

SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP PERFORMANCE FORMAT

**THURSDAY, 29 JANUARY 2015 at 9.37AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

APPROVED

Present: Trevor Reaney
Susie Brown
Gareth McGrath
Sebastien Mingout
Richard Stewart
Hugh Widdis

In Attendance: Jim Beatty
Edmund Kelly
Paula McClintock
Tracey Wilson
Conor Coughlin
James Gilsenan

1. Opening/Review

(a) Apologies

Apologies were received from John Stewart and Stephen Welch. Susie Brown attended on behalf of John Stewart and Sebastien Mingout attended on behalf of Stephen Welch.

(b) Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

(c) Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting of 9 January 2015 had been approved and published on 23 January 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. Strategic Issues

(a) SP15+ incorporating Assembly First and Organisational Development Strategic Work Strands (SWS)

- 3.1 Gareth McGrath said the Assembly Future SWS was closely allied to the SP15+ programme which he was now managing. SP15+ has three phases:-

- Resource Acquisition,
- Design, and
- Implementation

- 3.2 The Resource Acquisition phase has been completed and Gareth is currently consulting on the elements of the Design phase – among other things, these include further consideration and implementation of outstanding recommendations from the Organisational Redesign Report, identification of new service delivery models, prioritisation of Secretariat activities and preparation of a new Corporate Strategy. Responses are due by 9 February 2015 and he will bring a paper to the next Commission meeting.

- 3.3 SMG was told of the potential for significant change up to, and after, 1 April 2015 and the need for a Change Management Group to plan and manage the implementation phase. The importance of regular updates to everyone concerned was emphasised.

- 3.4 Richard Stewart said that progress on the Organisational Development SWS depended on budgetary priorities which had yet to be determined.

(b) Resource Planning Group Strategic Work Strand

- 3.5 Trevor Reaney said that the Resource Planning Group was operational and meeting as planned.

Hugh Widdis joined the meeting at 10.04am.

(c) Institutional Reform

- 3.6 Trevor Reaney said that the Stormont House Agreement would have an impact on the work of the Assembly. A Joint Implementation Group led by the Head of the Civil Service had been set up and this was due to report tomorrow. A sub-group, of which Gareth McGrath was an attendee, was considering the issues of a reduction in the number of MLAs, Petitions of Concern and arrangements for an Opposition.
- 3.7 SMG agreed that it would be timely to reconvene the Election Planning Group on conclusion of SP15+ design phase with consideration being given to retaining as many members of the successful 2011 group.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY

4. Risk Registers

(a) Corporate Risk Register

- 4.1 Hugh Widdis spoke to his paper on this issue and asked SMG to consider the need to include a risk which reflected the current budgetary position. After discussion, it was agreed to amend and renumber Risk 4 - Budget allocations and corporate capacity insufficient to achieve corporate objectives – to Risk 1.
- 4.2 SMG then considered each of the risks in detail and agreed several changes in light of Budget 2015/16 and other matters.

Susie Brown joined the meeting at 10.25am.

(b) Directorate Risk Registers

- 4.3 SMG reviewed the Directorate Risk Registers and the paper on Risk Clusters. It was agreed that the latest versions of the Registers should be forwarded to the next meeting of SARC.

5. Internal Audit Update

- 5.1 Edmund Kelly joined the meeting at 10.33am and spoke to the paper.
- 5.2 SMG was told that the last report considered at the SARC meeting on 5 December 2014 showed the overall level of assurance remaining as satisfactory. No opinions have fallen below satisfactory for the year.
- 5.3 Initial discussions have begun on the approach to the Internal Audit plan for 2015/16.

6. Directorate Business Plans

- 6.1 Trevor Reaney introduced this paper which summarised the performance of Directorates to 31 December 2014 against their Business Plans. SMG acknowledged the significant progress to date and agreed to refer the paper to the Commission for information.

7. HR Management Information

- 7.1 Richard Stewart spoke to this paper. After 9 months of the year, the average training days was 1.8 per member of staff , significantly less than the corporate objective of 3 days. Further training programmes have yet to be delivered but it seems unlikely that the 3 days per staff member will be achieved this year.
- 7.2 Directors were asked to remind Heads of Business of the importance of staff recording all training events, formal and informal.
- 7.3 For the period January 2014 to December 2014, the average days lost to sickness absence was 8.3, a reduction from 8.8 days applying a year on year comparison. During the month of December 2014, the average days lost was 0.7, a decrease from 0.9 days in November 2014. The Human Resources Office will continue to work proactively with managers and staff to ensure that sickness absence cases are managed effectively and in accordance with the provisions of the Managing Attendance Policy. SMG acknowledged the work which had been undertaken to improve absence levels.
- 7.4 At 1 January 2015, the actual staff in post including agency and seconded staff was 389.1, the same as at 1 December 2014.

