

**Minutes of meeting of the Board of the Public Appointments Service held in Chapter House, at  
2.30pm on 2nd December 2024**

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

Ms. Catherine Dobbins (Secretary).

**Apologies:** Mr. Colin Menton

*\*Attended virtually*

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**Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising**

The minutes were agreed.

**Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**Reports for the Board**

The Board noted that they had received the CEO's Report, the Operational Report, the Super10 Report and the Report on Risk Management (in addition to the supporting documentation).

The CEO informed the Board that the delivery time from request to assignment for General Grades is now just under 60% for the year to date and that delivery of other recruitment campaigns is at 73% (target 85%). She noted that a lot of changes have been made to try and improve timelines and that they have taken time to work through. She informed the Board that units have cleared the backlog and that vacancies have also levelled off. She noted that the Super 10 provides a clearer view of what is being achieved in all areas and that the new positions analysis report demonstrates the level of success in filling vacancies across the various areas of recruitment (from 67% in TLAC Specialists to 100% for TLAC and generalist positions). She noted that additional staff had been moved to senior executive recruitment to achieve improvements in service delivery in that area.

The CEO informed the Board that efforts are being made to improve the clearance timescales for local authority clearance and the Board noted that the delivery target for these roles should also be reduced as highlighted by the median time taken to deliver in this area.

The CEO updated the Board on the delays which have occurred in the delivery of Project Nova, noting that UAT is taking significantly longer than planned due to the complexity of the processes involved. She informed the Board that Oleo are working to deliver the required changes, and these are being tested as soon as available. It was noted that weekly Management Board meetings are taking place with the Project Team to review progress and discuss risks and issues and that there is no impact on cost.

The CEO updated the Board on her recent meeting with the CPSA to discuss their concerns in relation online interviews. She noted that the team had given a presentation to provide

reassurance on our approach in this area and informed the Board that no alternative evidence had been provided to support the view that all interviews should be held face-to-face. It was noted that interviews for PO level and above are held in person. It was noted that CSMB had not raised any concerns in relation to our current practices in this area and that customer and other feedback does not suggest that there are any issues with our current risk-based approach. It was agreed to keep this matter under ongoing review.

The various approaches to hybrid working across the public and private sectors were discussed and it was noted that there is ongoing monitoring of performance levels and that this is also kept under review in respect of public jobs staff.

The CEO informed the Board that the transfer of 664k from AGS/Department Justice in relation to funding for additional recruitment and the transfer of functions from the Policing Authority has been completed.

It was noted that a new Strategy will have to be developed and that this presents an opportunity to review all committed timescales to ensure that they are as challenging as possible.

#### Financial Report

The Board acknowledged the Financial Report which had been provided with the Board papers. The CEO informed the Board that the technical supplementary had been agreed and that the organisation was under budget for the year. She also informed the Board that additional funding to support STAR for a further year had been provided by DPENDR for 2025.

#### **Update on the Audit Committee**

The Board acknowledged the two audit reports provided with the Board papers and the Minutes of the previous Committee meeting. Mary Connaughton, the Board nominee on the Audit Committee, provided an update on the previous Committee meeting. She noted that both reports provided a reasonable level of assurance and noted that the new Strategic Audit Plan had been agreed. She welcomed the Head of Finance attending the Audit Committee meetings and suggested greater alignment between the Board and Audit Committee meeting dates going forward. She informed the Board that the Committee are monitoring the implementation of previous audit recommendations. The Board asked if the Committee would take a wide view in terms of reputational risks to the organisation and agree if there was any other information they need to assure themselves that decision-making in the organisation is not only procedurally sound but also ensures value for the citizen.

#### **Nova Project Update**

The Nova team attended to provide an update to the Board on this key strategic project. They informed the Board that testing had identified a number of issues which required development of the baseline product. They provided an overview of the principles guiding implementation and the technical and change management principles. They provided an update on the project benefits and provided a high-level deployment timeline. It was noted that this organisation has unique requirements but that solutions are being delivered and the project team are confident that the requirements will be met, with Oleo delivering some updates in advance of timelines. It was noted that what is delivered on launch day will be improved on an ongoing basis. It was noted that STAR can still be used should there be any issues with Oleo post go-live and that there will be a phased roll out of Oleo. It was noted that Oleo is being set up to inform the clearance process. It was noted that AI elements are not being introduced at this stage and will be considered further at a later stage.

The Project team agreed to share some information with the Board in relation to cyber security mitigations, but the team indicated that they were satisfied with the Oleo security features and approach in this area. The Board discussed the end user experience (candidates and clients) and highlighted the importance of stakeholder engagement and review pre go-live.

The Project Team discussed the high-level risks, including selection board member engagement, the complexity of managing dual system and the acceptance of process changes by staff, all of which could impact on timelines and adoption. They assured the Board that effective mitigants and controls were being put in place to reduce these risks.

The team outlined the overall costs for the 15 years (11m) and assured the Board that there were no cost increases due to the delay.

The Board requested to view the system (including from a candidate and selection board member perspective) at the next meeting.

The Board discussed how the candidate clearance process would work and also the type of communications which would issue to clients, noting the communications that have been used to date. The Board welcomed the further engagement planned with clients and their involvement in testing the system; it was agreed to update the Board on anything that clients need to put in place on their side to engage with the system.

The Board also discussed the engagement with selection board members to date. The Board welcomed plans to engage further with this key stakeholder group.

The Board was assured that there was a good strategic partnership in place with this supplier.

### **Talent Attraction Update**

Niall Leavy and Darragh McGrath gave a presentation to the Board on the recent talent attraction campaign. They outlined the ambition for the campaign including the focus on attracting those who haven't engaged previously with publicjobs and outlined the cross-platform coverage. They discussed the campaign assets developed and how the impact of the campaign is being and will be evaluated. The plan for a new brand tracker survey in Q1 2025 was outlined as were the plans for further campaigns in 2025 and 2026. They discussed some recruitment activity insights with an upward movement in application numbers highlighted and the increase in registrations with publicjobs. They outlined the improved social media engagement levels. They informed the Board that the campaign came in under budget overall and more people than anticipated were reached with the campaign. The Board agreed that the product was good, the brand is highlighted well and that the campaign reflects well in terms of public service roles.

### **Workplan for 2025**

The Board noted the draft Workplan.

### **AOB**

The Board expressed a preference for potential days for meetings in 2025; dates to be agreed with all Board Members.

