

**Meeting of Thursday 29 September 2022, via Webex**

**MINUTES**

<b>Members:</b>	Katrina Godfrey (Chair) Tracey Teague  Robert Huey  Norman Fulton Paul Donnelly David Reid  Lynda Lowe Roger Downey Paula Bratton Sharon McCue	Permanent Secretary Deputy Secretary Environment Marine and Fisheries Group Deputy Secretary, Veterinary Service Animal Health Group (joined meeting for item 5 onwards) Deputy Secretary, Food & Farming Group Chief Executive, NIEA Deputy Secretary, Rural Affairs, Forest Service, Estate Transformation Group Director of Corporate Services Director of Finance Strategic Business Partner, NICS HR Non-Executive Member (NEM)
<b>Apologies:</b>	Fiona McCandless  Brian Doherty  Bernie Stuart Carla McSorley	Deputy Secretary, Central Services and Contingency Planning Group Deputy Secretary, Central Services and Contingency Planning Group Non-Executive Member (NEM) Board Room Apprentice
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Joy Allen  Hugh Quinn (Item 4) Suzanne Keenan (Item 5)	Leading Governance Limited (Board Effectiveness Review) Strategic Planning Branch SPS Policy Branch
<b>Secretariat</b>	Ashley Davidson	Office of the Permanent Secretary

<b>Item</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome</b>	
	<p>Katrina welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that Joy Allen would be observing the meeting today as part of the Board Effectiveness Review.</p> <p>Katrina reflected on the passing of Helen Anderson, Director of Natural Environment Division, and acknowledged, on behalf of the Board, the massive contribution Helen had made to the work of NIEA, DAERA and the NICS. Board members expressed their sympathies to Paul and NIEA</p>	

	colleagues. Paul Donnelly provided his own reflections on Helen's legacy and thanked colleagues across the Department and from NICS HR for their support for Helen and her family at such a difficult time.	
<b>1(i)</b>	<b>Declarations of Interests</b>	
	Members confirmed they had no interests to declare.	
<b>2 (a)</b>	<b>Minutes of Previous Board Meeting</b>	
	Members approved the minutes of the last meeting.	
<b>2 (b)</b>	<b>Matters Arising from Previous Board Meeting</b>	
	<p>Action points 4, 5 &amp; 6 from 24 August – Tracey Teague confirmed that she had provided general comments on the NIFHA Business Plan and Lynda Lowe confirmed that comments / assurances on LMC and NIFHA Business Plans had been taken forward as requested.</p> <p>Action point 8 – Lynda Lowe provided a read-out on the level of compliance with Fire Risk Assessments concluding with assurance that overdue actions are tolerable or moderate. It was agreed that the issue should be considered further at the November Board meeting, focusing on areas of concern, the risks identified and the action being taken to address such risks.</p>	<b>Lynda Lowe</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Strategic Issues</b>	
	<p>Katrina set out the context in which the Department is currently operating, focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 28 October - uncertainty in terms of the constitutional and political situation as this date approaches</li> <li>• Budget – the challenges that the Department continues to face with no agreed budget and the impact of financial pressures facing all Departments.</li> <li>• Work on the three Missions that was continuing with the political parties entitled to form an Executive.</li> <li>• NICS Renewal and the work being taken forward by DoF to support HOCS and ensure the NICS is equipped to meet future context.</li> </ul>	
<b>Items for Discussion</b>		
<b>4</b>	<b>Deep Dive – Climate Change</b>	
	Hugh Quinn, Strategic Planning Branch, joined the meeting for this item.	

