

Minutes – Executive Team Monday 23 March 2009



Information Commissioner's Office
Promoting public access to official information
and protecting your personal information

Members and ICO Staff Present:

Vicky Best	Director of Human Resources (chair)
Simon Entwisle	Chief Operating Officer (key messages)
Susan Fox)	Director of Comms and External Relations
Phil Jones	Assistant Commissioner Data Protection Practice
Graham Smith	Deputy Commissioner Freedom of Information
Richard Thomas	Information Commissioner
Peter Bloomfield	Senior Corporate Governance Manager (secretariat)
Andrew Cryer	Finance Manager (agenda item 4)

1. Introductions and apologies

- 1.1. Apologies were received from David Smith who was unable to attend the meeting. Phil Jones substituted in his place.

2. Minutes and action points from the Executive Team business meeting of the 16 February, and notes of the engagement meetings of the 2 February and 9 March.

- 2.1. The minutes and notes were agreed with minor amendments.

Action point 1: Secretariat to amend the minutes as agreed and make them available to all staff via the web site.

- 2.2. In respect of action point 5 from the meeting of 17 November, Simon Entwisle reported that Operations Management Committee (OMC) had considered and inputted into a forward look / project plan for the ICO as a whole. Sue Fox had also provided initial content but no other input had been received. It was considered that this was still a worthwhile exercise and that Simon Entwisle was to send some content round to encourage further input.

Action point 2: Simon Entwisle to circulate ideas for a forward look / project plan for the ICO as a whole to inform input from other Executive Team members.

3. Business and Corporate Plans

3.1. Peter Bloomfield introduced the latest versions of the Corporate Plan for 2009-12 and of the Business Plan for 2009/10. The Corporate Plan was a near final draft and was presented for clearance by Executive Team. The introduction would be written by the close of the week and it was hoped to have the plan printed soon afterwards.

3.2. There were concerns that the report on progress against top priorities for 2008/09 was not complete.

Action point 3: Executive Team members to provide Peter Bloomfield with extra items for the report on progress by the end of the week (27 March).

3.3. Executive Team signed off the rest of the text of the plan. The plan would be finalised when the introduction and updated report on progress had been incorporated.

3.4. In respect of the Business Plan for 2009/10 this had been through much iteration and was presented for information and comments. Executive Team was not being asked to sign the plan off as there were figures still awaited, there would be a need to amend the plan in light of decisions on the budget, and the plan needed a final read through for errors. Vicky Best had already raised a query about some of the HR outputs and there was a question raised about an action for the Northern Ireland office.

3.5. Unique identifiers for the actions in the plan, taken from the Corporate Plan, were also wanted.

Action point 4: Peter Bloomfield to take on board comments raised and to revise the plan in light of discussion on the budget.

4. Draft budget for 2009/10

4.1. Simon Entwisle introduced a draft budget for 2009/10. It had not been possible, because of time constraints, to discuss the proposed budget in detail with all Executive Team members beforehand. The Finance Manager, Andrew Cryer had pulled bids together to form the budget and then, as bids were higher than expected income, had identified possible areas of work which could be dropped or delayed.

4.2. Uncertainty in funding was an issue. £500k of the grant in aid for freedom of information work was dependent on actions to clear the backlog which had yet to be confirmed, and, whilst it was expected that tiers would be introduced into the notification fee regime in October, details were not finalised. Simon Entwisle also highlighted uncertainties around costed IT changes. The level of uncertainty meant that the ICO might be able to fund more expenditure than was thought possible today, however, it was right to be cautious.

4.3. The budget was discussed in detail. Various changes were made and Andrew Cryer was asked to come back to Executive Team on the 6 April with a revised budget for discussion.

Action point 5: Andrew Cryer to revise the budget to reflect discussion at Executive Team and to bring the revised budget to Executive Team on the 6 April.

5. Creation of a new post focused on freedom of information training

- 5.1. The creation of this post was covered by discussed of the budget when it was agreed that, as the position would reduce the need for costly external training, the post could be created.

