

MINUTES

Board Meeting

Tuesday 18 August 2020 at 9.30am

Attendees: Paul Andrews (Chair)
Tom Burgess
Nuala McAuley
Allen McCartney
Mandy McKay
Jenny Laverick
Lesley Chambers (items 48.01/48.06)
Carolyn McDermott (items 49.01/49.02)

Secretariat: Michele Bown

LSA/20/46 Apologies & Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

- 46.01. The meeting was conducted on site with Jenny Laverick, Lesley Chambers and Carolyn McDermott attending via remote access. An apology was received from Stephen Martin and Jenny Laverick was welcomed in Stephens's absence.
- 46.02. No conflicts, other than those previously declared were noted.
- 46.03. NEM Update. Nothing to report

LSA/20/47 Governance

- 47.01 One minor change to the minutes of the June Board was accepted and the minutes were approved.
- 47.02 Progress Against Action Points – The updates on the action points were noted and agreed.

LSA/20/48 Shared Service Reporting – NICS HR

- 48.01 A verbal update was provided by HR. The Board noted an update paper received immediately prior to the meeting. Work was ongoing with COVID-19 recovery planning, including to reopen and increase capacity within NICS premises in accordance with Public Health and Health & safety Executive guidance. Findings from the recent NICS Survey on working from home is awaited and this will feed into any recommendations.
- 48.02 The Board were advised that a working group in conjunction with Deloitte had been established to look at HR Reporting and the associated timescales. It is hoped that the outcome will address the Boards concerns around the timeliness of reporting. The CEO offered to participate and provide any input to Deloitte and the Working Group if this would be helpful.
- 48.03 Discussion took place on the vacancy management procedures and the number of vacancies in LSANI. The Board noted an exercise to identify business critical posts across DoJ and other Departments. In conjunction with this NICS HR were continuing to progress the AO, SO and DP competitions.
- 48.04 A brief discussion took place on the recommendation of the NICS HR Board that staff be encouraged to take annual leave as part of well- being and work life balance. LSANI staff have all been encouraged to use annual leave, as there is no existing business justification that would require the carryover of annual leave above the permitted 9 days.

- 48.05 A verbal update was provided on Performance Management. It was noted that LSA had met their target for End Year Reviews which has been recognised by NICS HR as a significant achievement in the current environment.
- 48.06 An update on Learning and Development was provided, with NICS HR advising that a COVID-19 Staff Learning and Support Toolkit had been launched. The toolkit offers staff a variety of effective learning and development resources. Managers are asked to encourage staff to avail of the learning and development opportunities available.

Lesley Chambers signed off from the meeting at 10.10am

- 49.01 The FSD report was noted by the Board. The Board noted that the 2020-2021 resource expenditure showed an overspend of circa 900k at the end of July 2020, which was predominantly as a result of the Fund and the original budget profiling. The Board were advised that this overspend would be reviewed as part of the October Monitoring Round and Future Financial Planning exercises that had been commissioned by the Department and were currently underway. Discussion took place in relation to the monitoring rounds, the impacts of COVID-19 and the reduction in Court business.
- 49.02 Further discussions took place in relation to whether budgets can be fully utilised within timescales.

LSA/A/121 FSD to provide a paper to be prepared for the Board on the October Monitoring Round by Thursday 27 August 2020 to allow the Board time to consider.

Carolyn McDermott signed out of the meeting at 10.30am.

LSA/20/50 Agency Reports

- 50.01 The Board noted the content of the Operations paper and an update was provided on the new “Late Claims” policy to be introduced in September 2020 which should result in a reduction in the numbers of “deemed” errors. The Board also noted that SAU had resumed testing on 15 July 2020 and that it was reassuring that no new error types were being identified now. It was noted that the Operational Stakeholder Forums had recommenced.
- 50.02 A brief discussion took place on the workloads within Exceptionality & Authorities and the Board commented favourably on the overall content of the report and clearance of backlogs. The Board found the detail provided in the “Dashboard” useful in the level of detail it provided.
- 50.03 The Board noted the Legal Aid Strategy Group paper on Criminal Exceptionality Costs and Liabilities.
- 50.04 The CEO invited the Board to note the papers on the Interim Payment Scheme Update and in particular the letter from the Minister to the Law Society.
- 50.05 The Board noted the Corporate Services report and an update was provided. It was noted that the LSA risk in respect of Fraud and Error had been escalated to the Departmental ARC (DARC). However DARC was content that management of this risk remains with LSA unless circumstances change. It was reported that the Audit of the Annual Report and accounts was scheduled to complete by mid – late October 2020.
- 50.06 The Board were invited to note the COVID-19 updates and were advised that these were living documents that had been reviewed with Trade Union Side. The documents would be regularly reviewed and updated with the intention that they would be made available on the LSA Intranet and shared quarterly with the Board.

LSA/A/122 COVID-19 Risk Assessment, Safe Working advice and Recovery documents to be shared with the November Board.

- 50.07 The NI Direct Contract Exit and Infrastructure Transition Update paper was discussed which makes clear the amount of work that will be required in exiting the contract. The Board thanked Fiona Brashaw for her efforts in producing the paper.
- 50.08 The Board noted the paper providing the PAR Review Update and a brief discussion took place around the timing of the Gateway 5 review which is likely to take place in March/April 2021 and the work required to be undertaken in preparation for it.
- 50.09 The Board noted the paper providing a Debt Management Policy Update and followed up with a detailed discussion around the need for improved MI to capture debt cases, along with the need to give greater consideration to the “accounting treatment” of the debt.
- 50.10 The Board were asked to note the paper LAMS Data Management Project. A brief discussion on the content of the paper took place and it was agreed that a monthly report would be provided to the Board with the up-to-date case closure position.

LSA/A/123 Case Closure Update Report to be provided to the September Board.

- 50.11 The Board were asked to note the Enabling access to Justice Project Update – June 2020. The Board acknowledged the work that Eamon O’Connor and John Bradley had undertaken in recent months and their helpful attendance at the Board.

LSA/20/51 Updates and Questions on Reports

51.01 There were no updates and Q&A covered throughout meeting.

LSA/20/52 Governance and Corporate Risk

52.01 The FOI/DPA monitoring report was noted as part of the Corporate Services Highlight Report.

52.02 It was noted that there had been no Security Incidents reported.

52.03 It was noted that there had been 7 AQW's received and answered since the last meeting.

LSA/20/53 AOB

53.01 Board discussed Values & Behaviours and no concerns were noted.

Meeting ended at 12.10

Next Meeting: Tuesday 22 September 2020 at 9.30am