

**Meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee Meeting held on
7 May 2024 at 10.00am**

Present: Geraldine Alexander (Chair)
John Taylor (via Teams)
Kevin McCabe

In attendance: Don Leeson (Chief Executive)
Anne Dorbie (Interim Director of Corporate Services)
Angela Bryans (Joint HR Manager)
Diane Edgington (Transformation Project Manager)
Patrick Quigley (Business Support Manager)
Claire Webb (EDI Manager)
Oliver Murray (Executive Assistant)
Jim McAllister (Project Manager)

Apologies: Libby Armstrong
Lee Wilson (via Teams)
Patricia Coulter
Elaine Clarke

This was a hybrid meeting, with some members attending via video conference link.

1. Welcome – Introductions, Apologies and Declarations of Conflicts of Interests

Declarations of Interest: no conflicts of interest were declared.

1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2 **Director of Corporate Services**, Paul Lowe, was welcomed back from long-term sick leave. After a phased return, Paul has now returned to the Agency on a full-time capacity.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

2.1 The minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held on **6 February 2023** (Paper FP01-05/24) were agreed as an accurate record for publication on the Agency's website.

3. Matters Arising from the Last Meeting

3.1 The **Interim Director of Corporate Services** gave an update on a range of issues that have arisen following the previous Finance & Personnel Committee meeting, all of which will be covered in their respective sections of this meeting.

4. Finance Matters - Update

- 4.1 The **Interim Director of Corporate Services** gave an update on the current budget as well as discussing the expectations for the budget and staffing issues for the next financial year.
- 4.2 The Finance team were thanked for their work over the last month, which includes the staff pay uplift.
- 4.3 No budget has been officially confirmed for 24/25 year, but informal talks have suggested baseline funding, with additional funding to account for pay uplift and Holiday Pay work.
- 4.4 The **Director of Corporate Services** noted the need for additional capital funding to account for CRMS upgrade.
- 4.5 The **Interim Director of Corporate Services** noted that the official lease extension for the Regional Office has been confirmed for an additional five years, with no increase in rent. Final documents are currently being signed to action this.

5. HR Matters

- 5.1 The **HR Manager** presented the Draft HR Work Plan for 2024-25 (FP02-05/24) and HR Metrics report (FP 03-05/24), which highlighted a range of issues.
- 5.2 Health & Wellbeing weeks for the year ahead noted, with external party to carry-out 'internal stress audit'.
- 5.3 Staff appraisals are currently underway, support for staff through appraisal process noted, which will feed in to Coaching plan.
- 5.4 A review of the hybrid working policy is under way. Working groups have been asked for feedback to look at what is working well and what could be improved.
- 5.5 An update was given on the progress of the apprentices and plans for readying them for the next phase of their progression.
- 5.6 Investors In People response rate to follow soon, with an assessor then coming to interview staff and SLT members. This will be concluded by June.

5.7 Tender has been raised for HR IT system update. A discussion was held regarding current staff surveys and the action plans that have been planned as a result.

5.8 Current remote working and staff absence figures noted.

5.9 An update was given on fundraising efforts for the Agency's nominated charity, Women's Aid. Following participation in the Belfast City Marathon on 5 May 2024, £1600 has been raised for the year, 62% of the goal.

6. ICT Matters

6.1 The **IT Project Manager**, gave update on a range of IS/ICT matters.

6.2 The renewal of numerous contracts and licences, as well as Portal and CRMS improvement issues were discussed. A number of improvements will be outlined by Business analysis report from Ceox, which has been commissioned. Project organisation will be set up to keep track of this.

6.3 Holiday Pay project will have an impact on users and licences. This will be alleviated by procurement of new laptops which will work for new software, and to accommodate new staff.

6.4 An update on major risks anticipated was given, with 3 main risks being noted; resourcing, funding, and project management control.

6.6 The **Director of Corporate Services** noted progress with Ceox and Atlas to date. Business cases noted for CRMS upgrade and provision of managed IS services.

7. Communication Matters

7.1 The Communications Manager presented the Draft Communications Work Plan for 2024-25 (FP05-05/24) and gave an update on Communications matters.

7.2 A review and update of existing website for accessibility purposes is to take place.

7.3 To strengthen staff communication, an internal communications audit considered is being considered. A discussion was held on importance of communication policy that recognises importance of teamwork and culture in context of hybrid working.

7.4 The ongoing work of the Good Employment Charter was noted.

8. Business Support Matters

8.1 The Business Support Manager gave an update on Business Support matters.

8.2 Challenges currently in place for data cleansing noted due to restrictions on CRMS facilities and lack of staff trained on system.

8.3 Future recruitment plans were noted. Discussion held regarding necessity of agency workers until system is fully operational.

8.4 Discussion held on accuracy and reliability of info and plans for rectifying this with improved bulk upload facility.

8.5 An update was given on the recent Customer Service Excellence assessment, with the Agency achieving nine elements judged as 'Compliant-plus'. The Chair commended all staff involved in CSE for their hard work in achieving the award.

9. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

9.1 The **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Manager** provided the draft EDI Action Plan for 2024-25 (FP07-05/24).

9.2 Continued support for diversity networks and implementing diversity into Agency life. To date, 41 members of staff are currently engaged in one of the diversity networks.

9.3 Work with HR for diversity training and advancement of race in the workplace work noted.

9.4 Opportunities for good practice in inclusive recruitment and promotion of hybrid working in EDI plan were noted.

10. Knowledge Management

10.1 In the absence of the **Knowledge Manager**, the **Interim Director of Corporate Services** gave a verbal update on Knowledge Management matters.

10.2 A discussion was held regarding the possibility to further support staff with additional guidance for handling self-litigants with challenging behaviour and mental health issues.

11. Accommodation/Transformation Projects

- 11.1 The **Transformation Project Manager** gave an update on Accommodation and Transformation matters.
- 11.3 A Transformation update will be delivered to Project Board this afternoon. 5 key pillars of delivery (training, coaching, communications, cultural & strategy & people).
- 11.4 ERM training noted, with all completing their formal training with ACAS in Birmingham. Ongoing mediation training update given with TCM in Belfast, with assessments to take place shortly.
- 11.5 An update on the proposed Leadership and Coaching Training. AKU Coaching met with Senior Leadership Team for a workshop, with plans in place to extend this to all staff. The outcome of these workshops will shape Coaching project going forward.
- 11.6 Staff working group to help shape co-design piece meeting on regular basis. Feedback from sessions noted
- 11.7 Plans for this year's staff conference on 11 September were noted, with Transformation and Coaching to be the focus. An agenda is to follow shortly.
- 11.8 The Chief Executive noted that a review of the Senior Leadership Team is in progress, with the potential to create permanent additional Director post. Plans to keep Anne Dorbie as Director of Corporate Services on extended basis was noted.

12. Any Other Business

- 12.1 No other business.

13. Date of Next Meeting

- 13.1 The next meeting will be on **6 August 2024 at 10.00 am.**

Action: Executive Assistant