

**MINUTES OF BRANCH HEADS' MEETING  
WEDNESDAY 25 OCTOBER 2006 at 10.00am  
LORD CLERK REGISTERS ROOM, GRH**

**Present:** George MacKenzie, Dave Brownlee, David Brown, Jim Grady, Rob Mildren  
Laura Mitchell, Linda Ramsay, Tristram Clarke, Hugh Hagan, John McLintock, Jenny Cutts  
(Secretary)

**Apologies:** Peter Anderson, Ian Hill, Alison Horsburgh, Bruno Longmore, Bob Phillips

**1. Minutes of the Meeting of 6 September 2006 and Matters Arising**

1.1 The previous minutes were approved.

1.2 The Security Committee was discussed. It was noted that the Security Committee should look into both ICT security as well as document security and requires input from Records Services Division. A group lead by Peter Anderson including staff from various branches should be established to look into document security and to produce a report with recommendations. Various document security issues were discussed including the supervision of tradesmen working in store rooms, assurance for record owners and depositors, the production of unnumbered items within bundles in the search rooms, TTH backshift staff leaving the back door open, GRH side door not being locked when unattended.

1.3 George Mackenzie reported that 2 nominations for the Special Bonus Scheme had been received and that senior management will meet in early November to consider these. It was also noted that further nominations may be made and considered at any point throughout the year.

**2. Staffing Issues**

2.1 It was noted that the B2 Archivist Assessment Centres were taking place at Saughton House over 25<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> October this week. George Mackenzie explained that the Assessment Centres consist of a competency based interview, a presentation on a specific topic given to the applicant and a written test on a general subject. The candidates are scored 50% for the interview and 25% for the other two elements. Bruno Longmore and Alison Horsburgh will provide feedback on the Assessment Centres and these methods will be analysed to establish how successful a selection process this is. It was noted that 55 applications were received for 4 vacancies and that 12 applicants were selected for interview.

2.2 John McLintock reported that the job advert for a WRH receptionist had been prepared and Linda Ramsay reported that CSB would be looking to recruit a B2 conservator in early 2007.

2.3 George Mackenzie reported that Raymond Wright had been successful at a recent ICT B1 Board and was expected to leave NAS for a post in the Scottish Executive. It is hoped that NAS will acquire 2 new ICT staff.

2.4 It was also noted that NAS is also interviewing for cleaning staff this week.

### **3. Reports**

#### **3.1 Conservation**

Linda Ramsay reported that a note to branch heads had been issued regarding the anticipated slower response to High conservation priority requests as a consequence of staff absence and digital preparation work. A number of documents are expected to be loaned for exhibition. A report on the installation of new shelving and record moves has been published on the Oracle and the re-shelving of valuation rolls will be completed by end of November 2006. It was noted that Alison Horsburgh was looking into the problems associated with valuation roll productions and a possible surrogacy solution. Linda Ramsay reported that all of the valuation rolls for which there is a microfilm surrogate available have now been vacuum packed and will not be produced to readers.

#### **3.2 Accommodation**

In Bob Philips' absence George Mackenzie and Dave Brownlee reported that tenders for the remaining work on GRH and NRH had been received and that a confidential recommendation has been made. A 'standstill period' is in effect during which legal challenges may be made by tenderers. If no challenges are received, it is expected that contractors will be appointed in December 2006 and work will commence in January 2007.

#### **3.3 FOI**

Hugh Hagan reported that the number of FOI enquiries received by GRB had decreased but that the number of requests for review of SE Departmental FOI decisions had increased. It was also noted that NAS has undertaken one review of an FOI enquiry made by a political researcher regarding NAS corporate information. As the first review of FOI requests must be undertaken internally by personnel not involved in the original decision, George Mackenzie convened a board to review this. The review board's decision has been made known to the enquirer who is now entitled to appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner if he is unhappy with it.

#### **3.4 ICT**

Rob Mildren reported that testing of remote access to NAS networks was underway taking into account health and safety issues regarding homeworking. A review of NAS printers has been initiated and ICT are investigating external hosting of NAS websites in order to guarantee access. Rob Mildren reported that he has approved a paper recommending a software solution regarding energy efficiency and that anti-spam email measures will be implemented immanently.

