

# **SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP (SMG)**

**TUESDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2018 at 9.30AM  
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

**APPROVED**

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

**In Attendance:** Frances Leneghan  
Janet Hughes  
Robin Ramsey  
Paula McClintock  
Karen Martin  
Christine Watts  
Martina Dalton

## **Opening/Review**

The meeting commenced at 9.33am.

### **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 24 October 2018 together with unrestricted papers were published on 19 November 2018.

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

The outstanding action points were reviewed and progress was noted.

*Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 9.45am for agenda items 5 and 6.*

## **5. Political Update**

Lesley Hogg, Clerk/Chief Executive, advised that following the publication of the draft EU Withdrawal Agreement developments would be monitored over the coming weeks.

## **CORPORATE SUPPORT**

### **6. Draft Commission Agenda**

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

Proposed items for the meeting include:

- Chairperson's Business
- Matters Arising
- Clerk/Chief Executive's Report
- Secretariat Pay Policy
- Draft Corporate Plan 2018/19
- Display of Assembly Artefacts
- Commission's Relationship with Politics Plus
- Proposed Membership of Diversity Champions Programme
- Principles for Review of Events Policy

SMG agreed that a paragraph should be added in the Clerk/Chief Executive Report reaffirming the 3 principles of Retaining Readiness, Maximising Use of Public Resources and Supporting and Motivating staff which continue to guide all decisions taken by officials and advice brought to the Commission.

The date of the next Commission has yet to be agreed.

### **7. Approval of draft Corporate Plan 2018/19 and next steps**

Robin Ramsey presented a paper on the draft Corporate Plan 2018/19 for approval and highlighted a further comment provided by Paul Gill.

Robin expressed thanks to Karen Jardine and Heads of Business (HoBs) for their hard work and co-operation in the development of the plan.

Following consideration SMG approved the draft Corporate Plan 2018/19 subject to a potential minor amendment and consideration of the issues raised by Paul Gill and agreed that it should be presented to the Commission for approval.

**Action:** Robin Ramsey to discuss Paul Gill's comment with him in further detail.

**Action:** Robin Ramsey to seek approval for the Draft Corporate Plan 2018/19 at the next Commission meeting.

*Robin Ramsey left the meeting at 10.11am.*

*Paula McClintock joined the meeting at 10.12am for agenda item 8.*

## **CORPORATE SERVICES**

### **8. Management Accounts**

Paula McClintock presented the Management Accounts for October 2018.

Paula reminded SMG that the figures were prepared based on the assumption that there will not be a return to full Assembly business during the remaining months of this reporting period. However, for the Department of Finance (DoF) October monitoring return it was assumed that there would be a resumption of business on 1 January 2019.

SMG noted a forecast outturn for 2018/19 of £34.621m, Paula confirmed that this is £1.605m below the opening budget as approved by SMG, and £1.785m less than the amount presented to DoF in the October Monitoring Round. SMG further noted the Capital plan is £236k which is £546K less than the opening budget and £127K less than the amount presented to DoF in the October Monitoring Round.

Paula advised that the last set of Finance reports would be provided to HoBs before the next monitoring round return due the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in December.

SMG agreed to meet separately before the final monitoring return is sent to DoF.

**Action:** Paula to arrange a meeting with the Clerk/Chief Executive and Directors to discuss the latest available figures in advance of the submission of the December monitoring return.

Paula informed SMG of a bid of £35k in relation to the Support Services contract due to reduced activity in Parliament Buildings. Following discussion SMG agreed that a review of the Support Services contract should be commenced and a paper brought to SMG.

**Action:** Support Services Contract Manager to prepare a paper with input from Legal Services for consideration by SMG in February 2019 in relation to the position regarding service

delivery, value for money and options for variation of the Support Services Contract.

Paula advised that there is an expectation by DoF that we produce a draft budget by Christmas for the 2019-20 financial year. HoBs will now be asked to consider and estimate GAE and Capital requirements under two scenarios: a continuing period of no normal Assembly business and a return to full Assembly business from 1 April 2019. SMG will then need to review and agree the indicative figures. HoBs will be asked to give this exercise urgent attention once it commences.

Paula confirmed that a paper regarding the potential tax liabilities arising from the recent HMRC inspection will be presented to SMG at its next meeting if a response has been received from HMRC to some follow-up queries.

**Action:** Paula to present a paper regarding potential tax liabilities arising from the recent HMRC inspection to SMG at its December meeting subject to responses being received from HMRC to follow-up queries.

