

# SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP (SMG)

WEDNESDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 2018 at 9.30AM  
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

## APPROVED

**Present:** Lesley Hogg  
Tara Caul  
Richard Stewart  
Brian Devlin (deputising for Gareth McGrath)

**In Attendance:** Frances Leneghan  
Janet Hughes  
Shauna Mageean  
Paula McClintock  
Karen Martin  
Maria Bannon  
John Gibson  
Simon Burrowes  
Robin Ramsey

### Opening/Review

The meeting commenced at 9.30am.

#### 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 Brian Devlin deputised.

#### 2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 3. Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 22 August 2018 together with unrestricted papers were published on 17 September 2018.

*Change to agenda running order, Shauna Mageean joined the meeting at 9.30am for agenda item 13.*

## 13. Update on EU Exit

Shauna provided SMG with an update on the legislative outworkings of the UK's exit from the EU covering the last six months.

Shauna advised SMG that the EU Exit Working Group continued to meet and that a scoping paper on potential procedural implications for the Assembly of the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 was being prepared. She also advised that the Brexit Response Plan was being updated to take account of what actions would be required to be undertaken by the various business areas to ensure readiness when normal Assembly business is resumed.

Shauna also advised SMG that the Brexit Brief, which is a live resource published on the Assembly's website had proved a very popular information source both internally and externally.

SMG thanked Shauna for a very comprehensive report and the excellent work carried out to date.

*Shauna Mageean left the meeting at 10.01am.*

*Agenda items 4 and 5 taken after agenda item 10.*

*Paula McClintock joined the meeting at 10.01am for agenda item 6.*

## CORPORATE SERVICES

### 6. Management Accounts

Paula presented the Management Accounts for August 2018.

SMG noted the current forecast position for each category of expenditure based on a full year of reduced continuing activities and the surrenders/bids made to date.

Paula advised SMG that the next formal monitoring return is due with the Department of Finance (DoF) on 4 October 2018 and that consideration would need to be given to how much of the forecasted surplus could be surrendered at this time.

**Action:** Paula to arrange a meeting with the Clerk/Chief Executive and Directors to discuss the funds required and any subsequent surrenders to be made at the October monitoring round and that the two additional capital bids would also be considered at that time.

Paula also informed SMG that following discussions with Heads of Business (HoBs) it was unlikely that all of the planned capital projects would be completed in 2018/19 and confirmed that she would update

SMG with the revised capital budget requirement once costs had been reviewed.

**Action:** Paula to meet with HoBs/Budget Managers to review forecast expenditure on the capital projects in the current capital plan and to establish if they are aware of any other potential capital expenditure that may be required before the end of this financial year.

**Action:** Paula to meet with Tara Caul, Director of Legal, Governance and Research Services to discuss this paper in more detail.

SMG reviewed the Decision Authorisation System (DAS) reports and Paula confirmed that HoBs had provided explanations of variances in estimated and actual expenditure.

*Paula McClintock left the meeting at 10.32am.*

*Karen Martin joined the meeting at 10.32am for agenda items 7 and 8.*

## **7. HR Management Information**

SMG noted that the Staff in Post (SiP) figure on 1 September 2018 (including agency and seconded staff) was 313.5 compared with 315.6 on 1 August 2018.

Karen confirmed that there had been no change to the temporary arrangements currently in place to cover maternity or long-term sickness, temporary promotion and/or deputising arrangements and agency workers since last reported to SMG in August.

SMG reviewed the current redeployment figures and Karen confirmed that temporary redeployments with end dates of 30 September 2018 would be extended until 31 December 2018. It was noted that there may be some minor changes to staffing requirements at Parliament Buildings following a full analysis of the recent continuing activities exercise, however, it is anticipated that this could be managed using the existing resources. Karen also informed SMG that as the RHI Oral Hearings would shortly be coming to an end, temporary redeployment planning was being undertaken in relation to Hansard resources currently facilitating the Inquiry.

