

SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP (SMG)

**WEDNESDAY, 25 APRIL 2018 at 9.30AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

APPROVED

Present: Lesley Hogg
Tara Caul
Richard Stewart
Simon Burrowes (deputising for Gareth McGrath)

In Attendance: Janet Hughes
Rose Morwood
Paula McClintock
Karen Martin
Maria Bannon
Ken Eccles
Eddie Kelly
Alice McKelvey
Martina Dalton
Peter McCallion
Robin Ramsey

Opening/Review

The meeting commenced at 9.35am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr Gareth McGrath, Director of Parliamentary Services, who is currently on a short-term secondment with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Mr Simon Burrowes deputised.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 16 March 2018 together with unrestricted papers were published on 16 April 2018.

4. SMG Action Points

The outstanding action points were reviewed and progress was noted.

Action from July 2017 meeting:

‘Commence discussions with TUS regarding making employee photographs available on the Assembly’s Intranet’.

Tara Caul, Director of Legal Governance and Research Services, requested that this action be reviewed in line with agenda item 15, Policy for Managing and Processing Images.

Paula McClintock joined the meeting at 9.46am for agenda items 5, 6 and 7.

5. Management Accounts

Paula reported on the provisional outturn figures for income and expenditure for 2017/18. SMG noted that Finance Office were currently working on the year-end accounts and final outturn which they planned to have finalised within the next couple of weeks.

Paula referred SMG to areas of under/over spend and highlighted the main areas of underspend, namely, Secretariat salaries and Members costs which have continued to be impacted by the ongoing political situation.

Paula provided SMG with an estimated capital expenditure figure and advised on a provisional underspend.

SMG reviewed the latest Decision Authorisation System (DAS) report together with the year-end report. Paula advised SMG that the narrative provided by Heads of Business (HoBs) in relation to some of the over or underspends in the year-end report did not adequately explain the reason for any variances.

Action: Directors to liaise with their HoBS and review the year-end DAS report to ensure that reasonable explanations are recorded against any variances.

Paula informed SMG that the Finance Office had produced guidance in relation to DAS and suggested that this be circulated to relevant staff. SMG agreed that there needed to be better monitoring of contracts by contract managers, including their monitoring of DAS reports and requested in the first instance, that Finance Office issue the guidance to HoBs, dealing with any queries or questions they may have at their monthly meetings. Subject to these discussions an analysis would be made to establish if wider contract management training would be beneficial.

Action: Finance Office to issue DAS Guidance to HoBs and discuss at monthly monitoring meetings.

Lastly, Paula provided SMG with an update on the preparation and

timeline for the 2017/18 Resource Accounts and asked Directors to emphasise to their HoBs the importance of providing the Finance Office with the necessary returns on a timely basis.

Action: Directors to liaise with their HoBs to ensure that the deadlines for any returns requested by the Finance Office are met.

6. Draft Budget 2018/19

Lesley Hogg, Clerk/Chief Executive, explained that in order to give due consideration to the 2018/19 budget, a separate meeting was held with Directors and the Head of Finance so that it could be discussed in detail. Lesley Hogg also explained that earlier consultation had also taken place with HoBs.

Paula presented the 2018/19 draft budget which comprised of two sets of figures, i.e. (scenario 1) a budget which reflected reduced continuing activities and (scenario 2) a budget based on a fully operational Assembly.

SMG considered the draft budget for 2018/19 under both scenarios outlined and were content for these to be presented to the Commission at its May meeting.

Action: Richard Stewart to prepare a paper on the 2018/19 Draft Budget for the May Commission meeting.

SMG thanked Paula and her team for all their hard work throughout the year and appreciated the work involved in preparing the end of year accounts.

7. Review of Fraud Prevention and Anti-Bribery Policy and Response Plan

Paula presented a revised copy of the policy and response plan which had been updated to incorporate comments from Directors following review at the March SMG meeting.

Paula highlighted the main changes that had been made to both the policy and response plan.

SMG noted that Directors' comments regarding the Policy and Response Plan benefitting from greater clarification around the liaison with the PSNI for advice and support or to carry out an investigation had been considered in the revised drafts. Paula advised SMG on an agreed set of protocols, in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), that currently exists between Public Sector bodies and the PSNI in respect of the investigation and prosecution of suspected fraud cases.

SMG noted that this MoU is currently being reviewed by the PSNI and Paula advised SMG that she had received verbal confirmation that the Commission, as a Public Sector body, is covered by the new draft.

SMG sought clarification regarding the Commission's status in relation to the new draft MoU.

Action: Directors to feedback comments to Paula on the revised MoU which is currently being considered by the PSNI.

Action: Paula to seek clarification on the Commission's status in relation to the MoU between the Public Sector and the PSNI, consider any comments received from Directors and bring the MoU back to SMG for further consideration and approval at the May SMG meeting.

Following consideration, SMG were content to approve both the policy and response plan, subject to some further minor amendments and liaison with Internal Audit to seek clarification on a particular section within the policy.

