

SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP (SMG)

WEDNESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2018 at 9.30AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present: Lesley Hogg
Tara Caul
Gareth McGrath
Richard Stewart

In Attendance: Frances Leneghan
Janet Hughes
Robin Ramsey
Paula McClintock
Karen Martin
Ken Eccles
Richard Anderson
John Power

Opening/Review

The meeting commenced at 9.34am.

Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at the start.

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 18 January 2018 together with unrestricted papers were published on 7 February 2018.

Please note change to agenda running order, agenda item 4 taken after item 15.

5. Political Update

SMG discussed the Secretary of State's recent statement and potential impact on Assembly business.

It was agreed that a paragraph would be included in the Clerk/Chief Executive's Report to the Commission seeking confirmation of the planning assumptions regarding the Commission's principle of retaining readiness.

Action: Richard Stewart to provide a paragraph for inclusion in the Clerk/Chief Executive's Report to the Commission in relation to the planning assumptions regarding the Commission's principle of retaining readiness.

CORPORATE SUPPORT

6. Draft Commission Agenda

SMG discussed the agenda items for the next Commission meeting which is now due to be held on 5 March as opposed to the previously proposed date of 7 March 2018.

Agenda to include the following items:

- Clerk/CE Key Report;
- Pay Claim 2017;
- Portraits Update; and
- Youth Assembly.

SMG also discussed the Financial Assistance for Political Parties (FAPP) Scheme 2016 and agreed that a reminder should issue to parties, in advance of the audit of expenditure for 2017/18 that will be carried out by independent, external auditors.

Action: Richard Stewart to issue a reminder to parties, in receipt of funding under the FAPP Scheme, seeking confirmation that all expenditure has been incurred solely for the authorised purpose and also include a brief update in the Clerk/Chief Executive's Report.

7. Portraits Update

Robin Ramsey updated SMG on progress in relation to the commissioning of portraits of the former deputy First Minister and two former Speakers, since discussion at the last Commission meeting on 31 January 2018.

SMG also considered a recommendation in relation to where in Parliament Buildings portraits should be displayed and were content for this to be referred to the Commission for approval.

Action: Mr Ramsey to prepare a Portraits Update paper for the March Commission meeting.

Robin Ramsey left the meeting at 10.33am.

CORPORATE SERVICES

Paula McClintock joined the meeting at 10.33am for agenda item 8.

8. Management Accounts

Paula McClintock presented the Management Accounts for the reporting period 31 January 2018.

SMG noted the monthly management accounts together with the updated forecast for income and expenditure for 2017/18. Paula highlighted the level of underspend expected against the budget as updated in the Department of Finance's (DoF's) December Monitoring round.

SMG was content with the additional columns added to the Capital Plan Report capturing any changes to the estimated expenditure since the last report and found this helpful.

Paula advised SMG of two projects that had been removed from the Capital Report and reclassified as General Administrative Expenditure (GAE).

Richard Stewart provided an update on capital expenditure in relation to two x-ray machines and advised SMG that following recent contact with the supplier it was anticipated that all four machines would be delivered by the end of this financial year.

With regards DAS (Decision Authorisation System) reporting, Paula confirmed that feedback received from Directors on the format of the report, following the last SMG meeting, had been considered and, where possible in the timeframe since the last meeting, incorporated in the report presented.

Paula advised SMG that further adjustments, including comparisons to original approved date and expenditure limits, will require further development work on DAS which to date has not been scheduled by the IS Office. Lesley reminded Directors that they would be required to approve many of the variations on DAS and that when doing so they should ensure that variations are properly justified and that they are not retrospective.

Paula highlighted an issue regarding the integrity of the data recorded on DAS and SMG agreed that this should be reviewed.

Action: Directors to liaise with their Heads of Business (HoBs) to ensure that the split between GAE and capital

expenditure is accurately recorded on DAS, that variations on DAS are completed where necessary and that explanations requested by Finance on for e.g. overspends and date over-runs should be provided on a timely basis.

SMG agreed that IS resources should be allocated to conclude the DAS report and that priorities to be redesignated if necessary.

SMG thanked Paula and her team for all their efforts with developing DAS reporting to date.

Paula McClintock left the meeting at 11.16am.

Karen Martin joined the meeting at 11.16am for agenda items 9 and 10.

9. HR Management Information

SMG noted that the Staff in Post (SiP) figure on 1 February 2018 (including agency and seconded staff) was 321.6 which represents a slight reduction on last month due to changes in staff working patterns.

Karen Martin updated SMG on deputising arrangements, agency workers and staff redeployments.

Karen referred SMG to the additional information recorded on the Recruitment Schedule in relation to external job specific recruitment, as requested at the last SMG meeting. SMG were content with the additional information provided.

SMG noted the sickness absence information for the period January 2017 to December 2017 and found the new format of presenting sick absence information to reflect absence over a three-year period very helpful.

A discussion in relation to the completion of attendance records took place and SMG requested that the HR Office issue a reminder to all staff (especially those who are temporarily redeployed) on the importance of completing their attendance records and also to highlight to line managers their responsibility with regards to reviewing these records on a monthly basis.

Action: HR to issue an email to all staff regarding completion of attendance records.

10. Draft Mental Health Policy

Karen Martin presented this paper advising SMG that formal consultation on the policy and associated guidance with Trade Union Side (TUS) and staff had completed.

SMG noted that following consultation a number of minor amendments were made to the draft policy and TUS were content with the revised draft.

Tara Caul had some comments on the draft policy in relation to 'reasonable adjustments' which SMG agreed could be dealt with at a separate meeting with Karen Martin.

Action: Tara Caul to arrange a meeting with Karen Martin to discuss 'reasonable adjustments'.

