SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

2 SEPTEMBER 2008 AT 9.45AM
IN ROOM 106,
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Mr. Trevor Reaney; Dr. Gareth McGrath; Mr. John Stewart; Mr. Richard Stewart; Mr. Stephen Welch;**
In attendance:	**Mr. Hugh Widdis; Ms. Georgie Campbell; Mr. Tony Logue; Mr. Simon Kelly.**

1 APOLOGIES

1.1 No apologies were received.

1.2 Trevor Reaney welcomed all attendees to the first meeting of the Secretariat Management Group.

2 TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1 Trevor Reaney said that all core Directors would be attending SMG meetings. Other officials and Heads of Business would be invited to attend as required.

2.2 Trevor Reaney noted the draft Terms of Reference of the SMG and asked for comments from the group.

2.3 There was some discussion on placing SMG minutes and papers on AssISt and the Assembly website. Gareth McGrath undertook to investigate the number of hits on Scottish Parliament Directors' Board's minutes webpage.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH

2.4 It was agreed that the minutes should be placed on AssISt and the NI Assembly website once approved by SMG.

ACTION: SIMON KELLY

2.5 The draft Terms of Reference were agreed, subject to a number of suggested amendments, which Simon Kelly undertook to complete.

ACTION: SIMON KELLY

2.6 Hugh Widdis said that any Director who requires advice on FOI issues related to placing papers on AssISt should contact him or the Information Standards Officer, Martina Dalton.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS TO NOTE

2.7 Georgie Campbell provided an overview to the group on the procedures for submitting papers and agenda items for SMG consideration. There was also some discussion on the proposed programme for future agenda items for SMG meetings.

2.8 It was agreed that guidance on corporate templates and deadlines for submission of papers to SMG would be issued to Directors, once approved by the Clerk/ Director-General.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

2.9 It was agreed that SMG would meet on Wednesday mornings at 9.30am, on alternate weeks to Commission meetings.

2.10 It was agreed that SMG would meet at least twice yearly in Annexe C, and more often if possible.

ACTION: SIMON KELLY TO ARRANGE

3 FUTURE COMMISSION BUSINESS

3.1 Tony Logue provided an overview to SMG members of the future work programme for the Commission, and reported that agenda items at the Commission meeting of the 23 September would include:

- The Commission Members' Handbook;
- Ormiston House Update;
- Audit of Existing Accommodation Usage;
- Report on the Chamber Upgrade.

3.2 Stephen Welch undertook to submit a paper on the Chamber Upgrade to this Commission meeting.

ACTION: STEPHEN WELCH

3.3 Gareth McGrath said that he would be submitting a final paper on the Broadcasting equipment Update to SMG on 11 September, and subsequently to the Commission meeting of 23 September.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH

3.4 Tony Logue suggested that all Directors should attend the Commission meeting on 23 September 2008, to be introduced to Commission members. Trevor Reaney stated that he would wish all Directors to attend this first meeting and that he would keep future attendance under review.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

3.5 Gareth McGrath undertook to submit a paper on taking forward the Engagement and Outreach Strategy and a paper on Media Access to forthcoming SMG meetings.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH

3.6 There was some discussion on media access arrangements in the NI Assembly, and Gareth McGrath reported that he had met representatives of the Stormont Correspondents' Association the previous day, to discuss this issue. He undertook to liaise with Richard Good, Hugh Widdis and Sheila McClelland to explore this issue further.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH

3.7 Tony Logue gave an overview of the Commission's off-site meeting on 6 June 2008 and the subsequent progress on action points arising from that meeting. Trevor Reaney suggested that a paper be prepared and submitted to the Commission on the progress of these action points, including further actions required.

ACTION: TONY LOGUE

3.8 Trevor Reaney noted that Human Resources (HR) issues were not the discussed during the Commission's off-site meeting, and stressed that this was an area that required urgent attention. He highlighted the need for an integrated NI Assembly HR strategy to be prepared.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

4 UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 SMG noted the table on the implementation of Review recommendations and discussed progress against each recommendation.

4.2 Georgie Campbell provided an overview of the Business Planning process and undertook to prepare for the Clerk/ Director-General a cascading flowchart of the Performance Management system.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

4.3 There was some discussion on the relationship between the NI Assembly and the Department of Finance and Personnel regarding the financial accounting relationship between the two bodies. Trevor Reaney undertook to discuss this issue further with Hugh Widdis.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY/ HUGH WIDDIS

4.4 It was agreed that Directors should arrange to meet their respective Commission portfolio Members as soon as possible.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

4.5 Trevor Reaney asked that all Directors return any comments on their draft Letters of Delegation to him as soon as possible.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

4.6 Trevor Reaney undertook to discuss with Brian Moreland whether there was a need for a letter of delegation from Clerk/ DG to Head of Internal Audit

ACTION: ROSEMARY JOHNSTONE TO ARRANGE

4.7 Tony Logue undertook to issue to SMG members the composite report on selected corporate governance guidance documents, as detailed in Review recommendation 15.

