

SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP (SMG)

FRIDAY, 16 MARCH 2018 at 9.30AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present: Lesley Hogg
Tara Caul
Gareth McGrath
Richard Stewart

In Attendance: Frances Leneghan
Janet Hughes
Rose Morwood
Paula McClintock
Sinéad McDonnell
Maria Bannon
Jonathan McMillen
John Power
David Johnston
Shauna Mageean
Simon Burrowes

Opening/Review

The meeting commenced at 9.33am.

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 21 February 2018 together with unrestricted papers were published on 13 March 2018.

4. SMG Action Points

The outstanding action points were reviewed and progress was noted.

5. Political Update

SMG agreed that Lesley Hogg, Clerk/Chief Executive, update staff on various matters including the ongoing political situation and Corporate Strategy.

Action: Lesley Hogg to issue an email to staff regarding the ongoing political uncertainty.

Directors to ensure that Directorate meetings are being held, and that at these staff are provided with an opportunity to voice any concerns they may have.

Action: Directors to hold Directorate meetings and Lesley Hogg will attend if required.

Lesley Hogg highlighted that if the Secretary of State (SoS) makes any changes to the Assembly Members' (Salaries and Expenses) Determination, the Administrative Guide to Claiming Financial Support would need to be updated accordingly.

Action: Finance Office to commence work on updating the Administrative Guide and implement once any SoS changes have been confirmed.

Tara Caul, Director of Legal, Governance and Research Services informed SMG that the implementation of additional staffing arrangements for the Examiner of Statutory Rules has been put on hold pending clarity regarding the position in relation to Statutory Rules arising from the UK's exit from the EU. Adequate interim short term arrangements are in place.

CORPORATE SERVICES

Paula McClintock joined the meeting at 10:00am for agenda items 6, 7 and 8.

6. Management Accounts

Paula McClintock presented the monthly management accounts for February 2018 together with the final forecast for income and expenditure for the full year.

Paula highlighted areas of expected under/over spend against budget which have mainly arisen due to the ongoing political uncertainty.

Contingency monies held in the budget for reactive maintenance work was discussed and SMG agreed that more detailed explanations regarding movements needed to be provided for 2018/19.

Paula advised SMG of three requests for amounts totalling £22k to be added to the Capital Pan. SMG was content for these to be added. SMG reviewed the latest Decision Authorisation System (DAS) report and Paula confirmed that a year-end report would be provided to the April SMG meeting. SMG agreed that the report should include explanations from Heads of Business (HoBs) on any over or underspends for DAS records with completion dates up to 31 March 2018.

Action: Finance Office to liaise with HoBs, seeking explanations on over and underspends for DAS records with completion dates up to 31 March 2018 and update the end of year report accordingly.

Paula asked Directors to emphasise to their HoBs the importance of ensuring that all purchase orders are receipted on PECOS before the end of March. Paula advised SMG that she would follow this up by issuing an email to HoBs, (copying in Directors), detailing what is required from them and by when.

7. Annual Insurance Update

Paula McClintock provided SMG with an update regarding insurance claims for 2017/18 and highlighted a number of issues that had arisen during discussions with insurance brokers as part of the 2018/19 renewal process.

SMG considered the issues raised, namely:

- the loan of artworks from the Department of Finance (DoF) for display in Parliament Buildings;
- the on-going temporary redeployment of Assembly Commission staff to host organisations; and
- the use of the Senate Chamber by the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) Inquiry.

Following discussion of the above issues, SMG agreed with the proposal to increase the insurance cover to include artwork on loan from DoF. In relation to temporarily redeployed staff, SMG agreed that the Finance Office should work with HR to update and amend short-term loan agreements for redeployed staff to explicitly set out insurance arrangements. On the final issue regarding the use of the Senate Chamber by the RHI Inquiry, SMG agreed that the existing Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Assembly Commission and the RHI Inquiry, be reviewed and updated to ensure that liability is explicitly covered.

Action: Paula McClintock to arrange for the insurance cover to be updated to include artwork on loan from the DoF.

- Action:** HR to arrange for redeployed staff agreements to be updated to include insurance arrangements.
- Action:** Gareth McGrath to review and update the MoU between the Assembly Commission and the RHI Inquiry following liaison with Paula regarding the issue of liability.
- Action:** Paula to liaise with the Head of Legal Services to discuss a further matter in relation to the MoU.
- Action:** SMG also agreed that Paula should clarify with the insurance broker the position of cover for contractors, Party staff and NICS staff within Parliament Buildings.

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

SMG considered the revised Policy and Response Plan and Directors agreed to provide further comments to Paula for consideration.

- Action:** Paula to arrange a meeting with Tara Caul to discuss comments on the Policy and Response Plan from her business area.
- Action:** Directors to provide further comments to Paula for consideration.
- Action:** Paula to present a revised draft of the Policy and Response Plan following consideration of all comments from Directors at the next SMG meeting in April.

