

THE FORESTRY COMMISSION ENGLAND EXECUTIVE BOARD
MINUTES OF THE 110TH MEETING
Conference Room, National Office, Bristol
16 October 2017

Attendees:

Richard Britton
Ian Gambles
Richard Greenhous
Simon Hodgson
Steve Meeks
Jo Ridgway
Mike Seddon

Richard Barker – For item 7
Jenny King – Minute Secretary
Bob Price - For item 4
James Simpson - For item 4

1. Welcome

Ian Gambles opened the meeting.

2. Minutes and actions

The Board cleared the Minutes from the meeting on 6 July 2017 as a true and accurate record. Updates to the actions of 6 July 2017 were provided as follows.

The Board discussed the project to establish a centralised Defra Communications Team and agreed to receive an update after the Environment Agency (EA) had joined the Defra Communications Team.

The Board discussed the progression of the Future Operating Model (FOM) which since the last meeting had been approved by ministers. Ian Gambles reported that an announcement to staff on the FOM was scheduled for the 8 November 2017, to allow the announcement to align with Scottish communications to cross-border services.

Steve Meeks updated the Board on the progress with recruitment into the Government Internal Audit Agency (GIAA) team responsible for FCE/CS. The Head of Internal Audit has now been recruited and GIAA are taking steps to recruit into the rest of the team. In the meantime GIAA have brought in temporary staff to take forward the audit programme. A formal positional update from Nathan Paget, Defra Group Chief Internal Auditor, is being prepared for Director England.

3. Finance Report

Steve Meeks summarised the information provided in the finance paper, noting that FCE's financial position at the end of P6 was as expected. The Board discussed FC business planning and Defra budget gaps in 2018/19 and 2019/20,

and the requirement of the FC to contribute to bridging these gaps through the relevant outcome systems groups.

Steve confirmed that all residual work required for HMRC to conclude their VAT audit had now closed and thanked all teams involved in the project. Steve noted the importance of the countries and FR of implementing effective processes to ensure VAT compliance going forward and the Board agreed that ensuring compliance with HMRC's VAT audit was an executive responsibility for each of the business areas. The Board discussed key risks for the business and Steve confirmed that an analysis of these would be included in a final project report. Ian Gambles stated that an annual review of tax management by the EEB, as well as review by ARAC and GIAA would be needed to provide assurance that all parts of FCE were acting effectively to ensure compliance going forward.

Action 1: Jenny King to schedule tax management as an annual item on the EEB agenda.

4. Apprentices and FEE

Ian Gambles welcomed James Simpson and Bob Price to the meeting. James summarised the paper and stated that for key roles in Operations that are difficult to fill, changes to apprenticeship funding and work on FEE's leadership model provided an opportunity to review this challenge. Bob Price outlined a wide range of apprenticeship opportunities that could be used to develop staff and better fill roles over the medium term. Bob reported that a shift to a more apprentice-focused approach for these roles would bring clarity in relation to funding and allow FEE to cater for a greater number of eventualities.

The Board supported the proposed approach and discussed the importance of the apprentice levy being taken up across the sector. Richard Greenhous noted the aspects of work undertaken that would be important for FS, and the importance of working together to develop this, as well as the leadership model, for FS. Mike Seddon reported the importance of the cross organisation connections, as well as the importance of managing expectations across the business. Ian Gambles added the value of effective internal communications to present the changes to apprenticeships in an accurate way.

Action 2: James Simpson and Bob Price to engage with Internal Comms to communicate changes to apprenticeships and FEE.

Action 3: James Simpson and Bob Price to provide a progress report to the EEB in spring 2017, with a fuller review by October 2018.

5. Employee Offering

Jo Ridgway introduced the item following conversations with Simon Hodgson and Richard Greenhous concerning FCE's employee offering and reward. Jo summarised the paper and highlighted that a project to review reward would consider engagement, career development, wellbeing, work life balance as well as pay and benefits. Jo reported the next steps would be the production of a Project Initiation Document (PID) and consideration of resourcing.

The Board agreed the importance of this piece of work to benefit the business and employees. The Board discussed similar initiatives that had been launched in the past, agreeing the need to acknowledge this in the PID. The Board also agreed the importance of tying in any work on the employee offer to the FOM. The Board

noted that the scope of the project was ambitious, and it would be important to consider the PID carefully, and not cast the net too wide, with a view to ensuring a realistic scope.

The Board agreed that work should begin on this project in April 2018, when resource would hopefully be more available after the implementation of the new HR system.

Action 4: Jo Ridgway to update the Board the PID at the next meeting.

6. FCE Senior Mangers' Meeting

The Board discussed improvements to the format of the meeting which could increase engagement with wider staff, including creating a podcast of the meeting for all staff, as well as the option of engaging external speakers. The Board agreed to hold a FCE senior managers' meeting for 2018.

Action 5: Jenny King to send out placeholders for a FCE senior managers' meeting for 2018.

7. GDPR

Ian Gambles welcomed Richard Barker to the meeting, who gave a verbal update to the Board. Richard summarised activity since the EEB in July 2017, reporting that a project board had been established and a PID approved. Work to date had included 'fact finding' to audit the way that FCE currently handles personal data, and engagement with senior management boards.

Richard Greenhous emphasised the importance of collaboration with RPA, NE and EA to address sharing of information, and Richard Barker added that FCE have been approached by Defra to ensure joined up working on the issue across the Defra Group. Richard Barker confirmed that each of the countries and FR were taking ownership of their compliance with GDPR, as per agreement at the Information Security Management Forum.

7. AOB

Richard Greenhous reported that the 25 Year Environment Plan was on track for publication at the end of November 2017.

Ian Gambles closed the meeting.