

Land & Property Services (LPS)

Minutes of Management Board meeting

**Thursday, 25 May 2023 in Lanyon Plaza, Atrium Conference Room and by
Microsoft Teams**

Present:

Ian Snowden	Chief Executive
Christine Farrell	Registrar of Titles
Sharon Magee	Director of Rating Policy
Suzanne McLaughlin	Chief Survey Officer
Nigel McVittie	Director of Digital Services
Chris Rooney	Director of Revenues & Benefits
Gail Bennett	Valuation
Tracey Newell	Transformation & Organisational Development
Michael Thompson	LPS Statistics

Liz Semple	Rating Policy Division (Items 1 - 3 only)
Deirdre Mussen	Digital Services (Item 7 only)
Joanne McCarthy	HR Business Partner (Item 8 only)

Ian Gordon	Secretary
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Apologies Angela McGrath and Claire Jordan

Welcome/Conflicts of Interest

Ian Snowden welcomed everyone to the latest LPS Management Board meeting. No conflicts of interest declared.

1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes from the last Management Board meeting, held on 27 April 2023, were accepted as being a true record of discussions that occurred on that date.

2. Matters Arising and Action Points

The two actions listed from the previous meeting have been completed.

Ian Snowden noted that although it had not been recorded as an Action Point, Tracey Newell had undertaken to update the LPS Raid Log and circulate it to the Management Board. This had also been completed.

3. Climate Change Act (NI) and the Climate Action Plan

Liz Semple reminded Management Board of her previous paper, from February, which had provided a high-level overview of the Climate Change Act. There then followed preliminary discussions with LPS Directors to see what LPS may be able to contribute to supporting the Department's Climate Action Plan.

Liz Semple advised that since then, the Department's Green Growth Project Board had been reconfigured, with its initial meeting having taken place earlier this month. Liz further reported that there is a heightened sense of urgency across the Department, with a need to increase its contribution to the first five year Climate Action Plan.

Liz Semple then recapped on early engagement with Directors and staff in LPS and stressed the need for continued engagement across the organisation. Thought should be given as to how LPS can feed into the five-year plan and what initiatives we could, perhaps, put in place. Discussion then followed amongst Board members as to what possible plans the respective Directorates could, realistically, put in place to help the Department meet its commitment. It was agreed that Liz would continue to engage with LPS business areas to explore what actions could be taken and how we might baseline the carbon footprint of the delivery of our services. Alongside this, consideration will be given to including benefits around carbon reduction in the Nova projects' Benefits Realisation Plans.

Ian Snowden thanked Liz Semple for her informative paper, which was noted and with actions approved. It was also agreed that Liz would provide Management Board with regular updates on this topic.

4. Annual Workforce Planning Statistics 2022-2023

Tracey Newell's paper presented Management Board with an overview of the organisation's workforce planning position for the year ended 31 March 2023. The paper noted that despite a high level of recruitment activity, with 187 posts substantively filled, high churn rates meant that the net position of substantively filled posts had remained static throughout 2022/23.

The paper then highlighted the current age profile of permanent staff in post in LPS, with 23% members aged 55 or above.

Tracey Newell then looked forward to 2023/24, taking into account vacancies in LPS, the number of competitions with NICS HR for progression and the current supply position.

The paper noted that LPS faces significant workforce planning issues and associated risks in the current fiscal year. To that end a People and Resources Committee has been established to review all vacancies, workforce planning requests and take a strategic approach for future years.

Management Board noted the content of this paper. Ian Snowden thanked Tracey for the paper, which contained significant interesting and useful information. A high level summary, including details on vacancy numbers and competitions would be made available to all staff in LPS.

AP: Workforce planning information to be made available across the organisation.

5. CCCU and IMU Annual Statistics 2022/23

Tracey Newell reminded Management Board colleagues that there had been agreement to present these statistics on an annual basis, instead of a quarterly basis. The paper included details of the amount of correspondence received by CCCU and IMU; along with observations of the types of correspondence received and where there had been 'spikes' in numbers.

