

# SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

MONDAY, 24 APRIL 2017 at 1.00PM  
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

**APPROVED**

**Present:** Lesley Hogg  
Tara Caul  
Brian Devlin  
Gareth McGrath  
Richard Stewart

**In Attendance:** James Gilsean  
Janet Hughes  
Robin Ramsey  
Paula McClintock  
Sinéad McDonnell  
David Johnston  
Maeve Donnelly

## Opening/Review

The meeting commenced at 1.07pm.

### 1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Stephen Welch. Brian Devlin deputised.

### 2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Slight revision to be made to the minutes of the meeting on 30 March 2017 prior to publishing.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to provide revised text.

### 4. SMG Action Points

The outstanding action points were reviewed and progress was noted.

*Robin Ramsey joined the meeting for agenda items 5 and 14.*

## 5. Political Update

SMG discussed the implications of the extended deadline for political talks to 29 June 2017. The Commission have been informed of the intention to end agency workers contracts and Temporary Promotions (TPs) by 30 April 2017.

**Agreed:** Cessation of agency workers contracts and temporary promotions at the end of April 2017 except where there is an ongoing business requirement.

**Action:** Human Resources (HR) to issue notification to agency workers and staff on temporary promotion and appropriate line managers.

Lesley Hogg updated SMG on discussions with other legislatures regarding opportunities for seconding Secretariat staff to them on a short term basis as a result of the extended political deadline. SMG agreed to discuss this further with Sinéad McDonnell when she joined the meeting for agenda item 7.

*Agenda item 14 taken before agenda item 6.*

## 14. Draft Commission Agendas

SMG reviewed three draft agendas aimed at prioritising Commission business and agreed that there were no items that necessitated a Commission meeting at this stage, but would keep this under review.

Lesley Hogg proposed issuing copies of the Good Relations Action Plan 2016/21 six-monthly update, the progress update on the Gender Action Plan 2016/18 and the Health and Safety Management Report to Commission members via correspondence for consideration and approval if necessary.

**Agreed:** SMG agreed to issue three papers to the Commission via correspondence.

**Action:** Corporate Support Unit to issue the Good Relations Action Plan 2016/21 six-monthly update, the progress update on the Gender Action Plan 2016/18 and the Health and Safety Management Report to Commission Members via correspondence.

*Robin Ramsey left the meeting at 1.48pm.*

## CORPORATE SERVICES

*Paula McClintock joined the meeting at 1.48 pm for agenda item 6.*

### 6. Management Accounts

Paula McClintock presented the year-end Management Accounts for the reporting period 2016/17.

Paula referred SMG to areas of under/over spend and highlighted that the main area of underspend was in relation to Members costs which has been impacted by the ongoing political situation.

Lesley Hogg commented on the excellent provisional outturn figure for 2016/17 which she said reflected the hard work and effort put in by staff throughout the financial year. Lesley thanked Paula for her efforts and asked her to feedback SMG's thanks to staff.

Paula provided SMG with an estimated capital expenditure figure and advised that the final figure which would be available by the end of the week was likely to be well within the main estimate figure.

*Paula McClintock left the meeting at 2.04pm.*

*Sinéad McDonnell joined the meeting at 2.04pm for agenda item 7.*

### 7. HR Management Information

SMG noted that the Staff in Post (SiP) figure on 1 April was 345.6 FTE against an agreed staff complement (including complement plus) of 351.7. The figure represents a decrease of 2.2 FTE from the March 2017 SiP figure.

Sinéad McDonnell provided an update on recruitment activity and sought approval from SMG to progress the proposed recruitment schedule which had been updated to reflect the decisions made at the SMG meeting on 30 March.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the proposed recruitment schedule.

Sinéad also provided SMG with statistics regarding employee relations cases managed by Human Resources in the six-month period ending 31 March 2017.

On the subject of agency workers and TP'd staff (see item 5), Sinéad sought approval on the draft communication to be issued and agreement on when this should be done.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the communication to issue to agency workers and TP'd staff and agreed the timeline for issue.

Lesley Hogg raised the issue discussed earlier in the meeting regarding the possible short term secondment of Secretariat staff to other legislatures and requested that Sinéad draft and issue, once approved, an 'Expression of Interest' email to all staff.

**Action:** HR to issue an 'Expression of Interest' to all staff in respect of short term secondments to other legislatures.

*Sinéad McDonnell left the meeting at 2.34pm.*

## **FACILITIES**

### **8. The use of PRINCE2 Project Management Methodology in the Northern Ireland Assembly**

Following a request from Richard Stewart, Brian Devlin prepared and presented this paper, providing a summary of the PRINCE2 method and how it should be consistently applied in Assembly projects.

