Minutes of meeting of the Board of the Public Appointments Service held in Chapter House, at 2.00pm on 10th March 2026

Present (Board): Mr. Tom Moran (Chairperson), Mr. Paul Geraghty, Ms. Mary Connaughton, Ms. Valerie Lawlor*, Ms. Sinead Burns*, Ms. Anne Marie Hoey*, Ms. Yvonne Furey, Mr. Colin Menton*.
* Attended via MS Teams
Ms. Catherine Dobbins (Secretary).

Apologies: Ms. Fiona Quinn.

The Chairman apologised for the date change and thanked the Board for such a quick response to agreeing a new date. He welcomed the new CEO. The CEO also thanked the Board for agreeing to change the date (as he was unavailable) and said that he was very pleased to attend this Board meeting in his new role as CEO.

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 he was initially focused on some key areas: -

- The embedding of Oleeo and the successful decommissioning of STAR. He noted that Oleeo was delivered on time and under budget from an IT perspective, with the focus now moving to the change management needed to embed Oleeo, but that he had nothing major to report in terms of issues with this aspect of the project. The Board welcomed the news that Oleeo is going well.

- The CEO also highlighted that he is aware of the need to continuously monitor and deliver on key service-related KPIs. He informed the Board that presentations to the Executive Team from APs on KPIs for their areas had commenced and said he is keen that publicjobs take responsibility for improving all of the KPIs within its control. The Board welcomed this approach to managing the KPIs and noted that it would be worthwhile to engage with DPER on this also.

- The CEO informed the Board that he is also focused on how publicjobs can reengage with clients who may be doing their own recruitment. He noted that he is keen to understand why clients might not be using the centre of excellence offered by publicjobs, and would be using his various networks, and other opportunities to understand the reasons for this and to let all clients know that publicjobs is open for business. He asked for the support of the Board in carrying this message.

The Board agreed that it would be essential to understand why clients are not using publicjobs and to probe the issues, barriers and constraints they feel are preventing them from using publicjobs. The Board agreed that the use of publicjobs makes sense from both a VFM perspective and for the assurance provided by robust processes. In addition, the CEO noted that publicjobs has extensive experience around the provision of reasonable accommodations and that other recruiters would have to build this up over time. The Board noted that the new capability framework and the increased skills matching was beneficial for clients and one of the advantages of using publicjobs.

The CEO acknowledged that there is a need to tackle any perceptions around the agility, speed and client focus of publicjobs. The Board agreed that it would be important to review our processes in terms of agility and identify and address, where possible, any constraints.

The Board queried whether individual departments have the autonomy to make decisions about not using publicjobs and around funding additional recruitment teams in departments when a central body existed for this purpose. It was noted that currently they do have the authority to do this as it can be agreed at management board level.

The Board noted that it would be useful to be able to identify the extent to which other bodies are doing their own recruitment, both at present and projections for the future. The CEO noted that there was a lack of central information in relation to this but would hope to have a clearer picture by the next Board meeting.

The Board noted that there is an urgency around the client engagement process as it may be more difficult to win back clients who have set up structures to do their own recruitment and it may be easier to convince those who might only be considering doing their own recruitment that publicjobs can meet their needs. It was noted that a detailed action plan would be needed around the client engagement process and that publicjobs may need to build capacity around the areas of client engagement, sales and marketing.

It was agreed that this might also be considered from a policy point of view but a nuanced approach would be required.

The CEO highlighted an emerging risk in relation to the fall off in engagement by clients with inclusive routes campaigns and noted that he was keen to encourage engagement by all clients with these central initiatives. The Board discussed the decline in engagement with inclusive routes and queried whether it related to more global trends around the decline in engagement with ESG generally but agreed that it would be important to review how the central commitment to these inclusive routes campaigns is articulated.

The CEO highlighted some key items from the other reports, including the availability of selection board members which is exacerbated by the fees paid (which is currently under review centrally). He agreed to inform the Board if this becomes critical.

The CEO also provided an updated on the senior leadership capability framework discussions to date. He noted that benchmarking had been conducted and shared with the Steering Group and it has been agreed that a review will be undertaken in 2026. The next phase will involve wider consultation, led by DPER and publicjobs.

The CEO informed the Board that the new TLAC process is working well and there are just a few small tweaks required and DPER and publicjobs are working through these at present.

The CEO highlighted the impressive and inclusive culture in publicjobs and noted his appreciation for the support received from DPER and the CPSA since his appointment.

