

# SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP (SMG)

**TUESDAY, 18 JULY 2017 at 9.30AM  
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

**APPROVED**

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

**In Attendance:** Frances Leneghan  
Rose Morwood  
Robin Ramsey  
Paula McClintock  
John Gibson  
Jonathan McMillen  
Rebecca Ellis

## **Opening/Review**

The meeting commenced at 9.32am. Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at the start.

### **1. Apologies**

No apologies were received.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Minutes of the previous meeting together with unrestricted papers were published on 11 July 2017.

*Please note change to agenda, items 5 and 6 taken before item 4.*

### **5. Political Update**

In light of the failure to form an Executive by 29 June 2017, Lesley Hogg met with Heads of Business (HoBs) and an e-mail was issued to all staff updating them on the political situation. It was agreed that

consideration would now be given to the provision of information sessions for staff in respect of redeployment opportunities.

Lesley Hogg stated that discussions would now commence with Trade Union Side (TUS) and Richard Stewart would be meeting HoBs regarding finalising numbers and grades of staff for redeployment.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to progress with delivering information sessions to staff in respect of redeployment opportunities.

## **6. Draft Commission Agenda**

SMG were content with the draft agenda. It was confirmed that the next meeting of the Commission will be around the end of September and that thought should be given to any further issues that need to be tabled rather than go out by written procedure. SMG agreed that Commission Members should receive a summarised version of the Management Accounts for June 2017 in order to provide them with an update on the financial position at the end of the first quarter.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to forward a copy of the June 2017 Management Accounts to Commission Members for information.

*Robin Ramsey left the meeting at 9.45am.*

## **4. SMG Action Points**

The outstanding action points were reviewed and progress was noted.

### **Draft Internal Communications Strategy**

Gareth McGrath advised that the deadline for SMG responses to the latest draft is 21 July, and that subsequently the revised draft will be issued to HoBs for comment. It is therefore likely to be September before the draft Strategy is brought back to SMG.

### **Updating AssISt**

Gareth McGrath advised that further discussion will take place with the Communications Office in relation to updating Members' information on AssISt.

**Action:** Gareth McGrath to liaise with the Web Manager in relation to updating Members' information on AssISt.

### **Management Accounts**

SMG agreed that all outstanding Business Cases in respect of capital expenditure would be presented to the August SMG meeting, otherwise

an explanation should be provided as to why they are not available and when they will be.

## **PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES**

### **7. Update on the Assembly Secretariat Exiting the EU Working Group**

Gareth McGrath gave a verbal update on the work of the Assembly Secretariat Exiting the EU Working Group. Tara Caul asked that the Examiner of Statutory Rules be recorded in the Membership of the Group.

Gareth said that an Inter-Parliamentary Scrutiny Group, comprising of the House of Commons, the House of Lords, the National Assembly for Wales, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Scottish Parliament, has been set up to share knowledge and information in relation to exiting the EU.

Tara Caul said that she was meeting with her counterparts from the other devolved institutions in relation to matters of mutual interest including the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill. The Legal Services Office is analysing the provisions of the Bill.

*Paula McClintock joined the meeting at 10.29am for agenda item 8.*

## **CORPORATE SERVICES**

### **8. Management Accounts – May 2017**

Paula McClintock presented the Management Accounts for the reporting period to 30 June 2017.

SMG noted the budget figures. It was agreed that in light of the current political situation that significant work needed to be undertaken in relation to the full-year forecast and, it was agreed that the Finance Office should work on the assumption of an Executive being in place for October.

Paula advised SMG that the overall variance of £500,000 for Admin Costs arose from the profiling of the rates bill. She advised that further work was required on profiling and the Finance Office will work with Budget Managers to resolve this issue.

Paula advised SMG that travel is on budget but that some work needs to be undertaken with Members in relation to payment for travel to Parliament Buildings.

