

SEEDA Executive Board Meeting
Wednesday 7th April 09.00 – 12.00, Austen
ACTIONS AND DECISIONS

Attendees: Pam Alexander (PA) (Chair), Oona Muirhead (OM), Robert Crawford (RC), Susan Priest (SP), Lee Amor (LA), Chris Budleigh (CB)

Apologies: Paul Lovejoy

Also attending: Jonathan Tarttelin (JT), Julie Anderson – by conference call (JA), Alex Hunter (AH), Katie Lloyd (KL)

1. Matters Arising

PA made a general point about ensuring maximum publicity and press opportunities (post Purdah) for SEEDA investments and achievements; Harwell had been a notable example where we had perhaps not made the most of the opportunity.

Further discussion and agreement was required as to how the new Director-led groupings will report to Executive Board; in particular, clarity was still required on whether a Horizon Scanning Group was needed.

The staff note due to be issued this week needs to capture points such as Purdah (although this is a separate guidance note already issued by Comms) and the date for the staff away day. Clarity is still needed on whether grants can be awarded during Purdah; SWRDA (as Chair of Chairs) is checking on behalf of the network.

It was noted that the NAO are expected to come back to us on our latest ISR comments w/c 12th April.

On RDA CEX and Chairs papers, PA made a general point about ensuring all papers from SEEDA are submitted on time to Nat Sec and/or other RDAs as required.

CB tabled a short paper updating on the output position; PA requested a note on how outputs will be monitored during the year and which targets will be owned by which Executive Director.

A short discussion followed on Retrospective Purchase Orders, which have increased over the last month.

ACTION

OM to report to the next Executive Board the reporting lines/structure for new Business Management Group and Gateway Group.

OM (with Alex Hunter) to ensure additional points are captured in staff note.

OM/KL to clarify ISR timetable for responding.

CB to produce a note clarifying output monitoring for 2010/11.

CB to produce a note for RPOs; EDs to then write to Directors as appropriate. **CB** to report at the next Executive Board where the key issues are, the reasons behind them and what action is being taken to remediate.

2. Finance and Operational Matters

2.1 Spend 2009/10

CB provided an update to EB, in particular explaining the mitigating factors to reduce risk of an over spend. He noted the deadline for accruals is next Friday (16th April). EB asked for clarity on what items are not allowed to be accrued; CB will check and advise accordingly.

2.2 Financial Delegations

A draft letter setting out delegation levels has been drafted. EB agreed the travel budget needed to be reduced according to new staff levels and then reduced by a further 10% in line with efficiency savings. It would also be worth adding a reminder about the need for robust business cases for any overseas travel. It was also agreed that the temporary staff budget would continue to be held centrally, but when allocated to a specific task within the Agency, the relevant Executive Director should take control. Outputs/outcomes, in-year changes to budgets and managing resource effectively (including implications of the Flexible Working Policy) should all be referenced within the delegation letters. Reminders on travel & subsistence guidelines, gifts and hospitality and swift submission (within 6 weeks) of expense claims also need to be included.

2.3 Annual Report and Accounts

In the absence of a paper to discuss, it was agreed to postpone this agenda item to the next EB when PL is asked to bring a paper setting out ideas, plans to take it forward and timescales (including tying into Audit Committee). CB to lead on timescales element of the paper.

ACTION

CB to advise on items that are not allowed to be accrued.

CB/OM to re-draft and re-circulate delegation letter in light of comments made.

CB/PL to provide paper on Annual Report for next Executive Board.

3. Business Planning 2010/11

OM outlined the paper she had circulated, which CB's financial tables are to sit behind (excluding the 09/10 comparison). It was agreed that receipts from rental income would be shown as such for the top level Business Plan Framework and capital receipts would be treated separately. It was agreed the Departmental Business Plans needed to "marry up" budgets and outputs; they also need to reflect the interdependencies of place, sector and cross team working (to ensure the right people input in the right places).

ACTION

All to note requirements to finalise top level Business Plan Frameworks and departmental business plans.

4. Organisational Matters

4.1 General Election and Purdah

Alex Hunter provided a short update. He noted we are still awaiting guidance on awards of grants and what can/can't be awarded/committed during Purdah. PA noted that we are still able to do low key stakeholder engagement during this time.

AH advised that SEEDA's Head of Stakeholder Engagement will lead the process of preparing briefing and letters for new Ministers, working with a small internal group.

4.2 People and OD Report

JT provided an overview of the People Report.

4.3 SEEDA Board – 13th May 2010

It was agreed the pre-Board session should be for post-election discussion. Board papers are to be discussed at Executive Board on 23rd April. When Board agendas are published on the SEEDA website, they should be done so without the timings showing.

4.4 Stakeholder Survey

AH provided an overview of the results to date. A full analysis is still to be completed (and will be done shortly); EB requested that this included an analysis of which types of stakeholders gave which responses. AH advised that he is putting together a programme of focus groups for later this year as a follow on from the survey.

4.5 ISR Update

JA provided a verbal update. We are now waiting on the next set of comments from NAO w/c 12th April.

4.6 Assurance Framework

EB agreed to provide comments on the draft paper by Tuesday next week (13th April). There also needs to be greater acknowledgement of the Accounting Officer role within the paper. EB agreed they require the new Business Management Group to come back formally to them with all the Statements of Internal Control.

ACTION

AH to circulate a copy of the full Purdah guidelines

AH to advise who is sitting on the internal group (circulate names to EB)

AH to engage with SWRDA (as Chair of Chairs) as appropriate on who/how new Ministers will be briefed, in particular in relation to lead roles.

KL to update Board Forward Look with FSE item and Board Dinners.

KL to advise Programme Office that April's MPC is no longer needed.

EB to provide KL/PB with any further amendments to the Forward Look.

OM to contact NAO to check if there is any further information they require for the ISR.

KL/OM to clarify NAO timescales and ensure they are in all ED diaries.

OM to contact EEDA to check on feedback from their NAO visit.

AH to bring a full analysis of the Stakeholder Survey results to the next Executive Board.

JA to amend Assurance Framework paper and provide a final version for the next Executive Board.

KL to organise a meeting between PA and Pam Charlwood to discuss the Assurance Framework and Audit Committee more generally.

5. National Matters

No further comments were provided on the Lead Role work plans.

6. Forward Look

No actions to note.

7. AOB

ACTION

All to provide comments to OM on Total Business Environment paper

KL to allow time at all EB meetings for a closed session 9-9.30am

KL to organise a meeting for RC/OM/PA to discuss the Account Management System.

KL – next EB to focus on two main elements – Board Paper and Business Planning.