

# SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP STRATEGY FORMAT

FRIDAY, 13 MAY 2016 at 9.35AM  
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

**APPROVED**

**Present:** Trevor Reaney  
Richard Stewart  
Stephen Welch  
Tara Caul

**In Attendance:** James Gilsenan  
Janet Hughes  
Susie Brown  
Sinead McDonnell  
Brian Devlin  
Robin Ramsey

## 1. Opening/Review

### (a) Apologies

Apologies were received from Gareth McGrath. Susie Brown deputised.

### (b) Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

**Action:** James Gilsenan to investigate producing Assembly guidance for the proposed register of interests for senior Secretariat staff.

### (c) Minutes of Previous Meeting

Approved minutes of the meeting of 15 April 2016 were published on 27 April 2016. Unrestricted meeting papers have also been published.

### (d) Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

## 2. SMG Action Points

Progress on all action points was noted.

Before moving on to the substantive agenda items, Trevor Reaney recorded his thanks to the members of staff and contractors whose hard

work had ensured the first meeting of the Assembly on 12 May passed off so well.

#### **4. Assembly 21 Update**

##### **Corporate Strategy**

Richard Stewart advised SMG that all comments from the Corporate Strategy Planning Day had been collated and that he proposed to run another couple of planning sessions before the summer recess to allow all Secretariat staff to contribute.

It is anticipated the Commission will consider staff input in late June 2016 and re-visit again at the first meeting of the 2016/17 session. A period of consultation will follow with a planned launch date for the finalised Corporate Strategy before the start of the 2017/18 financial year.

##### **Budgets 2016/17**

Richard also advised SMG that now work on the 2016/17 year's budget was complete, attention has turned to considering the budget for the next 3 years. Following a period of restraint, the planned emphasis for the budget is improvement and development.

##### **Innovation Fund**

Trevor Reaney advised SMG that consideration needs to be given to how the budgeted Innovation Fund is to be used. He asked Directors to give this some thought before the next SMG meeting.

**Action:** SMG to consider possible suggestions for the Innovation Fund for consideration at the June 2016 SMG meeting.

##### **Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES)**

Richard Stewart reminded SMG that funds for a VES had been applied for as a precautionary measure.

**Action:** Richard to provide an update on whether a VES will be required in the 2016/17 financial year.

Tara Caul raised the potential need for additional funding for managing the process for IFRP reforms.

*Sinead McDonnell joined the meeting for agenda items 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.*

## 5. Revised Organisational Development Strategy

Sinead McDonnell spoke to this paper asking SMG to review the revised Organisational Development Strategy and agree governance arrangements for the Strategy.

Sinead advised SMG that the People Strategy and Organisational Development Strategy had been merged into a single document. Although the original themes remained the same, the suggestion that there should be a dedicated Organisational Development Strategy Manager had been removed.

Tara Caul raised a number of points on the content of the revised Organisational Strategy and as the points were quite detailed, she committed to sending these through to Sinead for her consideration.

Susie Brown asked for clarification on how Directorates might monitor the plan.

Stephen Welch also raised a number of points regarding governance arrangements and projected costs of the Strategy.

SMG agreed that the Organisational Development Strategy should dovetail with the Corporate Strategy which is in the very early stages of consideration. It was also considered appropriate to consult with the new Clerk/Chief Executive to ascertain her views on the merits or otherwise of having an Organisational Strategy.

On a related point and specifically under the 'Learning Organisation' Theme within the revised Organisational Development Strategy, Sinead asked SMG for ideas on corporate learning and development initiatives that should be implemented during the current financial year. Tara Caul advised that due to the implementation of new European Data Protection regulations, some corporate wide training would have to be done to inform staff of the changes.

Susie also advised that it was the view of her Director that the Competency Framework should be revised.

It was agreed that SMG would forward any other learning and development ideas for implementation in the 2016/17 financial year, to Sinead directly.

**Action:** Tara to forward points on revised Organisational Development Strategy to Sinead for consideration

**Action:** Trevor to brief the new Clerk/Chief Executive on the revised Organisational Development Strategy and consult on how best to proceed.

**Action:** SMG to forward learning and development ideas for implementation in the 2016/17 financial year, to Head of Human Resources.

## **6. HR Management Information**

SMG noted the Human Resource Management Information paper

Relevant points were:

- The current absence rate of 7.2 average working days lost per employee in the preceding 12 month period is below the absence benchmark of 7.5 average working days.
- The average number of training days per staff member is currently 2.1 days which is below the current corporate target of 2.5 days. However, Sinead advised that it was her view that it is likely the organisation has actually attained and exceeded the corporate target as she was aware that staff do not always record informal training on to iTrent.
- At 1 May 2016, actual staff in post including agency workers and inward secondees was 337.8 which is below the Secretariat's staff complement of 341.9. Work is continuing on vacancy management moves and it is hoped that remaining surplus staff will be placed in posts within the next couple of weeks. Sinead also noted a number of impending external recruitment exercises namely, Usher competition and Senior Legal Adviser.
- As part of a previous Staff Survey Action Plan, it was agreed that SMG would be informed of the number of cases arising and being managed under Employee Relations policies. During the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016, sixteen cases had arisen under these policies.
- In addition, disciplinary action has been taken against three members of staff who breached the Social Media Policy during the last financial year.
- The Age profile of staff as at 31 March 2016 was also provided and it was noted that the majority of staff are aged between 35 and 49 years. Some discussion took place around how we might enhance the motivation of a relatively young workforce of which the majority are now at the maximum of their payscales.

