

January 2023 QUARTERLY SMT MINUTES

MEETING: Thursday 12th January 2023, Progressive House, Belfast

In Attendance:

Margaret Kelly – Ombudsman; MK
 Sean Martin – Deputy Ombudsman; SM
 Corinne Neilson – Acting Director of Investigations (CN)
 Andrew Ruston - Head of Communications; AR
 Julie Healy - Head of Improvement, Engagement & Impact, JH
 Jeff Smyth – Acting Director of Investigations, LGES; JS
 Sarah Sherry – Secretariat; SSS

Agenda Item	Minutes	Action Required/ By Whom
1.	<p>Apologies and Conflicts of Interest</p> <p>No Apologies</p> <p>MK invited those present to register any actual or perceived conflicts of interest relevant to the agenda. No conflicts were noted.</p> <p>MK acknowledged that this meeting was JS last meeting, and expressed her thanks for his work.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of the last meeting</p> <p>Minutes from 8th December 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record</p>	
3.	<p>Outstanding Actions</p> <p><i>Business Continuity Plan</i> – Staff contacts are being updated. It was agreed that SMT members hold hard copies.</p> <p>Car Parking – SS to share criteria for SMT agreement.</p> <p><i>Social Media Policy for NIPSO Staff and NIPSO Social Media Policy</i> – to be agreed by SMT</p> <p><i>Contract Database</i> – SM and SS to check.</p> <p><i>Reasonable Adjustment Policy</i> – SMT to provide feedback to AR</p>	<p>SM – speak to GS re staff contacts</p> <p>SS – Criteria to SMT</p> <p>SMT – comments re policies</p> <p>SM/SS – Contract Database</p>

4	<p>Procurement Policy</p> <p>The revised policy was discussed and agreed subject to a small number of changes.</p>	
5	<p>Internal Audit</p> <p>The latest audit reports were presented. Both the <i>Review of Strategic Planning and KPIs</i> and <i>Review of Communications and Stakeholder Engagement</i> achieved 'Satisfactory' ratings with only minor recommendations.</p>	
6	<p>Business/Operational Plan</p> <p>The Business Plan to Q3 is to be updated by Monday.</p>	SMT – Plan to be updated
7	<p>Corporate Policy Database</p> <p>SM advised that GS and his team are helping with the update of the Information Governance Policies, but it is to be noted that at the time of review it will be the responsibility of Corporate Services.</p>	
8	<p>NIPSO Risk Register</p> <p>MK asked SMT were there any new or emergent risks that should be noted. A discussion took place on each main risk, with minor changes made to one.</p>	
9	<p>Draft Ombudsman Report</p> <p>SMT to read the draft and advise JH/AH if anything else should be deleted or added.</p> <p>This process has allowed her team to set up a database of all the recommendations and will provide good feedback for next year's Ombudsman report.</p>	SMT – Annual report
10	<p>Quarterly Sickness Absence Report</p> <p>The quarterly absence figure is 5.3%.</p> <p>MK reminded that Return to Work forms are to be completed</p>	
11	<p>Investigations update</p> <p>A procedural manual course for all investigations staff will commence in January – this will be in 1.5 hour sessions, fortnightly until the end of March</p> <p>An update was provided on the <i>Waiting List Communications</i> investigation, and the <i>PIP Follow Up report</i> .</p>	
12	<p>LGES Update</p> <p>JS provided complaints statistics on the year so far.</p>	
13	<p>Complaints Standards Update</p> <p>The Complaints Standards team is simplifying the Model Complaints Handling Procedure documentation. Publishing is planned for Spring, with a launch event being considered.</p>	AR/JM – Launch of MCHP

14	<p>Financial and Corporate Services Update</p> <p>A financial update was received, with projections for the end of year spend.</p> <p>Discussion took place regarding teams working patterns in line with the Hybrid Working Policy. MK is to send an all-staff message reminder of the policy.</p> <p>The 23/24 budget process has commenced.</p>	
15	<p>Communications & External Engagement Update</p> <p>A new website provider has been selected. Staff input on design and content will be required between now and the end of March.</p> <p>AR presented a paper on Podcasts and how they could be included on the new website.</p>	
16	<p>Improvement, Engagement, and Impact Report</p> <p>The Impact plan was deferred for further discussion at the Special SMT meeting in February.</p> <p>Meetings are to be set up for MK/SM to meet with councillors after the May election to discuss the code of conduct</p> <p>JH outlined meetings with community and interest groups over the coming weeks.</p>	<p>JH/AR/SS – meeting set up with parties</p>
17	<p>AOB</p> <p>None</p>	
15	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Thursday 9th February 2023 at 10am at Progressive House</p>	