

Minutes of meeting of the Board of the Public Appointments Service held in Chapter House, at 2.00pm on 6th March 2025

Present (Board): Mr. Tom Moran (Chairperson), Ms. Margaret McCabe, Ms. Mary Connaughton*, Mr. Colin Menton, Ms. Valerie Lawlor, Ms. Sinead Burns*, Ms. Anne Marie Hoey.

Ms. Catherine Dobbins (Secretary).

Apologies: Ms. Fiona Quinn, Ms. Yvonne Cooke.

**Attended virtually*

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 demand for general grades is still high and there is a continued focus on improving delivery times; having achieved 61% within target timeframe in 2024. She informed the Board that work continues across the teams to further improve these results, noting that the median time to fill general grade posts was 8 weeks, with TCO at 3.6 weeks for 2024.

She provided an update on the delivery of other recruitment campaigns which was at 74% for 2024 (target 85%); she noted that all recruitment areas are working towards achieving this target and some are achieving or are close to the target (TLAC were at 75%) with the median delivery duration 13 weeks. She noted that the main reasons for delays continue to be the availability of client nominees or external experts when awaiting a specific specialist on selection boards.

The CEO provided an update on Oleo, noting that €3.1m has been spent to date on procuring and implementing Oleo which is below the original sanctioned amount; sanction was also sought from DPENDR before contract signing. She also informed the Board that the Management Board have weekly meetings with the Oleo team, and she meets the Oleo CEO every six weeks and noted that Oleo are very responsive to the organisation's needs.

The CEO noted that publicjobs has recently received a significant number of PQs in relation to consultancy spend, with no issues arising.

The CEO updated the Board on the impact of the recent talent attraction campaign. The 'From Passion to Profession' campaign in Autumn 2024 ran in dual language (English and Irish) across various media platforms, programmatic, and out of home. She noted that in 2024, application numbers to competitions managed by publicjobs increased by more than 25%, compared to 2023,

and there were also more than 47,000 new registrations via the publicjobs.ie website during 2024, an approximate 7% increase in the year. The Board noted that it may be useful to reach out to specific cohorts of the labour market at specific times to attract people in certain sectors to the public sector.

The CEO also highlighted the newly developed landing page to support the Garda Trainee campaign which went live at midnight on advertisement date.

Financial Report

The Board acknowledged the Financial Reports which had been provided with the Board papers. The CEO informed the Board that there are no financial issues to date. She noted that the organisation is looking at the staff numbers and skills to maximise the use of resources within the existing budget.

Update on the Audit Committee

The Board acknowledged the audit report on cyber security 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 (in December). She noted that this was a key report on the area of cyber security and that it provided a reasonable level of assurance. She noted that the findings were mainly centered around how publicjobs deals with third parties in terms of cyber security and some administrative issues. She noted that the Head of Finance had attended the Audit Committee meeting and that this would be a standing item going forward; she noted that the Audit Committee does not have a role in the estimates process. She informed the Board that the Audit Committee discussed their commitment to an ongoing focus on value for money. She noted that the Committee had received a comprehensive update on the Oleeo project and that there was good progress demonstrated on implementing audit recommendations and good reporting on same. She noted that the Committee had suggested putting Oleeo as a separate risk on the Corporate Risk Register. She informed the Board that all audits in 2024 had provided at least a reasonable level of insurance and the main findings tended to be administrative, with recommendations in relation to updating policies, etc. She assured the Board that the Audit Committee are very conscientious and effectively interrogate all reports and there is a good process in place to ensure the implementation of recommendations. The Board thanked Mary for carrying out this role on behalf of the Board.

Nova Project Update

The Nova team attended to provide an update to the Board on this key strategic project. Rosemarie O'Mahony provided an update on the project structures and resourcing. She noted that the approach to deployment would involve starting small and then progressing to mid and larger volume campaigns over the period from March to May.

Stephen Buckley discussed the two phased deployment approach in more detail, discussing the demonstrations provided and pilots undertaken, outlining the approach to training and communications and discussing the support model, governance structures and controls in place. He noted that the partnership with Oleeo is working well and he also provided an update on engagement with DGOU and the EAC. He noted that this is a fixed price contract and there are no changes in relation to costs, and the project is within the sanction levels. He noted that Oleeo will be providing hyper-care until June.

John Norton outlined the technical cyber security measures in place and the independent certifications held by Oleeo in terms of cyber security. He covered the cyber security and technical plans, system maintenance and development and security testing and monitoring. He indicated that Oleeo had provided detailed plans and overviews and details of their

access arrangements and training provided to staff, and that the arrangements were viewed by IT management in publicjobs as robust. He said the IT team were assured by the Oleeo disaster recovery and encryption arrangements. He noted that Oleeo is subject to yearly independent penetration testing and regular assessments. He noted that other users Oleeo include the UK government and security forces.

Sandra Cairns provided an update on the organisational cyber security mitigations being put in place, including controlled and tiered access to Oleeo. She also outlined the measures in place to ensure client engagement. She informed the Board that for Phase I of the rollout all external functionality will be performed in-house and only rolled out to selection board members and clients as part of Phase II. She noted that there are plans in place to notify candidates of the changes and all other stakeholders at a later date.

Sandra demonstrated the Oleeo video to the Board. The Board welcomed the integration with the new branding and agreed that it looked impressive.

The Board welcomed the increase in the availability of data from Oleeo, noting that it will take some time for data to build up on the new system.

It was noted that STAR decommissioning is on track and that there will be a requirement to report from a number of systems and sources during an interim period. The Board noted that the current plan is for the data to be available in a cloud solution, as any other solution would be too expensive. It was noted that this will involve a separate procurement exercise.

Development of New Strategy

Rosemarie O'Mahony gave an update to the Board on the strategy development process to date. Catherine Dobbins outlined the SWOT conducted as part of the environmental analysis. Stephen Buckley and Michelle Noone outlined the priority areas and aims identified to date, through engagement with the Strategy Development Team and the Management Board.

The Board discussed the areas presented. They highlighted the importance of being client and role focused and the level of responsiveness to clients. The Board also discussed the importance of generating an interest in, and promoting the attractiveness of, careers in the public service. There was a discussion on the skills needed in the future in the face of significant changes and the role of publicjobs in ensuring skills conversation are taking place across the public service; it was noted that the ability to acquire new skills is prerequisite for all new staff. The Board noted the importance of the agility of the organisation to respond to changes in the labour market. It was noted that publicjobs is an enabler of the Programme for Government and enabling the strategic priorities of Government. The importance of publicjobs acquiring and sharing labour market intelligence, data and research into best practice was also highlighted. It was also agreed that the key areas from the current Strategy would also be reflected in the new Strategy.

It was agreed that there would be engagement with DPENDR on the draft strategy and that the mission statements for other significant recruiters would be reviewed. It was agreed that the updated slides would be circulated to the Board for any further input. It was also agreed to give this topic significant time on the agenda for the next meeting, with sign-off at the meeting in June.

AOB

The Board agreed to consider dates for the June and December meetings.