

Board Minutes (open)

Meeting:
Board meeting

Time:
11.30 – 13.30

Date:
19 April 2011

Location:
Board Room, Griffin House

Attendees:
Dr Bob Chilton, Chair (BC)
Prof Judy Simons, Deputy Chair (JS)
Lizzie Abderrahim (LA)
Elizabeth Hall (EH)
Paul Gott (PG)
Cllr Shirley Flint (SF)
Cllr Stephen Knight (SK)

Apologies:
Cllr Mehboob Khan
Cllr Sir Ron Watson

In attendance:
Tim Leslie (TL)
Steve Barrow (SB)
Paul Hoey (PH)
Freda Sharkey (FS)
Richard Broom (RB) (item 11/36 only)
Claire Chadwick (CC)

Minutes:
Kaitlin Kmicic (KK)

Item No.	Subject	Action
11/19	Apologies Apologies were received from Councillor Sir Ron Watson and Councillor Mehboob Khan.	
11/20	Board to resolve which papers are open and closed The classification for all items was <u>agreed</u> as stated on the agenda, although it was noted that item 11/32, Annual Report on Service Complaints, was for decision rather than information.	
11/21	Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2011 (open session) LA pointed out that the council referred to at 11/07 should be Gloucester City Council – not Gloucestershire –	KK

	<p>Standards Committee, and that it was the decision of the Council that this Committee should not meet, not that of the Committee itself.</p> <p>Apart from this amendment the minutes were <u>agreed</u> as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p> <p>In regards to the meeting she had attended, EH informed the meeting that she had provided informal feedback to the Chair, but there was nothing of sufficient importance to report to the Board.</p>	
11/22	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>PH presented his report of ongoing Board actions. Apart from a request to amend the wording of 11/08, this was <u>accepted</u> by the Board.</p>	PH
11/23	<p>Declarations of board member interests</p> <p>PG declared a professional involvement with the London Borough of Barnet.</p>	
11/24	<p>Chair's report (oral)</p> <p>The Chair thanked the rest of the Board for their generosity in contributing to Glenys Stacey's leaving gift, and told them she is settling in well in her new role at Ofqual. He informed the Board that TL has now been properly appointed as the Interim Chief Executive and Accounting Officer.</p> <p>The Chair explained that the terms of appointment of several Board members are due to end in the coming months. In June and July: BC, JS and LA. In February: PG and EH. He explained that reappointments are for the Department to consider – they are doing so but have not yet reached any decisions – and he will press for clarity and inform them immediately he receives any information. It was noted that the Board quorum is three. SF noted that she was standing for re-election to the district council in May and, whatever the outcome, would continue to serve as a Parish Councillor.</p> <p>The Chair informed the Board that he had been invited to speak at the Chief Legal Officers Conference in June 2011, but had declined. The Localism Bill is likely to be under consideration in the House of Lords at that point, so it would be inappropriate for him to comment on its content.</p>	RC/PH


<p>11/25</p>	<p>Board members' feedback (oral)</p> <p>SF updated the Board on activities of the LGA Independent Group, including feedback from two presentations she had recently given. She thanked officers for help with the presentations which had been very well received. She noted that support for a national code of conduct at those events was even stronger amongst independent Councillors than she had expected. She reported that the issue had been addressed in the recent e-bulletin sent to independent councillors by the LGA independent Group.</p>	
<p>11/26</p>	<p>Interim Chief Executive's report</p> <p>The Interim Chief Executive presented his report to the Board. He informed the Board that, as well as having his role confirmed, he had received training for new Accounting Officers from the National School of Government.</p> <p><u>Management Information Dashboard</u></p> <p>TL noted that since the MI Dashboard as at 1 March had been distributed the version as at 1 April had been completed, so this was tabled. He talked the Board through the detail of each of these.</p> <p>TL noted in the year-end Dashboard that both of the KPIs had been achieved, and that this will be reflected in the Annual Report. The Department had indicated they would be looking for the same KPI with regard to casework in the year ahead.</p> <p>TL highlighted an error in the 1 March Dashboard; the amount of guidance enquiries has reduced not increased. He noted the increase in legal enquiries. No particular cause for this has been identified, although the forthcoming local elections are likely to be generating activity.</p> <p>In March ten referrals were received – an increased number – and 16 had been received in April to-date. This demonstrates the unpredictability of caseloads. It was felt that the increase in April could be due to Standards Committees trying to 'clear their desks' before the upcoming local elections.</p> <p>As 11 cases were closed in March, active cases are now much reduced. The caseload is lower than the previously agreed base scenario. TL noted that the absence of an increase in complaints to SfE from members of the public concerning how standards committees were fulfilling their responsibilities may indicate that the local standards</p>	

