SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

26 NOVEMBER 2008 AT 10.00AM
IN ROOM 29,
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Mr. Trevor Reaney; Dr. Gareth McGrath; Mr. John Stewart; Mr. Richard Stewart; Mr. Stephen Welch;**
In attendance:	**Mr. Hugh Widdis;** **Georgie Campbell (Agenda items 5 and 6);** **Mr. Tony Logue (Agenda items 5 and 10);** **Mr. Simon Kelly.**

1 APOLOGIES

1.1 No apologies were received.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 The minutes of the Secretariat Management Group (SMG) meeting held on 6 November 2008 were approved subject to a number of amendments.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 SMG members noted the Committee Staff Guide excerpt circulated by John Stewart. It was agreed that this extract should be considered in respect of the proposed Protective Marking Policy.

ACTION: MARTINA DALTON

3.2 Richard Stewart said that he would be submitting his paper on Value for Money to the SMG meeting on 10 December 2008.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

3.3 Stephen Welch said that he would be submitting his paper on the Security Pass Policy to the SMG meeting on 10 December 2008

ACTION: STEPHEN WELCH

3.4 Trevor Reaney noted that John Stewart had issued a request to all Directors for assistance in easing staffing pressures on the Committee side. Trevor Reaney expressed appreciation for the positive response to this request.

4 SMG ACTION POINTS

4.1 The SMG action points table was noted and some amendments were suggested, which Simon Kelly undertook to make.

ACTION: SIMON KELLY

4.2 It was noted that negotiations on the joint Whitley agreement between TUS and management had been concluded successfully. It was hoped that a meeting with TUS could be convened prior to Christmas to sign off the document officially.

4.3 Trevor Reaney thanked Richard Stewart, Evan Hobson and TUS for their efforts in bringing the process to a conclusion.

5 RECRUITMENT OF NON-EXECUTIVE SMG MEMBER

5.1 SMG noted the 'Recruitment of a Non-Executive SMG Member' paper submitted by Georgie Campbell.

5.2 Trevor Reaney provided a background to the recruitment of non-executive members to the Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee (SARC) and SMG. He said that these posts had arisen from the Review of the NI Assembly Secretariat recommendations, and it had originally been envisaged that one person could fulfil both roles. However, it had been decided subsequently that the posts should be separated, to ensure the independence of SARC.

5.3 Georgie Campbell provided an overview of her paper, and there was some discussion on the issue.

5.4 A number of amendments were suggested to the paper, which Georgie Campbell undertook to make.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

5.5 Trevor Reaney said that he will submit the revised paper to the Assembly Commission, and that it is hoped that the post will be advertised w/c 5 January 2009.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY

6 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

6.1 SMG noted the draft Corporate Risk Register (CRR), and Georgie Campbell provided SMG with a background the creation of the CRR.

6.2 John Stewart and Stephen Welch undertook to provide some information on risks for which they are responsible.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

6.3 A number of amendments were suggested to the paper, which Georgie Campbell undertook to make. It was noted that once the final amendments are submitted, the CRR will be agreed.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

6.4 It was agreed that information would be provided on the new CRR in the Clerk/ Director General's next Monthly Report to the Commission.

ACTION: SIMON KELLY

6.5 Georgie Campbell said that the next step will be the issuing of stewardship statements- based on the new CRR- to all Directors to complete re their respective risks. These templates will be issued shortly, and will cover the reporting period 1 April to 30 November 2008.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

6.6 Georgie Campbell undertook to issue the previous stewardship statements, for the period October 2007 to March 2008, to SMG members for information purposes.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

6.7 There was some discussion on the preparation of the Directorate Risk Registers (DRRs). Trevor Reaney said that he recognised the extensive work required in developing the DRRs, and as a result the deadline for submission of these documents to the Clerk/ Director General would be extended to Friday 5 December 2008.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS TO NOTE

7 FUTURE SMG/COMMISSION BUSINESS

7.1 Trevor Reaney provided SMG members with an overview of the agenda for the Commission offsite meetings on 26 and 27 November 2008.

7.2 Tony Logue provided an overview to SMG members of agenda items for the Commission meeting of the 2 December, including:

- A report on the forthcoming off-site meeting;
- SSRB;
- An item report on the Audit of Existing Accommodation;
- The NI Assembly December Monitoring Round return,
- The recruitment of the independent SMG member.

8 NI ASSEMBLY ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08

8.1 The final draft of the NI Assembly Annual Report for 2007/08 was noted by SMG members. SMG approved the document, and it was agreed that the report should be published as soon as possible.

