

Management Board Meeting Minutes
Quarterly Half Day Session, Mespil Hotel
Monday 25 March 2019, 9.30 a.m.

Attendance: Secretary General (Fergal Lynch), Bernie McNally, Dermot Ryan, Éimear Fisher and Michelle Shannon. Miriam Kenna reporting.

POs Attending: Paul Fay and Gordon Gaffney

1. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of meeting of 11 March 2019 were agreed, subject to one text change.

2. Matters arising

FL confirmed that he had issued an e-mail to POs in relation to a meeting on international engagements within DCYA, following the discussion at the meeting of 11 March.

3. Strategic Priorities for the Department: Taking Stock

FL welcomed all participants to the first Quarterly meeting of the MB in a new format. He proposed to use this meeting as a reflective session, to take stock of where the Department is, to consider strategic priorities and to review the Department's Mission Statement and Values. A key concern would be to ensure that the Department has a clear path for the future, to be set out ultimately in its next Statement of Strategy.

The MB considered a paper by the SG circulated in advance, reflecting on the outcome of the Business Planning sessions with units and considering the possible next steps in relation to identifying the Department's priorities for the next three to five years.

The MB also considered the mission statement, vision and strategic objectives of the Department as set out in the current Statement of Strategy 2016-2019, as well as the section on values, behaviours and culture of the Department.

Among the agreed suggestions were:

- we should examine the language of the current document, and seek to make it less formal than a standard Departmental document;
- the vision and strategic objectives should focus particularly on the needs of children and young people including championing their well being;
- it should reflect more clearly our concern for the most disadvantaged children, including those who have come to the attention of the youth justice system;
- it should encompass the legacy issues that now form a significant part of the Departments work, such as the Commission on Mother and Baby Homes and the illegal registrations issues; and
- it should reflect the Department's concern for both progressive universalism (eg PPFS) and targeted interventions for the most vulnerable.

It was agreed that the MB would invite all POs to a discussion of the mission statement, vision, strategic objectives and values, behaviours and culture of the Department, with a view to revising the version set out in the current SoS 2016 – 2019. The meeting would be held on the 16 April, and the MB members would lead a discussion of the issues, drawing on the points made during the current discussion. It was suggested that this session could be supported by a survey/consultation mechanism to be agreed, possibly through Survey Monkey or a similar such platform, reaching all DCYA staff creating a culture of inclusion regardless of grade, with the possibility of the results being an item for a future Town Hall.

Each MB member presented on the priorities in their respective areas, with reference to key interdependencies, outcomes and risks. In particular there was a focus on how items could be prioritised in the face of many competing demands and finite resources, including staffing.

There was a discussion drawing on the themes summarised in the SG's paper, on the path that the Department should seek to set out for the coming years. There was a consensus that the Department should not simply pause or stop its current growth phase entirely, but also a concern that any further expansion must be based on the assessment of risk, the implications for staff, and a focus on quality and safety in further development. A number of MB members were concerned that the costs of not seeking the resources required to meet key priorities would exceed any benefits of putting these priorities on hold. Clearly, the necessary resources including staffing and accommodation would need to be secured for these priorities, but the Department should seek them in Budget 2020 and beyond.

A key concern was the welfare and well-being of staff, which needed to be central to any decisions about workloads and implementation of priorities.

It was agreed that the challenge would be for a modest further expansion, in which the Department would seek to reach an appropriate "state of equilibrium" for the years ahead. The matter would be considered further by the MB at future meetings.

4. For Noting

Internal Audit reports in relation to follow up reviews of Appropriation Account Preparation and Tusla Payments process were noted.

HR Unit's Monthly KPI report for February was noted.

5. AOB

FL wished Michelle Shannon the very best for her forthcoming retirement. He thanked her for her significant and continuing contribution to the Department and the wider civil service over the course of a very full career.

FL said he would attend a meeting of Secretaries General with the Oireachtas Disability Group 3 April.

FL thanked the MB for the PAC briefing notes he had received to date and noted their quality.

6. Next Meeting

The next MB meeting was confirmed for Monday 8 April at 10.30.