SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

6 NOVEMBER 2008 AT 1.30PM
IN TRAINING ROOM 1
ANNEXE C

APPROVED

Present:	**Trevor Reaney** **Gareth McGrath** **John Stewart** **Richard Stewart** **Stephen Welch** **Hugh Widdis**	
In attendance:	**Tony Logue**	**(Agenda item 4)**
	Brian Moreland	**(Agenda item 8)**
	Martina Dalton	**(Agenda items 11.2, 11.3 and 11.4)**
	Georgie Campbell	

1 APOLOGIES

No apologies were received.

2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Secretariat Management Group (SMG) meeting held on 15 October 2008 were approved without amendment.

3 MATTERS ARISING

It was agreed that these would be addressed under Agenda item 4.

4 SMG ACTION POINTS

4.1 SMG members reported on progress in relation to outstanding Action Points from previous meetings. The Clerk/DG asked that this list be updated to reflect the comments received. He also asked that the list be circulated to SMG members prior to the next meeting for a further update.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL/SIMON KELLY

4.2 Richard Stewart will submit a paper on the development of Value For Money arrangements to the SMG meeting scheduled for 26 November 2008. (Action Point 13)

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

4.3 Stephen Welch will submit a paper on the review of the policy re security passes for outgoing staff to the SMG meeting scheduled for 26 November 2008. (Action Point 15)

ACTION: STEPHEN WELCH

4.4 Richard Stewart will submit a paper giving an overview of current insurance arrangements to the SMG meeting scheduled for 26 November 2008. (Action Point 21)

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

Richard Stewart will submit a paper on the Gifts and Hospitality Policy to the SMG meeting scheduled for 26 November 2008. (Action Point 28)

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

5 FUTURE SMG/COMMISSION BUSINESS

5.1 Tony Logue reported that the following issues were scheduled for discussion at the Commission meeting on 18 November 2008:

- Clerk's Monthly Report
- North South Parliamentary Forum
- SSRB
- Media Access
- Audit Office Management Letter
- NI Assembly Protective Marking Policy
- Information Management within the Assembly

5.2 It was subsequently agreed during the discussion of Agenda Item 11.2 that the paper on Information Management within the Assembly should be postponed to the following Commission meeting.

ACTION: TONY LOGUE

5.3 It was agreed that the draft Gifts and Hospitality Policy should be included on the Agenda for the SMG meeting on 26 November prior to submission to the Commission for discussion at the 2 December meeting.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

5.4 Tony Logue reported that there would be an off site meeting of the Assembly Commission on 26/27 November 2008.

5.5 The Clerk/DG asked that the paper on MLA compliance with the Data Protection Act which is scheduled for submission to the Commission be added to the agenda for this meeting at 11.4.

6 PERFORMANCE AGAINST CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES 2008 – 2011

7 UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

These agenda items were taken together. The Clerk/DG said that he was anxious to finalise the implementation of the Review Recommendations and to mainstream any outstanding items by including them in the Corporate Plan. He proposed that the current Corporate Plan, including the format, is reviewed and that the revised Corporate Plan would include the outstanding Review Recommendations as objectives/actions. The revised Corporate Plan would cover the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2011. Directors agreed unanimously with this proposal. The Clerk/DG undertook to raise this with the Commission at their meeting on 26 November 2008.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY

8 RISK

8.1 RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

The draft Risk Management Policy, previously considered at the SMG meeting on 15 October 2008, was agreed without further amendment. This can now be placed on AssISt.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

8.2 CORPORATE RISKS

Agreement was reached on the Risks to be included in the Corporate Risk Register and Directorate Risk Registers subject to consideration of adding a risk relating to advice to the Commission and the Clerk/DG.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

8.3 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

The format for the Corporate Risk Register was agreed. The Clerk/DG said that the next step would be to insert the agreed Corporate Risks in the Risk Register and for the Risk Owners to complete the Risk Assessment. He asked that the Corporate Risk Register be copied to Risk Owners for completion.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

9 CORE BRIEF FEEDBACK

SMG Members noted the feedback from the Team Briefing sessions. The Clerk/DG asked that this report be copied to contributors for comment before it is placed on AssISt.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

10 CURRENT FOI REQUESTS

SMG Members noted the list of current FOI requests.

11 HR ISSUES

11.1 REVIEW OF ASSISTANT ASSEMBLY CLERK RECRUITMENT COMPETITION

Richard Stewart summarised the findings of the review of this competition.

It was agreed that:

- The improvements identified in relation to the design and format of application forms should be finalised and used for future recruitment competitions. The spaces allocated for applicants' responses should be fixed and not liable to distortion.

- Instructions to candidates should be clearly stated and internal checking processes should continue to be applied.