ACTION: TONY LOGUE

8.2 There was some discussion on the proposed smaller brochure, to be published to accompany the larger report. Gareth McGrath reported that he would be presenting the draft brochure to the Commission at its forthcoming offsite meeting. Trevor Reaney said that, once approval had been granted by the Commission, the brochure should also be published as soon as possible.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH

9 HR ISSUES

9.1 Recruitment of Assistant Assembly Clerks

9.1.1 Simon Kelly declared an interest and left the room for the duration of this agenda item.

9.1.2 Richard Stewart reported that he had liaised with most of the sift panel members from the most recent Assistant Assembly Clerk (AAC) competition. Their unanimous view was that guidance to sift panels would be most welcome to ensure that everyone had a common understanding of the requirements of the core competences. As the sift panel for the upcoming competition would involve the interview panel Chairpersons, it was agreed that the Personnel Office would issue guidance to sift panel members on the practical application of each of the core competences.

9.1.3 Hugh Widdis offered some legal advice on the issue.

9.1.4 SMG agreed that any such guidance should be used to enhance further the consistency of approach between panels and should include a reminder that the sift panels should routinely record all decisions on the application of sift criteria.

9.2 Revised Recruitment Schedule

9.2.1 SMG noted the revised recruitment schedule. It was agreed that all Directors should consider the document and provide any suggestions or comments at the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

9.2.2 Richard Stewart said that all amendments to the Recruitment Schedule will be made through SMG. Richard Stewart highlighted three posts that were proposed to be added to the schedule, namely: the Head of Security Services; the Head of Support Services; and the Head of Property Services. SMG agreed that these competitions should be added to the schedule.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

9.2.3 Trevor Reaney referred to the proposed Good Relations Officer competition and said that he hoped the competition would run early in 2009.

9.3 Delivery of Security Review

9.3.1 Stephen Welch reported that he had met with representatives from TUS regarding the Review of Security delivery. Further discussion followed on the proposed scale and scope of the review as it progresses.

9.4 Christmas arrangements in NI Assembly 2008

9.4.1 There was some discussion on arrangements at Christmas in the NI Assembly. Richard Stewart said that a note would be issued by the Head of Personnel shortly to all secretariat staff regarding staff conduct during the Christmas period.

9.4.2 Some discussion followed on events that take place in Parliament Buildings during the Christmas period.

10 RESOURCES ISSUES

10.1 Current insurance arrangements

10.1.1 SMG noted the paper submitted by Richard Stewart on Current Insurance Arrangements in the NI Assembly.

10.1.2 Trevor Reaney noted the significant saving made on the insurance premium for the year 2008/09 as compared with the previous year's premium. He offered his congratulations to the staff involved in achieving this saving.

10.1.3 There was some discussion on additional insurance requirements in the Assembly.

10.1.4 SMG approved the recommendation to put in place a computer insurance policy. Richard Stewart undertook to liaise with the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) to get confirmation on the arrangement that DFP carries the risk for buildings and contents damage in Parliament Buildings.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

10.2 Gifts and Hospitality policy

10.2.1 It was agreed that this agenda item should be deferred to the next SMG meeting on 10 December 2008. Richard Stewart undertook to issue the draft Gifts and Hospitality policy to Heads of Business in the interim period. SMG members should return with their Directorate comments on the policy at the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

10.3 ICT suppliers' event report

10.3.1 Richard Stewart provided SMG with an overview of his paper on the recent ICT supplier's event in Parliament Buildings. He reported that the event has been very successful.

10.3.2 It was agreed that sufficient positive feedback had been received to warrant holding a similar event in the future, if a procurement requirement arises in any other specific area.

10.4 December monitoring round

10.4.1 SMG noted the paper on the NI Assembly's December Monitoring Round Return, submitted by Richard Stewart.

10.4.2 Trevor Reaney said that he was content with the proposals in the paper. However, he undertook to discuss a number of outstanding issues with the Director of Resources prior to issuing the paper to the Commission for its meeting on 2 December 2008.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY/ RICHARD STEWART

11 INTERIM REPORT ON AUDIT OF EXISTING ACCOMMODATION USAGE

11.1 Stephen Welch provided SMG with an overview the Accommodation strategy, covering the following areas:

- The potential disposal of Ormiston House;
- The Accommodation Audit;
- Interim accommodation options.

11.2 SMG agreed that a steering group on accommodation should be established. Stephen Welch undertook to add this recommendation to his paper prior to submitting it to the Commission at its meeting on 2 December 2008.

ACTION: STEPHEN WELCH

12 CURRENT FOI REQUESTS

12.1 SMG noted the FOI requests received since its meeting on 17 September 2008.

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13.1 Dignity at Work Policy- note to Member and Parties

13.1.1 Richard Stewart provided SMG with an overview of the note to be issued to Members and Political Parties re the Dignity at Work policy, and asked for comments.

13.1.2 Hugh Widdis suggested that MLAs should be made aware that under the policy Secretariat staff will have a route to lodge a 'dignity at work' complaint with an appropriate body.

13.1.3 SMG members said they were content with the paper, and it was agreed that it should be submitted to the Commission meeting on 2 December 2008.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

14 FUTURE MEETINGS

To take place at 10.00am in Room 29 (unless stated otherwise) on:

- Wednesday 18 December (at 2.30pm);
- Wednesday 7 January;
- Wednesday 21 January.