

SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP (SMG)

FRIDAY, 25 AUGUST 2017 at 9.30AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present: Lesley Hogg
Tara Caul
Gareth McGrath
Richard Stewart

In Attendance: Janet Hughes
Rose Morwood
Sinéad McDonnell
Louise Close
Peter McCallion
Brian Devlin
John Perry

Opening/Review

The meeting commenced at 9.38am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Stephen Welch.

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 9 August 2017.

4. SMG Action Points

The outstanding action points were reviewed and progress was noted.

Prince2 Project Management

Richard Stewart confirmed that the Project Management Policy would go live on AssISt shortly and that a Postmaster would be issued to staff. The Learning and Development Team are likely to source training for groups of staff with the intention to provide the training in Parliament Buildings, if possible.

Action: Directors to remind Heads of Business (HoBs) when this is available on AsslSt.

Revenue Generation Plan – Marketing Strategy

Revised paper to be presented at the September SMG meeting.

Management Accounts

Action: Richard Stewart to forward a copy of the July 2017 Management Accounts to Commission Members.

Please note change to agenda, item 5 (Political Update) taken after item 14.

CORPORATE SERVICES

6. Management Accounts – July 2017

Richard Stewart presented the Management Accounts for the reporting period to 31 July 2017.

SMG noted the updated forecast for income and expenditure for the 2017/18 year. Richard highlighted the level of underspend expected against the adjusted indicative budget as included in the Secretary of State's Written Statement issued in July 2017.

Richard also referred to the ongoing budget profiling exercise, the outcome of which will be reflected in next month's report to SMG.

Capital expenditure to date was discussed and SMG agreed that a separate meeting was required to review capital expenditure plans for the remainder of the financial year in order to inform the Department of Finance as early as possible of any capital underspend against budget.

Action: Richard Stewart to arrange a meeting with the Clerk/CE, Directors and relevant HoBs to review the position of capital projects within each Directorate, in early September ahead of the next SMG meeting.

SMG also noted the updated position in respect of business cases on the July Capital Report and agreed that further discussion on those cases that still required approval would form part of the meeting agreed earlier to review capital projects.

Action: Finance to liaise with business areas with regards updating the Capital Report before the meeting in early September.

Lesley Hogg asked Richard to pass on SMG's thanks to the Finance Team and HoBs for all of their hard work in respect of revising capital figures and budget re-profiling.

Sinéad McDonnell joined the meeting at 10.18am for agenda items 7 & 8.

7. HR Management Information

SMG noted that the Staff in Post (SiP) figure on 1 August was 330.7 which reflects a slight reduction since July due to changes to the hours worked for two members of staff.

Sinéad advised SMG that as at 1 August there were three agency staff assigned to the Assembly Secretariat.

An update in respect of redeployed staff was also provided. SMG noted that as at 1 August 2017, 20 staff had been physically redeployed to other public bodies with a further number of staff due to commence redeployments in September.

The potential to offer more redeployment opportunities for staff from within NICS departments is being addressed as Sinéad is meeting with the NICS Director of Resourcing to discuss how this might be structured going forward.

Gareth McGrath informed SMG that the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Inquiry team and the Department of Finance (DoF) had further staff opportunities for grades 6,7 and 8.

Action: Sinéad to contact the RHI inquiry team to confirm staffing requirements and then make arrangements for these to be issued to staff.

Sinéad also confirmed that returns were due shortly from HoBs on the number of staff required to meet continuing activities within their respective business areas. This information will be used to ultimately establish the number of staff that can be redeployed to other public bodies. Sinéad also informed SMG that the HR Office is currently working on establishing a reliable methodology to capture the number of staff who are redeployed to other public bodies but are still based in Parliament Buildings. This data will be presented to SMG from next month.

With regards mandatory redeployment, Sinéad advised SMG that work is progressing well with the development of a Mandatory Redeployment Policy and that consultation with Trade Union Side (TUS) was continuing. It is hoped that the policy will be agreed with TUS by the end of August 2017.

Finally, Sinéad provided SMG with an update on recruitment activity. Sinéad advised that Clerical Officer interviews are due to take place in September, that the internal refresh of the AG5 merit list had been completed and that the refresh of the merit lists for AG6 and AG7 was planned for September.

