

# SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

FRIDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2016 at 9.30AM  
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

## APPROVED

**Present:** Lesley Hogg  
Tara Caul  
Gareth McGrath  
Richard Stewart  
Stephen Welch

**In Attendance:** James Gilsenan  
Janet Hughes  
Paula McClintock  
Maria Bannon  
Sinead McDonnell  
Ken Eccles  
Sebastien Mingout  
Debra Savage  
David Johnston  
Robert Barry  
Robin Ramsey

### Opening/Review

The meeting commenced at 9.35am.

#### 1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

#### 2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Approved minutes of the meeting of 1 July 2016 were published on 11 August 2016. Unrestricted meeting papers have also been published.

#### 4. SMG Action Points

Progress on all action points was noted.

## **CORPORATE SERVICES**

*Paula McClintock joined the meeting for agenda item 5 at 9.36am.*

### **5. Management Accounts**

Paula McClintock provided SMG with new style expenditure analysis reports as at 31 August 2016.

Paula reminded Directors that October Monitoring Round discussions will be held and subsequently, the December Monitoring Round will provide the final opportunity in the reporting year for surrenders. She also confirmed that the budget for a Voluntary Exit Scheme in the 2016/17 year will be surrendered as no scheme is being run.

SMG recorded its thanks to Paula and her colleagues in Finance for their work in producing the reports.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the format of the new analysis reports subject to some minor amendments.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to incorporate suggested amendments in future monthly expenditure analysis reports presented to SMG.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to prepare a summary version of the Management Accounts for a meeting on 23 September in advance of the September Commission meeting.

*Paula McClintock left the meeting at 10.15am.*

*Maria Bannon joined the meeting for agenda items 6 and 7 at 10.15am.*

### **6. Draft Disability Action Plan 2016-21: Post-consultation**

Maria Bannon advised SMG that the consultation period for the Draft Disability Action Plan 2016-21 ended in June 2016 with only one response being received.

SMG was asked to consider and approve the response to the consultee together with the final Disability Action Plan.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the Draft Disability Action Plan 2016 - 2021 and response to the consultee subject to some minor amendments.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to submit Disability Action Plan 2016-21 to the September 2016 Commission meeting.

### **7. Draft Good Relations Action Plan 2016-21: Post-consultation**

Maria Bannon advised SMG that five responses had been received during the consultation period for the Draft Good Relations Action Plan 2016-21. SMG was asked to consider and approve the responses to the consultees.

**Agreed:** Subject to some minor amendments, SMG approved the responses to the Draft Good Relations Action Plan 2016 - 2021 for tabling at the next Commission meeting.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to submit Draft Good Relations Action Plan 2016-21 consultation responses to the September 2016 Commission meeting for approval.

*Maria Bannon left the meeting at 10.42am.*

*Sinead McDonnell joined the meeting for agenda items 8,9,10,11,12,13 and 14 at 10.42am.*

## **8. Learning and Development Information Paper**

SMG noted the excellent progress made in the most recent People Service Plan which contains all of the learning and development activities that have been implemented for staff up to 30 June 2016. SMG also noted the proposed learning activities for 2016/17.

Sinead advised SMG that an average of 2.9 learning and development days per staff member had been recorded at the end of June 2016. This exceeds the corporate target of on average 2.5 learning and development days per staff member.

Sinead also advised SMG of a new learning management system being rolled out by NICS called Totara that Assembly Secretariat may avail of in the future.

**Action:** HR Office with the Director of Corporate Services to consider how the organisation may align Directorate Learning and Development bids for 2017/18 with budget planning work for the same period.

**Action:** Directors to promote the Health and Wellbeing Fair on 23 September to staff.

**Action:** HR Office to consider providing refresher training on Data Protection and FOI.

## **9. HR Management Information**

Sinead McDonnell, Head of HR, noted that the staff in post figure on 1 September was 333.2 against the agreed staff complement of 348.7 and that for the period 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2016, the average number of working days lost per employee was 7.4 against the benchmark of 7.5.

## 10. Recruitment/Vacancy Management Information

SMG discussed the content of this paper which included detail on the proposed recruitment schedule which will be managed by HR Office during the forthcoming year.

Following discussion, SMG agreed that permanent posts would henceforth normally be advertised externally. A number of generic grade competitions will also be advertised internally to create merit lists for the filling of temporary vacancies at these grades. As a result of these decisions, HR Office is to review the recruitment schedule to finalise dates for advertising each competition.

