SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

WEDNESDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2009
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. Tony Logue (agenda items 5 and 6); Ms. Georgie Campbell (agenda item 9); Mr Hugh Widdis; 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 4 February 2009 were approved, subject to one amendment.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 There were no matters arising.

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
DEADLINE: 19/2/09

4.2 It was agreed that arrangements re the future ownership of Parliament Buildings should be discussed at the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART/ SIMON KELLY
DEADLINE: 4/3/09

4.3 Hugh Widdis undertook to review the provisions re Parliament Buildings in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and to liaise with the Clerk/Director General and the Directors of Properties and Resources to discuss this issue.

ACTION: HUGH WIDDIS/TREVOR REANEY/ RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 4/3/09

4.4 It was agreed that Martina Dalton should provide SMG members with information on the role and responsibilities of Directorate Information Risk Owners (DIROs).

ACTION: MARTINA DALTON
DEADLINE: 20/2/09

5 FUTURE SMG/COMMISSION BUSINESS

5.1 Tony Logue provided an overview to SMG members of agenda items for the Commission meeting of the 24 February 2009, including:

- The proposed Commission visit to Brussels;
- Research Staffing Issues;
- NI Assembly Publication Scheme; and
- Extension of temporary staffing contract.

5.2 SMG noted the Commission action points list.

5.3 There was some discussion on the need to exercise restraint with foreign business trips in light of current economic climate. It was agreed that all Directors should also bear in mind the necessity of such business trips when considering any travel requests.

5.4 Trevor Reaney said that he would be updating the format of the Clerk's Monthly Report. This would include a shorter Clerk/ Director General's overview report at the beginning of the document, and condensed Directorate contributions as an appendix. Once the Clerk/ Director General has had feedback from Commission members he would provide updated guidance on contributions required from Directorates.

5.5 Tony Logue reported that meetings under the new cycle of Commission meetings may take place on the third Thursday of the month, starting at 1.00pm. Trevor Reaney said that he will be considering the scheduling of SMG meetings once the Commission meeting dates have been confirmed.

5.6 It was agreed that all SMG papers that are approved for submission to the Commission will be updated by the relevant Director and forwarded to the Commission Office.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: ONGOING

6 CURRENT FOI REQUESTS

6.1 SMG noted the FOI requests received since its meeting on 4 February 2009.

7 PROCUREMENT COMPLIANCE UPDATE

7.1 Richard Stewart provided an overview of the Procurement Compliance Update paper. SMG noted the following three key issues:

- The dramatic improvement in process compliance in the Assembly, with 99.5% of transactions now compliant;
- The need to clarify the NI Assembly's current relationship with the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) and the Properties Division (PD);
- The need to address a number of procurement issues regarding library access to online information and journals.

7.2 There was some discussion on the issues raised. It was agreed that information in the comments column of the procurement compliance table should be discussed with Directors in advance of the table being finalised.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART/ JOHN GIBSON
DEADLINE: ONGOING

7.3 Richard Stewart undertook to forward the consultant's building-related services business case and specification- prepared in 2003- to the Director of Properties.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 4/3/09

7.4 Richard Stewart undertook to provide SMG members with clarification on the process for identifying non-compliant single tender actions.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 4/3/09

8 TV DISTRIBUTION REPLACEMENT PROJECT

8.1 Richard Stewart provided an overview of the paper on the TV distribution replacement project, highlighting the need to upgrade the current system and outlining the associated costs.

8.2 There was some discussion on the issue and a number of amendments were suggested to the paper, which Richard Stewart undertook to make.

8.3 SMG agreed the recommendations in the paper, subject to the amendments suggested, and that the amended version should be submitted to the Commission meeting of 24 February 2009.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 19/2/09

8.4 It was further agreed that a Director would sit on the project board.

9 REVIEW OF CORPORATE PLAN 2008/11

9.1 Trevor Reaney provided SMG with an overview of work to date on the draft Corporate Plan for 2008/11. He said that following discussion at the recent Heads of Business (HOBs) workshop, the plan will now be issued to TUS and staff for comment.

