

SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

**FRIDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2012 AT 2.17 PM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

APPROVED

Present: Trevor Reaney
Tara Caul
Gareth McGrath
John Stewart
Richard Stewart
Stephen Welch

In attendance: Jim Beatty
Eddie Kelly (Agenda item 6)
David Johnston (Agenda item 9)
Brian Devlin (Agenda items 10 & 20)
Conor Coughlin (Agenda item 11)
Sinead McDonnell (Agenda items 12 -14)
John Gibson (Agenda item 15)
Tony Logue (Agenda items 16, 19)
Robin Ramsey (Agenda items 17 – 18)

1 Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Hugh Widdis. Tara Caul deputised on his behalf.

2 Declaration of Interests

- 2.1 No member declared an interest.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting/Matters Arising

- 3.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 6 July 2012 had been approved with minor amendment and published on 14 August 2012.
- 3.2 All issues within Matters Arising will be dealt with through the Action Points or discussed as substantive agenda items.

4 SMG Action Points

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

CORPORATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

5 Business Plans 2012/13 – updates on Directorate Business Plans

- 5.1 A quarterly monitoring exercise had been completed to assess the position with directorate business plans at 30 June 2012. A summary of the findings was discussed and noted.
- 5.2 It was agreed that an online Project Centre should be opened to allow on-going inputs to replace the manual quarterly exercise.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

6 Strategic Work Strands

6.1 Business Efficiency Update

Eddie Kelly who took over from Peter McCallion as Team leader from 1 September, joined the meeting at 2.29pm. The new BEP Team was now in place with Sean Gallagher, Business Services Organisation, Health Services on a one year secondment and Trevor Allen, Committee Office. The Project Board will next meet on 5 October 2012 and will consider a number outputs from the team, including a final draft of the report on Outreach and Education. Stephen Welch raised the issue of functions currently within Directorates and the role of the BEP in identifying the 'best place' for these functions. After discussion, it was agreed that Stephen Welch and John Stewart, Project Board Chair, would meet to take this forward.

ACTION: JOHN STEWART, STEPHEN WELCH

Eddie Kelly also spoke to his paper on Overtime and Events Costs which analysed the income generated against costs for evening and weekend events. SMG noted the work carried out to date and endorsed the continuation of this work strand.

6.2 Institutional Review

SMG noted that the Speaker had received correspondence from the Secretary of State relating to the NIO's 'Consultation on measures to improve the operation of the Northern Ireland Assembly'. SMG noted that the Speaker had forwarded this correspondence to the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) for consideration.

SMG also noted that recommendations from the AERC's recent report on 'Numbers of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly' were that a review of the Committee system and the scheduling of parliamentarian's business be undertaken. Gareth McGrath is currently drafting Terms of Reference for this review.

6.3 Organisational Development

Gareth McGrath will pre-circulate his paper on this issue before discussion at the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: GARETH McGRATH

6.4 Organisational Redesign

It is intended to confirm the team over the coming week and details will then be announced.

7. Co-ordination

7.1 Discussion on this issue was deferred.

8. Consultation, communication and engagement

8.1 Discussion on this issue was deferred.

LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE

9. Corporate Risk Register

9.1 David Johnston joined the meeting at 2.54pm and briefed SMG on recent changes to the register. After discussion, some further updates were identified and agreed. David Johnston will incorporate these into the register.

INFORMATION AND OUTREACH

10. Printer Replacement

- 10.1 Brian Devlin joined the meeting at 3.00pm and spoke to the paper on this issue which included a business case for the replacement of obsolete printer equipment, improvements in printing facilities provided and changes and enhancements to the service in response to changing needs and technological advances.
- 10.2 From April 2007 the Assembly has provided printers to all users and following the expiry of the warranty in July 2011, support was sought through the procurement of a suitable 3rd party maintenance arrangement. The subsequent procurement competition attracted no respondents. Interim support has been obtained to September 2012.
- 10.3 A number of options on the way forward were considered and the IS Office was recommending Option 5 which proposed new equipment for all users delivered by an external provider. SMG discussed the options and subsequent costs and while it was considered that a managed print service may prove cost effective at some time in the future, option 5 within the business case was agreed.

FACILITIES

11. Business Continuity Plan Review

- 11.1 Conor Coughlin joined the meeting at 3.23pm and assisted Stephen Welch in presenting this paper.
- 11.2 PricewaterhouseCoopers completed an audit of the Assembly's Business Continuity Plan (BCP) and while recognising many positive aspects of the Plan, they had made a number of recommendations to strengthen it. SMG was asked to consider the findings of the audit and when it should be referred to the Commission.
- 11.3 While Richard Stewart spoke of his reservations about the development of audit recommendations based on a British standard that has not been formally adopted by the Assembly Commission, SMG welcomed the report and accepted that some more needed to be done to bring the BCP to the required standard. As a first step, it was agreed that Directors would each appoint a Directorate Champion who would act as not only contact points but would co-ordinate the required action within directorates. Directors will notify Conor Coughlin by mid-September who will take on this role.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

- 11.4 There was a further discussion of the resource requirements in implementing the proposed recommendations. It was agreed to meet next week to discuss the response to the recommendations in detail and to assess funding needs before referring the issue to the Commission.

