

# **SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP**

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

## **APPROVED**

**Present:** Trevor Reaney  
John Gibson  
Gareth McGrath  
John Stewart  
Stephen Welch  
Hugh Widdis

**In attendance:** Jim Beatty  
Sinead McDonnell (Agenda items 6 – 9)  
Tony Logue/Robin Ramsey  
(Agenda items 10 & 11)  
Eddie Kelly (Agenda item 13)  
David Johnston (Agenda item 16)  
Glenda Grant (Agenda item 17)  
Sebastian Mingout (Agenda item 19)  
Conor Coughlin (Agenda item 20)  
Simon Burrowes (Agenda item 21)

## **1 Use of Social Media**

- 1.1 Mark Jackson, Thompson Solicitors, gave a presentation on the above issue. The Commission is currently drafting its own Social Media policy and welcomed the views from Mr Jackson who has experience in social media law.
- 1.2 After his presentation, Mr Jackson answered a number of questions from SMG.
- 1.3 Sinead McDonnell, Susie Brown, Karen Martin, Brian Devlin and Nicola Shepherd attended this session as interested observers.

## **2 Apologies**

- 2.1 Apologies were noted from Richard Stewart. John Gibson attended on his behalf.

### **3 Declaration of Interests**

- 3.1 Gareth McGrath, Hugh Widdis and Stephen Welch declared an interest in relation to Agenda Item 8, Review of Childcare Scheme.

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

- 4.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 8 February 2013 had been approved and published on 26 February 2013. A minor amendment to paragraph 17.2 was agreed.
- 4.2 All other issues within Matters Arising will be dealt with through the Action Points or discussed as substantive agenda items.

### **5 SMG Action Points**

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

## **CORPORATE SERVICES**

### **6 Social Media Draft Policy**

- 6.1 Sinead McDonnell spoke to the paper on this issue. At its meeting on 18 January 2013 SMG had approved the drafting of a Social Media policy based on a number of key principles.
- 6.2 After the earlier informative presentation from Mark Jackson, Trevor Reaney said that more than ever, there was a need for the Assembly to have a clear policy. SMG discussed the draft policy and suggested a number of amendments to the wording including inserting a reference to Corporate Values within the preamble.
- 6.3 It was agreed that HR would amend the draft policy and circulate the revised document to SMG members for comment. HR will then consult with TUS and all staff as per the normal policy consultation process.

### **7 Deputising/T/P – Revised Policy**

- 7.1 Sinead McDonnell spoke to this paper. A number of groups had identified necessary changes to the original policy, eg, the need to increase the length of time deputising can be authorised for and the provision of clearer and improved definitions. TUS had been consulted on the proposed changes and was content.

7.2 SMG discussed the revised policy and identified a small number of amendments. It was agreed that continuing to fill the same post through deputising arrangements beyond six months should be referred to the Vacancy Management Group.

7.3 Subject to the changes, SMG agreed the revised policy.

## **8 Childcare Scheme – Review**

8.1 Sinead McDonnell spoke to the paper on this issue. During 2012/13 Childcare Allowance was paid to 126 Secretariat staff.

8.2 HR proposed a number of options for the allowance in respect of 2013/14. After discussion, in which those SMG members who had declared an interest did not participate, it was agreed that the allowance would be increased by 1% for both 2013/14 and 2014/15 in line with the pay award settlement.

## **9 HR Management Information**

9.1 Sinead McDonnell spoke to this paper. The cumulative average working days lost per employee for the period February 2012 to January 2013 is 11.2 days. This remains above the benchmark figure of 7.5 days and is an increase of 0.2 days on the January 2012 to December 2012 figure.

9.2 SMG noted the on-going increase in working days lost per employee and discussed how best to address this issue. Stress, anxiety and depressive illnesses are the primary factor in long term absence and a number of initiatives have been put in place to assist staff in coping with the demands on their work and personal lives. SMG also noted that a staff member had been recently dismissed under the Managing Attendance policy for long term and unsustainable absenteeism from the organisation.

