

MEETING OF THE COURTS SERVICE BOARD

6th February, 2017

The Courts Service Board met on 6th February, 2017.

At the meeting the Board considered and approved reports in the following matters:

Minutes and Documentation from Committees of the Board

The Board noted minutes of meetings of Committees of the Board as follows

- Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting, 5th December, 2016
- Minutes of Family Law Court Development Committee Meeting, 28th November, 2016
- Minutes of Building Committee Meeting, 29th November, 2016

Report on Expenditure and Budget 2017

The Board considered and approved the Report. The Chief Executive briefed the Board on the key issues:

- **Expenditure** - The Board was briefed on expenditure to end 2016 which showed successful management of the overall budget, allowing for unanticipated additional expenditure at year end.
- **Budget 2017** - A further revision to the 2017 Budget was approved providing mainly for additional expenditure for courthouse maintenance to be applied on a prioritised basis to the areas of greatest need in Dublin and provincial locations.

The expenditure in 2017 will be closely monitored throughout the year. In accordance with the governance arrangements the Finance Committee had considered the proposed revised budgetary allocations at its meeting on 30th January, 2017 and recommended them to the Board for approval.

Chief Executive Officer's Report

The Board considered and approved the Chief Executive Officer's Report. The Chief Executive Officer briefed the meeting on some of the major issues outlined in his report including

- **Appointment of Ms. Geraldine Hurley as Head of Superior Courts Directorate and Chief Registrar of the High Court** – the Board noted that Ms. Hurley will take up her new role with effect from 13th February, 2017 and will be replaced as Head of Operations in the

CCJ by Mr. Tom Ward, current Chief Clerk of the Circuit and District Courts in Dublin. Mr. Ward will be replaced by Ms. Emer Darcy in due course.

- **Corporate Business Plan 2016** – the Board noted the significant progress made against the targets set out in the 2016 Corporate Business Plan.
- **Judicial Assistants** – the working Group established to review the current system and make recommendations will meet on 7th February and in the meantime a competition for Judicial Assistants is being arranged.
- **ICT** – significant progress continues to be made across a range of ICT initiatives including the new Citrix Desktop system, migration to the Government Cloud Network, outdated equipment replaced in the CCJ etc. Measures to address the recommendations of the recent Audit on ICT security are also being put in place through ATOS, including a review of the current main elements of the ICT security family of products and a list of important security DOS and DONTs has issued to all staff and judges. New Video Conference installations or replacement of Video conference equipment were completed in Trim, Ennis, Cloverhill, Four Courts and Limerick and installations have commenced in Clonmel, Naas and Portlaoise, to be completed in Q1 2017. A project to refresh the DAR technology in courtrooms has also commenced and phase 1 (CCJ and the Four Courts) was completed and went live on 11th January, 2017.
- **PPP Courthouse Bundle** – construction has commenced on all 7 PPP courthouse sites and significant progress is being made with all projects. There has been some slippage in relation to target dates in Drogheda and there is a probability that the target date will be missed by 2 to 3 weeks. The situation is being monitored very closely and the Chief Executive undertook to keep the Board informed of developments. All other projects remain on schedule for completion by their respective dates.
- **Hammond Lane** - Work on the Hammond Lane project is also continuing and good progress is being made. The Capital Appraisal and PPP Procurement assessment are under way at present and are due to be completed by end Q1 2017. It is anticipated that the Part 9 planning process will be undertaken during 2017, subject to the approval of the Department and the procurement process could begin during 2017 with a view to the project being completed in late 2020/early 2021. It is intended to bring further details to the board at its next meetings with a presentation on the proposed design and facilities to be made to the Board at its June meeting.
- **Future Provincial Projects** – the Chief Executive briefed the Board on the current status of the 5 provincial city/county town projects remaining to be completed as set out in the Report i.e. Galway, Tralee, Portlaoise, Roscommon and Wicklow. In Wicklow there is

space for refurbishment and extension of the courthouse on the current site; a valuation of Roscommon courthouse has been received from the Valuation Office which will form the basis for discussions with Roscommon County Council about a transfer of their portion of the building to the Courts Service; discussions are ongoing with the regarding sites in Tralee; a site in Portlaoise is being considered in consultation with Laois County Council and the possibility of acquiring a site in Galway is being actively pursued.

