

Board Minutes (open)

Meeting:
Board meeting

Time:
11.00 – 12.30

Date:
14 December 2010

Location:
Board Room, Griffin House

Attendees:
Dr Bob Chilton, Chair
Prof Judy Simons, Deputy Chair
Elizabeth Hall
Paul Gott (via telephone)
Cllr Shirley Flint
Cllr Mehboob Khan

Apologies:
Lizzie Abderrahim
Cllr Sir Ron Watson
Cllr Stephen Knight

In attendance:
Glenys Stacey
Steve Barrow
Paul Hoey
Tim Leslie
Freda Sharkey
Natalie Ainscough
Richard Broom (item 10/129 only)

Minutes:
Kaitlin Kmicic

Item No.	Subject	Action
10/133	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Lizzie Abderrahim, Cllr Sir Ron Watson and Cllr Stephen Knight sent their apologies.</p> <p>Paul Gott could not attend in person but joined the meeting by telephone.</p>	
10/134	<p>Board to resolve which papers are open and closed</p> <p>The classification for all items was <u>agreed</u> as stated on the agenda.</p>	
10/135	<p>Minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2010 (open session)</p> <p>The Chair drew the Board's attention to the fact that the</p>	All

	<p>meeting in April will take place on the 19th, as originally planned.</p> <p>The minutes were <u>agreed</u> as a correct record and signed by the Chair.</p>	
10/136	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>PH presented his report of ongoing board actions, which was <u>noted</u> by the Board. It was noted that a final meeting to close Project Excellence would take place after the Board meeting, completing that action.</p> <p>A press release issued by Sir Christopher Kelly that day was tabled at the meeting, for the Board to note.</p>	
10/137	<p>Declarations of board member interests</p> <p>There were none.</p>	
10/138	<p>Chair's report (oral)</p> <p>The Chair drew the Board's attention to a letter of thanks he had received from representatives of the PCS Union, after their presentation to the October Board meeting. It was felt that there is a respectful and professional working relationship between the Union and the Board.</p> <p>The Chair then turned to the letter he had sent to Standards Committee Chairs on 30 November, introducing the proposed new standards arrangements.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the board members for their responses regarding contributions to the staff Christmas party.</p> <p>The Chair informed the Board that he had written to all staff at SfE recently, to thank them for their hard work, and the Chief Executive confirmed that this had been well received.</p>	
10/139	<p>Board members' feedback (oral)</p> <p>Elizabeth Hall informed the meeting that she had received a letter from her local Standards Committee Chair after receiving Robert Chilton's letter, and that she may meet with him.</p> <p>Mehboob Khan noted that since the LGA cross-party leadership team met, the Labour group have stated that they support a national code of conduct.</p> <p>Shirley Flint informed the meeting that she is to submit a</p>	

	<p>report to the LGA independent group. They are also supportive of a national code.</p> <p>Judy Simons informed the meeting that she had met with Lord Judd at his request, to discuss local standards issues.</p>	
<p>10/140</p>	<p>Chief Executive's report</p> <p>The Chief Executive presented her report to the Board. This reviewed operational performance and risk, and set the context for other open papers.</p> <p>The Board <u>noted</u> the management information dashboard for November. They noted that strong operational performance is being maintained.</p> <p>TL took the Board through the details of section 5, 7 and 8, and gave more up-to-date information. The level of guidance enquiries in November was similar to that in October. Referrals have increased slightly on the previous two months. Nine referrals have been received in December, although this includes two groups of linked cases.</p> <p>TL explained that there are 16 current cases at draft stage, 15 of which relate to one authority. 16 other investigations are in progress. These case volumes are significantly lower than for the same period in previous years.</p> <p>Turning to the risk graphic, the Chief Executive noted that the picture is generally stable. She pointed out that in November the legal risk (4) increased slightly for various reasons, but the issues of concern are now being resolved.</p> <p>She asked whether the Board wanted to review a particular risk when they next meet. It was <u>agreed</u> that this would not be necessary given the stable risk profile.</p> <p>An additional risk of SfE existing for longer than is currently foreseen was suggested for addition to the register.</p> <p>The Chief Executive then asked the Board to review and confirm the base scenario (for the purpose of determining the rate of headcount reduction) and the current planning assumptions. The Board noted that by March 2011 work volumes may be less than predicted in the base scenario, as investigations volumes are falling more quickly than anticipated. The Board <u>confirmed</u> the base scenario and <u>noted</u> the uncertainties around future work volumes</p> <p>It was <u>agreed</u> that staffing levels and headcount reduction</p>	<p>SB</p>

	<p>would be revisited in the new year, but the Board confirmed again its strategic approach as agreed at the October Board meeting.</p> <p>Discussion turned to the current phase of voluntary redundancies. The Chief Executive updated the Board: there have not been a large amount of requests, but those that have been made may negate the need for compulsory redundancies. The scheme's steering group met two weeks previously, and discussed some 'bumping' of individuals to avoid compulsory redundancies. They were to meet again following the Board meeting.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Judy Simons and Elizabeth Hall for their input. The management of the exercise was commended.</p>	GS
10/141	<p>Feedback from the Audit Committee (oral)</p> <p>Judy Simons gave feedback from the Audit Committee meeting on 10 November to the Board.</p> <p>She informed them that the draft internal audit programme had been presented and had now been approved, and that it includes a review of the voluntary redundancy scheme that ended in August.</p> <p>Internal audit were also conducting a proactive fraud review at the end of November, including a limited review of the relevant policies.</p> <p>Outstanding internal audit recommendations had been reviewed and signed off.</p> <p>The committee had noted the governance arrangements for the closure programme. In relation to information management and intellectual property rights, it had been noted that National Archive will be ultimately responsible for some of SfE's data, information and documentation following closure, so communication should be opened with them, as well as with the department.</p> <p>The committee had also noted the pension fund's triennial review of the pension scheme.</p>	SB

10/142	<p>Customer satisfaction feedback on investigations</p> <p>TL introduced this paper for the Board's information. He explained that a survey is sent to complainants, subject members, monitoring officers and witnesses after the completion of an investigation, with the aim of improving the way SfE's investigation processes operate. The percentage response rate has been high but the actual numbers are low, so the data and information has been collated over the last three business quarters for review.</p> <p>Overall the feedback has been positive, bearing in mind that by the nature of an investigation at least one party is likely to be dissatisfied with the outcome.</p> <p>The Board <u>noted</u> the findings from the survey.</p> <p>The Board felt that it would be useful to have comparative data, and it was hoped that there would be enough investigations for this to be possible.</p> <p>Mehboob Khan praised in particular the positive responses to questions regarding respondents' satisfaction with the opportunity to say what they wanted during the investigations process (in relation to the allegations under investigation) and being given sufficient time to comment, as these are factors that give those involved an impression of the organisation.</p>	TL
10/143	<p>Attendance and Leave Policy</p> <p>Glenys Stacey introduced this paper, explaining that the changes made were not contentious. It was <u>noted</u> that the Chair had already given some detailed feedback. Subject to this, the suggested changes were <u>agreed</u>.</p>	
10/144 – 10/148	<p>These papers were considered in the closed section of the meeting.</p>	
10/149	<p>Any other business</p> <p>There was none.</p>	
	<p>The Board went into closed session.</p>	

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 18 January 2011.

R. H. H. H.

Chair