

SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

WEDNESDAY, 18 JANUARY 2017 at 9.30AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present: Lesley Hogg
Tara Caul
Paul Gill (deputised for Gareth McGrath until 1.09pm)
Gareth McGrath
Richard Stewart
Stephen Welch

In Attendance: James Gilsean
Janet Hughes
Paula McClintock
Sinéad McDonnell
Maria Bannon
Richard Anderson
David Johnston
Martina Dalton
Angela Kelly
Robin Ramsey

Opening/Review

The meeting commenced at 9.37am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr Gareth McGrath, Mr Paul Gill deputised.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Draft Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the meeting of 16 December 2016 were approved for publishing together with all unrestricted meeting papers.

4. Draft SMG Action Points

Progress on all action points was noted.

Robin Ramsey joined the meeting for agenda item 5.

5. Political Update

Lesley Hogg provided an update on recent political developments.

Stephen Welch confirmed that the Election Planning Group had reformed and was meeting on 19 January 2017 to plan for Dissolution. A lessons learnt report for the Reception Day event was written for the last mandate and business areas have been asked to provide any other lessons from their election planning experiences.

Action: Stephen Welch to provide Lesley with a 'Lessons Learnt Report' from the last Election Planning Group.

Richard Stewart advised SMG that the Members' Guidance during an Election Campaign was being updated.

Lesley suggested that a few briefing seminars should be offered to Members prior to Dissolution.

Action: Richard Stewart to co-ordinate the briefing sessions.

Lesley also highlighted the need to keep staff as informed as possible and asked Directors to set up business team meetings as soon as possible within their Directorates. Lesley also requested that Directors ensure that regular monthly team meetings take place within their business areas going forward.

Robin Ramsey left the meeting at 10.05am.

Paula McClintock joined the meeting for agenda item 6 at 10.05am.

CORPORATE SERVICES

6. Management Accounts

Paula McClintock presented the December 2016 monthly accounts.

Paula advised SMG that a significant piece of work would need to be undertaken by the Finance team in relation to Members' expenditure between now and the end of the financial year due to the recent Dissolution announcement.

The Finance team will also work closely with Heads of Business (HoBs) over the coming weeks to discuss the impact of Dissolution and the 2017 election on General Administrative Expenditure (GAE).

Richard Stewart confirmed that the 2016-17 budget will be based on the Main Estimate as the Budget Bill has not yet been approved.

Action: Paula to provide SMG with an update on available funds following meetings with HoBs.

Action: Paula to update SMG on conversation with DoF regarding Dissolution and the budget.

7. Independent Audit of the Financial Assistance to Political Parties 2015 Scheme (FAPP)

Paula spoke to this paper asking SMG to note the Assembly Commission paper on the Independent Audit Report of the FAPP Scheme and the recommendations therein.

The paper was issued to Commission Members on 17 January 2017 seeking approval of the revised guidance which includes recommendations made by Price Waterhouse Coopers following their last audit. Responses are due by close of play on 19 January 2017.

Paula noted that audit certificates for each party were issued demonstrating compliance with the terms of the FAPP Scheme. However, a small number of recommendations had been made which will further improve the quality of the guidance issued to Parties.

Action: Richard Stewart to issue guidance to MLAs once approval has been received from Commission Members.

Paula McClintock left the meeting at 10.39am.

Sinéad McDonnell joined the meeting for agenda items 8 and 9 at 10.39am.

8. HR Management Information

SMG noted that the Staff in Post (SiP) figure on 1 January 2017 was 348 against an agreed staff complement of 345.9 and a complement plus figure of 350.7.

Sinéad provided information on the number of agency workers currently assigned to the Assembly Secretariat together with details of temporary promotions (TPs) and deputising arrangements in place as at 1 January 2017. In light of the impending Dissolution of the Assembly, Directors were asked to review the agency workers' assignments and the TPs/deputising arrangements currently in place in their Directorate and to report back to the Head of HR by Monday 23 January 2017 as to whether they should continue.

Sinéad also provided an update on completed, live and upcoming competitions from the recruitment schedule. In light of the impending Dissolution of the Assembly, SMG was asked whether it still wished HR Office to proceed with the recruitment schedule. SMG confirmed that it was content to proceed at this time.

A broad discussion took place on the composition of recruitment panels and it was favoured by SMG that, where possible, the chair of a recruitment panel or at least one panel member should be two grades above the grade of post being recruited for.

Action: In light of the impending Dissolution of the Assembly, Directors to review the agency workers' assignments and the TPs/deputising arrangements currently in place in their Directorate and to report back to the Head of HR by Monday 23 January 2017 as to whether they should continue.

9. Appointments process for the NIA Commissioner for Standards

SMG noted the Assembly Commission paper on the appointments process for the Northern Ireland Assembly Commissioner for Standards. The current Commissioner for Standards' tenure ends in September 2017 and this appointments process aims to find a replacement.

