

SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

**FRIDAY, 16 DECEMBER 2016 at 9.30AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

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

In Attendance: James Gilsonan
Janet Hughes
Paula McClintock
Sinéad McDonnell
Maria Bannon
David Johnston
Robin Ramsey

Opening/Review

The meeting commenced at 9.58am.

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Declarations of Interest

Gareth McGrath and Richard Stewart declared interests as Trustee and Honorary Treasurer of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust, respectively, in relation to agenda item 14.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Approved minutes of the meeting of 16 November 2016 were published on 10 December 2016. Unrestricted meeting papers have also been published.

4. SMG Action Points

Progress on all action points was noted.

Tara Caul reminded Directors of significant upcoming changes to the Data Protection Act and the expectation of staff training in January 2017.

CORPORATE SERVICES

Paula McClintock joined the meeting for agenda item 5.

5. Management Accounts

Paula McClintock presented the November 2016 Management Accounts and provided details of the final forecast outturn for the year, outlining the areas where surrenders were made in the December 2016 Monitoring return to the Department of Finance.

Gareth McGrath left the meeting at 10.02am.

Paula confirmed that following the December Monitoring Round additional funds required by business areas between now and the end of March will be considered and approved by SMG subject to funds being made available from within other business areas. The monitoring budget will not be revised again this financial year.

Reference was made to capital expenditure forecasted in respect of CCTV Upgrade and Consultancy and it was agreed that Paula would clarify anticipated expenditure with the Head of Security.

Paula advised SMG that the Commission's budgeting exercise for 2017/18 would issue to budget holders/Heads of Business early next week, with overall proposed Commission budget figures presented to SMG in February.

Paula McClintock left the meeting at 10.08am.

Sinéad McDonnell joined the meeting for agenda items 6 and 7 at 10.09am.

6. HR Management Information (Quarterly Update)

SMG noted that the Staff in Post (SiP) figure on 1 December was 347 against an agreed staff complement of 345.9 and a Complement Plus figure of 350.7.

As part of the quarterly update SMG was provided with details on sickness absence for the period 1 November 2015 to 31 October 2016. Sinéad confirmed that the average days lost per employee due to sickness absence was 7.6 days against a benchmark of 7.5.

Sinéad reminded SMG of the range of support available to staff concerned about mental health issues including the availability of Carecall, Welfare Support Services and Harassment Contact Officers.

Sinéad advised SMG that work was progressing against the recruitment schedule and provided an update on the live competitions. Advice was sought from SMG on the scheduling of a permanent AG4 Assembly Clerk vacancy.

Gareth McGrath re-joined the meeting at 10.13am.

Following discussion SMG proposed amending the Schedule for AG4 Assembly Clerk to externally recruit for both temporary and permanent places in one competition subject to Equality Commission approval.

7. Standards of Conduct Policy – Political Activities

Sinéad advised SMG that the Political Activities section of the Standards of Conduct Policy had been reviewed. Angela Kelly's input into the drafting of the paper was noted.

Two options were proposed for consideration by SMG and subsequent referral to the Commission for approval.

Gareth McGrath left the meeting at 11.13am.

Following discussion, SMG approved the paper for the January Commission meeting subject to some detail being added in relation to the Local Government Act.

Action: Sinéad to add detail to the submission for the Commission relating to the Local Government Act.

Sinéad McDonnell left the meeting at 11.14am.

Maria Bannon joined the meeting for agenda items 8,9 and 10 at 11.14am.

8. Sign Language Guidance

Maria Bannon spoke to this paper asking SMG to consider and approve the proposed sign language guidance.

Maria advised SMG that this guidance has been developed as part of an action within the Disability Action Plan 2016-21, the purpose of which is to provide staff with information on how to make provision for visitors to Parliament Buildings who are deaf or have hearing loss and to ensure that the work of the Assembly is accessible to them.

Gareth McGrath re-joined the meeting at 11:18am.

Agreed: SMG were content with the proposed guidance for circulation to staff and publication on the website.

9. Draft Inclusive Customer Service Policy

Maria Bannon spoke to the paper asking SMG to consider and approve the the draft Inclusive Customer Service Policy.

Maria advised SMG that this policy has been developed to meet an action contained within the Disability Action Plan 2016-21. The purpose of the policy is to provide staff with information on how to make provision for visitors

to Parliament Buildings who require reasonable adjustments in relation to access needs in order to improve participation.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the wearing of name badges by Ushers should be included within the policy.

Action: Maria to liaise with Stephen Welch regarding the amendment to the draft policy and once updated, issue to SMG via correspondence for final consideration.

