

COMMISSIONERS' STRATEGIC ISSUES MEETING 25 FEBRUARY 2015

Present: Chairman
Professor Elizabeth Cooke
Stephen Lewis
Professor David Ormerod
Nicholas Paines QC

Chief Executive
Adrian Hogarth
Sara Smith – Head
of Strategic Planning

Registry

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Item 1: Minutes of the Strategic Issues meeting on 21 January 2015

1. The minutes of the Strategic Issues meeting on 21 January were approved without amendment.

Item 2: Matters Arising

2. The Chief Executive provided the Commissioners with an update on a number of areas:

50th Anniversary

3. All activities for the 50th Anniversary celebrations were proceeding in line with the timetable: there were now more than 200 confirmed attendees for the Scarman lecture; the planning for the Parliamentary Reception continued, with confirmation of a potential sponsor expected shortly; engagement was being undertaken with law schools regarding the launch of the University Law Reform competition; and the Welsh Advisory Committee and Welsh Event were also progressing well.

Framework Document

4. The Chief Executive and the Head of Strategic Planning continued to address the comments raised by HM Treasury as part of their review of the draft document, and were liaising with the finance team in MoJ over the issue. They hoped to be able to report back on progress to Commissioners at the next Strategic Issues Meeting.

Recruitment of Chairman and Non-Executive Board Members

5. The application window for the Chairman's recruitment had now closed. Interviews of selected candidates would take place in late March.

6. The process to recruit the Non-Executive Board Members had started, with approaches made to potential candidates. Informal interviews of potential candidates would commence in late March, but due to the nature of the recruitment process it might be necessary to hold a second tranche of interviews.

Item 3. Planning Grid and Progress Report

7. The Chairman updated Commissioners on the project on the Form and Accessibility of the Law applicable to Wales. While progress continued to be made, he sought Commissioners agreement to move the date on which they would consider

the draft Consultation Paper from 22 April to the 21 May. Commissioners agreed this proposal.

8. Commissioners then held a brief discussion of some of the other issues raised in the reports – specifically:

- Mental Capacity and Detention – Nicholas Paines noted that the project was on track with the revised timetable previously agreed, and so this would be assessed as being on track in future reports, with its RAG rating amended accordingly;
- Wills – where the RAG rating continued to be “amber” purely because of the potential ramifications of other work on the timetable; and
- Review of corporate functions – progress was being made, although it was slower than would have been hoped.

Item 6. Finance Report

9. The Chief Executive introduced the paper on the Commission’s finances. She brought to Commissioners attention an issue she was having with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel (OPC) and the Cabinet Office relating to the VAT treatment of services provided by the OPC. VAT had started to be charged on invoices, which had historically not been the case as Parliamentary Counsel time feel squarely within an exemption for VAT (as confirmed by the VAT expert in MoJ). The Chief Executive was in discussion with the relevant parties, and would provide an update to Commissioners at their next meeting on the 18th March.

Item 7: Any Other Business

10. No Other Business was raised.