Financial Report
The Board acknowledged the Financial Report and noted that the finances are on track at present.
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Risk Reports
The Board acknowledged the Risk Report which had been provided with the Board papers.

In terms of risks, the CEO highlighted the assurances around data protection and cyber security and discussed the planned audit programme for 2026.

End of Strategy Review
The Board acknowledged the Report which had been provided with the Board papers.

Rosemarie O'Mahony and Stephen Buckley attended the meeting to talk through the strategy review process and embedding the new strategy through strategy sessions with staff and establishing clear links with business planning and PMDS.

It was noted that three areas were not fully completed in the previous strategy as it finished six months ahead of schedule due to the appointment of a new government. These areas were incorporated into the new strategy, and included achievement of KPIs, monitoring market trends and working with clients on attraction, and supporting the Official Languages Act.

The Board noted that the achievements from the last strategy were impressive and reflect the quality of the organisation and its people.

The Board noted that it would be important to measure our share of public service recruitment as part of the new strategy.

Update from the Audit Committee

Mary Connaughton provided an update from the Audit Committee meeting in November. She discussed the Cyber Security Audit Report (which had been provided to the Board in advance) and noted that the results are on par with the civil service generally. She noted that the strengths currently include the system controls, access, and risk assessments, with the really important fundaments in place. She highlighted that there are improvements required in areas such as asset tracking, logging incidents and supply chain access. She noted that there was good commitment from IT management to implement outstanding elements by the end of Q1 2026.

She informed the Board that the Audit Committee had asked for two areas of concern to be raised with the Board:

- *the possibility of the non-filling of critical vacancies due to a shortfall in the 2026 payroll allocation;*

- *concern over the reliance on the good behaviour culture around data protection rather than the systems in place to lower the risk, and recommending the organisation prioritises the move to SharePoint.*

The Board was assured that the funding in A1 has increased for 2026 and it appears to be sufficient to fill key roles and that the move to SharePoint has also been funded for 2026.

The Board noted the changes to the Audit and Assurance Arrangements to ensure compliance with the new internal audit standards.

Mary informed the Board that the Committee are happy with the internal auditors and that the Committee is working well.

Key Risk Area: Nova Project Update

The Nova team (Stephen Buckley, Rosemarie O'Mahony and Sandra Cairns) attended to provide an update to the Board on this key strategic project.

The Board was informed that all recruitment units and types of campaigns are up and running on Oleeo, including the more complex campaigns. It was noted that the EO campaign (with over 17,000 applicants) will be at testing stage next week; it was noted that the CO is now open and the HEO will be launched shortly. The Board was informed that external adverts are now on Oleeo, and plans for onboarding clients and board members are underway.

It was noted that the communications to candidates about the new system have been ongoing and a range of communications have issued to encourage candidates to set up job alerts on the new system. It was acknowledged that clearance and panel management are complex processes and there are still issues to be ironed out and the project team are providing ongoing support to the business in this regard. The Board was informed that the team are still in the process of understanding competition management in the live environment and will work to get the most from Oleeo. It was noted that there were some workarounds in some areas but these will be addressed, and that the training of the Business Insights team has commenced as they will be involved in very complex reporting from a number of systems in the interim.

The Board was updated on the decommissioning of STAR and was informed that a lot of large volume panels had been frontloaded to ensure there was sufficient people to fill vacancies and that guidelines have been rolled out in relation to the processes to manage competitions off STAR. The Board was informed that the decommissioning had commenced today and the website has now switched to Oleeo. It was noted that test migrations had been carried out to the new STAR Data Viewer but STAR will take a few weeks to fully shut down.

The Board was informed that that there will be a change in the IT Operating Model and the desired future state will be achieved using a 2–3-year plan. It was agreed that the Board would be provided with some information on the opportunities for AI at a future Board meeting.

The Board acknowledged the work done to date and thanked the team.

External Board Review Report

The Board noted the report and agreed it reflected their previous discussions at the December meeting. They agreed to activate the Action Plan as part of the ongoing Board Workplan.

Key Strategic Issue: State Boards Recruitment

Michelle Noone gave a presentation on this topic. She provided some insights from 2025 and discussed the gender breakdown at all stages of the process. She discussed the typical skills sought and the outreach in 2025. She discussed the feedback received from surveying chairpersons, noting the positive feedback received. She outlined the current challenges to the achievement of KPIs. She also discussed some wider challenges in relation to State Boards, and these will be discussed at an upcoming governance meeting with DPER.

AOB

The next meeting will take place on 21st April.