

CONSUMER FOCUS FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

Director Finance and Operations: Graham Clark

1 ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE LAST BOARD MEETING

1.1 Finance

- Transition staff contracts ended, now permanent establishment only.
- Accrual process for year end in place and operating well, budget holders providing good quality back-up for all significant accruals.
- Temporary accountant engaged for year end work, first draft of accounts completed. NAO started audit 24th May.
- Budget discussions at Budget Holder level initiated.
- Final accounting position for year end agreed with BIS – subject to final statutory year end close.
- Continuous process of meetings with programme leads leading up to year end.
- GPC cards transferred to Finance, review of processes and policy in progress.

1.2 HR

- Recruitment of two HR Managers both started mid-May and final one due to start 14th June 2010. This will provide a fully resourced permanent HR team which will strengthen the service provided to the nations.
- A special consultation process has been introduced to shorten the finalisation of all outstanding interim policies. Open consultation has been introduced which invites all staff to respond to policies published on the intranet. Consultation on all outstanding interim policies will be completed in 3 tranches by the end of June. First tranche completed with process working well and second started.
- Union recognition finalised and signed.
- Introduced the first Consumer Focus on-line discussion forums for policies out for 'open consultation' with all staff.
- In March we provided 16 training courses to 115 delegates in stress, management, equality, recruitment and appraisal skills. In April we delivered 7 training courses to 51 delegates in mainly areas such as public speaking and presentation and equality and diversity training. A total of 23 courses and training for 166 individuals.
- Developed a back office training database in order to effectively manage the training function and provide statistical and operational data to assist decision making.
- Sickness absence reporting is now working systematically between the nations and HR in order to improve information capture and analysis.
- GB re-structure – provided advice and guidance and prepared letters/structure charts etc. covering individual circumstances for approx 60 staff.
- Performance appraisal process developed and consulted on. Training delivered to managers across all nations and appraisee training scheduled throughout May. NI planned for one full day including appraiser and appraisee.

1.3 IT

- IT Service Desk in April – 451 incoming requests, 452 completed, 183 pending
- Service availability in March – 99.966% overall availability during operational hours
- Network switches upgraded at data centre and Artillery House to remove a major bottleneck on our network and improve resilience and performance.
- Remote Access gateway upgraded to latest software versions to improve security and compatibility with newer version of Windows and Internet Explorer
- Riverbed network acceleration devices now fitted at all main offices providing a 74% data reduction for PC based users (32% reduction in total traffic)
- Backup system upgraded to give an additional 9TB (9000 GB) of storage capacity. We currently back up about 5TB of data per week
- Additional fields and drop down menus added to ServiceMail to allow the EHU to capture additional information and provide better Management Information.
- All redundant IT hardware left over from the merger has now been disposed of and asset details passed across to Finance.
- CFI team now using new mobility solution with offline working for laptops, solution now to be rolled out to other staff
- Intranet development – IT section created to demonstrate features available. HR section developed and launched. Finance section under development. Requests also received for Procurement section and CFI section.

1.4 Property and Procurement

- Concluded transfer of ex-Postwatch property in London and Ely to Royal Mail and 3rd floor Belfast reverted to Landlord - saving £1.1m
- Ex-Postwatch 4th Floor Belfast transferred to Royal Mail.
- Agreement reached with Landlord for early return of 20 Grosvenor Gardens, our biggest potential liability – Surrender completed – saving c£250,000.
- Procurement training follow-up given at Cardiff on 30th March.
- Procurement savings over year 2009/10 over £100k

2 CHALLENGES RUNNING UP TO NEXT BOARD MEETING

2.1 Finance

- Complete Year end to tight timetable
- Complete budget work down to detail control level including the restructuring impact
- Phasing and input of detailed budgets
- Consult on and issue new GPC policy
- Change GPC card provider
- Year end Audit by NAO 24 May to 11 June

2.2 HR

- Integrate three new HR Managers whilst minimising impact on service provided to the nations.
- Continue to juggle the balance between need to consult with staff and need to have completed policies in place and retain focus on completion at end of June..
- Continue developing pilot of on-line consultation discussion forum and integration with intranet.
- Further develop management information specifically around absence reporting, training and equality & diversity.
- Early stage development of relationships between CF HR department and CC Water HR to identify opportunities for 'shared services'

2.3 IT

- Installation of compression software to improve user experience for Terminal based users
- Roll out of new laptop solution that has full hard disk encryption and allows users to work offline
- Finance system work – Rebuild client side application server, database maintenance work and refresh of test environment from live.
- IT weekly and monthly preventative maintenance tasks to be documented and formally implemented
- HR system server build and software install
- Agreement / Introduction of new IT policies and procedures

2.4 Property & Facilities

- Decision on Artillery House move currently on hold at BIS pending election.
- Discussions underway on limited options for Cardiff office move.
- Paper records being consolidated at TNT to save £10k.