

Meeting of Wednesday 24 May 2023, Room 108, Dundonald House

MINUTES

Attendees:	Katrina Godfrey (Chair) Sharon McCue Bernie Stuart Norman Fulton Robert Huey David Reid Paul Donnelly Tracey Teague Roger Downey Kathryn Clarke Sharon McFlynn Paula Bratton Carla McElrone	Permanent Secretary Non-Executive Member (NEM) Non-Executive Member (NEM) Deputy Secretary, Food & Farming Group Deputy Secretary, Veterinary Service Animal Health Group [via Webex] Deputy Secretary, Rural Affairs, Forest Service, Estate Transformation Group Chief Executive NIEA Deputy Secretary, Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group Director of Finance Director of Corporate Services Director of Communications & Engagement Strategic Business Partner, NICS HR Board Room Apprentice
Apologies:	Brian Doherty Fiona McCandless	Deputy Secretary, Corporate Services & Civil Contingency Group Deputy Secretary, Corporate Services & Civil Contingency Group
Additional Attendees:	Michael Cooke (Item 4) Will Young (Item 4) Matthew Yeates (Item 5) Peter Clifford (Item 5)	Director of Business Partnering, DoF Director NICSHR (ER, OHS and L&D) Estate Transformation, Project Delivery & Maintenance Estate Transformation, Support & Development
Secretariat	Janice Cowan Ashley Davidson	Office of the Permanent Secretary Office of the Permanent Secretary

Item	Description	Action
1	Welcome	
	Katrina welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
1(i)	Declarations of Interests	

	Members confirmed they had no conflicts of interest to declare in relation to the agenda items.	
2 (a)	Minutes of Previous Board Meeting	
	The minutes from the March meeting were agreed.	SECRETARIAT
2 (b)	Matters Arising from Previous Board Meeting	
	Action points from the March meeting were noted as complete.	
3	Strategic Issues	
	<p>Katrina set out the strategic context in which the Department was currently operating, focusing on the following aspects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget – including the Department’s outturn for the year end and the difficult decisions needed to ensure the Department could live within the budgets set by the Secretary of State; • Implications on staffing and work programmes a result of the budget; and • Windsor Framework and facilities for SPS checks. <p>Katrina also referenced the work to advance the Future Agricultural Policy and asked Norman to provide an update on the progress made, the partnership working with stakeholders and industry and the communications arrangements.</p> <p>The work to progress the obligations placed on DAERA by the Climate Change Act was also highlighted and Tracey provided an update, thanking members for the feedback provided at the April workshop and setting out the next steps including consultation on public body reporting, the need to advance consultation on Carbon Budgets and the engagement she had undertaken with the Office for Environmental Protection</p>	
ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION		
4	People: Absence Management	
	<p>Katrina provided background on the proposed annual schedule of key people related topics for Board meetings, an action from the 2022/23 DB Effectiveness Review, and introduced the focused agenda item for this board meeting, absence management, welcoming Michael Cooke and Will Young from NICS HR.</p> <p>Michael, Will and Paula Bratton gave a presentation to update the Board on the current NICS-wide and DAERA sick absence position and the</p>	

	<p>steps being taken by NICS HR to ensure a consistent approach to absence management.</p> <p>Discussion took place on sick absence metrics, the importance of early intervention and prevention, the importance of maintaining effective and supportive working relationships within teams, the implications of Covid-19 on the sick absence pattern and the important role played by OHS.</p> <p>The Board agreed the need for a stronger focus on setting the right performance metrics and then monitoring compliance with those. It also asked that the People & Resourcing Committee include a specific focus on absence management at its next meeting to consider where best to put the Department's limited resources to improve absence and reported back to the Board on the discussion and agreed actions.</p> <p>Michael Cooke and Will Young left the meeting.</p>	<p>Brian / Fiona</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Estate Strategy and Annual Asset Management Plan</p>	
	<p>Alison Caldwell, Matthew Yeates and Peter Clifford joined David Reid for this item.</p> <p>Alison, Matthew and Peter provided an update the Board on the Asset Review Process.</p> <p>Following discussion the Board agreed, subject to the necessary business plan approval, to approve the Asset Management Plan and noted and supported the ongoing work in this area.</p> <p>Alison, Matthew and Peter left the meeting.</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>Finance Update</p>	
	<p>Roger Downey presented the paper including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress of first internal monitoring round to determine latest position on 23-24 Resource DEL pressures; • Update on Annual Report and Accounts; • Provisional outturn exercise for 22-23; and • Update on SofSNI Written Ministerial Statement advising of DAERA budget. <p>Katrina highlighted that spend on inescapable, contractual or statutory obligations must be met and that careful thought would have to be given to what other spend would be affordable .</p>	

	The Board noted the paper and the update provided by Roger and thanked the Finance team for its hard work and, specifically, for the excellent outturn position for 2022-23.	
7	2022-23 Business Plan Year End and Corporate Risk Register	
	<p>Roger introduced the paper, highlighting the Corporate Risk Register for 2022/23 and the year-end progress report on achievement of the targets contained in the 2022-23 Balanced Scorecard.</p> <p>Katrina highlighted the forthcoming DB Workshop in June on Business Planning and the risks associated with delivering the Business Plan.</p> <p>The Board noted the position points set out by Roger in the paper.</p>	
PAPERS TO NOTE		
8	ARAC Update	
	<p>Sharon McCue provided an ARAC update, highlighting the focus on action plan progress, the draft accounts due at the end of June and the appointment of a new ARAC member, Robbie Davis.</p> <p>The Board noted the update and the minutes of 26 April included with the paper.</p>	
9	Decisions Made in the Absence of Ministers	
	<p>The Board noted the paper advising of the decisions taken by senior officers in March and April 2023.</p> <p>Sharon McFlynn provided an update on the Northern Ireland (Interim Arrangements) Act 2023 and advised that, once the Secretary of State published updated guidance, the template and aide memoire to guide decision-making within DAERA would be updated.</p>	
10	Proposed Annual Schedule of People Related Topics for 2023/24 Departmental Board Meetings	
	The Board noted the background and purpose of the annual schedule of people topics and approved the draft schedule included in the paper.	
11	H&S Quarterly Update	
	Kathryn Clarke updated that 10 out of 16 targets on the H&S work programme for 22/23 had been completed and the main reason for six targets being outstanding related to the availability of staffing resource.	

	The Board noted the information provided in the quarterly update paper covering 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2023.	
CLOSING ITEMS		
12	AOB	
	Katrina reminded members of the Business Planning Workshop in June and that performance management would be the people-focused topic for the July meeting.	
	Close	
	Next Workshop: Wednesday 21 June 2023, at 10.00am (Greenmount) Next board meeting: Wednesday 19 July 2023, at 10.00am (Clare House)	