9.3 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 February 2013, the average training days were 2.8 per staff member.

9.4 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.

## **10. Good Relations – Review of Progress**

- 10.1 Tony Logue and Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 11.25am.
- 10.2 The Commission approved the 2010-2011 Good Relations Action Plan at its meeting on the 21 January 2010. This plan contained an action which stated that the Commission would “*Conduct an internal good relations audit with staff and Members*”. In 2010 Holywell Consultancy was commissioned to conduct the internal good relations audit to measure the extent to which the Assembly was meeting its Good Relations Duty and to identify any actual or perceived barriers.
- 10.3 Holywell Consultancy conducted a Good Relations Staff Survey in November 2010, held focus groups with staff and conducted one to one interviews with Directors and Commission Members and produced a report with a number of recommendations.
- 10.4 The current 2012-2016 Good Relations Strategy incorporates recommendations arising from the Internal Good Relations Audit as recommended for inclusion by the Assembly Commission at its meeting of 19 April 2012.
- 10.5 A draft version of the Good Relations Strategy, which contained the Commission’s Good Relations Policy and its second Good Relations Action Plan, and which spans a 4 year period in line with the Assembly’s Corporate Strategy was approved by the Commission for issue for public consultation at their meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> April 2012.
- 10.6 In December 2012 an update was prepared for the Good Relations Action Plan and this showed 15 completed actions, 32 ongoing actions and 7 marked as incomplete.
- 10.7 Trevor Reaney emphasised the need for all of the work in this area to be recognized and recorded. The Commission will consider this issue at an external event on 9 May 2013. After discussing the issues arising from the paper presented to SMG and in order to inform the Commission, it was agreed to hold a pre-meeting of Good Relations stakeholders – Trevor Reaney and Tony Logue will arrange this. It was also agreed that an external facilitator would be appointed for this meeting.

**ACTION: TREVOR REANEY/TONY LOGUE**

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

- 11.1 Tony Logue and Robin Ramsey spoke on this item. SMG noted the future work plans and considered the agenda for the next Commission meeting:-

- Clerk/DG Update Report
- Monitoring of Corporate Strategy
- BEP – Outreach and Education Recommendations
- Revised Information Assurance Policy
- Charities Policy
- Workplace Pension Reform – Auto Enrolment
- Good Relations Planning Workshop

11.2 The Commission will meet on Wednesday, 20 March 2013.

## **CORPORATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK**

### **12 Business Plans 2012/13 – updates on Directorate Business Plans**

12.1 SMG was advised that a new proforma has been prepared by Georgie Campbell to assist the development of Directorate Business Plans for 2013/14 – this is available within the Project Centre.

### **13 Strategic Work Strands**

#### **13.1 Business Efficiency Update**

Eddie Kelly, BEP Team leader, joined the meeting at 12.10pm and updated SMG on the BEP progress. The next date for the Project Board meeting has yet to be agreed – this is likely to be after Easter. The reports on Communications and Legal Services Office have been published. The report on Building Services has been amended following further discussions with Management and the report has been circulated to Project Board members for consideration. A number of reviews are on-going and it is hoped to have draft reports before the end of March 2013.

#### **13.2 Institutional Review**

There have been no further developments since the previous meeting.

#### **13.3 Organisational Development**

There have been no further developments since the last meeting.

### **13.4 Organisational Redesign**

The team undertaking the Organisational Redesign Project (Ken Hughes and Dianne Bevin) have concluded their report and this is currently with Trevor Reaney. It is planned to bring the report to a Commission meeting on 10 April 2013 before making it public.

### **14. Co-ordination**

14.1 There have been no further developments since the last meeting.

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

15.1 There have been no further developments since the last meeting.

## **LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE**

### **16. Corporate Risk Register**

16.1 David Johnston joined the meeting at 12.15pm and briefed SMG on proposed changes to the register and comments from SARC. SMG discussed and agreed various changes.

