SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

WEDNESDAY 1 APRIL
AT 9.30AM IN TRAINING ROOM 1, ANNEXE C
AND TUESDAY 7 APRIL 2009
AT 10.30AM IN ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Mr. Trevor Reaney; Mr. John Stewart; Mr. Richard Stewart; Mr. Stephen Welch; Mr. John Power*.** ***Deputising for Dr. Gareth McGrath (1 April meeting)**
In attendance:	**Mr Hugh Widdis; Mr. Tony Logue (agenda items 6 and 7); Ms. Georgie Campbell (agenda items 8 and 11); Mr. Simon Burrowes (agenda item 8); Mr. Evan Hobson (agenda item 10); Ms. Paula McClintock (agenda item 12); Mr John Gibson (agenda item 13); Mr. Simon Kelly.**

1 APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from Dr. Gareth McGrath.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2.1 No interests were declared.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 The minutes of the Secretariat Management Group (SMG) meeting held on 18 March 2009 were approved without amendment.

4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 There were no matters arising.

5 SMG ACTION POINTS

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

ACTION: SIMON KELLY
DEADLINE: 3/4/09

6 FUTURE SMG/COMMISSION BUSINESS

6.1 Tony Logue provided an overview to SMG members of agenda items for the next Commission meeting, to take place on 2 April 2009, including:

- Clerk Director General's Monthly Report;
- NI Assembly Pension Scheme;
- Assembly Website project;
- Accommodation strategy update;
- SSRB review recommendations;
- Separation Project Team- terms of reference

6.2 Tony Logue reported that the Inter-Parliamentary Contact Group would be meeting at Parliament Buildings on Friday 3 April and provided an overview of the agenda for the meeting.

7 CURRENT FOI REQUESTS/ ASSEMBLY QUESTIONS

7.1 SMG noted the FOI requests and Assembly Questions received since its meeting on 18 March 2009.

8 INTERNAL COMMUNCIATIONS UPDATE

8.1 Verbal update from Simon Burrowes

8.1.1 Simon Burrowes provided SMG with an update on internal communications activity in the NI Assembly since his last briefing to SMG on 18 December 2008.

8.1.2 He reported that the Internal Communications Working Group (ICWG) had met on three occasions since the last update, and had discussed the following issues:

- Implementation of the Internal communications strategy, including:
    - The separation project timeline;
    - Corporate identity; and
    - Induction training.
- Internal communications training;

- The presentation of papers at SMG meetings by staff;
- The next internal communications audit;
- Post 2010 internal communications strategy;
- The staff magazine;
- Engagement strategy briefings;
- Eurest survey; and
- Corporate values.

8.1.3 Simon Burrowes said that future issues for ICWG consideration included:
- The review of the staff magazine and team briefing, to commence in September 2009; and
- The next internal communications audit.

8.1.4 Simon Burrowes reported that TUS had requested that a NIPSA Assembly Branch representative be added to the ICWG membership. SMG agreed to this suggestion.

8.1.5 Trevor Reaney sought views on the effectiveness of the Clerk/Director General's staff briefing sessions and how they might develop in the future. Trevor Reaney said that he would like to attend a future ICWG meeting to discuss this issue. Simon Burrowes undertook to ensure that this issue would be placed on a forthcoming ICWG agenda.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY/ SIMON BURROWES
DEADLINE: 28/5/09

8.2 Feedback from March Team Briefing sessions

8.2.1 Georgie Campbell provided an overview of questions received from staff following the recent round of team briefing sessions. She said that these questions had been forwarded to the relevant Directors, and that responses should be returned to her by 3 April 2009. Georgie Campbell said that once received, these answers will be placed on AssISt

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS/ GEORGIE CAMPBELL
DEADLINE: 10/4/09

8.2.2 Georgie Campbell reported that a significant number of team briefing sessions had taken place beyond the recommended deadline. SMG agreed that all staff members should be encouraged to deliver their team briefing sessions within the designated timeframe.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: ONGOING

8.2.3 Trevor Reaney said that he hoped to attend future Directorate team briefing sessions where possible. He said that he would discuss team briefing when he attended a meeting of ICWG.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY/ SIMON BURROWES
DEADLINE: 28/5/09

9 REVIEW OF STATIONERY OFFICE – NEWSPAPERS

9.1 Stephen Welch provided SMG with an overview of the paper on the Stationery Office's distribution of newspapers to Assembly Secretariat staff. He outlined a number of options in the paper to reduce the number and cost of newspapers that the Assembly purchases daily.