8. Management Accounts

- 8.1 Paula McClintock joined the meeting at 10.55am and spoke to her paper.
- 8.2 SMG reviewed the Monthly Management Accounts, including individual Directorate reports, and noted that there was an overall underspend of 3.65% or £1.15m (GAE underspend was £576k or 11.24% and salaries underspend was £341k or 2.68%). Monies had been surrendered to DFP as part of the December Monitoring Round and it was expected that payment of the 2014 Pay Award would significantly reduce the salary underspend. SMG noted the need to closely monitor and accurately profile expenditure for the remainder of the financial year.
- 8.3 Capital expenditure for 2015/16 has been allocated £1.8m and expenditure plans have to be finalised.

9. Members Survey Action Plan

- 9.1 Gareth McGrath said that work is progressing on developing an action plan following the setting of a threshold by the Commission at its meeting on 10 December 2014.

10. Digital First Strategy and Business Case

- 10.1 Tracey Wilson joined the meeting at 11.15am and assisted Susie Brown in presenting this paper.
- 10.2 SMG was told that Digital First aims to develop the Assembly's systems, workflows and procedures so that information and content can be created once and then re-used whenever and wherever it is required and if necessary printed – the key theme is to “Create Once. Publish Everywhere”. The introduction of AIMS and the electronic committee packs had been successful but more needed to be done. It was accepted that there was always a role for print but this would be minimised.
- 10.3 It is planned to introduce the strategy in three stages:-
- Consolidate all of the progress/changes to date and move to produce key products and processes digitally
 - Ensure that our systems and workflows can be adapted to individual needs, and
 - Transform so that the primary communication route of all of the Assembly's information is digital.
- 10.4 The draft Strategy has undergone an initial equality screening and the results indicate a need to conduct an Equality Impact Assessment.
- 10.5 Subject to some minor changes the Business Case was approved by the Resource Planning Group on 26 January 2015. The current contract expires in July 2015 and the preferred option within the Business Case proposes a new contract on a revised basis.
- 10.6 SMG had a lengthy discussion on both the Strategy and the Business Case. The Business Case was approved. It was also agreed to refer the Strategy and Screening Form to the next Commission meeting.

11. Business Continuity

- 11.1 Conor Coughlin joined the meeting at 12.03pm and spoke to this paper.

14. Commission/SMG Business

- 14.1 James Gilsenan joined the meeting at 1.00pm and presented the agenda for the next Commission meeting for 18 February 2015. The proposed items are:-
- Clerk/CE's Update
 - Equality Screening Report – Assembly Commission Questions
 - NI Public Service Ombudsperson
 - Payment of Allowances to Assembly Commission Staff
 - Recognition of Individuals Policy
 - Support Services Contract Review
 - Digital First Strategy
 - Catering Tariff Review
- 14.2 SMG was told that arrangements are being made for an additional meeting in March 2015 to deal with SP15+.
- 14.3 SMG noted the Forward Work Plan to March 2015.

15. Directors' Updates

- 15.1 Gareth McGrath said the Speaker had issued a S44 Notice on behalf of the DSD Committee. Susie Brown said that the timeline for delivery of the EQIA on Flags had been amended and the report will not be available until May 2015. Hugh Widdis said the IFRP would shortly begin its final consultation to inform its intended Determination for the fifth Assembly. The Panel has been invited to give evidence to the Committee on Standards and Privileges.

16. Items Cleared by Correspondence

- 16.1 A paper on the Catering Tariff Review had been issued for clearance by correspondence but it was decided to discuss the proposal before referral to the Commission.
- 16.2 The tariff was last reviewed three years ago and it was proposed to retain the existing formula for the next three years. Sebastien Mingout emphasised the need to balance footfall and income through maximising purchases to offset costs.
- 16.3 It was agreed to refer the issue to the next Commission meeting.

17. AOB

- 17.1 No items were raised under AOB.

18. Next Meeting

- 18.1 The next meeting will be held on Friday, 27 February 2015 at 9.30am in Room 106, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 1.22pm.