

# **SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP STRATEGY FORMAT**

**FRIDAY, 15 JANUARY 2016 at 9.33AM  
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

## **APPROVED**

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

**In Attendance:** James Gilsenan  
Janet Hughes  
Robin Ramsey  
Brian Moreland  
John Gibson  
Martina Dalton

### **1. Opening/Review**

#### **(a) Apologies**

No apologies were received.

#### **(b) Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **(c) Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Approved minutes of the meeting of 4 December 2015 were published on 21 December 2015.

#### **(d) Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **2. SMG Action Points**

- 2.1 Outstanding Action Points were reviewed. Members were asked to advise James Gilsenan of any changes.

- 2.2 Heads of Business to be updated on capital position to inform planning until end of the financial year.
- 2.3 Trevor reminded Directors that unrestricted papers will be published from this meeting onwards alongside meeting minutes.

**Action:** Head of Finance to co-ordinate information to Heads of Business to assist planning of capital projects.

**Action:** Clerk/Chief Executive's Office to publish unrestricted papers along with minutes.

### **3. SP15+ Update**

- 3.1 Richard Stewart provided a verbal update on SP15+.
- 3.2 Following the Voluntary Exit Scheme (VES) in 2015, Richard highlighted the need to closely monitor staffing resources over the next couple of months when considering staffing levels from April 2016.
- 3.3 SP15+ will be looking forward to the next mandate and the impact of proposed Departmental changes to the work of the Assembly.

### **4. Budget 2016/17 Update**

- 4.1 Richard Stewart provided a verbal update on the Budget for 2016/17.
- 4.2 Richard informed SMG that the Ministerial Statement on 19 January 2016 will confirm the Commission's budget position going forward.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that there will be more investment in Learning and Development in the next financial year. This will include further work on Organisational Development.
- 4.4 Richard also drew the attention of SMG to the Shared Services paper going to the next Commission meeting for approval on 27 January 2016. Trevor Reaney noted that some shared services were already availed of by the Commission and commended the work of staff on the efforts that had gone into putting this substantial paper together.
- 4.5 SMG approved the paper for the Commission subject to a few minor amendments.

**Action:** Trevor to communicate Commission's decision on increasing use of shared services as soon as possible following Commission meeting on 27 January 2016.

## **5. Budget setting methodology for Assembly Commission**

- 5.1 Richard Stewart provided a verbal update on the budget setting methodology for the Assembly Commission. The Finance Minister's acknowledgement of the Commission's independence was welcomed.

### **Business Planning 2016/17**

- 5.2 A discussion took place around Business Planning and it was agreed that the 2015/16 Business Plans would roll on until the end of June with new plans being put in place from the beginning of July.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to lead on co-ordinating Business Plans for 1 July 2016.

*Robin Ramsey joined the meeting for agenda items 6 and 7 at 10.11am*

## **6. Stocktake of strategic issues**

- 6.1 Directors and Robin outlined the current key strategic issues for their Directorates/offices.
- 6.2 Some of the key strategic issues raised included: end of mandate pressures; election planning; impact of Departmental changes following the 2016 election; work to facilitate the Speaker's Respect Agenda; procedural reforms; impact of the Fresh Start Agreement; Women in Politics; corporate governance; and career development.

## **7. Commission/SMG Business**

- 7.1 Robin advised SMG that there would now be two Commission meetings before Dissolution; one on 27 January and one on 2 March 2016.
- 7.2 Robin tabled a draft agenda for the next Commission meeting on 27 January 2016. The proposed items are:-
- Clerk/CE's Update
  - Pay Award 2015
  - PSNI Security Review
  - Desktop PC Refresh
  - Easter Rising/Somme Commemoration
  - Women's Parliamentary Caucus
  - Update on Arts Projects
  -

- 7.3 SMG approved the draft agenda for the Commission meeting of 27 January 2016.

*Robin Ramsey left the meeting at 11.05am*

*Meeting suspended at 11:05am and resumed at 11.10am*

*Brian Moreland joined the meeting at 11.10am for agenda item 8.*

## **8. Internal Audit Update**

- 8.1 Brian Moreland spoke to his paper on Internal Audit activity since 1 April 2015.
- 8.2 SMG was advised that the last report considered at the Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee (SARC) meeting in December 2015 showed the Assembly remained on target for 100% satisfactory or substantial levels of assurance for audits conducted in 2015. He noted that physical and cyber security issues remained high on SARC's agenda.
- 8.3 Planning has commenced for a new four year audit programme. The plan will assist planning but, given the four year period, some changes to the timetable are inevitable.