- **Courts Service Website** – work on the redevelopment of the Courts Service website has commenced and a review group has been established with a view to providing a more customer centred approach and structure to the content of the site.
- **Commemorative Lecture Series** – the next lecture in this series will be given by Prof. Phillip Sands.
- **Waiting Times** – the Board noted the waiting times which continue to decrease across a range of case types in each jurisdictions.
- **Legal Services Regulation Act** – will be commenced later this year and a joint Department of Justice and Equality/Courts Service Working Group has been established to progress the arrangements for the new Legal Costs Adjudication system.

Corporate Business Plan 2017

The Board considered and approved the Annual Corporate Business Plan for 2017. The Plan is designed to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2014- 2017 and identifies priorities and actions for the Service in 2017 in this regard.

Business Case Methodology for Court Venues

The Board considered the Report of the Building Committee on a review carried out by the Building Committee of the format and content of business cases relating to future proposals for the closure of court venues in the context of Mr. Justice Noonan's judgement in the Skibbereen case. The Review considered the methodology approved by the Board in June 2012 to identify venues which should be considered for closure and the criteria and consultative process to be used.

The Board considered and approved the Report which

- Affirmed the evaluation criteria already in place and proposed 3 additional criteria i.e.
 - Security, health and safety of all those using court facilities – to reflect the heightened concerns for the health safety and security of all those using court buildings

- The estimated capital costs of refurbishing the courthouse to an acceptable standard
- Any other consideration appropriate to each individual venue

Each evaluation criteria will be supported by a number of agreed guideline sub-criteria. The estimated capital cost of upgrading venues to an acceptable standard represents the primary financial consideration.

Proposed amendment to the consultative process whereby, points awarded in the initial assessment of a venue carried out 2012 and which are no longer relevant, would not be circulated.

District Court Variation Order

The Board approved the proposal to transfer the District Court area of Ardee from District No. 10 to District No. 6. which will align the District Court area with the County of Louth.

Annual Review of the Operation of the Board and Committees

The Board considered the Report on the operation of the Board and Committees as circulated. In accordance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies there is a requirement on Boards to keep their performance and effectiveness and that of committees under review. It was agreed that to facilitate and inform such a review the Board would receive a report annually setting out Board and Committee operation and activity during the year. The Board considered the Report and in particular noted the extensive range of work carried out by both the Board and the committees during the year which shows a high functioning and productive Board. The work of the committees greatly supports the Board and the Chairperson thanked the Board members and the Chairpersons and members of the Committees for their contribution during the year.

Contract Register

The Board noted the Contract Register as circulated.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of Board will take place on 3rd April, 2017.

Attendance

Present: The Hon. Mrs. Justice Susan Denham, Chief Justice and Chairperson

The Hon. Mr. Justice Sean Ryan

The Hon Mr. Justice Peter Kelly

The Hon. Mr. Justice Michael Peart

The Hon. Mr. Justice Patrick McCarthy

The Hon. Mr. Justice Ray Groarke

Her Honour Judge Dóirbhíle Flanagan

Her Honour Judge Rosemary Horgan

Mr. Brendan Ryan

Mr. James McCourt

Mr. Paul McGarry S.C.

Mr. Stephen Bracken

Mr. Conan McKenna

Mr. Liam Berney

Mr. Pat Doyle

Apologies: The Hon. Mr. Justice Liam McKechnie

Judge Gerard Haughton

Mr. Stephen Bracken

Mr. Liam Berney

Mr. Pat Doyle

Mr. Shane Browne

Officials Present: Mr. Sean Quigley, Head of Resource Management

Ms. Marie Ryan, Secretary

Ms. Miriam O'Flanagan, Office of the CEO