Ms Caul also asked if some further consideration could be given to the phrasing of some of the questions within the Line Managers' Guide.

Action: Karen Martin to review the questions within the Line Managers' Guide as discussed and re-issue the draft policy and guidance to SMG via correspondence for final approval.

SMG were content in principle with the draft policy and guidance subject to some minor amendments and thanked Karen and her team for developing this.

Karen Martin left the meeting at 11.58am.

Ken Eccles joined the meeting at 12 noon for agenda item 11.

11. New Security Management System (SMS) – Parliament Buildings

Ken Eccles updated SMG on the current position regarding the proposed new SMS, since it was last discussed at SMG in June 2017.

SMG noted that some initial scoping and market sounding had been carried out in relation to a new SMS and agreed that the business case should be further developed and brought to a future SMG meeting for consideration.

Action: Ken Eccles to prepare the outline business case for consideration by SMG at a future meeting.

Ken Eccles left the meeting at 12.12pm.

Richard Anderson joined the meeting at 12.12pm for agenda item 12.

12. Health & Safety Management Report 2017

Richard Anderson presented the Health and Safety Management Report providing SMG with a detailed account on accidents and other health and safety issues, training and improvements made during the year ending 31 December 2017.

SMG noted that Display Screen Equipment (DSE) training would be rolled out to all Secretariat staff within the next few weeks.

Lesley Hogg enquired whether there were any actions arising from accidents or near misses that were outstanding. Richard confirmed that these were all being closed promptly.

SMG thanked Richard and his team on the production of a very comprehensive report.

Richard Anderson left the meeting at 12.28pm.

John Power joined the meeting at 12.28pm.

LEGAL, GOVERNANCE AND RESEARCH SERVICES

15. Renewal of the Concordat between Land and Property Services and the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission (“the Commission”) in relation to a Geographical Information (“GI”) Consultant

John Power presented this paper, seeking approval from SMG to renew the existing Concordat between Land and Property Services (LPS) and the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission in relation to the use of LPS Geographic Information (GI) and the secondment of a member of LPS staff to RalSe.

John outlined four options regarding provision of the service going forward, namely:

- i. Discontinue the service;
- ii. Contract out or contract in on an ad hoc basis;
- iii. Provide the service in-house using Assembly staff; or
- iv. Provide the service in-house using LPS GI seconded member of staff.

Following discussion, SMG were content to support the recommendation as detailed in the paper and approved the request to renew the Concordat (option iv).

John Power left the meeting at 12.34pm.

4. SMG Action Points

The outstanding action points were reviewed and progress was noted.

On reviewing the actions, Lesley Hogg requested that estimated completion dates are recorded in the ‘Status’ column as opposed to simply stating that the action is ‘Ongoing’.

13. Delegation Framework and Approval Limits

Following requests from two Directors, SMG agreed to defer discussion on this paper to the March SMG meeting.

14. Effective use of Corporate Support Systems: Lessons Learned

Richard Stewart presented this paper outlining the scope of the Corporate Systems Review Project.

SMG were content with the scope as set out in the paper and outlined by Mr Stewart, other than requesting that a contract database be included within the Tendering and Contracting element.

The meeting was suspended at 1.14pm and resumed at 2.03pm.

14. Effective use of Corporate Support Systems: Lessons Learned (Continued)

SMG noted and discussed in detail the seven lessons learned and a number of others which they highlighted from three previous system implementations which will be carried forward into the systems review project.

SMG agreed that as well as carrying out a full review of existing processes and work practices that consideration also needed to be given to outputs.

Mr Stewart confirmed that the 'Lessons Learned' would be set out in detail for the Systems Review Project Board and Project Team.

Gareth McGrath emphasised the need for effective project management and Lesley Hogg stated that good communication with staff from the outset was essential.

Gareth McGrath left the meeting at 2.26pm.

Tara Caul stated that any new corporate support system should include a contract database capable of providing a centralised list of all contracts held by the Assembly Commission to assist with reporting.

SMG agreed that 'Reporting' should be also be added to the list of 'Lessons Learned'.

Action: Richard Stewart to update the list of 'Lessons Learned' to include 'Reporting'.

Tara Caul also suggested building a Data Protection Impact Assessment into the project.

Action: Richard Stewart to prepare the outline business case and present at a future SMG meeting.

SMG also discussed the Post Project Evaluations (PPE) that were appended to the SMG paper and highlighted the importance of managing the end stages of projects (including project closure).

Action: Mr Stewart to produce an 'Issues Log' for items that are currently unresolved from the three projects considered as part of the paper. This log will record the specific issues and also how and when they were resolved.

SMG also discussed the wider issue of learning lessons from previous projects and Mr Stewart advised that an action to develop a central log of lessons learned was still outstanding. He undertook to progress this.

Action: Richard Stewart to develop a lessons learned registry for all applicable projects and make this available to HoBs.

DIRECTORATE UPDATES

16. Directors' Updates

SMG noted the Directorate updates.

Employee Relations Group (ERG)

Richard Stewart updated SMG on the recent ERG meeting.

General Data Protection Regulation

Tara Caul asked that Directors and their HoBs give priority to requirements in respect of GDPR and any requests received from the project team, ensuring that adequate staffing resources are available to undertake all work required.

Benchmarking

Lesley Hogg mentioned that she had had initial discussions with her counterparts in Scotland and Wales regarding the possibility of benchmarking and that Richard Stewart would be having more detailed discussions to consider the possibility of this.

17. Items cleared by correspondence

Corporate Risk Register

18. Commission papers cleared by meeting/correspondence

Commissioning of Portraits of former Officeholders.

OTHER ITEMS

19. AOB

There was no other business.

20. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is 16 March 2018.

The meeting ended at 3.41pm.