CORPORATE SERVICES

12. HR Management Information

- 12.1 Sinead McDonnell joined the meeting at 3.50pm.
- 12.2 SMG noted that the rolling annual figures show that the average working days lost per employee for the period July 2011 to June 2012 was 9.9 days which remains above the absence benchmark of 7.5 days. It was agreed that further analysis was required before deciding on action. HR will prepare a plan of action for the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

- 12.3 SMG noted the number of Performance Management Reviews still outstanding and the potential impact on 2012 pay awards. It was agreed that an effort should be made to have all of these reports, where possible, should be returned to HR by 30 September 2012.

13. Child Protection Policy

- 13.1 At the meeting on 8 June 2012, SMG approved the commencement of a formal in-house consultation on the proposed policy. The policy was also discussed with TUS within the ERG sub-policy group.
- 13.2 SMG approved the policy, subject to agreed minor amendments, for inclusion within the Staff Handbook and the roll out of appropriate training to the Designated Child Protection Officers and other relevant staff.

14. Discipline Policy

- 14.1 A draft policy was considered by SMG on 10 February 2012 and it was agreed that further discussions were needed. These discussions have now concluded and some changes have been made to the proposed policy.
- 14.2 SMG approved the policy for inclusion in the Staff Handbook.

15. Procurement Activities

- 15.1 John Gibson joined the meeting at 4.05pm and spoke to his report on this issue.
- 15.2 The report reviews procurement activity within the Assembly for the period April 2011 to March 2012 and highlights future issues and plans. Monthly reports to directors resumed in July 2012 in a more streamlined version and it is proposed to introduce a Publication Report with details of all Awarded Contracts within the Assembly within the next six months.
- 15.3 It is recognised more can be done to improve processes and the Procurement Office proposes to introduce a number of actions.
- 15.4 The Clerk/DG drew attention to the primary purpose of procurement which was to achieve the best value for money when obtaining goods and services, and that the important aspect of compliance should be kept in appropriate balance.
- 15.5 SMG noted the report and the planned activities.

16. Good Relations Public Consultation Findings

- 16.1 Tony Logue joined the meeting at 4.12pm and spoke to the paper on this issue.
- 16.2 An internal and external consultation on the Assembly's Good Relations Strategy has been concluded with responses received from 9 organisations.
- 16.3 After considering the report, including the responses, SMG approved the report for referral to the Commission.

17. 80th Anniversary of Parliament Buildings

- 17.1 Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 4.15pm and spoke to his paper on this issue.
- 17.2 At a previous meeting the Commission had agreed to consider proposals to mark the 80th anniversary. A number of events are proposed with an Open Day planned for 17 November 2012 with tours, performances and other activities. Catering facilities will also be open on the day.
- 17.3 SMG considered the proposals and agreed to refer them to the Commission.

18. “Perspectives On” Platform

- 18.1 At its meeting on 8 May 2012 the Commission had agreed its approach to handling events marking the decade of centenaries in Parliament Buildings and sought proposals on how best to capture the views of Members on these events.
- 18.2 It is proposed that there will be a “Perspectives On” page on the Assembly website and this will provide links to related events. These links will provide a short film of not only the event but short segments to allow Members to say what the event means to them. The package will be compiled to ensure a balance of party representations and views.
- 18.3 After considering the proposals SMG agreed to refer the paper to the Commission. It also approved filming of an event on 24 September 2012 pending formal approval by the Commission for publication.

19. Future Commission SMG Business

- 19.1 The future work plans for SMG and the Commission were noted. The proposed agenda for the next Commission meeting was considered:-
- Clerk/DG Update Report
 - Corporate Strategy – Monitoring Report
 - Business Efficiency Review
 - IFRP Annual Report
 - Good Relations Public Consultation Findings
 - Review of FAPP Scheme
 - Correspondence from OFMDFM Committee
 - Correspondence from Committee on Standards and Privileges
 - 80th Anniversary of Parliament Buildings
 - “Perspectives On” ... Platform

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

20. Network Maintenance and Support Contract

- 20.1 Brian Devlin spoke on this paper. The previous network maintenance contract expired in June 2012. In seeking approval to source a new contract, IS Office has proposed that it will provide hardware support for all low priority network devices. In doing so, this will considerably reduce maintenance costs.
- 20.2 SMG considered and approved the business case and associated funding requirements.

21. Directors' Updates

- 21.1 John Stewart said that good progress has been made on a number of IT projects including HRMS and Bills. A 1st draft of the Information Security Audit was being considered. A number of CPA meetings are planned for the coming weeks. A draft Memorandum of Understanding with the NIABT will be put before the next SMG meeting.
- 21.2 Richard Stewart advised that training on the new HRMS had begun and that pay negotiations were on-going within the Governments' 1% limit announced by the Chancellor.
- 22.3 Gareth McGrath said that a Members' survey would be undertaken early in 2013. A report on Electronic Committee Packs was being evaluated and will be referred to the next SMG meeting.
- 22.4 Tara Caul said that the next SARC meeting will be held on 9 October 2012. The Local Government Byelaws (Wales) Bill has been referred to the Supreme Court.

22. Items dealt with by Correspondence

- 22.1 SMG noted that Facilities had circulated a paper on Safe Places for consideration.

23. AOB

- 23.1 There were no items under this heading

24. Next Meeting

- 24.1 The next meeting will take place at 2.00pm on Wednesday, 10 October 2012 in Room 106.

The meeting adjourned at 4.42pm.