9.2 Stephen Welch said that he now required approval from SMG to review the current provision, and to agree in principle to the reduction in the number of papers purchased by the NI Assembly.

9.3 SMG discussed the issue, and it was recognised that there was an opportunity to reduce the use of newspapers in the NI Assembly.

9.4 SMG agreed that the Director of Properties should circulate the template outlining the current provision of newspapers to Directorates.

ACTION: STEPHEN WELCH
DEADLINE: 3/4/09

9.5 All SMG members should consider their current Directorate newspaper requirements and provide a business case to the Director of Properties on proposed future usage. The Director of Properties will then submit a report to SMG on this issue.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: 1/5/09

9.6 It was agreed that the Engagement Directorate should lead an exercise to raise awareness staff among staff of access to electronic news resources.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH
DEADLINE: 30/6/09

10 HR ISSUES

10.1 Recruitment pressures

10.1.1 Richard Stewart reported that following the recent recruitment competitions, there would be a significant turnover of staff members in the Recruitment and Finance Offices in the coming months.

10.1.2 SMG recognised the added pressures that this handover would bring to these offices, and agreed that all staff should exercise understanding and patience with both offices during this period.

10.1.3 SMG also acknowledge that similar pressures were being faced across other parts of the organisation and there was a need for a similar approach in other areas.

10.2 Recruitment schedule

10.2.1 Richard Stewart reported that due to restructuring in the Engagement Directorate, four posts were to be added to the Recruitment schedule within the overall staffing complement for the Directorate. SMG agreed that these posts should be added, but that their inclusion should not delay any existing competitions in the Recruitment Schedule.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 3/4/09

10.3 Directors' PA/ PS requirements

10.3.1 Evan Hobson said that he had issued a note to all Directors asking for their preferences on whether they require a Personal Assistant or a Personal Secretary role. He requested that all Directors respond to him with their preferences as soon as possible.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: 3/4/09

10.4 Temporary Promotions

10.4.1 Evan Hobson said temporary promotions (TPS) in the NI Assembly were due to be reviewed at the end of March 2009. He said that he would be issuing a note to all Directors informing them which TPs were required to be reviewed.

ACTION: EVAN HOBSON
DEADLINE: 3/4/09

10.4.2 Directors should then undertake a review of relevant TPs in their Directorate.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: 3/4/09

10.4.3 It was agreed that central clearance should be given to all proposed temporary promotions- by either the Head of Human Resources or the Director of Resources- until the Internal Promotions/ Lateral Transfers policy is finalised.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS TO NOTE
DEADLINE: ONGOING

10.5 Agency staff guidelines

10.5.1 Richard Stewart said that he would be finalising the agency staff guidelines and circulating the document to SMG for comment. It will then be decided whether the guidelines need to be considered at a future SMG meeting.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART/ ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: 3/4/09

10.6 Equal Pay/ Fair Pay

10.6.1 Richard Stewart said that discussions re fair pay were ongoing with TUS.

10.7 Internal promotion/ lateral transfers

10.7.1 Evan Hobson said that a number of requests had been made recently for lateral transfers in the NI Assembly. He said that all Directors must approve transfers in their Directorate.

10.7.2 Trevor Reaney said that these transfers must be carried out in the context of the proposed internal promotion/ lateral transfers policy, which is currently being considered in consultation with TUS.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS TO NOTE
DEADLINE: ONGOING

11 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER- MONTHLY REVIEW

11.1 Georgie Campbell provided an overview of the Corporate Risk Register (CRR), which she said had been updated to reflect the new strategic priorities and corporate objectives in the revised Corporate Plan 2008/11.

11.2 SMG discussed the CRR. Richard Stewart undertook to provide wording for an amendment to, re Corporate Risk 7, to Georgie Campbell.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 3/4/09

11.3 A number of amendments to the CRR were suggested, which Georgie Campbell undertook to make.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL
DEADLINE: 3/4/09

12 BUDGETS 2009/2010

12.1 Paula McClintock provided an overview of the paper outlining the draft NI Assembly Budget for 2009/10.

12.2 SMG discussed a number of issued arising from the paper including:

- Capital expenditure in the NI Assembly;
- Members' and Parties' costs;
- Secretariat GAE;
- The classification of consultancy;
- Payroll;
- Fair pay;
- Pay and grading.

