

## **Minutes of ninety-sixth meeting of the Board of the Public Appointments Service held through zoom, at 2pm on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021**

**Present (Board):** Mr. Tom Moran (Chairperson), Ms. Anne-Marie Taylor, Ms. Shirley Comerford, Ms. Mary Connaughton, Mr. John O'Callaghan, Ms. Mary Hurley, Ms. Anne O'Connor, Dr. Eddie Molloy, Ms. Catherine Dobbins (Secretary).

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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**

#### 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 a number of key areas.

The CEO informed the Board that demand for campaigns to fill posts at Senior Executive level continues to be very high, for both TLAC and non-TLAC posts. It was noted that since October, PAS Leads had been attending the final TLAC interview in person, but in the light of the latest Government advice, we have now reverted to attending final TLAC interviews remotely. The CEO highlighted that while there has been a decrease in the overall numbers applying for SER campaigns, there has also been a significant decrease in the number of ineligible applications; to date the quality of candidates presenting for preliminary and final interview has remained high.

The Board discussed the area of State Boards recruitment and whether there was any prospect of a review in this area. It was noted that this would be the responsibility of DPER in terms of areas such as fees, but that PAS would keep this on the agenda for any discussions with DPER. The Board noted that feedback on the PAS part of the process remains positive.

The CEO updated the Board on the Garda Sergeant Campaign, with objective testing completed for the majority of applicants (and those who requested a change facilitated). It was noted that results will issue on 10<sup>th</sup> December and interviews are scheduled for week commencing 17<sup>th</sup> January 2022, with potential board members being briefed and trained prior to interviews. The CEO acknowledged the team's effort to ensure the smooth running of this campaign to date, and informed the Board that the Garda Inspector campaign is due to be advertised this week. The CEO also acknowledged the positive impact of the working group between PAS/AGS and D/Justice, and noted that PAS has the systems in place to manage all requests from review received as part of either of these new AGS campaigns.

The Board was informed that high levels of demand also continues in the area of Medical Consultant recruitment, and that we expect to exceed 200+ posts by year end (a 106%

increase in requests year on year). The Board noted that the Consultant in Public Health Medicine competitions are well underway with Phase 1 almost fully advertised (with 30 posts have been advertised to date over 4 competitions).

The Board noted the positive impact the joint HSE/PAS working group has made in relation to creating efficiencies and moving towards a more streamlined process. It was noted that PAS would be taking on a significantly increased work programme in this area in 2022 with a commitment to run 420 campaigns and would be receiving almost €2.2m increased funding (for A1 and A2) to carry out this work. The Board discussed the area of sourcing in respect to Medical Consultants and acknowledged the need to look at new ways and avenues to source some specialists; the engagement with the HSE in relation to the area of brand awareness and communications was discussed.

The Board discussed the paper which had been circulated with the Operational Report into the review of Clearance and Assignments, and the measures put in place to address the backlog and create efficiencies going forward. The challenges of the current labour market were discussed as was the dropout rate at assignment stage. It was agreed that the Board would get a further update at the next meeting which would highlight the impact on the backlog, and include specific numbers in terms of both the backlog and dropout rates at this stage of the process.

The CEO informed the Board that the PAS Performance Reporting Dashboard is due to be reviewed in Q1 2022, once all the data has been collected from 2021. It was noted that the Board will be consulted as part of the February 2022 update. There was no update in the lens for this meeting due to the short period of time since the last meeting.

The CEO highlighted the work of the Marketing and Communications team in relation to the area of branding, including the recent brand Management Board workshop, which included a guest speaker (Head of Brand at An Post). The Board noted that the focus of the workshop was to define the brand positioning and brand architecture for PAS, and Management Board will consider this further in December, with the aim of engaging with the PAS Board early in Q1 2022 in relation to this area. The Board discussed the background to the branding project and the previous market research which had indicated there was low brand awareness in relation to publicjobs.ie and PAS. It was acknowledged that this would be a big decision for PAS and all aspects would need to be considered carefully, and that it is currently only at the exploratory stage. It was agreed that the Board would be involved in any decision-making around this area.

The Board acknowledged the important role of integrity and independence in the PAS brand, and noted that the risk to the brand may also come from public service recruitment not under the remit of PAS. The CEO highlighted the work underway to assist other public service organisations in relation to recruitment and drive up standards overall, including the roll out of the Professional Certificate in Resourcing and Recruitment Practice, the establishment of a Recruiter Network across the public service (on the request of the CPSA) and the provision of online training material and supports for clients.

The Board also discussed the importance of attracting people from the private sector into roles in the public sector and asked whether any research had been undertaken, or could be done, into whether there are specific competencies where people from the private sector score less well. The CEO agreed to look into this and come back to the Board on this matter at a future meeting.

