

## **Minutes of meeting of the Board of the Public Appointments Service held in Chapter House, at 10.30am on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

**Present (Board):** Mr. Tom Moran (Chairperson), Ms. Margaret McCabe, Ms. Fiona Quinn, Ms. Anne Marie Hoey, Ms. Mary Connaughton, Ms. Yvonne Cooke, Ms. Valerie Lawlor, Ms. Sinead Burns.  
Ms. Catherine Dobbins (Secretary).

Apologies: Mr. Colin Menton.

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### **Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising**

The minutes were agreed.

### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest. Mary Connaughton advised the Board that she had been appointed to the Senior Pay Advisory Committee but this was not felt by the Board to be a conflict.

### **Reports for the Board**

#### Operational Report

The Board noted the Operational Activity Report (and the supporting papers), which were circulated in advance of the meeting. The CEO informed the Board that although the timescales for administrative roles are still not at the level the organisation would like, they have improved significantly and the backlog has decreased significantly.

The CEO updated the Board on the recent Management Board Strategy Day; where the focus was on:

- reviewing and enhancing the CRM/Account Manager function in PAS to best deliver for clients (this was also recommended in Capacity Review); the aim is for client managers to be closer to the clients and have the specialist training needed to deliver a high quality service in this area;
- receiving updates from each member of the management board on the areas of the strategic implementation plan that they are responsible for and outlining what will be delivered under each of the work programmes and progress achieved to date;
- reviewing all KPIs and agreeing KPIs for all areas of recruitment from receipt of request to the end of clearance for all campaign types; and agreeing on additional KPIs which can inform service improvements; it was noted that there is a further session on this scheduled for management board in May;
- agreeing all of the non-recruitment service delivery related indicators for the Super 10 which it is hoped will streamline the papers for the Board.

The CEO also updated the Board on the recent CSMB People sub-group meeting; it was noted that the sub-group reviewed actions implemented by DPENDR and PAS in terms of TCO contracts and speeding up the clearance process which had been agreed at the previous meeting. The CEO noted that the sub-group also discussed the changes to educational requirements for EO which has reduced queries and appeals and has increased the eligibility rate, and the opening up of campaigns to holders of a Stamp 4&5 visas which

has also widened the field of eligible candidates. She informed the Board that the sub-group is also planning to review the paths to permanency and the use of part-time contracts for new starters. The CEO stated that there was also a commitment to analyse issues around the recruitment of Executive Officers, Higher Executive Officers and Administrative Officers and barriers linked to specialist competitions.

The Board welcomed the commitment at that meeting to use PAS as the centralised recruiter for general grades in the Civil Service, and the agreement that departmental competitions should be used only in exceptional circumstances.

The CEO informed the Board that she had been invited to speak to the Joint Committee on Disability Matters this week. She informed the Board that the Minister and the Board are invited to the 100 years celebration on 18<sup>th</sup> June.

The CEO updated the Board on actions arising from the last meeting. The Board has asked to be kept updated on developments in senior executive search procurement and noted that the process is working well, with the timeline from publication of tender to signing of contract with the vendor now approx. 4 weeks (a reduction of approximately 4 weeks) and that it allows for the targeting of agencies with particular expertise. The Board had also asked that PAS consider including ED&I baseline data in its regular reporting and noted that this is being incorporated into the development of the Super 10 which is underway at the moment. The new logo was circulated as a handout to the Board on the day.

The Board discussed the review process and welcomed the independence of the process and that where it identifies any significant issues with a process that there is scope for the Board to be reconvened to review all decisions.

The Board noted the low numbers responding to client surveys and queried whether they can be statistically reliable when the numbers are so low. The CEO agreed to ask CRM to review this and consider whether there is a need to qualify such reports.

The Board agreed that it was important to closely monitor TLAC and SER timelines. It was noted that scheduling boards is still a challenge in this and other areas.

The Board noted concerns with P&T timelines, particularly at planning stage and welcomed the ongoing review of KPIs for all stages of the P&T recruitment process. It was agreed that it would be very useful to have the process as streamlined as it is now on the HSE side. The Board recognised the challenge of working with a much wider range of clients on the P&T side. It was also noted that staff had been moved from P&T to improve service delivery in both general service recruitment and TLAC/SER and this had achieved improvements in those areas. It was agreed that there is a need for a focus on P&T recruitment now to understand the timelines and factors causing delays. They agreed to discuss this further at the next meeting.

