SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

THURSDAY, 18 APRIL 2013 AT 10.05AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Trevor Reaney**
	Damien Martin
	John Stewart
	Richard Stewart
	Stephen Welch
	Hugh Widdis
In Attendance	**Jim Beatty**
	Edmund Kelly
	David Johnston
	Sebastian Mingout
	Sinead McDonnell
	Paula McClintock
	Tony Logue

1 Apologies

1.1 Gareth McGrath sent his apologies – Damien Martin deputised on his behalf.

2 Declaration of Interests

2.1 No interests were declared.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting/Matters Arising

3.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 8 March 2013 had been approved and published on 25 March 2013.

3.2 Stephen Welch reminded members to provide David Lynn as soon as possible with details of additional services which may be required with the introduction of Internet Protocol Telephony – see 18.4 of the Minutes of 8 March 2013.

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 Performances against 2012/13 Directorate Business Plans are currently being monitored and a paper will be brought to the next SMG meeting.

5.2 Business Plans for 2013/14 are nearing completion and it was agreed that all Directors would share drafts to help to identify common areas.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

6 Strategic Work Strands

6.1 Business Efficiency Programme

Eddie Kelly, BEP Team leader, joined the meeting at 10.12am and updated SMG on the BEP progress. A number of draft reports will be considered at the Project Board meeting on 26 April 2013 – they will then be referred to the relevant Business Area, TUS and Party Support. The final tranche of reviews has begun and it is planned to hold workshops in May/June with the reports drafted over the Summer Recess. As some of these reviews include relatively small business areas, the need to 'de-personalise' these reviews was emphasised. The Project Board has approved the Building Services report.

6.2 Institutional Review

The Committee Review Group held its first meeting on 9 April 2013 and discussed how best to take forward its brief.

6.3 Organisational Development

There were no further actions to report.

6.4 Organisational Redesign

The Organisational Redesign Project Team (Ken Hughes and Dianne Bevin) will ~~has repor~~present their report to the

Commission on 24 April 2013. The report would then be made more widely available.

7   Implementation Updates

7.1   Co-ordination, Consultation, Communication and Engagement

Richard Stewart said that ERG had met on several occasions and good progress had been made in a number of areas.

7.2   Vacancy Management Group

At 1 April 2013 the Assembly had 385.3 F/T equivalent Secretariat staff – 374.5 were direct employees. These figures are in line with plans. SMG discussed the role of the Vacancy Management Group and how it balanced resources and vacancies, the effects of the Business Efficiency Project and the on-going pressures on budgets.

7.3   Financial Management Group

SMG received a presentation on the relevant issues later in this meeting.

7.4   IT Prioritisation Group

The group has held its first meeting and agreed its role in highlighting IT risks and developing priorities. There are significant pressures within the ISO and it is important for ISO to meet regularly with Directors to discuss the IT implications and needs for their plans.

LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE

8   Corporate Risk Register

8.1   David Johnston joined the meeting at 10.45am and briefed SMG on proposed changes to the register. SMG agreed to the proposed changes. Stephen Welch raised concerns about the Risk 3 – Interruption of ability to deliver key services and the development of the Business Continuity Plan. Trevor Reaney acknowledged the significant work being done on BCP but expressed concern about progress on some aspects of the work due to competing business pressures. He wished to give the matter and the content of the draft report consideration at a separate meeting. It was agreed that Mr Welch would circulate the draft BCP report on progress against Internal Audit

recommendations progress for discussion at the Director's meeting on 19 April 2013.

ACTION: STEPHEN WELCH

8.2   Hugh Widdis is currently holding Directorate risk workshops and when these are concluded will brief SMG on any emerging themes

FACILITIES

9   Access to Members Bar

9.1   This will be cleared by correspondence.

ACTION: STEPHEN WELCH

INFORMATION AND OUTREACH

10   Volunteer Visitor Programme – USA, March 2013

10.1   John Stewart gave a presentation on a recent visit to legislatures within the USA - he was accompanied by Gareth McGrath. The visit had been largely funded by the US State Department.

10.2   The Directors visited Washington, Annapolis and Albany and assessed the value of establishing relationships with state legislatures as well as central Government. The visit to the Maryland Assembly in Annapolis was particularly useful.

10.3   Assembly visits to other legislatures have significantly decreased over the past years but the value for MLAs and staff was recognised.

10.4   Mr Stewart's presentation will be circulated to Directors who may wish to discuss the issues with their staff.

11   Review of Engagement Strategy

11.1   John Stewart spoke to this paper. In February 2009 the Commission agreed an Engagement Strategy for the period 2008-13. This strategy has now been reviewed.

11.2   The review concluded that the great majority of the recommendations had been implemented while some were met by other means. After discussion SMG agreed that the strategy had been successful and warranted the development of a further strategy – this would run to 2016, the end of the current Corporate Strategy.

11.3 It was also agreed that the views of the Commission were key in taking forward a new Engagement Strategy and these would be sought when the Commission considered the BEP report on Outreach and Education.

CORPORATE SERVICES

12 Capability Policy – Approval

12.1 Sinead McDonnell joined the meeting at 11.58am and spoke to this paper. The Capability Policy was considered by SMG on 10 October 2012 and approval given for formal consultation with TUS and staff. This consultation has now been completed and did not raise any further issues during formal consultation.

12.2 The Policy has also been considered by Legal Services and the Equality Unit and changes have been made to reflect their legal advice and comments.