*Brian Moreland left the meeting at 11.22am*

*John Gibson joined the meeting at 11.22am for items 9 and 10.*

## **9. Procurement Sourcing and Governance**

- 9.1 John Gibson spoke to his paper, asking SMG for a decision on the degree to which ETendersNI will be deployed throughout the Secretariat.
- 9.2 Three options on going forward were put to SMG for consideration.
- 9.3 Discussions took place on the proposed options and it was decided that additional options should be considered with a further paper being brought to the next SMG meeting.

**Action:** John Gibson to distribute additional options to SMG for discussion.

## 10. Revision of Assembly Secretariat Procurement Thresholds

- 10.1 John Gibson spoke to his paper, seeking agreement from SMG to increase the current procurement thresholds which have been in existence since implementation back in 2008.
- 10.2 John recommended new procurement thresholds of:
- £0-£5,000 – proof of the achievement of Value for Money
  - £5,001 - £30,000 – 5 Competitive quotes/tenders
  - Above £30,000, a full competitive tender would be conducted by the Procurement Office.
- 10.3 SMG discussed the proposed new thresholds and agreed the limits. However, it was agreed that 3 competitive quotes/tenders was sufficient to achieve value for money but reduce bureaucracy for procurement exercises between £5,001 and £30,000. It was further agreed that procurement processes should remind staff that economy / cost is a key driver in the procurement of any service or product.

**Action:** John Gibson to issue revised procurement thresholds to staff.

*John Gibson left the meeting at 12.02pm*

## 11. Secretariat Staffing

- 11.1 Richard spoke to his quarterly staffing update paper, asking SMG to note the Staff in Post/Staff Complement information arising following the agreed allocation of staff following the 2015 Voluntary Exit Scheme.
- 11.2 Richard advised of the need for SMG to closely monitor the appropriateness of current staffing allocations in preparation for agreeing a new staff complement with effect 1 April 2016.

**Action:** Richard to provide staff with complement information for 1 April 2016 onwards by mid-February.

**Action:** Directors to monitor current staffing allocations.

## 12. Directors' Updates

- 12.1 Gareth McGrath provided SMG with a copy of the Final Notice of Forthcoming Assembly Business for the period 18 January 2016 to 15

March 2016 and confirmed that the last business day prior to dissolution was Friday, 25 March 2016.

- 12.2 Stephen Welch reminded SMG of the importance of completing and returning Business Impact Analysis forms by the required deadline.
- 12.3 Richard Stewart proposed the lifting of the temporary bar on outward secondments. Following discussion, it was agreed that the bar would be lifted with effect from 1 April 2016.

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

13.1 SMG noted that the following items had been cleared by correspondence since the last meeting:

- Business Case – Electricity Supply for Parliament Buildings
- Digital First Strategy EQIA Post Consultation Report
- Desktop PC Refresh
- IFRP – Minor Reform
- Women’s Parliamentary Caucus

13.2 SMG moved into closed session to discuss the Security Review Report which was issued to Directors via correspondence.

*Martina Dalton joined the meeting at 12.38pm for agenda item 14 in open session.*

### **14. AOB**

14.1 Following a request from SMG at the October 2015 meeting, Martina spoke to her paper providing additional information on the introduction of an Information Asset Register for the Assembly.

14.2 The paper provided information on the work involved and cost implications of creating an information asset register for the NI Assembly and the review and update of this register.

*Gareth McGrath left the meeting at 12.45pm*

14.3 Following discussion, SMG agreed the Assembly should proceed with holding critical information only on such a register.

**Action:** Martina to develop criteria for establishing a Critical Information Asset Register during the first year of the new mandate.

*Martina Dalton left the meeting at 12.52pm*

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

15.1 SMG's next meeting date will be confirmed once future Commission dates are agreed.

**Action:** James Gilsonan to advise SMG of future Commission and SMG dates.

The meeting ended at 12.54pm