**Action:** Finance Office to liaise with Budget Managers in relation to budget profiling.

**Action:** Finance Office to write to Members in relation to expenses for travel to Parliament Buildings.

In relation to Capital spend Paula advised SMG that work was ongoing and that HoBs had provided some additional comments. The Department of Finance (DoF) has not yet confirmed that the original budget of £890k had been provided. SMG agreed that prioritisation of capital would be necessary if the Assembly didn't receive its full capital allocation.

Lesley Hogg asked that Paula McClintock look at the capital bids.

**Action:** Paula McClintock to revisit the capital bids with HoBs and update them with the latest expenditure estimates.

Richard Stewart advised that DoF has sought input to the required funding for the Commission to November 2017. Also, DoF may undertake an ad hoc monitoring exercise in the absence of a more formal process of monitoring.

*Paula McClintock left the meeting at 10.55am.*

## **9. HR Management Information**

SMG noted that the Staff in Post (SiP) figure on 1 July was 330.9 against an agreed staff complement (including complement plus) of 351.7.

Richard Stewart provided SMG with an update on current recruitment competitions and said that competitions were being kept under review.

Richard said that going forward Human Resources (HR) will provide a more systematic way of reporting on redeployment which will include how many staff are redeployed, those staff due to take up opportunities and how many opportunities are identified.

*John Gibson joined the meeting at 11.15am for agenda item 10.*

## **10. Procurement Office Annual Activity Report**

John Gibson spoke to this paper. He said that generally there was more movement towards proactive procurement planning and that this is improving the quality of procurement. In operating the delegated model, staff now liaise with the Procurement Office but due to the current political situation, there had been a downturn in contact. The only concern identified was in relation to frameworks and a possible

over reliance on them and the need to continue to be careful that proper analysis is provided.

SMG discussed the details provided in relation to the 30 entries on the Decision Authorisation System (DAS) and noted that only 14 adhered to the Procurement Policy in terms of referral to the Procurement Office through the inclusion of the Head of Procurement as a stakeholder. It was agreed that further familiarisation briefings be provided reinforcing the Policy as a way of identifying failures in the process.

Lesley Hogg asked that the paper be reissued to include a paragraph in relation to what is being done to address this issue.

**Action:** John Gibson to update and re-issue paper to include a paragraph in relation to what was being done to ensure that the Procurement Office is fully involved in non-delegated procurements in accordance with the Procurement Policy.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to prepare a paper for the next SMG meeting on the review of procurements below £30k.

*John Gibson left the meeting at 11.41am.*

## **11. Effective Use of Corporate Support Systems**

Richard Stewart spoke to this paper and said that it was an attempt to start a conversation in relation to the use of corporate support systems. SMG considered what systems should be covered in the review, what the intended outcomes are and whether the review should include all business processes. SMG agreed that this should be an organisation wide programme, that as an initial step there should be an audit of all systems and processes, that there was a need to move quickly to a more formal process and that SMG should act as the Programme Board. It was also acknowledged that a successful Programme of this nature would require investment in staff time and financial resources.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to prepare a paper setting out a Programme Management approach for this project.

## **DIRECTORATE UPDATES**

### **12. Directors' Updates**

SMG noted the Directorate updates. It was noted that the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill had had its first reading in the House of Commons.

## **OTHER ITEMS**

### **13. Items Cleared by Correspondence**

Replacement of X-ray search equipment – Parliament Buildings  
Business Case

Issue of personal Protective Equipment – Stab Proof Vests – Usher  
Services Business Case

Stationery and IT Consumables Contract 2017 Business Case

*Jonathan McMillen and Rebecca Ellis joined the meeting at 12.25pm for agenda item 14.*

### **14. AOB**

Jonathan McMillen presented legal advice in relation to privacy and data protection.

*Jonathan McMillen and Rebecca Ellis left the meeting at 13.05pm.*

Lesley Hogg said this was the last SMG meeting that Stephen Welch would attend. She thanked him for the last 9 years dedicated service to the Assembly and wished him well in his new job.

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

The next meeting will be held on Friday, 25 August 2017 at 9.30am in Room 106.

The meeting ended at 13.10pm.