

# SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

THURSDAY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2013 AT 9.31AM  
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

## APPROVED

**Present:** Trevor Reaney  
Ken Eccles  
Gareth McGrath  
John Stewart  
Richard Stewart  
Hugh Widdis

**In Attendance** Edmund Kelly  
David Johnston  
Brian Devlin  
Eva Grosman  
Eilis Haughey  
Damien Martin  
Karen Martin  
Tony Logue  
Robin Ramsey

### **1 Apologies**

- 1.1 SMG recorded their condolences on the death of Stephen Welch's mother, Muriel. Ken Eccles deputised on Mr Welch's behalf.

### **2 Declaration of Interests**

- 2.1 Gareth McGrath declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item 13 as a director of the Trust. Trevor Reaney is a trustee of the Trust and also declared an interest.

### **3 Minutes of Previous Meeting/Matters Arising**

- 3.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 3 July 2013 were approved and published on 2 August 2013.
- 3.2 There were no matters arising.

## **4 SMG Action Points**

- 4.1 The Action Points list was reviewed. Members were asked to advise Jim Beatty of further updates and amendments.

## **CORPORATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK**

### **5 Business Plans**

- 5.1 SMG considered the paper in respect of performance against objectives within Directorate Business Plans for q/e June 2013 and noted the significant progress to date.
- 5.2 It was agreed to refer the paper to the Commission.

### **6 Strategic Work Strands**

#### **6.1 Business Efficiency Programme**

Eddie Kelly, BEP Team leader, joined the meeting at 9.40am and updated SMG on BEP progress. Significant progress has been made during Summer Recess and the project is nearing completion. The Project Board met on 19 August 2013 and agreed a number of draft reports – feedback from these is due next week. The Project Board will meet at the end of September to sign off final reports. A draft report has been completed for the Finance Office and this will be brought to the next Project Board meeting.

#### **6.2 Institutional Review**

Gareth McGrath said that the Assembly and Executive Review Committee is considering a number of issues on which to conduct its next inquiry. The Committee Review Group report will be considered on 17 September 2013 and should be presented to the Assembly in October 2013.

#### **6.3 Organisational Development**

Richard Stewart said that the next scoping paper should be completed by 27 September 2013 and this will provide the basis for work through to December 2013.

## **6.4 Organisational Redesign**

Trevor Reaney said that the Project Board will next meet on 24 September 2013. Alex McGarel has been appointed as Project Manager. The Senior Staff Job Alert System and the Heads of Business evaluation have been completed.

## **7 Implementation Updates**

### **7.1 Co-ordination, Consultation, Communication and Engagement**

Richard Stewart said that discussions were on-going with TUS on BEP reports. Negotiations are due to start soon on the August 2014 Pay settlement. SMG agreed to explore the proposal for the building to close over the forthcoming Christmas holiday period.

### **7.2 Vacancy Management Group (VMG)**

Richard Stewart said that VMG was to discuss a paper on its future role.

### **7.3 Financial Management Group (FMG)**

Richard Stewart said that budgets had been agreed and profiled for this year. A monitoring exercise will be completed in October.

### **7.4 IT Prioritisation Group**

John Stewart said that he had met with Directors and the Head of Information Services to discuss and review priorities. IT implications arising from the Roof Project had to be fully identified and will be discussed at a special IT Prioritisation Group meeting when known.

## **LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE**

### **8 Corporate Risk Register**

- 8.1 David Johnston joined the meeting at 10.07am and briefed SMG on recent changes to the Risk Register. In line with the recent risk management audit recommendation, the register had been moved to 5x5 matrix.

- 8.2 Some minor changes had been made to the register and these were agreed by SMG. Some further changes were identified by SMG in their discussions.
- 8.3 The recent audit had also recommended that all Directorate Risk Registers should be considered by SMG bi-annually. Consequently, these registers were presented to SMG at this meeting. David Johnston identified risk clusters and these were discussed.
- 8.3 It was agreed that directors should continue to keep under review relationships with closely connected partner bodies and ensure that these relationships are properly governed, eg, MoU setting out at least broad principles. Directors confirmed that they had relationships with such bodies and that no associated entries were currently required in the Directorate Risk Registers.
- 8.4 Richard Stewart suggested that Risk Registers should be placed in a Project Centre and High Widdis undertook to explore this.

**ACTION POINT: HUGH WIDDIS.**

## **INFORMATION AND OUTREACH**

### **9 Information Point – Great Hall**

- 9.1 John Stewart said that this was an initial paper to inform SMG of Research and Information Service’s plan to develop presentations on the ‘Perspectives On’ series and to deliver these through an information point in the Great Hall.
- 9.2 SMG noted the plan and looks forward to a presentation on the topic at a future meeting.