	<p>framework is continuing to operate satisfactorily in most authorities.</p> <p>The Board noted an improvement in the average time taken to close cases, which TL attributed to the types of cases rather than necessarily performance.</p> <p>LA asked about cases that are incomplete at closure. TL explained that, as he understands it and subject to legislation, these will simply be handed back to the relevant local Standards Committee to complete. Standards Committees may have to remain a statutory requirement until all investigations are completed. It was noted that Standards for England was not actively informing Standards Committees about the likely transition arrangements at the stage of referrals, because cases received now should be completed before closure. This may however need to be considered in the future. It was <u>agreed</u> that the approach to the acceptance of referrals more generally will be considered in the next Board meeting.</p> <p>The board <u>noted</u> the MI Dashboards.</p> <p><u>HR Dashboard</u></p> <p>The Board were gratified to see that employee absence figures remained low, and welcomed the evident commitment from staff.</p> <p>It was noted that headcount has reduced in the last year from 81 to 35. It was also noted that the diversity statistics are disappointing, but that nothing can be done to change these given the recruitment freeze and impending closure.</p> <p><u>Corporate Risk Graphic</u></p> <p>TL explained that the Corporate Risk Register has been through a complete revision; risk owners have in places been changed as a result of staff reductions, and the risks and their positions have been reconsidered.</p> <p>TL explained that the increase in the impact attributed to risk 5: 'finance and accounting,' is due to the dependency on the Department to approve funding around closure and the impact any delays may have. The Board <u>agreed</u> to consider this risk in detail at the next meeting. Risk 7: 'legislative uncertainty' will be considered under the Government Legislative Proposals item.</p> <p>It was <u>noted</u> that accommodation is being provided in the</p>	<p>TL</p> <p>PH PH</p>
--	--	----------------------------

	<p>office to around 20 staff members from Government Office North West, who are in the process of being made redundant.</p> <p>The Board <u>noted</u> that Jonathan Wigmore is no longer an ESO following the latest round of voluntary redundancies.</p>	
11/27	<p>Board Forward Schedule</p> <p>PH introduced the report, explaining that many planned activities cease to be necessary given the planned closure of SfE, so the schedule of business has been amended accordingly. The Board <u>agreed</u> the changes. It was noted that planned meetings are dependent on there being sufficient business.</p>	
11/28	<p>Review of Scheme of Delegation</p> <p>FS explained that minor amendments had been made to the Scheme to reflect the new Senior Management structure, and in particular TL's dual role. The principal changes in this regard are the delegation of Regulation Programme management from TL to Steve Bannister, and PH's role as Steve Bannister's alternate to consider referrals received from standards committees.</p> <p>It was noted that at the top of page 2, 'delegated from: Interim Chief Executive' needs to be changed to 'delegated from: Board'. Other than this the changes to the Scheme of Delegation were <u>approved</u>.</p> <p>The Chair asked for clarification regarding the Board's oversight of delegated contract management, in particular the reporting of cost increases. FS <u>agreed</u> to review this.</p>	<p>FS</p> <p>FS/PH</p>
11/29	<p>Review of the Code of Conduct for MPs</p> <p>PH introduced the report. He explained that SfE had been invited by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards to respond to their review. He noted that he had already received some comments on the draft response from the Chair.</p> <p>There was a discussion about whether it is appropriate to make a public response and whether this should acknowledge the impact of the Localism Bill on SfE. It was <u>agreed</u> that the response is a helpful document in the public interest, and that its neutral presentation is appropriate.</p> <p>The substance of the draft response was <u>agreed</u>. PH noted that the response needed to be submitted by the end of</p>	<p>All</p>

	<p>May, so asked that Board members send any further comments before then.</p> <p>EH asked whether more could be done with research conducted by SfE. PH agreed to consider this and informed the Board that discussions about using SfE research in future are ongoing with the Committee on Standards in Public Life.</p>	PH
11/30	<p>Electronic business decision notice (11/17)</p> <p>The decision notice was <u>noted</u> by the Board.</p>	
11/31	<p>Electronic business decision notice (11/17)</p> <p>The decision notice was <u>noted</u> by the Board.</p> <p>It was <u>noted</u> that, as the need for electronic business becomes increasingly frequent, prompt responses are vital.</p>	
11/32	<p>Annual Report on service complaints</p> <p>FS introduced the report. She explained that the quantity of service complaints has always been low, and this has reduced in line with reductions in activity.</p> <p>FS explained that slight changes have been made to the procedures for dealing with persistent complainants, mainly regarding equality issues; attempts have been made to ensure complainants with disabilities are dealt with in an effective and appropriate manner. The approach of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman has been followed, as in the previous version of the policy.</p> <p>The group briefly discussed the recognised links between mental health and persistent complaints, and the specific issues that may arise at SfE. FS explained that the policy is applied flexibly by Senior Management, depending on the circumstances of individual cases.</p> <p>The Board <u>noted</u> the report and <u>approved</u> the revised persistent complaints policy. The Scheme will be published and publicised to staff.</p>	FS
11/33 – 11/40	<p>These papers were considered in the closed section of the meeting.</p>	
	<p>The Board went into closed session.</p>	

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 21 June 2011.



Chair