In light of the Assembly Commission not meeting next week the paper was issued by correspondence to Commission Members on 17 January 2017 for consideration and response by close of play on 19 January 2017.

Action: James Gilson to issue a note to Commission Members clarifying one aspect of the tenure of office.

Following discussion, it was agreed that an HR Office representative would meet with the current Commissioner for Standards to discuss the job role and responsibilities in advance of the recruitment process.

Sinéad McDonnell left the meeting at 11.10am.

The meeting adjourned until 11.16am.

Maria Bannon joined the meeting for agenda item 10 at 11.16am.

10. Draft Language Policy

Maria Bannon spoke to this paper.

At its meeting of 29 September 2016, when considering the Good Relations Action Plan 2016-21, the Commission requested that a paper on a language policy be presented to it in January 2017.

Following consideration, SMG suggested some amendments to the draft policy and guidance and it was agreed that the paper should be ready for consideration by an incoming Commission.

Action: Maria Bannon to meet with Tara Caul to discuss revisions.

Maria Bannon left the meeting at 11.24am.

Richard Anderson joined the meeting for agenda item 11 at 11.24am.

FACILITIES

11. Health and Safety Management Report

Richard Anderson provided SMG with a detailed account of the Health and Safety Management Report for the calendar year ending 31 December 2016.

Richard confirmed that officials record and collate near misses and will brief colleagues on the CEDREC system that keeps officials apprised of their legal obligations regarding health and safety.

Stephen Welch thanked Richard for the positive work done by him and Emma Quigg, especially with limited resources.

Action: Richard to add a table to the next annual report logging the percentage uptake of mandatory online Health and Safety courses by Secretariat Staff.

Action: Richard to provide Stephen Welch with a monthly accident and near miss report which will feed into the Directorate monthly update to SMG.

Richard Anderson left the meeting at 11.44am.

David Johnston joined the meeting for agenda item 12 at 11.44am.

LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE

12. Review of the Risk Management Strategy and Process Guidance

David Johnston spoke to this paper seeking SMG's approval of the contents of both the Risk Management Strategy and the Risk Management Process Guidance.

Following consideration SMG felt that some minor amendments were needed to both the strategy and guidance.

Action: Directors to hold a separate meeting to review 'Risk Appetite' for specific areas and report back to David Johnston.

David Johnston left the meeting at 11.55am.

The meeting adjourned until 1.09pm.

Gareth McGrath joined the meeting in place of Paul Gill at 1.09pm.

Martina Dalton and Angela Kelly joined the meeting for agenda item 13 at 1.09pm.

13. Changes to the Data Protection Regime

Martina Dalton and Angela Kelly spoke to this paper asking SMG to consider the forthcoming changes arising from the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation in May 2018. The changes are significant and will need significant preparation and awareness training.

It was noted that Dissolution may allow some of the proposed actions to be brought forward and Martina will provide a quarterly update on progress to SMG.

Action: Directors to consider the network of Information Assets Owners within their Directorates to ensure this is adequate to support the forthcoming changes.

Martina Dalton and Angela Kelly left the meeting at 1.35pm.

Item 15 taken before item 14.

CORPORATE SUPPORT

15. Staff Survey 2014 Action Plan Update

Lesley Hogg spoke to this paper asking SMG to note the updates to the Draft Staff Survey 2014 Action Plan.

The Action Plan was most recently considered by SMG at its meeting in September 2016.

Action: James Gilsenan to amend the update as discussed and forward to the Internal Communications Group.

Action: James Gilsenan to bring a further update to SMG in March/April 2017.

Robin Ramsey joined the meeting a for agenda item 14 at 1.45pm.

14. Draft Commission Agenda

Robin asked SMG if there was any urgent business that needed cleared by the Commission due to the fact that next week's Commission meeting is now not taking place and future meetings are unlikely until after the elections.

Action: James Gilsenan to issue the Revenue Generation paper to Commission Members for approval.

Robin Ramsey left the meeting 2.00pm.

The meeting adjourned until 3.29pm.

Item 19 taken before item 16.

19. AOB

Events Planning

Stephen Welch spoke to this paper asking SMG to consider and approve the management of confirmed events and tours' bookings during dissolution/suspension.

Consideration was given to MLA sponsored Charity Events, MLA Sponsored Non-Charity Events and MLA Sponsored Dinners.

SMG agreed that these events should be honoured but changed to become Assembly official sponsored events as opposed to MLA sponsored events.

Action: Stephen Welch to review the list of upcoming MLA sponsored events and notify the organiser and main MLA sponsor that an event will now be sponsored by an Assembly official if it is to go ahead.

DIRECTORATE UPDATES

16. Quarterly Directorate Business Plan Updates

SMG noted the Directorate and Corporate Support Unit updates.

17. Directors' Updates

SMG noted the Directorate and Corporate Support Unit updates.

OTHER ITEMS

18. Items cleared by Correspondence

Corporate Risk Register

Noted

20. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 15 February 2017 at 9.30am in Room 106.

The meeting ended at 4.02pm.