DoF Departmental Board Meeting  
The Board Room, Clare House  

27 February 2017, 10.30am – 12.10pm

Minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Departmental Board Members</th>
<th>In Attendance</th>
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<tr>
<td>David Sterling</td>
<td>Martin Monaghan (minutes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Des Armstrong</td>
<td>Anne Armstrong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mike Brennan</td>
<td>Claire Archbold</td>
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<td>Colin Sullivan</td>
<td>David Marshall</td>
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<td>Brigitte Worth</td>
<td>Caron Alexander (Item 2)</td>
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<td>Anne Breen</td>
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<td>Colin Lewis</td>
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<td>Colum Boyle</td>
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<td>Paul Wickens</td>
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<td>Stephen Hodkinson</td>
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<td>Dolores O’Reilly</td>
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1. Welcome/Apologies

David Sterling welcomed Members to the meeting. He advised that Siobhan Carey and Hugh Widdis had sent their apologies and that David Marshall and Claire Archbold were deputising for them. He also welcomed Caron Alexander for Item 2 on the agenda.

No conflicts of interest were registered.

2. NICS Digital Transformation Programme Update

Paul Wickens and Caron Alexander advised that they were undertaking a programme of visits to each NICS Departmental Board to discuss the new Digital Transformation strategy. They provided an update on the current work programme and noted that the target of delivering ten Digital Transformation projects in 2016/17 will be achieved, with 12 services coming on-line by the end of March 2017.

Caron advised that, as a result of the Transformation Programme, over eight million digital transactions had taken place in NI since April 2013, with savings estimated at £39 million delivered and a ‘very good’ customer satisfaction rating achieved. She also highlighted the use made of reusable technology and services to maximise the benefits of previous work and minimise the cost of developing new services.

Caron provided an update on the work that was ongoing to provide on-line identity insurance and noted that this would be key to developing citizen self-service projects, and the ‘tell me once’ and secure messaging facilities. She also provided a brief overview of developments with the nidirect site aimed at
personalising the user experience and providing a single entry-point to access on-line government services.

Board Members discussed the importance of, and benefits from, the Digital Transformation Programme and noted that the greater use of digital services had helped the NICS manage staff reductions resulting from the VES programme.

3. Minutes from Previous Meeting/Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting on 30 January 2017 were agreed.

Board Members noted progress against the action points from the previous meeting.

David Sterling asked Members to continue to promote the NICS Awards and encourage nominations from their areas. Anne Breen noted that the proposals for the future delivery of corporate services had been agreed by correspondence and advised that she would issue a note summarising the decision.

Action: A Breen

4. Finance Update – Jan 2017

Brigitte Worth provided an update on the financial position at the end of January 2017 within the Department. She noted that the Department had been able to absorb the initial set-up costs for the RHI Inquiry and was forecasting a contained underspend of £0.5M in resource expenditure.

Brigitte asked Directors to continue monitoring budgets closely and to inform Finance Division of any emerging issues.

Action: DB Members

5. Departmental Financial Planning

Brigitte Worth outlined a draft scenario for a contingency Budget for 2017/18. This budget scenario had been developed on the basis of allocating departments enough funds to proceed with core functions and approved projects. However, Brigitte stressed that this approach did not have Ministerial endorsement and was therefore subject to considerable revision.

Board Members discussed the impact of a 5% reduction to the Resource Budget and considered the level of over-commitment that should be carried to allow key projects to continue. They also noted that the scenario planning for the Capital Budget would see allocations to fund contractual and essential projects only.

It was agreed that a special Stocktake meeting would be convened to discuss budget planning in more detail, once an outcome to the ongoing political deliberations was known.
6. **Change to DB Membership**

David Sterling outlined the rationale for the Deputy Departmental Solicitor being added to the membership of the DoF Departmental Board. He noted that the Departmental Solicitor, Hugh Widdis, was a Grade 2 and member of the NICS Board and it was therefore more logical that the Deputy Departmental Solicitor represent DSO on the DoF Board. David also noted that the addition of the Deputy Departmental Solicitor would potentially improve working relationships amongst Grade 3s within the Department.

Board Members discussed the proposal and agreed that the Deputy Departmental Solicitor be added to the DoF Board Membership, with the Departmental Solicitor retaining the option of attending and participating in DoF Board meetings as required. Martin Monaghan agreed to update the Board Operating Framework to reflect these changes.

**Action:** M Monaghan

7. **Strategic Issues – Discussion on challenges presented by the current political situation**

David Sterling set out the various scenarios and timescales for a political resolution following the Assembly election. He noted the challenges that the political uncertainty was causing and highlighted the lack of an agreed Budget and Rates legislation as major issues for the Department. David advised that until a new Executive and Minister were in place, it was imperative that Civil Servants continue to act with their customary integrity, impartiality, honesty and objectivity as they deliver key services to the public.

Board Members discussed the implications of the upcoming elections on Departmental business. They noted that new projects and strategies could not proceed without Ministerial approval and agreed that the best way forward was to finalise plans for such activity so that they could be considered by a new Minister, once appointed.

8. **PSG Update**

David Sterling provided a brief update from the latest PSG meeting.

9. **Staff Brief Articles**

Board Members noted and agreed the proposed articles for the next Staff Brief.

10. **Communications Update – Media Analysis**

Board Members noted the Communications Update and Media Analysis.
11. **AOB**

Anne Breen reminded Members that the Performance Management cycle year-end was approaching and she asked Members to schedule their end of year reviews and encourage compliance with the system in their areas.

*Action: DB Members*

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**MARTIN MONAGHAN**  
2 March 2017