	<p>Tracey opened the discussion by welcoming the deep dive and presenting a paper on the Climate Change Risks to be recorded on the Corporate Risk Register. She noted particularly the two discrete roles that the Department would play in the development and production of Northern Ireland’s Climate Change Action Plan (CAP) by December 2023:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The responsibility placed on DAERA to produce an effective CAP that incorporates input from all departments by December 2023; and</li> <li>• The need to ensure that DAERA’s own input to the CAP was comprehensive and effective.</li> </ul> <p>Board members agreed that these were two connected but distinct risks. The Board debated the proposed risks, noting the need to ensure that they were correctly framed and had the right control measures applied.</p> <p>There was also a discussion on escalation. It was agreed that the risks for now should be on the Corporate Risk Register but that it would not be appropriate to escalate from a civil contingencies perspective to TEO. However, the work to develop a NI Risk Register would be monitored to ensure that, if it became necessary, appropriate risks relating to carbon emissions could be incorporated.</p> <p>It was agreed that Tracey would review the risks to ensure the legislative requirement placed on all Departments was recorded as a control measure and to review the wording to ensure it reflected the Orange Book: Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts.</p>	<b>Tracey Teague</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Future Operating Model for SPS and other Regulatory Checks Project</b>	
	<p>Suzanne Keenan, SPS Policy Branch, joined the meeting for this item.</p> <p>Robert advised that Defra had initiated work to consider the requirements set out in the Command Paper and the NI Protocol Bill. He explained that the purpose of this paper was to update the Board on preparatory work to ensure that, should it become necessary, the Department would be ready to implement a Future Operating Model (FOM) for DAERA for SPS and other regulatory checks.</p> <p>Suzanne Keenan gave a presentation on the Future Operating Model (FOM) objectives; identified workstreams, governance structures and representation; roles and responsibilities within the project; and the interdependencies with portal operations and SPS Operational Readiness and Support project, led by RAFSET. The presentation gave emphasis to developing the policy, developing the processes and recruiting, equipping, and supporting the people tasked with delivering operationally, through the FOM project. David Reid was invited to discuss the alignment of the RAFSET project with the FOM project during the presentation. .</p>	<b>Robert Huey</b>

	<p>Robert highlighted how this work must be agile given the multiple political and legal uncertainties that exist.</p> <p>The Board discussed the relationship between the FOM Project and the SPS Operational Readiness &amp; Support Project and the importance of ensuring that any governance structures were properly integrated. It also noted the importance of ensuring that the Minister was updated on the preparatory work undertaken to date.</p> <p>Resourcing issues were also raised as a key risk to delivery of the FOM project, irrespective of the requirement to deliver on either a negotiated or non-negotiated outcome from EU/UKG talks.</p>	
<p><b>Items for Agreement</b></p>		
<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>HR Management Information</b></p>	
	<p>Paula spoke to the paper, setting out the HR Management position at the end of July 2022.</p> <p>Paula updated with the end of August position, advising that staff in post and TP figures had both increased, although TPs over 12 months in duration had decreased. With supply now in place or shortly to be available for grades up to DP, many TPs would have to come to an end in the weeks ahead and Paula highlighted the need to be mindful of the impact on team dynamics when staff reverted to their substantive grade.</p> <p>Paula updated that 720 active vacancies were registered with NICSHR at the end of August. She advised that a small number of SO vacancies remained unallocated following the Department's recent appointments from the SO open competition and that these would be held until the next DP allocation is completed.</p> <p>Paula noted that the Department had a significant increase in the number of new staff in recent months and emphasised the importance of induction and the requirement for investment of managers' time.</p> <p>Paula reminded the Board of the approaching target date for completion of In Year Reviews.</p> <p>Paula advised that long term sick absence cases had fallen from the July position and that, on examination, there were no 'hot spots' identified. There were no further changes to employee relations cases for the Department.</p>	

	<p>Paula concluded by thanking the Board for the opportunity afforded at August's meeting to take a 'deep dive' into vacancy management. Katrina noted that an update on the supply position would be provided in November.</p> <p>The Board noted the HR Report and the Management Information Pack for July.</p>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Finance Update</b>	
	<p>Roger spoke to the paper, highlighting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The financial planning issues the Department faces with the absence of Executive and an agreed budget;</li> <li>• The Department's current inescapable pressures;</li> <li>• The potential for contribution towards cost of living pressures;</li> <li>• No change to the cash position which should carry the Department to early November; and</li> <li>• That the Prompt Payment Performances remained on target at a Departmental level.</li> </ul> <p>Following discussion on ALB budgets, Lynda advised that a paper is currently being prepared for consideration by TMT on the AFBI Assigned Work Programme,.</p> <p>The Board noted the Finance Update paper.</p>	
<b>Closing Items</b>		
<b>8</b>	<b>Forward Look Agenda – October 2022</b>	
	<p>Katrina advised that October's meeting would be a single-item meeting on cyber security and advised that the Board Secretariat would re-circulate the reading material provided earlier in the summer.</p>	<b>Louise Mackey</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Any other Business</b>	
	<p>Katrina provided an update on essential maintenance which DoF needed to carry out in Dundonald House.</p>	
	<b>Close</b>	
	<b>Next Meeting: Wednesday 19 October 2022, at 10.00am. Venue to be confirmed.</b>	