

## **SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM (SMT)**

**WEDNESDAY, 2 JULY 2025 at 1.45 PM  
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

**APPROVED**

### **Present:**

**Lesley Hogg, Clerk/Chief Executive  
Tara Caul, Director of Legal, Governance and Research Services  
Gareth McGrath, Director of Parliamentary Services  
Ken Eccles, Head of Usher Services (deputised for Steven Baxter,  
Director of Corporate Services)**

### **In Attendance:**

**Janet Hughes, Clerical Supervisor  
Robin Ramsey, Adviser to the Speaker/Head of Corporate Support  
(Items 5 and 6)  
Paula McClintock, Head of Finance (Items 7 and 8)  
Suzanne Murphy, Deputy Head of Finance (Items 7 and 8)  
Diane Lamont, Senior HR Manager (Items 9 and 10)  
Christine Watts, Environmental Services and Health and Safety  
Manager (Item 11)  
Mary-Ellen Nutt, Head of IT (Item 13)  
Paddy McAllister, Deputy Head of IT (Item 13)  
Michael Cairns, Acting Head of Communications (Item 14)**

The meeting commenced at 1.52 pm.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Steven Baxter, Ken Eccles deputised.

### **2. Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Minutes of previous meeting**

It was noted that the minutes from the meeting on 4 June 2025 had been published.

#### **4. SMT Action Points**

The outstanding action points were reviewed and progress was noted.

*Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 1.53 pm for agenda items 5 and 6.*

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

SMT noted that the Assembly Members (Independent Remuneration Board) Bill passed its final stage on 16 June 2025. SMT recorded its thanks to the Project Board and Project Team for all the hard work that had gone in to supporting the Assembly Commission in taking the Bill through its various stages.

### **CORPORATE SUPPORT**

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

Robin Ramsey advised that a date for the next Assembly Commission meeting had yet to be agreed.

Proposed items for the meeting included:

- Clerk/Chief Executive Key Update Report
- Transgender Policy and Guidance
- Delegated Authority Arrangements
- Budget 2026-2029
- Security Review Recommendations Made by PSNI

*Robin Ramsey left the meeting at 2.01 pm.*

### **CORPORATE SERVICES**

*Paula McClintock and Suzanne Murphy joined the meeting at 2.01 pm for agenda items 7 and 8.*

#### **7. Management Accounts May 2025**

Paula McClintock presented the Management Accounts for May 2025.

SMT noted the forecast outturns for Resource DEL, Capital DEL and the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee (WFDSC).

Paula advised of movements in Admin costs and SMT noted a further surrender of funds additional to what was identified in the April Accounts.

Paula advised that, following a meeting with the Director of Legal, Governance and Research Services and the Head of Legal Services, it had been agreed that the budget for legal costs would be held centrally by Legal Services and kept under review.

In relation to the Salaries budget, Paula advised that it had been adjusted to reflect the impact of the planned recruitment schedule, between now and the end of the year, both in terms of which posts will be filled and the timing of the appointments.

Paula noted that the Salaries budget had been further revised to reflect the temporary requirements within the Corporate Services Directorate, to cover long-term absences and to cover a permanent additional resource in the Information Standards Office within the Legal, Governance and Research Services Directorate.

Paula advised that these adjustments had led to an increase in the salary forecast, and SMT agreed that the budget needed to be closely monitored and kept under review.

On reviewing the Capital Plan, Paula advised of a surrender in relation to the purchase of new devices and peripherals.

SMT noted that there were no new capital bids for the month.

## **8. 2026-2029 Budget Process**

Paula updated SMT on the process and anticipated timescales for the 2026-2029 budgeting exercise, commissioned by the Department of Finance.

Paula advised that the date for returns for the budgeting exercise, in relation to Resource DEL (Administrative expenditure) for the upcoming three years and Capital DEL needs for the upcoming five years, were being finalised and that budget managers would be informed.

SMT considered the budget guidance that had been prepared and agreed some changes.

**Action:** Paula to arrange for updated guidance to be issued to budget managers.

SMT highlighted the need for robust forecasting by budget managers, noting that there would be very little opportunity to make any changes due to the tight deadline for returns to DoF.

*Paula McClintock and Suzanne Murphy left the meeting at 2.33 pm.*

*Diane Lamont joined the meeting at 2.33 pm for agenda items 9 and 10.*

## **9. HR Management Information**

Diane Lamont presented the HR Management Information as at 1 May 2025.

SMT noted the Staff in Post figure (SIP) and temporary promotion/deputising

arrangements and agency worker assignments currently in place.  
Diane updated SMT on recruitment activity.

