

SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP STRATEGY FORMAT

**FRIDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2015 at 9.33AM
SKAINOS CENTRE, NEWTOWNARDS ROAD,
BELFAST**

APPROVED

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

In Attendance: Jim Beatty
Tara Caul

1. Opening/Review

(a) Apologies

No apologies were received

(b) Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

(c) Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting of 29 January 2015 had been approved and published on 9 February 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.

3. SP15+

- 3.1 Trevor Reaney said that today's workshop, following the SMG meeting, was in preparation for the Commission meeting on 6 March 2015. The Steering Group would meet on Monday, 2 March 2015 to review the proposals.

4. Management Accounts

- 4.1 Richard Stewart said the latest information confirmed that it was likely that there would be an underspend within this financial year.

5. Gender Action Plan Update

- 5.1 John Stewart spoke to this paper. Following a request from the Commission it was decided to introduce quarterly updates on implementation of the Gender Action Plan. This was the first update.
- 5.2 Five sub-groups had been set up to consider a range of issues and a workshop was planned for Friday, 27 March 2015 to bring the work of the groups together. It was hoped that a 'signature' project would take the issues forward.
- 5.3 The groups will also consider the findings and research of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) 'Review of Women in Politics' and the Northern Ireland Assembly to identify any overlapping issues; specifically where identified issues may affect secretariat staff. An initial meeting was held with the Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk on 19 January 2015.
- 5.4 SMG's attention was drawn to the Annex, an EU working paper titled 'How to engage senior men to promote women to senior decision-making positions in their organizations' and there was a discussion on how senior management within the Assembly could help in taking this forward.
- 5.5 SMG acknowledged the excellent work done to date and agreed to refer the paper to the Commission.

6. Internal Communications Group Update

- 6.1 Tara Caul joined the meeting at 9.42am and spoke to this paper.
- 6.2 Interim findings from the recent Staff Survey were now available and Tara presented some key figures to SMG. The response rate was an acceptable 55.4%. A copy of the findings is being sent to TUS today.

- 6.3 Overall, there were some very positive findings with significant improvements in a number of areas. Trevor Reaney drew attention to the results regarding Unacceptable Behaviour and that this issue needed renewed attention.

Hugh Widdis joined the meeting at 9.53am.

- 6.4 Richard Stewart said that this was the third survey and asked the group to identify any underlying trends across the surveys. It would be helpful if the group would also suggest thresholds for action within specific headings.
- 6.5 Trevor Reaney asked if the group would look at external comparators to compare against our results.
- 6.6 SMG thanked the group for its work, especially Barbara Love. The final report will be brought back to SMG's next meeting.

7. Commission/SMG Business

- 7.1 SMG considered a draft agenda for the next Commission meeting for 18 March 2015. The proposed items are:-
- Clerk/CE's Update
 - Equality Screening Report – Assembly Commission Questions
 - Recognition of Individuals Policy
 - Quarterly Gender Action Plan Update
 - Insurance 2015/16
 - Voluntary Exit Scheme
 - Exhibitions Policy Update
 - Fee Reviews for SARC, IFRP and Commissioner for Standards
- 7.2 A Commission budget planning workshop is to be held on Friday, 6 March 2015 to consider the proposals arising from today's workshop on SP15+.
- 7.3 The need for relevant papers going to the Commission to be considered first by SMG was re-iterated.
- 7.4 SMG noted the Forward Work Plan to March 2015.

8. Directors' Updates

- 8.1 Gareth McGrath said the Social Development Committee was considering arbitration relating to the ongoing S44 notice.
- 8.2 John Stewart briefed SMG colleagues on meetings in London with colleagues from the House of Commons, British Council, Westminster

Foundation for Democracy, History of Parliament Trust and Model Westminster. He said that the NIABT had hosted a well-attended briefing on economic challenges and was planning a study visit to Washington DC and New York City later this year. John said that he had met Christopher Wade (Director of the British Council, the Americas) and the US Consul General.

9. Items Cleared by Correspondence

9.1 SMG noted that the following items had been cleared by correspondence:-

- HR Management Information
- Corporate Risk Register
- Self-Assessment of Information Security Group

10. AOB

10.1 Trevor Reaney said that it appeared that agreement had been reached on lighting Parliament Buildings on a number of days – the issue would go before the Commission for decision by correspondence.

11. Next Meeting

11.1 The next meeting will be held on Friday, 3 April 2015 at 9.30am in Room 106, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 10.33am.