

# SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

WEDNESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2016 at 9.30AM  
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

## APPROVED

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

**In Attendance:** James Gilsean  
Janet Hughes  
Damien Martin  
Paula McClintock  
Sinead McDonnell  
Maria Bannon  
John Gibson  
Sebastien Mingout  
Aoibhinn Treanor  
Claire McCanny  
Maeve Donnelly  
Louise Close  
Robin Ramsey

### Opening/Review

The meeting commenced at 9.38am.

#### 1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Gareth McGrath; Damien Martin deputised.

#### 2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Approved minutes of the meeting of 16 September 2016 were published on 18 October 2016. Unrestricted meeting papers have also been published.

#### 4. SMG Action Points

Progress on all action points was noted.

Further meeting to be arranged with the Clerk/CE and Directors to discuss the Corporate Strategy.

### CORPORATE SERVICES

*Paula McClintock joined the meeting for agenda item 5.*

## **5. Management Accounts**

Paula McClintock presented the September 2016 Management Accounts.

Paula also provided details of the current forecast for income and expenditure for the remainder of the financial year.

SMG noted the hard work done by Finance staff to produce the new format accounts, but highlighted the difficulties their own teams faced in providing monthly accounting information to Finance within a very tight timeframe.

It was suggested that a timeline providing dates on when monthly financial reports will be issued to Directors/Budget holders and the date that annotated returns are due back to Finance is produced by Finance branch covering the next 6 months to help business areas with resource management.

**Agreed:** Given that amendments to the Management Accounts are possible between a monthly SMG and Commission meeting, the last set of accounts to be referenced in an SMG paper will be the preceding month's Commission paper.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to issue a timeline to Directors covering the next six months for monthly financial reporting.

*Paula McClintock left the meeting at 10:16am.*

*Sinead McDonnell joined the meeting for agenda item 6 at 10.17am.*

## **6. HR Management Information**

Sinead McDonnell noted that the staff in post figure on 1 October was 337.1 against the agreed staff complement of 350.7. The Complement + figure was also slightly up.

337.1 represents a slight increase on the September 2016 figure. The rise was due to an increase in the number of agency workers recruited to cover temporary vacancies.

*Sinead McDonnell left the meeting at 10.24am.*

*Maria Bannon joined the meeting for agenda item 7 at 10.24am.*

## **7. Final Good Relations Action Plan 2016-21**

Maria Bannon sought approval from SMG on the final Good Relations Action Plan, which had been amended following discussion at the September Commission meeting.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the final Good Relations Action Plan 2016-21 for tabling at the October Commission meeting.

## **8. Progress update on Gender Action Plan (GAP) (2016-18)**

Maria Bannon provided the first six-monthly update on progress by the GAP Implementation Group.

Maria noted that the Assembly had received a very positive interim score of 80% in a Business in the Community gender audit.

SMG recorded its thanks to the Group on its work to date.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to bring the GAP update to the October Commission meeting.

**Action:** James Gilsenan to bring draft Deputising guidance for SMG meetings to the October SMG meeting.

*Maria Bannon left the meeting at 10.39am.*

*John Gibson joined the meeting for agenda item 9 at 10.40am.*

## **9. Future use of the Decision Authorisation System (DAS)**

John Gibson spoke to this paper seeking guidance from SMG on whether all live, historic business justifications and cases should be migrated to the DAS and also if the Policy should be used for all justifications and cases and hence, whether DAS should be used to record all justifications and cases.

Following discussion SMG agreed to arrange a meeting to review the existing Business Justification and Cases Policy prior to making any decisions on the appropriate use of the DAS. Additional information by way of a worked example was also requested to help inform any decisions.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to provide briefing on the current Policy.

**Action:** Further meeting to be arranged with the Clerk/CE, Directors, Head of Finance and Head of Internal Audit to review the Policy.

*John Gibson left the meeting at 11.46am.*

## **FACILITIES**

*Sebastien Mingout joined the meeting at 11.47am.*

## **10. Assembly wide Corporate Income Generation**

Stephen Welch advised SMG that Stage 1 of the process of identifying corporate opportunities had been completed.

Sebastien Mingout advised SMG on a number of new opportunities for income generation identified by Heads of Business following consultation.

SMG discussed the functions of the Assembly Commission set out in the Northern Ireland Act 1998, agreed that the key opportunities for income generation were already being pursued and that none of the other opportunities were likely to generate sufficient income/profit to warrant further

investigations at this time. However, SMG agreed to remain alert to other opportunities that may arise in the future.

