

THE STANDARDS BOARD FOR ENGLAND
Board Meeting

Board Room
1st Floor, Cottons Centre
Cottons Lane, London SE1 2QG
9 January 2006
10.00am – 12.45pm

Meeting Minutes

Present: Sir Anthony Holland, Chair
Patricia Hughes, CBE, Deputy Chair
Cllr Louise Bloom
Celia Cameron, CBE
Peter Chalke, CBE
Roger Taylor

In attendance: David Prince, Chief Executive
Tim Bogan, Communications Manager
Chris Boothman, Head of Legal Services
Allister Duncan, Head of Corporate Services
Paul Hoey, Head of Policy and Guidance
Lisa Klein, Head of Investigations
Lucy Nickless, Principal Referrals Case Manager

Dan Adamson and Karen da Silva (PCS)
Clare Stephenson, Matthew Finn and Eva Antao (Staff Council)
Items 06/06 – 06/07 only. Clare Stephenson also attended for item 06/12

Observer: Anne Rehill, Senior Policy Adviser

- ACTION**
- 06/01 Apologies**
Margaret Pratt and Paul Sabapathy
- 06/02 Minutes of Board Meeting held on 16 November 2005 (Open Session)**
The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.
- 06/03 Matters Arising**
None.
- 05/04 Declaration of Board Member interests and forthcoming engagements**
Chair: Term of office as Chair of Northern Ireland Parades Commission finished on 31 December 2005 and the Chair asked for details to be removed from the website. He also reported that he has recently met with Malcolm Dean of the Guardian.
Celia Cameron: now a Director of Age Concern Norwich;
Roger Taylor: no longer Interim Associate Chief Executive at Norwich City Council; will be meeting, together with Paul Hoey, with members of Cumbria County Council to talk about declarations of interest.
- 06/05 Team Briefing**
The Board noted the report.
- 06/06 Implementing *Standards of Conduct in English Local Government: The Future***
The Board discussed this paper setting out the key considerations for the implementation of the ODPM paper *Standards of Conduct in English Local*

Government: The Future which had been circulated previously to Board members.

The Chair invited comments and representations from representatives of PCS and the Staff Council, whom he welcomed to the meeting. PCS expressed concerns about the timing of the proposed move of Policy and Guidance to Manchester; requested a postponement of decisions about compulsory redundancies in view of the many uncertainties still unresolved; and requested the Board to minimise the distress and uncertainties faced by staff during what was recognised as a difficult and inevitable transition period. Staff Council concurred, and expressed concerns about the impact on the rest of the organisation of an early move of P&G to Manchester. They were also concerned that the timing of the 1:1 interviews during January presented difficulties to staff in the absence of both a detailed transition timetable and plan and structural proposals for P&G. It was noted that confirmation was still awaited as to whether the Board's staff was included in Cabinet Office protocols and whether previous local government service could be counted in overall service calculations. While Cabinet Office and ODPM were being chased firm information had not been forthcoming.

Board members sought clarification of the points raised, and thanked all the representatives for their clear and cogent presentations.

The Board then resolved to go into private session since the issues involved discussion of staff groups and commercial consideration around property leases.

The Board then resumed open session and the Chair explained the decisions taken.

On balance, the Board decided that the first phase of the relocation to Manchester should begin with P&G moving into serviced accommodation around June 2006. This is to secure an early presence in the new permanent base, providing early certainty and continuity for existing staff intending to relocate, and to enable rapid recruitment of new permanent staff to Manchester, thus enabling the new regulatory role to be developed in time for 2008. The move also reduces floor space needs and costs in Cottons Centre which was important in terms of the negotiations about the lease.

The Board agreed proposals for the future structure of P&G as the basis of staff consultation.

The Board considered the timing of an approach to redundancies in Investigations department in order to bring the number of investigators to 18 by 1 May 2006 in line with the draft Corporate Plan. While noting the points made about the uncertainty surrounding future workloads, which could be based on estimates rather than firm data trends, the Board nevertheless reaffirmed its long-standing aim to reallocate resources from investigating cases into training and preventative work. This shift was considered necessary irrespective of the Minister's statement, which did not in itself vary the shift or the assumptions. This was because of the continuing trend to refer cases for investigations locally.

