

EONI MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING

TUESDAY 25 AUGUST 2009 at 10.00AM

CONFERENCE ROOM

MINUTES

Members:

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO)
Assistant Chief Electoral Officer (ACEO(E))
Assistant Chief Electoral Officer (ACEO(R))
Head of Corporate Services (HoCS)

In attendance:

PA to CEO
NIPSA REPS (item1-11,14)
HR Officer (item 5-7)
Information Officer (item 11)

Apologies: Head of Information Services (HoIS)

		<u>ACTION</u>
1.	<p><u>Matters arising – Action Points</u></p> <p>Minutes of the June Board were agreed out of Board on 22 July 2009.</p> <p>Action points were reviewed – matters arising, on going actions and new action points have been recorded on the Board Action Point report.</p> <p>Action 2 – the CEO asked for the papers on the proposed breakdown of this year’s budgets to be passed to him for approval. Once the CEO has received the papers a meeting will be arranged between the CEO, HoCS and Finance Officer.</p> <p>Action 4 – all information gathered on the running of Finance Departments in other organisations should be passed to the CEO.</p> <p>Action 7 – The HoCS will take forward all the necessary actions to renew the contract for the mystery shopper.</p> <p>Action 13 – the ACEO(R) will have a paper produced showing Helpline activity at different times of the day in the pre-election period and on polling day. This would inform future staffing decisions.</p>	<p>HoCS</p> <p>HoCS</p> <p>HoCS</p> <p>ACEO(R)</p>

	<p>European Elections.</p> <p><u>Staff Survey</u> – the Board reviewed the draft Staff Survey Action Plan. A number of amendments have been identified. One area identified was team briefings. A was agreed that all notes from team briefings should be copied to the appropriate line manager and that the conduct of team briefings will be added to as an additional objective on all job plans. The line managers will write to the AEOs to inform them of this.</p> <p>The CEO asked the HR Officer to further consider the practicalities of home working for those who do not have broadband access and produce a report outlining the options.</p> <p>Subject to the agreed amendments the Board agreed the Staff Survey Action Plan. Once the amendments have been completed the Plan will be issued to all staff.</p> <p><u>Recruitment</u> – the HR Officer took the Board through the current recruitment activity and staff transfers.</p>	<p>ACEO(E)/ ACEO(R)</p> <p>HR Officer</p> <p>HR Officer</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p><u>Notification & Filling of Internal Vacancies</u></p> <p>The ACEO(E) stated at after the recent internal moves it had been reported to her that there was a feeling amongst the staff that it would be more transparent if everyone was advised of internal vacancies. It is proposed that EONI revert to the previous practice of advising all staff of every vacancy. There followed a discussion on the implications of returning to the old system and the HR Officer highlighted that this could mean posts will take longer to fill. The NIPSA Reps contributed with the unions views</p> <p>After discussion the Board agreed that –</p> <p>(1) the operation of the transfer list will continue. Anyone wishing to be considered for a transfer should contact HR to be added to the list.</p> <p>(2) when a vacancy arises the HR Officer will notify all those on the transfer list at the same grade or higher of the vacancy. This would ensure that staff on the list had an opportunity to consider the vacancy if they had been on leave.</p>	

