

# SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP PERFORMANCE FORMAT

FRIDAY, 15 APRIL 2016 at 2.06PM  
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

**APPROVED**

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

**In Attendance:** James Gilsenan  
Janet Hughes  
Sinead McDonnell  
Robin Ramsey

## 1. Opening/Review

### (a) Apologies

No apologies were received.

### (b) Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

SMG accepted Internal Audit's recommendation that a register of interests for senior management be created and maintained.

**Action:** James Gilsenan to create and maintain a register of interests on the Assembly website.

### (c) Minutes of Previous Meeting

Approved minutes of the meeting of 25 March 2016 were published on 14 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.

Richard Stewart to confirm date for issuing Shared Parental Leave Policy to staff and including in the Staff Handbook.

### **3. Directorate/Corporate Plan year end updates**

Trevor Reaney advised SMG of an overall achievement of 94% of Directorate targets to the end of the 2015-16 reporting year. This figure is the same as for 2014-15.

Trevor noted that this represented a strong performance given the pressure on resources and events beyond the Assembly's control. A year-end report will be produced for the new Commission to inform corporate planning and strategy going forward.

**Action:** James Gilsean to provide the report before summer 2016 recess.

Richard Stewart provided an update on the 2016 IFRP Determination that was issued to Members on 25 March 2016. Since then, a further detailed note has issued to Members regarding the recruitment of staff. Richard informed SMG of the challenges ahead to ensure compliance and the need to provide ongoing advice to Members.

### **4. Internal Audit Update**

Tara Caul spoke to this paper.

SMG was advised that the overall level of assurance for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 was satisfactory and that the finalised activity report for 2015/16 would be presented to the June meeting of SARC.

SMG noted the Internal Audit Strategy.

### **5. Financial Issues**

#### **5.1 Management Accounts – March 2016**

Richard Stewart advised SMG that the projected underspend for the financial year 2015-16 is currently at 2.6%. It is expected that this figure will reduce once all accruals are accounted for in the next couple of weeks.

SMG discussed underspends in GAE, Salaries and Training and areas of expenditure where predictions are anticipated to be challenging such as fuel costs.

## 5.2 Budget 2016/17

Richard Stewart gave an overview of the budget setting approach for the 2016/17 financial year with the implementation of the agreed 5% budget reduction. Richard noted a number of budgeting issues including:

The need for the 2016-17 budget for Members' costs to take account of resettlement costs following the end of the 2011-16 mandate;

The need to consider where bids may be necessary in the upcoming June Monitoring Round; and

The need for flexibility from the start of the financial year.

Stephen Welch suggested that discussions on budgets at each SMG meeting focused on year end projections as well as real time positions.

Richard Stewart and Trevor Reaney welcomed this suggestion.

**Agreed:** The SMG agenda item *Management Accounts* will change to *Management Accounts and Year End Projections* with immediate effect.

Tara Caul advised SMG that due to staff changes within her Directorate she may require additional funds throughout the year to cover mandatory staff training.

Gareth McGrath raised some possible funding requirements for Politics Plus for the longer term.

**Agreed:** A new agenda item, *Assembly 21* will replace SP15+ on future SMG meeting agendas.

Trevor Reaney proposed that the ALF group attend a half day planning event during the week commencing 2 May 2016 to commence work on the development of the Corporate Strategy 2017/2022.

*Sinead McDonnell joined the meeting at 3.10pm for agenda items 6, 7 and 8.*

## 6. HR Management Information

Sinead McDonnell spoke to this paper asking SMG to note the current Staff Complement/Staff in Post (SiP) information.

Sinead advised SMG that the original plan had been for surplus and other displaced staff to be placed in a post by 30 April 2016. However, the finalisation of some Business Areas' complements had been delayed but all efforts would be taken by HR Office to now place staff as early as possible.

Some discussion took place on the filling of a number of vacancies within Parliamentary Reporting. It was agreed that an expression of interest would be issued to all existing generic AG7 post-holders to seek

interest in taking up the vacant Parliamentary Reporter posts, with necessary training and support being provided.

**Agreed:** HR to issue an expression of interest to existing generic AG7 post-holders to seek interest in moving to the post of Parliamentary Reporter.

Stephen Welch sought clarification on a number of positions within IS Office.

Following discussion, SMG agreed to an amendment of the IS Office complement relating to the two temporary Sandwich Student posts. It was agreed that one of these posts would be considered as a permanent complement post at AG8 grade in the IS Office and the other retained as a temporary AG8 Sandwich Student post (a complement plus post).

**Agreed:** The two current Sandwich Student positions in IS Office will henceforth be recorded on the HR Management Information as: 1 AG8 IS Office Support (within permanent complement) and 1 Sandwich Student (recorded as complement plus).

SMG also discussed the broad principle of Business Areas requesting changes to the makeup of their complements which results in an adverse impact for the organisation to manage e.g. such changes create additional surplus staff or reduces the number of posts available to place surplus staff in to. SMG agreed that changes to the makeup of Business Area complements should only be progressed when any adverse impacts can be effectively managed.

**Agreed:** Changes to the makeup of Business Area complements should only be progressed when any adverse impacts can be effectively managed.

*Gareth McGrath left the meeting at 3.55pm.*

## **7. Equal Pay Review**

Sinead McDonnell spoke to this paper asking SMG to note the content of the Equal Pay Report and approve the commitment to conduct a further review in approximately two years.