On reviewing the Recruitment Schedule, SMT agreed the priority of a number of posts.

## **10. Review of HR Policies**

Diane presented a paper, which proposed changes to the HR policies on Maternity, Annual Leave, and Flexible Working and Partial Retirement.

Following consideration, SMT approved the changes to the Maternity and Annual Leave policies as proposed. However, in relation to the Flexible Working and Partial Retirement policy, SMT agreed a further revision, and requested that the policy be re-circulated for final approval.

**Action:** Diane to amend the Flexible Working and Partial Retirement policy as agreed and re-circulate to SMT for final approval.

*Diane Lamont left the meeting at 3.08 pm.*

*Meeting suspended at 3.08 pm and resumed at 3.15 pm.*

*Christine Watts joined the meeting at 3.15 pm for agenda item 11.*

## **11. Annual Environmental Management Review 2024-2025**

Christine Watts presented the Environmental Management Review for the period April 2024 to March 2025, noting performance against Environmental Management targets and actions.

SMT reviewed and approved the draft Continuous Improvement Action Plan for 2025-2026 and the Environmental Management targets for 2025-2030.

SMT also reviewed the Environmental Policy and the Sustainable Development Policy and agreed that no changes were required.

Christine advised that a paper on a Climate Change Act Mitigation Report and Climate Change Act Adaption Report would be prepared for consideration and approval by SMT, prior to submission of the Reports to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs on 31 October 2025 and 31 March 2026 respectively.

*Christine Watts left the meeting at 3.26 pm.*

## **12. Business Case for the Purchase of Northern Ireland Assembly Commission Issued Uniforms**

Ken Eccles presented and sought approval of a business case for the purchase of Assembly Commission issued uniforms.

Following consideration, SMT approved the business case and recommended option within, to appoint a supplier to meet the Assembly Commission's uniform and Personal Protective Equipment requirements.

## **PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES**

*Mary-Ellen Nutt and Paddy McAllister joined the meeting at 3.36 pm for agenda item 13.*

### **13. Business Case for a Centralised, Cloud-Based IT Service Management (ITSM) Solution**

Mary-Ellen Nutt and Paddy McAllister presented and sought approval of a business case for a centralised, Cloud-based ITSM solution.

Following consideration and a discussion on the assumptions used for the cost estimates, SMT approved the business case and recommended option within, to procure a Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) solution.

SMT also approved the awarding of the contract with financial headroom, to take into consideration potential implementation of the service across other business areas on a 'call off' basis, subject to the appropriate business case and financial approvals as necessary.

*Mary-Ellen Nutt and Paddy McAllister left the meeting at 3.57 pm.*

*Michael Cairns joined the meeting at 4.03 pm for agenda item 14.*

### **14. Strategic Communications Update**

Michael Cairns provided SMT with a communications update.

*Michael Cairns left the meeting at 4.14 pm.*

## **OTHER ITEMS**

### **16. SMT Papers Cleared via Correspondence**

- Annual Plan 2025-26
- Quarterly Review of the Corporate Risk Register – June 2025

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

#### **Legal, Governance and Research Services**

Tara Caul provided an update on the work undertaken by all business areas within the Legal, Governance and Research Services Directorate and, in particular, highlighted the ongoing litigation cases; current procurement projects; staffing vacancies within Research and Information Services

(RaISe); and the ongoing work within RaISe in relation to the future resumption of the Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series.

### **Parliamentary Services**

SMT noted the work undertaken by all business areas within the Parliamentary Services Directorate, since reported at the previous SMT meeting.

Gareth McGrath highlighted, despite hybrid working, a shortage of accommodation and that the Model Office project had been paused. Tara confirmed that there were accommodation shortages for RaISe staff which need to be resolved.

### **Corporate Services**

Ken provided an update on all business areas within the Corporate Services Directorate.

In particular, Ken updated SMT on the development of the Business Continuity Plan; the electronic access control project; and the refurbishment of the Blue Flax.

## **18. AOB**

Tara advised that the Artificial Intelligence Working Group was in the process of agreeing its Terms of Reference, and that work was continuing on producing Guidance for staff.

## **19. Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting is to be confirmed.

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

- Business Case for the Continued Use of iTrent for 3-Year Period to 2028
- Disability Access Survey
- Security Review Recommendations Made by PSNI
- Admin Support to Pension Trustees
- Review of Policies Potentially Impacted by a Change in the Calculation of the Daily Rate of Pay
- Business Case for an Electronic Document Records Management (EDRM) System
- Internal Communications Quarterly Update
- Strategic Communications Update

The meeting ended at 4.42 pm.