

SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

THURSDAY, 16 NOVEMBER 2016 at 9.30AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

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

In Attendance: James Gilsean
Janet Hughes
Paula McClintock
Sinead McDonnell
John Gibson
Brian Devlin
Ken Eccles
Robin Ramsey

Opening/Review

The meeting commenced at 9.33am.

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 19 October 2016 were published on 11 November 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.

5. Management Accounts

Paula McClintock presented the October 2016 Management Accounts.

Paula also provided details of the current forecast for income and expenditure for the remainder of the financial year. She noted the current underspend on staff salaries and that there were further new joiners that would reduce this underspend.

SMG was advised that the next formal monitoring round in early December would be the last opportunity to surrender or bid for monies in this financial year; final dates will be confirmed soon by DF.

Prior to completion of the December monitoring returns, it was agreed that a separate meeting should be scheduled between Finance and Directors to discuss the January monitoring return in detail. Heads of Business should also pay particular attention to their Administration budgets in the next round of monthly conversations with finance.

Action: Paula to arrange a meeting with Directors for early December to discuss the January monitoring return.

Paula highlighted the forecasted underspend on salaries and sought approval from SMG to move the necessary funds to cover a shortfall arising from additional bids requested from the Administration budget.

Agreed: SMG were content with Paula's proposal to transfer the requested funds to the Administration budget.

Action: Monthly Executive Summary to include figures from previous month to illustrate month to month movements.

Paula also sought approval from SMG to add the funding for 8 additional projects to the Capital Plan.

Agreed: SMG were content for Paula to add the additional 8 projects to the Capital Plan.

Paula McClintock left the meeting at 10:11am.

Sinead McDonnell joined the meeting for agenda item 6 and 7 at 10.11am.

6. HR Management Information

Sinead McDonnell noted that the Staff in Post (SiP) figure on 1 November was 342 against the agreed complement (including complement plus) of 350.7.

The SiP figure is expected to rise as new staff join the Assembly as per the recently published recruitment schedule.

As at 4 November there were 19 temporary arrangements in place (i.e. temporary promotions and deputising) and 17 FTE agency workers.

Sinead advised SMG that the recruitment schedule was on target and gave a brief update on the competitions currently underway.

7. Business in the Community's Gender Project Plan

Participation in the Business in the Community's Gender Project Plan is an action in the Assembly Commission's Gender Action Plan 2016-18.

Sinead McDonnell informed SMG that after a brief delay, the project was well underway and, to date, the Assembly Commission was performing well against the project criteria.

Sinead McDonnell left the meeting at 10.18am.

The meeting was suspended for 12 minutes.

John Gibson joined the meeting for agenda item 8 at 10.30am.

8. Review of Delegated Procurements

SMG has previously agreed that delegated procurements need not be expedited through the E-tendersNI platform. This was however predicated on a programme of informal and formal audits by the Procurement Office and Internal Audit.

John Gibson therefore sought agreement from SMG on a proposed process for reviewing delegated procurements that fall within the £5k-£30k band. The proposed process involves reviewing sample delegated procurements to affirm compliance. The process of reviews is scheduled to take place for delegated procurements that have taken place during 2016/17 and the results summarised in a report to SMG.

SMG then discussed the monitoring of delegated procurements below £5k. It was agreed that delegated procurements should be included in the review unless these were already being reviewed by Internal Audit as part of its normal audit process.

Action: Tara Caul to ask Internal Audit whether or not they assess sub £5k procurements as part of their standard audits.

Action: If sub £5k procurements are not assessed as part of Internal Audit's standard audits then these should be included in the review.

Action: John to issue Business Case Consultation directly to Heads of Business.

John Gibson left the meeting at 10.53am.

FACILITIES

9. Mobile Telephones

Stephen Welch provided an update on the current position in relation to the mobile telephone contract for the NI Assembly Secretariat and the ongoing signal issues.

Stephen advised SMG that the current provider (EE) has offered to install an inbuilt signal solution which would significantly improve coverage within Parliament Buildings, at no cost to the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (NIAC).

If, following completion of the above works, the NIAC sees an acceptable signal improvement covering all levels within Parliament Buildings the proposal would be to offer the current provider a new contract for a further three years.

SMG noted that even if the signal improves after the installation of the new hardware the NIAC is not committed to renewing with the current provider.

Agreed: SMG agreed to proceed with the installation of the new hardware and were content to enter into a new 3-year contract with the current provider for the provision of mobile phones and services provided there is an acceptable signal improvement throughout Parliament Buildings.

Brian Devlin joined the meeting for agenda item 10 at 11.15am.

10. IP Telephony Update

Brian Devlin provided SMG with an update in relation to the proposed implementation of an IP telephony system for the Assembly. He outlined the benefits of the system compared to maintaining the current analogue telephone system.

Market sounding on IP telephony has been carried out and discussions have taken place with Microsoft with regard licensing and compatibility with existing NIAC software.

Brian advised SMG that the requirements of the contract need to be carefully considered and that it may be necessary to employ a consultant to help with the detailed technical designs.

The new Business Relationship Manager (BRM) is due to be appointed at the end of January 2017 and he/she will be the project manager for this new system.

Brian stated that significant training would be required for Secretariat staff, Members and Members support staff.

Agreed: SMG agreed that the project board and/or project teams(s) should include representation from across a range of Parliament Buildings users.

Brian Devlin left the meeting at 11.45am.

Ken Eccles joined the meeting for agenda item 11 at 11:45am.

11. Assembly ID Passes

Ken Eccles outlined three options regarding issuing of passes with a recommendation to proceed with Option (1) which is to maintain the present position as agreed by the previous Commission in March 2016.

Agreed: SMG approved the paper for submission to the next Commission meeting subject to some minor amendments.

Ken Eccles left the meeting at 11.54am.

The meeting was suspended until 1.15pm

CORPORATE SUPPORT

Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 1.15pm.

12. Revised SMG/Commission meeting guidance

Robin Ramsey spoke to his paper seeking SMG approval on the revised SMG/Commission meeting guidance for uploading onto AsslSt.

Existing guidance has been updated to include advice on presenting to SMG and/or the Commission and attending SMG on a Director's behalf.

Agreed: SMG approved the revised guidance for publication.

13. Draft Commission Agenda 24 November 2016

Robin Ramsey tabled a draft agenda for the next Commission meeting on 24 November 2016. Proposed items include:

- Secretariat staff Pay Award
- Assembly ID Passes – Former Politicians
- Decade of Centenary Events to be marked during the Mandate
- Artefacts

DIRECTORS' UPDATES

14. Directors' Updates

SMG noted the Directorate and Corporate Support Unit updates.

15. Directorate Business Plans – quarterly update

Directors and Robin provided updates on their Directorate Business Plans as at 30 September 2016. The Business Plans position as at 31 December 2016 will be reviewed by SMG in January 2017.

16. AOB

Lesley Hogg will arrange a meeting with Directors to take forward the Corporate Strategy.

Lesley updated SMG on the recent Internal Communications Group (ICG) meeting.

17. Date of Next Meeting

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

The meeting ended at 2.26pm.