Accordingly, while the Board confirmed the need for redundancies to achieve the Corporate Plan projections and therefore could not rule out compulsory redundancies, it nevertheless agreed that invitations for voluntary redundancies from investigators be sought from 10 January 2006, closing 28 February, and for any such redundancies to be effective from Friday, 2 June 2006. This was felt to allow staff a longer period of discussion and consideration. While the timetable was extended, the Board nevertheless felt it was important that 1:1 discussions should be held so that individual's needs and concerns were articulated and understood from the outset.

The Board decided as follows on each of the recommendations:-

- a. Noted and endorsed the replies given to Open House questions by staff in

Appendix 1

- b. Considered and responded to issues raised by representatives of Staff Council and PCS at the meeting
- c. No trade press or media coverage available at the time of the meeting
- d. Agreed that the role of the strategic regulator would be discussed at the Transition Panel meeting on 1 February and taken to the Board Away Day on 21 February for discussion by full Board
- e. No further comments on the Minister's Discussion Paper
- f. Authorised the Chair or Deputy Chair (as available) to sign off any submissions need to meet the ODPM implementation timetable between Board meetings, on the understanding that these are e-mailed to all Board members for their comments
- g. Endorsed the proposed workstreams which will be monitored by the Transition Panel. Chair advised that Roger Taylor will be taking his place on the Transition Panel and that the Panel will be chaired by Patricia Hughes
- h. Agreed that redundancies should be sought from investigators on a voluntary basis but that the period will be extended by one month, i.e. consultation to 24 February 2006 and any such redundancies effective from 2 June 2006. Compulsory redundancies for investigators not ruled out.
- i. Discussed in closed session and agreed. To be kept under review by the Board alongside the eventual future structure needed for the whole organisation to meet the strategic regulatory role. Agreed that initial relocation to Manchester should begin in June 2006 with Policy and Guidance.

06/07 Feedback from Staff Council and PCS

See minute 06/06.

06/08 Final Draft Corporate Plan 2006-09

The Board noted the amendments made in relation to the strategic regulatory role. The Board agreed that the production of the guidance in relation to the new Code is the most important item this year and amended the targets in relation to the production of this guidance and its publication on the website on the day that legislation comes into force. Other priorities are to be revisited and revised to enable this to happen and to be properly resourced. The Board also acknowledged that resource would have to be "bought in" if there is difficulty producing in house.

The Board approved the final draft for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

06/09 Membership of the Audit Committee

The Board agreed that Margaret Pratt be appointed, on a short-term basis, perhaps to the end of July 2006, as an independent member of the Committee (on terms to be agreed by the Chair). A further member would be appointed from one of the two new members to be appointed early in the New Year, asking them to take up the role of Committee member as soon as possible. Finally a further Committee member to be appointed from those other new Board members to be appointed in 2006, with a start date in August 2006.

06/10 Relocation Policy

The Board agreed the Relocation Policy in Appendix A of the report.

06/11 Expenses Policy (revised)

The Board agreed the proposed changes.

06/12 Annual Assembly 2006

The Board received the report and approved the theme and approach as described. However, they suggested that flexibility is required on one of the "big debates" to allow time for discussion on the possible restructure of town and parish councils and they also wanted the new Code to have a higher profile.

Comms.Mgr

06/13 Research: the impact of the ethical agenda at a local level

The Board approved the undertaking of this project.

06/14 Chief Executive's Report

The Board:

- i. received the report;
- ii. confirmed they are content with the arrangements for the Panel Meetings on Wednesday, 1 February 2006; and
- iii. gave instructions on the arrangements for the February away day.

06/15 Performance against the Operational Plan

The Board noted the report and congratulated staff on their performance.

06/16 Corporate Services Report

The Board noted the report.

06/17 Risk Management Annual Report

The Board noted the report.

06/18 – Closed Items

06/23 The Board then went into closed session to consider confidential matters.

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 16 March 2006 at 10.00am

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Chair