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Mr Shane McAteer
Clerk
Committee for Finance and Personnel
Room 419
Parliament Buildings
Stormont

Our Ref: CFP207/11-15

6 March 2013

Dear Shane,

Flexible Working Enquiry

The purpose of this minute is to provide the information in relation to the areas highlighted in your letter of 18th February.

1. **Paragraph 11 of the DFP briefing paper states that there is no official record kept of the amount of flexible working, in terms of IT, undertaken by NICS staff. How might this be addressed going forward and to inform the development and monitoring of any future strategy?**

It is extremely difficult from a central IT perspective to monitor the level to which flexible or agile working is being utilised. Indicators that we have at our disposal include the number of:

a. Laptops issued;
b. Secure Remote Access facilities activated;
c. BlackBerry devices that have been issued;
d. Video Units added to our infrastructure; and
e. Times the Video Units are used.

However, none of these indicators will disclose how much value is generated from the use of these facilities. This can only be accounted for at a business level. For example, a business case must be produced in order for a member of staff to acquire a laptop. It is therefore up to the business to ensure that benefits are being generated from the use of that device.

From an HR perspective, records are held on such things as the number of part time workers, term time working etc. However, no records are currently held on locally organised and agreed flexible working arrangements, which tend to be very ad hoc in nature. Implementing some form of monitoring

regime could have a detrimental effect on the uptake of flexible and agile working.

2.   Do staff have to meet certain criteria to have access to the Zones and, if so, is this too restrictive (i.e. paragraph 19 of the briefing paper refers to "workers who travel extensively or who work remotely")?

Staff do normally have to meet certain criteria regarding mobile working and travelling as part of their standard duties and I refer to guidance on the f@w intranet Business Zone http://online.nigov.net/index/reform/future-at-work/business_zones.htm.

Issues which would need to be considered in extending the zones for wider usage include:

- Control of access - numbers wishing to use the facilities against what is available;
- Security access - concerns of how staff are to enter the buildings - current NICS access security protocols demand that staff have authorisation for buildings only as required;
- IT equipment available - only mobile staff have laptops - PC equipment needs to be widely supplied;
- Overall management of zone resources (day to day running of the zones, booking in, security of resources, housekeeping etc); and
- Current size of business zones and resources available would limit numbers.

3.   What efforts has DFP made to examine how other public sector organisations have addressed these issues and implemented effective homeworking policies?

During the development of the NICS Working from Home policy, consultation took place with organisations developing their own home working policies, including Belfast City Council. In light of the comments made by the Committee and the concerns raised at a senior level within DFP, DFP's Corporate Human Resources will contact Belfast City Council and liaise with other public sector organisations to see how they have addressed these issues and the extent to which they have implemented effective homeworking policies.

4.   In addition to some of the references at paragraph 9 of the DFP briefing paper, are there any other employees in Departments or arms-length-bodies that could be termed as "Mobile Workers" (those who do not require a designated office desk)? What type of technology is in place for these workers in their day to day work?

This information is not recorded anywhere centrally and would need to be requested from departments. Such information in relation to Arms Length Bodies would be obtained through the relevant sponsor departments.

Services which enable mobile and agile working such as Secure Remote Access and Instant Messaging are available to all NICS Departments and Agencies [1]who take services from IT Assist. Certain field workers in departments such as DARD, DOE, DRD and DFP may have alternative mobile devices such as 'ruggedised' laptops. However, these devices are secured and managed in the same manner as standard devices and have the same connectivity capabilities.

Arms length bodies who do not take ICT services from IT Assist may have alternative technologies in use, but those technologies and the security thereof would be a matter for the Arms Length Bodies and the relevant sponsoring department.

5.   **In relation to the use of video-conferencing and realised savings, has any assessment been made of the potential savings that could be achieved across the NICS if video-conferencing was fully utilised as a substitute for staff travelling to and from meetings both within and outside this jurisdiction?**

The procurement and therefore justification of video conferencing units is the responsibility of the department and business area which makes use of the facility. It is therefore down to the relevant department to track the benefits derived from the installation of the equipment. From a central perspective we can identify how many times a video unit has been used and who it has connected to, but we cannot tell how many staff have been involved at each end or the exact amount of travel that has been saved. For example, we know that the video unit in Rathgael House has been used 54 times since June 2012. This includes 18 calls to Edinburgh 6 calls to Sheffield, 6 calls to Cardiff and 3 to Dunfermline. Each call could have saved the price of a flight, but what we can't tell is how many staff were involved for each video session. This level of detail can only be gathered by the business using the facility.

