

# **SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP**

**FRIDAY, 8 FEBRUARY 2013 AT 9.30AM  
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

## **APPROVED**

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

**In attendance:** Jim Beatty  
Eddie Kelly (Agenda item 6)  
David Johnston (Agenda item 9)  
Cathy McGowan/Robin Ramsey  
(Agenda item 7)

### **1 Apologies**

- 1.1 Apologies were noted from Hugh Widdis. Tara Caul attended on his behalf.

### **2 Declaration of Interests**

- 2.1 None

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

- 3.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 18 January 2013 had been approved and published on 4 February 2013 .
- 3.2 As a Matter Arising, Stephen Welch updated the meeting on progress made with the Staff Survey. Directors met on 31 January 2013 and agreement was reached on the action plan. In essence, there were two categories of action: those that are generic to all Directors – Directors were asked to consider their incorporation into Business Plans – and those actions where individuals have a responsibility to implement the action identified.
- 3.3 All other 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 Action Point list was 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 SMG considered a paper on performance against targets within Directorate Business Plans for the quarter ending 31 December 2012.
- 5.2 While content with the progress to date, the Clerk/DG urged Directors to ensure that end-of-year objectives/targets were achieved. John Stewart said that following a meeting with Gareth McGrath, he hoped to bring forward a Print Management Strategy as soon as possible.
- 5.3 SMG discussed preparations for commencing Business Plans for 2013/14. It was agreed that common issues which should be included in all plans would be identified and inserted onto an outline plan which would be available to Directors through the Project Centre.
- 5.4 Richard Stewart said that Finance had begun preparations for the 2013/14 budget.

### **6 Strategic Work Strands**

#### **6.1 Business Efficiency Update**

Eddie Kelly, BEP Team leader, joined the meeting at 9.49am and updated SMG on the BEP progress. The Project Board had met on 1 February and approved final reports on Building Services, Legal Services and Communications and Information Standards. These will be sent to the Clerk/DG for his action and consideration. The Project Board approved scoping documents for Information Systems, the Speaker's Office, Commission and Corporate Support Unit and Support Services and Resources. The Project Board decided that the planned review of the Clerk/DG's Office would be incorporated into a wider review of personal secretary functions in the Secretariat. It is planned to have draft reports completed by 22 March. The reports on Clerking and Reporting and Outreach and Education Service are to be referred to the Commission.

## **6.2 Institutional Review**

Gareth McGrath said that the Clerk/DG has been invited to give evidence to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on a draft Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill when they visit Parliament Building on 25/26 February.

At its next meeting the Chairpersons Liaison Group will consider draft Terms of Reference for a review of the Assembly's Committee system.

## **6.3 Organisational Development**

There have been no further developments since the way forward on this issue was discussed at a previous SMG meeting and Trevor Reaney indicated that this project would move forward after completion of the Organisational Redesign report.

## **6.4 Organisational Redesign**

The team undertaking the Organisational Redesign Project (Ken Hughes and Dianne Bevin) have concluded their planned interviews and are analysing the outcomes. It is planned to have a report in February 2013. It was agreed that Trevor Reaney would issue an e-mail advising ALF of the process following receipt of the report.

**ACTION: TREVOR REANEY**

## **7. Co-ordination**

- 7.1 John Stewart told SMG an Internal Prioritisation Group (IPG) had been founded within ISO following an audit by Internal Audit – this group will help to inform the decisions of the Financial Management Group. It is planned that the IPG will meet three times a year and the related documents will be put on the Project Centre.

## **8. Consultation, communication and engagement**

- 8.1 The Clerk/DG invited Directors to identify those issues which they would like him to raise at the forthcoming staff briefings which are due to be held on 28 February and 1 March 2013.
- 8.2 Stephen Welch said that implementation of the BEP report on Security and Ushering was continuing.

## **LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE**

### **9. Corporate Risk Register**

- 9.1 David Johnston joined the meeting at 10.20am and briefed SMG on recent changes to the register.
- 9.2 David asked Directors to ensure that the lessons learnt from the recent seminars on Fraud and Bribery were passed to all staff.

