SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

FRIDAY, 11 MAY 2012 AT 10.05AM
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Trevor Reaney** **Tara Caul** **Gareth McGrath** **John Stewart** **Richard Stewart** **Stephen Welch**
In attendance:	**Jim Beatty** **Peter McCallion (Agenda item 6)** **David Johnston (Agenda item 9)** **Simon Burrowes (Agenda item 12)** **Barbara Love (Agenda item 12)** **Sinead McDonnell (Agenda item 13)** **Tony Logue (Agenda item 17 and 18)** **Robin Ramsey (Agenda item 18)**

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Hugh Widdis. Tara Caul deputised on his behalf.

2 Declaration of Interests

2.1 No member declared an interest.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting/Matters Arising

3.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 29 March 2012 had been approved and published on 16 April 2012. There were no further comments.

3.2 All issues within Matters Arising will be dealt with through the Action Points or discussed as substantive agenda items.

4 SMG Action Points

4.1 The outstanding Action Points were reviewed. Members were asked to advise Jim Beatty of further updates and amendments.

CORPORATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

5 Business Plans 2012/13 – updates on Directorate Business Plans

5.1 The Clerk/DG will complete signing off Directorate Business Plans early next week. All plans should be then be published via AssISt.

6 Strategic Work Strands

6.1 Business Efficiency Update

Peter McCallion joined the meeting at 10.15am and spoke to his paper which updated SMG on the progress of the project. The Project Board met on 4 May and approved the report on Clerking. This was subsequently made available to staff on AssISt. The Project Board also approved a draft report on the review of contracts. Directors will be asked to comment on factual accuracy and acceptability of recommendations. The scoping documents for the review of a number of further areas were approved by the Project Board. SMG was updated on the staffing position within the project team. It was agreed that Richard Stewart and John Stewart would meet to discuss the resources required for the team.

ACTION: JOHN STEWART/RICHARD STEWART

6.2 Institutional Review

John Stewart updated SMG on the progress to date. AERC are considering relevant issues and the Secretariat will plan accordingly when the Committee has reported.

6.3 Organisational Development

Gareth McGrath updated SMG on the progress to date. It was felt that it would be helpful for members of the Assembly Leadership Forum to assist in taking this forward and he will seek volunteers from that group. A draft report will be referred to SMG in the future.

6.4 Organisational Redesign

The draft Terms of Reference are currently out for consultation and comments have been received. It is planned to present a paper to the Commission prior to the Summer Recess.

7. Co-ordination

Richard Stewart is taking this forward. There was nothing to report at this stage.

8. Consultation, communication and engagement

The Vacancy Management Group continues to meet regularly and to monitor and address the staffing position. The Financial Management Group will meet for the first time next week. As well as confirming planned budgets, the group will discuss moving to monthly monitoring rather than the present three monthly.

FACILITIES

9. Rowel Friers Caricatures

9.1 Stephen Welch spoke to his paper on this issue.

9.2 The Assembly currently owns 46 of Rowel Friers' caricatures and these are on display in the Members' bar. A further eleven drawings of 1970's politicians have been offered to the Assembly and an independent valuation obtained.

9.3 After discussion, it was agreed to further explore purchase of the drawings.

10. Assembly CCTV Policy

10.1 As a result of upgrading the Assembly's CCTV system and Control Room under the auspices of the Security Management System, a CCTV Policy and Code of Practice have been developed to assist and guide not only the Security Team but all building users. The proposals incorporate current practices.

10.2 The proposed policy sets out the objectives of the CCTV system, eg, protection and safety of building users. It also sets out the proposed principles of operation, eg, acting in accordance with the requirements and principles of the Human Rights Act 1998.

10.3 SMG agreed the CCTV Policy and Code of Practice.

LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE

11. Corporate Risk Register

11.1 David Johnston joined the meeting at 11.00am and updated SMG on the recent changes to the Corporate Risk Register including the revision to the definition of 'Risk Appetite'.

11.2 SMG agreed that the Register needed an in-depth revision which would closely examine all of the risks listed, the inherent risks and the residual risks. Trevor Reaney will discuss with the Directors how best to take this forward.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY

INFORMATION AND OUTREACH

12. Staff Survey 2012

12.1 Simon Burrowes and Barbara Love joined the meeting at 11.10am and spoke to the paper on this issue on behalf of the Internal Communications and Working Group (ICWG).

12.2 The survey was completed in February 2012 and the majority of the questionnaire was similar to the previous survey in 2010. Some new questions had been added and other questions were amended to reflect current structures. Research and Information Service (RaISe) co-ordinated the production and analysis of the results.

12.2 The survey outcome shows that improvements have been made in a number of areas, some areas have remained more or less the same and some have worsened.

12.3 ICWG identified four broad categories to be addressed, namely,

- Team spirit/Morale
- Leadership and Management
- Internal Communications, and
- Behaviour

12.4 SMG discussed the findings and recommendations. It was acknowledged that the Secretariat had come through difficult times and yet the overall impression was positive. There were clearly issues to be addressed and more thought was required before decisions on the way forward could be made.