With regards to retaining readiness in relation to recruitment, Karen advised SMG that relevant Heads of Business (HoBs) had been contacted and asked to supply information on recruitment competitions that will commence on the resumption of normal Assembly business.

SMG also noted that the issue in relation to the potential extension of existing merit lists had been discussed at a recent Employee Relations

Group (ERG) meeting and that the matter was with Trade Union Side (TUS) awaiting response.

*Frances Leneghan joined the meeting at 10.47am.*

Sickness absence information was provided and SMG noted that the average days lost per full-time equivalent (FTE) member of staff for the period September 2017 to August 2018 was 9.6, which was the same as for the period September 2016 to August 2017. Although the annual figure has showed no increase, SMG noted that it was still above the agreed benchmark of 7.5 average working days lost per annum per employee and still needed to be closely monitored.

## **8. Procedures regarding Members and Disability**

Karen presented a draft Commission paper seeking approval of additional measures to enable Members to declare a disability and seek advice and assistance in relation to adjustments related to a disability.

Following discussion, SMG approved the paper for presentation at the October Commission meeting subject to the inclusion of some additional information.

**Action:** Karen to update the draft Commission paper in line with SMG's comments.

*Karen Martin left the meeting at 11.00am.*

*Maria Bannon joined the meeting at 11.00am for agenda item 9.*

## **9. Equality and Good Relations Staff Survey**

SMG reviewed and approved the content of the Equality and Good Relations survey, subject to some minor amendments.

SMG also considered and agreed incentives for staff to participate in the survey.

**Action:** Maria to arrange for the survey to issue to all Secretariat staff at the earliest convenience and also appear on the corresponding Friday weekly AssISt update.

*Maria Bannon left the meeting at 11.20am.*

*Ken Eccles joined the meeting at 11.20am.*

## **10. New Parliament Buildings Security System (PBSS)**

SMG reviewed the outline business case for a new PBSS.

A further revised draft Commission paper proposing the acquisition of a new Internet Protocol (IP) based security management system for Parliament Buildings was presented to SMG and approved for Commission consideration at its October meeting.

*Ken Eccles left the meeting at 11.26am.*

#### **4. SMG Action Points**

The outstanding action points were reviewed and progress was noted.

#### **5. Political Update**

Lesley Hogg, Clerk/Chief Executive, informed SMG that since the last meeting in August the Secretary of State had announced that she intended to introduce legislation to facilitate restoration of the Assembly and that a reduction in MLAs' salaries would take effect in November.

*The meeting suspended at 11.36am and resumed at 12.50pm.*

#### **11. Secretariat Pay Policy**

SMG considered a draft paper to the Commission relating to its consideration of a future pay policy for Secretariat staff.

Following discussion, SMG approved the paper for presentation at the October Commission meeting subject to some minor amendments.

**Action:** Richard Stewart, Director of Corporate Services, to update the Commission paper in line with SMG's comments, for presentation at the October Commission meeting.

### **LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND RESEARCH SERVICES**

*John Gibson joined the meeting at 1.16pm for agenda item 12.*

#### **12. Review of Business Justifications and Cases**

John presented his findings on a review of compliance with the Assembly's Business Justifications and Business Cases Policy.

SMG had previously agreed that a sampled approach would be taken and John confirmed that 40 business justifications and 10 business cases had been reviewed.

John stated that the review demonstrated that the policy and process for business justifications is working well. However, the review of business cases suggests that stronger controls are required to ensure that all elements of the process are completed.

Discussion also took place around the recording and monitoring of business cases on DAS and whether it could be further developed to incorporate additional control mechanisms as recommended in the paper.

From his findings, John outlined six recommendations which were considered by SMG as follows:

1. That SMG reviews its commitment to this policy and its application via DAS.

*SMG confirmed that it was still committed to the need for a governance process for business justifications and business cases but noted that changes to the policy and delivery may be required.*

2. That SMG makes it clear to all staff, who manages and monitors the policy and DAS.

*SMG agreed to discuss this recommendation in more detail and clarify who manages and monitors the Business Justifications and Business Cases Policy. SMG also agreed to consider the links with project and contract management.*

3. That the policy and guidance is reviewed in association with the delivery of further training to users, to create a better understanding.

