

Executive Team minutes

Monday 29 July 2013

Members and other attendees present

Daniel Benjamin	Director of Corporate Services
Simon Entwisle	Director of Operations
Christopher Graham	Information Commissioner
David Smith	Deputy Commissioner and Director of Data Protection
Steve Wood	Head of Policy Delivery
Peter Bloomfield	Senior Corporate Governance Manager (agenda item 3)
Hannah Cutler	Corporate Governance Officer (secretariat)

1. Introductions and apologies

There were apologies from Graham Smith who was unable to attend.

2. Draft minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed subject to minor amendments

Actions from the 15 July: Action point two, to confirm payments of expenses for non-executives, cannot be completed until the return of the Finance Manager.

Action point five, to send a response to the Direct Marketing Commissioner, is now complete.

Action point six, to draft the proposal for the regional office structure, is now complete.

Action point one from the 24 June, for ET to feedback comments on the new Corporate Service job descriptions, is now complete.

Actions two and three from the 28 May will remain on-going.

Further to the AOB of the previous meeting, an update on the London Office move was provided. The security review is now complete and the aim is for the move is to take place after August Bank holiday.

References for the new non-executives are being returned and it is hoped that the first can start working for the ICO on the 1 September. The second new appointee will start next year.

3. Internal Audit - governance

Issues: One of the planned internal audits with Grant Thornton for 2013/14 relates to overall governance and decision making. ET was presented with a brief and scope from Grant Thornton, for information and comments.

It was clarified that the review would be undertaken by senior auditors and the standards the ICO was being measured against would include the Corporate Governance in Central Government Departments: Code of practice.

Decisions: Subject to minor amendments ET agreed with the brief.

Action point 1: Peter Bloomfield to make amendments to the internal audit brief and to liaise with Grant Thornton over scheduling in the audit meetings.

4. Proposal to integrate procurement into finance

Issues: A paper was presented recommending the integration of the Procurement Unit into the Finance team.

Decisions: ET agreed to the proposal.

5. Emerging financial planning landscape

Issues: Daniel Benjamin presented a summary of the financial challenges the ICO may face over the next three years and possible approaches to meeting these challenges.

Action point 2: Simon Entwisle to draft a paper on the history of the ICO's freedom of information funding

and trends in case work, in time for Christopher Graham's meeting with MOJ officials.

6. Any other business

Scotland and regional office structures

Issues: The structure of line management responsibility and office management in the regional offices was discussed. With a colleague leaving from the Belfast Office the need for a review of the structures has arisen. Recruiting a manager for the Belfast office was proposed as the Assistant Commissioner is only located in the office two days per week. Travel costs would also be reduced.

Decision: ET agreed to implement a new structure and role in the Belfast Office.

Other issues

- An update was provided on work on the Consulting Association. Further to this issue our position on the Cross Rail Blacklisting was discussed.
- An update on the appeal against the civil monetary penalty imposed on Scottish Borders was provided.
- Recent surveys by the Green Group and Equality and Diversity Group have highlighted staff engagement concerns. Ideas to act on this feedback were discussed.
- The business case on additional work arising from PECR for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport is almost complete.

7. Review of decisions on publication of papers

The Executive Team agreed to proactively publish the previous minutes and actions.

8. Key messages

1. Executive Team considered the financial challenges facing the ICO over the next few years. The office has already absorbed large grant in aid cuts affecting its freedom of information work, and at the same time managed to continue to provide a good service. However work-loads continue to grow and

public finances remain tight. The office will challenge further reductions. Executive Team are considering long term funding options with the aim of providing the ICO with increased financial stability and predictability.

2. We are starting our programme of 2013/14 Our internal audits. This will begin with a review of the ICO's governance and decision making processes. The results of this will be shared in the autumn.

3. The ICO believes that the system for issuing monetary penalties under PECR needs to be revised to reflect the fact that only a relatively few cases can be said to cause substantial distress. We have therefore submitted a business case to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport arguing for a reduction in the threshold so that breaches that are a nuisance or annoyance could prompt action. The work is a good example of cross office collaboration.