

SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

FRIDAY, 13 DECEMBER 2013 AT 9.32AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present: Trevor Reaney
Gareth McGrath
Brian Moreland
John Stewart
Richard Stewart
Stephen Welch

In Attendance Jim Beatty
David Johnston
Karen Martin
Cathy McGowan
Robin Ramsey
Brian Devlin
Stephanie Mallon

1 Opening/Review

Apologies

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Hugh Widdis. Brian Moreland attended on Hugh's behalf.

Declaration of Interests

- 1.2 No interests were declared.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 1.3 The Minutes of the meeting of 14 November 2013 had been approved and were published on 27 November 2013.

Matters Arising

- 1.4 There were no matters arising.

2 SMG Action Points

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

CORPORATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

3 Business Plans Monitoring

- 3.1 It was noted that a paper on the quarterly performance against Directorate Business Plans for q/e 30 September 2013 is on the agenda for the next Commission meeting. A further round of monitoring for q/e December 2013 will be carried out in January 2014. There was a discussion on the arrangements for business planning in 2014/15 and it was agreed that Trevor Reaney would meet with Richard Stewart to discuss the approach to business planning for 2014/15.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY

4 Strategic Work Strands

4.1 Business Efficiency Programme (BEP)

John Stewart said that a Project Board meeting is planned for 14 January 2014. The meeting will consider the Finance Office report and Closure report.

4.2 Institutional Review

Gareth McGrath said that the Assembly and Executive Review Committee is continuing its inquiry into Petitions of Concern. The Committee on Procedures is also continuing with its inquiry into the participation of the Attorney General in the proceedings of the Assembly and the Review of the Business Week of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

4.3 Organisational Development

Trevor Reaney said that comments on the draft Scoping Document were being collated by Richard Stewart. It is planned to collate earlier responses from Directors and consider at a future SMG meeting..

4.4 Organisational Redesign

Trevor Reaney said that the Project Board met on 10 December 2013 and discussed the way forward after the recent consideration by the Commission on the viability of an early exit scheme.

5 Implementation Updates

5.1 Co-ordination, Consultation, Communication and Engagement

Richard Stewart had nothing further to report.

5.2 Vacancy Management Group (VMG)

Richard Stewart said that after discussion, the group had agreed that it was no longer required and should not meet again. Details of staffing will be provided within the monthly HR Management Report. SMG recorded its appreciation of the work done by the VMG and the significant contribution it made in assisting with managing staff reductions.

5.3 Financial Management Group (FMG)

Richard Stewart said the FMG will meet on 17 December 2013 to discuss the Assembly's Spring Supplementaries position. Further information to inform decisions had been sent out last week. A formal response has to be sent to DFP by 2 January 2014.

5.4 IT Prioritisation Group

John Stewart said that the Project Board will meet on 17 December 2013 following the FMG meeting – David Lynn, Building Services, has been invited to join the meeting. Plans need to be agreed to meet the impact of the Roof Project.

LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE

6 Corporate Risk Register (CRR)

6.1 David Johnston joined the meeting at 9.55am and briefed SMG on recent changes to the Risk Register.

6.2 SMG was told that the Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee (SARC) had met on 5 December and reviewed the CRR. In order to assess how Directorate Risk Registers contribute to the CRR, SARC has asked to see the Directorate Risk Registers annually.

CORPORATE SERVICES

7 Deputising and Temporary Promotions

- 7.1 Karen Martin joined the meeting at 10.17 and spoke to this paper which had been brought back to SMG to consider an amendment to the policy in relation to circumstances where staff may be deputised/temporarily promoted. The proposed change will increase the minimum period to cover absences to 15 days.
- 7.3 SMG approved the revision and this will now be referred to the Employee Relations Group (ERG) sub-policy group for consultation with TUS. Where possible, the HR Office will post information on staff deputised on AsslSt.

8 Equal Pay Review

- 8.1 As part of an on-going review, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) was asked to carry out a statistical review of the pay of Secretariat staff.
- 8.2 Analysis was carried out at each grade level up to AG4 (work rated as equivalent) and within each grade (like work). In the analysis emphasis was placed on pay gaps identified using the Median Test which calculates the median salary for the group of staff being examined and looks at the proportion of males and females above and below this median.
- 8.3 The review identified some areas which required further investigation by the HR Office and these investigations have now been completed. Where appropriate, the issues will be referred to the ERG for consultation.
- 8.4 SMG noted the positive outcome of the review and agreed in principle to conduct a further pay review in two years.

9 Alcohol and Drugs Policy

- 9.1 In January 2013 SMG agreed to the revision of the policy relating to alcohol and drugs. The revised policy was now with SMG for consideration.
- 9.2 SMG acknowledged the need to provide support to staff while balancing this with the needs of the organisation. SMG identified the need for training, especially for managers and it was agreed to include this within the Health and Wellbeing Action Plan.

- 9.3 Some amendments to the proposed policy were agreed. The policy will now be referred to staff and ERG for a four week consultation period.

HR Management Update

- 10.1 Richard Stewart said that by 30 November 2013, 616 training days had been delivered, an average of 1.6 days per staff member. More in-house training was planned for the coming months. The need for all staff to record all training, formal and informal was emphasised.

