

Minutes of meeting of the Board of the Public Appointments Service held in Chapter House, at 9.30am on 4th December 2023

Present (Board): Mr. Tom Moran (Chairperson), Ms. Margaret McCabe, Ms. Fiona Quinn*, Ms. Anne Marie Hoey, Ms. Mary Connaughton, Ms. Yvonne Cooke, Ms. Catherine Dobbins (Secretary).

Apologies: Mr. Colin Menton.

**Attended virtually.*

Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes were agreed. Colin was unable to attend the meeting but asked for an additional provision to be included in the Minutes of the September meeting.

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 noted that timelines are being achieved for campaign delivery year to date (at 82% with a target of 80%); TLAC is now at 71% for year to date and at 83% in Q4 to date. The Board welcomed the positive feedback received in relation to improvements in this TLAC metric. The Board discussed the current Executive Search Framework and asked for an update on the establishment of a PAS specific framework at the next meeting in order to ensure that this is not delaying the recruitment process.

The CEO informed the Board that general grade assignments is now up to 34% in Q4 to date (target 80%); she noted that although this is still very low, it is improving and the substantial backlog is impacting on the length of time it will take to achieve the 80% target. It was noted that the backlog is decreasing significantly month on month; from 789 in July to 268 in November. The CEO informed the Board that this is an area of discussion at the CSMB People Sub-group, with an initial focus on TCO and CO. The Board welcomed the plans for longer-term contracts and routes to permanency for TCO and noted that this Sub-Group will now focus on EO and HEO/AO recruitment.

The Board asked what PAS would need to bring the general service recruitment up to the 80% target. It was acknowledged that there is a need to attract more candidates into the civil and public service and to promote the civil and public service as a place to work by promoting the offer to potential candidates. Yvonne informed the Board that there is some work being done on this at a senior level across the civil service and the Board agreed that a whole system approach is needed. The Board also discussed the need for part-time recruitment and hybrid work in order to attract a wider pool and acknowledged that these are not always guaranteed in all organisations. The Board also recognised that there is a need to liaise with colleges and universities to design courses to prepare people for a career in the public service. It was noted that PAS has engaged with D/PENDR in relation to the need for

branding and marketing, and the Board agreed that this is an area which needs to be funded.

The CEO informed the Board that in order to speed up the pre-employment checks process, that some organisations may be willing to accept appointments subject to clearance; PAS would complete the clearance process after assignment and make appointments subject to candidates successfully coming through the clearance process. It was noted that this approach would be piloted with one of the larger departments.

The Board discussed the responses to the customer surveys included with the Board papers and discussed the importance of ongoing communications with customers (which will be easier using the new recruitment system). It was noted that all senior campaigns have a specific PAS Lead who continually engages with the client organisation.

The CEO updated the Board on progress achieved with the Capacity Review. It was noted that benchmarking is underway; the staff survey has been completed; stakeholder Interviews are underway as is the document review process. It was noted that the first draft Report on Phase I is due in mid-December and that this is on-track at present. Board Members agreed to participate in the stakeholder interviews and agreed that it was important that PAS has the capacity to scale up and down in response to demand and the specialist capability needed to deliver.

The CEO discussed the recent Management Board strategy session; it was noted that it has been agreed that all KPIs would be reviewed to ensure coverage of all aspects of recruitment and that the Business Insights team would be working with all teams to agree consistent and appropriate KPIs. The CEO also informed the Board that a Decision-Making Framework had been agreed for taking on additional recruitment and that there had been agreement on the need for an agile approach to the use of resources; the agreed priority was *"Using Nova to Improve Service Delivery"*.

The CEO informed the Board that PAS intends to celebrate the centenary of the organisation in 2024 (with the first campaign run in 1924). The Board welcomed the plans to tie this into the brand refresh and reinstatement of the role of publicjobs.

The CEO updated the Board on actions from the last Board meeting; it was noted that names have gone to the Minister for appointment to the vacancies on the PAS Board. She also informed the Board that SER are reviewing and benchmarking timelines for this type of recruitment.

Risk Management

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

The CEO outlined the significant risk in relation to the capital funding of Nova in terms of the impact of the €1m shortfall in funding. It was noted that PAS has been allocated funding to enable PAS to sign a contract with the preferred vendor but have only been partially funded for the other implementation costs and STAR decommissioning spend. It was noted that the elements of the project not covered include implementation support for business process redesign, change management support, technical integrations and the work required to extract all necessary data from STAR and decommission STAR by end of Q1 2025. It was noted that in response to the funding shortfall, PAS is looking at restructuring the project, potentially separating the data extraction and decommissioning of STAR until funding is available. The CEO noted that the funding shortfall increases the risk profile of the project, including delays due to an inability to respond to new requirements leading to

change control requests which increase costs; reduced capacity to realise all the possible benefits of the new system – resulting in reduced adoption of the new system; limited capacity to properly implement our end-to-end processes on the new system – negatively impacting operations; lost efficiencies and no single source of data; delays decommissioning STAR would mean ongoing increased risks for PAS – technical, security and operational and having to continue paying for STAR beyond Q2 2025. Yvonne asked for a note on this and it was agreed that the Board would be copied on this.

Financial Position

The Board noted that the Financial Report for the end of October was included with the Board papers. The CEO noted that Payroll is unfavourable, due to additional staff which have been sanctioned in 2023 and that incidental costs are unfavourable due to increased costs for utilities, cleaning, security and unbudgeted legal expenses arising out of settlements. She noted that interview board costs are unfavourable and have increased compared to the same period last year and that this includes expenditure on additional recruitment of Garda Trainees for AGS; marketing expenditure has also increased due to the return to attendance at promotional events. It was noted that expenditure on Project Nova is behind schedule and it is intended to vire funding to the current expenditure budget to help cover the expenditure pressures, and a small amount of Supplementary funding (150k) is also required to fully cover the additional costs expected as the AGS refund did not proceed on time.

Update from the Audit Committee

The Board noted the two audit reports which had been provided with the Board papers in addition to the Minutes of the last Audit Committee meeting. The Board agreed to consider its new nominee to the Audit Committee at the next meeting once the two new members are in place.

TLAC Review – Implications for PAS

Michelle Noone gave a presentation to the Board on this area. The Board discussed the risks to PAS and agreed that agreement on clear responsibilities at all stages is critical in order to inform applicants as to who is responsible for all elements of the process. It was noted that the Report remains with D/PENDR for implementation and that PAS will continue to engage on this matter.

Organisational Reporting

Stephen Buckley, Tatiana Romanova and Rosemarie O'Mahony gave a presentation on this area. The proposed reporting structure was agreed. The Board noted that PAS should aim to exceed the agreed targets and take an ambitious approach to delivery. The Board welcomed plans to monitor the number of private sector applicants and to report on this.

Project Nova

The Nova Project Team gave a presentation on this project. It was noted that the new system appears to be intuitive, flexible and in line with best practice. The Board noted that the contract could be in place for 15 years and that there is a 2-year notice period for the supplier to end the contract and a 1-year notice period for PAS. The Board welcomed the

capacity of the system for automation and for increased and automated customer engagement. It was noted that the CSSO have been engaged with this project and will support PAS if there are any legal challenges.

Draft Workplan for 2024

The draft Workplan for 2024 and proposed dates were agreed. Colin was unable to attend the meeting but provided some suggestions for the Workplan, which will be incorporated into it.

Next meeting and AOB

The next meeting will be on 26th February at 10.30am.