Lesley Hogg requested a meeting with Sinéad and Roisin Kelly to obtain an update on the Organisational Development (OD) Strategy.

Action: Sinéad to arrange a meeting to provide Lesley and Directors with an update on the OD Strategy.

Louise Close joined the meeting at 10.42am for agenda items 8, 9, 10 and 11.

PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

8. Amendment to the Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) Policy in support of Charity of the Year events

Sinéad McDonnell and Louise Close spoke to this paper seeking SMG approval to amendments to the 'Northern Ireland Assembly Commission's Employer Supported Volunteering Policy' to reflect volunteering time permitted in support of fundraising events for the Northern Ireland Assembly's Charity of the Year.

SMG noted that the Engagement Office had drafted a 'Procedure to Organise a Fundraising Event for the Northern Ireland Assembly Charity of the Year' to address the existing policy deficit.

Sinéad confirmed that HR had reviewed the procedure drafted by the Engagement Office together with the ESV Policy and it was their view that all leave arrangements for any volunteering event, including Charity of the Year events, should be referenced in the ESV Policy. Sinéad also confirmed that consideration had been given to the number of days which can be permitted for volunteering in respect of Charity of the Year events.

Following review, HR Office proposed an amendment to the ESV Policy to allow up to 3 days volunteering leave per year (pro rata for part time members of staff) to participate in an event in support of the Assembly's Charity of the Year with no requirement for this time to be matched by an equal amount of the staff member's own time.

Sinéad confirmed that TUS had been consulted with regards the time changes above and that they were content.

HR and SMG proposed some further general changes to the policy.

Agreed: SMG were content with the proposed amendments to the ESV Policy subject to the inclusion of the further changes agreed at the meeting.

Action: Sinéad to incorporate the changes agreed and issue a copy of the revised Policy to staff.

Sinéad McDonnell left the meeting at 10.59am.

The meeting was suspended until 11.06am.

9. The Assembly Trainers Network

Louise Close spoke to this paper seeking approval from SMG to develop an Assembly Trainers Network (ATN) which would offer Secretariat staff an opportunity to become recognised trainers.

Louise stated that the aim of the programme was to train a number of staff to deliver 'How the Assembly Works' training to external groups and consequently play a key role in increasing public engagement.

Louise confirmed that interested staff would be offered the opportunity to complete a two-day training course which would include a one-day presentation skills course and a one-day session on how to deliver the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation. On completion of the course they would be a recognised ATN Trainer.

SMG proposed some amendments to a couple of sections of the paper, namely:

- to make the training available to all staff who express an interest,
- to provide training on a phased basis,
- to remove the grade related target for trainers; and
- to remove the target that at least one member of the ATN comes from each Directorate.

SMG thanked Louise for all the hard work put into this initiative.

Agreed: SMG were content to proceed with the development of the ATN subject to the incorporation of SMG feedback into the implementation process.

Please note change to agenda, item 11 before item 10.

Peter McCallion joined the meeting at 11.30am for agenda item 11.

11. Development Programme for a new Assembly Engagement Strategy

Peter McCallion spoke to this paper seeking SMG approval on a development programme for a new Assembly Engagement Strategy 2017-22.

Peter outlined the approach to the new strategy and highlighted the objectives and the risks both internal and external.

Lesley Hogg requested that learnings from the recent Engagement Conference and particularly those regarding consultation, should be fed into the strategy development process.

Action: Peter and Louise to present a draft Engagement Strategy to SMG in Spring 2018.

Agreed: SMG were content to approve the approach outlined.

SMG thanked Peter for all the work done on this project to date.

Peter McCallion left the meeting at 11.50am.

10. Development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the People's Congress of Liaoning Province, China

Gareth McGrath spoke to this paper informing SMG of a proposal from the People's Congress of Liaoning Province, China for the Northern Ireland Assembly (NIA) to strengthen relations and cooperation and establish a regular exchange mechanism between the two institutions.

Agreed: SMG agreed that Gareth McGrath to engage with officials from the People's Congress of Liaoning Province on the development of an MoU.

Louise Close left the meeting at 12.11pm.

Please note change to agenda, item 13 taken before item 12.

FACILITIES

Brian Devlin and John Perry joined the meeting at 12.16pm for agenda item 13.