- 10.2 It was agreed to provide the details each month of training by Directorate – current information would be circulated to Directors now.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

- 10.3 A number of Performance Management reports are outstanding and Directors were urged to ensure that, where possible, these are completed and returned to the HR Office as quickly as possible. The online iTrent system will allow completion of annual reports from 1 April 2014.

- 10.4 In 2010, SMG agreed an absence benchmark of 7.5 average working days lost per annum per employee. It was noted that at that time there was a high number of agency staff working within the organisation. The cumulative average working days lost per employee for the period November 2012 – October 2013 was 9.2 days, which represents a decrease of 1.6 days compared with the period November 2011 – October 2012 figure of 10.8 days.

- 10.5 SMG noted the information provided.

11 Future Commission/SMG Business

- 11.1 Cathy McGowan and Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 10.50am. Cathy McGowan presented the agenda for the Commission meeting planned for 29 January 2014. The agreed items are:-

- Clerk/DG's Update
- Flags Consultation
- Business Continuity
- Assembly Commission Handbook
- Procurement Contracts
- Recognition of C S Lewis and S Heaney
- Recognition of Individuals Policy
- Exhibitions Schedule 2014
- 'Perspectives On' Events 2014

Richard Stewart left the meeting at 11.00am.

FACILITIES

12 Roof Project Update

- 12.1 Stephen Welch provided a verbal update on this issue.
- 12.2 Some clarification requests have been received from the remaining contractors and it has been necessary to put back the closing date for tenders to early January 2014 and for work to begin before the end of March 2014.
- 12.3 Consultation is continuing with a number of parties over the temporary relocation of building occupants. It is intended to have these plans completed by mid-January 2014.

INFORMATION AND OUTREACH

13 Draft Information Systems Strategy

- 13.1 Brian Devlin joined the meeting at 11.07am and spoke to this paper.
- 13.2 SMG was told that the need for this revised Strategy derived from a recommendation contained in the Internal Audit Unit's Review of Systems under Development 2012 and the 2013 Business Efficiency Review of Information Systems Office. The paper sets out the strategic approach to the development and use of information systems that underpin the delivery of services for Assembly Members and the business of the Northern Ireland Assembly and addresses the information systems needs of the Assembly for the period January 2014 – December 2016.
- 13.3 The paper sets out four strategic aims underpinned with six key themes and how these might best be achieved. The draft strategy recognises the need to further improve the identification of need for IS Office support and includes a proposal to appoint, on a temporary basis, a Business Relations Manager.
- 13.4 SMG discussed the draft strategy and its implications. In recognising the significant work done by Brian Devlin in drafting the Strategy, SMG approved the draft, subject to the outcome of the planned consultation with staff across the Secretariat. Any material changes arising would be referred back to SMG.

ACTION: BRIAN DEVLIN

14 Parliament Buildings Closing Time

- 14.1 John Stewart said this item was discussed at the previous SMG meeting and a decision was deferred until further information was received.
- 14.2 Advice has now been received from the HR Office and a number of meetings have taken place.
- 14.3 SMG discussed a range of options and agreed to maintain the status quo position subject to on-going review by the Head of Outreach and Education and the Head of Usher Services.

15 Internal Communications Strategy Update

- 15.1 Stephanie Mallon joined the meeting at 11.45am and spoke to this paper.
- 15.2 SMG had approved the Internal Communications Strategy in May 2013 and an Action Plan was subsequently developed. This update provided details of the progress to date with the Action Plan. It was recognised that organisational changes have occurred since the Action Plan was written and that achievement of some of the actions could not be measured. It was recommended that the Action Plan should be referred to the Internal Communications Group to review, revise and reissue before April 2014.
- 15.3 SMG discussed the Action Plan, in particular those actions relating to SMG/directors and the level of monitoring and reporting.
- 15.4 It was agreed that a review of the Questions/Comments to the Clerk/DG would be carried out and brought back to SMG along with a revised Action Plan in early March 2014.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

16 Directors' Updates

- 16.1 Stephen Welch said that the sale of Ormiston House was on-going with BTW Shiels acting as agents. There are a number of interested parties and it is hoped to have more definite information by the e/o January 2014. A trial of the cashless paypoints will begin on 16 December 2013 and it is planned to introduce the system to everyone in January 2014.
- 16.2 Gareth McGrath said that the rollout of the live Electronic Committee Pack (ECP) system had been completed, with all committees having held fully electronic meetings. Three committees were using ECPs

only, and their members were no longer receiving any paper meeting packs. The number of members receiving hard copy packs in the remaining committees is decreasing as members become more familiar with ECPs and the tablet devices.

- 16.3 Brian Moreland said that Eddie Kelly has returned to the Internal Audit Unit. A member of staff from the Office of Legislative Counsel is working within the Assembly's Legal Team.

19 Items Cleared by Correspondence

- 19.1 No items have been cleared by correspondence.

20 AOB

- 20.1 No items were raised under this heading.

21 NEXT MEETING

- 21.1 The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 16 January 2014 at 9.30am in Room 106.

The meeting adjourned at 12.05pm.