

**Meeting of the Finance and Personnel Committee Meeting held on
6 February 2024 at 10.00am**

Present: Geraldine Alexander (Chair)
John Taylor
Lee Wilson (via Teams)
John Taylor (via Teams)
Libby Armstrong
Kevin McCabe

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

Apologies: None

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

There was a Closed Committee Briefing to discuss the matter of an Action Plan as previously brought to this Committee and the Board. It was agreed that progress was satisfactory and the Board could be advised accordingly.

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, remains on long-term sick leave, and Anne Dorbie continues to cover his role on an interim capacity. The Chair welcomed Communications Manager Keelin Kelly, who has returned from maternity leave. Paul Martin will continue until the end of next month and after the conference to provide support to the Agency.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

2.1 The minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee meeting held on 27 November 2023 (Paper FP01-02/24) 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 Interim Director of Corporate Services reported the financial position to date, which is on track to achieve budget outturn in March.

4.3 Dilapidations work for the former Head Office premises on Gordon Street have now been fully paid and the matter has been concluded.

4.4 Capital required for laptop replacement and upgraded server work were discussed.

5. HR Matters

5.1 The HR Manager presented the HR Metrics report (FP 02-02/24), which highlighted a range of issues.

5.2 Latest absence figures were discussed in detail, along with long-term sick leave being a largely contributing factor. The policy on special leave was also discussed,

5.3 Thanks was given to Deirdre Blaney, for organising staff participation in the Belfast City Marathon, which takes place 5 May 2024.

5.4 The HR Manager gave an update on current Recruitment and selection matters, with a progression of offers with EOII posts, ERO post recruitment has concluded, with interviews to follow shortly. Recruitment at this level will help to address vacancies and future proofing for the Holiday Pay Team.

5.6 A review of the hybrid working policy has now commenced. Working groups have been asked for feedback to look at what is working well and what could be improved.

5.7 An update given on the procurement of new HR IT system. This will aim to integrate EDI, payroll and time management functions. The aim is for this to go out to tender in the next few weeks.

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.

7. Communication Matters

7.1 The Communications Manager gave update on Communications matters.

7.2 An update was given regarding work for the Future Flexible 24 conference, which remains a point of taken focus. A news release will be sent out next week.

7.3 The Committee continued to note the risks to the Agency's reputation regarding the Holiday Pay Project and that the Chief Executive had already engaged a PR Partner to assist.

7.4 The Awareness survey report, which will detail the public's awareness of the Agency's services, is to follow shortly.

8. Business Support Matters

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

8.2 It was noted that a very large claim was received in the days before the Christmas Holidays and that the team up worked hard to ensure that this processed in time. The Chair thanks the BST Manager and asked that this be passed on to the Team

8.3 The BST Manager highlighted an improvement to the system by CEOX, the CRMS Support, and how this was helpful and hopefully an indicator of good working relationships moving forward.

9. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

9.1 The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Manager provided an update on progress against the EDI Plan for 2023-24.

9.2 The Chair congratulated the CEO and the EDI Manager on their nominations for the Women in Business NI awards. The Agency for Advancing Diversity (Corporate) and Claire for Advancing Diversity (Individual).

9.3 An update was given on continued work of Diversity networks, with an informal review of the networks currently being carried out.

9.4 Plans for carrying out Customer Service Excellence award work was noted.

9.5 The EDI Staff Survey is in the process of being sent out, with the data collected then being able to better inform EDI policy going forward. HR systems upgrade will help with EDI work as well as help embed EDI throughout the Agency

9.6 Kevin McCabe was thanked for agreeing to be the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Champion.

10. Knowledge Management

10.1 The Knowledge Manager 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). Plans for ERM upskill training which is monitored by training matrix were noted.

11.4 An update was given regarding the coaching model, which will launch initially with SLT, which will then be extended to the rest of the Agency.

11.5 An update on the proposed Leadership and Coaching Training and that a collaborative framework exists which is being explored that should expedite this element of the Programme.

12. Any Other Business

12.1 No other business.

13. Date of Next Meeting

13.1 The next meeting will be on **7 May 2024 at 10.00 am.**

Action: Executive Assistant