Ian Snowden noted that the report showed that the volume of correspondence received by LPS is driven by external factors such as the Covid grants and rate reliefs and the strikes by Council staff. He noted that correspondence will rise when the Executive and Northern Ireland Assembly return.

Chris Rooney asked if there was scope for a form of triage for complaints as some queries coming to R&B as Stage 1 complaints could be better dealt with as normal line of business queries. Gail Bennett added that this also applied to some Valuation queries/complaints. Tracey Newell said it would be useful for CCCU and staff who deal with correspondence in business areas to meet and discuss the matter.

AP: Chris Rooney and Tracey Newell to meet to discuss first point of contact complaints.

6. LPS Frontline Operations Report

Chris Rooney advised that R&B will report Gross Collectable Rates collected or discharged by the year end, this percentage reflects the overall performance of the Directorate. Cash Collection and the reduction of rating debt will be monitored at a Directorate level. At this stage, all R&B targets currently have Green RAG status.

Gail Bennett noted the good progress made by Valuation in List Defence, with an average of 51% completed across the country as at the end of April. The number is expected to rise significantly when the 1,400 education cases are resolved within the next few months.

Gail advised that the Client Services income was below profile thus far, but this had been impacted by the Easter holiday period and the launch of the new non-domestic Valuation List.

Sharon Magee reported that the Rating Policy Corporate target currently has Amber RAG status. The Director also commented on current policy development and legislation matters.

Christine Farrell commented on the excellent start made against the priority searches target. She noted that application volumes in April were approximately 500 lower than in April 2022. It is too soon to say what effect this may have on year end income figures.

Suzanne McLaughlin reported that a good start had been made by Ordnance Survey for the Orthophotography target, with forty-five sheets captured during good weather in April and May.

Suzanne McLaughlin confirmed that Ordnance Survey achieved income amounting to 97.5% of its running costs for 2022/23. Income generated was £131K higher than the previous year and the highest figure ever achieved.

Suzanne McLaughlin advised that the pilot project with Valuation has not yet been implemented as discussions with TUS are ongoing. Another meeting is scheduled for 16 June. Ian asked that all TUS' issues and management's response to them are clearly documented so that the matter can be drawn to a conclusion.

All Transformation & Organisational Development targets currently have Green RAG status, with the exception of the Contract Centre call handling, with performance in April not meeting expected customer levels. The reason appears to be that the contact centre had under-estimated the volume of calls that would be generated by rate bills issuing at the start of the month.

7. NOVA Programme Monthly Highlight Report

Deirdre Mussen summarised the latest position of the Nova programme. The overall RAG status remains at Amber because the rectification plan for the R&B Implementation project has not yet been formally signed off (this is expected imminently) and delays in the Valuation Delivery Partner project.

Deirdre Mussen cited the loss of staff as being a problem, particularly in respect of the Valuation Delivery Partner Project where vacancies are proving hard to fill.

LPS and ITS are close to signing off the rectification plan and it is hoped that the R&B Implementation plan will move to Green RAG status . This is a positive position, thanks were expressed for the significant efforts the LPS Contract Management Unit and Project Team in reaching this position.

Nigel McVittie advised on a couple of Amber streams in the Integration Services Implementation Project. The Cusher work package has been approved until the end of October. No further approval has been agreed beyond this point, to date.

8. HR Update

Joanne McCarthy provided a brief summary of the latest HR information. This included detail on resourcing, management information, performance management and HR related matters.

9 Team Brief - Key Messages

The key messages for publication in the next Team Brief are:

- Update on Climate Action Plan
- Summary of Workforce Planning Report
- Well done to all on staff working on Rate Rebate on the excellent 99.2% Financial Accuracy figure reported by DfC's Standards Assurance Unit; and
- Good start made by Ordnance Survey towards achieving the Orthophotography target.

10. Any Other Business

Nigel McVittie enquired if LPS currently had a Business Continuity Plan in place, as this was applicable to a number of IT Health Checks underway and whether this reflected the organisations current operating model. Tracey Newell explained that LPS currently has an interim BCP, which considers the potential impact of a future Pandemic and how LPS would respond.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday, 29 June 2023