16.3 David Johnston had examined Directorate Risk Registers and had identified a number of 'Risk Clusters' including a lack of compliance and information management security. SMG discussed these and agreed their impact on the Corporate Risk Register.

### **17. Internal Audit Update**

17.1 Glenda Grant joined the meeting at 12.15pm and spoke to the update paper prepared for SMG.

17.2 The draft annual overall level of assurance was presented to the Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee (SARC) meeting on 5th March. The overall level of assurance remains satisfactory and reflects the results of the assignments completed to date in the 2012/13 year.

17.3 A total of 13 Internal Audit reports were issued in final form in the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2013. In addition, 8 follow up audits were completed in the same period.

17.4 The draft Internal Audit plan for 2013/14 was considered and approved by SMG. The annual programme is based on the 3 – 4 year

programme submitted to SARC in 2012. Some adjustment has been made to take account of the temporary reduction in Internal Audit Resources.

## **FACILITIES**

### **18. Migration to Internet Protocol Telephony**

- 18.1 Stephen Welch spoke to this paper.
- 18.2 The existing telephony system (landlines and fax machines) in Parliament Buildings operates on a shared service from N.I. Civil Service which is currently going through the process of migrating to internet protocol technology (VOIP). When that process is complete the existing maintenance support provision and associated services will no longer be available for the Assembly.
- 18.3 In order to allow adequate time to scope the requirements it is proposed that the Assembly procures a short term maintenance and support contract for the existing telephone system. It is envisaged that this would be for a period of 12 months only.
- 18.4 Stephen Welch asked if Directors could give consideration to additional services that may be required in any new system, such as operator helpdesk, video conferencing etc. Directors are asked to provide input to David Lynn by Friday 29 March 2013.
- 18.5 SMG agreed that a procurement exercise is undertaken now to provide maintenance provision for the existing telephone system to extend its serviceability from March 2014 until the migration to a new VOIP system is complete, and that a cross directorate team is established to commence planning for the purchase and implementation of a VOIP telephone system in Parliament Buildings.
- 18.6. A business case will be presented to SMG with proposals for the establishment of the project team along with associated budget costs for the VOIP system.

### **19. Cashless System in Catering Outlets**

- 19.1 Sebastian Mingout joined the meeting at 12.45pm and spoke to this paper.
- 19.2 Within the Parliament Buildings catering outlets Eurest accepts cash/cheque as a payment mode. Debit and Credit cards are also accepted for transactions over £5. At peak times queues form at the tills. This is not only time consuming for customers with a limited time

for lunch but also impedes the flow of customers within the main service area of the Blue Flax. Consequently Support Services Office requested Eurest to investigate the possibility of implementing a cashless system for individual catering transactions.

- 19.3 As all building users have been issued with the current security “pass” card, the application will be uploaded onto it. The electronic purse is then topped up using revaluation terminals or “loaders”. At this stage it is believed note loaders would be sufficient. The card then replaces cash when paying for goods at the catering outlets.
- 19.4 Following discussions with Eurest, it has been agreed that they will purchase and maintain the loaders.
- 19.5 SMG discussed and agreed the proposal. It is hoped to introduce the system over the Summer Recess.

## **20. Business Continuity Planning – Absolute Prioritisation**

- 20.1 Conor Coughlin joined the meeting at 1.00pm and spoke to this paper.
- 20.2 At a meeting on 11 January 2013 SMG identified 5 key strategic services as part of the Business Continuity process and agreed a scoring matrix to be used by Directors to achieve absolute prioritisation of all Assembly business areas. Based on Directors’ responses, the Business Continuity Management System (BCMS) Team prepared a draft absolute prioritisation list.
- 20.3 An Assembly Business Continuity Management Strategy is being prepared and will be circulated to SMG shortly for comment before undertaking wider consultation.
- 20.5 SMG noted that the business process mapping documentation and guide will be circulated to each business area asking them to process map their key services only, and this will be stored within each Directorate
- 20.6 SMG discussed the paper and authorised the absolute prioritisation list and agreed to the proposed actions regarding business process mapping and the Business Continuity Strategy.