The CEO updated the Board on the Future of Work structures and the introduction of a 6th subgroup on the Recruitment Operating Model, who are focusing on the delivery of our

recruitment services in a hybrid model. The Board noted that the six subgroups meet on a regular basis to progress plans toward the return to Chapter House and the transition toward a hybrid approach to work, with each subgroup having a designated Sponsor at senior management level who are responsible for providing governance to the group whilst also acting as point of contact for the sub-group when decisions are required.

The CEO updated the Board on the roll out Inclusio - a gamified, interactive platform that collects data and reports on the diversity profile of the organisation - during November. The Board notes that staff were asked to interact with different articles, videos and conversations regarding topics that impact staff the most (inclusion, wellbeing, accessibility, psychological safety at work, working in hybrid teams). The CEO outlined how the results will allow us to make data informed decisions when it comes to shaping our culture and optimising the employee experience at PAS; results of the trail in early January.

The Board noted that all three strategic projects are progressing well.

The CEO updated the Board on the upcoming opportunity to engage with the Civil Service Management Board on the area of recruitment and acknowledged the opportunity to have a discussion on a range of strategic issues and developments in this area. It was agreed that the final presentation or paper would be circulated to the Board for information.

### Risk Management

The Board noted the risks as outlined in the Risk Report.

### Financial Position

The CEO informed the Board that PAS has received approval for the supplementary estimate from the Finance Committee on 24<sup>th</sup> November; it is now scheduled for vote in the Houses next week. It was noted that the supplementary includes the €800k to cover additional posts in PAS required to undertake the HSE recruitment work, and that PAS have also invoiced HSE for these funds which will be passed back through surplus Appropriations-in-Aid, at the request of DPER. The CEO informed the Board that although there are some variations in the costs in some A2 subhead, overall A2 will run close to target.

The Board noted that in relation to expenditure on the Chapter House upgrade, OPW submitted a request for a further €1.6m in funding to be transferred from PAS in October and the request for a supplementary includes additional funding of €2.865m for this project, in line with the expected expenditure on the project this year.

### **Update from the Audit Committee**

No update for this meeting.

### **ESG Reporting – Social Impact Lens**

Ciaran Oman and John Keegan gave a presentation to the Board on the Social Impact Lens of the Super 8 and noted that taken in conjunction with the Corporate Governance Lens, they cover most of the aspects required in relation to ESG reporting. Siobhan McKenna also attended for this presentation as the Lens includes ED&I reporting. It was noted that in reporting on this Lens, PAS aims to go beyond compliance and that it has been tailored to the work of PAS and its strategic aims. The Board welcomed the work being done and

agreed that it was appropriate for PAS to develop its own model which is tailored and connected to our business. The Board discussed the various ED&I related elements feeding into this Lens and welcomed the increased outreach and the work underway to try and attract a diversity of candidates. It was acknowledged that an increased focus would be required on the Environment input into this lens, but that this will be developed further in 2022.

### **Delivering our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy**

Salome Mbugua, Chair of the ED&I Project Board presented on this topic to the Board. Siobhan McKenna also attended this session. Salome gave the Board some background on herself and informed the Board that she appreciated being given the opportunity to Chair the Project Board. She updated the Board on the progress achieved to date since the launch of the ED&I Strategy in March. She noted that she was very happy with how the team is progressing the delivery of the strategy, and with the ambition and engagement of PAS in this area. The Chair noted that the area of ED&I has been central to a lot of Board discussions and welcomed the progress being made in this area.

The Board discussed the engagement with other public service bodies in relation to this area and also the various other fora at which PAS is taking the opportunities to engage around ED&I. The Board thanked Salome for taking on this role and welcomed the progress achieved to date and the plans for the future.

### **Update on Key Risk Area: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**

Siobhan McKenna provided an update to the Board on this area and highlighted the risks to delivery of the ED&I Strategy, which included lack of data, insufficient engagement (internally and externally) and insufficiency or robust KPIs. She also highlighted the mitigations in place and the work done in 2021 to reduce the risks in all of these areas.

The Board acknowledged the depth and breadth of the work underway in relation to ED&I and acknowledged the importance of this work with PAS being the gateway to much of the public service. The Board noted the importance of targets in this area and acknowledged the importance of seeing baselines against which progress can be measured. The Board acknowledged the critical importance of wider public service engagement so that not only can PAS deliver on all aspects of the ED&I Strategy but that all public service organisations would have inclusive workplaces.

The Board acknowledged that the right structures are being put in place to deliver this strategy and welcomed PAS using its influence across the public service to deliver on all public service commitments in the area of ED&I and ensure the public service can reflect the communities it serves.

### **Draft Board Workplan for 2022**

The Board agreed to review this further at the February meeting and agreed to revert in relation to the proposed dates, if these dates don't suit.

## **Update on Executive Search**

Michelle Noone gave a presentation on this area and noted that engagement with clients is sometimes required to demonstrate the potential added value of search. The Board agreed that a very professional approach is being adopted in this area.

## **AOB**

The CEO thanked the Board for their support in 2021 and for their assistance in advancing key priorities such as ED&I and the Super 8.

## **Next meeting**

The meeting will be held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022 at 2pm.