

MEETING OF THE COURTS SERVICE BOARD
27th September 2021

Welcome

The Chair welcomed everybody to the full day meeting, the holding of which had been one of the recommendations arising from the 2020 IPA review. The meeting was attended mainly in person in Croke Park with a number of Board members joining in via Zoom.

Estate Strategy

Presentation on Baseline Data for Estate Strategy

Mr. Cleere introduced this item and gave the background and context of the Presentation which was made by Mr. Brendan Sheils.

Mr. Sheils talked the Committee through the Presentation which outlines the Key Baseline Information such as Circuits, Districts and Areas, venues, population, caseloads within counties, and distances from venues. It also took the Board through the findings of the Condition Survey, put the Strategy into policy, strategic and operational context and outlined the next steps.

The Presentation was followed by an opportunity to discuss what had been presented, ask questions and make suggestions as to what else might be included. Mr. Cleere and Mr. Sheils indicated they would take on board any observations or comments when developing the Estate Strategy.

Hammond Lane Update

Mr. Cleere brought the Board through this presentation which outlines the background, rationale, preliminary business case, project governance, key activities, high level project plan, and proposed terms of reference for the Hammond Land Project Board.

Mr. Cleere also outlined that Ms. Denning as Accounting Officer for the Courts Service will be meeting with the other Accounting officers involved in the project.

The Board noted the report.

Modernisation Programme update

Ms. Audrey Leonard, Assistant Secretary, Strategy and Reform Directorate, took the Board through the MP presentation which outlined how the Modernisation Programme fits into the 2030 Strategic Vision of the Courts Service, and includes 4 pillars of reform. The Programme status of each of the 4 pillars were outlined and an update on the programme budget status was given.

A discussion followed where it was indicated that the first internal change people will see is the new IT Desktop while the first external change to be seen will be the Jury system. There should also be changes to Plain Language on the website with Debt Lists also being worked on. It was suggested that the Courts Service website doesn't tell any of the story on the good work being done in these areas and it could perhaps along with the Vision be more visible. Other issues discussed were videolink expansion, opportunities for review and lessons learnt.

The Chair thanked Ms. Leonard and the presentation was noted.

IPA Effectiveness review

Update on Recommendations

The Secretary spoke on this report which gave an update on the status of all of the IPA Recommendations from the 2020 review on the effectiveness of the Board.

Self Evaluation forms

It was agreed that the Board would proceed with the self-evaluation with the findings to be discussed at the November meeting. It was requested that there be room on the forms for a narrative in addition to scaling.

2022 Draft Calendar

The draft calendar for 2022 had been circulated and following on some feedback will be updated.

Workshop on Organisational Culture and Team Dynamics

The workshop, which was quite interactive, was facilitated by Mr. Tom Ward Senior Governance Specialist in the IPA, and Mr. Aidan Horan, director, Training & Development and Consultancy Services. It went through how the Board and Executive work together, the culture and dynamic of the Board, how culture is disseminated through the organisation and how visible the Board is. When discussing Culture, the question as to how we see evidence of Integrity, Respect and values was posed, where the staff in the Courts Service were praised for their dedication to Public Service which has been particularly evident during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was stressed that how we do things matter. All members of the Board were asked their input into why they were here as a Board member and how they see their purpose. Everybody was also asked about the Board's priorities for the next 12 months where there were some common themes of the Modernisation Programme, the Estates Strategy, the IT Strategy, Hammond Lane, the Effectiveness of the Board and getting back to normal.

The Workshop was well received with good engagement by all participants.

Operational Committee

The idea for an Operational Committee being set up as a sub-committee of the Board, was raised as part of the 2020 IPA Review. Mr. Tom Ward and Mr. Peter Mullan prepared a Report on the topic and spoke on it at the meeting. The Report gave a suggested composition of such a committee which wouldn't necessarily have to be a Board sub-committee.

The Chair proposed that a working group be formed along the lines suggested in the Presentation, which would report back as to what they see is the best structure to raise issues. It was also suggested that a list of Committees to let Judges know where to go with issues could be provided.

AOB

As this was his last meeting prior to retirement, Ms. Denning thanked the Chair Frank Clarke for chairing and steering the Board so well over the past 4 years.