

SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP POLICY FORMAT

**FRIDAY, 9 JANUARY 2015 at 2.05PM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

APPROVED

Present: Trevor Reaney
Nuala Dunwoody
John Stewart
Richard Stewart
Stephen Welch
Hugh Widdis

In Attendance: Jim Beatty
Sinead McDonnell
Robin Ramsey
James Gilsean

1. Opening/Review

(a) Apologies

An apology was received from Gareth McGrath. Nuala Dunwoody attended on his behalf.

(b) Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

(c) Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting of 5 December 2014 had been approved and published on 5 January 2014.

(d) Matters Arising

Trevor Reaney said that he has delivered staff briefings on the Strategic Planning for 2015 and Beyond (SP15+) initiative. Gareth McGrath has agreed to act as Programme Director. Further details will be finalised when the budget position for 2015/16 is known.

Following on from the Stormont House Agreement, it is likely that some actions will fall to the Assembly/Commission. These have yet to be clarified.

2. Action Points

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

3. Job Evaluation Policy

- 3.1 Sinead McDonnell joined the meeting at 2.10pm and spoke to this paper. A previous paper had been with SMG on 4 July 2014 and suggested changes had been incorporated. These have since been agreed with Directors and TUS.
- 3.2 The paper offered a number of suggestions on how best to deal with appeals and SMG discussed these. It was agreed that Option 1, where the Clerk/CE acted as the final arbiter, was the preferred choice. The revised policy was agreed.

4. Secondment/Job Shadowing Policy

- 4.1 Sinead McDonnell said that these were two inter-related policies and were before SMG jointly. SMG had approved a consultation period in October 2014. A few comments had been received and agreed changes had been made.
- 4.2 SMG discussed and agreed the proposed policies.

5. Gifts and Hospitality Policy

- 5.1 Richard Stewart said the existing policy had been revised to include Assembly Committees and the Commission.
- 5.2 The proposed changes had been sent to Committee Chairpersons and no comments had been received. Committee Clerks have approved the proposals. Some further changes were necessary to reflect the introduction of the PECOS system.
- 5.3 After discussion, SMG agreed the revised policy. It was also agreed that this item should be referred to the Assembly Commission's next meeting.

6. Business Case for Ad Hoc Team

- 6.1 Nuala Dunwoody spoke to this paper. As the OFMdfM Committee cannot scrutinise its own legislation it will be necessary to appoint an Ad Hoc Committee with associated staff costs. Staff details cannot be

finalised until the final form of the Ombudsperson Bill is determined but it is likely that costs will run into the next financial year.

6.2 After discussion, SMG noted the paper.

7. Commission/SMG Business

7.1 Robin Ramsey and James Gilsenan joined the meeting at 2.42pm and presented the agenda for the next Commission meeting for 21 January 2015. The proposed items are:-

- Clerk/CE's Update
- Members' Expenses System
- Audit of Inequalities
- Equality Screening Report – Assembly Commission Questions
- Legislative Strengthening Trust – MoU
- Exhibitions Policy
- Gifts and Hospitality Policy

7.2 SMG noted the Forward Work Plan to March 2015.

8. Directors' Updates

8.1 John Stewart paid tribute to colleagues in Research and Education who had worked on the successful Erasmus+ Youth Engagement bid. He also briefed colleagues on a NIABT reception at the Kingspan Stadium and hosting US Fulbright Scholars and Postgraduate Students at Parliament Buildings. John briefed SMG on meetings with diplomats from Hungary and the US and meetings with the European Commission Office in Belfast and staff from the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

8.2 Stephen Welch said that talks were ongoing with EE on the level of services provided within Parliament Buildings. The roof project was proceeding well and consideration will soon be given to managing a recant of staff.

9. Items Cleared by Correspondence

9.1 It was noted that the following item has been cleared by correspondence:-

- Corporate Risk Register

10. AOB

10.1 Management Accounts e/o December 2014

10.1.1 Richard Stewart updated SMG on the current balance sheet. Trevor Reaney reminded Directors of the importance of proactively managing the GAE budget during the remainder of the year.

10.2 Proposed Memorandum of Understanding – NIA and Politics Plus

10.2.1 Nuala Dunwoody spoke to this paper. SMG previously considered this item in October 2014 and the revised paper included some changes since then.

10.2.2 Stephen Welch raised concerns about a number of issues, eg, length of agreement, budgets and staffing. It was agreed that further clarity was required.

10.2.3 Trevor Reaney asked for comments to be sent to Gareth McGrath for finalisation by correspondence.

10.3 Assembly Community Connect Advisory Group

10.3.1 John Stewart said the issue of Assembly Secretariat attending external events, such as political party conferences, had been raised at the last meeting of this group and invited SMG views on this.

10.3.2 While recognising the good work of the group, there was some concern over the perception of Secretariat staff at party conferences and the need for clearly defined roles. While there may be some benefits the general view was that more consideration needed to be given to the matter.

11. Next Meeting

11.1 The next meeting will be held on Thursday, 29 January 2015 at 9.30am in Room 106, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 3.45pm.