Action: Paula to update the Policy and Response Plan as agreed by SMG and liaise with Internal Audit to confirm that a proposal detailed within the policy aligns with their processes.

Paula confirmed that once all the proposed changes had been made, the Policy and Response Plan would issue to all Secretariat staff along with a brief overview of the key changes. This would be followed up with on-line staff training rolled out by the end of June.

Paula McClintock left the meeting at 11.02am.

Karen Martin joined the meeting at 11.02am for agenda items 8 and 9.

8. HR Management Information

SMG noted that the Staff in Post (SiP) figure on 1 April 2018 (including agency and seconded staff) was 319.3, compared with 320.6 on 1 March 2018.

Karen updated SMG on temporary promotions, deputising arrangements and agency workers.

Karen also informed SMG that the recruitment exercise in relation to the IS Office AG5 competition had completed.

In relation to the current Recruitment Schedule, SMG asked that HR provide information on the expiry dates for merit lists.

Action: Karen to append details on the expiry dates for merit lists to future monthly HR Management Information reports for review by SMG.

Sickness absence information was provided and it was noted that for the period March 2017 to February 2018, the average days lost to sickness absence per FTE member of staff had increased from 8.9 (for the year ending February 2017) to 10.7 working days.

SMG noted that an email had issued recently to all staff in relation to Managing Attendance and Karen confirmed that HR would be carefully monitoring compliance with the policy and keeping SMG informed.

Action: Directors to reinforce the importance of complying with the Managing Attendance Policy with their staff at directorate meetings.

9. Joint Agreement between the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission and the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance

SMG considered and approved the revised Joint Agreement subject to some minor amendments.

Action: Karen to update the draft agreement with the changes as agreed by SMG and notify the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Project Team that a reference to 'adherence to Data Protection requirements including GDPR' has been added to the Agreed Principles section of the Agreement.

Karen Martin left the meeting at 11.43am.

Maria Bannon joined the meeting at 11.52am for agenda items 10 and 11.

10. Good Relations Action Plan 2016-2021: March 2018 six-monthly monitoring update

Maria presented a revised Good Relations Action Plan, six-monthly monitoring update, which had been updated to incorporate comments from Directors following review at the March SMG meeting.

SMG noted the changes and were content for the six-monthly update report to be presented to the Commission at its May meeting.

Going forward, Tara Caul requested that action 1.9, 'Legal Services Office continues to provide advice as necessary', be removed from the plan as it is no longer required.

Action: Richard Stewart to present the six-monthly monitoring update to the Commission at its May meeting.

Action: Maria to update the plan going forward to remove action 1.9.

11. Five-Year Review of Disability Action Plans 2013-2018

Maria presented a revised Five-Year Review of Disability Action Plans Report, which had been updated to incorporate comments from Directors following review at the March SMG meeting.

SMG noted the changes, and praised the Equality Unit on their efforts in producing such a clear, concise and well written report. SMG was content for the Report to be presented to the Commission at its May meeting.

Action: Richard Stewart to present the Five-Year Review of Disability Action Plans Report to the Commission at its May meeting.

Maria Bannon left the meeting at 12noon.

Ken Eccles joined the meeting at 12.04pm for agenda item 12.

12. Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (NIAC)

SMG reviewed the draft Service Level Agreement and agreed that it should be referred to the Commission for approval at its May meeting, as the value exceeded the Clerk/Chief Executive's delegated authority.

Tara Caul raised the issue of compliance with GDPR in relation to the SLA, however, Ken Eccles confirmed that this SLA does not deal with personal data and that GDPR is not applicable in this instance.

Action: Richard Stewart to present the draft SLA to the Commission for approval at its May meeting.

Ken Eccles left the meeting at 12.13pm.

LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND RESEARCH SERVICES

Eddie Kelly joined the meeting at 12.13pm for agenda item 13.

13. Draft Internal Audit Plan 2018/19

Eddie presented the draft Internal Audit Plan and Resource Plan for 2018/19.

Richard Stewart proposed splitting the audit of Members' expenses into an interim audit and final audit, with the interim audit taking place in

Quarter 4 of 2018/19. He explained that this would alleviate some of the pressure on the Finance Office in Quarter 1 of 2019/20 as the audit normally coincides with preparation of the Annual Resource Accounts.

Following discussion, SMG agreed the draft Internal Audit Plan in principle, subject to splitting the audit of Members' expenses and some other minor amendments.

Action: Eddie to update the draft Internal Audit Plan as agreed by SMG and issue to HoBs and the Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee (SARC).

In relation to the Resource Plan, it was agreed that Eddie would review staffing resources within Internal Audit with the Director of Legal, Governance and Research once the scope of the planned audits had been considered in more detail.

Eddie Kelly left the meeting at 12.43pm.

Alice McKelvey and Martina Dalton joined the meeting at 12.43pm for agenda item 14.

14. GDPR Progress Report

SMG noted the excellent progress made to date against the GDPR implementation plan and thanked the team for their hard work.

