

SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP (SMG)

**TUESDAY, 16 APRIL 2019 at 9.30AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

APPROVED

Present: Lesley Hogg
Tara Caul
Gareth McGrath
Richard Stewart

In Attendance: Frances Leneghan
Rose Morwood
Robin Ramsey
Karen Martin
David Lynn
Ashleigh Mitford
Eddie Kelly
Simon Burrowes

Opening/Review

The meeting commenced at 9.30am.

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 26 March 2019 together with unrestricted papers were published on 11 April 2019.

4. SMG Action Points

The outstanding action points were reviewed and progress and estimated completion dates noted.

5. Political Update

Lesley Hogg, Clerk/Chief Executive advised SMG that the Speaker had received a letter from the Secretary of State (SoS) seeking the assistance of Assembly Commission officials to provide procedural information to parties during the Northern Ireland Office's continuing contacts with them.

Lesley noted that while the Speaker was content that the request was consistent with the normal procedural advice provided to Members and parties he had consulted Assembly Commission Members at the recent Assembly Commission meeting and that Members were content for Assembly Commission officials to provide procedural information as required by Members and parties but were clear that it was not the role of those officials to be involved in the detail of any negotiations.

Lesley also highlighted that, as per the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Act 2018, the Secretary of State had made regulations to extend the deadline for the formation of an Executive from 26 March 2019 to 25 August 2019. The SoS had also announced that she had spoken to the five main parties and the Irish Government and that a short, focused set of roundtable talks to restore devolution were likely to begin in May after the council elections.

CORPORATE SUPPORT UNIT

6. Draft Commission Agenda

SMG reviewed the draft agenda for the next Commission meeting scheduled for June 2019.

Proposed items for the meeting include:

- Clerk/Chief Executive's Report
- Further paper on Parliamentary Travel for Members
- Options paper on the Development of a Youth Assembly
- Northern Ireland Assembly Complaints Policy and Procedure 2019 Report
- Members Survey 2016-17 Action Plan – Annual Update
- Future delivery of Member development and support for the Assembly Women's Caucus
- Options paper re Members' expenses technical fix issue
- Number of Statutory Rules Laid
- Broadcasting Contract and Variations
- Broadcasting Refresh
- Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee (SARC) Annual Report 2018/19.

Action: Head of Finance to liaise with the Head of Legal Services regarding requesting legal advice in relation to the Options paper re Members' expenses technical fix issue.

CORPORATE SERVICES

Karen Martin joined the meeting at 9.58am for agenda items 7 and 8.

7. HR Management Information

SMG noted the Staff in Post (SiP) figure at 1 April (including agency and seconded staff) was 308.7 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) against an agreed staff Complement of 349.4 FTE (including Complement plus).

Karen Martin advised that there had been no change to temporary promotion/deputising arrangements currently in place since last month's report to SMG.

Karen also advised that there had been no change to agency workers assignments since last reported, and that there are currently 2 agency workers in the Finance Office and 1 in the IS Office.

Karen provided updated information on temporary redeployment. SMG thanked HR for issuing the information to them prior to the meeting as this was very helpful. Lesley raised an issue regarding some of the numbers in the Corporate Services Directorate. Richard agreed to review the figures in relation to the Finance Office and to update the continuing activities records to reflect the work being undertaken on the Corporate Systems Review Project.

Action: Richard Stewart to review the Corporate Services Directorate redeployment figures and update the continuing activities records in line with the work undertaken on the Corporate Systems Review Project.

SMG asked that a further column be added to the report to show any increases in continuing activities and that Gareth McGrath's return from secondment is also reflected in the figures.

Karen advised SMG that the IS Scholarship recruitment process was currently taking place.

Karen also advised SMG that a paper would be presented at a future SMG meeting on Recruitment Competitions and Merit Lists. Lesley suggested a separate meeting to allow adequate time for discussion of this issue before the next SMG meeting. Karen to draft a paper and arrange a meeting.

