

BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Monday 16 May 2022,
Thistle House

Present:

Mr Lindsay Montgomery, CBE, Chairing Member
Sheriff Principal Aisha Anwar
Ms Neelam Bakshi
Mrs Deirdre Fulton
Ms Emma Marriott
Ms Morag Ross, QC
Professor Stephen Tierney
The Hon. Lady Wise, QC
Sheriff David Young, QC
The Hon. Lord Minginish, QC

In attendance:

Mrs Paula Stevenson, Chief Executive
Mr Stuart Scott, Interim Head of Operations
Ms Alanna Jeffs, Appointments Manager
Mr Andrew Cairns, Business Support Officer

Apologises:

Mrs Liz Burnley, CBE

1. Welcome & Apologies / Declarations of Interest

1.1 The Chairing Member welcomed Paula Stevenson, the new Chief Executive and Alanna Jeffs, Appointment Manager to their first Board meeting. Apologies were received from Liz Burnley ahead of the meeting.

1.2 Ms Bakshi made her standard declaration on social security.

2. Business from previous meeting

2.1 Minutes of Previous Meeting

2.1.1 Minutes of the March Board meeting were agreed.

2.2 Action Tracker

2.2.1 The Chief Executive went through the action tracker and provided an update to the Board.

2.2.2 The action tracker was agreed by the Board.

3. Chairing Member's updates

3.1 The Chairing Member welcomed the Chief Executive to her first Board meeting and thanked the Interim Head of Operations for the work he carried out over the previous months.

3.2 The Chairing Member updated the Board on the new Board members. The Solicitor Member recruitment exercise run by Scottish Government has identified a suitable candidate to fill the vacant position and the Lord President has identified replacement judicial members for Lady Wise and Lord Minginish, as their terms with JABS expire at the end of May 2022.

3.3 The Chairing Member and the Chief Executive met with Judicial Office and discussed the benefits of developing an enhanced approach for planning judicial recruitment over the coming years.

3.4 The Chairing Member noted that informal but positive feedback on the recent Senator competition had been received.

3.5 The Chairing Member and Chief Executive met with colleagues in Scottish Government Sponsorship Division. They recognised the need to enhance JABS resources to facilitate increased recruitment demands and change programme.

3.6 The Chairing Member is looking forward to informal 1-2-1 meetings with all Board members over the upcoming months, which the BMU will arrange.

BMU Action (1) – BMU to organise 1-2-1s for Board members.

4. Chief Executive Updates

4.1 The Chief Executive introduced herself to the Board and noted the contents of her Chief Executive report.

4.2 The Chief Executive updated the Board on staffing of the BMU. The Head of Operations recruitment round was unsuccessful and will need to be re-run. The recent Appointments Manager recruitment round was successful, Alanna Jeffs taking up post from another Scottish Government department. An appointable candidate was found for the Business Support Officer role and will take up post in due course.

4.3 The Chief Executive updated the Board on accommodation, confirming the landlords SLAB have agreed to refurbish the office, which includes painting the office and providing new desks to accommodate more staff. The heating in the office has now also been fixed.

4.4 Discussions have been on going with potential providers of a cloud based application software. Each provider has received information on JABS requirements and the expectation is that at least two providers to be shortlisted for consideration. Further discussions will be held with each provider.

4.5 A wider discussion about the use of technology within JABS followed, with specific mention made of the availability of Wi-Fi for Board members whilst in Thistle House. The Interim Head of Operations confirmed that Wi-Fi was now available and that he would have login details made available to Members. It was also agreed that Wi-Fi login details would be included on the Board meeting agenda.

4.6 The Chief Executive, Chairing Member and Interim Head of Operations met virtually with colleagues of NIJAC as part of the 'Compare and Contrast' exercise, they have agreed to share all of their working documentation and provide access to their e-learning package.

4.7 The Chief Executive shared her priorities to the Board over the next month, which included finalising draft Terms of Reference for the Board to consider for the Governance Review.

