

Minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held on 3 May 2022 at 10.00am by videoconference

Present: Geraldine Alexander (Chair)
Michelle McGinley
Lee Wilson
John Taylor

In attendance: Don Leeson (Chief Executive)
Paul Lowe (Director of Corporate Services)
Patricia Coulter (Knowledge Manager)
Paul Herink (IT Manager)
Claire Kilpatrick (HR Manager)
Mary O'Brien (Business Support Manager)
Angela Bryans (HR Manager)
Diane Edgington (Accommodation Project Manager)
Keelin Kelly (Communications Manager)
Pamela Robinson (Minute taker)

Apologies: Aideen Duggan (Board Apprentice)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and particularly **John** as it was his first meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee since taking up his position as a Board member.

Declarations of Interest: no conflicts of interest were declared.

1. Minutes of recent Meeting

- 1.1 The minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held on 3rd February 2022 (Paper FP01-05/22) were agreed as an accurate record.

2. Matters Arising from the Last Meeting

- 2.1 The Director of Corporate Services reported that HR are sourcing Agile Leadership Training in line with a Board member's request (para 4.12 of the previous meeting refers).
- 2.2 The Director of Corporate Services also provided an update on progress with development of an Internal Communications Framework. The framework is currently with the staff Employment Relations Group for feedback with a view

to bringing it to the August F&P Committee for discussion (para 6.5 of the previous meeting refers).

- 2.3 It was also reported that the Department of Finance have committed to cover any additional costs to the Agency arising from the delay in readiness of James House and the need to extend the current lease on the Gordon Street premises. (para 9.7 of the previous meeting refers).

3. Finance Matters – Update

- 3.1 The Director of Corporate Services reported that the Agency was currently working closely with our accountants in preparing the financial statements for Annual Report and Accounts 2021-22. These would be presented to the June Board meeting.
- 3.2 Work has also commenced on the draft Budget 2022-23 for presentation to the May Board meeting. The budget allocation has yet to be confirmed by DfE.
- 3.3 The Chair thanked the Director of Corporate Services for his update.

4. HR Matters

Outline of HR Work Plan 2021-22 and progress to date

- 4.1 The HR Managers presented the Draft HR Work Plan for 2022-23 and highlighted some important exercises around:
- EDI
 - Hybrid Working
 - Leadership Development
 - Investors in People
 - Staff Intranet
- 4.2 HR will continue with the Ask HR/Tell HR initiative which has proven to be a useful vehicle for engagement and improvement.
- 4.3 **John Taylor** suggested that the Hybrid Working Policy be linked to health and wellbeing strategy within the Agency, highlighting the potential negative impacts on wellbeing associated with remote working and isolation.
- 4.4 Following feedback from recent retirees it was agreed to introduce the retirement hub earlier for staff members.

- 4.5 Cohort 4 of the Leadership Development Programme is now underway, and the 'give SLT a go initiative' is continuing.
- 4.6 The Chair thanked the HR Managers for their work in developing the HR Work Plan and acknowledged the importance to staff of the initiatives set out within it.

HR Metrics

- 4.7 The Committee noted the HR Metrics (paper FP03-05/22).
- 4.8 The Committee noted the rise in staff absence rates. The primary causes of long term sick were identified as stress/mental health issues.
- 4.9 **Lee Wilson** queried if the Agency had considered provision of grief or bereavement counselling support for staff. HR outlined work to date in that area and undertook to consider if more could be done.
- 4.10 **Michelle McGinley** requested that special leave statistics be included within the metrics. HR undertook to include this for future reports.
- Action: HR Managers**
- 4.11 It was reported that 12 staff will reach eligibility for retirement by 2026. It has been agreed to provide pre-retirement information and signposting to staff well in advance to allow them to make informed decisions about their futures.
- 4.12 HR have received positive feedback from staff in respect of the recent health and wellbeing week initiative and are planning to make this an annual event.
- 4.13 Two sessions of Unconscious Bias training have been scheduled for June 2022. This will be extended to Board members.
- 4.14 Membership of the ERG has been refreshed with the term of membership now extended to two years.
- 4.15 The Committee noted the HR Metrics as at 31 March 2022. The Chair thanked the HR Managers for their update.

5. ICT Matters

- 5.1 The IT Manager presented the Draft IS Work Plan for 2022-23 and provided an update in relation to ongoing IT activities.

- 5.2 It was reported that the final phases of development on the CMRS were now ready for user acceptance testing by the Agency and that work was also progressing in the transition to new IS managed services arrangements.
- 5.3 It was also noted that the IT Manager is currently preparing for the relocation to James House.
- 5.4 The Chair thanked the IT Manager for his work in developing the IS Work Plan and for his update.

6. Communications Matters

- 6.1 The Communications Manager presented the Draft Communications Work Plan for 2022-23 and provided an update in relation to ongoing activities.
- 6.2 The Communications Manager reported that the Agency is continuing to build relations with the media. Liaison with DfE is also continuing in preparation for the launch of the online toolkit.
- 6.3 The Agency's media work in relation to the recent P&O dispute was also noted.
- 6.4 John Taylor encouraged continuing use of social media as the pandemic has drawn even more people into using it and queried if the Agency was making efforts to target younger people. The Chief Executive reported on a positive meeting with the DfE's Careers Service which has signposted other potential partners to raise awareness of employment rights among young people.
- 6.5 In response to a query raised by Lee Wilson the Communications Manager undertook to look in to specific guidance around communications in a hybrid working environment.

Action: Communications Manager

- 6.6 The Chair thanked the Communications Manager for her work in developing the Communications Work Plan and for her update.

7. Business Support Matters

- 7.1 The Business Support Manager presented the Draft Business Intelligence Work Plan for 2022-23 and provided an update in relation to ongoing activities.
- 7.2 The Customer Service Excellence (CSE) reassessment exercise was completed on 31 March with formal confirmation of the result expected soon.

7.3 The Chair thanked the Business Support Manager for her work in developing the Business Intelligence Work Plan and for her update.

8. Knowledge Management

8.1 The Knowledge Manager provided an update on ongoing activities.

8.2 Weekly knowledge updates are now being issued to staff and the role has been established as the primary point of contact for individual staff queries. A comprehensive guidance document has been produced in respect of 'holiday pay' issues.

8.3 The Knowledge Manager also reported that she is involved with and supports the work of Mental Health First Aid , Dignity at Work, Women's Network and LGBT+ and Allies network within the Agency.

8.4 The Chair thanked the Knowledge Manager for her update.

9. Accommodation Matters

9.1 The Accommodation Project Manager reported that the revised date for moving to James House is now 12 September 2022. Notice of terminating the existing lease on Gordon Street will now be given by 31 July.

9.2 It was confirmed that Staff have now removed all their personal belongings from Gordon Street.

9.3 Further risk assessments have been completed in respect of reopening of Head Office and the Regional Office.

9.4 Translink delivered a virtual talk to staff on best value travel options for travel to and from James House.

9.5 The Chair thanked the Accommodation Project Manager for her update.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution to the meeting.

11. Date of Next Meeting

11.1 The next meeting will be on **2nd August 2022 at 10am.**