10. Draft Guidance and Checklist for Gender Balancing Groups

Maria Bannon spoke to the paper asking SMG to consider and approve the proposed guidance and checklist for ensuring that internal working groups record their consideration of the need for gender balance in their membership. Maria advised SMG that the guidance has been developed to fulfil an action in the Gender Action Plan 2016-18.

Agreed: SMG approved the guidance and checklist subject to some minor amendments for distribution to Directors and Heads of Business.

Maria Bannon left the meeting at 11.48am.

The meeting was suspended until 11.53am and the Clerk/CE advised SMG that on resumption agenda item 13 would be taken ahead of item 11.

David Johnston joined the meeting at 11.53am.

LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE SERVICES

13. Review of the new format Corporate Risk Register and Directorate Risk Registers

David Johnston advised SMG that a few minor amendments had been received since this paper was prepared, in relation to risks 4 (Failure to maintain a suitably skilled, experienced and motivated staff complement), 5 (Failure to adequately prepare for outworkings of the EU Referendum vote) and 6 (Loss of confidence in how Members' salaries and expenses are determined and paid).

SMG was asked to consider the contents of the new format Corporate Risk Register and agree any subsequent amendments prior to it going to the Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee (SARC) meeting in January.

Agreed: SMG agreed the new format Corporate Risk Register subject to some minor amendments to corporate risks 1 (Budget available to the Assembly Commission insufficient to achieve corporate

aims) and 4 and the addition of dates to all risks in relation to 'Position at'.

Action: Staff Survey 2014 update to be tabled at the January 2017 SMG meeting.

Agreed: The Clerk/CE also suggested a separate meeting to discuss 'Risk Appetite' during the first quarter of next year.

SMG then considered the new format Directorate Risk Registers and made some minor amendments.

David Johnston left the meeting at 12.42pm.

FACILITIES

11. Revenue Generation Plan/Progress Report

Stephen Welch provided SMG with an update on the revenue generation plan's performance to date and sought direction in relation to the plan permanently continuing beyond the agreed initial two-year trial period which ends in January 2018.

Gareth left the meeting at 12.42pm.

Stephen stated that the revenue generation plan had performed well in terms of sales revenue, particularly in public dining, but that additional revenue could be generated.

Gareth re-joined the meeting at 12.48pm.

Agreed: SMG were content with the revenue generation plan continuing on a permanent basis beyond the initial two-year trial and also with the proposals to allow wedding ceremonies in Parliament Buildings and permanently opening the Members' Dining Room to the public on all trading day, when space is available.

12. Sustainable Development Annual Management Review

Stephen Welch spoke to this paper, highlighting performance against targets and objectives. Targets and objectives for the next 2 years were also discussed. An NQA ISO 14001 Audit took place September 2016 and continued registration was recommended.

SMG noted the contents of the paper and were content with the review of the Environmental Management System (EMS).

SMG also noted the Action Plan and Stephen requested that SMG review the Environmental and Sustainable Development Policies and forward any comment to him by mid-January. Any volunteers to be Environmental

Champions would also be welcomed: MLAs and Party support workers are also being approached in an effort to recruit additional champions.

With regards the action to proceed with thermal mugs, it was agreed that this would be considered further and that Stephen would bring a paper on this to SMG in early 2017. The current hot drink take away cups are creating a huge amount of waste and contamination at recycling collection points.

Lesley Hogg requested clarification in relation to the target setting period i.e. calendar or financial year.

PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

14. Future governance arrangements for the Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT) and Politics Plus

Gareth McGrath spoke to this paper, outlining proposals on the future governance arrangements for the NIABT and Politics Plus.

SMG considered the proposal to replace the NIABT with the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Network and noted that in respect of Politics Plus the core funding from the Atlantic Philanthropies and the grant from the Assembly Commission is due to be spent by July 2017.

Action: Gareth McGrath to bring a paper to the January Commission meeting for consideration and approval.

Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 1.41pm

Gareth McGrath left the meeting at 1.41pm.

Item 16 taken before item 15.

16. AOB

SMG discussed a letter received from the Department for the Economy dated 15 December 2016 regarding the Non Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI).

Stephen Welch confirmed that the Assembly had applied to this scheme following installation of solar tubes as part of the recently completed roof project. However, the Assembly is not currently a beneficiary of the scheme and the status of the application to the scheme is unclear at this time.

Action: Stephen Welch to draft a response to the Department for the Economy seeking confirmation of the status of the application to the RHI Scheme and issue a note to Commission Members informing them of the letter received and response issued.

Gareth re-joined the meeting at 1.48pm.

DIRECTORS' UPDATES

15. Directors' Updates

SMG noted the Directorate and Corporate Support Unit updates.

17. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 18 January 2017 at 9.30am in Room 106.

The meeting ended at 2.00pm.