

SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

THURSDAY, 16 JANUARY 2014 AT 9.31AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

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

In Attendance: Jim Beatty
David Johnston
Edmund Kelly
David Lynn
Tony Logue
Robin Ramsey

1 Welcome/Opening

(a) Apologies

There were no apologies

(b) Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

(c) Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting of 13 December 2014 had been approved and were published on 6 January 2014.

(d) Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

2 Action Points

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

Gareth McGrath joined the meeting at 9.37am.

3 Business Plans 2013/14

- 3.1 Richard Stewart said that completion of monitoring forms for the q/e December 2013 is now required. It is planned to bring a summary of responses to the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

- 3.2 Guidance and timetable for the preparation of Directorate Business Plans for 2014/15 will be issued shortly.

4 Strategic Work Strands

(a) Business Efficiency (BEP)

John Stewart briefed SMG on the 14 January 2014 Project Board meeting - Finance Office Review Report cleared for consultation (feedback due by 14 February 2014), discussion on implementation of Thematic Review recommendations, Project Evaluation Report cleared to go to Clerk/ Director General, agreement on file retention/ disposal schedule. John said that this was the last meeting of the Project Board. He paid tribute to Project Board Members and Project Team Members for their hard work and expert advice.

SMG recorded its appreciation of the Project Board, the Project Team and staff from across the Secretariat who participated in workshops and consultations. Trevor said that the project had been challenging on occasions and had produced firm evidence to be used as a base for a range of future discussions on budgets and resources. He indicated that he would review future monitoring of BEP recommendations when the Project Evaluation Report was published.

(b) 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.

(c) Organisational Development (OD) Strategy

Richard Stewart spoke to his paper on this issue. It was noted that the Secretariat faces significant challenges over the coming years in delivering services to the Assembly and its Members not least within the reduced capacity arising from the spending constraints placed on the entire public sector as part of the Spending Review 2010 (SR2010) and the likelihood of financial further constraints. The rationale for the

development and delivery of an OD Strategy is the clear intention to support the Secretariat in delivering the Corporate Strategy's vision, objectives and targets.

SMG discussed the paper in detail, especially its relationship to on-going work with Strategic Work Strands. SMG agreed that the governance arrangements for the OD Strategy will be carried out by a Project Board with representatives from each Directorate to ensure ownership of the Strategy. The Board will be chaired by the Director of Corporate Services with admin support provided from within the Corporate Services Directorate. The Group will report to SMG.

It was also agreed that, subject to a revision of some wording, the project should proceed to the completion of Phase 2 and then be referred back to SMG for review. Directors will confirm their Directorate's representative.

**ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
ALL DIRECTORS**

(d) Organisation Redesign

A future meeting is planned for next week.

5 Implementation Updates

(a) Co-ordination, Consultation, Communication and Engagement

Richard Stewart said that substantially all BEP reports had been signed off by Employee Relations Group. The Finance report was being considered.

(b) Financial Management Group

Richard Stewart said that there was nothing to report.

(c) IT Prioritisation Group

John Stewart said that the Group met on 17 December 2013 to discuss the impact of the Roof Project/staff decant on the IS Service Desk and Infrastructure Team, Draft IS Strategy, laptop refresh (postponed until 2014-15 financial year), Kosovo Project, Annunciator System and Draft Business Case for Cameras in Room 21.

6 Corporate Risk Register

- 6.1 David Johnston joined the meeting at 10.20am. After a discussion, some changes to the Register were identified. David will make the required amendments.

7 Internal Audit Update

- 7.1 Edmund Kelly joined the meeting at 10.30am and spoke to the paper on this issue. The current overall level of assurance was presented to the Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee (SARC) meeting held on 5 December 2013. The overall level of assurance remains satisfactory and reflects the results of the assignments completed to date in the 2013/14 year. A total of nine Internal Audit reports have been issued in final form during the period 1 April 2013 to 23 December 2013. Of the reports issued, four received a substantial assurance rating, four were assessed as being satisfactory and one limited. During the same period a number of follow – up audits were completed and reports issued.
- 7.2 It is intended to perform an update on the risk analysis for the Secretariat in February to inform the Internal Audit programme for 2014/15. Meetings will be arranged with Directors and Heads of Business in due course.
- 7.3 Following a procurement exercise to identify a supplier for investigative services, the evaluation panel agreed on the successful tender.
- 7.4 Internal Audit has been notified on an attempted fraud involving supplier bank account details. The attempt was discovered by the operation of controls in the Finance Office. It was agreed that a message should be issued to warn all business areas of this attempted fraud.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

- 7.5 At the December meeting of SARC Michael Watson, the Head of Internal Audit at Craigavon Borough Council presented his report on the Internal Audit Unit. The report arrived at a positive conclusion, with a small number of recommendations made for improvement. Work is underway to implement these recommendations, and should be complete by 31 March 2014.