ACTION: TONY LOGUE

4.8 There was some discussion on the progress of preparation of the NI Assembly Annual report for 2007/08.

4.9 Trevor Reaney requested that Tony Logue send him a copy of Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee paper submitted to Commission on 17 April 2008, containing recommendations on the proposed non-executive member of SMG.

ACTION: TONY LOGUE

4.10 There was some discussion on the performance management process and Georgie Campbell undertook to draw up an SMG performance monitoring system.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

4.11 Richard Stewart undertook to review progress on the continued development of arrangements for measuring and demonstrating Value For Money achieved by the NI Assembly.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

4.12 Richard Stewart also undertook to prepare a paper on the review of the delivery of a procurement service to the Assembly, to be submitted to SMG and Commission.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

4.13 Gareth McGrath said that it would be worthwhile to meet with officials from the NI Authority for Utilities Regulation to hear of its experiences in establishing an integrated HR strategy.

4.14 Trevor Reaney said that there had already been considerable success in achieving targets set in the Review recommendations, but recognised that there is still a lot of work to be done. He paid tribute to the work of Carol Devon and the members of the Interim Management Board.

5 IMB ACTION POINTS

5.1 Georgie Campbell provided an overview to SMG of the IMB action points list.

5.2 Trevor Reaney requested that all Directors review the list and return comments to Simon Kelly on actions points for which they are now responsible. This table will then be reviewed by SMG at its next meeting on Thursday 11 September.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

6 RISK MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP

6.1 Georgie Campbell provided an overview to SMG of plans for the forthcoming Risk Management Workshop, to take place on 1 October 2008.

6.2 Georgie Campbell undertook to issue papers for the Risk Management Workshop to all Directors as soon as possible.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

6.3 Georgie Campbell undertook to source the Department of Finance and Personnel's risk management policy from Alison Caldwell, Head of Fraud and Internal Audit at DFP.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

7 UPDATE ON CHAMBER UPGRADE

7.1 Stephen Welch provided an overview to SMG on David Lynn's update paper on the Chamber upgrade.

7.2 Stephen Welch said that some delays had been experienced with the delivery of the hoist for the disabled lift, but that the Chamber will be fully operational for the mock plenary taking place on Thursday 4 September and also for the first plenary sitting of the Assembly on 15 September.

8 UPDATE ON BROADCASTING UPGRADE

8.1 Gareth McGrath provided an update to SMG on the Broadcasting Equipment Replacement Project. He reported that all engineering work had been competed and that some extra work on finalising camera angles, etc. would be completed by September 5 2008.

9 RECRUITMENT UPDATE

9.1 Trevor Reaney said that this issue would be discussed fully at the meeting arranged between SMG members and the Head of Personnel on Friday 5 September.

10 CURRENT FOI REQUESTS

10.1 Outstanding FOI requests were noted by SMG.

10.2 Trevor Reaney requested that SMG members receive a demonstration on the AIMS database.

ACTION: ROSEMARY JOHNSTONE TO ARRANGE

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Clerk/Director-General's meeting with staff

11.1 Trevor Reaney said that two introductory meetings in the Long Gallery between the Clerk/ Director General and staff had been arranged for Tuesday 2 September and Friday 5 September. He asked that all Directors encourage their staff to attend these sessions.

European Heritage Open Days

11.2 Gareth McGrath said that a note had been issued to staff informing them of the European Heritage Open Days taking place in Parliament Buildings. He undertook to liaise with Stephen Welch and Sheila McClelland re arrangements for these events.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH/ STEPHEN WELCH

Staffing Issue

11.3 Richard Stewart advised SMG of a staffing issue raised by TUS that all Directors be made aware of the procedures and policies in place for the creation of new posts and the filling of posts in the Assembly, which must be followed in all instances.

Devolution of Policing and Justice

11.4 Trevor Reaney asked that all Directors begin to think about the potential ramifications for their Directorates, e.g. in relation to staffing and accommodation, if policing and justice powers are devolved to the NI Assembly and Executive.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

Recognition of staff contribution

11.5 Gareth McGrath suggested that there should be some official recognition of the significant contribution made by Assembly staff to major projects (e.g. Chamber upgrade project).

11.6 The importance of recognising staff contributions was emphasised and that it was important to be consistent for all such events or projects. Further consideration would be given to such ideas.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY

Media Contact

11.7 Gareth McGrath asked that all Directors give him early notice of any notable interaction between staff and members of the press. It was agreed that this issue would be discussed at the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: SIMON KELLY TO PLACE ON AGENDA

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

12.1 It was agreed that the next SMG meeting would take place at 10am on Thursday 11 September in Room 106.

12.2 All SMG meetings thereafter would occur at 9.30am on Wednesdays, on alternate weeks to Commission meetings.