## **INFORMATION AND OUTREACH**

### **10. External Relations Strategy**

- 10.1 John Stewart spoke to his paper. Following the ending of the Assembly Group on the USA, the Commission agreed that the Secretariat should develop this strategy to encapsulate the existing external relations work, prioritises this and highlights what other work may be undertaken within existing resources. The proposal before SMG was based on the strategies currently used by Scotland and Wales.
- 10.2 SMG discussed the proposed five strands, namely, Local Relationships, European Union, Kosovo, USA and Other Opportunities. (The title of the fifth strand may be reconsidered.) Gareth McGrath suggested that a section on Resources should be added with information on monitoring and evaluation and that the paper should be circulated wider for input and comment.
- 10.3 SMG agreed that the draft External Relations Strategy should be referred to the Commission for consideration.

## **CORPORATE SERVICES**

### **11. HR Management Information**

- 11.1 Richard Stewart spoke to this paper. The cumulative average working days lost per employee for the period January 2012 to December 2012 is 11.0 days. This remains above the benchmark figure of 7.5 days and is an increase of 0.2 days on the November 2011 to October 2012 figure.
- 11.2 SMG noted the effect of long-term sickness on the figures and discussed current and potential actions to reduce absences. Richard Stewart said that there was potential for a fall in the absence figures with the recent return of some staff who were long-term absentees.

- 11.3 The Corporate Strategy 2012/16 requires the HR Office to monitor the average number of training days with a target of 3 training days on average to be taken by staff members across each year. At the end of January 2013, the average training days were 2.5 per staff member.
- 11.4 A number of training events are planned for the next months and it is expected that the average training days per staff member will rise accordingly.
- 11.5 It was noted that a number of performance appraisals for 2011/12 were still outstanding. Directors were urged to have these cleared as soon as possible.

## **12. Future Commission/SMG Business**

- 16.1 Cathy McGowan and Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 10.40am. SMG noted the future work plans and considered the agenda for the next Commission meeting:-
- Clerk/DG Update Report
  - Monitoring of Business Plans
  - Members Survey 2012
  - Pensions Administrative Agreement
  - Youth Assembly
  - External Relations Strategy
  - Business Efficiency Project Reports

- 16.2 The Commission will meet on Wednesday, 27 February 2013.

## **ADDITIONAL BUSINESS**

### **17. Directors' Updates**

- 17.1 Stephen Welch said that the Roof Design Team was meeting regularly. The Team is considering the potential impact on the work of the Assembly and preparing options for the location of a contractor's yard. The Project Support Group (PSG) will issue a communique to all staff on the issue. Mr Welch asked Directors to allow PSG staff sufficient time to participate fully within the Group. The Cycle-To-Work Scheme has now been approved and Directors were asked to encourage staff to participate. It is unlikely that the ICT Business Recovery Plan will be completed this financial year.
- 17.2 John Stewart said that a review of the Thematic Reviews is to be completed and a paper on the implementation of the recommendations was being prepared. Plans have begun for attendance at the Balmoral Show in May 2013. The Northern Ireland Assembly Business Trust is

due to attend a conference in Letterkenny in March 2013. The replacement of the OKI printers is going well and all constituency offices have been completed. The procurement of computer tablets is progressing. There may be some slippage in updating the WLAN as the current equipment may need to be replaced. The production of the Assembly's Annual Report is progressing – it is planned to produce the report in video form.

17.3 Gareth McGrath said the Assembly Strengthening Trust will launch Politics Plus on 20 February 2013. Arrangements are progressing for the prestigious TEDxStormont conference in Parliament Buildings on 28 March 2013 when there will be up to 15 guest speakers and 200 attendees.

17.4 Trevor Reaney updated Directors on the recent North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association meeting.

## **18 Items dealt with by Correspondence**

18.1 There were no items dealt with by correspondence.

## **19. AOB**

19.1 The Clerk/DG noted that the annual self-assessment of SMG had been completed and that no significant issues had emerged. The format of the assessment would be reviewed for next year.

## **20. Next Meeting**

20.1 The next meeting will be at 9.30am in Room 106 on Friday, 8 March 2013.

*The meeting adjourned at 11.25pm.*