

Executive Team minutes

Monday 1 September 2014

Members and other attendees present

Simon Entwisle	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Christopher Graham	Information Commissioner (chair)
David Smith	Deputy Commissioner and Director of Data Protection
Graham Smith	Deputy Commissioner and Director of Freedom of Information
Peter Bloomfield	Senior Corporate Governance Manager (secretariat)
Neil Bostock	Corporate Governance Officer (secretariat)

1. Introductions and apologies

- 1.1. There were no introductions or apologies.

2. Matters arising from the previous meeting

Minutes

- 1.2. The minutes from the last meeting were agreed.

Action points

- 1.3. All action points have been cleared.
- 1.4. There was discussion of the forthcoming visit of Rt Hon Simon Hughes MP, Minister of State at the Ministry of Justice. Christopher Graham would draft a schedule for the visit and circulate it to Executive Team members for comment.

3. Joint Committee

Issue

- 1.5. Executive Team discussed the agenda for the next Joint Committee meeting with trade union representatives on 3 September. Consideration was given to the question of insurance and back-up arrangements for staff travelling abroad.
- 1.6. It was also reported that as yet there had been no decision from the Ministry of Justice on the proposed pay remit.

Decisions

- 1.7. No decisions were necessary.

Actions

- 1.8. Simon Entwisle to re-check with the Ministry of Justice the position on the insurance status of staff travelling abroad (especially outside the EU).

4. Accommodation allowance

Issue

- 4.1. The paper considered the possibility of the ICO paying an accommodation allowance on a temporary basis to a member of staff. The allowance would be a contribution towards the rent of a flat in Brussels and would represent a saving to the ICO on hotel expenses when the member of staff visited Brussels for work purposes and had to stay overnight. The extent of the saving depended on the number of overnight stays required.
- 4.2. Whether or not the allowance covered subsistence was also raised. In certain circumstances it would still be right to pay subsistence.

Decisions

- 4.3. Executive Team agreed the allowance on a trial basis for six months after which it would be reviewed. It was also agreed that subsistence could be paid in certain circumstances, particularly when several colleagues needed to confer before attending meetings.

Actions

- 4.4. David Smith to determine (with Michael Collins) the appropriate level of payment in the light of a realistic estimate of the overnights likely to be required. The arrangement and amount of the allowance to be reviewed in six months time (February 2015).

5. Succession planning

Issue

- 5.1. The Executive Team had already identified as a risk the fact that retaining and recruiting good staff was getting more difficult as the economy recovered. However there remained many existing staff with the potential to do well at higher grades if given the right development opportunities.
- 5.2. The paper presented recommended that a sub-group of the Leadership Group be established to address succession planning and the development of leadership skills.

Decisions

- 5.3. It was agreed that a sub-group of Leadership Group would be established to take this work forward.
- 5.4. Expressions of interest would be invited from Leadership Group and at group manager level.

Actions

- 5.5. Graham Smith to invite expressions of interest in being members of the sub-group from Leadership Group members and to ensure the sub-group is established.

6. Website rebuild - update

Issue

- 6.1. Simon Entwisle reported that, due to substantial increases in cost estimates, extra funding would be required to complete the website re-build as planned.
- 6.2. It would be possible to deliver an enhanced user experience, but the transactional capacity might have to follow the development of the new platform.
- 6.3. There were concerns that the Project Board had been used more as a user group than for robust governance.

Decisions

- 6.4. It was agreed that the website rebuild should continue, with extra functionality introduced when it could be afforded. Simon Entwisle would chair the project board.

Actions

- 6.3 Christopher Graham and Simon Entwisle to meet to consider how best to address the issues of project management and governance.

7. Any other business

- 7.1. It was reported that the Department of Communications, Media and Sport had still not launched the promised consultation on lowering the threshold at which the ICO could issue civil monetary penalties for breaches of the Privacy in Electronic Communications Regulations (ie for spam texts and nuisance telephone calls). The unexplained delay was a source of disappointment and some frustration to the office.
- 7.2. Simon Entwisle reported that the replacement of the finance IT system was on track. The project was currently at the procurement stage.

8. Key messages

The key messages from Monday's Executive Team meeting are:

- The upcoming agenda for Joint Committee was discussed. Particular attention was paid to arrangements for insurance and back up for staff travelling abroad.
- A paper was presented on the subject of developing leadership skills across the ICO. This forms part of a wider development programme for all staff.
- Further discussion took place on progress with the website rebuild project.