*Sebastien Mingout left the meeting at 12 noon.*

*The meeting was suspended until 1.10pm*

## **PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES**

*Aoibhinn Treanor joined the meeting for agenda item 11 at 1.10pm.*

### **11. Outline Business Case for Legislative Drafting Contract**

Aoibhinn Treanor sought approval from SMG on the Outline Business Case for a Legislative Drafting Contract and agreement that it be referred to the Commission for approval.

Aoibhinn advised SMG of the requirement for a new contract to provide external drafting services to the Assembly for the new mandate.

A framework of drafters is being sought to provide relevant expertise and contingency for the provision of non-executive bills, complex standing orders and amendments as required and other Assembly drafting projects such as the potential for the Commission to propose legislation relating to the Independent Financial Review Panel.

Aoibhinn stated that the framework would need to be procured promptly to ensure that drafters are available by the time Private Members' Bill proposals are developed to the stage of drafting. There has been some slippage in the timetable and it is now anticipated that it will be December before the framework is in place.

Aoibhinn summarised the key elements of the outline business case and highlighted that this requirement is critical due the huge increase in demand for Private Members' Bills.

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

**Action:** Gareth McGrath to prepare a paper for consideration by the Commission at its next meeting.

*Aoibhinn Treanor left the meeting at 1.30pm.*

*Claire McCanny joined the meeting for agenda item 12 at 1.30pm.*

### **12. Fees for Objections to Hybrid Bills**

Claire McCanny spoke to this paper seeking agreement to refer the matter to the Commission to make a determination in accordance with Standing Order 104(3c) that no fee shall be required to accompany an objection to a hybrid bill.

Claire outlined the decisions taken by other UK legislatures on the fees charged for objections submitted to Hybrid Bills and in light of this and in the context that the consideration of a hybrid bill by the Assembly is likely to be a very rare occurrence, the advice to the Commission should be to determine that there should be no fee for submitting an objection to a hybrid bill.

**Agreed:** SMG agreed to bring the paper to the October Commission meeting for approval.

*Claire McCanny left the meeting at 1.39pm.*

*Maeve Donnelly and Louise Close joined the meeting for agenda item 13 at 1.39pm.*

### **13. Revised Exhibition and Arts Engagement Policy**

Maeve Donnelly spoke to this paper advising SMG of the proposed revisions to the Exhibition and Arts Engagement Policy.

Approval was sought on the revised policy and the principle of the proposed Draft Assembly Arts Programme.

The Draft Assembly Arts Programme will follow a brief developed by Assembly Officials with the Speaker approving individual exhibitions in the Great Hall.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the paper for consideration by the Commission.

*Maeve Donnelly and Louise Close left the meeting at 1:47pm.*

### **14. Future Funding of Politics Plus**

Damien Martin spoke to this paper advising SMG that Atlantic Philanthropies' funding for Politics Plus will end in May 2017. It is proposed that funding be sought from the Executive to allow the valuable and well-received programme to continue beyond this date.

SMG noted that whilst the Commission may approve additional funding for the project, the project itself would remain entirely independent from the Commission. It was also noted that the Commission's submission to the Audit Committee refers to the future funding of Politics Plus.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the paper subject to some minor amendments for bringing to the November Commission meeting.

**Action:** Intended note to the Audit Committee to include reference to the Commission's potential role in the future funding of Politics Plus.

*Robin Ramsey joined the meeting for agenda items 15, 16 and 17 at 2:13pm.*

## **CORPORATE SUPPORT**

## **15. Decade of Centenary Events to be marked during the Mandate**

Robin Ramsey spoke to this paper seeking approval from SMG for a paper to be presented at the next Commission meeting asking for their consideration and agreement to a package of centenaries to be marked during this mandate. Possible centenaries to be marked included universal male and limited female suffrage and the first sittings of Dáil Éireann and the Northern Ireland Parliament.

These commemorations follow those held successfully during the last mandate.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the paper for bringing to the November Commission meeting.

## **16. Draft Commission Agenda 27 October 2016**

Robin Ramsey tabled a draft agenda for the next Commission meeting on 27 October 2016. Proposed items include:

- Outline Business Case for Legislative Drafting Contract
- Revised Exhibition and Arts Engagement Policy
- Insurance Coverage
- Fees for Objections to Hybrid Bills

## **DIRECTORS' UPDATES**

### **17. Directors' Updates**

SMG noted the Directorate and Corporate Support Unit updates.

*Robin Ramsey left the meeting at 3:25pm*

### **18. Items cleared by correspondence**

Corporate Risk Register - Update

### **19. AOB**

There was no other business.

### **20. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 16 November 2016 at 9.30am  
in Room 106.

The meeting ended at 3:26pm.