12.3 In its discussion SMG identified had some queries on terminology used. SMG approved the Capability Policy for issue to staff and inclusion in the Staff Handbook subject to the agreed minor changes.

13 Probation Policy – Approval

13.1 The Probation Policy was considered by SMG on 10 October 2012 and approval given for formal consultation with TUS and staff. This consultation has now been completed and did not raise any further issues.

13.2 The Policy has also been considered by Legal Services and the Equality Unit and changes have been made to reflect their legal advice and comments.

13.3 SMG approved the Probation Policy for issue to staff and inclusion in the Staff Handbook.

14 People Strategy

14.1 Sinead McDonnell spoke to this paper. The People Strategy 2012-2016 was agreed by SMG in June 2012 with three people priorities:-

- Effective Leadership & Management.
- Staff Capacity & Capability.
- Enhancing Behaviours & Motivating Staff.

14.2 To assist in delivering the three priorities, a People Service Plan was developed. The current Plan is for the period 2012-2014 and details training interventions which support the achievement of the three people priorities and associated objectives. The purpose of this paper was to provide SMG with an update on the progress of actions in the Plan after Year One.

14.3 Feedback showed that there had been good progress made in Year One with an average of 3.7 training days delivered per member of staff – the target was 3 days.

14.4 The Learning & Development Manager will meet with Directors in the coming weeks to discuss corporate and directorate business objectives and any learning activities which may be required to support the achievement of them. This is likely to result in changes to the Plan to take account of any new activities required.

14.5 SMG noted the progress to date. A significant investment had been made in leadership and management training and SMG discussed how best to build on this for the future. The issue of compulsory training and its timing was also raised.

14.6 In noting the paper, SMG agreed the need to remind line managers and staff of the importance of completing the new Performance Management System paperwork within scheduled timeframes.

15 Development of Competence Framework

15.1 Sinead McDonnell spoke to this paper. In September 2011, SMG approved the development of a new Performance Management System (PMS). It was decided that a competence framework should not be used in the PMS and that the existing Core Competence Framework should be reviewed and if appropriate, replaced.

15.2 Since the implementation of the new PMS, the existing Core Competence Framework has continued to be used as part of internal recruitment and selection - this Framework was inherited from the Northern Ireland Civil Service. It continues to provide an explanation to staff of the attributes required at each grade in order that they may seek opportunities to develop these attributes for the future. The PMS does not measure performance against a competence framework.

15.3 SMG considered the options put forward by the HR Office and having agreed that a new Competency Framework was required, decided that Option 3 was the preferred choice. This option recommended the development of a competence framework based on the business needs and culture of the Assembly Secretariat and which reflects Corporate Values and caters for both generalist and specialist roles. In

order to avoid duplication of effort, it was agreed that development of the framework would be incorporated into the proposed work on Organisational Development.

15.4 It was agreed that the HR Office would set out the key principles and bring these back to SMG.

16 HR Management Information

16.1 The cumulative average working days lost per employee for the period March 2012 to February 2013 was 10.7 days. This was a decrease of 0.5 days on the February 2012 to January 2013 figure but remains above the benchmark figure of 7.5 days.

16.2 SMG noted that the decrease in working days lost per employee was due to a slight decrease in the number of short term absences and a sharp decrease in the number of long term absences during the relevant period. SMG remains concerned at the high levels of sickness and discussed pro-active means to address the problem.

16.3 This month's information also included details of internal complaints raised during 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 – a total of 7 complaints were received. In noting the information, SMG asked for future information to be provided on a Directorate basis.

17 Budget Update

17.1 Paula McClintock joined the meeting at 12.50am and spoke to this paper which sets out the result of the recent exercise to prepare the Commission's Revenue and Capital budgets for 2013/14. While salaries expenditure fell within targets, GAE expenditure was less than planned. SMG emphasised the need for the Financial Management Group to robustly challenge and question Directorates on their budgets, expenditure and surrenders throughout the year.

17.2 SMG considered the proposed budget for 2013/14 and agreed the allocations whilst noting further challenge to GAE figures required going forward as noted above. The proposed revised capital plan was also agreed with the understanding that an additional bid would be made to DFP at the next monitoring round.

18 Good Relations – Data Collection

18.1 Tony Logue joined the meeting at 1.15pm and spoke to this paper. In January 2013, the Good Relation Panel was established to screen and, if required, carry out an Equality Impact Assessment for the Good Relations Strategy. Following screening it was identified in the area of

data collection and monitoring needed to be addressed. It was seen that monitoring of visitors was required to assess the outcomes of the Good Relations Strategy to ensure that the proposed outcomes are effective and do not create any adverse impacts.

18.2 Following the findings of the Good Relations Panel, Research and Information Services (RaISE) designed a questionnaire and centralised research system proforma which was before SMG for consideration.

18.3 SMG accepted the need for such a questionnaire and, subject to a review of the section on Political Opinion, approved the recommendations.

19 Future Commission/SMG Business

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

- Clerk/DG Update Report
- Business Efficiency Project
- Equality/Good Relations/Language Review session

19.2 The Commission will meet on Wednesday, 1 May 2013.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

20 Directors' Updates

20.1 There were no updates at this time.

21 Items Cleared by Correspondence

21.1 There were no items cleared by correspondence.

22 AOB

22.1 No items were raised.

23 NEXT MEETING

23.1 The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 15 May 2013 at 9.30am in Room 106.

The meeting adjourned at 1.30pm.