



## **Minutes of the VSS Board Meeting No 55**

**VSS, Seatem House, 28-32 Alfred Street, Belfast**

**Board Meeting Type: Quarter End Review**

**22 January 2019 at 9:30am**

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### **Board Members Present:**

|                         |                      |
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| Oliver Wilkinson (OW)   | Board Member (Chair) |
| Patricia Haren (PH)     | Board Member         |
| Bertha McDougall (BMcD) | Board Member         |
| Richard Solomon (RS)    | Board Member         |

### **VSS Officers in Attendance:**

|                          |                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Margaret Bateson (MB)    | Accounting Officer and CEO   |
| Andrew Walker (AW)       | Head of Corporate Services   |
| Joanne McConville (JMcC) | Head of Health & Wellbeing   |
| Lizzy Graham (LG)        | Governance Officer (Minutes) |

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### **A Apologies**

Apologies were received from Stephen McIlveen and Beverley Clarke.

### **B Minutes of Previous Meeting**

**B1** The minutes of the meeting on 5 December 2018 were approved.

### **C Action Points**

The Board asked the Head of Corporate Services to provide an update in relation to the outstanding action points.

The Board noted that one action point remains open:

**MSFM 4.4.3:** Ministers to meet Board. It was agreed that the status of this action point will be changed to red, reflecting the passage of time since first raised. The Board is content however that this matter remains out of VSS' control.

## **D Conflict of Interest**

**D1** The Board reviewed the Supplier List.

**D2** No conflicts of interest were declared.

## **E Chairman's Report**

The Chairman provided the Board with details of events he had attended in the last quarter, highlighting the meeting with the Commissioner for Victims & Survivors, and Andrew Sloan, the newly appointed CEO of the Commission for Victims and Survivors.

## **F Quarter End December 2018**

### **F1 CEO/AO Exception Report**

The Board asked the CEO to present this report.

The Board noted that progress against three Delivery Plan targets is less than expected at this stage, however, remedial actions are underway and full or close to full achievement of these targets is still expected.

The Board noted that the VSS response to the NIO Legacy Consultation has been submitted and is now available on the VSS website.

The Board held a discussion with management on the allocation of funding to individual victims, and to funded organisations. A discussion was also held on the potential cohort of bereaved who are not in receipt of cash awards because they were not registered for support with VSS at the 31 March 2017 cut-off date.

The Board noted that the VSS 2017/18 Annual Report & Accounts were approved and have been certified with an unqualified opinion.

The Board noted that a bid for additional funding has been submitted to SEUPB requesting an extension to the current PEACE IV project timeframe, as well as additional funding to extend the scope of the project.

The Board also discussed the relationship and communication between VSS and the Regional Trauma Network.

### **F2 Quarterly ALB Performance Report**

The Board asked the CEO to present this report.

MB highlighted the current risks, specifically in relation the home heating element of the persistent pain framework, and cash flow difficulties which will arise at the end of the PEACE project.

### **F3 Quarterly Assurance Statement**

The Board noted this paper, specifically noting that the Audit Recommendations had been discussed by the VSS Audit and Risk Committee.

### **F4 Quarterly Outcomes Based M&E**

The Board noted this paper, specifically noting the pressures Welfare Reform is presenting and reflecting on issues raised within the Victim Forum.

***AP1: The Board requested that VSS review the implications of welfare reform and the new universal credit programme.***

## **G Board Sub Committees**

### **G1 Audit and Risk Committee Update**

The Head of Corporate Services provided the Board with an update from the recent ARC meeting on 17 January 2019.

The Board noted that the upcoming Internal Audits are scheduled for February and March to review Human Resources (Recruitment), follow up of previous recommendations, and PEACE IV project management.

### **G2 Health and Wellbeing Committee Update**

The Head of Health and Wellbeing provided the Board with an update from the last Health and Wellbeing Committee meeting.

The Board noted that the VSS plans to bring internal policies in line with the Protect Life Policy, the regional health and wellbeing initiative to risk assess clients and respond to crisis phone calls.

## **H Board Workplan and Development**

### **H1 Board Attendance / Work Plan**

The Board asked the Head of Corporate Services to provide an update on Board Attendance and Work Plan.

The Board noted this paper.

## **H2 Board Training Update and Questionnaire**

The Board noted this paper including a number of proposed training opportunities.

## **H3 Board Self-Assessment Update**

The Board asked the Head of Corporate Services to present this update.

It was agreed that the Board would engage an external facilitator to assist with the completion of the annual Board and Committee Self-Assessments.

***AP2: VSS Board and Committee Self-Assessments to be scheduled with external facilitator.***

## **I Standing Agenda Items**

### **I1 Compliance Update (Tabled)**

The Board asked Head of Corporate Services to present this paper.

There is one suspected fraud case which remains open as at 31 December 2018. This case is awaiting a CCNI Final Report. VSS contacted CCNI in November 2018 and confirmed that the enquiry remains open.

VSS closed the 6 other suspected fraud cases in the period and no new cases were received.

It was noted that one new suspected attempted fraud case has arisen in early January 2019 which has been escalated to TEO and GFIS in line with procedure. No payment was made in this case and therefore there is no exposure to loss.

Final write off approval for one debtor was received in December 2018.

Five debtor balances in respect of individual victims and survivors have been identified as a result of the actions taken to close the suspected fraud cases. These debts will either be off-set against future awards where possible, or attempts to recover directly will be made.

One whistleblowing case emerged during the period which has resulted in an internal investigation. The case did not include any suspicion or accusation of fraud.

There were no new Ombudsman Complaints made in the period to 31 December 2018. No open cases were carried forward.

There were two FoI Requests received in the quarter (from same individual relating to the same subject matter). Both requests were answered in full and closed as at 31 December 2018.

There were no complaints about VSS were received in the quarter ending 31 December 2018. There were two complaints received in respect of VSS Funded Organisations. One complaint has been upheld, however an appeal is ongoing and VSS is currently seeking legal opinion to support the Board in its consideration of the appeal.

## **I2 Complaints and Appeals (Tabled)**

The Board noted that there was one appeal ongoing with the Board, as noted above.

## **I3 Client Risk Update**

The Board asked the Head of Health and Wellbeing to present this report.

The Board noted that one new case arose during the period which was appropriately directed to statutory services. No new clients have been added to the unacceptable behaviour register during the period.

## **I4 Data Protection Update**

It was noted that two data breaches occurred during the period. Both were deemed to be low risk and did not require reporting to the ICO. Both were as a result of human error and no personal or sensitive information was compromised.

It was also noted that no subject access requests had been received since the implementation of the new GDPR guidance. Further specific training for all VSS staff is scheduled for January 2019.

## **J Any Other Business**

The Board noted that an invitation had been issued to the Commissioner to attend the next Board meeting to engage with the VSS Board.

## **K Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Tuesday 19 February 2019 at 10:00am at Seatem House.