Brian sought approval from SMG on the draft guidance and recommendations within the paper.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the guidance and recommendations subject to some minor amendments. The PRINCE2 Principles and Themes will be mandatory but the process itself will be at the discretion of each Project Board.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to amend the guidance as discussed and issue to Heads of Business (HoBs) for comment before it is finalised.

A further discussion took place regarding an audit recommendation to publish Post-Project Evaluations.

**Action:** Richard to consider this audit recommendation and advise SMG on the Assembly Commission's responsibilities before the guidance is finalised.

SMG thanked Brian for producing and presenting the comprehensive paper.

### **9. Business Case: Tablet PC Replacement**

Brian Devlin spoke to this paper, setting out the economic case for the replacement of the Acer tablet computers allocated to MLAs and some Secretariat staff.

The need to replace the tablet computers stems from their age. The majority are now more than 4 years old with expired warranties and have no residual value.

Brian outlined the five options considered in the business case and the recommendation to replace the current tablets with management delivered by in-house staff.

**Agreed:** SMG agreed with the recommendation in the business case to procure 190 new tablet PCs for all MLAs and selected Secretariat staff (including SARC Members) with the configuration and rollout of the devices managed by the in-house IS Office Service Desk team. SMG agreed to delay the purchase of replacement tablets due to the ongoing political situation.

SMG complimented Brian on a very comprehensive paper and suggested some minor amendments to the Business Case.

**Action:** Brian to update the Business Case with SMG amendments.

## **LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE SERVICES**

*David Johnston joined the meeting at 3.35pm for agenda item 10.*

### **10. Review of the Risk Management Strategy**

David Johnston confirmed that the Risk Management Strategy had been revised to incorporate process guidance.

SMG were asked to review and approve the contents of the revised Risk Management Strategy.

David acknowledged Tracey Wilson's help in designing and formatting the draft Strategy.

A discussion took place around the necessity for maintaining both Branch Risk Registers and Directorate Risk Registers and whether Directorate Risk Registers would suffice.

SMG approved the revised Risk Management Strategy subject to some minor amendments for tabling at the May 2017 Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee (SARC) meeting.

**Action:** David to amend the Strategy as per SMG comments and forward a copy to Internal Audit.

**Action:** David to raise the issue of the necessity for individual Branch Risk Registers with Internal Audit and advise SMG accordingly.

**Action:** Risk Management Strategy to be reviewed again in 2018.

*David Johnston left the meeting at 3.49pm.*

## PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

*Maeve Donnelly joined the meeting at 3.49pm for agenda item 11.*

### 11. Draft Internal Communications Strategy

Maeve Donnelly spoke to this paper.

Maeve presented a revised draft of the Internal Communications Strategy following previous SMG and Director level discussions.

SMG agreed minor amendments to some of the actions within the strategy and that they would further consider a proposed action regarding team development activities.

**Action:** Directors to provide suggestions to Maeve on how to address team development as part of the Strategy.

**Action:** Once updated, Gareth McGrath to issue a copy of the Strategy to HoBs for consideration.

*Maeve Donnelly left the meeting at 5.04pm.*

## CORPORATE SUPPORT

### 12. Performance v Directorate Business Plans (Q/E 31 March 2017)

Directors provided updates on their Directorate Business Plans (with James Gilsenan presenting the Corporate Support Unit update) as at 31 March 2017.

**Action:** Directors and Head of Corporate Support to provide final versions to the Corporate Support Unit by 28 April 2017.

James Gilsenan will provide final versions to the Commission at a later date.

### 13. 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 approve final sign off.

The Action Plan was most recently considered by SMG at its meeting in January 2017.

**Agreed:** SMG approved the Action Plan for sign off subject to one outstanding action being addressed directly.

**Action:** The final version of the Action Plan to be issued to all staff before the 2017 Staff Survey is issued in June 2017.

*Agenda item 14 taken after agenda item 5.*

## **DIRECTORATE UPDATES**

### **15. Directors' Updates**

SMG noted the Directorate and Corporate Support Unit updates.

## **OTHER ITEMS**

### **16. Items Cleared by Correspondence**

Corporate Risk Register.

### **17. AOB**

SMG noted the second reading of the Northern Ireland (Ministerial Appointments and Regional Rates) Bill was scheduled for that afternoon.

### **18. Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting to be agreed in due course.

The meeting ended at 6.00pm.