13. Business case: Review of CRT televisions 2017 (including Annunciator screens)

Brian Devlin spoke to this paper seeking approval from SMG on the business case to replace the current fleet of approximately 250 Cathode Ray Tube (CRT) televisions deployed throughout Parliament Buildings.

Brian provided SMG with background on the requirement and an assessment of need. SMG noted the scope of the project and two options were outlined together with costings and any associated risks.

The options considered by SMG were:

- Option 1 – Do nothing.
- Option 2 – Full equipment replacement.

Brian informed SMG that the life expectancy of the replacement TV screens would be approximately 5-10 years. SMG also requested that Brian consult with Directors and HoBs regarding the need for TV screens for Secretariat staff.

Agreed: SMG agreed with the recommendation to proceed with a full equipment replacement (i.e. Option 2).

Agreed: SMG also agreed that the Commission would be consulted on whether to proceed with the replacement at this time or whether it should be paused pending a return to normal operational business.

Action: Brian to consult with Directors and HoBs regarding the need for TV screens for Secretariat staff.

Brian Devlin and John Perry left the meeting at 12.38pm.

The meeting was suspended until 1.15pm.

PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES CONTINUED

12. AssISt Phase II – Update

Gareth McGrath provided SMG with an update on AssISt Phase II.

SMG noted the analytics gathered to date in relation to the most recent version of AssISt introduced in May 2017.

SMG discussed a current number of issues with AssISt at length. These included currency of content, structure, responsibility for uploading and maintaining content and broken links etc.

Action: Gareth to issue an email to all HoBs requesting that they review all content on their respective pages of AssISt for completeness and accuracy by the end of September 2017 and to highlight the importance of adding new content.

LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE SERVICES

14. Update on Planning for the Implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and consideration of the DPO role in the NIA Commission

Tara Caul spoke to this paper providing SMG with an update on planning for the implementation of the GDPR.

SMG noted the preparatory work done to date and Tara confirmed that the Data Protection Audit had been rolled out to all business areas and

that once all returns had been received a final report would be provided to SMG for consideration.

Tara recorded her thanks to all business areas for their assistance with this audit exercise.

Tara advised SMG that bespoke training had been developed on GDPR which would be rolled out to all Secretariat staff in September.

Tara confirmed that Governance Services and the Information Security Group (ISG) had reviewed five Assembly policies in light of GDPR.

Tara also informed SMG that there was a need now to look at third party arrangements and also the need to provide members with training and guidance.

Action: Tara to speak with the Assembly's Information Standards Officer about training and guidance for Members.

To manage the implementation of GDPR, Tara proposed setting up a Project Board comprising of Directors and a Project Team comprising of representatives from IS, HR, Finance and other business areas that process large volumes of personal data.

Agreed: SMG agreed the make-up of the Project Board and with the setting up of a Project Team.

SMG noted that one of the requirements of GDPR was to have a Data Protection Officer (DPO) in post.

Tara outlined the role of the DPO and provided SMG with two options for consideration in relation to the designation of a DPO in the Assembly Commission.

The meeting went into closed session until 2.44pm.

Action: Tara to make some amendments to the paper in respect of Option two.

Agreed: Tara to bring amended paper back to SMG in September.

OTHER

5. Political Update

Lesley Hogg advised SMG that a further round of talks was likely to commence soon.

CORPORATE SUPPORT

15. Draft Commission Agenda

SMG discussed and agreed the agenda items for the September Commission meeting.

Agenda to include the following items:

- Updated Staffing Paper
- Mandatory Redeployment Policy
- Support Services and other Contracts
- Expenditure on Capital Projects
- Clerk/CE Key Report

SMG agreed that Jim Brooks, chair of the Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee should be invited to the September Commission meeting.

DIRECTORATE UPDATES

16. Directors' Updates

SMG noted the Directorate updates.

OTHER ITEMS

17. AOB

NIA Charity of the Year 2017/18

In light of the ongoing political uncertainty, SMG discussed options with regards the Assembly Charity of the Year for 2017/18 and agreed that the best option would be to extend the term of the Cedar Foundation, the existing Assembly Charity for 2016/17 by a further 6 months from October 2017.

Visitors' Restaurant and Room 106

SMG discussed the possible change of use of the Visitors' Restaurant and a change of furniture in room 106.

18. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is to be confirmed.

The meeting ended at 4.04pm.