Action: Tara Caul to arrange for a further update to be presented to the SMG at its May meeting.

Alice McKelvey and Martina Dalton left the meeting at 12.57pm.

The meeting suspended at 12.57pm and resumed at 2.06pm.

Martina Dalton re-joined the meeting at 2.06pm for agenda item 15.

15. Policy for Managing and Processing Images

Martina outlined the draft Policy for Managing and Processing Images.

Following consideration of the draft policy, SMG agreed that a more detailed discussion was needed with other interested business areas.

Action: Lesley Hogg to arrange a meeting with Directors, HoBs and those staff members involved with managing and processing images, to discuss this issue in more detail.

Martina Dalton left the meeting at 2.47pm.

PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

Peter McCallion joined the meeting at 2.48pm for agenda item 16.

16. Progress on the development of a new Engagement Strategy

Peter outlined the progress to date in the development of a new Engagement Strategy and sought SMG's views on the draft Strategy for 2018-2023.

Following review of the draft strategy, five-year action plan and proposed next steps, SMG highlighted a number of comments and agreed to provide Peter with any further initial comments by correspondence. SMG also suggested that further discussions should take place with relevant staff to help inform and shape the strategy, prior to consultation with staff and that both the strategy and the action plan should be consulted upon. Lesley Hogg stated that as it was an engagement strategy, it should be an exemplar for staff consultation

Action: Revised drafts of the action plan and strategy, incorporating comments from Directors and discussions with relevant staff, to be presented at a future SMG meeting for further consideration, prior to consultation with staff.

Peter McCallion left the meeting at 3.29pm.

Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 3.31pm for agenda items 17, 18 and 19.

17. Political Update

SMG noted the possibility of the Secretary of State (SoS) meeting with Party Leaders at the end of the week.

CORPORATE SUPPORT

18. Draft Commission Agenda

SMG noted that the next Commission meeting would be held on 30 May and that a further meeting was being proposed for 3 July 2018.

SMG reviewed the draft Commission agendas for the next two Commission meetings.

Proposed items for the meeting on 30 May 2018 include:

- Clerk/CE Report
- Correspondence received
- Broadcasting and Related Services Contract Variation

- Proposed Amendment to the Assembly Commission's Events Policy
- Draft Budget 2018/19
- Payment of Assembly Allowance
- Salary Review Report
- Sexual Harassment review update
- Security Recommendations arising from the Internal Audit Review of Usher Services
- Five-year Review of Disability Action Plans 2013-2018
- Good Relations Action Plan 2016-2021: March 2018 six-monthly monitoring update
- Service Level Agreement between the PSNI and the NIAC
- Directorate Business Plans – End of year outturns

Proposed items for the following meeting on 3 July 2018:

- Clerk/CE Report
- Decade of Centenary Events to be marked during the Mandate
- Review of External Lighting Policy

DIRECTORATE UPDATES

19. Directorate Business Plans – End of year outturns

Directors provided updates on their Directorate Business Plans (with Robin Ramsey presenting the Corporate Support Unit update) as at 31 March 2018.

Robin advised SMG that an Exceptions Report was being prepared for the NIAC's Annual Report and Accounts and advised Directors that he would shortly be circulating a draft of the Report for their consideration and approval.

Action: Corporate Support Unit to prepare an Exceptions Report for inclusion in the NIAC's Annual Report and Accounts.

Robin Ramsey left the meeting at 4.10pm.

SMG noted Directorate activities to meet Strategic Objectives achieved during 2017/18 and were content with end of year outturns subject to some minor amendments.

Action: Directorate Business Plans – End of year outturns to be presented to the Commission at its May meeting.

20. Directors' Updates

SMG noted the Directorate updates and recorded their thanks to the GDPR Project Team for all the excellent work they have carried out to date and to the IS Office staff for their efficient and professional handling of the recent cyber incident.

OTHER ITEMS

21. Items cleared by correspondence

Corporate Risk Register.

22. AOB

Outstanding SMG Action re staff photographs

Action: Lesley Hogg to arrange a meeting to discuss the outstanding SMG action in relation to employee photographs on the Assembly's Intranet and its linkage with the draft Managing and Processing Images Policy, as discussed earlier in the meeting.

Tara Caul requested that SMG consider the question of whether the Commission should have insurance cover in place for unintentional data breaches.

Action: Tara Caul to meet with Richard Stewart to review whether the Commission should have insurance cover in place for unintentional data breaches along with the cost of cover and inform SMG accordingly.

Tara Caul also informed SMG that the Information Security Group was currently reviewing the Bring Your Own Device Policy in light of GDPR and that she would bring an updated policy to the next SMG meeting for consideration.

Richard Stewart advised that he had been in discussion with the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales to seek their interest in implementing a benchmarking model across the legislatures with a view to providing a contextual comparator and a desire to continuously improve what we do.

23. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is 22 May 2018.

The meeting ended at 4.51pm.