

## **Draft Minutes of 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of the Civil Service Accountability Board (CSAB)**

**Department of the Taoiseach, 4 November**

### **Present**

*Taoiseach*

*Tánaiste*

*Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform*

*Minister for Finance*

*Dorothy Scally*

*Bernie Gray*

*Shane Bissett*

*Martin Fraser*

*Robert Watt*

*Niall Cody*

*Seán O Foghlú*

*John Shaw (Secretary)*

### **Apologies**

*Paul Farrell (written observations on the papers were circulated at the meeting)*

### **Item 1 – Report of last meeting and matters arising**

The Board agreed to the Minutes of the last meeting as circulated and noted that they would be published.

The Taoiseach noted that a briefing session for the external members of the Board had taken place in September and, arising from that, some additional background information had been circulated with the papers for this meeting in relation to workforce planning, sick leave reforms and the Cabinet Committee structure.

### **Item 2 – Performance Management System for Secretaries General**

The paper circulated outlining the proposed system for introduction in January 2016 was considered and a number of issues arising were discussed including:

- it will be necessary to recalibrate objectives following the general election in 2016, taking account of Programme for Government commitments, new Strategy Statements and any reassignment of functions;
- giving more prominence to objectives in the area of implementing cross-cutting Government priorities;
- ensuring that the objectives reflect the particular contribution of the Secretary General to the achievement of wider Departmental objectives;

- ensuring that the objectives include sufficient stretch and ambition;
- how to ensure that the commitment to publish the objectives doesn't affect the value of the process, and
- where possible and appropriate, objectives should capture outcomes that reflect the experience of the users of public services.

It was agreed that the issues raised would be considered in finalising the process and noted that it will be necessary to review and adapt the process in light of experience.

It is intended that one of the external members of the Board will participate in the Performance Review Group and this will also help the Board fulfil its oversight role.

### **Item 3 – Programme of Organisational Capability Reviews**

The Board discussed the approach proposed in the paper circulated and a number of issues arising including:

- it is intended to pilot the methodology in two Departments during 2016, and this should provide considerable learning;
- the External Peer Review Panel will be responsible for agreeing the contents of individual reviews, and, it would be desirable, if possible, for an external member of the Board to join the Panel;
- the Board's role is to provide oversight of the overall Programme, and of implementation of recommendations arising; in this regard it would be desirable to have a draft schedule of reviews over a number of years;
- there should be a strong emphasis on a culture of continuous improvement as part of the process and the follow-up implementation plan should be of 2 (rather than 3) years duration;
- each review will need to be cognisant of the different nature, role and scale of Departments\Offices, and
- the framework should provide a greater emphasis on organisational culture and on structures (while recognising the Government's role in assigning responsibilities across Departments).

It was agreed that the approach would be refined taking account of the issues raised.

### **Item 4 – Whole of Government pathfinder projects**

The Board received an update based on the paper circulated. It noted that work continues to identify the best models to apply in the three pathfinder projects and to establish necessary support structures. The next meeting will provide an opportunity to consider working models for each project.

### **Item 5 – Performance Indicators / Metrics for the Board**

The Board discussed the paper in relation to setting key performance indicators for the Board itself, and more generally for the Civil Service. Issues arising included:

- the complexity of setting performance indicators across such a broad range of different activities and organisations;
- the need to include some metrics which capture the experience of users of public services; it was agreed to circulate results of the recent Civil Service Customer Survey to the board for information;
- the Board should include some indicators about its own effectiveness and processes, and
- the need to communicate positive messages about achievements and successes, both externally and to staff within the Civil Service; in this context, positive feedback from recent Townhall meetings with Civil Service staff was noted.

It was agreed that the Board would return to the issue of finalising Performance Indicators at a later stage.

### **Item 6 – AOB**

It was noted that the Board members will be invited to Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards ceremony on 3 December.

The next meeting of the Board will take place in Spring 2016 and the date will be confirmed in due course.

*Department of the Taoiseach*

*5 November 2015*