8. Roof Project Update

- 8.1 David Lynn joined the meeting at 10.40am and assisted Stephen Welch in presenting this item.

- 8.2 Stephen Welch said that 5 tenders had been received within the deadline and these were currently being assessed. It is hoped to have this part of the project completed by 7 February 2014.
- 8.3 David Lynn said that after extensive consultation, the Project Support Group had produced a draft plan for the decant and internal relocation of staff affected by the roof project, especially on the 4th floor. Both Annexe C and Knockview Buildings will be used although as many as possible will be relocated within the building. It was agreed that Directors would discuss this with their Heads of Business and send any comments to David Lynn as soon as possible.
- 8.4 SMG acknowledged the work done to date by the Project Team, the Roof Project Support Group and the Project Board.

9 Temporary Broadcast Facilities in Room 21

- 9.1 John Stewart spoke to this item. Due to the pending work on the roof, it is necessary to consider moving meetings of the Justice Committee to Room 21. However, Room 21 is only equipped with audio recording facilities which will not support the live video and audio broadcast of the Committee. As a consequence, it has been recommended that temporary broadcast facilities are installed in Room 21.
- 9.2 SMG considered the Business Case which included 5 options for consideration. After discussion, the option supporting the rental of the required equipment to facilitate broadcasting was agreed. It was noted that the Assembly's Procurement Office has agreed that Pi Communications will carry out the procurement exercise.

10 HR Management Information

- 10.1 Richard Stewart spoke to the paper on this issue. A Corporate Strategy objective is to have an average of three days training per member of staff per year. The current figure completed is 1.7 days. It is believed that some staff complete training, particularly informal, without updating the online register and Directors were urged to encourage their staff to record all training.
- 10.2 Richard Stewart said that he would be writing to Directors to propose alternative arrangements for planning training events to avoid overlapping of events.
- 10.3 In 2010, SMG agreed an absence benchmark of 7.5 average working days lost per annum per employee. The cumulative average working days lost per employee for the period December 2012 – November 2013 was 8.9 days, which represents a decrease of 2.1 days compared with the December 2011 – November 2012 figure of 11.0 days. Trevor

Reaney acknowledged the efforts of all involved in improving the absence levels.

- 10.4 SMG noted that 379.7 staff are currently working within the Secretariat of which 368.4 are permanent staff.

11 Commission/SMG Business

- 11.1 Tony Logue and Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 11.16am. Tony Logue presented the agenda for the Commission meeting planned for 29 January 2014. The agreed items are:-

- Clerk/DG's Update
- Flags Consultation
- Business Continuity
- Recognition of C S Lewis and S Heaney
- Recognition of Individuals Policy
- Exhibitions Schedule 2014
- 'Perspectives On' Events 2014
- Employers and Public Liability Insurance

- 11.2 Robin Ramsey circulated papers on Recognition of Individuals in Parliament Buildings, Recognition of Seamus Heaney and C S Lewis and a proposed Exhibition Schedule for the Great Hall. SMG considered the proposals and agreed that the papers should be referred to the Commission.

12 Directors' Updates

- 12.1 John Stewart briefed SMG on a Network Virtual Server problem and the planned restart to the IT system on 16 January 2014. He also highlighted the possibility of disruption within the Stormont Estate on Friday, 9 May 2014 due to the Giro d'Italia cycle race.
- 12.2 Hugh Widdis advised SMG of a recent meeting with officials of the Human Rights Commission.
- 12.3 Stephen Welch reported a good uptake of the cashless payment system with Eurest.

13 Items cleared by correspondence

- 13.1 SMG noted that the following items have been cleared by correspondence:-

(a) Web Streaming

(b) Perspectives On – World War 1

14 AOB

- 14.1 Trevor Reaney said that it had not been possible to circulate a paper on Review of Governance: Partner Bodies in time for discussion at today's meeting. Members had now received the paper and were asked to forward any comments to the Clerk/DG.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

15 Next Meeting

- 15.1 The next meeting will be held on Friday, 14 February 2014 at 9.30am in Room 106.

The meeting adjourned at 11.45am.