

DFP Departmental Board Meeting

5th Floor Conference Room, Rathgael House
Monday 5 December 2011, 10.30am –1pm

Minutes

Departmental Board Members	In Attendance
Derek Baker (Chair)	Lucy Marten
Richard Pengelly	Linda Kirkwood (Item 3)
Paul Wickens	Patricia Corbett (Item 4)
Norman Caven	Roy Bell
Oswyn Paulin	Anne Flanagan
Gerry Cosgrave	Brigitte Worth
Stephen Hodkinson	Brenda Nixon (minutes)

1. Welcome/Apologies

Derek Baker chaired the Board meeting in the absence of Stephen Peover who was attending the funeral of the husband of Dolores O'Reilly. DB Members expressed their condolences to Professor O'Reilly on her bereavement. Apologies were also received from John Wilkinson and Des Armstrong. Derek welcomed Patricia Corbett, Roy Bell, Anne Flanagan, Linda Kirkwood, and Board Members to the meeting.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting/Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting of 7 November 2011 were agreed.

Progress against the action points was noted.

3. DFP Customer Service Standards – Update

Linda Kirkwood asked DB Members for a verbal update on progress within their business areas on key actions on the 9 DFP Customer Service Standards. Derek Baker advised that discussion on the standards had featured prominently at the recent DB Quality Programme Consensus Day. Anne Flanagan also informed the group that the recent LPS AA/AO Workshops focussed on customer service and staff were aware of what was expected from them. In answer to a query from Norman Caven, Anne advised that this programme had been specifically created for LPS staff but would discuss further with Norman to pass on any materials which might be useful to NISRA.

Board Members agreed that progress had been made in this area and that a further update should be given after a follow up survey next year (November 2012 DB).

ACTION: A Flanagan

4. **CAL Budget**

Patricia Corbett's paper gave background and suggested options to address the CAL funding issue. Board Members discussed the issue and agreed with the rationale and need to sustain CAL as a corporate asset. There was general consensus that as the NICS had decided corporately on the need for this kind of shared service the financial burden and risk should not be borne by DFP. It was agreed that PSG should be consulted on the options for securing and sustaining the future of CAL and take the decision on the way forward. A paper would therefore be produced, which would place a greater emphasis on the efficiencies realised to date together with potential savings and cost comparisons of using CAL as opposed to external training.

ACTION: P Wickens/PCorbett

5. **Communications Office - Update**

Lucy Marten highlighted key dates on the Communications Planner for December 2011 and asked that any key messages from business areas be passed to the Communications Office. The report on Sick Absence for 2010-11 had been issued by NISRA and the target of 10.5 days absence had been met. A draft press release has been prepared for issue if required.

Board Members noted the key messages and upcoming activities.

6. **ESS Update**

The paper circulated by Paul Wickens provided DB Members with an update on work within ESS.

- Strategic Direction – work was underway to prepare the ESS vision document.
- IT Shared Services – call handling and incident management had met or exceeded their targets of calls/incidents resolved.
- Finance Shared Services – 10 and 30 day prompt payment figures for all Departments have consistently remained above 90% and 97% respectively.
- HR Shared Services – Service Management Division – the eHR Programme is now effectively complete.
- HR Shared Services – CAL – action is being taken to address the funding issue.
- ESS Corporate Issues – regarding finance, it is expected that ESS will live within tolerances and an ISID project to centralise ESS finance is now nearing completion.

DB Members noted the update.

7. Departmental Finance Update – October 2011

The paper from Brigitte Worth provided information by business area on current and capital expenditure outturn against budget for the financial year 2011/12.

Brigitte noted that the level of reduced requirements in this monitoring round was still significant.

Richard Pengelly suggested that it would be useful if a financial analysis were produced highlighting performance against opening position and lessons learned to help inform future allocations. Board Members agreed and Brigitte Worth will produce a paper. Following discussions on item 8, this paper will also consider potential reduced requirements for reallocation in the future budget years in the light of the lessons learned.

Richard also suggested that this would be useful at Block level where key lessons could be picked out and taken at PSG.

Brigitte stressed the need for continuous monitoring of budgets and any further reduced requirements should be notified to Finance Branch by 19 December.

It was also agreed that the risk level remains appropriate given the timing of the final monitoring round.

ACTION: B Worth

8. Departmental Charging Strategy

Brigitte Worth's paper presented DB members with a number of proposals provided by business areas to diverge from the Departmental hard charging strategy.

The board agreed that it was more important to consider the practicalities of introducing new charging arrangements, in terms of increases in efficiency and effectiveness, for each business area than to apply a similar approach to charging across the whole Department and in the light of this agreed that the cases set out in the paper should be endorsed by the Board, subject to the Permanent Secretary's agreement as Accounting Officer.

CPD did, however, raise the issues that this lack of consistency could cause for them in dealing with other Departments.

Derek Baker undertook to discuss both the conclusions of the Board and the CPD point further with Stephen Peover.

ACTION: D Baker

9. LPS Position on Presentation of Additional Information

Anne Flanagan advised that Land & Property Services had been experiencing financial pressures due to policy changes. It was agreed that this issue would be taken forward in light of lessons learned from the 2011/12 budget process, where additional resources may be highlighted as available for allocation.

10. Review of Timing of Departmental Board Meetings

Brigitte Worth's paper asked DB Members to give consideration to moving the timings of DB meetings in 2012 in order that corporate performance information could be considered on a more timely basis.

DB Members will be required to provide a verbal update on the reasons for financial variances and there will be some occasions when absence management statistics or financial management information will not be available a full week before the Board meeting.

Business areas will need to ensure they meet the timescales set for the return of information that feeds into this reporting.

DB supported the changes and noted the new timetable for meetings.

11. PSG Update

Derek Baker provided Board Members with an update on the recent PSG meeting. Board Members noted the update.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The next DB meeting will be held at 10.30am, 30 January 2012, in 5th floor Conference Room, Rathgael House.

**BRENDA NIXON
6 December 2011**