12.3 The Director of Resources and the Head of Finance undertook to liaise with all Directors re staffing complement estimates. The Director of Resources will then submit paper to SMG re final NI Assembly staffing complement figures for 2009/10.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART/ PAULA MCCLINTOCK
DEADLINE: 1/5/09

12.4 SMG noted the recommendations in the paper.

The SMG meeting adjourned at 12.30pm and reconvened at 10.30am on Tuesday 7 April 2009.

13 NI ASSEMBLY PROCUREMENT NEEDS

13.1 John Gibson provided SMG with an overview of his paper on the Review of the Delivery of Procurement Services to the NI Assembly.

13.2 He highlighted the main recommendations in the paper relating to the following issues:

- The strategic direction of the Procurement Office;
- Strategic approach to Procurement;
- Sustainable procurement;
- Contract management;
- Political impact on procurement activity;
- Staffing resources;
- Skills; and

- Recruitment and retention.

13.3 SMG discussed the paper, and a number of amendments were suggested, which John Gibson undertook to make.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART / JOHN GIBSON
DEADLINE: 10/4/09

13.4 SMG agreed that a draft business case template should be prepared and submitted to the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 1/5/09

13.5 SMG approved the recommendations in relation to the following issues:

- The strategic direction of the Procurement Office;
- Sustainable procurement;
- Contract management;
- Political impact on procurement activity;
- Staffing resources; and
- Skills.

13.6 The recommendations re the strategic approach to Procurement were approved, subject to the procurement control limits being readjusted in line with the figures agreed by SMG.

13.7 SMG identified the need for an early resolution to installation of an e-procurement solution (including full purchase ordering and integration with Sun Financials).

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART/ JOHN GIBSON
DEADLINE: 31/3/10

13.8 SMG agreed that the recommendations relating to the Recruitment and Retention issue should be taken forward and agreed as part of the Separation Project.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 31/03/10

13.9 There was some discussion on the recommendations regarding the proposed staffing complement for the Procurement Office. SMG recognised the need for increased resources in the Procurement Office, but it was agreed that a business case regarding the proposed staffing complement should be submitted to a future meeting of SMG.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 1/5/09

14 MEMBER SURVEY

14.1 John Stewart provided SMG with an overview of the Member Survey paper, highlighting the following issues:

- Next steps in the survey process;
- The draft survey questionnaire;
- The timetable for the survey process.

14.2 SMG discussed the issue and a number of amendments were suggested to the paper, which John Stewart undertook to make.

14.3 It was agreed that the paper, once amended, should be submitted to the Commission meeting on 24 April 2009.

ACTION: JOHN STEWART
DEADLINE: 1/5/09

15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

15.1 NI Assembly Taxi Scheme

15.1.1 Stephen Welch reported that an audit of the NI Assembly Taxi Scheme was currently being undertaken. As part of this exercise, for the month of April, all authorisations for taxi dockets will be processed through the Taxi Scheme contract manager. He asked that all Directorate taxi dockets books to be returned to contract manager.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: 30/4/09

15.1.2 Stephen Welch asked that all Directors encourage their staff to familiarise themselves with contents of NI Assembly's Taxi Scheme.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: ONGOING

15.2 Job descriptions/ job specifications

15.2.1 Richard Stewart reported that the process for creating job specifications and job descriptions for NI Assembly recruitment competitions was currently being reviewed.

15.3 Gender/ Diversity Action Plan

15.3.1 Trevor Reaney highlighted the need to develop a Gender/ Diversity Action Plan for the NI Assembly. SMG recognised that it was very important for such a plan to be produced.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 30/6/09

15.4 Performance appraisal reports for 2008/09

15.4.1 Richard Stewart said that an email would be issued by the Personnel Office to all Secretariat staff reminding them to complete performance appraisal reports for their staff for the year 2008/09.

15.4.2 Trevor Reaney said he intended to hold informal fortnightly “catch up” meetings with Directors from April 2009 onwards.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY/ ALL SMG MEMBERS TO NOTE
DEADLINE: ONGOING

15.5 Planning for post-2011

15.5.1 There was some discussion on future challenges facing the NI Assembly beyond 2011. Trevor Reaney asked all Directors to consider this issue on an ongoing basis and advised that he would be asking Richard Good to prepare a “blue-sky” discussion paper.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: ONGOING

16 FUTURE MEETINGS

These will take place at 9.30am in Room 29 (unless stated otherwise):

- Friday 1 May;
- Friday 15 May;
- Friday 29 May;
- Friday 12 June in Annexe C;
- Friday 26 June.