9.2 All SMG members agreed that the recent HOBs workshops had been very constructive.

9.3 SMG considered the draft plan, and a number of amendments were suggested, which Georgie Campbell undertook to make. She further undertook to circulate the updated plan to TUS and staff.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL
DEADLINE: 20/2/09

9.4 It was agreed that the consultation period for TUS and staff would be two weeks, and that comments should be received from TUS by correspondence. Following this consultation period, the final draft will be submitted to the Commission on 10 March 2009.

10 HR ISSUES

10.1 Payment of Allowances to Assembly Secretariat staff

10.1.1 Richard Stewart provided SMG with an overview of the paper on the Payment of Allowances to Assembly Secretariat staff. He said that this was an updated version of the paper considered by SMG on 4 February 2009. He highlighted that there was a need to amend the NI Assembly allowances regime for the ICT and accountancy allowances.

10.1.2 The issue was discussed by SMG and the recommendations in the paper were agreed, subject to a number of amendments, including that a time limit would be placed on the allowances in relation to the discussion of allowances as part of the Separation Project.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: ONGOING

10.1.3 It was agreed that this issue should be discussed at next Employee Relations Group meeting, on 13 March 2009.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 13/3/09

10.1.4 SMG agreed that the longer term aspiration in the NI Assembly was to achieve a comprehensive pay structure that was fully reflective of the skills needed to perform all roles in the organisation.

10.2 Special bonus scheme

10.2.1 Richard Stewart provided SMG with an overview of the paper on the NI Assembly's special bonus scheme.

10.2.2 There was some discussion on the subject, and it was agreed that the special bonus scheme should continue as outlined in paragraph three of the paper. However, it was further agreed that the scheme should be reviewed as part of the Separation Project.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 31/3/10

10.2.3 SMG agreed that during the decision making process re special bonuses, Directors cannot participate in discussion on an application if they have forwarded the nomination.

10.3 Separation project

10.3.1 Richard Stewart provided an update on the progress of the Separation Project, highlighting that interviews for the Separation Project team posts were ongoing.

10.3.2 It was agreed that Richard Stewart would liaise with Directors re the release of staff members who have applied for the Separation Project Team.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 18/2/09

10.4 Staff briefings

10.4.1 Trevor Reaney said that he planned to hold another round of staff briefing sessions prior to the Easter recess, and asked for comments from SMG members on the most productive format for the sessions.

10.4.2 There was some discussion on the issue, and it was agreed that the overall format of the events should remain the same. However, the Clerk/ Director General's address would be shorter, and two Directors would also provide an overview of work in their Directorate. SMG further agreed that the sessions should be held in early April 2009, prior to Easter recess.

10.5 Recruitment schedule

10.5.1 There was some discussion on the recruitment schedule, and Richard Stewart undertook to update the schedule re the Hansard typist/ clerical officer competitions.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 20/2/09

11 NI ASSEMBLY EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

11.1 Gareth McGrath provided an overview of his paper on the proposed NI Assembly External Communication Strategy.

11.2 SMG discussed the issue and a number of amendments were suggested, which Gareth McGrath undertook to make. It was agreed that the amended paper should be submitted to Commission meeting of 24 February 2009.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH
DEADLINE: 19/2/09

11.3 Gareth McGrath undertook to liaise with the Speaker re his activities in External Communications Strategy

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH
DEADLINE: 23/2/09

12 ADMINISTRATIVE PREPARATIONS FOR THE DEVOLUTION OF POLICING AND JUSTICE

12.1 John Stewart provided an overview of the paper outlining administrative preparations for the devolution of Policing and Justice.

12.2 Trevor Reaney undertook to provide an update on this issue in the Clerk/ Director General's Monthly Report to the Commission for February 2009.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY
DEADLINE: 19/2/09

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13.1 Heads of Business attending SMG

13.1.1 SMG agreed that it was at the discretion of Directors as to whether a Head of Business should attend SMG to present their papers.

13.2 Budgets for 2009/10

13.2.1 Richard Stewart reminded SMG members that all Directorate budgets for 2009/10 should be completed using the relevant template and returned to Paula McClintock in the Finance Office by 26 February 2009.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: 26/2/09

14 FUTURE MEETINGS

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

- Wednesday 4 March;
- Wednesday 18 March;
- Wednesday 1 April.