SMG also agreed that, if necessary, HR Office have permission to utilise external providers to assist with the running of recruitment competitions. Tara Caul, Director of Legal and Governance Services noted that the use of any external provider would have to be very carefully managed to ensure compliance with the high standards HR Office meet when managing competitions.

**Action:** HR Office to review the recruitment schedule and provide SMG with a revised version.

**Action:** HR Office to consider the use of external providers to assist in the management of competitions.

*The meeting was suspended for 7 minutes at 12noon.*

## 11. Childcare Support Measures Policy

Sinead McDonnell spoke to this paper seeking approval of the draft Childcare Support Measures Policy and agreement to issue to all Secretariat staff. The Policy has been consulted on with Trade Union Side and staff.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the draft Childcare Support Measures Policy subject to minor amendments. It was noted that the Policy would apply retrospectively from 1 November 2015.

**Action:** HR Office to arrange to issue the Childcare Support Measures Policy to all Secretariat staff and for it to be placed in the Staff Handbook.

## 12. Business Case for Temporary Worker Contract

Sinead McDonnell sought approval from SMG on the Outline Business Case for a Temporary Worker Contract and agreement that it be referred to the Assembly Commission for approval.

Sinead advised SMG that the current temporary worker contract will expire on 31 March 2017 and a new contract will need established given that there is an expectation that a certain level of temporary worker will always be required in the organisation to cover temporary vacancies.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the Outline Business Case subject to some minor amendments.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to prepare a paper for consideration by the Commission at the September 2016 meeting.

### **13. Standards of Conduct Policy: Political Activity**

Sinead McDonnell spoke to this paper seeking direction from SMG on whether the Political Activities section of the Standards of Conduct Policy should be amended.

This matter was previously considered by SMG in July 2016 at which stage additional information was sought from other jurisdictions regarding how their policies apply in practice.

Sinead updated SMG on comparable policies in the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly and highlighted two options that require consideration by SMG.

Following discussion SMG agreed to seek advice from Legal Services before considering the issue further.

**Action:** HR Office to seek legal advice from Legal Services

### **14. Staff Survey 2014 Action Plan**

Lesley Hogg spoke to this paper asking SMG to note the updates to the Draft Staff Survey 2014 Action Plan and consider the actions not yet complete.

The Action Plan was most recently considered by SMG at its meeting in April 2016.

**Action:** Update Change Management (8.1 of the Action Plan) and mark as complete; update 8.2 stating the need to remind those charged with the delivery of projects that change management is an intrinsic part of project management methodology.

**Action:** Lesley to discuss Internal Communications related actions with ICG representatives. This includes the date of the next staff survey.

*Sinead McDonnell left the meeting at 1.00pm.*

## **FACILITIES**

### **15. NI Assembly Sustainability Report**

Stephen Welch presented the latest Northern Ireland Assembly Sustainability Report.

SMG noted the report and agreed a limited print run for MLAs and Commission Members.

*The meeting was suspended for 30 minutes at 1.05pm.*

*Ken Eccles joined the meeting for agenda items 16 and 17 at 1.35pm.*

## **16. PSNI 2015 Security Review of Parliament Buildings**

Ken Eccles spoke to this paper asking SMG to note the recommendations requiring further consideration by the Commission following security reviews in 2010 and 2015.

SMG suggested some amendments to the paper.

**Action:** Stephen Welch to amend the paper for Directors to review prior to being presented at the September Commission meeting.

## **17. Business Continuity Plan Update**

Ken Eccles provided SMG with an update on the progress to date with the Business Continuity Plan and lessons learned from the last Major Incident/Business Continuity exercise held on 8 April 2016.

SMG discussed the recommendations made within the paper and agreed that a further paper be brought to SMG once all proposals were addressed. It was agreed that communications needed to be addressed and further consideration given to the requirements of plenary sittings following an incident.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the revised streamlined procedure recommended in the paper.

**Agreed:** SMG agreed not to seek ISO accreditation at this time but to keep the option under review.

**Agreed:** SMG agreed to liaise with NICS regarding the availability of a permanently available initial gathering site suitably equipped for use in the immediate aftermath of an incident.

**Action:** Stephen Welch to bring a further paper to SMG incorporating proposals discussed.

*Ken Eccles left the meeting at 3.30pm.*

*Sebastien Mingout joined the meeting for agenda item 18 at 3.30pm.*

## 18. Support Services Contract 2017 Business Case

Sebastien Mingout spoke to this paper summarising the services provided by the existing contract with Eurest and outlining the business case for the tendering of the Support Services Contract for when the current contract ends in July 2017.

