

**Management Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Quarterly Away Day Session**  
**Meeting Room 10th Floor**  
**Brunel Building**

**Monday 10 February 2020, 9.30am**

**Attendance:** Secretary General (Fergal Lynch), Bernie McNally, Dermot Ryan, Laura McGarrigle and Conor Rowley.

Anne Marie Brooks, Paul Fay, Ger Hughes, Vera McGrath, Olive McGovern, Denis O’Sullivan, Sinead McEvoy and Sarah Ryan. Miriam Kenna reporting.

**1. Minutes of Last Meeting**

It was agreed that the minutes of meeting of 28 January 2020 would be considered at the next MB meeting on 24 February.

**3. Review of Business Plan meetings**

The MB reviewed the main lessons to be drawn from the Business Plan sessions. The discussions were supported by two notes, one prepared by FL and the other by the PMO. The consensus was that the two papers captured the major messages to be drawn from the unit meetings. In addition to the papers, it was noted that the Climate Action fund would be led by DCYA, and that the forthcoming Youth Justice Strategy would likely be jointly led by DJE and DCYA. The discussion that followed focused on:

- the need for rigorous prioritisation of activities in the face of many competing items;
- in prioritising, the need to identify what is not being done and should be, as well as what could be postponed or dropped;
- the importance of achieving the right balance between pushing an ambitious agenda and ensuring a realistic agenda for the year;
- the value of looking at ranking developmental priorities with costs attached, so that an incoming Minister and Government can decide if they wish to provide the necessary resources for ~~or~~ it, or not;
- the importance, as part of the restructuring process, of pursuing efficiencies and addressing duplication of activities. A key area to explore now would be the question of centralising the preparation of PQs, reps and other standard queries which have traditionally been dealt with by each unit;
- the importance of ensuring that all staff were properly supported, particularly in the context of the considerable extent of welfare support cases that HR has handled;
- the availability of resources (this year’s pay budget is fully committed) the capacity of staff and the likely availability of accommodation;
- the likely further pressures that could emerge from any new Programme for Government; and

- the value of Business Plans as a management tool, and the importance of using the Plans as 'live' documents rather than as something to deal with in January and at review time.

#### **4. Reflections from the development of previous Strategies**

Three POs shared with the MB their reflections on lessons learned and experiences gained from the preparation of a range of strategies over recent years. Short reflections were offered by Anne-Marie Brooks (*First Five*); Olive McGovern (*LGBTI+ Youth Strategy* and *Youth Participation Strategy*) and Paul Fay (*National Youth Strategy*). Inputs were also offered by others with experience of strategy development and implementation. FL undertook to summarise the main lessons from the discussion.

#### **5. Discussions on next steps in preparation of the Department's Statement of Strategy and BOBF2**

Denis O'Sullivan presented a paper on preparation of the Department's next Statement of Strategy (SoS), 2020-2022. He reviewed the progress made to date and summarised the main points of previous discussions that had been held with the MB and SMT. There was a further discussion on the mission statement, strategic objectives and values, behaviours and culture of the Department, and suggestions were made for further revisions. It was noted that different approaches had been taken by Departments that had prepared more recent Strategies, and that some of these were worth consideration.

It was agreed that, using a project management approach overseen by with the involvement of the PMO, DOS would pull together a small group to work on the text of this key part of the SoS. The group would be under the auspices of the SMT, in line with the discussion of 7 February on the SMT's role, and it would seek to finalise a draft within three weeks. This would then be considered further by the MB and by the SMT. It could then be discussed at a town hall meeting, which would be convened as part of the process of developing the SoS. The town hall could also deal with other issues, including progress on *Reform 2020*.

There was a detailed discussion of how best to develop a successor document to *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (BOBF)*. This was informed by the discussion above on the experience of preparing strategies in recent years and by the previous MB discussion in September last of a paper prepared by Conor Rowley. Among the main points made at the current discussion were:

- the importance of seeking a clear mandate from the Minister and Government to engage in this major process;
- the case for a whole-of-society, as opposed to whole-of-government, approach;
- the approach to determining the scope and content of a framework of this kind;
- the question of whether it would adopt a similar approach to the previous BOBF or instead perhaps concentrate on identifying gaps in key services and supports across the system and deal with how these would be addressed;

- the best means by which the buy-in of other Government Departments and stakeholders could be secured, including the case for an SOG/Cabinet Committee structure, with support from relevant Secretaries General;
- the question of how best to develop such a framework, whether by a specially resourced unit or otherwise.

There was a general consensus about the need for a clear framework document, which covered each of the main areas of focus— Having a strong, inclusive vision would help overcome the need for multiple separate rather than separate strategies on a range of areas as previously. This would be supported by a strategic action plan for each area which could, for example, be reviewed and refreshed/updated every two to three years.

It was agreed that, within the next six weeks, a small group under the auspices of the SMT would scope out the potential coverage of and approach to a framework document, which would then be considered by the MB and SMT as appropriate. It would then be subject to approval by the Minister, who would seek a Government Decision to support its advancement. There was general agreement that the preparation of the framework would require a small dedicated team, which would probably take 6 to 9 months to complete the work. The allocation of these resources would be pursued as soon as there was a positive indication from the Minister.

## **6. For Noting**

The following item were noted by the MB:

- (i) Audit Committee minutes 13.12.2019 (Final)

## **7. AOB**

DR asked that, in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Management Board, papers for substantial discussion items be circulated at least a week in advance.

DO'S thanked the MB on behalf of the attending POs. He welcomed the spirit of collaboration that was evident and found the process very valuable. He supported the intention to target and match POs to specific meetings, and noted that, as agreed at the recent SMT meeting, that group should look at key items beyond the immediate restructuring/reform agenda.

## **8. Next Meeting**

The next meeting was confirmed for the 24 February at 10.30.