### **10 IT Disaster Recovery Plan**

- 10.1 Brian Devlin joined the meeting at 10.40am and assisted John Stewart in presenting this paper.
- 10.2 The Recovery Plan had been passed to the Business Continuity Project (BCP) Team for consideration of the options on the way forward. All of the options were achievable but some would cost significantly more than others and the degree of risk had to be weighed against potential costs. Ken Eccles said that the BCP Team had recognised the major importance of IT recovery allied with the provision of alternative accommodation and he agreed to bring a paper on BC that would include references to IT recovery and alternative accommodation to the next SMG meeting.

**ACTION POINT:   STEPHEN WELCH**

- 10.3 Brian Devlin spoke to SMG about priorities and potential solutions, for example, relocating one of the server rooms. SMG noted the options and will discuss this issue at a future meeting.

**11   ISO 27001 Review**

- 11.1 John Stewart spoke to this paper.
- 11.2 In a recent audit of information security, Internal Audit recommended that the Assembly should seek ISO 27001 accreditation. Following a review by the ISO, it was recommended that accreditation should not be sought at this time.
- 11.3 SMG agreed to the recommendation.

**FACILITIES**

**12   Conduct and Behaviour of Visitors Policy**

- 12.1 Ken Eccles spoke to this paper.
- 12.2 This paper was discussed at the SMG meeting on 3 July 2013 and it was agreed to seek the views of Hugh Widdis, Director of Legal and Governance Services, who was unable to attend that meeting.
- 12.3 Hugh Widdis replied on 24 July 2013 and his response was discussed by SMG. It was agreed that the policy would be revised further on the subject of residual discretion to permit demonstrations.
- 12.4 It was agreed that Trevor Reaney would update the Speaker on the matter and that Ken Eccles would amend the existing policy to reflect Hugh Widdis' advice.

**ACTION POINT:   TREVOR REANEY/KEN ECCLES**

**CLERKING AND REPORTING**

**13   NI Assembly Legislative Strengthening Trust**

- 13.1 Eva Grosman joined the meeting at 11.15am and assisted Gareth McGrath in speaking to these papers.

- 13.2 SMG commended the significant achievements of Politics Plus and the success of the events held to date. SMG noted the Trust's Strategic Plan for 2013 – 16 and that discussions on future funding from Atlantic Philanthropies were on-going.
- 13.3 SMG discussed governance issues relating to the Trust and its relationship with the Assembly. It was recognised that the Trust was a separate company with independent funding and as part of its strategic plan, a review of governance was to be completed. Hugh Widdis welcomed the decision of the Trust as he had concerns about existing governance arrangements. He also highlighted the apparent prejudging of that review by the Trust's plan stating that a Public Service Mutual was the appropriate vehicle.
- 13.4 It was agreed that the issue of governance in relation to the Assembly's relationship with the Trust and other bodies should be reviewed and Trevor Reaney will arrange a meeting to discuss that review.

**ACTION POINT: TREVOR REANEY**

## **14 Legislative Programme**

- 14.1 Damien Martin and Eilis Haughey joined the meeting at 11.44am and spoke to this paper.
- 14.2 While partially subject to the agreement of the Executive, it was likely that there would be a substantial number of bills coming to the Assembly before the end of the current mandate. There had been significant pressures to deal with the number of bills at the end of the last mandate and SMG was urged to put plans in place now to deal with the workloads.
- 14.3 SMG discussed a range of options on how best to address this potential workload, agreed the recommendations in the paper and will revisit the issue at a later meeting.

*The meeting adjourned at 12.05pm.*

*The meeting reconvened on Friday, 13 September 2013 at 9.36am.*

## **CORPORATE SERVICES**

### **15 Health and Wellbeing Plan**

- 15.1 Karen Martin joined the meeting at 9.36am and spoke to this paper.

- 15.2 A Health and Wellbeing strategy was agreed by SMG in September 2011 and an action plan has been implemented for the past two years. The paper before SMG was a draft action plan for the next two years.
- 15.3 The previous action plan was considered to be a success and significant benefits had been identified from a relatively low budget. It was planned to build on this success over the coming years.
- 15.4 SMG approved the action plan and required budget. It was also agreed that Trevor Reaney would take on the role of 'Wellbeing Champion', as and when required.

## **16 Redeployment Policy**

- 16.1 The current Redeployment Policy, implemented since September 2011, only provides for AG6s and below to be considered for redeployment for Career Development purposes. Grades above this level are largely specialist in terms of qualifications and experience.
- 16.2 There are 41 x AG5s within the Assembly and concerns about lack of experience have been raised after recent temporary promotion exercises. In order to address this deficit, SMG agreed to the inclusion of AG5s as staff eligible to apply for redeployment. All moves will continue to be subject to a business case.
- 16.3 SMG discussed extending the policy to all grades and it was agreed that HR would bring a paper to a future SMG meeting on this matter.
- 16.4 Hugh Widdis asked that redeployment, development and talent management should be considered within the forthcoming Organisational Development scoping paper. SMG agreed.