SMG were asked to note and consider the business case prior to submission to the Assembly Commission for approval.

**Agreed:** Subject to an amendment being made to reflect the management of any legal risks arising. SMG approved the business case for presentation at the September Commission meeting.

*Sebastien Mingout left the meeting at 4.10pm.*

## PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

*Debra Savage joined the meeting for agenda item 20 at 4.11pm.*

## 20. NIA Commission Complaints Policy and Procedure

Debra Savage spoke to this paper seeking approval of the revised Complaints Policy. The new policy was drafted to recognise that since the 1 April 2016, the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman may consider complaints against the Assembly if a person believes the Assembly has failed to adequately address their complaint.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the revised policy for publication on the website.

*Debra Savage left the meeting at 4.13pm.*

## FACILITIES CONTINUED – Note slight change to agenda running order.

## 19. Electricity Supply for Parliament Buildings - Business case

Stephen Welch sought approval from SMG on this business case.

Stephen reminded SMG that Parliament Buildings receives its electricity supply from the mains network on the Stormont Estate which is owned and managed by the Department of Finance (DoF) who have responsibility for the provision of the supply. DoF ran an external competition for the supply of electricity and the nominated supplier is L.C.C. Power Ltd, Go Power.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the business case.

**Action:** Stephen Welch to make all necessary arrangements with DoF for the electricity supply to Parliament Buildings.

## LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE SERVICES

*David Johnston joined the meeting for agenda items 23 and 22 at 4.15pm.*

### 23. Biannual Review of Directorate Risk Registers

David Johnston spoke to this paper. The previous review was in March 2016.

SMG were asked to review the latest Directorate Risk Registers and consider emerging “Risk Clusters” and whether any Directorate risks need to be reflected in the Corporate Risk Register.

**Agreed:** SMG agreed that no emerging risk clusters needed to be incorporated into the Corporate Risk Register on this occasion.

**Action:** Tara Caul to commission the production of revised Directorate Risk Registers to reflect the new Risk Register format (once endorsed by SARC).

### 22. Review of updated Corporate Risk Register

David Johnston spoke to this paper.

SMG was asked to consider the latest draft of the Corporate Risk Register and agree any subsequent amendments.

**Agreed:** SMG agreed the contents of the current draft Corporate Risk Register subject to minor amendments.

**Noted:** SMG approved the new Risk Register format which will go to SARC on 5 October for formal endorsement.

**Agreed:** All Directors will attend future SARC meetings.

**Action:** David Johnston to amend deadlines to Internal Communications and ODS controls under Risk 4.

*David Johnston left the meeting at 4.30pm.*

**PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES CONTINUED** – Note slight change to agenda running order.

*Robert Barry joined the meeting for agenda item 21 at 4.30pm.*

### 21. Members’ Survey 2016 – Draft Interview Schedule

Robert Barry spoke to this paper asking SMG to consider proposed changes to the methodology of the Members’ Survey. It is recommended that the next survey comprise of interviews only.

A decision on the sample for the survey and approval of the Interview Schedule was also sought.

SMG suggested circulating responses to Members.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the Interview Schedule and sample survey subject to some minor amendments.

**Action:** Gareth McGrath to circulate survey responses to Members.

**Action:** Gareth McGrath to commence survey of first group of Members in October 2016.

*Robert Barry left the meeting at 4.51pm.*

## **CORPORATE SUPPORT**

*Robin Ramsey joined the meeting for agenda item 24 at 4.53pm.*

### **24. Draft Commission Agenda**

Robin Ramsey tabled a draft agenda for the next Commission meeting on 29 September 2016. Proposed items include:

- Draft Disability Action Plan 2016 – 2021: Post-consultation
- Draft Good Relations Strategy and Action Plan 2016 – 2021: Post-consultation
- Independent Financial Review Panel: Reform
- Independent Financial Review Panel: Current position/issues
- Scope of current Commission Insurance

## **DIRECTORS' UPDATES**

### **25. Directors' Updates**

SMG noted the Directorate and Corporate Support Unit updates.

**Agreed:** Continue with the provision of ivory stationery

*Robin Ramsey left the meeting at 5.19pm.*

### **26. Items cleared by correspondence**

Clerk Assistant post - approved

Finance AG5 post - approved

Justice Research Officer post – approved

## **27. AOB**

There were no items under AOB.

## **28. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 19 October 2016 at 9.30am in Room 106.

The meeting ended at 5.20pm.