

Civil Service Management Board

26th February 2021

Note of Meeting

Item 1 Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards Action 13b

The CSMB were presented with two options on how to proceed with this year's awards – to return to a competitive live event with the option to incorporate a live stream element; or a virtual recognition event similar to that run in 2020. The CSMB agreed to the first option and that this should be announced in April.

Item 2 Civil Service Mobility Scheme Action 15

The Assistant Secretary of the Civil Service Human Resources Division of DPER introduced this item and outlined that 9 categories of roles at HEO/AO grades have been identified as being more appropriately filled through advertisement-based mobility. These 9 categories have been approved by the Corporate Assistant Secretaries Group and FORSA agrees with 8 of the 9 categories. It is hoped that advertisement-based mobility for HEO/AO grades will be deployed by the end of Q1 2021.

Members were generally supportive of the approach but some further consultation will take place regarding certain specialist roles required by the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. It was noted that the intention is to review the categories following two years of operation.

It also noted that a move to including open competitions for recruitment to the grade of HEO would be a valuable addition.

It was confirmed that, under the new secondment policy, there is sufficient flexibility for bone fide, ad hoc, appointments to continue.

Item 3 Organisational Capability Reviews Action 20

The Secretary General of the Department of Education introduced this item and noted that the Review of Reviews document draws together the principal findings from the six Departmental capability reviews undertaken to date, and outlines areas of strength and matters requiring attention. It is intended that the findings will assist the development and implementation of reform initiatives, individually at organisational level and generally across the civil service. An abridged version of the document will be published in the Administration Journal of the Institute of Public Administration this month.

Members expressed their interest in the findings of the composite document and noted that it would be worth reflecting on with members of their management board.

The Department of Defence is next in line for review and preparatory work is also underway for reviews of the CSO and OPW. Caution was expressed regarding the potential challenge of energising staff remotely to participate in the process.

It was noted that the document reflects a moment in time and does not pick up all the activity that has taken place in Departments since the recommendations were made. The CSMB agreed that it would be useful if there could be an additional chapter, or a follow up article, which reflected what has changed in Departments since the reviews were completed and for Departments to provide this input.

It was agreed that reflections from Departments on the OCR process would be brought back to the CSMB and that this should be a recurring agenda item.

Some other reflections on the document included that: - there should be a commitment to review the template every two years; bespoke tailoring for a particular set of circumstances unique to a Department might be helpful; the review reflect the trade-off that Departments sometimes have to make between taking a more strategic long-term approach and dealing with issues that suddenly emerge; and future iterations might reflect the sometimes significant upheaval of changes in Departmental functions following the formation of a new Government.

It was stressed that the big themes from the reviews will have to be reflected in the new Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy and the first three-year action plan.

Item 4 Covid-19 Update / Discussion

It was noted that Ireland was to remain in Level 5 until 5th April and that the disease level was still high but that progress on the vaccine roll-out will improve the situation.

It was noted how important it was to strike the right balance between hope and caution in public communications. As the country begins to reopen it is important that the messaging around compliance is effective, and that outbreak management is effectively deployed, including rapid antigen testing.

With regard Civil Service employees, it was noted that as employees will continue to work from home for the foreseeable future, emphasis should be given to engaging employees on wellness. It was suggested that work should be carried out on a plan for migration back to the work place for the Civil Service.

Reference was made to the newly published COVID-19 Resilience and Recovery 2021 - The Path Ahead and the valuable input from Departments, including consideration of the impact on public services when the country begins to reopen.

Attendance

Martin Fraser, Department Taoiseach

Robert Watt, Department of Health

Jacqui McCrum, Department of Defence

Seán Ó Foghlú, Department of Education

Derek Moran, Department of Finance

Jim Breslin, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

Graham Doyle, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Kevin McCarthy, Department of Rural and Community Development

Katherine Licken, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

Ken Spratt, Department of Transport

Maurice Buckley, Office of Public Works

Damien Moloney, Office of the Attorney General

Shirley Comerford, Public Appointments Service

Pádraig Dalton, Central Statistics Office

Oonagh McPhillips, Department of Justice

Niall Burgess, Department of Foreign Affairs

Niall Cody, Revenue

John McKeon, Department of Social Protection

David Moloney, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Brendan Gleeson, Department Agriculture, Food and Marine

Orlaigh Quinn, Department Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Fergal Lynch, Department Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

David Cagney, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Secretariat

Liz Canavan, Department of the Taoiseach

Colin Menton, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Fiona Curran, Department of the Taoiseach

Apologies

Mark Griffin, Department Environment, Climate and Communications