

AGENCY MANAGEMENT BOARD MEETING THURSDAY 24TH NOVEMBER 2005

Present: Graham Gunn, SAAS (Chair)
Professor Pauline Weetman, NEBM
Margaret Munckton, NEBM
Eileen Marshall, NEBM
Audrey Heatlie, SAAS
Stephen Blyth, SAAS
Tracy Richardson, SAAS
Linda Pender, SAAS (Secretary)

Apologies: David Stephen, Chief Executive
Martin Lowe, NEBM

Minutes of the previous meeting

1. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Matters Arising

2. Graham updated the Board on developments since the last meeting:-

- DSA – work still on-going as the report was not yet available.
- Travel Expenses - On-going as discussions have not yet taken place.
- SAAS recruitment - David was due to attend a meeting of Agency Chief Executive's on 9 December to consider consortium arrangements.
- CD-ROMs – David had sent a letter to institutions to ask how many copies of the CD-Rom they would like to receive and the website was currently being redesigned to improve front end profiling.
- Efficient Government – AiB had not yet responded to the feasibility study. There had been a numbers of visits from other organisations including SPPA to see our EDM System.

Quarterly Report

CSU

3. The CSU peak period each year is August to October due to the number of last minute applications received and an increase in phone calls from students. As at Monday 21 November 99.6% of applications had been completed. This performance was greater than in previous year due to the changes the Agency had made to improve procedures.

4. The new telephony system was now installed and 20% of calls received on the first day were dealt with without caseworker intervention. If students can't get the basic information they require on the automated phone service they will be put through to a member of staff.

5. NEBMs were concerned that CSU are not reaching published targets in this quarter each year although the targets are met annually and it was suggested that consideration should be given to introducing quarterly targets and presentation issues for staff and customers. Audrey explained that our performance targets were expected to be met over the full year. Caseworkers had a target to process 70 student applications each day to remain on target.

6. It will now be easier for students to apply on-line as they would not have to print off parts of the form to sign and post. It was hoped that a letter could be issued to continuing students next session to ask them to check their details on-line and if content, simply submit their application. Shortened applications are used for continuing students who are non means tested and who are paid only fees. If circumstances changed or applications need to be means tested then caseworker input was required.

7. Forward Look Update

- Travel applications start from 12 December.
- DSA Stakeholders group continuing.
- ILA work has transferred to CSU.
- GE will transfer to CSU (call handling/awareness letters) although Stephen's team will continue to deal with debt recovery
- GEU will stay within CSU
- EDM will move to Graham's Unit from 28 November

8. CSU may require new staff to deal with ILA work or GEU but it was hoped that the new GE would fit into quieter processing periods. A3 & A4 Caseworkers were currently being recruited as 3 members of staff had moved elsewhere on promotion. These A3 and A4 posts had been advertised internally and temporary recurring contracts would be advertised in January.

9. Audrey explained that the recent mid session reviews were an opportunity for staff to give feedback to managers on operational issues.

Finance

10. Agency running costs to September were underspent on pay however this underspend would be used to pay the early retirement cost for a senior member of staff. There may be savings on capital expenditure as the SAAS pay loans project was not going ahead. The Agency have used casual staff and student work placements to cover vacancies throughout the year.

Graduate Endowment

11. The team were now starting to contact institutions to check whether students have withdrawn from their courses. The Chief Executive had sent a submission to the Minister to keep him informed of the position on GE.

Debt Recovery

12. The Debt Recovery Team has estimated recoveries of £1m this year. Pauline asked whether a cost benefit evaluation had been carried out. This had not been done as yet but will need to be considered.

Personnel

13. It would appear that the Attendance Management Procedures and the introduction of SAAS internal procedures for dealing with certificates had either slowed down or reduced intermittent sick absence. To verify this Tracy had requested statistics on sick absence from the Executive.

14. It was agreed to consider how to publicise the special bonus scheme internally to staff.

15. A3 and A4 caseworker posts were currently advertised in the Executive and also included in an interdepartmental trawl. It was noted that the Agency need to go through this process before advertising externally in the New Year.

IS & Operational Policy

16. The Agency will continue to work towards making our own payments and this project was on track.

17. Discussions were on-going on the service level agreement(SLA) for the ICT support development contract.

18. The Team has started work on loans for fees which will require an exchange of information with the SLC. An update on this work would be provided at the next meeting. It was agreed that this project needed to be closely managed.

19. Work has also started on a Scottish based career development loan system. An update would be provided at the next meeting.

Chief Executive Office's

20. The Agency had submitted an application for a Quality Scotland award and would be assessed on 23 February 2006. The SHAW team would be assessed for a SHAW Silver Award on 7 December.

21. Environmental Issues would be included in the Agency's Health & Safety Committees remit and future quarterly checks of the building and training was being undertaken on producing an Environmental Management System.

Committee minutes

22. Committee minutes were considered and no comments were received.

Complaints Report

23. The complaints system had been reviewed to provide more information on the reasons for each complaint. This would be available at the next meeting.

Risk Register

24. The risk register had been updated since the last Board meeting. This would be updated as required. Board members found the paper on management of risk helpful.

Corporate Planner

25. It was noted that the Finance Committee required more meetings towards the end of the year to monitor and control programme expenditure.

26. It was agreed to add senior management monthly meetings to the corporate planner.

Any Other Business

27. There was no other business.

Date of Next Meeting

28. The next meeting would be held on 22 February 2006.

Chief Executive's Office
25 November 2005