

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE JOINT MANAGEMENT BOARD

Meeting held in Portcullis House, on 15 July 2014 commencing at 13.00

Secretary of State (Chair)
Advocate General

Alun Evans (Principal Accounting Officer)
Michael Chalmers
Ruairaidh Macniven
John Aldridge
Edward Adams

Item 1: Introduction & apologies

1. Apologies for absence: the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Margaret Porteous, and Glenn Preston. .

Item 2: Minutes of the meeting of 12 November 2013 and matters arising

2. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the previous meeting. There were no matters arising requiring further action.

Item 3: Offices' strategy and current policy

3. Alun Evans reported that the publication of the Scotland analysis papers had been completed. Scotland Office Ministers were devoting as much of their time as possible to work in Scotland. The Office had increased its outreach work significantly and this would continue until the purdah period started.
4. Michael Chalmers reported that OAG had been supporting the Advocate General's increasing constitutional work. OAG's core work continued to be demanding, notably litigation and advisory work on UK legislation.
5. In response to questions Alun Evans and Michael Chalmers reported that at an official level SO and OAG staff continued to work constructively and professionally with SG officials and legal advisers over such matters as devolution litigation, Scotland Act orders, and the Commonwealth Games. The Board was reassured to hear that assessment in view of the importance of collaborative working between the two administrations.

Item 4: Financial report

6. The Board noted that the Offices had achieved a small underspend in 2013-14 of £160k. The Offices faced a particularly difficult spending climate in 2014-15 and 2015-16.

7. The Board noted the importance to the Offices' operations and to the Exchequer of good value for money services provided by other government bodies, and the benefits of collaborative relationships with them. .

Item 5: Monitoring Scotland Office performance

8. It was reported that the overall performance in achieving the Office's performance indicators was broadly satisfactory. The processing of FOI requests and invoices to target continued to be very good, ministerial correspondence with MPs and Peers had improved markedly. It was too early in the financial year for the data about PQs to be meaningful.

Item 6: Any other business and date of next meeting

9. The Board asked that its thanks to the Finance Manager and the rest of the Finance Team should be minuted. Despite the pressure of other work the Offices' accounts had been certified without qualification and the annual report and accounts were due to be laid before the summer recess.
10. The board agreed to hold its next meeting in early October.