6. Data Protection Strategy

- 6.1. Phil Jones outlined possible revisions to the Data Protection Strategy. The Strategy had been in place for a year but needed updating to reflect the changed environment; in particular the themes that had been originally identified had altered. The changes had been discussed in Policy Committee.
- 6.2. Amendments were agreed by Executive Team; however, it was thought that the order of the themes should be revised. In addition given the current passage of the Coroners and Justice Bill through Parliament, it was agreed to delay finalising the changes until the Bill was finalised.

7. Transition to the new Commissioner

- 7.1. This is currently a standing item at Executive Team supported by the Communications Plan. A few changes to the plan were raised and Executive Team were asked to note the Communications Impact checklist.

8. Staff survey results

- 8.1. Sue Fox and Vicky Best introduced this item. Members and staff had now had a chance to see the results of the staff survey and a written paper would be coming to Executive Team in April for further discussion. The thoughts of Executive Team members were welcomed now, to help inform the report.
- 8.2. There was general discussion about some of the areas highlighted in the survey and of how these areas could be addressed.
- 8.3. Sue Fox and Vicky Best would bring a paper to Executive Team in April for further discussion.
- 8.4. The ICO was still awaiting the final IPSOS Mori report which will go on ICON.

9. Forward look

- 9.1. There were no items raised.

10. Annual Report update

- 10.1. Given time constraints it was agreed to drop this item.

11. Schedule of future Executive Team meetings

- 11.1. Earlier in the meeting it had been agreed to change the engagement meeting of the 6 April into a business meeting, to allow early discussion of the budget.

Action point 6: Peter Bloomfield to re-schedule the Comms and ER engagement meeting.

- 11.2. It was agreed to add papers on Travel and Subsistence, the Staff Survey, and the April Management Board (which the MoJ permanent secretary would be attending) to the meeting of the 20 April.

- 11.3. It was agreed to re-schedule the business meeting of the 22 June to the 6 July. The chair would need to be agreed as this would be Chris Graham's first meeting.

Action point 7: Peter Bloomfield to revise the schedule of meetings and to liaise with Chris Graham over chairing the meeting of the 6 July.

12. Operations Management Committee meeting 18 February

- 12.1. There were no comments on the draft minutes.

- 12.2. Simon Entwisle raised the need to look at how well the committee was working, especially in light of the lack of substantive decisions coming to the committee and the setting up of the Business Delivery Group. It was noted that the internal audit plan for 2009/10 included looking at corporate governance issues.

13. Any other urgent business

- 13.1. Phil Jones reported that feedback from the recent data protection officers' conference in Manchester was good. It had allowed the ICO to be seen to be supporting data protection officers and staff had enjoyed the challenge of organising and running the conference.

- 13.2. Sue Fox reported that a card to hand to conference organisers with the ICO's supported charity contact details on had been produced. The aim was to help encourage conference organisers donate any fees they might have paid the ICO to the charity.

14. Key messages

- 14.1. ET discussed a draft budget for 2009-2010. Compiling the budget is a complex process and ET thanked Andrew Cryer for the work he had put in to preparing a first draft. ET discussed the budget and made suggestions for changes to ensure that the final draft met overarching ICO priorities and made efficiency savings where these were possible. A second draft will be returned to ET for the meeting on 6 April 2009.
- 14.2. ET approved a new post to lead on FOI training. The new member of staff will be situated in the FOI Policy Team.
- 14.3. ET agreed the suggested changes to the Data Protection Strategy. ET noted that further changes would be required when current legislation proposing new powers for the ICO is finalised.
- 14.4. ET discussed the staff survey results. It was noted that further work was being undertaken to develop a range of actions focussing on areas where improvements were required. Sue Fox and Vicky Best will lead on this work and will seek to involve staff wherever possible. ET noted that there had been improvements in important areas since the previous survey was conducted.