

SAAS MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING THURSDAY 4TH JUNE 2009

Present: David Stephen
Tracey Slaven
Bruce Nelson, NEBM
Allan Forsyth, NEBM
Graham Gunn
Audrey Heatlie
Stephen Blyth
Maureen Shevas
Ewhan Barschtschyk
Linda Pender (Secretary)

Apologies: Dugald Mackie, NEBM
Eileen Marshall, NEBM
Audrey Shimmons

1. Tracey Slaven had recently been appointed as David's successor. She would be taking up post as Chief Executive as from 2nd November 2009.

Minutes of the previous meeting

2. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 February 2009 were agreed.

Matters Arising

3. David updated the Board on the following issues:-

- Quality Scotland had presented the Agency with a Recognised for Excellence award. SAAS was the only part of the Scottish Government ever to have received such an award.
- Means-test Questionnaire – The Agency had received returns from only around half of Scotland's FE Colleges. However, these were sufficient to show that for SAAS to replicate Bursary Officers' means test checking procedures, we would have to double in size to around 300 employees.
- Fraud - David and Audrey Shimmons had recently attended the ELL Audit Committee to discuss issues arising from the organised frauds uncovered in 2008. David had given a commitment to produce a paper outlining the nature of the frauds that had been committed, what SAAS could do to tighten prevention and detection systems and the potential impacts on customer service for discussion with the Cabinet Secretary in about eight weeks time. By then, it was hoped that the Procurator Fiscal's intentions would be known.
- Attendance data confirmation - this had been a major topic of discussion at the ELL Audit Committee meeting. While SAAS was working with the SLC to improve the current system there remained certain categories of students who were not covered by it and there was uncertainty about HEIs capability to produce accurate numbers of drop outs and other non-attenders. Bruce Nelson reported that HEIs were developing a system for identifying non-attenders where, for example, pieces of course work were

not submitted on time. He also noted that requirements being made of HEIs by the Borders Agency were about to change.

- Gaelic language plan – no action was required meantime. Estimates suggested that there might be around 1,000 students able to speak Gaelic but it was possible that as few as 10% of them would also be able to write it

Quarterly Report

Customer Services Unit

4. This report covered the last quarter of last session. Processing had gone well but difficulties in dealing with large volumes of e-mail had continued.

5. The new session had got off to a slow start with about 1,000 fewer applications having so far been received compared to the same point last year. The Agency had not issued paper shortened applications due to the move to 100% on-line. Text messages had been issued asking students to apply on-line at as early a date as possible but little response had so far been noted.

6. CSU had recruited new staff and training was going well. Arrangements were being made to manage quality assurance of their work.

7. 24,000 on-line applications had so far been received with only 81 paper forms having had to be issued. The reasons for requesting paper applications were varied - EU postgraduate students could not apply on-line; some students did not have the necessary NI number required to apply on-line; others did not have internet access and there were a small number who simply insisted on using paper forms. On the basis of these figures, it was hoped to receive approximately 98% of applications on-line for the year as a whole. No problems had been raised by disabled students applying on-line. The Agency might want to consider charging for paper forms next year. It was noted that college applications were up by around 35%. While not all of these would be for HE courses, there was likely to be an increase in the number of applications to SAAS for funding.

Finance

8. The Finance Team were finalising the Agency's accounts for 2008/09. Spend on DRCs and capital had been affected by the delay in the StEPs project. Since the Agency's lease for Gyleview House expires in 2013, provision had had to be made for dilapidations in last year's budget. The lease was currently being advertised for sale by our landlord. There were potential risks for the business if the Agency had to move to new accommodation but also some potential opportunities. We were staying in close contact with SG Estates Department who would advise on any offers that might arise.

9. Programme expenditure – A large part of the underspend of £16.6m was due to increased receipts from the Inland Revenue and the SLC. It was agreed it was difficult to predict receipts with any accuracy. The Agency was working with Analytical Services on how to improve forecasting methods.

10. Part/time tuition fees – The budget was £6m but expenditure was only 10% of that amount. Analytical services and SDS had over estimated take up and SG Finance had been made aware that we would not spend the budget allocation.

11. ILA500 – Glasgow had issued 20,000 applications packs but only around 3,400 had come back to SAAS for processing. A third of all applications were being rejected and Agency staff were discussing the reasons for this with SDS.

