

SAAS MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING TUESDAY 26TH AUGUST 2008

Present: David Stephen, Chief Executive
Martin Lowe, NEBM
Bruce Nelson, NEBM
Graham Gunn, SAAS
Audrey Heatlie, SAAS
Audrey Shimmons, SAAS
Maureen Shevas, SAAS
Linda Pender, SAAS (Secretary)

Apologies: Eileen Marshall, NEBM

Membership

1. On behalf of SAAS and the Board, David thanked Martin for the contribution he had made to the Agency over the period of his appointment. Martin's successor would be Dugald Mackie recently retired Vice Principal of Manchester University. Margaret Munckton's successor had still to be decided and Eileen Marshall's appointment would be extended for a further 3 years.

Minutes of the previous meeting

2. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 12th May 2008 were agreed.

Matters Arising

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

- David and Graham had met with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to discuss ILAS. SDS were happy to continue to work in partnership with SAAS and had indicated that there might be additional work we could deal with in future.
- ILA500 – Numbers had been much lower than estimated by HELS and SDS with only 120 applications having been received to date.
- Quality Scotland – Martin had met with Andrew Cubie to discuss SAAS's application for an excellence award. Dr Cubie had yet to provide the further response that had been promised. Having discussed the position with David and Linda, Martin had put a suggestion to Andrew and intended to follow it up as it was not in the best interests of SAAS or Quality Scotland to let matters remain unresolved.
- Homeworking project – Maureen would restart the project in October looking first at any outstanding technical problems and associated costs. Around 50% of respondents to the recent travel survey (40 staff) had expressed an interest in homeworking.

Quarterly Report

4. David noted that this would be the last report to be made using the current format. The next Quarterly Report would be produced in a new format based on the balanced scorecard approach that SAAS was developing.

Customer Services Unit

5. There had been a steady start to the session and Annex A showed performance levels for April to June when 99% of applications had been processed within 12 days. Since then, a higher than normal number of applications had been received and it could be expected that processing times would lengthen over the next few weeks. For the moment, however, CSU were well on top of the workload.

6. It was noted that the 5 day target for dealing with e-mails was now unrealistic due to the volumes of messages being received. The majority of e-mails were being dealt with within 10 working days which was well within the 21 day target for general correspondence.

Finance

7. There was little to report at this early stage of the financial year. The budgets that had been set were tight but should be manageable.

Fraud

8. Some evidence was emerging to suggest that SAAS and some other public sector agencies had been targeted by a fraud ring. Home Office immigration officials would be visiting the Agency to discuss identity theft and related fraud issues with the Agency's management team. The Fraud Team had recently been expanded and an Internal Audit review would be taking place in the near future that would help forward planning in this area.

HR

9. The Agency had a number of vacancies and would mount an open recruitment exercise for A Band staff in October. An SG Band B promotion board had thankfully been delayed until later in the year.

10. The vacancy list included in the report would be reviewed before the next meeting as some of the posts identified might no longer need to be filled. **Action:** Maureen

IS & Operational Policy

11. StEPS –There had been a problem with the user interface design, possibly due to too much data having to be validated each time a screen was refreshed. Everything else was going well and some parts of the system were now in test.

12. Bruce reported that Edinburgh University had experienced something similar with its new student records system. The solution appeared to be to break things down into

smaller modules. Bruce offered to put the BSU in touch with Edinburgh's IT staff if discussion might help. **Action:** Bruce and Graham to liaise on setting up a meeting.

13. ILA500 – The BSU had developed an access database for ILA500 applications and were still developing a new database within StEPS.

14. Website applications – 80% of applications this year had been received online which suggested that the move to 100% next year should not be overly problematic. No systems problems had been experienced.

15. Policy Team outreach visits were very popular and increasing in number. David was strengthening the Policy Team in recognition of their increased volume of work.

Chief Executive's Office

16. The Agency had prepared a report of their environmental performance and had been awarded ISO 14001 accreditation in July. It was agreed to table the environmental report at the next meeting. **Action:** Linda

17. Scottish Prison Service had agreed to run a Mental Health First Aid training course for Agency staff. This was a requirement of the HWL's scheme but also a good thing in itself. Bruce reported that similar training had been reported on favourably by university administrators and student advisers.

Committee meetings

18. H&S Committee meeting minutes of 13 August and 22 June 2008 were noted. Linda explained that the minor accidents reported had not been caused by any problem in the workplace but were the result of personal carelessness by the individuals involved.

19. ISSC Committee meeting 24 June 2008 – the minutes were noted.

20. Audit Committee – In future, it was agreed to provide more detailed minutes which would include a list of completed audits and future audit activities.

21. New SG guidance, which had still to be finalised, recommended that audit committees should be more independent and made up entirely of NEBMs (although officials could continue to attend). This would require the Agency's NEBMs to attend a further 2 to 3 meetings each year. The committee's terms of reference would also have to be amended. Dugald Mackie had indicated he would be happy to take over from Martin as chair of the Audit Committee. This was agreed by the Board.

22. It was also agreed that SAAS should in future pay NEBMs a daily fee for attending board and Audit Committee meetings. **Action:** David would write to NEBMs with details of fees payable and ask members how they would wish payment to be made.

23. David updated the Board on the following issues raised at the last Audit Committee meeting:-

- GE abolition – Mark Batho had commissioned Internal Audit to look at decision making processes for GE.

- Means testing – Education Committee, Jeremy Purvis MSP had challenged the legality of collecting information from students before the new means test Regulations came into force. David would attend the Committee's next meeting with the Minister on 2nd September. There was still a risk that the Regulations might be annulled. However, the 80,000 assessments already made would not have to be recalculated.

Complaints Report

24. The complaints report was noted

Any other Business

25. No other business was discussed.

Date of next meeting

26. A date for the next meeting would be arranged shortly.

Chief Executive's Office
27 August 2008