

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 17 April 2014

CROWN OFFICE, EDINBURGH

Present: (Chair)	Catherine Dyer John Logue John Dunn David Harvie Liam Murphy	Crown Agent/Chief Executive Director of Serious Casework PF East of Scotland PF West of Scotland PF North of Scotland
In attendance:	Evelyn Aitken Janice Irvine Keith Dargie Graham Kerr Gertie Wallace Anne McNee Kevin McArthur	Finance Division (Item 1 on agenda) Director of Human Resources (Item 3) Director of Information Technology (Item 3) Head of Strategy and Delivery Division (Item 3) Deputy Head of Policy Division (Item 3) Corporate Office Corporate Office

Welcome

1. The Crown Agent welcomed everyone to the first Executive Board meeting.

Financial and Performance Outturn

Finance

2. Evelyn Aitken introduced paper EB(1415)01 which provided an update on the financial position for 2013/14.

3. The current projection is for a very small, cashable running cost under spend of approximately £53,600. The under spend is over the entire organisation and is not attributable to any specific Federation or Unit. A confirmed final position is expected by 25 April 2014.

4. A further technical under spend of approximately £500,000 is calculated in depreciation and impairment. In both cases the under spend is ring fenced and cannot be recycled and principally relates to decisions not to spend capital on projects which would have led to depreciation charges occurring in 2013/14 within 12 months of spend. The emerging

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position on this had been fully communicated over the year to SG Finance colleagues.

ACTION: Finance Division to provide a paper to the next meeting setting out potential options for use of funding now allocated for depreciation and impairment through 2014/15.

Performance

5. The Crown Agent updated the members on the outcomes from her recent meetings with the frontline functional managers in the North, East and West Federations. 25 meetings across all the Federations were held between 24 March and 16 April with all Band C to Band G managers being invited. The meetings generated a number of further good ideas on how COPFS can continue to improve the service it delivers. One of the main messages shared was that to be able to achieve further improvements in delivery, the strategy will remain what it has been since 2010 with the three main strands being :

- (i) *Collaborative working* – while staff are now focusing on and becoming further expert in a particular stream of work, managers will have sight of the “bigger picture” and consider the workload and capacity of both their own and other teams to ensure resource is deployed appropriately across functions and Federations as workloads and other external factors continue to change. COPFS will also continue to work with its criminal justice system partners to identify improvements and efficiencies;
- (ii) *Federation/Functional working* – The move away from the Area structure and focus on specialist workstreams has allowed COPFS to make necessary resource savings and continue to deliver high quality casework whilst being able to afford to retain the numbers of permanent staff who chose to remain with the organisation following the earlier series of exit schemes prior to 13/14 which were required for the organisation to live within reduced budget from 14/15;
- (iii) *Exploit Technology* – COPFS has always been a leader in use of technology, for example the Secure Disclosure Website which COPFS has transformed our ability to achieve disclosure and prove it has taken place and is groundbreaking with no comparator existing in other jurisdictions. Technology improves and evolves constantly and COPFS must continue to take advantage of any advances.

6. The meeting noted paper EB(1415)02 which provided the figures for the performance against organisational targets for 2013/14.

7. COPFS has exceeded all of the performance targets in 2013/14. The meeting agreed this is an excellent achievement against the current

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challenging background of financial constraints and rapidly changing justice system conditions. The Crown Agent thanked all staff for their hard work over the last year.

ACTION: Corporate Office to liaise with Communications regarding message to staff

8. In discussions around anticipated case reporting it was noted that Police Scotland continues to carry out analysis on outstanding cold cases some of which may require consideration of specialised resource.

ACTION: John Logue to provide a paper at next meeting on the analysis and potential resource implications of the identified outstanding cold cases

2014/15 – Current and Future Proposals and Timetable

9. The Crown Agent welcomed Janice Irvine, Keith Dargie, Gertie Wallace and Graham Kerr to the meeting.

10. A Strategic Planning Group has been set up to develop the Strategic Plan 2015-18. The consultation phase has commenced which will include workshops with the People Consultation Group, Senior Managers and external partners concentrating on four main strategic strands; People, Digital, Finance and Improvement.

11. An oral update on each strategic priority was provided by the respective official attending. During discussion the following points were noted:

- a) As with all Civil Service organisations COPFS' ability to manage and mould its resource is constrained by Cabinet Office rules. The meeting noted that, as of 19 April 2014, the option for offers of fixed term contracts to be made must follow an open competition. Direct approaches to suitably qualified persons, subject to necessary Disclosure checks, which had been used from time to time by COPFS to fill unexpected short term vacancies as quickly as possible is no longer an option. The meeting agreed this change will have a significant impact on COPFS recruitment options;

ACTION: Janice Irvine to provide a paper on the implications of the change for COPFS and options available for managers to mitigate the impact

- b) The meeting discussed the organisation's capacity to deliver particular areas of work against the background of reducing budgets. It was agreed that the management of the resource available against the current priorities needs to continue to be kept under review;

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- c) Information Systems Division are looking to link in with the wider Justice Board Digital Strategy and ensure the ISD staff remains sufficiently flexible and skilled to deliver solutions and to take advantage of progressive approaches in IT;
- d) The meeting agreed the importance of continuing to monitor and highlight pieces of legislation, EU Directives and other Justice System changes which are likely to have high impact on the organisation and to identify those that COPFS can influence to the benefit improved delivery of the Service and the wider justice system;
- e) The owners of the four main strategic strands have identified priorities to be discussed at the workshops during the forthcoming consultation phase.

AOB

Procurator Fiscal Depute (PFD) Recruitment

12. The meeting discussed and agreed the need for a further PFD recruitment exercise to be carried out.

ACTION: Business Services Delivery Group to commission PFD Recruitment exercise

Corporate Office
17 April 2014