

Local Partnership Board Meeting
Tuesday 28 August 2007, 10:00am
Lord Clerk Registers' Room, General Register House

Attendees: George Mackenzie (Chair); Dave Brownlee (NAS); Jim Grady (NAS); Jimmy Gilmour (PCS); Alex Cochrane (PCS); James McCormack (Prospect); John Mitchell (Health and Safety); Scott Murray (Assistant Secretary PCS); Jenny Cutts (secretary).

Apologies: Maureen Morris (PCS)

Minutes of last meeting

1. The minutes of the last meeting were approved and signed.

Matters arising

2.1 [3.3] It was reported that Louise Wilson has replaced Mary Robson as the NAS and GROS HR business partner and agreed to invite her to a subsequent meeting. Senior management observed that there had been a notable improvement in the service received from HR in terms of recruitment over the past six months.

Action: Jenny Cutts to invite Louise Wilson to the next meeting to be held in November 2007.
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2.2 [3.4] It was noted that the recruitment of support staff issue had been resolved, in that the standard entry level educational qualification requirements may be waived provided the job adverts state that moves into other Scottish Executive jobs would be dependent upon basic entry qualifications being obtained first.

2.3 [3.8] Scott Murray asked for clarification regarding NAS rules on claiming flexi credit for medical appointments and noted that the NAS rules were more restrictive than the Scottish Executive guidance. It was suggested that NAS staff are being discriminated against in that respect and Scott Murray explained that in the event of a dispute about this, the unions would work from the assumption of core Scottish Executive rules on medical appointments. George Mackenzie explained that the current application of flexi credits for medical appointments had been implemented because there had been issues with inflated claims in the past, and that a level of fairness for all staff was the aim. It was noted that as staff members are aware of the rules in advance, they may manage their worked hours so as not to lose credit for time worked over 7:24 (or equivalent standard daily hours). It was also explained that the flexi credit limit is not 7:24 for everyone and those working alternative working patterns may claim up to a total daily amount corresponding to their normal working pattern. It was noted that this remains an issue of staff concern and agreed that Scott Murray review the NAS rules on flexi credit for medical appointments and report back to the group.

2.4 [4.2] Alex Cochrane explained that HSR readers regularly complain about the length of time it takes to search the sasines using the RAC search tool. It was noted that the search tool had been developed for the legal customers and was accepted that it does not provide an ideal finding aid for conducting historical research. It was

further noted that design and performance issues are being pursued with the supplier, BT, and that it would be appropriate for Alison Horsburgh to address these issues in the post implementation review.

2.5 [6.1] It was noted that ICT have implemented the planned rota of early morning helpdesk cover and that some network problems had been solved by 8:00am accordingly. John Mitchell explained that he had been unable to contact members of ICTB on their corporate mobile telephones. It was noted that under the new arrangements, ICTB staff will now ascertain by 7.00am if there are problems with the IT network and the call out arrangements implemented if necessary.

2.6 [6.4] It was reported that there has been disciplinary action taken within the Scottish Executive regarding the refusal by some staff to wear identification passes. Scott Murray stressed the importance of wearing ID passes, particularly with regard to heightened security levels and to incidence of theft within Scottish Executive buildings. It was noted that NAS staff demonstrate good practice concerning ID passes and that security guidance including 'challenging people politely' is well known.

3. Staffing

3.1 WRH reception cover

Jimmy Gilmour raised the issue of covering WRH reception when the receptionist is off on annual or sick leave. It was noted that WRH staff are finding it problematic to cover the receptionist post in addition to their other roles. It was further noted that provision of cover impacts upon the achievement of their own tasks. George Mackenzie reported that the same issues had been raised and discussed at the WRH open forum held on 22 August 2007. Senior management agreed that engaging a Pertemp to cover WRH reception during planned blocks of annual leave would be acceptable but that it was not justifiable to employ a second permanent full time receptionist given the level of business. The issue of training for reception duty was raised. While it was agreed that for the permanent receptionist post a working knowledge about NAS and public access to other archives was desirable, during periods of cover this level of service may not be available to visitors. On these occasions, management's view was that it would be perfectly acceptable for the member of staff on reception to explain politely to the visitor that they are not able to answer the query, but that they will contact a colleague who may be able to assist. It was noted that a lot of relevant information is available on the reception desk for consultation.

3.2 Cleaning staff

John Mitchell reported that we are in the process of recruiting additional permanent cleaners as well as letting a contract for temporary cleaners to help out in emergencies. It was noted that the Reid Room had been finished and required cleaning. It was agreed that when the Scottish Family History Centre opens next year it will necessitate additional cleaning and this would be arranged.

3.3. Conservation staff

James McCormack sought clarification about the recent conservation services recruitment board. It was noted that one conservator had been appointed and the other

vacancy remained unfilled. It was reported that the second post would be readvertised after a suitable period had elapsed.

3.4 ICT Recruitment Board

It was noted that NAS and Rural Affairs and the Environment Directorate would be holding a shared B1 recruitment board next week.

