

Minutes of meeting of the Board of the Public Appointments Service held in Chapter House, at 2.30pm on 9th September 2024

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

Ms. Catherine Dobbins (Secretary).

Apologies: Ms. Anne Marie Hoey, 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

Operational Report

The Board noted the Operational Activity Report (and the supporting papers), which were circulated in advance of the meeting. The CEO updated the Board on key areas outlined in the CEO Report which had also been circulated in advance.

The CEO discussed the improvements made in delivery times from request to assignment for General Grades (now at 73.5% delivered within the agreed timescale, just 11.5% short of the KPI); she outlined that work continues across the teams to further improve these results and to bring more certainty to expected timelines for our clients. She informed the Board that delivery of other recruitment campaigns is at 72% and all recruitment areas are working towards achieving this target and some are achieving or are close to the target (with SER now working to achieve the 85% target having reduced a significant backlog). It was noted that TLAC are meeting all key targets and there is no negative feedback in relation to TLAC delivery.

The CEO updated the Board on the launch of a new initiative to recruit candidates for Digital Marketing Apprenticeship roles this month, noting that this appears to be a growing area of demand.

The CEO highlighted the issues with attraction of candidates with Irish Language Proficiency at the level needed to meet the requirements set out in legislation and the need for additional resources to support this; she provided an update on the ongoing engagement with the Department, the Advisory Committee and DPDENR. It was noted that planning is also underway in relation to the Q3 Recruiters Network event that will focus on the action plan stemming from the legislation and the implications for recruitment. The Board requested a paper on this area at a later date in 2024.

The CEO informed that Board that she is now a member of the new Recruitment Training Capacity Group to focus on recruitment and retention in AGS (includes membership at a senior level from AGS, the D/Justice, and DPENDR) and there is a focus on the AGS clearance process and reducing any delays throughout the process.

The CEO updated the Board regarding the brand launch which was very successful and the nationwide attraction campaign being rolled out in the Autumn, noting that the number of applications already appears to be increasing.

The CEO provided an update on CSEES results, which were very positive for the organisation (above average) and had a 93% response rate; the highest scores were for employee engagement 80%; Wellbeing 81%; Competence 83%; Citizen impact 81%. The Board requested an update at a later meeting in relation to how we measure staff engagement.

The CEO informed the Board that discussions are underway with DPENDR in relation to moving the TLAC process under our recruitment licence (or where not possible for Secretary General roles under our guidelines).

The CEO updated the Board on the estimates submission which is with DPENDR; she informed the Board that the total increase in funding requested is €1.638m (+6.8%), consisting of a one-off payment to support the organisation in running two recruitment systems for one-year to mitigate the risk of shutting down STAR too soon, funding for three-year recruitment attraction programme, additional support to meet the requirements of the Irish Language legislation, and funding to support a review and increase in Board Member fees and to implement the recommendations from the TLAC review. It was noted that there is a meeting scheduled with DPENDR next week at which our allocation is likely to be discussed.

The CEO provided an update on the Capacity Review Action Plan and informed the Board that Aine Gray would be managing delivery of the actions, which will include an external benchmarking exercise and external assistance with the development of organisational structures and systems (both of which will be procured from an existing OGP Framework). It was agreed to update the Board on progress on a regular basis.

The Board noted the update on the CIPD benchmarking as outlined in the Operational Report and welcomed that the organisational scores were good compared to the norm. The Board discussed the lower scores across the civil service in relation to internal resourcing and talent management, noting that it is an area that DPENDR is focusing on. There was a discussion in relation to the rates of mobility and the decreasing depth of experience and future focused skills in some departments and offices due to high promotion rates.

Risk Management

The Board noted the Report on Risk and the Corporate Risk Register which had been provided with the Board papers.

The Board requested an update on the impact of AI on recruitment at a later date, including some benchmarking in this area.

Financial Position

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

Update from the Audit Committee

The Board welcomed the Chair of the Audit Committee to the meeting, and noted the papers provided in advance. The Chair of the Audit Committee thanked the Board for the invitation. He updated the Board on the paper agreed by the Audit Committee in relation to their role, noting that they have agreed that they are an Audit Committee (and not an Audit and Risk Committee), with risk management a function of the executive. The Chair of the Audit

Committee informed the Board that the Board will be updated if the Committee have any concerns and that the Audit Committee will continue to have a focus on operations and finances. It was noted that the Chair of the Audit Committee and Chair of the Risk Management Committee will meet twice annually. The Chair of the Audit Committee informed the Board that the Committee have been receiving excellent reports each quarter on Nova and agreed that retaining STAR for an additional year is prudent and they only way to mitigate the risks involved. He informed the Board that the Committee has adopted a flexible approach to audit and can prioritise audits on an ongoing basis with reference to organisational risks at any time and assured the Board that the Committee have the capacity to agree to an increased number of audits if required and that the Strategic Audit Plan reflects the risk register. He informed the Board that the implementation of recommendations is generally up-to-date and there is good engagement by managers attending the Committee meetings. He thanked the Board for the new Committee Member, representing the Board and noted that the internal support is very professional and at a high standard.

Review of Governance and Culture Report Action Areas

The Board noted the report provided. The Board did not wish to approve any of the policies listed and were satisfied for approval to be at Management Board level. They asked that the organisation should ensure that the policies in place include flexible working and the right to disconnect.

Nova Project Update

John Norton, Rosemarie O'Mahony, Sandra Cairns and Stephen Buckley attended the meeting and made a presentation to the Board. This included an overview of the implementation plan and the stages involved. It was noted that system testing is the next stage and plans are in active development with the system due to be tested by staff, clients, selection board members and potential candidates. The Board was assured that the training plan and change management /communications plan are being developed and that there is a high level of staff engagement to date. The approach to candidate communications was discussed in detail and it was agreed that this would be carefully managed. It was noted that deployment is due to commence in November and that business continuity is being carefully considered. The Board welcomed the nomination of the project for a National Procurement Award for Digital Transformation. It was agreed that further consideration would be given to business continuity in the event that the external provider can no longer provide this service. It was noted that AI is already incorporated into the system but will not be used until any usage has been fully investigated and researched.

Super 10 Reporting

The Board noted report provided in Advance. Tatiana Romanova and Eimear O'Connor attended the meeting to discuss the report and changes from the Super 8, outlining the reasons for the move and how data is being used to review performance with a view to using it to predict productivity and delivery timelines going forward. The Board discussed the findings concerning the main reasons for delays and welcomed the ongoing work with clients to raise awareness as to how they can contribute to improving timescales. The Board welcomed the measures in place to ascertain the quality of candidates and agreed that plans to obtain even more specific feedback would be advantageous and could be used to review which recruitment techniques are the most effective. The Board also discussed efforts to increase the client response rate in surveys; although the results are statistically significant,

they continue to be relatively low. The Board noted the measures around quality, digital transformation and ESG, noting that the Climate Action Roadmap is in place and will be published once the up-to-date figures are available from the central system. The Board welcomed the engagement by the Management Board with all of this data to identify and drive improvements. The Board agreed that the data being reported on is of a high standard.

Next meeting and AOB

It was agreed that a half-day strategy session would be organised and the date of the December meeting reviewed in terms of Board Member availability.