

**Minutes of the Board Meeting
Tuesday 29 September 2020 at 10.30-12.30**

Meeting held remotely by video conference

Present:

Mrs Helen Pitcher (Chairman)
Miss Karen Kneller (Chief Executive)
Mrs Sally Berlin (Director of Casework Operations)
Mr Peter Ryan (Interim Director of Finance & Corporate Services)
Mr David Brown (Non-Executive Director)
Mr Rob Ward (Non-Executive Director)
Mr Andre Katz (Independent Non-Executive Director)
Mr Mark Oldham (Independent Non-Executive Director)
Mr Martin Spencer (Independent Non-Executive Director)

Apologies: Mrs Linda Lee (Non-Executive Director)

1. Declarations of interest:

None

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the previous Board meeting held on 21 July 2020 were approved.

3. Action Matrix

All previous actions completed.

4. Chairman's update

The Chairman welcomed Mark Oldham to the meeting and advised the Board that his appointment as a new Independent Non-Executive Director would be confirmed imminently.

The Chairman had a meeting arranged with the Secretary of State on 5 October and would update the Board subsequently.

It was noted that the letter of commitment between the Ministry of Justice and Government Property Agency to secure the new office space was still awaited.

The Chairman reported that the Ministry of Justice had agreed to reimburse the Commission £28.8k as a repayment for legal costs incurred.

5. Chief Executive's report including MIP and Covid-19 update

The CEO updated the Board on Commissioner recruitment. The DCO and CEO were running the casework exercise for 57 candidates using a live case. Interviews will follow in December.

The CEO reported that the Business Plan was finalised.

Covid-19 update - following the recent government advice that staff should now work from home wherever possible, the CEO confirmed this message had been reinforced to staff. Everyone now had remote access and should have the necessary equipment to work from home successfully. Only a very small number attended the office as agreed in advance to ensure business continuity. The DFCS reported on two IT issues during the last month; it was considered that once the new system goes live at the beginning of November both the email and document management system will be in the cloud and there will be greater resilience going forward. Consideration was also being given to scanning arrangements to enhance current postal arrangements; this would place the Commission in a strong position should there be a national lockdown.

6. Casework performance in the context of Covid-19 restrictions

The DCO reported that casework was now progressing well. During May and June a large number of Post Office cases completed the review process enabling 57 referrals since the beginning of the business year. An initial drop in new application numbers at the start of the pandemic had enabled an increase of work on longer running cases which had reduced the long running cases list.

The DCO was working closely with the Customer Services Manager and external stakeholders to make sure new applications are forthcoming from the prison estate.

Recruitment of casework staff and induction has continued throughout the last few months. A recruitment campaign was due to be launched for Case Review Managers. This will be flexible to open up a larger pool of applicants, enabling home-based options.

The Board was concerned that staff were receiving sufficient support to deal with the challenges of working from home. It was noted that staff had received additional IT equipment and different initiatives had been introduced. These included regular casework group meetings, a weekly newsletter and information on a government confidential helpline and counselling sessions.

7. Transformation Programme update

The DFCS reported that the Programme had made a great deal of progress and was ahead of plan. The new Windows 10 laptops had been issued to all staff and Commissioners and the Case Management System was due to go live by the end of November. Contracts had been signed for new HR and Finance systems.

It was noted that the budget for the Transformation Programme remained as submitted.

8. Information Governance Framework for approval

The Framework document was noted and approved by the Board.

9. Let's Talk About Race - discussion

The CEO reported that the Diversity and Inclusion Group was to be relaunched and she would be asking for expressions of interest from staff members to chair the group. A Commissioner would be included in the group and some Knowledge Cafes arranged to generate input more

widely from staff. It was noted that the Research Committee was about to issue a call for research proposals which included issues of race and ethnicity in the Criminal Justice System.

10. CCRC 25th Anniversary

The Head of Communication joined the meeting; the Board was in complete agreement that this was a very special event and work needed to commence shortly. A steering group would be appointed to begin planning.

11. Public Board meeting

The Head of Communication reported that a virtual public board meeting would take place in November by Zoom. It will be publicised.

The Chairman stressed the importance of the media strategy and requested that the HoC circulate the stakeholder map and linked documents to the Board this week.

12. Any other business

The DCO reported that the Board's decision to move no appeal cases decision making to some casework staff had been postponed because of the Transformation Programme, Covid and new Case Review Managers joining the Commission. The Board agreed that implementation could be delayed for around six months.

13. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 24 November at 10.30