

ACRO Governance Board Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9th December 2020 via Microsoft Teams

1. Attendance

1.1	AC Martin Hewitt (MH)	National Police Chiefs' Council (<i>Chair</i>)
	Richard Croucher (RC)	Hampshire Constabulary
	Robert Price (RP)	ACRO
	Supt James Fulton (JF)	ACRO
	Lizzy Gummer (LG)	Home Office
	Nikita Cannan (NC)	Home Office
	Kath Clarke (KC)	National Crime Agency
	DAC Richard Martin (RM)	International Crime Coordination Centre
	Lorraine Henderson (LH)	Police Scotland
	Louise Cooper (LC)	Justice Northern Ireland
	James Payne (JP)	Hampshire OPCC
	Iain Hall (IH)	PSNI
	Lucy Saunders (LS)	ACRO
	Susan Francis (SF)	ACRO
	Chloe Bowler (CB)	ACRO
	Tom Mason (TM)	ACRO
	Phil Rogers (PR)	ACRO
	Tanya Smith (TS)	ACRO (<i>minute taker</i>)

1.2 Apologies were received from Ian Johnston and Helen Nisbet.

2. Minutes and action log

2.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th September 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record. These will now be published externally.

2.2 The action log was updated.

3. ACRO Finance Report and 2021/22 Budget

3.1 Prior to SF going through the finance report, MH set out the financial context and positioning for the Spending Review.

SF reported that in the period 1st April to 31st October 2020 ACRO generated an income of £6,436,300 with expenditure of £7,046,645; there is a deficit for the financial year to date of £610,345. Total income for the period is £2,185,436 less than budgeted with income from Police Certificates 37% below budget and 27% down on last year.

Total expenditure for the period is £1,604,302 less than budgeted. In particular, employee costs are £1,168,079 less than budgeted. To mitigate the downturn in income in the current financial year, a decision was made to freeze all but business critical recruitment for the foreseeable future. Where vacancies exist, these continue to be absorbed by existing resources with work prioritised.

Closed session

Closed session

The ACRO reserve level is now £3,988,172 which includes the £2m surety credit. In terms of the surety, JP made it clear that it is a requirement to ensure ACRO repay the £2m surety back to the OPCC to ensure ACRO is indemnified against future losses if the company was to cease operating.

SF spoke through the three budget options to colleagues for further discussion. Each version is positioned to give a closing reserve balance of approximately 10% of expenditure.

RM asked if there would be an option to potentially raise the cost of Police Certificates. JF stated that it was less than a year since the last cost increase, there would be some nervousness on the perception of increasing the costs again so soon. MH agreed and recognised that this could be an option but it would be a last resort option.

RC asked SF what the percentage increase would be for forces. SF stated it is £750k more than the 2020/21 request of £2.8m from police forces; this is roughly a 24% increase.

MH proposed that option three is agreed by all colleagues as this is the best-case scenario to manage the budget for 2021/22. However, the decision will ultimately need to be revisited once there is more certainty around the variables known (Brexit, FPNs etc.). MH asked RP to prepare a paper for the Chiefs' Council meeting in January.

4. Brexit

4.1 Home Office Update

Closed session

4.2 International Crime Coordination Centre (ICCC)

RM confirmed that the transition period ends on the 31st December 2020. The ICCC have been working hard with ACRO and the NCA to streamline the processes in order to be prepared for every eventuality. Contingency plans are in place ready for the UK to exit the EU.

5. International Services Portfolio

5.1 LS reported that the volumes that were significantly impacted by the recent Covid pandemic have now recovered and almost all processes within International Services are back up to pre-pandemic levels. In this quarter, there has been a substantial surge in EU Notifications Out.

5.2 Closed session

5.3 Closed session

5.4 Closed session

5.5 Closed session

6. National Services Portfolio

6.1 TM stated the 2020/21 financial year applications for all disclosure products up to and including 31st July 2020 are as follows:

- Police Certificates 27,539 -36% YoY
- ICPC 2942 -27%
- Subject Access 2346 -27%
- Unit total 32,827 -33%

6.2 The effects of Covid has had a significant impact on the demand for Police Certificates. The majority of applications that have been received are in relation to individuals looking to renew Visas whilst residing in country. There has been a steady recovery in demand across the financial year. Demand for certificates for EU countries from Non-UK nationals residing in the UK has seen growth this year. Italy, Portugal, France and Spain have driven this.

