

NOTE OF SUPERVISORY BOARD MEETING

Thursday 26 June 2003

Present:

Juliet Wheldon	Martin Hemming	Isabel Letwin
Robert Aitken	Tony Hindley	David Pearson
Len Berkowitz	Hilary Jackson	Gary Murphy
Valerie Cain	Rosemary Jeffreys	Iv Rees
Vivienne Collett	Jonathan Jones	Alison Schofield
Carol Coyne (items 1 & 2)	John Kempzell	Doug Walters
Simon Harker	Philip Kent	

Apologies:

Mark Blythe	Barrie McKay
David Brummell	Mike Thomas

1. Business Performance

- (a) **PRACAMS/MoB** – an Activity Report to 10 June had been circulated prior to the meeting. David reported on the main activities: -

arising from work on the communication strategy:-

- presentations for senior managers in Litigation/ECCG/COCAD had been arranged to take place in July to clarify key messages;

other: -

- the working groups which had been looking at specific business processes were presenting their findings to the Programme Board on 3 July.

The Audit Committee had asked for a paper explaining the management arrangements for MoB. It was agreed that these and other Audit Committee papers should be circulated to the Supervisory Board. There would not be an opportunity for the Board to have a substantive discussion before the next Audit Committee, but it should do so between future meetings. **Action: Board Secretary**

Hilary took the opportunity to update the Board on the **Centre of Excellence** (COE) for Programme and Project Management, details of which had been circulated the previous month. Hilary had chaired its first meeting on 23 June. The key issues discussed/actions agreed were: -

- the role of the COE - an advisory body providing additional quality assurance on programmes and project set-up and advising in particular on inter-dependencies;
- baseline data to be collected for the Agency's key programmes and projects for progress reporting purposes – the BSU was co-ordinating;

- the role of the COE in developing and supporting good practice in managing and delivering significant projects.

The COE had been set-up in response to a central initiative co-ordinated by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC). OGC had given the Agency's proposals, co-ordinated by Gary, the 'green light' – and the Agency is taking a leading role in developing a model COE for small Departments, on which Gary had made a presentation at an OGC event. The Board thanked Gary for his work.

Juliet noted that Gary would be leaving the Agency before the next meeting of the Board, and took the opportunity to thank him for all the work he had done both for the Board and generally during his time with the Agency.

(b) Finance/Targets – Tony updated the Board on key points:

- Tony and David reported that chargeable hours were down slightly against the budgeted target, but that there was no cause for concern. Finance would continue to monitor the figures closely and Tony confirmed that work was progressing to enable monthly profiling of the figures, and that such profiling would allow for more meaningful conclusions to be drawn;
- 10% of debt was over 90 days old with the MoD, LCD and the Highways Agency remaining the major debtors – Tony would be focussing on this;
- DATIX showed 104 timesheets outstanding with a third over 90 days old – Tony would discuss the accuracy of this data with Litigation and ECCG.

(c) Client Care

The Client Care Activity Report for June had been circulated to the Board. Hilary had taken over from Philip as Head of Client Care and had chaired a meeting of the Client Care Group on 25 June. The Group had reviewed the work programme and agreed the following priorities: -

- PRACAMS: consulting clients on how the system could best be set-up and used to meet their needs;
- Review of Client Satisfaction Survey Methodology: an action plan for taking this forward had been agreed by the Group. This included a Focus Group of clients to identify what aspects of the Agency's service they see as important and how these might be best reflected in the form. The opportunity might also be useful for initial consultations on the set-up of PRACAMS;
- Agency Brochure: the text of the brochure was almost finalised and Gary agreed to circulate the near final version to the Board. **Action: Gary**; and
- Client Care Guide: the Group was considering the minimum standards for the Guide on which they would consult with a number of caseholders/advisers.

The other key action emerging was to hold a meeting of Client Care Managers to discuss experiences and best practice, and the approach to client

management for smaller clients – the meeting would take place in September, after the main holiday season.

David Pearson reported that the Agency's bid to retain the work of the Boundary Commission for Wales had been successful. The Commission had been complimentary about the presentation of the bid. The BSU and Roland Phillips were thanked for their work on it.

On a related good news point, Juliet reported that Sir Andrew Turnbull, Head of the Civil Service, had indicated that he was content with the work of the Department.