Paula McClintock left the meeting at 11.13am.

Sinéad McDonnell joined the meeting at 11.20am for agenda items 9 and 10.

9. HR Management Information

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

Sinéad updated SMG on agency workers, staff redeployments and recruitment.

Gareth McGrath, Director of Parliamentary Services, informed HR that following the end of the RHI Inquiry's public hearings there will be a number of Hansard staff seeking redeployment opportunities. SMG noted that it was important to seek redeployment opportunities to maintain staff skills as far as reasonably practicable.

- Action:** HR to liaise with Simon Burrowes regarding temporary redeployment opportunities for Hansard staff.

Sickness absence information was provided and it was noted that for the period February 2017 to January 2018, the average days lost to sickness absence per FTE member of staff has increased from 8.4 (for the year ending January 2017) to 10.5 working days. This is significantly above the absence benchmark of 7.5 working days. SMG expressed concern about the increasing level of absence and agreed to arrange a separate meeting to review sickness absence in more detail.

Action: Lesley Hogg to arrange a meeting with Directors and HR to discuss staff sickness absence.

Sinéad also sought direction from SMG regarding how to conduct staff performance management for the 2017/18 year because of staff redeployment and discussed proposals presented by Sinéad.

Tara Caul agreed with the proposal by HR Office to use a simplified manual form for all staff to record end of year performance management reviews and that feedback should be sought from host organisations for temporarily redeployed staff.

Richard Stewart and Gareth McGrath however preferred the continued use of iTrent to conclude the performance reporting for 2017/18.

Given that staff objectives and in-year reviews were already recorded on iTrent, Lesley Hogg proposed continuing to use iTrent for the 2017/18 reporting year as far as practicable but seeking feedback from host organisations for redeployed staff so that this work could be reflected in end of year reviews.

In light of the current Review of Performance Management that is currently being led by Sinéad, it was agreed that the iTrent performance management module should not be used to record 2018/19 objectives. Instead an alternative approach will be used to capture 2018/19 objectives until such time as the review is completed.

Agreed: SMG agreed to proceed with the view that iTrent would be used as far as practicable for end of year performance reviews and that feedback would be sought from host organisations for those staff that were redeployed and reflected in end of year reviews.

10. Equal Pay Review 2017

SMG noted the content of the Equal Pay Report and committed to conducting a further review in two years' time subject to consideration being given to the scope of the review being undertaken.

Agreed: SMG agreed that when reviewing the scope, an analysis of grades AG1 to AG3 would be carried out with consideration given on whether these grades should be included in future reviews.

Action: SMG to review the scope of the review in advance of it being undertaken in two years' time.

Sinéad McDonnell left the meeting at 12.10pm.

Change to agenda running order.

Maria Bannon joined the meeting at 12.10pm for agenda item 12.

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

Maria Bannon provided SMG with a progress update on the actions in the Good Relations Action Plan 2016-21 for the six-month reporting period.

SMG reviewed the progress made on the actions and were content with the changes proposed by Maria, however, they found it unacceptable that some of the actions had been marked as 'suspended due to the current political situation'.

Maria also highlighted that liaising with some staff who were redeployed was difficult due to the fact that redeployed staff had been advised that they could not communicate with staff in Parliament Buildings using host email accounts.

Action: Equality Unit to contact HoBs to discuss suspended actions and seek further clarity on the rationale for their suspension and then update the plan accordingly.

Action: Maria to issue a further draft of the action plan to SMG for approval prior to it being forwarded to the Commission.

Action: Tara Caul to review the guidance issued to redeployed staff regarding email communication with staff in Parliament Buildings.

Maria Bannon left the meeting at 12.35pm.

The meeting was suspended at 12.35pm and resumed at 2.20pm

LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND RESEARCH SERVICES

Jonathan McMillen joined the meeting at 2.20pm for agenda item 14.

14. Litigation Update

Jonathan McMillen provided SMG with a litigation update covering the last fifteen months.

Jonathan McMillen left the meeting at 2.27pm.

John Power joined the meeting at 2.27pm for agenda item 15.

15. Provision of Library Electronic Resources and Journals

John Power outlined three options for consideration by SMG in relation to the provision of Library electronic resources and journals with effect from 1 April 2018.

The options considered were:

- Option 1, Do nothing;
- Option 2, Continue to purchase Electronic Resources and Journals and apply DAS reference numbers for each individual subscription;
- Option 3, Continue purchasing Electronic Resources and Journals (Both print and online) under two single overarching DAS reference numbers.

Agreed: SMG considered the business cases and options outlined and agreed to proceed with Option 3 as recommended.

John Power left the meeting at 2.34pm.

David Johnston joined the meeting at 2.34pm for agenda items 16 and 17.