12.5 SMG congratulated the ICWG on its excellent work in managing the survey and the assistance from RaISe in producing such an informative report.

12.6 It was noted that the report had been published and that staff were encouraged to study the report.

12.7 SMG agreed the following recommendations:-

- That SMG oversees the production of a co-ordinated action plan to examine and address each of the four key issues identified by ICWG (and any others identified by SMG).

- That the Head of Communications reviews the internal communications strategy in conjunction with ICWG.

- That the Clerk/DG and SMG seek further detail and analysis from RaISe in relation to leadership and management issues and unacceptable behaviour.

- That consideration be given to the Assembly Leadership Forum having a role in the development of an action plan to address team spirit/morale, leadership and management issues.

- That a co-ordinated action plan is put in place no later than summer recess.

- That Directorate business plans should include reference to actions arising from the staff survey.

12.8 This issue will be discussed further at the next SMG meeting.

CORPORATE SERVICES

13. Staff Volunteering Policy

13.1 Sinead McDonnell joined the meeting at 11.45am and spoke to the paper on this issue.

13.2 The issue had been before SMG on 10 February 2012 and consultation on a proposed policy had been completed since then. Some minor amendments had been made to the proposals as a result of the consultation.

13.3 SMG agreed the proposed policy and asked HR to consider how this could best be put into practice in the near future, eg, an exercise to assist the Assembly's nominated charity, Action Mental Health.

14 Data Gathering Exercise

14.1 Sinead McDonnell told SMG that a data gathering exercise to record hours worked by Secretariat staff had been conducted from December 2010 to March 2011. An analysis of the findings and a recommended way forward was provided.

14.2 SMG agreed that a new policy and procedure for recording and managing hours to facilitate work patterns in all areas of the Secretariat was required. While a new process would contain key principles of the current flexitime system, other changes are required to produce a system which best reflected the needs of a modern legislature.

14.3 It was agreed that HR should proceed with the required development under the ERG Policy subgroup and that operation of the new policy/procedure should be effective from September 2013.

15 People Strategy 2012/16

15.1 Sinead McDonnell explained that this issue had been before SMG on 9 March 2012 when it was decided that the paper should be referred for wider consultation. This was done and a number of amendments have been made to the strategy.

15.2 SMG approved the People Strategy 2012/16 for communication and implementation.

16 HR Management Absence Information

16.1 SMG considered the absence information for February 2012 and the 12 month rolling absence figures from March 2011.

16.2 It was noted that the average absence figure had risen to 9.4 days which remains above the benchmark of 7.5 days. SMG was concerned at this ongoing increase over the past year and will review the figures again at their next meeting.

17 Disability Action Plan

17.1 Tony Logue joined the meeting at 12.25pm and spoke to the paper on this issue.

17.2 Under Section 49B of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Commission is required to submit to the Equality Commission a Disability Action Plan and to conduct a public consultation on the matter. The proposed Plan for 2012/16 sets out the measures to be taken together with performance indicators, targets and timescales.

17.3 SMG approved the Plan.

18. Future Commission/SMG Business

18.1 Robin Ramsey joined the meeting at 12.30pm and SMG considered the proposed agenda for the next Commission meeting:-

- Clerk/DG Update Report
- Disability Action Plan
- Business Efficiency Review Update
- Organisational Redesign
- Review of FAPP Scheme 2007
- SARC Annual Report 2011/12
- Rowel Friars' Caricatures

18.2 Robin Ramsey updated SMG on the recent Commission meeting which considered Good Relations and agreed a paper.

18.3 SMG noted the future workplans for the Commission and SMG.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

19. Evaluation of SMG

19.1 As part of its annual evaluation, Trevor Reaney asked Directors to complete the pro-forma within today's papers and return to him as soon as possible.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

20. Directors' Updates

20.1 John Stewart thanked everyone who had helped in the preparation for and delivery of the two staff briefing sessions on the Business Efficiency Team draft report for Clerking. He also commended Clerking staff for their professional and considered response to the report. Executive business is being monitored for its impact on Committee and Plenary business. A potential bill on the role and powers of the NI Ombudsman is being supported by a cross-service project team. A project meeting to seek to ensure the various strands of reform required to improve the budget process and enhance financial scrutiny has taken place. The on-going quality support provided by the AERC staff was acknowledged along with the continuing service provided by

Business Office staff in dealing with increasing numbers of written questions.

20.2 There were no further updates

21. Items dealt with by Correspondence

21.1 A paper on the Youth Assembly has been circulated to SMG. Gareth McGrath will review the paper following comments from Directors.

22. AOB

22.1 There were no items raised under this heading

23. Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place at 10.00am on Friday 8 June 2012 in Room 106.

The meeting adjourned at 12.52pm.