*SMG agreed that the Business Justifications and Business Cases Policy and guidance needed to be reviewed and that further consideration be given to how this is done. SMG also agreed to consider the roles and authority of the key stakeholder groups such as SMG, the Project Board and Head of Procurement.*

4. That stronger controls are put in place to ensure that all of the process steps including completion of the final business case, robust analysis of the achievement of the objectives and updating for final costs, are completed.

*SMG agreed that stronger controls needed to be put in place and agreed to consider how this would be done.*

5. That DAS is developed to allow records to be closed.

*SMG agreed that a process was required to close, reject or cancel DAS records but needed to give further consideration to how this could be best done as significant further development of DAS may not be efficient.*

6. That DAS is developed to facilitate the completion of lessons learned/Post Project Evaluations for both business justifications and cases.

*SMG agreed that a mechanism should be developed to complete lessons learned and Post Project Evaluations but needed to give further consideration as to how this could best be done as DAS may not be the most appropriate mechanism.*

**Action:** Clerk/Chief Executive's Office to arrange a meeting with the Clerk/Chief Executive and Directors to further consider the recommendations outlined.

*John Gibson left the meeting at 2.24pm.*

*Comfort break 2.24pm until 2.32pm.*

*Change in agenda running order, items 15 and 16 taken before item 14.*

## **PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES**

*Simon Burrowes joined the meeting at 2:32pm for agenda item 15.*

### **15. Review of the Events Policy**

Simon presented a draft Commission paper in relation to queries raised regarding the Assembly's Events Policy.

Following consideration SMG approved the paper for presentation at the October Commission meeting.

*Simon Burrowes left the meeting at 2.43pm.*

## **CORPORATE SUPPORT**

*Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 2.45pm for agenda item 16.*

### **16. Draft Commission Agenda**

SMG reviewed the draft Commission agenda for the next Commission meeting.

Proposed items for the meeting include:

- Clerk/Chief Executive Report
- Secretariat Pay Policy
- Administration of Determinations and the Management of Litigation
- Procedures regarding Members and Disability
- Broadcasting and Related Services Contract Variation
- Correspondence in relation to the Events Policy
- New Parliament Buildings Security System

- Update on Compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Politics Plus Annual Report

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for 11 October 2018 with a further meeting proposed for end November/early December.

*Robin Ramsey left the meeting at 3.11pm.*

## **PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES CONTINUED**

### **14. Broadcasting and Related Services Contract Variation**

SMG considered a draft Commission paper in relation to proposals for an extension to the existing contract variation and a further contract variation to the Broadcasting and Related Services contract.

SMG was content to recommend extension of the current variation but acknowledged that the proposal to further vary the contract would have to be considered by Legal Services.

Lesley Hogg advised SMG that following review by Legal Services, the draft paper would be re-circulated to SMG for final comments and approval prior to the October Commission meeting.

**Action:** Lesley to arrange for the draft Commission paper to be re-circulated to SMG for final comments and approval following review by Legal Services.

## **DIRECTORATE UPDATES**

### **17. Directors' Updates**

SMG noted the Directorate updates.

## **OTHER ITEMS**

### **18. AOB**

There was no other business.

### **19. Date of next meeting – 24 October 2018**

The date of the next meeting is Wednesday, 24 October 2018 at 9.30am in Room 106.

## **20. Proposals for Agenda Items for Next Meeting**

- Diversity Champions Network
- Good Relations Action Plan Update
- Gender Action Plan Update
- Effective use of Corporate Support Systems: PID
- Quarterly Review of Corporate Risk Register
- Biannual Review of Directorate Risk Registers
- Review of under £5k Delegated Procurements
- Information Security Group Annual Report and Self-Assessment
- Bribery and Fraud Risk Assessment
- Filming Location Agreement
- Data Breach Report
- Sustainable Development Office Annual Environmental Management Report

*The meeting ended at 4.19pm.*