

**MINUTES OF THE OFMDFM DEPARTMENTAL BOARD MEETING  
ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2008**

- PRESENT:** Bruce Robinson (Chair), Mary Bunting,  
Frank Cushnahan, Rosalie Flanagan, George Gray,  
Stephen Grimason, Jackie Kerr, Deirdre Kenny,  
John McMillen and Eddie Rooney.
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Richard Bullick, Joe Beattie, Dara O'Hagan and Mark  
Higgins (Secretary).
- APOLOGIES:** None.

**Welcome**

1. The Chairman welcomed Joe Beattie to the meeting, to lead on the Lotus Notes Applications agenda items, and special advisers Richard Bullick and Dara O'Hagan to their first Board meeting.

**Minutes of Last Meeting**

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 28.8.08 were agreed as amended.

**Matters Arising**

3. Updates to outstanding action points from previous meetings and recorded on the Action Points table were agreed. An updated table would be completed and issued with the draft minutes of the 25 September 2008 meeting.

**Lotus Notes Applications**

4. As agreed at the 28 August 2008 Board meeting, Joe Beattie provided a paper which detailed Lotus Notes applications in use in OFMDFM. Joe's paper recommended that the Board

notes the current position and endorses the OFMDFM approach that continues to adhere to the NICS ICT Strategy

5. The Board discussed the paper in detail and it was agreed that Joe Beattie would provide a further paper, in consultation with the Director of Finance, for the October Board meeting. That paper would address issues concerned with the continuation or otherwise of a Lotus Notes application and the impact discontinuation would have in terms of efficiency savings, the likely impact on business needs and the management of that approach. **Action: Joe Beattie.**

### **Executive Business**

6. Rosalie Flanagan provided an update on Assembly matters and forthcoming meetings including the British Irish Council (BIC) meeting scheduled for 26.9.08 in Edinburg. Previous to the BIC meeting the First Minister and deputy First Minister are scheduled to attend a Tri-lateral meeting with the First Minister of Scotland, Alex Salmond and the First Minister of Wales, Rhodri Morgan. Rosalie also reported that a North South Ministerial Council meeting in Plenary format is scheduled for 3.10.08.

### **Review of Statutory Functions**

7. Jackie Kerr and George Gray advised that consideration needed to be given to the general principle that Departmental functions are based on a sound legal footing and that statutory functions are allocated to a particular Department and Minister or Ministers. It was agreed that Jackie Kerr, in consultation with George Gray would give further consideration to this matter, in the context of the

Department's ambit and prepare a Ministerial submission that would address any potential outstanding issues. **Action: Jackie Kerr.**

### **Corporate Performance Framework**

8. John McMillen explained that an annual review of the Corporate Performance Framework was now due and the Board discussion focused on the operation of the Board and the role of Ministers in terms of policy making, as referred to in paragraph 4.4. of the Corporate Performance Framework. It was agreed that the Board's Finance sub-committee would undertake a formal review of the Corporate Performance Framework, with input from special advisers on the role of Ministers and report on the outcome of that review to the November Board meeting. **Action: John McMillen.**

### **Corporate /Business Planning 2009-10**

9. Directors provided an update on progress in their directorates to develop high level objectives for the 2009-10 Business Plan as agreed at the Board's 19.8.08 Strategic Planning day. It was agreed that Directors would complete that work by 30.10.08 which would inform an iteration of the 2009-10 Business Plan to be discussed at a second Strategic Planning day to be arranged by the Board Secretary for the first week in November. **Action: Mark Higgins.**
10. A further iteration of the 2009-10 Business Plan would be undertaken at a half-day business planning event in the first two weeks in December, also to be arranged by the Board Secretary. **Action: Mark Higgins.** Special advisers would be invited to input at each stage of the business planning

process. The Board noted the overall timeframe specified that a final draft of the 2009-10 Business Plan would be submitted in mid/late January 2009 to Ministers for their approval.

### **Financial Reports**

11. Jackie Kerr tabled a financial management highlight report which provided information on the Department's resource and capital expenditure against budget for the period April 2008 to August 2008. The report was compiled on an exception basis, with explanations provided for significant variances, supported by summary tables and individual Business Area outturn reports, financial forecasts to 31 March 2009 and an update on September monitoring proposals.
12. The Board noted and discussed ongoing budget pressures and the reclassification bid which was submitted in the September monitoring round. It was agreed that the 2<sup>nd</sup> iteration of the 2009-10 Business Plan at the half-day business planning event, scheduled for December (see paragraph 10 above) would also address budget priorities.

### **Corporate Services Update**

13. The Board noted a paper tabled by Deirdre Kenny which provided a monthly update on a range of corporate services matters. Information was provided by Directorate for: - Departmental headcount and vacancies; managing attendance (including the latest available sickness absence statistics to July 2008); training statistics on course attendance and non-attendance; and performance information on processing Freedom of Information (FOI) requests.

### **Special Bonus Scheme**

14. The Board noted a paper tabled by Deirdre Kenny on payments made by Directorate to September 2008, under the 2008-09 Special Bonus Scheme.

### **Record NI Project Update**

15. The Board noted a report tabled by Ciaran Murphy, Departmental Information Manager, on the issue of possible duplication of information within TRIM. His report concluded that to date, neither his Unit or business areas have identified any issues relating to the duplication of information. The report advised that a specific exercise to examine this issue has recently been completed and no problems were identified.
16. It was agreed that a more detailed paper would be submitted for the October Board meeting to highlight the range of actions required to fully maximise the potential benefits of TRIM implementation. **Action: Deirdre Kenny.**

### **Business Change Programme: Highlight Report**

17. The Board noted the monthly report on the various priority 1 projects within the Business Change Programme. The Board's discussion focused on the ongoing work to resolve interface issues between the Account NI and HR Connect projects. Bruce Robinson emphasised the need to improve the use of HR Connect as insufficient numbers of staff are logging on to the system to check that their details are accurate and equally there needs to be a significant improvement in the use of the iProcurement or purchase order system for Account NI.

18. Deirdre Kenny advised that staff and line managers would be notified shortly of mandatory actions they need to take to enter essential information on to the HR Connect system so that updated data is held for annual leave and other purposes. As previously notified to staff and the Board, Deirdre also advised that staff needed to take action now to limit the size of their e-mail boxes, personal and business area network shared drives, as there are plans to limit access to these in the short to medium term. Information Management Unit will take this forward as part of their work programme towards the end of 2008.

### **Departmental Brief**

19. The Board noted the draft October Departmental Brief and further material would be provided shortly to the Board secretary to initiate the Team Briefing process within the Department. Bruce Robinson proposed that the Departmental Brief should be reviewed as it was too detailed. It was agreed that Alan Maitland, who was leading a working group on a review of internal communications, would provide an interim report to the October Board on the group's findings to date, including their proposals for improving the Team Briefing process. **Action: John McMillen.**

### **Board's Forward Plan**

20. The Board noted the Forward Plan which had been updated from changes received from members for meetings up to March 2009.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

21. The next meeting was arranged for Wednesday 29.10.08 at 13.30 p.m. in the Glass House, Stormont Castle.

Mark Higgins