

# **SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP POLICY FORMAT**

**FRIDAY, 3 APRIL 2015 at 9.33AM  
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

**APPROVED**

**Present:** Trevor Reaney  
David Lynn  
Gareth McGrath  
John Stewart  
Richard Stewart  
Hugh Widdis

**In Attendance:** Jim Beatty  
Tara Caul

## **1. Opening/Review**

### **(a) Apologies**

Apologies were received from Stephen Welch. David Lynn deputised on his behalf.

### **(b) Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **(c) Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting of 27 February 2015 had been approved and published on 23 March 2015.

### **(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.

- 2.2 It was agreed that the Election Planning Group would be reconvened under John Stewart. Directors were asked to consider their nominations and advise John accordingly.

### **3. SP15+**

- 3.1 Gareth McGrath said that he had recently changed roles and was now primarily working as SP15+ Programme Director. A Change Management Group had been set up to ensure that the process was effectively managed. Gareth's immediate focus was on drafting a revised Corporate Strategy and SP15+ Implementation Plan.
- 3.2 Trevor Reaney said a Voluntary Exit Scheme will launch on 20 April 2015 – a briefing will be arranged with Directors prior to the launch.
- 3.3 John Stewart referred to two letters from DFP on a NI Executive decision to expand the use of shared services in Departments and arm's length bodies. Trevor Reaney said that he would convene a separate meeting to discuss the issues raised in the correspondence from DFP.

**ACTION: TREVOR REANEY**

### **4. Management Accounts**

- 4.1 Richard Stewart said final accounts were being prepared and it was very likely that there would be an underspend of just over 2%.
- 4.2 Gareth McGrath said it would be important, where Directorate underspends in 2014/15 exceeded 2%, that action be taken to determine the underlying cause and whether 2015/16 budgets would need to be revised to ensure that such underspends do not recur.

### **5. OJEU Procurement Regulations**

- 5.1 Richard Stewart said that new regulations, the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015), which are both detailed and technical, came into force on 27 February 2015. All Assembly procurements will be completed in accordance with these regulations from this date.
- 5.2 Procurement Office, in association with Legal Services, has commenced a project to take this forward as the full impact will only develop over time and it is essential that the Assembly manages the full implications to minimise reputational, financial and operational risk.
- 5.3 SMG noted the paper.

## **6. Staff Survey**

- 6.1 Tara Caul joined the meeting at 10.14am and spoke to this paper.
- 6.2 Provisional findings of the recent staff survey had been presented to SMG at its meeting on 27 February 2015. Following that meeting, the Internal Communications Group (ICG) has completed its analysis of the findings and these were presented to SMG today.
- 6.3 Before taking SMG through the major outcomes, Tara recorded the appreciation of the ICG for the work done by Barbara Love in helping in the analysis of the findings.
- 6.4 The survey had shown improvements; in some cases these were significant, in a wide range of areas. However, there was a need to address potential areas for improvement. ICG had made a number of recommendations and these were also before SMG today.
- 6.5 SMG acknowledged the contribution of the ICG. After a discussion, the recommendations were accepted. The survey findings will be issued to all staff on 13 April 2015. SMG agreed to set up a team to draft an action plan before 31 August 2015. Trevor Reaney will consider who will lead this team and its composition.

**ACTION: TREVOR REANEY**

## **7. Commission/SMG Business**

- 7.1 SMG considered a draft agenda for the next Commission meeting for 29 April 2015. The proposed items are:-
- Clerk/CE's Update
  - Draft Corporate Strategy
- 7.2 SMG noted the Forward Work Plan to October 2015.

## **8. Directors' Updates**

- 8.1 John Stewart briefed SMG on a successful NIABT event involving the Institute of Directors and a briefing on the Review of Public Administration. He paid tribute to everyone involved in a youth event to mark Commonwealth Day involving 'Rock the Vote'. John thanked colleagues from all directorates who participated in a Gender Action Plan Workshop. He briefed SMG on the IS Office/ Research and Information Service/ Westminster Foundation for Democracy Project in Kosovo and the 'Erasmus Plus' (EU) funded Youth Engagement Project. John said that he had accompanied a US State Department/ 'Politics Plus' funded American Council of Young Political Leaders

delegation to Washington DC and Boston MA – this delegation included representatives of the main political parties and an Independent Unionist MLA.

- 8.2 Hugh Widdis said that the Commonwealth Law Conference which is to be held in Glasgow had been extended by one day to allow the delegates to convene in Parliament Buildings. Hugh also said that Legal Services was coming under increased pressure and expected to have to consider prioritizing its workload for the final year of the Fourth Assembly.
- 8.3 David Lynn said that work was continuing on addressing issues with the mobile phone service.
- 8.4 Trevor Reaney reminded Directors of his note asking them to identify major issues which may impact on SMG and the Commission in 2015/16. He will arrange a meeting when all replies have been received.

## **9. Items Cleared by Correspondence**

- 9.1 SMG noted that the following items had been cleared by correspondence:-
  - HR Management Information
  - Corporate Risk Register
  - Fee Reviews for SARC, IFRP and Commissioner for Standards, review of terms
  - Temporary Post DLGS
  - Information Management and Guidance

## **10. AOB**

- 10.1 John Stewart raised the preparation of Directorate Business Plans in the absence of a Corporate Strategy. Gareth McGrath assured SMG that a draft Strategy would be ready for consideration by the Commission for its April meeting and Directorates can begin formalising plans after that.
- 10.2 In line with agreed policy, John Stewart advised SMG that a residual risk assessment had moved to red – over reliance on an external service provider. This was noted.

## **11. Next Meeting**

- 18.1 The next meeting will be held on Friday, 1 May 2015 at 9.30am in Room 106, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting adjourned at 11.26am.*