SMG were advised that sickness absence was on a downward trend and stable at the moment.

Action: Karen Martin to draft a paper on Recruitment Competitions and Merit Lists and arrange a meeting with the Clerk/Chief Executive and Directors to discuss, prior to presenting at a future SMG meeting.

8. Review of the Staff Hours at Work Policy

Karen Martin presented a draft Review of the Staff Hours at Work Policy. Karen advised that there was no change to the content of the policy, only the emphasis of the policy.

Following consideration, SMG approved the revised Staff Hours at Work Policy as agreed with Trade Union Side (TUS). Arrangements are to be made for the policy to be communicated to all staff and published in the Staff Handbook on AsslSt. Lesley also requested that the name of the author of the Data Protection Impact Assessment is noted on the document.

Action: HR Office to arrange for the revised Staff Hours at Work Policy to be communicated to all staff and published in the Staff Handbook on AsslSt.

Action: Karen Martin to update the Data Protection Impact Assessment with the name of the author.

Karen Martin left the meeting at 10.30am.

David Lynn joined the meeting at 10.31am for agenda item 9.

9. Roof Project Closure: Lessons Learned

David Lynn presented the Roof Project Closure: Lessons Learned paper.

SMG noted the lessons that can be learned from the Roof Project which will inform wider, project-based activities. SMG also made a number of comments in relation to costs, timeline, approval of scope and budget and subsequent variations and also asked that the author of the report be stated on the Evaluation Report.

It was agreed that it would be helpful for David to discuss the lessons learned with Heads of Business (HoBs) and particularly the teams involved in the delivery of other projects such as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), Broadcasting and the new Parliament Buildings Security System (PBSS).

Lesley commended David for an excellent Evaluation Report and asked that when the minor amendments reflecting SMG's discussion were made to the Report, that the final version be re-issued to SMG.

Action: David Lynn to update the paper in line with the amendments discussed at the meeting and re-circulate to SMG.

Action: David Lynn to convene a meeting with HoBs and VoIP, Broadcasting and new PBSS project teams to share the lessons learned from the roof project.

David Lynn left the meeting at 11:25am.

Meeting suspended until 11.37am.

Ashleigh Mitford joined the meeting at 11.37am for agenda item 10.

10. Annual Review of the Risk Management Strategy

Ashleigh Mitford presented the Annual Review of the Risk Management Strategy.

Ashleigh advised that the Risk Management Strategy was last reviewed at SMG on 22 May 2018 and that Directors had met on 19 February 2019 for initial discussions in relation to the 2019 review.

SMG reviewed and approved the revisions to the Risk Management Strategy and agreed that it would be presented at the June meeting of the Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee (SARC). It was also agreed that the annual Risk Management Self-Assessment would take place in the autumn to coincide with the Fraud and Bribery Self-Assessment Checklists and the Bribery Risk Assessment and Action Plan.

Ashleigh Mitford left the meeting at 11.42am.

Eddie Kelly joined the meeting at 11.43am for agenda item 11.

11. Draft Internal Audit Plan 2019/20

Eddie Kelly presented the Draft Internal Audit Plan for 2019/20, and advised that the targets in the Plan would be challenging but achievable.

Richard noted that the annual review of Members' expenses covered some of the administrative aspects and that it would be important to ensure that there was no duplication in the proposed audit of the administration of Members' expenses. Richard also enquired about the scope of the procurement audit but Eddie explained that this was still to be established.

SMG approved the Internal Audit Plan for 2019/20 which will be presented to SARC on 15 May 2019. SMG also asked that the final version of the Plan be shared with HoBs.

Action: Eddie Kelly to issue a copy of the final Internal Audit Plan for 2019/20 to HoBs.

Eddie Kelly left the meeting at 11.51am.

Brian Devlin joined the meeting at 11.52am.

PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES

12. Business Case for Renewal of the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement 2019

Brian Devlin presented the Business Case for Renewal of the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement 2019.

