

Civil Service Management Board – 23rd March 2018

The list of attendance is appended.

1. Work of the Performance Review Group for SGs (Action 12)

Bernie Gray (Civil Service Accountability Board member) joined the meeting to provide some feedback on the process and to identify actions that might be taken forward following the first full Performance Review by the Performance Review Group comprising Martin Fraser, Robert Watt and Bernie Gray.

It was noted that all review meetings were concluded bar one (those brand new to post). In terms of overall reflections, the following points were made:-

- The Performance Review Process has brought transparency to the challenges being faced, the range of approaches and perspectives across the system. The demands of individual roles vary considerably and therefore the competencies required are significantly different in terms of emphasis. It was also noted that, even within Departments, demands and environmental factors can change significantly over time.
- Overall, the Performance Review Group and the participants found the opportunity for a focus on the individual as very welcome, a rare opportunity and a critical feedback loop – with both the opportunity to reflect and seek feedback from authoritative sources.
- It was noted that the role of Ministers in the process is of value. Noting the nature of the engagement varied, it is important to keep this as part of the process.
- CSMB is a key support and of significant value to the group. The CSMB process and work programme assists SGs by providing a key network for sharing of experience and expertise.

For future iterations of the process the following were noted:

- The approach worked well as it gave an opportunity for the reality of the challenges being faced by people to come through the discussion.
- 180 / 360 feedback processes should be considered in advance of next review. Useful for reflection but also as a role model for the management team and the organisation.
- Timing of the process of engagement is critical and it was noted that scheduling discussions when Dail was not sitting was crucial to concluding the process efficiently.

It was agreed that individuals will be provided with a summary of their individual discussion – for the purposes of benchmarking and as a reference point for next year.

It was also noted that:

- An added value of process has been to identify development needs and to encourage investment in the SG leadership cadre. It was noted that a menu of options is being developed

to support Secretaries General (including consideration of specific issues relating to induction for new appointees and those reaching end-of-term).

- Experience and “lessons learned” within the group are enormous and efforts might be made to capture that in a more structured way.

Finally, it was noted that the process needs to be sustainable for the future. It was acknowledged that the input of an external person was very important to the development and implementation of the process. It was also acknowledged that the commitment required from an outside person is enormous in terms of developing an understanding of the context and building up trust. This also needs to be recognised. The Group thanked Bernie Gray for her work to date and her reflections on the process.

2. Employee Engagement Survey (Action 25)

Padraig Dalton led the discussion and the following points were emphasised:-

- The scale of this survey should be noted as this is a considerable achievement (- 38,000 people with 21,000 respondents). The input of respondents, as well as the work of the CSO team and the PMO was commended.
- This is a comparable survey with a baseline reference point. However, within departments year on year comparisons will need to be considered in the context of both restructuring and level of “churn” experienced by individual organisations.
- The improvements in a number of areas were noted. PD commented that changes on issues over such a short timescale would not normally be expected. Therefore the changes are significant. Some of these measures take significant effort simply to maintain scores. Therefore to see changes and improvements in certain areas (such as well-being) reflect significant effort. All “challenging” scores (i.e. those that are the lowest scoring) still show positive improvements in this year.
- Largest increases would appear to reflect the CSMB efforts and engagement on key themes – although the full impact of some of those actions have not fully been realised yet.
- The improvement in response rate itself was also noted. PD suggested this should be seen as a sign of engagement across the system. The higher response rate should also give greater confidence the results. However, he noted that 80% response rate is very good for a survey of this nature and a reasonable aspiration over time. Caution is required in terms of how we might seek to maximise response rates. It was also noted that the success in achieving this level of improvement in response rate supported the decision to carry out the survey biennially as opposed to annually.

It was agreed that the survey provides an opportunity to consider CSMB next phase of Renewal work. In particular, the lower scores in the area of innovation and the linked issues of risk management and risk appetite were mentioned for consideration. A further paper on how the survey results can inform the CSMB work programme will be developed by a small working group.

It was noted that the survey would be launched on 28th March 2018. It was noted that staff should be informed in advance of the official launch. PMO will provide material for circulation to staff.