Fraud

12. Fraud Ring - There had been no response as yet from the Procurator Fiscal on the Agency's report and David was seeking a meeting. The Board passed on their thanks to the case worker who had uncovered the "phase 2" fraudulent claims for Students Outside Scotland bursaries.

Human Resources

13. Recruitment –13 new staff were due to start before the end of June. It was noted that new starts require disclosure Scotland certificates and references from previous employers. **Action:** Maureen agreed to add a total complement column to the vacancies table and to consult colleagues on any posts that no longer needed to be filled.

14. Homeworking – HR were awaiting comments from the TUS and Solicitors on terms and conditions for homeworkers. Other than that, the main obstacle remained the potential cost and time required to install IT equipment – made more complex by security requirements for accessing GRASS.

IS & Operational Policy

15. Web upgrade – The upgrade was due to go live next Wednesday.

16. StEPs – The project board had commissioned two reviews of the project. Recommendations made in subsequent reports included strengthening programme management and possibly employing an Enterprise Architect to make sure all necessary system links were in place. It was confirmed that, although excellent progress was now being made, the Agency could continue to use GRASS if StEPs implementation had to be delayed for a further year

17. ILA500 was now in the live environment and should be able to be used for processing applications from the beginning of July.

18. Link with the Passport Office – the Passport Office offer a service which we might be able to use to authenticate applicants' identities as part of our fraud prevention measures. One of their representatives would be visiting the Agency in the next two weeks or so to explain the service and its costs.

19. EDM – We were reducing the number of servers which should lower energy consumption.

Chief Executive Office

20. The Agency would seek to publicise our ISO 14001 accreditation, Quality Scotland Excellence award, and HWLs gold award on the Government's Saltire intranet.

Balanced Scorecard

21. The latest draft Balanced Scorecard was circulated for comment. The following changes were agreed:-

- KPI 1B – It was agreed we should compare DRCs without the dilapidations cost to compare like with like.
- KPI 10B – It was agreed that the 10 day target was too low and that DSA assessment cases tend to take longer than average cases. It was agreed to look again at the number of days it took to process different types of cases.
- KPI 13 –the target of paying 100% of invoices within 10 days had been set by the centre. The target was aspirational but had been met in one month so far.
- KPI 18 - data would have to be reviewed as the current stakeholder rating only covered HEIs and did not include feedback from other stakeholders such as SDS, HEIs or SLC.

Action: Ewhan Barschtschik to update the scorecard and circulate for next meeting

Committee minutes

22. ISSG – It was noted that USB sticks were not used for personal data and the Policy Team used them only for presentations. The BSU had applied for a small stock of the new encrypted USB sticks but only for approved users. The BSU were carrying out a risk assessment on data handling. **Action:** David would raise data handling training issues at the next SG security committee meeting.

23. The minutes of the H&S committee meeting on 12 February 2009 and Audit committee meeting on 23 February 2009 were noted.

Complaints Report

24. The report was noted and no particular trends were reported.

Risk Register

25. Ewhan attended the meeting at this point to discuss the risk register and how it could be linked directly to our objectives and Corporate Success Factors (CSF). The following were agreed:-

- there was a need for the Board to see all risks periodically – not just high level risks.
- the register should incorporate an indicator column to show if risks were reducing.
- an owner for each risk would be clearly shown.
- the register should show the period for review of each risk.
- Catastrophic risks such as plane crashes or flu epidemics should be dealt with in the BCP. The updated BCP would be issued to the Management Board along with a revised risk register at future meetings (intervals to be decided by the Board).

Action: Ewhan would run a workshop for senior managers/unit heads to go through his proposals for revising the risk register in detail. Thereafter, a near final draft would be circulated to non-executive members for comment. If necessary, a separate Board meeting could be convened to finalise.

Any Other Business

26. Framework document – Work had started on revising this document over a year ago but had been put on hold at the Public Bodies Unit's behest. Having restarted work earlier this year we had again been advised by the Unit not to proceed pending further guidance from them. However, David and Andrew Scott had agreed that the document was so redundant that it had to be updated now; it would be easy to update/amend it further as and when the PBU guidance became available.. **Action:** David agreed to keep the Board informed of progress.

Date of next meeting

27. To be arranged.

Chief Executive's Office
5 June 2009