3.5 Staffing levels

Scott Murray enquired as to whether the reported likely level of Spending Review 2007 (SR07) settlement would result in staffing reductions. George Mackenzie asserted that there were no reductions in staffing levels planned. He explained that it was expected that the opening of the Scottish Family History Centre would boost visitor numbers to the Historical and West Search Rooms which will continue to be staffed appropriately. George Mackenzie stated that staff retiring will be replaced where necessary. It was noted that changes to staff structure commensurate with changes in NAS business will be managed, for example as has been discussed previously, as more material becomes available online there will be less fetching and carrying of records needed, but more customers may be willing to pay for additional help in their searches. Senior management reported that there are currently 160 full time equivalent members of staff at NAS. Numbers have stabilised in the past couple of years but the staffing complement is still at a historical high. It was explained that the use of casual staff provided flexibility, but recent recruitment means that there are now very few Pertemps staff on the books.

4. Spending Review 2007

4.1 The outline timetable of SR07 was explained. It was noted that the Scottish Government will find out how much money it will receive from the UK Treasury in October 2007 and that the incoming administration will reallocate that money in line with new priorities and plans. It was further noted that the Culture portfolio (which includes NAS) is expected to ask for a 2% efficiency saving to be achieved across all directorates and agencies. It was noted that the First Minister has asked for a 1.5% efficiency saving to be achieved across the whole of the Scottish Government. It was noted that efficiency savings apply across the whole 3 years of a spending review period and that NAS would also be expected to achieve further 2% efficiency savings in the second and third years. It was noted that efficiency savings are not cuts and that reduction in services delivered would not count. George Mackenzie explained that advice will be sought on what counts for efficiency savings but that changes NAS is already making in the delivery of public services may be relevant. He explained that delivering access to records electronically may demonstrate that NAS is doing more with the same number of staff. George Mackenzie emphasised that the same level of public service must be maintained.

4.2 James McCormack asked about the Scottish Government's shared services initiative. It was noted that staff in other government organisations were concerned about job losses due to shared service initiatives. George Mackenzie explained that NAS already shares many services: HR and many financial services are provided by Scottish Government, Development and Training and accommodation are shared with GROS and there are other services such as telephony systems which it will also be possible to share with GROS. It was noted that currently there would be no cost benefit for NAS to buy in to SCOTS ICT services and there were no plans to do so.

The likelihood of NAS merging with another institution, such as the National Library of Scotland, was raised. George Mackenzie explained that the suggestion to merge the National Collections had been made some time ago and that it was considered then that no efficiency savings would be made through such a merger

4.3 Scott Murray noted that the proposed 2% efficiency saving is less demanding than the anticipated 5% efficiency saving requirement imposed upon some Whitehall departments and that an announcement was likely to be made in November 2007.

4.4 NAS involvement with the Granton building project was discussed. Senior management explained that NAS would like to be included although this would most likely be limited to a presence in the visitor's centre. Options for NAS long term accommodation continue to be investigated and solutions for long term building infrastructure problems at West Register House must also be considered. It was noted that long term accommodation for NAS had been submitted to the Minister as a 'spending pressure'.

5. Progress on major projects

5.1 It was reported that the Reid Room refurbishment as part of the SFHS project had been completed and that it may be used for testing SFHS applications and for user group demonstrations in advance of the Centre opening. Work continues on the Matheson Dome and this area will be finished shortly. It was noted that the Garden Entrance to General Register House is expected to be opened during September 2007 and that visitors to the Historical Search Room will use this door rather than the temporary entrance on James Craig Walk. The expected completion date for the Scottish Family History Centre remains as March 2008. It was clarified that the income generated by the Scottish Family History Service will be shared between NAS and GROS in proportion to the number of records contributed and that more NAS records will be added in due course, starting with the church records, sasines and valuation rolls.

5.2 It was reported that the VR digitisation project is at the tendering process and that a suppliers meeting will be held on 3 September 2007.

6. Health and Safety Issues

6.1 It was noted that the Health and Safety Committee met on 27 July 2007 and that John Mitchell advises both NAS and GROS regarding health and safety matters. It was reported that the health and safety section of the Oracle was being revamped to give it a higher profile and provide clearer guidance for staff. It was noted that two additional HSLOs are required for WRH and TTH respectively and that a programme of display screen equipment assessments is being undertaken.

6.2 Scott Murray explained that road risk assessment was an important part of health and safety within the Scottish Executive including consideration of checking driving licenses, medical examinations for drivers and use of an IT tool to assess driving ability.

7. Any other business

7.1 Alex Cochrane asked why SE security was not used at the Garden Entrance in GRH. It was noted that SE security would be used at the GRH side door, but that

NAS reception staff will be used at the garden entrance, as this will be the usual entrance for visitors to the Historical and Legal search rooms. Scottish Family History Centre staff will cover the main entrance when the Centre opens.

7.2 Issues regarding the supply of trousers for female members of staff were discussed. It was noted that it was important to closely involve the individual members of staff concerned when purchasing these garments and that cost was not the only consideration.

7.3 It was noted that the paper store at WRH had been approved regarding damp proofing and condensation and was ready for delivery.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is due to be held in November. It was noted that this timing should enable consideration of spending review and agreed that Jenny Cutts canvass for a date during week commencing 27 November 2007.