

**MEETING OF THE COURTS SERVICE BOARD**  
**26<sup>th</sup> June, 2019**

**The Courts Service Board met on 26<sup>th</sup> June, 2019.**

**Minutes and Documentation from Committees of the Board**

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

- Minutes of the Family Law Court Development Committee, 4<sup>th</sup> March and 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019  
Minutes of Building Committee 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2019

**The Board considered and approved the following Reports:**

**Report on Appointment of new Chief Executive of the Courts Service.**

In accordance with section 17(1) of the Courts Service Act 1998, the Board approved the appointment of Ms. Angela Denning as the new Chief Executive of the Courts Service with effect from 19<sup>th</sup> September, 2019.

**Report on Expenditure and Budget 2019**

The Board considered the Report on Expenditure and Budget 2019, as circulated. The Board noted:

- **Financial position to end May 2019** – Gross expenditure to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2019 was €55.316m showing a gross underspend of €1.329 m. of underspends on Pay of €0.883m, and Capital of €0.832m and an overspend on Non Pay of €0.387m. .821m. Appropriations in Aid (Income) to the end of February shows a shortfall against profile of €0.210m relating to Court Fees. The Financial position will be managed very carefully to ensure a balanced budget is achieved at year end.
- **Budget Review** - The Budget Review at end April which identifies expenditure trends and acts as an early warning system has highlighted a number of issues in relation to Pay, Non Pay and capital expenditure which will be monitored very carefully between now and year end to ensure a balanced budget is achieved.
- **Estimates 2020** - work on the Estimates for 2020 is underway and the key focus will be on additional funding for ICT to provide the necessary resources to enable implementation of

the recommendations of the ICT Review and the Organisational Capability Review particularly in relation to building up capability and funding developments. The report on ICT to be considered by the Finance Committee will be very helpful in informing management of the ICT budget in 2020.

### Report on Risk Management

**The Board considered the Report on Risk Management and noted the progress made.**

Risk Management continues to be actively addressed throughout the organisation and was considered by the both the SMT and the Audit & Risk Committee at their recent meetings. The Risk Overview provides a high level focus for the major risks facing the Service which include 7 High Risks, 12 Medium Risks and 3 Low Risks. The Risks and associated Actions are listed in the Corporate Risk Register and tracked via a Risk Action Log. The Risk Register also acknowledges the potential risks to the organisation arising from BREXIT and the Courts Service is actively engaging with the Department of Justice and Equality in the matter.

Very good progress is being made in relation to the actions and controls with 80% of Q1 actions completed and progress made in relation to Q2 actions. The SMT continues to manage risks very closely and engage with the Heads of Directorates in relation to the implementation of the necessary mitigating actions and controls.

### Chief Executive Officer's Report

The Board considered and approved the Report by the Chief Executive Officer and noted major issues including:

- **Corporate Business Plan 2019** - good progress is being made in meeting the objectives in the Corporate business with the majority of actions on target or completed.
- **Recruitment** - Additional staff are being appointed as required to meet operational, strategic and administrative needs. Recruitment is underway in relation to a number of specialist posts including Health and Safety and Energy Efficiency managers, solicitor and accountancy expertise and Legal research managers. A number of internal promotion competitions are also being held.
- **ICT** - e Licensing is progressing very well and has been well received in the pilot districts by the solicitors. This will be rolled out nationwide in the coming months and an eLicensing Register

is also being launched shortly. Significant progress is also being made in the roll out of equipment as part of the Judicial Customer Journey project.

- **Awards** - Anglesea Courthouse, Cork won the Innovation Award at the recent RIAI 2019 Irish Architecture awards and finished in 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Public Choice Category. The courts PPP bundle was a finalist for the Best Operational Project in the recent International Partnership Awards in London.
- **Youghal Courthouse** - the court has not sat in Youghal courthouse since 2003 and the building is in poor condition and not suitable for upgrade to modern standards. Cork County Council has formally requested to take over ownership of the building for community use. The building is valued at €150,000. The Courts Service has no use for this building and at its meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> May the Building Committee approved the disposal of the building to the Council for no consideration. This is in line with Court Service policy whereby surplus property is offer to other public bodies for public use.
- **Combined Office Review (CORI)** - good progress is being made in the implementation of the recommendations of CORI and a centralised service is now in place in Castlebar in relation to the service of foreign documents and jury summonses. This is operating well and developing a centre of excellence in relation to these functions. It is intended to roll out more centralised services in due course.

### Report on the Review of the Courts Service ICT Operating Model

The Board considered and noted the Report on the Review of the Courts Service ICT Operating Model. The Courts Service is embarking on a significant programme of work in line with Long Term Strategic Vision - 2030 which includes the delivery of improved services to users through optimising the use of technology and the greater use of online service delivery. There has been significant under investment in ICT and the development of the necessary capacity and capability within the ICT function is critical to the successful delivery of this vision. The Courts Service engaged KPMG to review the ICT Unit in terms of the governance arrangements, organisation, structure, skills, working methodologies and resources. The review has been completed and the Report sets out the proposed the future state which will be required to deliver ongoing services and the proposed change programme. It also identifies the gaps between the current and proposed state and makes recommendations as to how these gaps can be addressed.

The Report includes a transition plan which is estimated to take up to 3 years to implement and will require additional resourcing including the appointment of the Chief Information Officer.

The report has been considered by the Senior Management Team and it is proposed to commence work on implementing the recommendations.

### **Annual Report of the Courts Service**

The Board considered and approved the Annual Report of the Courts Service for 2018. The Report will be formally presented to the Minister for Justice and Equality on 8<sup>th</sup> July, 2019.

### **Closure of Kilcock Courthouse**

**The Board considered and approved a report on the proposal to amalgamate the District Court area of Kilcock with the District Court area of Naas** with the permanent transfer of Naas Court business to Naas. Kilcock courthouse was closed on a temporary basis on health and safety ground in July 2016 and the business of the District Court was transferred to the courthouse in Naas. The accommodation and facilities are limited and in poor condition.

The Courts Service, in accordance with the agreed protocol carried out a full consultative process with the judiciary, court users, justice agencies and public representatives. Following the completion of this process a report was brought to the Building Committee. The Committee considered the Report and agreed to recommend the closure of the courthouse to the Board. In accordance with agreed procedure, a further consultation process was carried out and all views received as set out in the Report to the Board. A court venue will be required in North Kildare and is likely to be in Maynooth or Leixlip. This is a matter which will be actively progressed subject to funding.

### **Annual Return to the Minister for Justice and Equality on Courts Service compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies**

**The Board considered and approved the annual return to the Minister** which sets out implemented by the Courts Service to enhance compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and provides the Minister with assurance in relation to specific regulatory and governance items as required. A signed Statement of Internal Financial Control; a schedule of fees paid to Board members and the Return under Cir 40/02 in relation to non- competitive procurement in 2018 are also attached as required under the Code.

### **Annual Board Work Programme/Calendar**

**The Board noted the Annual Work Programme for 2018/19 which is being implemented.**

