



Minutes of the VSS Board Meeting No 50
VSS, Seatem House, 28-32 Alfred Street, Belfast
Board Meeting Type: Quarter End Review

Board Members Present:

Oliver Wilkinson (OW)	Board Member (Chair)
Patricia Haren (PH)	Board Member
Bertha McDougall (BMcD)	Board Member
Stephen McIlveen (SMcI)	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
Caroline King (CK)	Acting Head of Health & Wellbeing
Maria McKeown (MMcK)	Project Assistant (Minutes)

A Apologies

Apologies were received from Beverley Clarke.

OW advised the board that Seamus Magee has resigned from the VSS Board. The Chair stated he is grateful for the service Seamus provided and wishes him well in the future

NIO Legacy Update

The CEO provided an update in relation to NIO legacy consultation and details of an event she attended on 30 July 2018 at Stormont. Members of five political parties explained their views on proposals to deal with Northern Ireland's Past, before the meeting was opened to questions from victims and survivors.

VSS are continuing to respond to queries from clients and other stakeholders. Provide guidance and support to clients wishing to respond and where appropriate, signpost to the advocacy support workers.

B Minutes of Previous Meetings

B1 19 June 2018. The minutes of this meeting were agreed.

C Action Points

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

25.10.16: AP2: UPDATE: Options have been documented. This position was publicly advertised for a third time in October 2017. One candidate interviewed but not appointed. A co-opt exercise via TEO resulted in no application. One interested party has been identified and an approach is being made via TEO.

15.5.18: AP1: VSS to provide Board with further feedback from the Victims Choice Quality Mark (in strategic session) **UPDATE: To be scheduled in future strategic session (possibly September)**

The board noted two action points were closed. **24.4.18 AP1** to be reopened as child safeguarding policy has not yet been finalised and approved.

MSFM 4.4.3: Ministers to meet Board. This action point is now on hold.

AP1 CEO to write a letter to The Executive Office in relation to board appointments in the absence of ministers. Issue of board appointments and extensions to be added to the risk register.

D Conflict of Interest

D1 The Board reviewed the Supplier List.

D2 No conflicts of interest were declared.

The CEO requested it be noted for transparency, that the VSS has paid for printing (10,000 copies) for a publication (aid to assist completing NIO Legacy Consultation) by Healing through remembering. The VSS chair sits on the board for healing through remember but had no involvement with this as it was approved by the VSS CEO and all procurement requirements were followed.

E Chairman's Report

The Board noted the Chairman's Update Report.

F Quarter End June 2018

F1 CEO/AO Exception Report

The Board asked the CEO to present this report.

MB provided an update on the key strategic issues including:

The VSS received written confirmation of its opening budget position of £13.266m (all resource – no capital allocation) on 23 March 2018.

An additional £50k in relation to welfare reform was provided within June Monitoring, as a technical transfer from the Department for Communities (DfC). This additional funding (bringing the revised budget position to £13.316m) will be allocated to welfare support activities within funded organisations.

A £4k bid for Capital funding (to cover a residual cost relating to the development of the new MIS system) was not accepted at this stage, and a further bid will be made in October Monitoring.

VSS continue to prepare and provide the required information (under guidance of our solicitors) to defend an employment tribunal case which is scheduled for late August 2018.

MB advised no new strategic issues to report. A full update will be provided at the next Board meeting, following engagement with the newly appointed RTN Manager.

F2 Quarterly ALB Performance Report

The Board noted this paper.

F3 Quarterly Assurance Statement

The Board noted this paper.

F4 Quarterly Outcomes Based M&E

The Board noted this paper.

G Board Sub Committees

G1 Audit and Risk Committee – Annual Report 2017/18

The Board reviewed the ARC Annual Report 2017/18

Next ARC meeting is on Tuesday 14 August at 2pm.

Internal Audit Programme for 17/18 has completed and a satisfactory assurance level was awarded in all areas.

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 asked the Head of Corporate Services to present this report.

The Head of Corporate Services reminded members of the availability of time within the Board Work Plan for appropriate training to be undertaken.

Objectives were reviewed and agreed.

H3 Board Self-Assessment Update

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

VSS to provide Board with feedback following outcome of Victims Choice Quality Mark process. Feedback to be scheduled for next Strategic Board Session on 13 September 2018.

Post – evaluation review of first year service delivery approach to be provided to the Board in the next strategic board session.

Board approved and adopted revised risk appetite in June 2018. Appetite now in use for management and escalation of risks throughout the organisation.

I Standing Agenda Items

I1 Compliance Update (Tabled)

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

There are now 20 suspected Fraud cases which have been closed by FIOG. FIOG has requested VSS responses to the recommendations raised in these cases. VSS action on debt recovery/possible sanctions is pending. VSS will write to individuals in all cases.

Ombudsman case ref COM1718/02 the investigation has concluded and draft report was shared with both VSS and the client. VSS responded to NIPSO on 20 June 2018, and awaits the final report. VSS is not in agreement with the proposed outcome as reflected in the draft report, and the VSS response details the reasons for this position.

There was one new whistle-blowing case in the quarter ended 30 June 2018. An anonymous whistleblower made accusations of client fraud. Preliminary investigation by VSS found no case to answer in this matter.

The Board noted that the NI Direct contract finishes at end of September 2018 and calls will then return directly to the VSS office.

The Board noted the update on the other compliance areas.

I2 Complaints and Appeals (Tabled)

The Board noted that there were no complaints to be considered at Board level.

I3 Client Risk Update

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

There is no new incidents to report in terms of unacceptable client behaviour. There is currently no members of the public listed on the Unacceptable Behaviour Register. The last member of the public listed was removed from the register in May 2018 per the Policy.

During Quarter 1, eight clients were added to the Client Risk Register. The total number of individuals that VSS has listed on the register from April 2018 to date is 8. All cases to date are closed.

14 Data Protection Update

A GDPR Action plan was presented to the Board. The Board noted there were no breaches to report in terms of GDPR and data protection.

J Any Other Business

J1 Revised Anti-Fraud Policy and Fraud Response Plan

The Board approved this policy, noting changes in respect of sanctions in cases of fraud.

The Board appointed PH as the Board member responsible for overseeing the VSS Whistleblowing policy and procedures.

K Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board is scheduled for Thursday 13 September 2018 at 10:00am at Seatem House.