

MINUTES

Board Meeting

Tuesday 22 September 2020 at 9.30am

Attendees: Paul Andrews (Chair)

Deborah Brown

Tom Burgess

Nuala McAuley

Allen McCartney

Mandy McKay

Stephen Martin (EAJD)

Andrea Quail (FSD)

Presentation: Hugh Tohill (ICT Cyber Security & Information Protection)

Secretariat: Joan McShane

LSA/20/54 Apologies & Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

54.01. Chair welcomed the attendees. No apologies were noted.

54.02. No conflicts, other than those previously declared were noted.

54.03. NEM Update. Nothing to report

LSA/20/55 Cyber Security Presentation

- 55.01 A Cyber Security presentation was delivered by Hugh Tohill from NICS ICT, Cyber Security & Information Protection Team. A question and answer session followed the presentation.
- 55.02 It was noted that cyber security was monitored at Departmental Board level, reported at the quarterly meetings and assurance statements were in development for shared services. The Board were updated that IT Assist carried out independent health checks of all their systems.
- 55.03 The Chair highlighted the risks associated with shared services, the interaction of that service with LAMS, the importance of a joined up approach and collective assurances for all Agencies that a secure network was in place. The Board raised concerns about IT systems and remote working, which included non-aligned and up to date policies and no infrastructure to support staff working from home. It was noted that times were challenging, but staff were regularly encouraged by IT support services to use strong passwords, report any suspicious emails and not open links/ attachments if they were unsure. The Board were given assurance that work was ongoing including policy development and guidance to support staff working from home. It was agreed that the best place for this issue to be discussed was at the DoJ Information Risk Owners' Council (IROC). It was agreed that the Board would be provided with greater visibility and Departmental reports.

LSA/20/56 Governance

- 56.01 The minutes of the August Board were approved.

56.02 Progress Against Action Points – The updates on the action points were noted and agreed. It was further noted that LSA/A/123 relating to case closure would be covered in the Corporate Services report.

LSA/20/57 Shared Service Reporting

57.01 The FSD report was noted by the Board. Discussions took place in relation to the implications of COVID-19 on Court business, case profiles, forecasting and whether budgets could be fully utilised.

57.02 The Board noted that the 2020 -21 resource expenditure showed an over spend of approximately £2m at the end of August 2020; which was predominantly as a result of the Fund. The Board were advised that the October Monitoring Round submission had been completed with a minor easement of £55k projected to the year- end position. The outcome of the October Monitoring was not yet confirmed and would be dealt with in subsequent papers. The Board were further advised that work plans for both provisions and forecasting were in progress. The Board welcomed confirmation that an additional £3m was likely to be made available to the Agency and this would be of considerable assistance in processing payments

57.03 The changes and additions to the structure within the FSD team were noted. It was agreed that the content and style of reporting would be reviewed and FSD would provide a short paper on the forecasting and provisions projects.

LSA/A/124 FSD to review the style of reporting and to provide a paper for the October Board on the forecasting and provisions projects.

- 57.04 It was noted that no formal apology had been received from NICS HR but staff were aware that Leslie Chambers had been off ill. The Board raised concern about their ongoing concerns about progress on filling vacancies and the absence of the paper requested at previous meeting.
- 57.05 The Board also noted that work was ongoing to assess the uptake of mandatory training by LSANI staff in order to identify and address gaps. A recruitment exercise is underway to fill a Training Officer post at EO1 grade in the Operations Directorate of the Agency. An update was provided on the progress of recruitment for the Head of Fraud & Error post. It was noted that this was an important role and that the team had been under resourced for some time.
- 57.06 Deborah Brown advised the Board that as at the end of July 2020, 41% of staff annual leave allocation had been used in the DoJ, which was comparable for the same period in the previous year. The Board were pleased to note that staff were taking proper rest and recuperation especially when working from home. It was noted that a message would issue centrally from DoJ emphasising the importance of using annual leave and informing staff that they would not be permitted to carry over more than 9 days annual leave into 2021 without approval at Director level.
- 57.07 The Board were updated on the high compliance rate in staff recording their attendance on the NICS COVID Keep In Touch.

LSA/20/58 Agency Reports

- 58.01 The Board noted the content of the Operations paper and an update was provided on the Appeals and Exceptionality workload which had reduced significantly. Discussion took place on the 'official errors' and the work that was ongoing. It was noted that the errors relating to ICOS, Travel &

Mileage and Taxing Master cases had been addressed, no new cases identified and work was ongoing on 50 cases in the system to be allocated results. The Board noted that in a spirit of openness and transparency a Circular was to issue to the Profession on accuracy of legal aid payments which outlined the required checks.

- 58.02 A brief discussion took place on the numbers of stakeholders not registered on LAMS and the Board noted the work that was ongoing to analyse the information and identify any irregularities.
- 58.03 The Board were updated on the work ongoing with on the Appeals process and the need to look at all changes required to ensure the system worked as originally intended.
- 58.04 The Board noted the Corporate Services report and an update was provided. The Board were informed that an audit was scheduled by the ICO to take place in October and work was ongoing with BCS. LAMS Support team were working to resolve a 'snagging' list from the date of LAMS 'go live' which was nearing completion. The Board were updated on progress on the Closure Project in managing and refining auto closure functionality and identifying those cases populations that could be closed.
- 58.05 A brief discussion took place on the NI Direct Contract and the move to the IT Assist platform to support the business.
- 58.06 The Board noted the Enabling Access to Justice paper. It was reported that the projects which were properly resourced were on track. It was highlighted that support was required from LSA for developing the operational elements of the Registration Scheme, including compliance sampling and without the support EAJD would be unable to deliver the Project. The Board were updated that the post of Head of Registration & Compliance was vacant and would have to be recruited.

LSA/20/59 Updates and Questions on Reports

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

LSA/20/60 Governance and Corporate Risk

60.01 The revised Corporate Risk Register was discussed. It was noted that the Stewardship Statements had been requested from the LSA business areas, they would be reviewed and results reflected in the October Risk Register.

60.02 Board Effectiveness quarterly review was discussed. It was noted that the Framework document would be taken forward by Nuala McAuley with Brendan Devlin prior to 1 April 2021. It was noted that the business planning had been expanded to Branch level where Risk Registers, Balance Scorecards and Bi-annual Assurance Statements are all now maintained. The Board were updated that there were score cards for IT and FSD shared services which were included in the Assurance Statement. The Board noted that Cyber Security would be taken forward after the IROC meeting. A Performance Management Working Group is in place and it was hoped that a product would be available for the October/November Board.

60.03 The FOI/DPA monitoring report was noted as part of the Highlight report and the Board advised that two Fol's were in the process of final redaction and would not be on the next report.

60.04 It was noted that there had been one Security Incident reported.

60.05 It was noted that there had been no AQW's received in August, but to date there were two that would be reported on in the October paper.

LSA/A/125 Corporate Framework to be reviewed and agreed with the Department prior to 1 April 2021

LSA/A/126 Performance Management Working Group to bring forward a paper for the October/November Board.

LSA/20/61 AOB

61.01 Board discussed Values & Behaviours and no concerns were noted. It was noted that the Departmental Values Focus Group that included 3 LSA staff had been postponed but would be rescheduled.

Meeting ended at 12.45

Next Meeting: It was noted that the dates for the Board and ARC had been swapped and the next Board meeting would take place on Thursday 22 October 2020 at 9.30am.