16. Review of Corporate Risk Register

SMG considered the latest draft of the Corporate Risk Register which will be reviewed by SMG again in June 2018 and by the Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee (SARC) in May 2018.

Agreed: SMG agreed the contents of the current draft Corporate Risk Register, subject to some minor amendments.

Action: David Johnston to amend the implementation date in Corporate Risk 1, Section C, 'Additional actions to manage the risk'.

Action: David to replace all references to 'HOIT' in Corporate Risks 2 and 3 with 'HOIS'.

Action: David to remove root causes, in relation to Fraud and Bribery and GDPR from Corporate Risk 3 and create a new Corporate Risk.

Action: David to include additional text at Corporate Risk 4, Root Cause 'Loss of key skills' and update the revised implementation date at Section C.

Action: David to liaise with the Examiner of Statutory Rules with regards revised wording for the first additional action recorded under section C of Corporate Risk 5 and remove the last two actions at the April review as these are now complete.

Action: David to move the additional action recorded at Corporate Risk 6 to 'Risk Response'.

17. Biannual Review of Directorate Risk Registers

SMG reviewed the latest Directorate Risk Registers for Parliamentary Services, Legal, Governance and Research Services and the Corporate Support Unit, which will be further reviewed by SARC in May 2018.

SMG also considered emerging Risk Clusters and whether any Directorate risks needed to be reflected in the Corporate Risk Register.

Agreed: SMG agreed that the current risk clusters are reflected in the Corporate Risk Register.

SMG noted the need to revise the Parliamentary Services Directorate Risk Register to reflect the reduction in business and staff within the directorate due to temporary redeployment, and agreed to review again at the next SMG meeting.

Richard Stewart, Director of Corporate Services, outlined the six risks that he had discussed with his HoBs for the restructured directorate and that he would present the Risk Register for the Corporate Services Directorate at the next SMG meeting as it was still in the process of being updated. He also confirmed that while the Risk Register for the restructured directorate was being updated to reflect the change in functions, risks were still being considered at his Directorate team meetings.

Action: Gareth McGrath and Richard Stewart to update their respective Directorate Risk Registers for review at the April SMG meeting.

David Johnston left the meeting at 3.27pm.

PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

Shauna Mageean joined the meeting at 3.27pm for agenda item 18.

18. Update on EU Exit

Shauna Mageean provided SMG with an update on the legislative outworking of the UK's exit from the EU.

Shauna Mageean left the meeting at 3.47pm.

Simon Burrowes joined the meeting at 3.47pm for agenda item 19.

19. Correspondence from Kellie Armstrong MLA proposing amendments to the Assembly Commission's Events Policy

SMG noted correspondence received by the Assembly Commission from Kellie Armstrong MLA regarding the Assembly Commission's Events Policy.

SMG considered three options outlined by Gareth McGrath and was content that a paper detailing these options be presented to the Commission at its next meeting.

Action: Gareth McGrath to prepare a paper for the next Commission meeting detailing proposed options for consideration.

Simon Burrowes left the meeting at 3.59pm.

Note change to agenda running order.

CORPORATE SERVICES continued

11. Five-year Review of Disability Action Plan 2013-2018

SMG reviewed the progress made within the five-year review period and suggested a number of changes to the report.

Action: Maria Bannon to issue a revised draft of the report for further review at the April SMG meeting prior to forwarding to the Commission.

13. Internal Audit Review of Usher Services

SMG noted two recommendations arising from the 2018 Internal Audit of Usher Services and agreed that they be considered by the Commission at its next meeting.

Action: Richard Stewart to prepare a paper for consideration by the Commission at its next meeting.

DIRECTORATE UPDATES

20. Directors' Updates

SMG noted the Directorate updates.

2018/19 Budget Profiling Exercise

Action: Richard Stewart asked SMG to encourage HoBs/Budget Managers to complete the profiling exercise by the requested deadline.

General Data Protection Regulations

Action: Tara Caul asked SMG to check that all relevant contracts and service-level agreements (SLA's) that they are responsible for are recorded on the SharePoint site.

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)

Tara Caul advised that the VoIP procurement strategy was still being finalised.

OTHER ITEMS

21. Items cleared by correspondence

SMG Register of Interests - updated 8 March 2018.

22. Commission papers cleared by meeting/correspondence

Paper on Pay Claim 2017 Decision.

Paper on the Development of a Youth Assembly.

23. AOB

Lesley Hogg advised Directors that the annual SMG Self-Evaluation was due to be carried out and that self-assessment forms would issue shortly.

Lesley Hogg also informed Directors that the following items would be considered at the April SMG meeting:

- Directorate Business Plan outturn reports;
- Delegation Framework and Approval Limits paper deferred from February's SMG meeting; and
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Readiness.

24. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is 25 April 2018.

The meeting ended at 4.47pm.