



Extraordinary Meeting of the Board

Thursday 2nd May 2024 9am
MS Teams

Members

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| Malcolm Beatty OBE | Board Member |
| Richard Greenhous | Chief of Staff |
| Julie Hill MBE | Board Member |
| Professor Dan Laffoley | Board Member |
| Dr Paul Leinster CBE | Board Member |
| Professor Richard Macrory CBE | Board Member |
| Natalie Prosser | Chief Executive |
| Dame Glenys Stacey | Chair |

OEP Attendees

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| Peter Ashford | General Counsel |
| Mike Fox | Head of Communications and Strategic Relations |
| Angel Lai | Head of Finance and Corporate Services |
| Andy Lester | Head of Business Strategy and Planning |
| Professor Robbie McDonald | Chief Insights Officer |
| Craig McGuicken | Northern Ireland Lead |
| Helen Venn | Chief Regulatory Officer |

24.36 Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

There were no apologies of absence and no new declarations of interest.

24.37 Business Plan, Corporate Plan and Budget

The Board considered the draft budget, business plan and corporate plan. We have yet to receive confirmation of the funding we will receive from DAERA in the year ahead, so the Board considered the implications in this regard as it reviewed the proposals developed.

In England, we have received some additional funding compared to 2023/24, but the cap on our headcount is unchanged. There is no equivalent constraint in Northern Ireland. A small

amount of additional FTE is required to deliver the plans developed across the two jurisdictions. Were we to receive the same or additional funding in Northern Ireland, we may have some additional flexibility to recruit without exceeding the permitted headcount overall.

The Board considered the approach to recruitment proposed. It received assurance that the proposals would allow the Executive to manage headcount within the constraints overall, whilst providing the flexibility to resource the intended work programme. It accepted the approach proposed.

The Board considered changes proposed in the business plan since its last review, as a result of slightly more resource being provided in England, revised assumptions on DAERA funding, and the progress in delivery of existing commitments.

The Board welcomed the proposed chemicals work programme and queried its scale and scope. It was clarified that this work will be evidence gathering in its first phase. The Board judged this should be clearer in the corporate plan as it is likely to attract interest from those who may wish we could do more, sooner. It was noted that the delegation policy means that all strategically significant projects are considered by the Board before initiation.

The Board sought clarity of the OEP's remit to conduct the proposed work in respect of green finance. Green finance is said to be a key enabler of Government's plans for delivery of the EIP and targets, particularly biodiversity targets. It therefore aligns with our EIP progress reporting in England. General Counsel will prepare a note to the Board to clarify the OEP's remit to conduct the proposed work in respect of green finance. ACTION General Counsel

The Board discussed the need to have sufficient capacity for compliance and investigations activities, and to respond to additional questions that might arise as a result of the current investigation outcomes. It received assurance on the capacity reserved, and the ability to change course and reprioritise in year if needed.

The Board reviewed the proposed budget and business plan for Northern Ireland and considered the plans to reduce work in the event of receiving less funding from DAERA than had been assumed. It acknowledged the difficult choices that might result, and endorsed the proposals made.

The Board noted the difference in approach to develop an over-programmed business plan than the previous year. The Board discussed the maturity of the organisation in budgeting, and financial management, and recognised improvements in the way we are able to procure. The Board sought assurance on the key risk factors to the budget, which include uncertain public sector pay awards, utility costs and the impact of a general election on delivery plans.

The Board discussed the Corporate Plan. It felt the allocation of resources to environmental themes could be clearer. In setting this out, the Board judged it could be even clearer which priorities the OEP was not progressing – for example, air quality and waste management.

The Board AGREED the budget and business plan for 2024/25 and the proposals for how the plan for Northern Ireland would be varied if the sums received from DAERA are lower than the likely case presented.

The Board AGREED to delegate approval of variations to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair.

The Board considered and commented on the draft corporate plan and AGREED to delegate approval of the final corporate plan to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair.

24.38 Any other business

There was no other business.