*Paula McClintock left the meeting at 10.49am.*

*Karen Martin joined the meeting at 10.49am for agenda items 9, 10 and 11.*

## **9. HR Management Information**

SMG noted the Staff in Post (SiP) figure on 1 November (including agency and seconded staff) was 314.4 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) against a staff Complement of 344.9 FTE.

Karen Martin confirmed that there had been no change in relation to temporary arrangements currently in place since last month's report to SMG. Lesley Hogg suggested that the information currently provided in Appendices 2 and 3 to the Management Information paper could be amalgamated into one table.

SMG noted that as at 5 November arrangements for the temporary redeployment of 22 Hansard staff have been put in place with 2 others awaiting signed paperwork being returned. Karen advised that there had been a slight increase in the number of staff awaiting redeployment as a result of staff returning to work from maternity/sick leave.

Richard Stewart, Director of Corporate Services, advised that the redeployment table would be updated to reflect the number of staff required for continuing Commission activities as discussed by SMG and HoBs on 16 November 2018.

In relation to recruitment, SMG noted that the merit lists had been extended for six months.

Sickness absence information was provided and it was noted that for the period November 2017 to October 2018, the average days lost to sickness absence per FTE member of staff was 9.2 which was a slight reduction compared with the period November 2016 to October 2017 figure of 9.6 days.

Karen referred to the research which had been undertaken by the Human Resources Office in relation to comparative information on sickness absence levels within the private sector and the conclusion that available data was not comparable with the rates calculated for the Assembly Commission. Lesley asked if NISRA figures for the NICS could be obtained and reported to SMG.

**Action:** HR to amalgamate current appendices 2 and 3 into one document.

**Action:** HR to provide SMG with NISRA figures on NICS sickness absence statistics if available.

## **10. Results of Health & Wellbeing Survey**

SMG noted the analysis of the Health and Wellbeing survey and considered the key findings of research carried out in relation to initiatives being taken forward in other public sector bodies.

Karen Martin advised that the findings of the survey will be used to help develop a new Health and Wellbeing Action Plan for 2019-2021

SMG was fully supportive of looking at ways to support employee health and wellbeing in the workplace and asked HR to develop more detailed proposals based on its discussion.

**Action:** HR to arrange a further meeting with Clerk/Chief Executive and Directors to consider the more detailed proposals once developed.

## **11. Standards of Conduct Policy: Political Activities**

Karen Martin presented a paper in relation to the Standards of Conduct Policy relating to political activities and sought SMG's views on the options presented.

Following discussion SMG agreed Option 3 as presented in the paper and that a paper should be prepared for presentation to a future meeting of the Commission.

**Action:** HR Office to prepare a paper for presentation at the next Commission meeting.

*Karen Martin left the meeting at 12 noon.*

*Comfort break until 12.06pm.*

*Christine Watts joined the meeting at 12.06pm for agenda item 12.*

## **12. Sustainable Development Office (SDO) Annual Environmental Management Report**

Christine Watts presented the annual Management Review of Environmental Management Systems (EMS) for 2017/18 which was noted by SMG.

SMG considered the recommendation to review the Sustainable Development Strategy but asked that it be re-considered to clearly define the scope of the Strategy and to ensure consistency with the new draft Corporate Strategy. It was agreed that the revised Strategy document should be presented to the March SMG meeting. SMG also agreed that the review of the EMS should make reference to key legal obligations.

SMG considered and was content for the SDO to proceed with the proposed initiatives for the 2018/19 Continuous Improvement Plan but requested that new initiatives were clearly communicated to staff prior to their introduction.

Performance against targets for the 3 years to 31 March 2018 was noted and proposed 3-year targets to be met by 2021 were considered. Following discussion, SMG requested additional statistics in relation to the achievement of targets over the last two years together with a rationale for the proposed targets and key initiatives on how to meet the proposed new targets. This additional information to be presented with the revised Strategy document at the March SMG meeting.

**Action:** Christine to revise the Sustainable Development Strategy document as discussed and present to the March SMG meeting.

**Action:** Christine to present additional statistics in relation to the achievement of targets over the last two years together with a rationale for the proposed targets and key initiatives on how to meet the proposed new targets to the March SMG meeting.

