

AGENCY MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING TUESDAY 22ND MAY 2007

Present: David Stephen, Chief Executive
Martin Lowe, NEBM
Eileen Marshall, NEBM
Bruce Nelson, NEBM
Graham Gunn, SAAS
Audrey Shimmons, SAAS
Tracy Richardson, SAAS
Linda Pender, SAAS (Secretary)

Apologies: Margaret Munckton, NEBM
Audrey Heatlie, SAAS

Minutes of the previous meeting

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2007 were agreed.

Matters Arising

2. David updated the Board on action taken since the last meeting:-
 - The problem with the Agency's SEAS interface reported at the last meeting had been resolved.
 - SEPA would take action on concerns about renewable energy provided by our new electricity supplier.
 - SLC costs – SAAS would now pay an overall share of 6.9% of SLC's running costs. SLC had been asked to provide monthly expenditure profiles to help the Agency monitor SLC costs. **Action:** Audrey Shimmons agreed to report on progress at the next meeting.

Quarterly Report

Customer Services Unit

3. There had been a slow start to the season and approximately 17,000 applications had been received (98.6% of which had been processed). The Agency had issued SMS messages to students encouraging them to apply as soon as possible.
4. ILA processing – There were now approximately 65,500 open accounts.
5. GE – It was noted that only around 3% of cases were resulting in debt recovery action – a much lower number than could have originally been expected.

Finance

6. Running costs had come in very close to budget.
7. Audrey Shimmons asked Board Members to let her have any suggestions that might occur to them for improving the presentation of finance issues in future reports.

8. Loan parent childcare grant – The fraud officer had been carrying out an exercise to check that those claiming the grant were using the services of registered child minders as required by regulations. It might also be possible to set up a link with the Childcare Commission to check details of registration. **Action:** Audrey Shimmons to report back at next meeting.

9. Eileen Marshall invited the Agency to examine her own college's childcare assistance procedures and compare notes.

Personnel

10. Staff turnover figures had reduced to normal levels this quarter and vacancies in CSU had all been filled. Tracy Richardson had become a member of a Cabinet Office forum to help fill staff vacancies with surplus staff from other Government departments. Communities Scotland had surplus staff due to their relocation to Glasgow and SAAS had been able to consider them for vacant posts.

11. The Team were now carrying out assessment centres in-house. Tracy was working with SE procurement to choose a new Occupational Health Service supplier.

12. E-HR – Tracy was working with consultants on the SE's new e-HR system which, it was intended, would delegate responsibility to line management for a number of day to day personnel functions.

13. Homeworking – A project team had been set up to look at homeworking policy and practice. In an initial survey, 47 staff had expressed an interest in homeworking. The intention was now to set up a pilot to ensure that there were no technical difficulties then widen this out to 10 or so staff in September/October for a fuller evaluation. If all went well, a fully fledged scheme could be launched in 2008.

14. The current vacancy position was noted. In some cases decisions had yet to be taken on whether particular posts would in fact be filled. It was felt that it would be useful to the Board to have more background information in the report on the reasons for staff moving out of the Agency. **Action:** Tracy agreed to provide a new section in the quarterly report on feedback from exit interviews.

Information systems and Operational Policy

15. Telephony project – The new system was now in place and would - all things remaining equal - be signed off, by the end of next week. Telephony statistics should be available for the next quarterly report.

16. GRASS rewrite – A project board had been set up to oversee and co-ordinate 4 different workstreams. Invitations to tender for the supply of business process modelling software had been issued and it was hoped to let a contract by end - June.

17. Fiona Hyslop, MSP had been appointed as Cabinet Secretary for Education & Lifelong Learning. David had been invited to meet her along with Mark Batho, Director for Lifelong Learning, to discuss the new administration's policies on the Graduate Endowment and student loans. **Action:** David agreed to keep NEBMs informed of policy decisions.

Committee Minutes

18. The minutes of the following meetings were noted:-

- Finance Committee – 12 February.
- Fraud Committee – 23 April.
- Health & Safety Committee – 25 April.
- Information Systems Steering Committee – 27 March.

19. It was noted the Agency had been successful in meeting the standard for the Cycle Friendly Employer award.

Complaints Report

20. Nine complaints and eight letters of thanks had been received during this quarter.

Any Other Business

21. Three of the NEBMs had recently attended a training course for Board members which they agreed had been very useful. NEBMs had also found the recent awaydays to be of interest.

Date of Next Meeting

22. The next meeting had been arranged for Thursday 30th August @ 10.00am

Chief Executive's Office
22 May 2007