

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

**FORESTRY COMMISSION EXECUTIVE BOARD
MINUTES OF THE 103RD MEETING
Bristol National Office Conference Room and via MS Teams
30 September 2020**

Attendees:

Ian Gambles (Chair)
Tristram Hilborn
Richard Greenhous
Meirion Nelson
James Pendlebury
Steph Rhodes
Jo Ridgway
Mike Seddon

Julia Lovell - minute secretary

Reward and Pensions Manager
Offer 2020 Project Manager

Apologies:

Steve Meeks

1. Welcome and introductions

Ian Gambles (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies have been received from Steve Meeks.

2. Minutes of the Executive Board 26 August 2020

The minutes of the meeting of the Forestry Commission Executive Board (EB) of the 26 August 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

Actions 1, 2, 3, and 4 were carried forward.

All other actions were confirmed as complete.

Action 1: Richard Greenhous to present an item on FC Carbon and net zero targets to the EB at a later meeting.

Action 2: Jo Ridgway to put together options for an FC wide management programme.

Action 3: Knowledge and Information Management Lead to put together proposals for a knowledge and information management programme to present at a future EB meeting. This is to include the initial actions to shift culture, governance and technology leading on to steady-state KIM management.

Action 4: Meirion Nelson to contribute to the tax risk register with Steve Meeks.

3. FC Pay Review Options

Reward and Pensions Manager updated the EB that the business case for the additional 0.5% within the 2020-21 pay award has been approved by the Permanent Secretary. The purpose of this item is to agree which option to take forward. It was noted that options 6, 7 and 8 are recommended as they affect a significant number of staff, the increase is weighted towards lower grades and provide progress towards Offer 2020 objectives.

There was a wide-ranging discussion which focused on the number of staff affected within the different parts of the Forestry Commission, with options benefiting different parts more. The EB asked Reward and Pensions Manager to remodel Option 6 to see if a more equitable distribution of benefits can be achieved between grades and parts of the Forestry Commission.

Action 5: Reward and Pensions Manager to remodel Option 6 to provide better parity between the number of staff benefiting in different parts of the Forestry Commission for approval by EB via correspondence. 2 models were produced and a preferred option was agreed by correspondence on the 1st October 2020.

4. Offer 2020

The Chair introduced this item by outlining that the EB will need to make a decision on whether to submit the business case for Offer 2020 to the Cabinet Office in November. Reward and Pensions Manager and HR Project Manager provided an update on the costings of different options and the number of staff that would benefit. This was caveated with that savings from work reforms have not been included in the model and that the work by Beamans still needed to be quality assured.

The group supported the proposal of harmonisation with Civil Service grades. The EB approved the recommendation to submit a business case as set out in the EB paper to the Cabinet Office.

The EB raised a concern about the proportion of staff who would be pay protected after harmonisation. Special factor solutions have diverged the FC pay structure from the rest of the Civil Service. The EB agreed that in principle the JEGs process should be trusted and applied uniformly without special allowances to meet the aim of harmonisation with the civil service. However, all also agreed that JEGS undervalues physical and outdoor roles, which are critical to the identity and purpose of the Forestry Commission. There was a wide-ranging discussion on how to reconcile these two points. It was agreed that a solution had to be found which reduced both the number of pay protected roles and resolved the issue of fair treatment for certain specific outdoor roles.

The EB briefly discussed RRAs. The EB agreed that the cost of RRAs should be reduced as the overall pay will increase and so there is less rationale for using the RRA to match the market rate for certain roles.

The EB agreed that the next phase of analysis should focus on how to reduce the number of pay protected posts. The EB asked for a small number of additional roles to be evaluated by Beamans. HR Project Manager requested that the EB send her the names of those roles and she will ensure Beamans evaluated them. This should not delay the business case submission to the Cabinet Office.

The success of the business case is dependent on whether we can provide sufficient evidence of productivity gains. It was noted that it is likely FC might be asked to introduce Civil Service reforms regardless of the success of the business case. The EB supported the workforce reforms proposed in the paper, and their inclusion in the business case. Workforce reforms would however be discussed with FCTU on a separate basis from the main pay structure changes as EB may impose some of the reforms even if the pay structure changes were not agreed. It was noted that the business case will need to include additional ways in which the business case 'increases productivity'. The EB asked HR Project Manager to circulate a draft of the business case before it is submitted to the Cabinet Office.

The EB thanked all those who have worked on the project to get it to this stage.

Action 6: HR Project Manager to coordinate Beamans' evaluation of a limited number of additional roles.

Action 7: HR Project Manager to meet with Tristram Hilborn and Mike Seddon to discuss options for roles which appear to be undervalued by the JEGS process.

Action 8: Reward and Pensions Manager and Steve Meeks to provide figures for the cost of the business case including:

- a) Figures to take account of the 2020/21 pay remit
- b) A business case which reduces the number of posts that will be pay protected

- c) An analysis of how the 2021/22 and 2022/23 pay remit could be used to fund the move to Civil Service pay bands

Action 9: HR Project Manager to circulate a draft of the Offer 2020 business case, including the new figures provided in Action 8, before submission to the Cabinet Office.

5. AOB

Christmas

The Chair introduced this item. The EB approved an extra half day to be taken out of office for staff as a thank you for helping the Forestry Commission continue working during a hard year. Together with the Christmas eve half day, this will give staff a whole extra day off, pro-rata. The EB agreed that this will need to be flexible to allow for local arrangements, and so agreed that the day can be taken during two weeks either side of Christmas. Jo Ridgway agreed to lead on communication of this to staff.

BAME Task and Finish Group

The Chair updated the EB that the mandate for the BAME Task and Finish Group has been drafted and circulated. Any comments should be sent to Ian Gambles. The Chair confirmed that the group membership has been agreed with representatives from a range of grades and parts of the Forestry Commission, to be led by the Central District Forest Management Director.

Employee discount site

HR Project Manager updated the EB that the staff discount site is likely to go live beginning of November and in time for Black Friday and Christmas shopping. The site will come to the EB for comment mid-October. Communications about the site will then be shared on Roots.

Performance Management Cycle options

Jo Ridgway introduced this item for discussion by the EB. The group approved for the new performance appraisal review period to start in April 2021, with a mini-period to cover October 2020 until end of March 2021. The start in April 2021 will coincide with a move to new continuous improvement culture.

Action 10: Jo Ridgway to lead on communications about an extra day off as part of Christmas and New Year for staff.

Action 11: All to send comments on the BAME Task and Finish Group remit to Ian Gambles by 9 October 2020.

No further business was raised, and the meeting was closed.