Jonathan noted that the DfES advisory team would be taking on new childcare work from Department for Health/Department for Work and Pensions following machinery of Government changes. The lawyers currently undertaking the work would transfer to Jonathan's team – it was suggested that they should be invited to the reception for new entrants on 18 July. **Action: Iv to liaise with Janine**

(d) Work Programme

Gary explained that the BSU had added a new column to the Work Programme indicating the status of the project/work using the traffic light system to help the Board to focus on priorities. There were four items on the programme which had been given an amber status:

- Appraisal/Competencies/Reward Strategies: given an amber status as the pay discussions with HM Treasury not yet completed;
- Client Care: given amber to reflect slippage in the original Client Care Programme – priorities had been reviewed at the recent Group meeting;
- Financial Systems: the outstanding DOCS delegations were now virtually complete; and
- LION: difficulties with suppliers had led to some delay in completing the LION subscriptions, although a positive outcome had been achieved. 32 Government Departments had agreed to contribute to a one-year contract. Juliet thanked everyone involved, particularly Robert, Paul Woods and David Hogg. She asked Robert if he could arrange for a news item to be put on LION and TSOL about the success. There would be a need to ask staff for the views on the service well in advance
Action: Robert

(e) Quarterly Training and Development Report

The report had been circulated to the board - recommendations for the Board were detailed in Section 1. Alison drew the Board's particular attention to the need for new staff to be enrolled on induction courses.

2. Investor in People Re-accreditation/Staff Survey

The Board thanked Carol Coyne for her paper about the Agency's liP re-assessment. It proposed that the Agency should opt for a "Profile Review", which would score performance against key aspects of the liP standard – this would allow comparison with other organisations and would identify priority areas for improvement as

necessary. The Board agreed to the proposed approach. Martin would for information let Carol Coyne have a copy of the liP Action Plan used by MoD previously

Alison confirmed that Divisional breakdowns of the Staff Survey results would be available in July for all those Divisions/Teams which were large enough so as not to breach individual confidentiality: Litigation; Bona Vacantia; DOCS; all Advisory Divisions together; MoD; DFES; ECCG and Human Resources. HR would provide assistance to Divisions on the interpretation of the results. The Agency Plan had been put on the Intranet and work continued on developing precise actions. **Action: Alison.**

In the meantime, there were a number of key areas which the Supervisory Board could address immediately, as follows: -

- ensuring staff are inducted properly within their Divisions;
- building on the strength of communication within teams by getting involved in team meetings and generally walking the floor;
- ensuring consistent standards and objectives for the 2003/04 reporting year;
- making the link between individuals' objectives and the Agency's Business/Corporate Plans;
- clarifying mechanism within their Divisions for requesting additional resources.

Action: Supervisory Board

It was agreed that a consistent approach and guidance was needed on flexible working and the use of overtime, and this would be discussed at the next Supervisory Board. **Action: Alison to liaise with the Diversity Group to produce a paper.**

3. Review of Agency Risks and Treatment

Gary was thanked for the paper he had prepared on the Review of Agency Risks and Treatment Plans – the purpose was for the Supervisory Board to take a step-back look at the Agency's risks and the work being done to manage and control them. The Board were also provided with Internal Audit's Report on Risk Management and the proposed Management Response, which had recommended such reviews.

It was agreed that the highest risks remained those discussed at the Supervisory Board's Strategy meeting in November 2002, and that the Corporate Plan substantially addressed them.

Len asked whether the management of risks at the point of delivery (ie in delivering legal services - disputes with clients or errors in interpreting the law) needed to be added. There are important lessons to be learnt when things go wrong; promoting an environment in which such learning can happen can help minimise risks to the business. It was agreed that the Agency should consider this – the key was encouraging openness when mistakes were made.

Hilary agreed to look at this area, at least initially, with the Client Care Group. The Group were considering how best to disseminate the guidance note on managing clients' legal risks, which is a related point. It was also agreed that openness started

at the top, and the Supervisory Board should be role models within their Divisions and at the Board.

Action: (i) John to add to Agency Risk Register; (ii) Hilary to consider response through the Client Care Group; (iii) Supervisory Board to promote and encourage openness.

4. Other Business

Alison updated the board on the work being undertaken on skills **competencies** - the work to date had been focussing on MoB and PRACAMS; information had been requested from other Departments about management and general competencies and a discussion would take place at the Supervisory Board once this was collated.

Hilary informed the Board that all Departments had been asked to provide baseline information for the **Public Sector Relocation Project** and were waiting to hear whether any further information was needed, given the current business need to be located in London.

The key messages from the meeting for the Intranet were agreed as: -

- Centre of Excellence;
- Andrew Turnbull's satisfaction with the Agency's performance;
- successful tender and new DfES work;
- Jonathan's paper on managing clients' legal risks; and
- Staff survey results.

Business Strategy Unit
27 May 2003