**THE SCOTTISH LEGAL AID BOARD**

**APPROVED MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE SCOTTISH LEGAL AID BOARD HELD by VIDEO CONFERENCE ON Tuesday 10th august 2021**

Present: Ray MacFarlane, Chair

Sheriff John Morris

Marieke Dwarshuis

Stephen Humphreys

Tim McKay

David Sheldon QC

Brian Baverstock

Raymond McMenamin

Gerry Bann

Brigid Whoriskey

Sarah O’Neill

In attendance: Colin Lancaster, Chief Executive

Graeme Hill, Director of Corporate Services and Accounts

Marie-Louise Fox, Director of Operations

Anne Dickson, Director of Strategic Development

Ian Dickson, Director of Legal Services

Andrew McIntosh, Corporate Support Manager

Stuart Drummond, Corporate Governance and Policy Officer

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were apologies from Lesley Ward.

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None

1. **REVIEW OF MINUTES**

The draft minute of the Board meeting held on 28th of June 2021 was approved subject to a change in the wording under item 9, Strategic Positioning and Communications, which CL agreed to consider and revise appropriately.

**ACTION: CL**

The draft minute of the Legal Services Cases Committee 12th July 2021 was **noted**.

1. **CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S UPDATE**

The Chief Executive reported on matters of interest since the last meeting.

It was reported that in relation to COP 26 there had been discussions with the Law Society of Scotland about concerns that members of the legal profession had raised. Although HM Treasury would be making the final decisions on the costs the LSS had requested a number of things including top up fees for police station and court duty work. Discussions will be ongoing with the LSS as the COP 26 plans develop.

The Chief Executive also reported that there would be discussions with the SG in relation to scoping the new legal aid bill particularly in relation to what SG wished to achieve and the Board would be asked for input in this process as it progresses. The Board agreed that a clear, early indication of the scope and purpose of the Bill would be helpful.

The launch of the new Legal Aid Support for Business and Recovery Fund and the closure of the SLAB administered Resilience Fund was noted. The Board were of the view that care needed to be taken to ensure that it was made clear that the new fund was not being administered by SLAB.

The Chief Executive informed the Board that he had been invited to attend a roundtable on legal aid being hosted by the Criminal Law Committee of the Scottish Parliament. More information would be made available to the Board on this in due course.

The report was noted.

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| 1. **ADMINISTRATION FUND UPDATE**   The Board was presented with the SLAB Administration Finance and Resource Report which reported that after the first quarter the budget was broadly in line with predicted budgets and there was £0.5m available for spend to save projects. Information on how that money would be spent would be included in the quarter review, which would be presented to a future Board meeting.  It was noted that the sickness absence rate was low.  The report was noted.   1. **OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORT**   The Board was presented with a report on operational performance as at 30th June 2021. It was noted that performance across applications and accounts was good with no major concerns.  The report was noted. |
| 1. **BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE**   The Board were presented with an update on the Business Plan. The report gave the Board a snapshot of current progress against the 2020-21 Business Plan.  It was reported that progress against the plan was generally good with no business critical issues currently.  Projects delivering strategic objectives 1 and 2 were all on track at this stage. Strategic objective 3 projects were experiencing a range of issues, although there was confidence that projects would come back on track in due course. It was noted that this was due to limited levers SLAB had in those areas. It was noted that the incorporation of the UNCRC project was highlighted as needing the most attention at this point.  The improved format of the report was noted and appreciated by the Board.  It was noted that external consultancy would be brought in to progress the development of the review of people policies and the workforce plan.  The report was noted.   1. **COMPLAINTS UPDATE: QUARTER 1 2021**   The Board were presented with the Quarterly Complaints Report: April 2021-June 2021. The Board acknowledged that the number of complaints was low and that no significant failures had been identified. It was requested that future reports include details on why complaint responses missed their deadlines.  **ACTION: SD**   1. **DANWE UPDATE**   The Board were presented with an update on the Designing and New Working Environment project.  It was noted that the return to work policy was due to be finalised.  There was a discussion about how hybrid working might be implemented for the Board. It was agreed that this would be considered and the Board approached in due course for their views on this.  **ACTION: AMcI, SD** |
| 1. **MEETINGS WITH OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**   The Board noted a paper setting out the details of key meetings attended by senior SLAB staff with external organisations.   1. **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**   The Board noted the following dates:   * Cases Committee 16th August 2021, 20th September 2021 * Legal Assistance Policy Committee 6th September 2021, 4th October 2021 * Audit Committee 20th September 2021 |

The meeting concluded at 15:10