**ACTION POINT: RICHARD STEWART**

## **17 Flexible Working Policy**

- 17.1 Karen Martin told SMG that the current Flexible Working and Partial Retirement Procedures have been in place since September 2011. Since then, an increasing number of staff have enquired about working from home for which no policy exists. The proposed amendment to the Procedures would provide for staff to apply for home working as a flexible working arrangement.
- 17.2 SMG discussed the proposal and its potential implications and benefits. It was agreed that this was a step forward and would allow staff to apply. In particular, the potential benefits at a time when there would be significant pressure on accommodation due to the pending roof project

were recognised and will be investigated further. It was also agreed that this issue should be considered as part of a longer term strategy.

- 17.3 Hugh Widdis asked that homeworking should be considered within the forthcoming Organisational Development scoping paper. SMG agreed.

## **18 HR Management Information**

- 18.1 At 31 August 2013 a total of 256 training days have been delivered, equating to an average of 0.7 day per staff member. The Dignity At Work session continues to roll out and should be completed by 31 March 2014.
- 18.2 Bray Leino has recently submitted a report on the Evaluation of Learning and Development 2012 -13 – this shows a decrease in the number of training events in respect of management programmes but a significant increase in specialist events, for example, Risk Assessment.
- 18.3 SMG has agreed an absence benchmark of 7.5 average working days lost per annum per employee. The cumulative average working days lost per employee for the period August 2012 – July 2013 was 10.3 days, which represents an decrease of 0.4 compared with the July 2012 – June 2013 figure of 10.7.
- 18.4 Karen Martin told SMG that the new Managing Attendance policy had been introduced and centrally managed from HR Office – 8 staff had been interviewed and 3 warnings had been issued.
- 18.5 SMG welcomed the recent small reduction in absences and the on-going work to address this issue.

## **19 Disability Action Plan Review**

- 19.1 Tony Logue joined the meeting at 10.16am and spoke to this paper.
- 19.2 The report covers the review of the Disability Action Plans (DAPs) published by the Commission for the period 15 December 2007 – 31 March 2013. Three DAPs were produced and developed in liaison with the ECNI and the Assembly Commission's business areas.
- 19.3 All DAPs, signed off by the Speaker and the Director General, contained a range of measures to fulfil the Disability Duties and included associated timescales and performance indicators. The review looked at the outcomes achieved over the five year period and what remains to be completed.
- 19.4 SMG noted the significant quantity of work done over the period of the plan. After discussion, SMG approved the review for submission to the

Assembly Commission and subsequent forwarding to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

## **20 Future Commission Business**

- 20.1 Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 10.21am. Due to diary difficulties the Commission meeting planned for 26 September 2013 would not proceed. SMG reviewed the draft agenda and discussed what items could be cleared by correspondence and whether specific items required an earlier Commission meeting.
- 20.2 Tony Logue said that the Clerk/Director General had received a request for Honours nominations and a date had yet to be agreed for the next North South Inter Parliamentary Association meeting.

## **ADDITIONAL BUSINESS**

### **21 Directors' Updates**

- 21.1 John Stewart said that a follow-up meeting of interested parties was planned for 16 September 2013 to discuss the availability of funding for the proposed Youth Assembly. Mr Stewart agreed to update SMG on progress at its next meeting.
- 21.2 Ken Eccles said that because of ISO priorities, the introduction of cashless pay points in Eurest facilities has been delayed. Planning approval and Listed Building Consent have been received for the roof project.
- 21.3 Gareth McGrath said that the Committee for Social Development would be considering draft Terms of Reference for an inquiry which, if agreed by the Committee, might require additional resourcing from the Secretariat. A Public Services Ombudsman bill is in preparation.
- 21.4 Richard Stewart said that there would be further developments in HRMS over the coming months, for example, the recording of leave. There was no information yet regarding the 2015/16 budget.
- 21.5 Trevor Reaney said that he had attended the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and Clerks conference in South Africa. There had been a number of useful visits and he would provide papers on request.

## **22 Items Cleared by Correspondence**

22.1 The following item has been cleared by correspondence:-

External Relations Strategy

## **23 AOB**

23.1 Trevor Reaney said that an issue had arisen over the publication of SMG Minutes on the Assembly's website in line with SMG's Terms of Reference and sought views from SMG. The matter was discussed and while most favoured publication, it was decided that members would consider recent Minutes to identify potential concerns if published.

**ACTION POINT: SMG**

## **24 NEXT MEETING**

26.1 The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 3 October 2013 at 10.30am in Room 106.

*The meeting adjourned at 10.55am.*