- Where it is likely that tests will be used, a statement should be included in the Job Specification indicating this and also the purpose of such tests. Applicants should be informed that tests will be carried out before the eligibility sift.

- Tests should not be used just to reduce numbers. The mark at which an applicant progresses to the next stage should be set to reflect the need to include a sufficient pool of applicants for the next stage but subject to the achievement of an acceptable test score.

- Panel Chairs and Panel Members should continue to agree the job specification.

- The length of time for waiting lists should be reviewed.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

The Clerk/DG asked that the views on this recruitment process are sought from the panel members to ensure that nothing is missed. He asked that a revised paper be prepared for the next SMG meeting

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

11.2 COMMITTEE STAFF

John Stewart said that he had sent a paper to the Director of Resources on the subject of staffing in committees. He stressed the urgent need for Assistant Assembly Clerks in the Clerking and Reporting Directorate. He asked if this competition could be moved up the recruitment agenda. The Clerk/DG asked for this to be done and if necessary, to consider the reprioritisation of other recruitment competitions.

John Stewart reported that that the introduction of the new Committee Clerks had gone well, however there were pressures due to outstanding vacancies, inexperienced staff and higher than expected workload in some areas. He said that he would be meeting with the Chairpersons Liaison Group to outline the current challenges and what had been done to manage these.

John Stewart said that the recent appeal for staff from other Directorates to be loaned to the Clerking and Reporting Directorate had produced only one member of staff from the Engagement Directorate. The Clerk/DG said that it may be necessary to make decisions based on the highest business priorities. SMG members undertook to consider how their Directorates could assist with these short term pressures in Clerking and Reporting.

ACTION: SMG MEMBERS

11.3 LATERAL MOVEMENTS/INTERNAL PROMOTIONS

Richard Steward reported that he will bring a paper on this subject to the next meeting of SMG.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

11.4 RECRUITMENT SCHEDULE

The Clerk/DG said that an updated recruitment schedule should be prepared for submission to the next meeting of SMG taking account of emerging issues in each Directorate

12 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

12.1 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE ASSEMBLY SECRETARIAT

Martina Dalton summarised her paper on the subject of Information Management within the Assembly. It was agreed that the first task would be to move all the registered files currently in boxes in Annexe C to shelving. Stephen Welch offered to provide staff to assist with this. Martina Dalton will liaise with Directors in relation to the review of files which are the responsibility of their Directorates.

ACTION: TONY LOGUE/STEPHEN WELCH

The Clerk/DG said that a reference to the Protective Marking Policy (see 12.2) should be incorporated in this paper prior to its submission to the Commission.

ACTION: MARTINA DALTON

12.2 PROTECTIVE MARKING POLICY

It was agreed that this paper should be entitled “Assembly Secretariat Protective Marking Policy” and should be redrafted to include:

- A statement that the Assembly wishes to conduct its business in an open and transparent manner and that the number of documents which will require protective markings will be very small.

- A “clear desk” policy as an annex.

- Enforcement procedures. The Employee Handbook should include a reference under “Disciplinary Procedures” to sanctions for misconduct in relation to the handling of classified materials.

- Handling and disposal procedures for classified documents

- Statement saying that arrangements are in place to review the guidance to Committees re a protective marking policy.

ACTION: TONY LOGUE

It was acknowledged that whilst the Commission could determine a protective marking policy for the Secretariat, this would not apply to Assembly Committees. John Stewart undertook to circulate the existing committee arrangements to SMG members with the aim of developing a complementary system for Committees using the same protective markings as the Secretariat.

ACTION: JOHN STEWART

Gareth McGrath offered the services of an Assembly Researcher to explore the arrangements in other Parliaments.

ACTION: TONY LOGUE TO LIAISE WITH GARETH MCGRATH

It was agreed that the updated paper could be cleared by correspondence by SMG members.

ACTION: TONY LOGUE

12.3 MLAS’ COMPLIANCE WITH THE DATA PROTECTION ACT 1998

SMG members noted the contents of this paper. It was agreed that the paper should be issued to Legal Services for comment, then to the Assembly Commission for its consideration

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13.1 VIP VISIT

The Clerk/DG informed SMG members that the President of the European Parliament will visit the Assembly on 24 November and will address Assembly Members in the Senate Chamber. Arrangements are being made for the visit in conjunction with the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

13.2 CROSS DIRECTORATE WORKING GROUP ON POLICING AND JUSTICE

The Clerk/DG reported that this Group, chaired by the Director of Clerking AND Reporting was developing plans to put in place administrative arrangements to deal with the transfer of policing and justice powers.

14 FUTURE MEETINGS

To take place at 9.30am in Room 29 (unless stated otherwise) on:

Wednesday 26 November
Wednesday 10 December (at 2.30pm)

The meeting ended at 17.20hrs.