

**Minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held on
Monday 2 October 2017 at 4.00pm
at the Labour Relations Agency, Gordon Street, Belfast**

Present: Albert Mills (Chair)
Michelle McGinley
Jill Minne

In attendance: Tom Evans (Chief Executive)
Don Leeson (Director of Corporate Services)
Paul Cassidy (Finance Manager)
Paul Herink (IT Manager)
Michael Riddell (HR Manager)
Neil Wallace (Employment Relations Manager (Certification Office))

Apologies: None

Declarations of Interest: No conflicts of interest were declared.

1. Minutes of the Last Meeting

1.1 The minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held on 19 June 2017 were agreed as an accurate record (paper FP01-10/17 refers).

2. Matters Arising from the Last Meeting

2.1 The Director of Corporate Services reported that HSENI's report on the Agency's performance against the Management Standards for work related stress has been discussed with the Trade Union Side at the Health and Safety Committee (paragraph 4.5 of the minutes of the last meeting refers). Further discussions are planned with the Health and Safety Committee regarding whether any actions are needed in response to the outcome of HSENI's survey.

Action: Director of Corporate Services

3. Finance

Budget Issues

3.1 The Committee noted that the revised budget for 2017-18 was approved at the August 2017 Board meeting.

3.2 The Chief Executive updated the Committee on the outcome of the Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES). Some staff had withdrawn their VES applications, which

meant that the savings would be less than the Agency had anticipated and resulting in a budget pressure.

- 3.3 The Committee noted that the Agency has shared the budget with the Trade Union Side (TUS) and regularly provides updates to it on the financial position. Committee members commended this action.

Management Accounts for the Period Ending 31 August 2017

- 3.4 The Finance Manager presented the Management Accounts for the period ending 31 August 2017 and sought feedback from the Committee on the new format (paper FP02-10/17 refers). The Committee welcomed the new format, which will be used to report the Agency's financial position to the Board.
- 3.5 The Committee noted that there has been additional unforeseen liability relating to the likely outcome of the Rent Review (agenda item 6 refers).

4. HR Issues

HR Update

- 4.1 The HR Manager reported that the current sickness absence trend means the Agency is likely to exceed the target of nine days per employee year. The increase is primarily due to the long term absence of a small number of staff; short-term absence is similar to the previous year's level.

Draft People Strategy for 2017-21

- 4.2 The HR Manager presented the new People Strategy for 2017–21 (paper FP03-10/17 refers). The Strategy, together with the IS Strategy (agenda item 5) and a Communications Strategy (to be prepared later in the year), underpin the Agency's new Corporate Plan.

- 4.3 The Committee welcomed the Strategy and approved it for submission to the Board.

Action: HR Manager

- 4.4 It was suggested that including diversity as an explicit item in the Strategy should be considered.

Action: HR Manager

Mental Health Charter

- 4.5 The Committee noted that the Agency plans to sign up to the Mental Health Charter as part of World Mental Health Day on 10 October 2017. The Charter (paper FP04-10/17 refers) has been developed by the Equality Commission and mental health organisations to provide a framework for working towards mentally healthy workplaces.

- 4.6 The Charter includes provision for a Mental Health at Work Champion at Board level. The Committee agreed that a Board member should be approached to take on this role.

Action: Chair, F&P Committee

5. ICT

ICT Update

- 5.1 The IT Manager gave an update on the development of the specification, and business case for funding, for CMRS Phase 2. There has been a change to reflect the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation, which comes into effect in 2018. Also, the scope of the project has been broadened to include the Certification Office and in anticipation of Early Conciliation implementation. The business case will be presented to the November 2017 Board meeting for approval.

Action: IT Manager

Draft IS Strategy for 2017-21

- 5.2 The IT Manager presented the draft IS Strategy for 2017-21 (paper FP05-10/17 refers). The Strategy contains a number of developments to support the implementation of the new Corporate Plan, including working with NISRA to become an approved data centre.
- 5.3 The Committee approved the Strategy for submission to the Board, and commended its clarity and exciting direction.

Action: IT Manager

6. Accommodation Issues

- 6.1 The Chief Executive gave an update on the 2014 Rent Review, which has not yet been resolved. The Committee noted that Land and Property Services has recommended that the Agency accepts a settlement of this that is approximately £5k per year greater than their earlier estimate, meaning additional arrears of around £20k of expenditure retrospectively applied over four years, which are an unanticipated financial pressure in 2017-18. The Agency has agreed to this and instructed LPS to settle the matter.
- 6.2 The ERM (Certification Office) gave an update on the project to appraise the options for the Agency's longer term accommodation requirements when the leases on its Headquarters and Regional Office buildings expire in 2019. The Committee noted that the Department of Finance's Reform of Property Management team (RPM) has confirmed that there will be no suitable accommodation to house the Agency on the Government Estate in Belfast until 2021. It is unlikely that there will be any accommodation on the Government Estate for the Regional Office.
- 6.3 RPM has, therefore, recommended that the Agency seeks an interim solution for its Headquarters, possibly extending the lease by three years until 2022.

The Chief Executive reported that, in light of this, LPS is engaging with the Landlord about a lease extension as part of the Rent Review discussions. A business case will then be developed.

Action: Director of Corporate Services

6.4 Separate proposals for the Regional Office will be made in due course.

Action: Director of Corporate Services

7. Any Other Business

7.1 There was no other business.

8. Date of Next Meeting

8.1 The Director of Corporate Services reported that a schedule of Board and Committee meetings through to March 2019 is being prepared for approval at the October 2017 Board meeting.