



Prepared by: Information Officer

Staff Consultation

1. The Issue

Improved consultation with staff.

2. Background

As a result of the recent staff survey report, in which it was found that less than half of staff are satisfied with the current decision making process within EONI, I have been asked to review the staff consultation process. In particular, I have been asked to incorporate an internal protocol for consulting staff before decisions are taken by the Management Board.

3. Existing Policy and Practice

At present, if a change in policy or procedure is suggested, the relevant member of staff is asked to draft a Management Board paper for discussion at the Board. This paper is not distributed to all staff, even if it will potentially affect them. Board members discuss the issue at the Board and make the final decision as to whether the new policy/procedure is implemented. The result of the discussion is reported in the Management Board minutes which, although available in the relevant folder in TRIM, are distributed only to Board Members by email. Staff are then informed of the forthcoming change in policy/procedure, without having had an opportunity to contribute to the discussion.

4. Proposal

In order to improve consultation with staff, it is proposed that any Management Board papers relating to possible changes in policy/procedure be distributed to all staff at least two weeks before the Board. Staff should be asked for their views on the proposed changes and their reasoning behind it. They should be given one week to respond and their comments should be annexed to the Management Board paper and taken into account during discussions at the Board. The decision taken and reasoning behind it should be clearly set out in the Board minutes which would then be distributed to all staff via email.

The CEO has stipulated that there should be an exception allowing a new policy or procedure to be introduced without staff consultation. This could be necessary, for example, because it has to be introduced immediately or it is not appropriate to seek views on it. Any exceptions would apply only very rarely.

Implementation of this procedure should ensure that, for the most part, staff are informed of any potential changes and given an opportunity to contribute to the discussion. If this new process is adopted it will be written into the EONI Communications Strategy.

5. **Application of Section 75**
N/A
6. **Human Rights Considerations**
N/A
7. **Resource Implications**
N/A
8. **Personnel Implications**
N/A
9. **Presentation/ media issues**
N/A
10. **Recommendations to the Board**

The Board should:

- a. Discuss the proposal and agree the outcome.

Signed



Information Officer

Date

28 October 2009

Responses Received:

Liz Murray:

I think the timescales are quite restrictive. Notifying staff 2 weeks before the meeting is quite long. I had to prepare a paper once one week before the actual meeting.

The papers have to be printed either the Monday or Tuesday before the actual meeting so there is only 3 full weeks between meetings approx.

If staff have to be informed 2 full weeks before the meeting we actually only have 1 full week to propose any papers.

One week for consultation is quite long too as the author may want to include valid comments received back in the paper before bringing it to the Board.

I just think there shouldn't be a strict timetable. Each proposal should be considered separately. Users should be sent a paper as soon as it is available and according to the date for finalisation the response date should be set.

CEO - Draft wording of new consultation procedure:

1. Wherever reasonably practicable the Management Board or Chief Electoral Officer will consult staff before taking any decision.
2. It is envisaged that consultation will take place in by far the majority of decisions. Exceptions will include matters –
 - relating to individual members of staff
 - on which an immediate decision is required
 - in respect of which security requirements make consultation inappropriate
 - concerning the budget.
3. Where consultation is possible –
 - the Board paper or a note of the issue will be sent to all members of staff and an initiation to comment within seven days
 - all responses received will be considered by the Board/CEO in taking the decision.
4. The process will be introduced with effect from XX and will be reviewed as part of the EONI Communications Strategy.