6.   **In relation to paragraph 24 of the DFP briefing paper which refers to a "Business Continuity Planning Guide", are there any examples of the flexible working opportunities being applied for business continuity purposes - for instance, in the case of the flooding of Dundonald House in June 2012?**

As a DFP service, the example we have provided relates to IT Assist, part of Enterprise Shared Services, which provides ICT Infrastructure services to over 18,000 NICS staff. Around 250 technical and administrative IT Assist staff are located primarily in Craigantlet Buildings, the basement of which was

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[1] The possible exception might be Department of Justice, which due to security restrictions might not be able to avail of all services

flooded following the deluge of rain on the evening of Wednesday 27th June 2012. Following the failure of the mains electrical supply, the generator at Craigantlet Buildings was switched on and this powered the building until Friday morning, when continuing problems meant that the generator had to be shut down and the building evacuated. On Friday at lunchtime the IT Assist Business Continuity Plan (BCP) was invoked and an emergency meeting held.

At this meeting IT Assist Management made the decision that, as there was likely to be limits on available office space, all staff who were able to work from home and had the necessary communications facilities should do so with immediate effect. This included approximately 30 technical support staff who provided out-of-hours cover plus a number of management staff. Prior to the flooding crisis, IT Assist already a pilot teleworking scheme in place, with identified mutual benefits not only for staff in terms of travelling time but also for management in terms of productivity. The BCP decision was also made that all staff who were involved in the IT Assist teleworking pilot should use all of the available places to maximum capacity. A summary of the IT Assist teleworking locations is given below.

Locations (5)	No of Teleworking Staff
Marlborough House, Craigavon	8
Innishkeen House, Enniskillen	4
Orchard House, Londonderry	3
Magherafelt, Roads Service Office	2
Holts Building, Newry	7
Total	**24**

In the event, accommodation was identified for 150 of the 250 IT Assist staff in four main locations: Rosepark House, Goodwood House, Rathgael House, and Castle Buildings. This included the IT Assist Help Desk which was spread over two locations. From the viewpoint of the IT Assist staff, operating from their new location was very straightforward. Staff just logged onto their own laptop or PC which they had brought with them. The new IP Telephony system also helped business continuity by allowing staff to bring their own extension number with them. Throughout the early stages of the crisis, an emergency help desk was provided at all times and by the following Monday morning, staff were in the process of moving to their new locations. Teleworking again proved invaluable at this time, as a remote worker in Newry for a very short time fielded all help desk calls while contingency measures were put in place. Customers were only aware of a very minimal disruption to operations and service level targets very quickly returned to normal.

Hot desking facilities were also provided in Rosepark House, which enabled home/tele workers to communicate and interact in person with their managers and peers, when required. It is unlikely that, without the home-working, teleworking and hot-desking facilities put in place, IT Assist would have been able to restore services to virtually full capacity in anything like the same timescales, enabling critical business to be maintained throughout the NICS.

7.   With reference to paragraphs 31 and 32 of the DFP briefing paper, has the "Flexible Working Project", which was recommended in the NICS IS Strategy, been established and what is the timeline in this regard?

The project referred to in the IS Strategy had significant interdependencies on a number of other IS Strategy projects, in particular the Unified Communications project, which has made good progress so that, while the flexible working project itself has not been formally mobilised, significant progress on enabling flexible and agile working has been made. The NICS IS Strategy is the subject of a 'mid term' review and we will look again at the scope and timing of this project, which may also be informed by the outcome of the Committee's inquiry.

8.   Further information to clarify the Programme for Government targets in relation to vacating office space.

The target for estate consolidation is not a Programme for Government target, but rather sits at the DFP Business Plan level. The target in the DFP Business Plan for 2012/13 was to vacate 2,000 square metres of office space and this has been achieved.

9.   Information on the pilot scheme in relation to "Bring your own device".

The whole area of Bring Your Own Device brings with it considerable challenges, particularly in the areas of security and data protection. The NICS has created a Mobile Device Strategy to establish a vision and set short to medium term actions. As part of this, we have established a proof of concept to test a number of aspects relating to the security and manageability of mobiles devices. This includes looking at a Mobile Device Management (MDM) solution, combined with methods of device identification, authentication and encryption. The expected outcome will be the ability to offer staff a greater choice of mobile device, while still ensuring the integrity of our network and the security of any data held on, or accessed by, the mobile device.

10.   Information on work on-going to address the need for staff to work more cost-effectively in customer facing areas outside the normal 9-5 working day.

DFP's Corporate Human Resources is still gathering information from departments about their requirements, which need to be defined in more detail.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Finlay

JUDITH FINLAY
Departmental Assembly Liaison Officer