#### **3.4 Finance**

Jim Grady reported that finances remain tight and that salaries and accommodation costs are the highest. It was noted that NAS had a 0.1% underspend last financial year. The financial review by management board will take place in November 2006.

### **4. Attendance Management**

4.1 George Mackenzie reported that the civil service survey of sickness absence results had been received and that NAS has fared very poorly, with almost the worst sickness absence record in the UK with an average of 16 days lost per member of staff.

4.2 It was noted that this issue should be under continual discussion and that senior management will work with OneHR regarding the tracking and follow-up of sickness absence with the possible consequence of dismissal for non-genuine absences. It was stressed that return to work interviews should be held as soon as possible and that line managers should be urged to take an interest in staff welfare and explain the consequences of staff absence during these discussions.

4.3 It was noted that the NAS online attendance management system affords in-house tracking and monitoring of sickness absence and can be used for investigation, although it does not include long term sickness absence until the staff member has returned to work.

4.4 It was proposed that the SL9 system should be used for comparative purposes between SE figures and in-house data and between 2005 figures and the current year. It was also proposed that NAS could compare sickness absence with similar organisations such as NLS or RCAHMS.

5.4 There was a general discussion of related issues such as Pertemps staff, homeworkers, the impact of long term sickness upon statistics and staff morale.

4.6 Rob Mildren stated that the new remote working arrangements will enable homeworkers to use the existing SL9 system which they cannot do at present.

4.7 It was agreed that sickness absence should be added to the agenda for the NAS Away Days.

## **5 Any Other Business**

5.1 It was noted that minutes of recent Branch Heads meetings had not been published on theOracle and agreed that this would be rectified.

5.2 It was noted that the Health and Safety Committee was overdue for a meeting and that Bob Philips would convene one shortly. Dave Brownlee is to take the chair.

5.3 Tristram Clarke raised the point that it is Energy Saving Week this week. It was noted that a document concerning this topic had been circulated to branch heads for comment and will subsequently be circulated to all staff for further comment.

5.4 A discussion of energy saving suggestions took place including the suggestion that the Records Management procedures might eliminate the use of records issue and transfer forms in favour of an online process. Hugh Hagan agreed to take this suggestion back to GRB for discussion.

5.5 Hugh Hagan stated that the NAS Records Manager, James McCormack, requested that branch heads remind staff that the reorganisation of branch drives and electronic records is in progress as a precursor to the introduction of Electronic Records Management and that it would be useful if line managers could include related work during In-Year Reviews as appropriate.

5.6 A discussion about NAS Away Days was held. Dave Brownlee stated that staff had made suggestions at the last Away Days for future events and that he will be issuing a note to

everyone asking for further suggestions. Topics for inclusion were discussed including NAS the brand, streamlining of corporate administrative procedures, genealogical tourism and using geography as access points.

5.7 George Mackenzie reported that a working group lead by Dee Williams, with members from ROS, RCAHMS and NLS has been established to consider a project, provisionally known as 'ScotlandsPeople2', to investigate how ScotlandsPeople might be further developed.

5.8 George Mackenzie also reported that NAS will be collaborating with National Museum Scotland to establish an image library potentially named 'Images Scotland'.

5.9 There was a discussion about family history and opportunities for other areas of NAS, outwith the Scottish Family History Centre to become involved and for such projects to become more inclusive.

5.10 George Mackenzie reported that he would be meeting with his new reporting officer, Mike Ewart, Head of Education, this afternoon and that the reporting structure had changed to reflect that of the other cultural institutions within the portfolio. It was noted that there is a proposal for NAS to take responsibility for Public Records Policy and provide input to the minister on this. He also reported that the governance structure of NAS will be reviewed and that Management Board membership should be extended to include non-executive directors and include HR and Finance advisors. George Mackenzie invited suggestions for external members and potential members were discussed.

## **6 Date of Next Meeting**

Margaret Millar will canvas for dates in early December.

Jenny Cutts  
25 September 2006