	<p>(3) a notice will be issued to all staff giving details of the post and a deadline of 14 days will be imposed for expressions of interest.</p> <p>The HR Officer will notify staff of the Board's decision, with NIPSA approval, and advise them of the new procedures. The policy will be revised in due course.</p>	<p>HR Officer</p>
<p>14.</p>	<p><u>Transfer of Responsibility for Public Awareness</u> (item taken along with item 7)</p> <p>The CEO reported that it had now been agreed in principle with the Electoral Commission, at Board level and the NIO that responsibility for public awareness will transfer to the CEO as soon as practicable after the General Election. This is likely to happen by August 2010.</p> <p>The CEO advised that the responsibility for public awareness will include TV, Press, radio and other advertising, research and evaluating the effectiveness of campaigns. He outlined how much work is involved in undertaking public awareness and what he envisaged EONI would need with regard to advertising over the coming year. He stated that it requires very specialist skills to do this job and that no one in EONI has the required skill level to handle this work. He advised when devolution takes place next year EONI will lose the support of the NIO Press Office. The CEO has assessed that the work currently undertaken by the NIO Press Office, the public awareness responsibility and internal communication would create one full time post at B1 level/ Senior Information Officer equivalent.</p> <p>The CEO outlined the 3 possible options for filling this post: external recruitment, secondment from the NICS Press Office for a period of 2 years or advertising for a fixed term contract with consideration for a secondment. The CEO asked the Board for their views on the options. There followed an in-depth discussion on the implications of each option. The NIPSA reps stated that from a NIPSA point of view the recruitment for the post should be as open a competition as possible.</p> <p>After discussion the Board agreed that if the</p>	

	<p>transfer of public awareness responsibility went ahead the post should be created and advertised in an open competition, with a secondment opportunity available for those currently working in the public service where their employer agreed.</p> <p>The Board then discussed the timing of this post and agreed that the person should be in post for March 2010. This is necessary so that they can prepare the tender documents required for the procurement of the TV adverts etc required for the 2011 elections. It will allow them to gain valuable experience during the General Election and develop good organisational awareness. The CEO noted the views of the Board which will inform his ongoing discussions with the Commission and the NIO.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p><u>Creation of Training Officer Post</u> (minutes for this item by CEO)</p> <p>The CEO then turned to item 7 of the agenda. He explained that the title was rather misleading. It was not proposed that there should be any new training officer post. Rather what was proposed was an internal re-structuring, largely as a result of the proposed SIO post, to free up time of an existing staff member to undertake training duties. The proposal he would outline would also allow an existing anomaly to be addressed.</p> <p>The CEO advised the Board that in the Report on the 2005 elections the Electoral Commission recommended the creation of a Training Officer post. This was originally dismissed by his predecessor. The CEO said that times have now changed with the availability of the AEA qualification and with the ACEO(E) leaving a trainer is required to continue with the delivery of this training. Buying in the training from AEA would cost around £10k pa. The CEO said EONI is good at sourcing external training but not providing internal training.</p> <p>At present the Helpline supervisor is the same grade as the staff being supervised. A supervisory allowance is payable. Line management responsibility for all the Helpline staff rests with the Information Officer and is, given the grade difference, not a sensible use of</p>	

the time of that post holder. To address this anomaly it is proposed to transfer line management responsibility for the Helpline staff to the Helpline Supervisor post. Whilst it would have to be confirmed by a JEGS assessment, it was likely that the post would be re-graded to EO2 equivalent. The post holder would continue to report to the Information Officer.

That change would free up a substantial amount of time of the Information Officer post. The transfer of the media work to the proposed SIO post would free up a further small amount of time. Overall it was assessed that the remaining existing work of the post (records management, website, TRIM, FOI, DPA, NFI) would require only around 50% of a B2 equivalent's time.

It was proposed to seize the opportunity by making the holder of the current Information Officer post responsible, along with the remaining duties, for training.

The training role would include –

- delivery of AEA training from 2010/11 onwards
- delivery of such other in-house training as time allowed
- quality assurance of other intended training.

The NIPSA representatives asked why the post was not being put out for competition. The CEO responded that open competition would have been appropriate if a new post was being created. That was not the case. What was proposed was a simple re-allocation of the duties of an existing post. It would be wrong to adapt a procedure that would disadvantage the incumbent of the post concerned. If the proposals were implemented any further vacancies would be filled in the normal way.

The CEO reminded the Board that the ability to deliver the AEA training alone in-house would save EONI considerable sums each year. The proposed SIO equivalent post will be fully funded from money transferred from the Electoral Commission.