3. Performance Management - Absenteeism (Action 11)

The draft letter was agreed for issue to all Secretaries General and Heads of Office advising them of:

- The findings of the CSMB sub-group on Absence Management;
- The views of the CSMB sub-group that performance-management as a whole needs to be addressed and that there is a need to drive cultural change within each organisation so that people are managed effectively from the top-down;
- That the CSMB sub-group, drawing heavily on the People Strategy for the Civil Service has formulated an Absence Management Plan to assist in bringing about change in civil service organisations.

It was noted that while individual line managers are key, that the process must begin with a cascade approach, building up confidence and capacity right to embed strong, consistent and effective performance management as the norm within the system.

4. Civil Service Recruitment Review

Fiona Tierney provided a detailed presentation on 2017 Recruitment Activity data. The following points were noted as part of the discussion:-

- The large scale recruitment being supported by PAS is a significant change in the overall operational requirements and scale. This includes significant levels of recruitment by PAS for bodies outside of the core Civil Service. PAS has had to significantly change its processes to be more client-focused and to manage increasing complexity of recruitment requirements as well as volume.
- There is still some way to go in achieving an effective and consistent approach to workforce planning across the Civil Service.
- It was also noted that there is significant internal churn generally.
- A number of trends were noted including :-
 - Application levels are holding up very well overall – apart from maybe specialist roles but even these are holding reasonably well.
 - 70% of AO in last panel were existing Civil Servants.
 - Success rates for competition for AP/PO level suggests that these are also largely internal candidates which, in turn, suggests we are not fully succeeding in bringing in greater diversity from outside the system despite open recruitment.

A number of specific issues were noted for CSMB consideration. Firstly, there are discrepancies between workforce planning data, experienced seasonality of demand and PAS analysis of workload vis-a-vis workforce plans. There is no trend to give predictability year on year as yet. It was agreed there is a need to improve the overall workforce planning process and to achieve greater consistency in approach if PAS are going to be responsive to the CS demands. David Cagney indicated that work is ongoing in improving and simplifying the process for Departments.

A second issue which was raised was the graduate level recruitment (AO grade). These have been at the same level as last year but given the numbers of internal applicants coming through this process there may be a need to examine AO/graduate recruitment generally; the role of AOs; and the

increasing difficulty in meeting demands for HEOs. The issue of internships/apprenticeships for the civil service was also discussed.

It was acknowledged that the presentation is a very useful lens for looking at the issues of recruitment and retention across the system. It was noted that it does not take account of recruitment processes outside of PAS. David Cagney confirmed that DPER are currently in the process of completing the picture. He noted that the issues discussed are all under active consideration in the context of the implementation of the HR strategy. It was agreed that once the broader analysis is complete a paper on the key issues regarding recruitment/retention and the responses to them will be submitted for further consideration by the CSMB.

5. Strategic Communications Update

SG updated on progress on completion report on Review for submission to the Taoiseach.

6. Programme Director's Monthly Report

The Programme Director's report was noted including the provisional date of 22nd November for the 2018 Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards which will be held in St. Patrick's Hall Dublin Castle.

7. AOB

- It was noted that although the Talent Management reviews for the PO cadre is not fully completed, it is intended to press ahead with planning for a further programme to be run by Roffey Park. A paper will be available for the next meeting.
- It was also noted that POs who completed the first programme are anxious to engage with the CSMB process.
- It was noted that Away Day session will likely be on a new date in May.

23 March 2018

Attendance

Martin Fraser, D\Taoiseach
Robert Watt, D\PER (Chair)
Jim Breslin, D\Health
Maurice Buckley, OPW
Niall Burgess, D\FA&T
Niall Cody, Revenue
Pádraig Dalton, CSO
Graham Doyle, D\TTS
Mark Griffin, D\CCA
Katherine Licken, D\CHG
Fergal Lynch, D\CYA
John McCarthy, D\HPLG
John McKeon, D\EASP
Oonagh McPhillips, D\JE
Derek Moran, D\Finance
Aidan O'Driscoll, D\AFM
Seán Ó Foghlú, D\ES
Maurice Quinn, D\Defence
Orlaigh Quinn, D\BEI
Fiona Tierney, PAS

Apologies

Kevin McCarthy, D/R&CD
Damien Moloney, AGO

Other/Secretariat

Bernie Gray, Civil Service Accountability Board / Performance Review Group
Liz Canavan, D\Taoiseach
Lucy Fallon-Byrne, D\PER
David Cagney, D\PER