

**FORESTRY COMMISSION EXECUTIVE BOARD
MINUTES OF THE 126TH MEETING
via MS Teams and in Bristol Conference Room
10 June 2024**

Attendees:

Richard Stanford (Chair)
Anna Brown
Derrick Osgood
James Pendlebury
Steph Rhodes
Paula Rice
Jo Ridgway
Mike Seddon

Governance Manager – minute secretary
Head of Health & Safety and Training – Health and Safety
Reward and Pensions Manager – Pensions update
Diversity and Wellbeing Manager – Wellbeing
Interim Chief of Staff – Corporate plan

1. Welcome, updates and introductions

The Chair opened the meeting. Amanda Grist, Tristram Hilborn and Chief of Staff sent their apologies.

In advance of the political election in July, the Forestry Commission (FC) were linking with Defra on the manifestos under development. All FC staff had been reminded on pre-election behaviours and rules via Roots.

Discussions were being held on the Spending Review with Treasury regarding FC input and cross-government work to take place.

2. Minutes of the Executive Board 23 April 2024 and matters arising

The minutes for the meeting of the Forestry Commission (FC) Executive Board (EB) of 23 April 2024 required Anna Brown adding to the list of attendees, the minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record with this amendment.

The following actions were left as outstanding.

Action 1: Richard Stanford and Jo Ridgway to consider findings of this session to plan an away day to empower the FC Executive Board to deliver the corporate plan together.

Action 4: Review Year 4 FC People Strategy Deliverables following the discussion on Corporate Plan.

All other action points were discharged.

3. Pensions update

Issues had been identified in the iTrent payroll system affecting the Commissioner's Office, Forest Services (FS) and Forestry England (FE). Forest Research (FR) was not impacted. Four main issues were identified: the cap on partnership pension employer contribution was not working correctly which meant the FC had been overpaying. The Mini-ASLC was not being processed and so the Cabinet Office was being underpaid by the FC. Certain pay elements which are pensionable were not such as overtime and keep in touch days. Lastly the CS Pension statutory payments should be pensionable but were not. The majority of the impact was on FE owing to the larger staff head count.

Since identifying the issue iTrent had been fixed so no further errors would occur, a meeting is to be held with MyCSP to understand the process to rectify the records and legal advice being sought prior to contacting HMRC. The intent was to go live with the payroll fixes in August. There was high confidence that all errors have now been captured and an MHR consultant was being bought in to confirm this and check for any other discrepancies. It was agreed that FC wide critical systems and processes should undergo a deep dive review on a risk-based approach.

4. Wellbeing Dashboard

The wellbeing dashboard highlighted some of the activities carried out by the Diversity and Wellbeing team during Q4 and Q1. The data on the payroll cost of lost working days per full time equivalent are to be reviewed to see if they can be also broken down by unit and job type in FE. It was agreed that that the initial data would be shared with Mike Seddon as soon as it was available. The next update will be at the November meeting to allow for the staff engagement results to be finalised.

Action 1: Diversity and Wellbeing Manager and Jo Ridgway to discuss with the data team providing payroll costs of lost working days by unit and job type in FE.

5. Health and Safety

There had been one RIDDOR incident confirmed since the last report, all other injuries reported had been minor. While the number of animal injuries reported had increased this reflected better investigations and reporting by staff. The trends in staff injuries showed that the majority were as the results of slips, trips and falls. It was agreed that the pedestrian separation information would be shared with Head of Estates in FR.

Action 2: Head of Health & Safety and Training to share the pedestrian separation information with FR Head of Estates.

6. Corporate Plan

Since the last version of the corporate plan had been circulated the majority of the feedback received had been incorporated into the document. The only items not

included were those that either conflicted against other feedback received or went against Board level decisions. It was agreed to sign off version 1.0 as complete.

7. Finance

The in-year status report was provided, and it was noted that the FC had not received all the budget anticipated from Defra, an additional £4.5 million was being sought. There had been positive feedback from the ARAC on the layout of the annual report and accounts (ARAs). The key issues raised on the ARAs were the FE valuations and section 31 local authority grants and how to account for them. An additional concern was the timing of the accounts with the general election so the likelihood of laying before summer recess was low.

8. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)

While the FC is looking to see whether implementing a new ERP system is appropriate work by Defra has commenced work on its own project Synergy. There is a need to review both what is to be done but also the implications of using either of the different systems. Once a final decision on the system to move to is made, resourcing to support the move would be key although the costs of this were not yet budgeted for and a decision was to be made on who would manage the project.

9. Security Improvement Plan (SIP)

The Security Risk Management Forum (SRMF) had completed a full review of the SIP focussing on the areas of highest risk. New policies had also been developed and approved regarding incident management, business continuity and physical security, with a view to improve the Departmental Security Health Check (DSHC) score from the previous year. It was confirmed that the DSHC was a self-assessment undertaken by the FC, but that the questions were set by Cabinet Office and changed each year.

10. GIAA Action Tracker

Performance had improved from the previous year, the draft annual report showed areas of risk were staff morale (linked to Your Offer) and some of the offline spreadsheets and processes.

11. AOB

The staff survey had a soft launch that morning and was to be officially sent out to all staff.