*Christine Watts left the meeting at 1pm.*

*Meeting adjourned at 1pm until 1.50pm.*

*Please note change to agenda running order.*

*Martina Dalton joined the meeting at 1.50pm for agenda items 16 and 17.*

## LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND RESEARCH SERVICES

### 16. Review of Information Management Systems

Martina Dalton presented a paper on a review of Information Management Systems and informed SMG that the objective of the review was to conduct a scoping exercise of information management systems in the public and private sector market place, identifying best practice and the most innovative systems available.

SMG considered the Terms of Reference (ToR) for a review and agreed in principle with the approach but requested some amendments to the ToR.

SMG further requested that lessons learned in relation to recent system reviews be forwarded to the Information Standards Officer by Richard Stewart for consideration.

**Action:** Martina to update the ToR and re-circulate to SMG for final approval.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to forward lessons learned to Martina.

### 17. Information Assurance Policy Review

Martina Dalton presented a paper in relation to a review of the Information Assurance Policy.

SMG considered three issues in relation to the review i.e. recent revisions to the Information Assurance Policy approved by the Information Security Group, the recent practice of treating as 'Assembly Restricted' certain information and draft guidance on processing personal contact details for official purposes.

Following discussion, SMG agreed to some revisions to the policy and was content with the draft guidance on processing personal contact details for official purposes.

SMG affirmed that business areas should consider the appropriate protective markings classification for material and noted that an "Addressee Only" classification was available. It was also agreed that further clarification would be included in the Information Assurance Policy for the "Addressee Only" category.

**Action:** Martina to update the policy and re-circulate to SMG for final approval.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to feedback the availability of an "Addressee Only" classification in the Information Assurance Policy to relevant business areas and that

business areas are responsible for determining the appropriate protective markings classification.

*Martina Dalton left the meeting at 3.34pm.*

## **15. Delegated Procurement Review**

Lesley Hogg explained that she had asked for further contextual information to be included in the paper and that as a result it had been deferred to the December SMG meeting.

## **PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES**

### **18. Members Survey 2016-17 Action Plan – 6 monthly update (November 2018)**

SMG noted the 6 monthly update on the implementation of the Members Survey 2016/17 Action Plan and agreed that as the majority of ongoing actions have been paused due to the current political circumstances an annual update would be provided to the Commission following the May 2019 update to SMG.

### **19. Draft Commission paper on the background to the Commission's Relationship with Politics Plus**

Paper deferred to December SMG meeting.

## **CORPORATE SERVICES CONTINUED**

### **13. Proposed Membership of Diversity Champions Programme**

SMG considered and was content with the revisions made to this paper since presentation at the last SMG meeting but asked that information be included to clarify that membership of the programme would not have any direct impact on items discussed in the Chamber by Assembly Members.

SMG agreed that a paper be developed for presentation at the next Commission meeting reflecting the proposal in the SMG paper.

**Action:** Richard Stewart to prepare a paper for presentation at the next Commission meeting.

## **14. Systems Review Project Mandate**

Richard Stewart spoke to this paper seeking SMG's approval to set up the project. He said a project of this nature will require effort and resilience and will need to be planned and implemented properly, the project will look to change how the Secretariat does things hopefully for the better.

Richard highlighted the need to identify a suitable person to act as Project Manager.

Lesley Hogg stated that she believed that SMG had already previously confirmed its commitment to the project when it considered papers on the subject in February and July 2018 and that we needed to get on with commencing the project.

Following discussion SMG considered the Project Mandate for the Systems Review Project and agreed to proceed with the project subject to reference being made in the Project Mandate for the need for integration/liaison with other ongoing projects, particularly the Review of Information Management Systems.

## **DIRECTORATE UPDATES**

### **20. Directors' Updates**

SMG noted the Directorate updates.

## **OTHER ITEMS**

### **21. AOB**

A Staff Return Event has been arranged for 28 November 2018 to coincide with the lighting of the Assembly tree.

### **22. Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting is Monday, 17 December 2018 at 9.30am in Room 106.

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

- HMRC Employer's Compliance Review
- Members' Travel
- Accessibility Guidance and Checklist
- Bribery and Fraud Risk Assessment
- Delegated Procurement Review

- Corporate Risk Register
- Draft Commission paper on Secretariat Pay Policy (dependant on date of next Commission meeting)
- Draft Commission paper on Display of Artefacts (dependant on date of next Commission meeting)
- Draft Commission paper on the background to the Commission's Relationship with Politics Plus (dependant on date of next Commission meeting)
- Principles for Review of Events Policy

*The meeting ended at 4.33pm.*