## **INFORMATION AND RESEARCH**

### **21. Internal Communications Working Group Update**

- 21.1 Simon Burrowes joined the meeting at 1.20pm and provided an update on the above issue.

- 21.2 The group had contributed to the production of the Internal Communications Strategy and will continue to play a role in taking this forward. The Group has reviewed its work in helping to deliver the outcomes of the 2012 Staff Survey and is likely to assist with the 2013 Staff Survey.
- 21.3 The Group will next meet on 15 March 2013. Trevor Reaney agreed to attend a future meeting.

## **22. Revised Information Assurance Policy**

- 22.1 John Stewart spoke to this paper.
- 22.2 On 18 January 2011, a draft report on the Public Accounts Committee's inquiry into performance and governance in NI Water was leaked to the media. The matter was referred, under Standing Order 69A, to the Interim Assembly Commissioner for Standards and an investigation conducted. A working group of Secretariat staff was set-up to consider the Interim Commissioner's recommendations and review the Assembly's Information Assurance Policy.
- 22.3 The Chairpersons' Liaison Group (CLG) was consulted on 16 October 2012 and welcomed the working group's suggested implementation of the Interim Commissioner's recommendations and agreed with the proposed way forward.
- 22.4 The Interim Commissioner's recommendations from the investigation was agreed by SMG on 9 November 2012 and by the Commission on 30 January 2013.
- 22.5 The National School of Government developed an e-learning program of information assurance training. This consists of a number of short topic modules plus an assessment test. The training package will help staff think about some practical situations, and how we must take responsibility for using information safely and improve the understanding and management of information risk. The training material is currently with HR and is being prepared for testing. This should be available for roll-out by April 2013.
- 22.6 SMG agreed the revised policy and the roll out of training.

## **23. Assembly Charity Policy – Revised**

- 23.1 John Stewart spoke to this paper.
- 23.2 In March 2012 the Assembly Commission approved the NI Assembly Charity Policy and this was subsequently implemented through an agreed process. Since the introduction of the policy, several limitations

have been identified, eg, a lack of staff ownership. The paper proposes a number of changes to the current policy and process.

- 23.3 SMG discussed the proposed changes and although it was considered as somewhat complicated, it was agreed that the revised policy did improve the process. SMG approved the revised policy and asked for it to be referred to the next Commission meeting.

## **ADDITIONAL BUSINESS**

### **24. Directors' Updates**

- 24.1 John Stewart said that the Engagement Strategy had been reviewed and a paper would be brought to the SMG meeting in April. Current budget restrictions would allow for 170 computer tablets to be purchased.
- 24.2 John Gibson said that Purchase to Pay has gone to tender and a paper will be brought to SMG in the future.
- 24.3 Stephen Welch said that a meeting had been held with the Environment Agency on 7 March 2013 about the proposals for a new roof. The meeting had been very positive and a planning submission would be made next week for the contractor's compound to be built to the rear of Parliament Buildings. A technical solution which would allow access to the balcony on the front of the building had been agreed with the Environment Agency. The Assembly has retained ISO 14001.

### **25. Items Cleared by Correspondence**

- 25.1 There were no items cleared by correspondence.

### **26. AOB**

- 26.1 Stephen Welch raised the issue of available office space within the building and the need for Directors to review their current staffing arrangements to free up any further space, eg, identifying empty desks. It was agreed that Room 144 would no longer hold the status of 'spare Committee room' and its future use will be considered in the wider context of the roof project.

### **27. Next Meeting**

- 27.1 The next meeting will be at 10.00am in Room 106 on Friday, 18 April 2013.

*The meeting adjourned at 1.45pm.*