant improvement in the caseload figures, reducing by almost 1000 cases. The summary work queues in Belfast and Eastern continue to be closely managed and monitored.

Members discussed the caseloads and resourcing of SCU and noted that the performance has remained favourable. Consideration is still ongoing to the long-term resourcing of the section and overall management of the organisation capacity model. Mr Agnew highlighted the figures for DIRs issued and files dip sampled which were slightly below the compliance target.

10. Finance Update

Executive Summary

Members reviewed and discussed the key financial issues being managed by the Finance Team as of September 2023.

Ms Quinn advised members that the revised forecast would now show an outturn adverse to budget with a projected pressure of £1m. There is a small pressure in the capital spend and a bid has been submitted to Supply for £30k, it is anticipated that confirmation of whether this has been successful will be received in the next few days. Members noted that resourcing pressures cannot be dealt with in the absence of a Monitoring Round.

Members were informed of consultation with DOF Economists in the preparation of a business case for Modernisation funding. An allocation has already been included in the current forecast and any successful bids would manage down pressures further. A review is ongoing of the calculation of accruals, particularly in respect of the £1.2m in counsel fees, it is anticipated that this may also reduce pressures, as expenditure currently reported as accruals will move to provisions reducing DEL requirements. Current salary pay award estimate has been factored in and there may be further surplus from that when actual amounts are known to assist in also managing down the year end pressure.

Ms Quinn advised members that the Annual Report and Accounts have been certified and laid in both the Assembly and Westminster. Work is ongoing on the management responses to queries raised by Auditors in the Draft Report to those Charged with Governance and these will be shared with members in due course. Board members thanked Ms Quinn and the Finance team for all their hard work in completing the accounts.

Mr Houston highlighted the issue raised by the Audit office around the treatment of counsel fees and queried whether there was a better way of monitoring this

and reducing the risk. Ms Quinn advised that a review was ongoing into the methodology and criteria for identifying and reporting costs. Mr Houston highlighted the importance of demonstrating to the Audit Office that we are focused on addressing their recommendations.

Mr Luney outlined there are continuing challenges arising from resourcing pressures in the Finance Team and the requirement for separation of duties within the team. Ms Quinn is to review the current structures and governance functions within the team.

11. People

NICS HR Summary Report October 2023

Members reviewed and discussed the October 2023 NICSHR Report, including the latest staffing position, vacancies and recruitment, employee relations, and performance management. Members noted that PPS has received an allocation of administrative staff and progress has been made to commence competitions to fill vacancies in both legal and specialist posts. The challenge is around recruiting to specialist posts particularly accountancy and IT posts. Enquiries are ongoing in respect of the potential to outsource some of this work.

12. Governance Issues.

Corporate Risk Register 2023/24

Members reviewed and discussed the 2023/24 Risk Register and noted the planned actions, mitigations, status, and rating of all risks.

Mr Luney highlighted the additional controls put in place to mitigate Risk 4, Information Management. It was agreed that SMG will consider the broader context of this risk.

Complaints Update

Mr Luney provided an overview of the Complaints update and highlighted the slight decrease in complaints and number of requests for reviews of No Prosecution decisions.

ARC Update

Mr Houston provided members with an overview of the matters discussed at meeting of ARC on 27 September 2023. The Committee focused on the 2022/23 NIAO findings and recommendations, and the Draft Report to Those Charged with Governance.

A pre meeting was held with internal Audit and NIAO and in keeping with good governance practice an annual review of the TOR was completed with a few minor adjustments made.

Mr Houston reported that the internal audit programme is on track. He anticipated that the two outstanding audit reports will be available for the next ARC meeting. The Committee had also welcomed the engagement with the independent expert to resolve the prior year supply issue. The management responses to the NIAO recommendations will be considered at the next ARC meeting.

MB members discussed and agreed it would be preferable to have the Annual Reports and Accounts completed before the summer recess and in line with the other Departments.

13. Communication Update.

Ms Harrison provided a verbal update on several stakeholder and policy launch events scheduled for the coming weeks.

Communication Planner.

The Board Members discussed and reviewed the Communications Planner and update.

14. Next Meeting.

The next Management Board will take place on the 30 November 2023 at 10.00 am in Belfast Chambers.

Summary of Action Points arising from Management Board.

Meeting of 25 October 2023

<i>AP 08-23/24</i>	<i>Peter Luney to draft an action plan to address the recommendations from the Board Effectiveness review for the January Board meeting.</i>
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Action Points carried over from previous meetings.

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