Brian highlighted the 3 possible options to SMG to ensure that the Assembly Commission was correctly licensed for the software it requires to meet its business objectives.

Brian explained that Option 3 which was recommended, bundled a number of products together into a suite and provided access to a range of applications not currently utilised by the Assembly Commission. He stated that if this option was approved the IS Office would conduct further research and analysis during year 1 of the contract to determine if and how it might leverage the Assembly Commission's rights to those applications.

SMG noted that while the Assembly Commission is not obliged to use the Crown Commercial Services framework to source Microsoft software licences, that its use guarantees the maximum discounts available to UK public sector customers

Richard confirmed that a 25% increase had been incorporated in the budget for 2019/20 in anticipation of the increase in Enterprise licence costs.

Following discussion, SMG considered and approved Option 3 in the business case – to renew the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement using optimised renewal (M365).

Brian Devlin left the meeting at 12.14pm.

13. Northern Ireland Assembly Complaints Policy and Procedure 2019 Report

SMG noted that there were no complaints received under the Complaints Policy during the period September 2018 to March 2019.

Simon Burrowes joined the meeting at 12:35pm for agenda item 14.

14. Internal Communications Group (ICG) Update

Simon Burrowes presented an update on the work of the Internal Communications Group (ICG) and outlined ICG's terms of reference (ToR) and the group's membership.

He stated that although ICG had formally met infrequently during 2018, it had done quite a bit of work and had now looked ahead to what it might focus on in 2019/20. Simon said that the group believed that its ToR remained appropriate and that he had sought further representation from Parliamentary Services as that directorate was slightly underrepresented.

SMG noted the update on the work of ICG and endorsed the ToR and membership.

Simon advised that ICG had reviewed the 2018/19 draft Internal Communications Strategy, that the group felt the strategy should be updated and rolled forward into 2019/20, and that ICG was now working on this. He also stated that ICG had discussed the next staff survey and had indicated that it would be happy to oversee such a survey in 2019. Simon also highlighted that Kevin Pelan, Acting Head of Communications, would be discussing the draft Internal Communications Officer job description with ICG.

SMG was content for ICG to lead on this and agreed that it should take place later in the year (i.e. Autumn), but that the survey content should be reviewed to ensure that it was relevant and, insofar as was possible, reflected staff views and experiences relating to the past two years.

Simon Burrowes left the meeting at 12.46pm.

Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 12:48pm.

DIRECTORATE UPDATES

15. Directors' Updates

SMG noted the Directorate updates.

Corporate Support

Robin Ramsey, Adviser to the Speaker/Head of Corporate Support, advised that discussions were ongoing in relation to the Staff Return Event and that a 'hold the date' notification would be issued to staff in the next few weeks. Robin also updated SMG on the arrangements in relation to the imminent visit by the Congressional delegation of the United States of America.

Legal, Governance and Research Services

Tara advised SMG that she was continuing to take steps to fill the vacant AG5 Procurement Manager post temporarily.

Parliamentary Services

Gareth McGrath, Director of Parliamentary Services, advised that initial discussions had commenced on the development of a programme of work to replace all the broadcasting equipment and supporting infrastructure in Parliament Buildings.

SMG noted that a full Plenary rehearsal, to ensure continuing readiness to resume normal business and additionally to check all broadcasting systems, had been scheduled for June.

OTHER ITEMS

16. Items cleared by separate meeting

Commission paper on the Support Services Contract.

Commission paper on the Principles to Guide Future Investment and Delivery Structures for Member Development and Support for the Northern Ireland Assembly Women's Caucus.

17. AOB

There was no other business.

18. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 22 May 2019 at 9.30am.

19. Proposals for Agenda Items for Next Meeting

- Further paper on Parliamentary Travel for Members
- Staff Travel Policy
- Recruitment Competitions and Merit Lists
- Review of Recruitment & Selection and Induction
- Support Services Contract
- Members Survey 2016-17 Action Plan – 6 Monthly Update (May 2019)

The meeting ended at 1.55pm.