	<p>Although no firm decision can be taken on these proposals until the proposed transfer of public awareness responsibility from the Commission is further advanced it had been necessary, with her agreement, to arrange appropriate training for the current Information Officer so that she could commence work if the proposal went ahead. The CEO undertook to consider any representations received when taking a final decision.</p>	
8.	<p><u>Finance Report</u></p> <p>The HoCS took the Board through the Budget Centre Report for July 2009. She advised the budget is on target and that the only concern at this time is the shortfall on non-cash costs. She will contact Vida Donnelly regarding this shortfall.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract for the Transportation of Election Material <p>After discussion the Board agree to continue the contract for the transportation of election material. The HoCS will take forward the necessary actions.</p>	<p>HoCS</p> <p>HoCS</p>
9	<p><u>Audit Update</u></p> <p>The HoCS took the Board through the Audit Update Report. She advised that feedback had been received from both Area Offices visited by the auditors. The auditors are due to visit HQ at the end of September. She highlighted that there are two areas of concern, the IT Disaster Recovery Plan and the Finance Procedures Manual, must be completed before they arrive.</p> <p>The ACEO(E) advised that dates had been set for the IT Disaster Recovery Plan but had to be postponed because of the election. She will take forward the necessary action to have this completed before the end of September.</p> <p>The HoCS and the Finance Officer will have the Finance Procedures Manual finalised before the auditors visit.</p>	<p>ACEO(E)</p> <p>HoCS/ Finance Officer</p>
10.	<p><u>Fire Risk Assessment – St. Anne’s House</u></p> <p>The HoCS advised that HQ is now ready for the</p>	<p>HoCS</p>

	<p>fire risk assessment review, which will take place next month. Once this has been completed she will take forward the necessary actions to get the Area Offices ready for review.</p>	
11.	<p><u>Customer Feedback Report</u></p> <p>The Information Officer advised that over 1,200 responses had been received from the customer satisfaction questionnaire. On analysis it showed, overall, customer service remains high.</p> <p>There were also over 3,000 responses received from the election comment cards from polling stations. The comments have been collated and forwarded to the AEOs for information and consideration. It was agreed that the Information Officer should send a copy of the analysis to Margaret Lavery in the Electoral Commission for use in the election report.</p> <p>The mystery shoppers report has also showed a very high level of customer service.</p>	<p>Information Officer</p>
12.	<p><u>Charter Mark Update</u></p> <p>The ACEO(E) reported that the Charter Mark team had met with Paul Hindley on 20 August to discuss how EONI would map across to the new Customer Service Excellence (CSE). The ACEO(E) advised there are 5 criteria for the new CSE and it differs from the Charter Mark criteria. She advised that EONI must move to the new standards by June 2011. The preferred course of action would be to do a preparation assessment in the next year. She also highlighted the strategies that need to be put in place to achieve CSE such as engaging with customers and customer focus.</p> <p>As the ACEO(E) will be leaving EONI at the end of September she advised the ACEO(R) will take over as chair of the Charter Mark Team. The new AEO in Newtownabbey will also join the team.</p>	
13.	<p><u>Good Relations Strategy Update</u></p> <p>The ACEO(E) advised the Good Relations Strategy had been updated taking into account comments received. She highlighted the areas of</p>	

	<p>change. After discussion the Board agreed to adopt the Good Relations Strategy and Action Plan for 2009/10. It was also agreed that this Plan should be reviewed annually.</p> <p>The ACEO(E) will forward the Good Relations Strategy and Action Plan to all EONI staff and arrange for it to be displayed on the website.</p>	ACEO(E)
15.	<p><u>Risk Register Update</u></p> <p>The current risks were reviewed and updated by the Board. The amended risk register will be circulated out of Board for approval.</p>	CEO
16.	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <p>This will be the ACEO(E) last attendance at an EONI Board meeting before she leaves to take up a new challenge. The CEO said EONI was indebted to her for her work in the organisation throughout the years and this was endorsed by the Board.</p>	
12.	<p><u>Next Meeting</u></p> <p>Next meeting – Thursday 24 September 2009 at 10.00am</p>	

The meeting concluded at 1.10pm

Approved out of Board on 11 September 2009

