

# SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

WEDNESDAY, 15 MAY 2013 AT 9.47AM  
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

## APPROVED

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

**In Attendance** Jim Beatty  
Edmund Kelly  
David Johnston  
Karen Martin  
Tony Logue  
Robin Ramsey

### **1 Apologies**

1.1 None.

### **2 Declaration of Interests**

2.1 No interests were declared.

### **3. Security Issue**

3.1 SMG discussed media coverage alleging a security threat to Parliament Buildings. SMG was advised on the Commission's duty of care to all building users by Hugh Widdis and received an update on the alleged threat from Stephen Welch.

*Stephen Welch left the meeting at 9.53am.*

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

4.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 18 April 2013 had been approved and published on 26 April 2013.

## **5 SMG Action Points**

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

## **CORPORATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK**

### **6 Business Plans**

- 6.1 SMG considered a paper on performances against 2012/13 Directorate Business Plans. It was agreed to refer the paper with some amendments to the next Commission meeting.

### **7 Strategic Work Strands**

#### **7.1 Business Efficiency Programme**

Eddie Kelly, BEP Team leader, joined the meeting at 10.00am and updated SMG on the BEP progress. The Project Board met on 26 April 2013 and agreed a number of draft reports which have been sent to interested parties for comments. It is planned to bring final reports to the next Board meeting on 7 June 2012. Work on the final tranche of reports is continuing. Consideration is being given to closure of the project.

#### **7.2 Institutional Review**

The Committee Review Group has held a second meeting and is focussing on strategic issues – the extension of the mandate to 2016 may impact on the implementation of recommendations. The Independent Financial Review Panel will be advised on the UK Government's intention to legislate for an extension to the Assembly mandate from 4 years to 5 years, resulting in the current mandate ending in 2016 rather than 2015; at its next meeting. Consideration is being given to the impact of the extension on the Corporate Strategy.

#### **7.3 Organisational Development**

Following acceptance of the relevant Organisational Redesign recommendation by the Commission, Richard Stewart is considering how best to take this forward. It was agreed that the People Strategy must be a key component of future plans.

#### **7.4 Organisational Redesign**

Trevor Reaney is concluding his meetings with Directors and Heads of Business and will make a further presentation to the Commission at its meeting on 5 June 2013.

### **8 Implementation Updates**

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

There were no developments to report.

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

The VMG met on 8 May 2013 – at present there are 385.1 staff of whom 373.3 are employed as Secretariat staff. An Internal Audit review of the VMG has been completed with positive outcome and it was agreed that this would provide the basis for Directors to consider the future role for the Group.

**ACTION: DIRECTORS**

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

Richard Stewart reported that the target for a 2% underspend had not been achieved in 2012/13, (out turn was 2.8%), largely because of an underspend in GAE. The focus is now on the 2013/14 budget. A new Comprehensive Spending Review has been announced for June 2013 and the FMG is preparing for this.

#### **8.4 IT Prioritisation Group**

There were no developments to report.

## **LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE**

### **9 Corporate Risk Register**

- 9.1 David Johnston joined the meeting at 10.45am and briefed SMG on proposed changes to the register. SMG agreed to the proposed changes.

## **INFORMATION AND OUTREACH**

### **10 Re-evaluation of Post**

- 10.1 John Stewart asked SMG to agree to the consideration of the re-evaluation of the post of Head of IS following a number of reports which recommended that this should be done.

*Stephen Welch joined the meeting at 11.10am.*

- 10.2 SMG discussed the request and how best to proceed. An initial re-evaluation of the post was agreed.

### **11 Internal Communications Strategy**

- 11.1 Susie Brown joined the meeting at 11.21am and spoke to this paper. The paper has been considered by the Internal Communications Working Group and made available to all staff for comments. Some amendments have been made to the strategy as a result of the consultations and it is now ready for implementation – this will be overseen by the Communications team.

- 11.2 SMG discussed the paper and subject to some changes, agreed the next stage of implementation.

## **CORPORATE SERVICES**

### **12 HR Management Information**

- 12.1 Karen Martin joined the meeting at 11.55am and spoke to this paper. The cumulative average working days lost per employee for the period April 2012 – March 2013 is 10.6 days. This remains above benchmark of 7.5 days, however it has decreased by 0.1 compared with the March 2012 – February 2013 figure of 10.7.

- 12.2 An analysis of the figures would indicate that there has been a sharp rise in the number of short term absences but there has been a slight decrease in the number of long term absences during the month of March 2013 in comparison with February 2013.

- 12.3 SMG discussed the figures and considered how best to address this issue. It was agreed to discuss in more detail at the next SMG meeting.

## **13 Future Commission/SMG Business**

13.1 Tony Logue and Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 12.10pm. SMG noted the future work plans and considered the agenda for the next Commission meeting:-

- Clerk/DG Update Report
- Monitoring of Business Plans 2012/13
- Business Efficiency Programme
- Equality Commission Annual Progress Report
- Employers and Public Liability Insurance

13.2 The Commission will meet on Wednesday, 5 June 2013 at 4.00pm.

*Stephen Welch left the meeting at 12.20pm.*

## **14 Equality – Annual Progress Report**

14.1 Tony Logue spoke to this paper. SMG was told that the significant document is based on a template provided by the Equality Commission and clearly reflects the many activities undertaken within the Assembly.

14.2 It was agreed to refer the paper to the next Commission meeting.

## **ADDITIONAL BUSINESS**

### **15 Directors' Updates**

15.1 Hugh Widdis said that Internal Audit has met with Gareth McGrath to discuss reviews of the NIA Legislative Strengthening Trust and Politics Plus. Consideration is being given if Internal Audit can be employed by MLAs to carry out investigations within their remit. It is planned to bring the SARC Annual Report to the Commission in June 2013. The outcome of the Risk Management Audit will require actions from all Directors.

15.2 John Stewart said that tenders for the IT disaster recovery plan were to be considered at a meeting this afternoon. The Assembly Community Connect programme will be launched on 21 May 2013. A Children In Need family fun day will be held in Stormont on 27 May 2013. Staff from the Kosovo Parliament will be in the Assembly in week commencing 17 June 2013.

- 15.3 Trevor Reaney told SMG that he had attended a Clerks/CEO meeting in Dublin and he will circulate the relevant papers to Directors. The next meeting will be held in August 2013.

**ACTION: TREVOR REANEY**

## **16 Items Cleared by Correspondence**

- 16.1 There were no items cleared by correspondence.

## **17 AOB**

- 17.1 No items were raised.

## **18 NEXT MEETING**

- 18.1 The next meeting will be held on Friday, 21 June 2013 at 10.00am in Room 106.

*The meeting adjourned at 12.47pm.*