Tara Caul suggested a minor rewording in one part of the report for the purposes of clarity.

**Agreed:** SMG noted the report and agreed to a further equal pay review in 2 years' time.

**Action:** The HR Office will provide the NISRA's report to Trade Union Side and arrange a further equal pay review in two years' time.

**Action:** HR to request that NISRA review some wording in the report to assist with clarity.

## 8. Results of Health and Wellbeing Survey

Sinead McDonnell spoke to this paper asking SMG to note the results of the survey, taking account of its findings and the Health and Safety Executive's advice on possible solutions and decide if any further action should be taken to address the issues raised. The two areas for specific attention are Change and Control.

SMG were advised that the Health and Wellbeing Team had decided to focus on the top 6 areas which staff have asked for support in and will develop initiatives to address these issues.

Trevor Reaney requested further statistics for consideration.

Stephen Welch and Tara Caul recorded their thanks to the Health and Wellbeing Committee and the HR Learning & Development Team, whose work is making a significant contribution to staff welfare.

*Gareth re-joined the meeting at 4.10pm.*

**Agreed:** SMG agreed to take the results of the survey back to Directorate management teams for discussion and revisit again at the next SMG meeting. It was also agreed that results of the survey could feed into Strategic Planning and Learning and Development work going forward.

**Action:** Sinead to arrange for further statistics from the Health & Wellbeing Survey to be provided to SMG as requested.

*Sinead left the meeting at 4.18pm.*

## 9. Review of Events Policy (March 2016)

Stephen Welch spoke to this paper asking SMG to approve the revised policy for implementation. The policy was previously reviewed in 2014.

The key change is to allow key persons attending corporate events to use the Upper Car Park, subject to security checks.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the revised policy for implementation.

**Action:** Facilities Directorate to implement the revised policy.

**Action:** Assembly Commission to be advised for information.

## **10. Staff Survey Action Plan Review**

James Gilsean updated SMG on progress against the Staff Survey 2014 Action Plan since February 2016.

HR have completed the review of the Learning and Development year. It is to remain April to March.

John Power is the new Internal Communications Champion and will bring a report to SMG in June.

An external contractor is currently configuring the Content Management System for updating AsslSt. The anticipated go live date is September 2016.

Gareth McGrath sought clarification on who was responsible for the management of AsslSt content.

James suggested that this matter be referred to John Power in his new role as Internal Communications Champion (ICC) to consider how management and editorial control of AsslSt can best be managed. Tara Caul confirmed that she would still be chairing the Internal Communications Group (ICG) meetings and that she would meet with John Power to discuss the roles of the ICC and the ICG.

With regards SMG actions, Trevor Reaney encouraged Directors to get more of their staff involved with SMG meetings. SMG agreed with the suggestion to have Heads of Business sit in on SMG meetings from time to time. This recommendation is also included in the recently published Gender Action Plan.

SMG will consider Managing Change under the Action Plan at June's meeting.

*Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 4.37pm for agenda items 11 and 12.*

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

Robin Ramsey advised SMG that the new Commission would be in place within 2/3 weeks of the first Plenary and that the priority would be to induct the new Speaker, as Chair of the Commission, and new Commission Members.

The first Commission meeting was likely to be early June with a planning day planned before Summer Recess.

It was noted that the Members' Financial Services Handbook will need approval by the current Commission.

## **12. New Mandate preparations - update**

Stephen Welch confirmed that all actions in relation to Election Planning and the Induction Day on 9 May were on track.

Gareth McGrath informed SMG of a new undertaking for Members subject to legislation passing through Parliament.

Trevor Reaney advised SMG that the introduction of a new Act means that Ministers can be appointed up to 14 days after the first sitting as opposed to 7 days as in the past.

Robin Ramsey requested that Directors forward their First Day Brief returns as soon as possible.

Trevor Reaney also mentioned that Gareth McGrath was currently working on guidance which will be issued to staff in relation to the impact of the Referendums Act.

*Robin Ramsey left the meeting at 5.05pm.*

## **13. Directors' Updates**

Stephen Welch referred to the positive feedback received to the recent video circulated to Secretariat staff by Facilities Directorate, on the steps to take to keep safe in the event of a firearms or weapons attack and suggested offering it to other building users such as civil servants and party support workers.

Stephen discussed the proposed pilot to trial the practicalities of a new one way traffic system i.e. in by the East and out by the West and confirmed that further details would follow prior to its introduction.

Stephen also advised SMG that the first 200 PCs have arrived and would be rolled out to MLA offices, constituency offices and Official Report by 9 May.

Tara Caul updated SMG on the ongoing Judicial Review case.

## **14. Items cleared by correspondence**

**Corporate Risk Register April 2016 (by 19 April 2016)**

## **15. AOB**

Trevor spoke about the success of the recent Business Continuity Training event and thanked Stephen Welch and Ken Eccles for their work in arranging it. A report will be produced and circulated.

Gareth advised SMG that Susie Brown, Head of Communications and Outreach is currently working on a new complaints procedure following the appointment of the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman. The revised procedure will be issued to SMG for clearance by correspondence shortly.

## **16. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Friday, 13 May 2016 at 9.30am in Room 106. Suggested dates for SMG meetings prior to the Summer Recess are 10 June 2016 and 1 July 2016.

The meeting ended at 5:09pm.