

Management Board Meeting Minutes

Monday 2 December 2019

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

1. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of meeting of 18 November 2019 were agreed with minor amendments.

2. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Early Years Finance Governance and Reform – Systems review.

Gordon Gaffney, Anne-Marie Brooks, Tim Heneghan, Orla Corrigan, Toby Wolfe and Oisín Murphy attended for this item. BMcN introduced and GG presented on a detailed paper setting out for discussion the proposed approach to a review of the Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare Operating System. He outlined the background, including objectives, scope, principles, outputs and a proposal for the conduct of the review.

The MB welcomed the paper and offered comments and questions, which were dealt with by the EY team. Among the main issues discussed were: recognition of the complexity of the project and of the significant implications for DCYA, Pobal, CCCs, VCOs and the system as a whole; the value of specifying a number of options for future delivery while not implying support for or rejection of any one of them, including any single agency option; the value of allowing 'form to follow function' in developing options; the need for the Department to take a clear lead so as to give cohesion to the whole process, while still allowing for genuine external input; the exact role of the IDG and the external consultancy in proposing and ultimately recommending options; and the importance of taking full account of the risks involved – both of the current system and of anything that would replace it. Ultimately, the principal objective was to develop and implement an operating model that was best for children and families.

There was a discussion about membership of the IDG, including the use of external expertise in addition to the consultancy support that would be commissioned. There was also a discussion of how best to achieve an effective consultation process, including the possibility of a consultative group that would feed into the IDG's work. In addition, the link with the current and any future role of Tusla, and the work of the existing Expert Group on Future Funding Models was raised.

It was noted that the timescale for the work was ambitious for such a complex task, and there was a need to manage expectations about how quickly it could be done. Nevertheless it was agreed that this was a critical project that needed to be advanced as soon as possible. The aim would be to have a recommended model for consideration by Government by the first quarter of 2021.

The MB thanked the EY team for the considerable work and thought that had been put into the paper. It was agreed that the team would reflect further on the points raised by the MB and adjust the paper accordingly. A Memorandum for Information about the proposed process would be submitted to Government in January, and there would be appropriate briefing of stakeholders.

4. Divisional Business Plans

Denis O’Sullivan and Michael Keenan attended for this item. The revised divisional plans had been circulated prior to the meeting. The approach set out was agreed and the unit plans would now be prepared for discussion with the MB. There would be an SMT session on the divisional plans at its next meeting on Friday 6 December. The MB thanked the team for their work on this.

5. For Noting

A Paper on National Model Parenting Support Services was noted and it was agreed to have a discussion on it in January.

Oral PQs will be taken on 10 December 2019.

It was noted that the Select Committee meeting on dealing with the Supplementary Estimate for Vote 40 would be taken on 3 December.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the MB was confirmed for Monday 16 December at 2.45pm.