6.3 ACRO have received confirmation from Smaller Earth (the UK subsidiary of Camp America) that they are significantly scaling back their footprint in the UK. They are making around 50% of their UK workforce redundant amidst huge uncertainty over demand for their services in the USA. Camp America accounts for 35% of total ICPC applications.

6.4 The demand for #NE checks dropped significantly in the first quarter. This has recovered and has been driven by a return in demand for Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service increasing their requirements. The Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) are now regularly using ACRO services for checks. TM is in the process of securing an official contract with them as ACRO are now a key element to their processes.

6.5 Closed session

6.6 Closed session

6.7 Closed session

7. Intelligence and Operations Portfolio

7.1 CB provided the board with an update on intelligence development within her command. Due to the sensitivities within this portfolio, this update was not minuted.

8. Development and Projects Portfolio

8.1 This report was noted by all colleagues, no detailed read through was required on this occasion.

9. Information Management Portfolio

- 9.1 JF reported that in respect of information governance, there is a backlog of 35 items awaiting review by the Data Protection Officer. It is hoped that the backlog will be cleared by the end of 2020 to enable the Development Team to focus on bringing in new work. Some complex agreements have taken up considerable time these being the FPN work and Train Operating Companies, which is looking at enhancing the central delivery for train operators.
- 9.2 In the last quarter, the unit processed 559 applications for the deletion of records from the PNC, Ident 1 and NDNAD. By 2nd November, a total of 1,860 applications for record deletion had been received for the calendar year, 1,415 of these have been sent to forces to review and 917 decisions have been processed by Public Access so far.
- 9.3 Up to the 31st October 2020, there were 750 data breaches recorded, this equates to 0.1% of 553,503 data transactions. Four of these resulted in referrals to the Information Commissioners Office and to date all cases reviewed have resulted in no future action.
- 9.4 The ACRO Section 22(a) agreement is to be reviewed and refreshed in the New Year along with the National Units agreement which has been tasked to the NPCC leads in these areas.

Action: RP to begin the review of the ACRO Section 22(a) agreement in the New Year.

10. Central Services

10.1 Human Resources

JF stated there has been a drop in headcount of 10% in the last quarter which mirrors the financial savings. There are 7 leavers in the pipeline, 4 of these are retiring, 2 are transferring to Hampshire Constabulary and 1 has found alternative employment.

Sickness absence has reduced since the end of quarter 1. The top reason for absence remains as anxiety/stress. Long terms sickness is decreasing gradually and in October it stood at 2.02%. The HR teams ensure proactive case management is in place to deal with all cases and at the end of quarter 2, there are 4 active long-term sick cases. HR casework support currently comprises of 82 cases of attendance, performance and misconduct which relates to 25% of the staff.

The ACRO offices are Covid compliant and both locations have had extensive risk assessments undertaken to ensure staff can work safely and effectively. There are working from home rotas in place to assist with reducing the number of people coming into the office, most staff are working one week at home and two weeks in the office.

10.2 Communications

The team have been liaising with the NPCC and ICCA in relation to the comms planning for the EU Exit and preparing a Q&A briefing. ACRO staff have been regularly updated also with blogs to keep them up to date on the developments of the EU Exit.

In respect of Covid-19, a range of internal channels have been used to ensure that staff are kept up to date on the guidance and regulations.

A major project is underway to re-design the ACRO website. This aims to make the site more user-friendly and ensure visitors reach the correct web pages.

10.3 IT

RP reported that all staff have now been issued with a Windows 10 laptops. Microsoft Teams are now available across the estate for virtual meetings.

A due diligence piece of work is currently being undertaken to look at the possibility of moving the infrastructure and support back into Hampshire/TVP Joint ICT to a cloud environment to give resilience in a business continuity / disaster recovery scenario.

11. Risk Register

11.1 At the time of the meeting ACRO had the following risks identified within the Risk Register. This was noted by all colleagues.

Risk Summary							
Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Total Score	Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Total Score
ICCE1	4	4	16	IT25	2	5	10
ICCE44 reopened	5	4	20	DB1	3	3	9
IT21	4	4	16	GDPR1	3	3	9
IT23	4	3	12	BC1	5	3	15
IT24	4	4	16				

12. Any Other Business

12.1 *Supt James Fulton secondment to Royal Cayman Islands Police Service*

MH wished JF well on his secondment and thanked him for all his hard work and commitment since he has been at ACRO. MH's comments were echoed by all board members.

12.2 MH further wished RM well on his pending retirement and thanked him for his assistance and membership on the Board.

13. Date of Next Meeting

13.1 The next meeting will take place on Tuesday 16th February 2021 at 1000hrs via MS Teams.