## **7. Non-Financial Reward and Recognition Policy**

Sinead McDonnell spoke to this paper asking SMG to consider and approve the key principles of a Non-Financial Reward and Recognition Policy. She advised that a number of the ideas had arisen from staff directly.

SMG discussed the key principles and were in broad support of them whilst acknowledging that further discussion with key stakeholders in developing the eventual Policy would now need to take place. Trevor requested that further non-financial reward and recognition ideas be directed to Sinead at the earliest opportunity for potential incorporation into the eventual Policy.

**Action:** HR Office to now develop a draft Non-Financial Reward and Recognition Policy and consult with key stakeholders accordingly. The draft Policy to be considered by SMG at a later stage.

**Action:** Directors to send other non-financial reward and recognition ideas to Sinead at the earliest opportunity for potential incorporation into the eventual Policy.

## **8. Possible Review of Overtime Policy**

Sinead McDonnell spoke to this paper asking SMG to consider if the current Overtime Policy should be enhanced to reflect the rise in out of hours working at weekends/public holidays.

Following discussion, SMG agreed that the points raised should be incorporated into the existing Overtime Policy.

**Action:** HR to make the necessary adjustments to the existing Overtime Policy and advise TUS/staff accordingly.

## **9. Childcare Support Measures**

Sinead McDonnell spoke to this paper seeking approval from SMG to consult on the draft Childcare Support Measures Policy following the introduction of mitigation measures with effect from 1 November 2015 as agreed by the Commission.

*Richard Stewart left the meeting at 11.15am.*

**Agreed:** SMG agreed that the draft Childcare Support Measures Policy should go out for consultation with staff and Trade Union Side.

Trevor Reaney asked that the Health and Wellbeing agenda item originally scheduled for this meeting be brought to the June SMG meeting.

*Sinead McDonnell left the meeting at 11.21am.*

*Brian Devlin joined the meeting for agenda item 10.*

## 10. **Business case for provisions of centrally funded Constituency Office Broadband Services**

Brian Devlin spoke to this paper asking SMG to approve the business case and obtain agreement to proceed with the procurement exercise.

Brian advised SMG that the costs stated related to the supporting of 65 constituency offices and that the business case was based on going out to open procurement with a recommendation to avail of fibre connections. It is understood that some 80% of constituency offices can utilise fibre connections.

Some Members have in the past held their own contract, however, the recent IFRP Determination may mean that they join the main Assembly contract, thus increasing the number of offices to be supported and in turn increasing the cost of the contract.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the business case and were content for the Information Systems Office (ISO) to proceed with the procurement exercise.

**Action:** ISO to proceed with the procurement of centrally funded constituency office broadband services.

**Action:** James Gilsean to inform Commission Members that we are moving forward with this service.

*Brian Devlin left the meeting at 11.35am*

*Robin Ramsey joined the meeting for agenda item 11.*

## 11. **Commission/SMG Business**

Robin Ramsey advised SMG that as per Standing Orders, Commission Members need to be appointed within 28 days of the first meeting of the Assembly.

Following discussion, it was agreed that a letter would issue to Party Whips asking if they wanted to consider appointing Commission Members earlier for example at the same time as appointing Committee Chairs.

The proposed date for the next Commission meeting is 15 June 2016.

Meetings with Directors and the new Speaker / Chair of the Commission have been arranged for Tuesday 17 May 2016.

**Action:** Robin to issue a letter to Party Whips re appointment of Commission Members.

*Robin Ramsey left the meeting at 11.50am.*

## **12. Directors' Updates**

Tara Caul advised SMG that the post of Head of Legal Services would be advertised next week.

Tara also advised that after submissions being made to the High Court the Assembly Commission had been released from the Judicial Review case and informed SMG that a complaint had been registered with the Information Commissioner's Office.

Stephen Welch advised SMG that some dFM staff had relocated to Room 55 freeing rooms for the new café/retail area work on which work would take place during the summer recess.

Stephen informed SMG that the Assembly had been shortlisted for a third award for the roof project and that the PC refresh was proceeding according to plan.

Stephen also requested that Directors have discussions with their teams regarding potential uses of the Speaker's Villa e.g. training, interviews, conferences etc.

## **13. Items cleared by correspondence**

Health & Wellbeing Survey Results – further information requested by SMG.

Review of Commission Actions from January 2015.

## **14. AOB**

There was no other business to discuss.

## **15. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Friday, 3 June 2016 at 9.30am in Room 106.

The meeting ended at 11:58am.