BMU Action (2) – To provide Wi-Fi login details to the Board and ensure that the agenda is updated accordingly.

5. Assurance of Governance.

5.1 Assurance of Governance

5.1.1 The Board agreed the contents of the report set out in the Assurance of Governance Q4 paper.

5.1.2 The Chairing Member advised that a draft Operational plan will be brought to the next meeting.

BMU Action (3) Bring a draft operational plan to the June meeting.

5.2 Finance

5.2.1 The Board had been provided with information on expenditure over the previous financial year and discussed the new Budget bid which was submitted at the beginning of May, which they welcomed.

5.3 Risk Register

5.3.1 The Chief Executive updated the Board on the risk register. The only increased risk was in relation to Information Management which has been updated to reflect an increased risk to our systems. This is due to a Scottish Government update for all users, with the potential for our shared storage drive to be replaced with a cloud storage solution which may not be optimal for our needs.

5.3.2 The Board noted the content of the risk register and agreed the proposed change.

5.4 Code of Conduct

5.4.1 The Board agreed parts of the report as set out, however suggested sections 3.7 and 5.2 should be amended to better reflect the singular nature and remit of the Board. The Chief Executive agreed to have further discussions with Scottish Government on these points.

BMU Action (4) – the Chief Executive will have further discussions with the Scottish Government concerning the Code of Conduct.

6. Policy

6.1 Update on Policy paper

6.1.1 The Chief Executive gave an update on the policy papers. The last policy paper was updated in June 2021. The clear priorities at the moment are to update the Code of Conduct and the once the Review is complete, the Framework Agreement. The BMU will bring an update to the June Board meeting and a timetable.

BMU Action (5) – BMU to bring a policy paper update to the June Board meeting.

7. Current Competitions

7.1 Sheriff 2022

7.1.1 The Interim Head of Operations and panel chair, Stephen Tierney provided an update to the Board of the ongoing Sheriff competition.

7.1.2 Shortlisting has concluded and interviews are due to commence over May and June for 11 known vacancies. As there is no Board meeting in July the BMU will circulate dates to Board members for an extraordinary decision meeting in late June, which will be virtual.

7.1.3 The mock interview was held with Sheriff Small on Wednesday 4 May, the panel felt this went well and prepared them for upcoming interviews.

BMU Action (6) – BMU to circulate dates for a virtual extraordinary meeting for Board decision of Sheriff recommendations,

7.2 LTC Ordinary Member - Valuation Experience

7.2.1 Due to revisions to the programme, the competition is not yet live. The round will go live week commencing 16 May 2022.

7.3 Parole Board for Scotland

7.3.1 A draft timetable for this competition is due to go to panel members next week. The panel chair, Neelam Bakshi will have a meeting with the panel to discuss what the Parole Board for Scotland do and any adjustments that are needed to be made.

8. Future Rounds

8.1.1 The Board discussed the upcoming future rounds.

9. Legal Appointment Advisors

9.1 The Board viewed a proposed Guidance note for Legal Appointment Advisors and approved the job description, with minor changes to be made to the remainder of the document.

10. Small Tribunal Rounds

10.1 The Interim Head of Operations explained the rationale behind the draft paper on small tribunal rounds. The Board agreed the model, if a line to the effect that 'appropriate subject knowledge would be covered by the tribunal nominee on the panel' was added to the paper.

BMU Action (7) – BMU to add a line to the Model for Small Tribunals so that 'appropriate subject knowledge would be covered by the tribunal nominee on panel'.

11. Life of the Senator

11.1 Lady Wise shared a 'Day in the Life' paper with the Board, giving a flavour of what a Senator would expect to do on a daily basis. She agreed to arrange visits to the courts for new members with no such previous experience.

12. Any other Business

12.1 The Chairing Member thanked both Lord Minginish and Lady Wise for their work throughout their time in JABS as this was their last Board meeting.

13. Meeting Closed

Meeting closed at 12:15

The next Board meeting will be Monday 20 June at Thistle House.