The Board welcomed the increase in engagement with workforce planning.

### Risk Management

The Board noted the Report on Risk and the Internal Control Report which had been provided with the Board papers.

## Financial Position

The Board noted that the Financial Report included with the Board papers.

## **Update from the Audit Committee**

The Board noted draft Minutes of the last Audit Committee meeting. The Board noted that the ED&I Audit recommendations had been agreed and time-lined.

The Board discussed the paper on the role of the audit committee in relation to risk. It was noted that the Committee is an Audit rather than an Audit and Risk Committee. It was noted that the role of the Audit Committee and Risk Management Committee in PAS is in line with Audit and Risk Management Guidance issued by D/PENDR and is also in line with the general approach throughout the Civil Service. The Audit Committee have agreed that the significant focus on Risk in the current Audit Committee agenda should be reduced in order to better represent the Audit responsibilities, and the fact that the Audit Committee members are non-executive; therefore, the current report/presentation on a key risk area, and review of risk register will be removed from the agenda as this will be reviewed at Management Board and is summarised in the Report on Risk Management from the Chair of the Risk Management Committee to the Audit Committee and PAS Board. It was noted that a biannual meeting will take place between the Chairs of the Audit Committee and the Risk Committee at which a detailed discussion of risks management processes will take place. It was noted that the Audit Committee will also be centrally involved in the development of the Strategic Audit Plan and that management, the Risk Committee and the PAS Board will also input into the development of this Plan.

## **Presentation of the Annual Report from the Audit Committee**

Kevin Smyth joined the meeting virtually to present this annual report as Chair of the Audit Committee. He said it was a very good report which demonstrated a lot of success in 2023. He noted that the Committee is well served, has a good gender and diversity balance and is functioning well. He highlighted the importance of Project Nova, which is a standing item on the Audit Committee agenda and stated that they are very pleased with the progress achieved to date. He noted that the Committee will continue to engage with the project team to track delivery within timelines and budget. He agreed that the Committee track the implementation of recommendations and are very satisfied with the level of implementation in PAS and the engagement with audits, and with the performance of Mazars in conducting audits.

He noted the paper on the role of the audit committee in relation to risk and outlined that the proposed new approach is in line with the OECD approach, and with other government departments and will ensure a clean line of accountability; he highlighted the importance of ensuring the rules of governance are very clear and that everyone knows their responsibility in terms of governance.

He noted that it would be useful to review the report on governance in RTE when published to look any lessons for to be applied to all state boards. The Board agreed to review this report when issues and will consider any best practice recommendations relevant to their role as an Advisory Board.

Kevin thanked the administrative support received in PAS and noted the quality of documentation received by the Committee and noted that the committee will continue its commitment to high standards in this area.

The Board agreed that the Capacity review Report should be circulated to the Audit Committee.

### **PAS Annual Report 2023**

It was agreed that any observations on this report should be sent to the Secretary by the end of May.

### **Capacity Review Report**

The Board noted the Report and welcomed the positive feedback on organisational culture. and highlighted the importance of protecting this throughout the major change process underway.

The Board agreed that the comment in relation to the over-engineering of some processes should be watched and recognised the importance of redesigning processes to take full advantage of Nova. The Board also noted that a Ticketing System had been introduced since the research had been conducted for this report.

It was agreed that all recommendations would be noted in a separate document and tracked going forward with updates at all Board meetings, using a two-track approach to track Nova and non-Nova related recommendations. It was noted that phase II of this report would involve implementing all Nova related recommendations through the new system and maximizing the use of the new system. It was agreed that this would be made available to the Board once developed.

The Board expressed disappointment with the level of benchmarking and asked that this be enhanced in phase II. They also requested that assurances be received on the level of seniority of the team working on phase II and recommended that this be tracked closely.

It was agreed that Nova should be a standing item on the Board agenda going forward.

### **Questions for the Board Member Annual Review**

The Board agreed to provide any feedback on the questions within two weeks and that an online survey would then issue to the Board. The Board agreed to meet without the executive present at the next meeting to discuss the results.

It was noted that an external review and training would be sourced for later in 2024.

### **Next meeting and AOB**

The next meeting will be on 24<sup>th</sup> June at 10.30am.