

AGENCY MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING WEDNESDAY 11 MAY 2006

Present: David Stephen, Chief Executive
Eileen Marshall, NEBM
Graham Gunn, SAAS
Audrey Heatlie, SAAS
Stephen Blyth, SAAS
Tracy Richardson, SAAS
Linda Pender, SAAS (Secretary)

Apologies: Martin Lowe, NEBM
Margaret Munckton, NEBM

Minutes of the previous meeting

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 22 February were agreed.

Matters Arising

2. David updated the Board on developments since the last meeting:
 - SAAS payloans project was now up and running.
 - Quality Scotland Award – The Agency had not been shortlisted for an award on this occasion but were waiting for details from Quality Scotland on their new investors in excellence scheme.
 - Martin Lowe had contacted Universities Scotland who were keen to hold an event this year. Carolyn Wilson would raise this issue at the Secretarys' Committee meeting tomorrow.

Quarterly Report

Customer Services Unit

3. This quarter was traditionally quieter and CSU had focused on processing travel claim forms and preparing for the new session. Last session had been the most successful year ever for processing applications.
4. CSU had recruited staff who had taken up their posts before the end of March. Training had taken place for the new staff as well as refresher training for existing staff. CSU were working with the TLO to organise additional training as required.
5. There had been a slow start to the new session and 18,500 application forms had been received and 17,500 processed so far. It was hoped that more electronic forms would be completed this session; early indications were that up to around 35 – 40% of applications might be made online this year.

6. Statistics for the new phone system were not yet available however it was hoped that they would be available by next week. Graham would speak to BT about the production of management information.

Action: Graham Gunn

Finance

7. Annex B – A £38k underspend on DRC's was due to extra funding received for GE to process court cases which had not been spent as the number of cases requiring court action was less than originally thought. This was mainly due to the number of students continuing their studies and students who were not liable for GE.

8. Stephen explained that the prints did not yet include accruals and the Agency still had to fund back payments for staff pay awards (to be paid end May salaries). It was expected to spend £1.7m on capital expenditure which included outstanding creditors and capitalised salaries.

9. Annex C – there was a slight underspend in fees and grants. Savings were mainly due to slippage in the SAAS payloans project and backdated VAT payments for SLC. Expenditure on loans was less than expected. As had been discussed at the last meeting, the Agency's statistician was currently working on estimates for loans requirements in the future. Stephen agreed to speak to Andrew Murray towards the end of week and find out when his researches might be concluded.

Action: Stephen Blyth

10. GE – 1,200 responses were still outstanding. Finance Team were checking with institutions for information on 3rd year students to see if any had withdrawn from their courses.

11. Debt Recovery – 61 cases were outstanding of which 30-40 were EU students. The Agency had still to decide how best to deal with these cases. Stephen would contact SLC with a view to gaining access to their franchise arrangements for pursuing overseas debtors.

Action: Stephen Blyth

Personnel

12. Staff movement outwith the Agency was mostly due to promotion. 2 members of staff had been placed on sick leave monitor. A member of staff who retired recently had been award the Imperial Service Medal for 33 years service.

13. The in-house recruitment campaign had been a great success, new staff were in post within 6/8 weeks and training had been successfully completed.

Information systems and Operational Policy

14. On-line applications/web applications – this was an in-house development by the web team and initial signs were that the system was running successfully. It was hoped that more students would apply on-line as there was no longer any need to print off part of the form to sign and return to SAAS by post.
15. Eileen complimented the Agency on the production of a leaflet and CD-ROM to encourage students to apply on-line as they had been very helpful in her college.
16. Payloans project – The Logica report had been published and an independent project manager from Logica was now taking work forward. The first Project Board meeting would be held on 5 June.
17. A separate note was circulated to inform Board members of a very successful visit to an Education seminar in Sweden by a member of the Policy Team.
18. Change management – EDM was one of the most efficient areas in the Agency but the Kaisen process had recently been used to improve processes even further. Early signs showed throughput of correspondence should reduce from 3 days to 1 even at the busiest times of the year.

Minutes of Committee meetings

19. Health & Safety Committee – The Agency's Environmental Policy and procedures would now be included in Induction training.
20. Information Systems Steering Committee – The quarterly report included issues raised at the meeting.
21. Finance Committee – the minutes were noted but no issues raised.

Complaints Report

22. 20 complaints had been received in the last quarter. However there were no obvious trends calling for action.

Graduate Endowment

23. Stephen agreed to supply figures showing the overall number of letters the Agency had received as a results of issuing letters informing students of GE liability.

Action: Stephen Blyth

Any other business

24. Martin Lowe was now unable to attend the Audit Committee meeting planned on 4 July. It was agreed to try to rearrange the meeting.

Action: Linda Pender

25. Eileen said that the “cost of learning” publication from Smarter Scotland was very helpful and had been very well received by students. It was agreed to pass this information onto the relevant division.

Date of Next Meeting

26. The next meeting would be held on 24 August at 10.30am

Chief Executive’s Office
11 May 2006