SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH 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 Hugh Widdis; Mr. Tony Logue (agenda items 6, 7, 14 and 15.1); Ms. Georgie Campbell (agenda items 8 and 9); Mr. Simon Burrowes (agenda item 12); Mr. Simon Kelly.**

1 APOLOGIES

1.1 No apologies were received.

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 4 March 2009 were approved with an 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: 19/3/09

5.2 Gareth McGrath and Stephen Welch undertook to report on events co-ordination arrangements in NI Assembly at the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH/ STEPHEN WELCH
DEADLINE: 1/4/09

5.3 Trevor Reaney provided an overview of plans for the next Clerk/ Director General's staff briefing sessions, to be held on 2 and 3 April 2009. It was agreed that the Directors of Resources and Properties should provide an update on developments in their business areas at these briefing sessions.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART/ STEPHEN WELCH
DEADLINE: 2/4/09

5.4 Richard Stewart reported to SMG on the recent Employee Relations Group meeting, which he said had been positive and constructive. He said the following issues had been discussed:

- Recruitment update;
- Equal pay;
- Fair pay;
- Staff allowances;
- Filling vacancies in the NI Assembly.

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- language considerations;
- Accommodation strategy update;
- Final report on SSRB review recommendations.

6.2 John Stewart reported that the Member Survey Project team had met for the first time on Thursday 12 March. He provided an overview of issues discussed at the meeting, including:

- How member surveys are carried out at other parliaments; and
- Plans to progress the NI Assembly Member Survey.

6.3 It was agreed that a verbal update would be provided on the NI Assembly internet connection at the next Commission meeting.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

DEADLINE: 2/4/09

6.4 There was some discussion on the scheduling of SMG meetings in light of the Commission's move to a monthly meeting cycle. It was agreed that SMG meetings would now take place on alternate Fridays at 9.30am, commencing on Friday 17 April 2009. Papers for these meetings would be issued on the Monday prior to the meeting. The deadline for papers would be 12.00pm on the day of issue.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS TO NOTE/ SIMON KELLY TO ARRANGE
DEADLINE: ONGOING

6.5 Gareth McGrath said that he was currently preparing a response to a number of MLAs following issues raised during the recent Engagement Strategy debate in the Assembly chamber.

7 CURRENT FOI REQUESTS

7.1 SMG noted the FOI requests and Assembly Questions received since its meeting on 4 March 2009.

8 REVISED CORPORATE PLAN 2008/11 AND BUSINESS PLANNING FOR 2009/10

8.1 Revised Corporate Plan 2008/11

8.1.1 Trevor Reaney said that the revised Corporate Pan for 2008/11 had been signed off by the Commission at its meeting on 10 March 2009, and the plan would now be equality screened. Georgie Campbell said that she would be liaising with the Commission Support and Compliance Unit to progress this issue.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL
DEADLINE: 20/3/09

8.1.2 There was some discussion on the Corporate Planning process. It was agreed that the planning process for next Corporate Plan should incorporate more opportunity for discussion with Commission members.

8.2 Business Planning 2009/10

8.2.1 Georgie Campbell reported that Directorate Business Plans should now be prepared, in line with the strategic priorities and associated corporate objectives in the revised Corporate Plan 2008/11. It was agreed that these plans should aim to be submitted to the Clerk/ Director General by 1 April 2009.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS
DEADLINE: 1/4/09

8.2.2 Georgie Campbell said that she had prepared a Directorate Business Plan template which she undertook to circulate to all Directors.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL
DEADLINE: 20/3/09

8.3 NI Assembly Budget 2009/10

8.3.1 Richard Stewart provided an update on the preparation of the NI Assembly budget for 2009/10.

8.3.2 He undertook to issue a draft of the budget to the Clerk/ Director General.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 25/03/09

9 FINAL REPORT ON REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Georgie Campbell provided an overview of a paper outlining plans to sign off the Review of the NI Assembly Secretariat recommendations.

9.2 She said that a number of Review recommendations had been incorporated into the revised Corporate Plan 2008/11, and a small number remained outstanding. The Clerk/ Director General would provide commentary on how these were being brought forward.

9.3 There was some discussion the issue, and a number of amendments were suggested to the paper, which Georgie Campbell undertook to make.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL
DEADLINE: 20/3/09

9.4 Trevor Reaney undertook to provide wording re the outstanding recommendations in this paper, prior to submission to the Commission.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY
DEADLINE: 20/3/09

9.5 It was agreed that a paper on selected corporate governance reviews-arising from Review Recommendation 15- should be prepared and submitted to next Commission meeting.

ACTION: BRIAN MORELAND/ TONY LOGUE
DEADLINE: 2/4/09

9.6 It was agreed that the Final Report on the Review Recommendations should submitted to next Commission meeting.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL
DEADLINE: 20/3/09

9.7 It was further agreed that the prominent link to the Review pages on the AssISt homepage should be removed once the revised Corporate Plan 2008/11 has been uploaded.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL/ BRENDAN O'NEILL
DEADLINE: 30/04/09

10 SEPARATION PROJECT TEAM- TERMS OF REFERENCE

10.1 Richard Stewart provided an overview of the Separation Project Team- Terms of Reference paper.

10.2 SMG discussed the paper and a number of amendments were suggested, which Richard Stewart undertook to make. It was agreed that the paper should be submitted to the next Commission meeting.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 2/4/09

11 HR ISSUES

11.1 Recruitment programme

11.1.1 Richard Stewart provided an update on the ongoing programme of recruitment, including the following competitions:

- Assistant Assembly Clerk;
- Clerical Officer;
- Clerical Supervisor.

11.1.2 He said that the next large volume competitions to be undertaken would be the Researcher and Doorkeeper competitions.

11.1.3 There was some discussion of job evaluation in the NI Assembly. Richard Stewart undertook to review the Interim Management Board discussion on job evaluation and clarify the NI Assembly's position on the issue.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 1/4/09

11.2 Leadership Development Programme

11.2.1 Trevor Reaney gave an overview of the Leadership Development Programme currently provided in the National Assembly for Wales.

11.2.2 SMG agreed that such a programme would be of value in the NI Assembly. Trevor Reaney and Richard Stewart undertook- in conjunction with Training Branch and the new Head of Human Resources- to prepare proposals for creating such a programme in the context of the wider training and development needs of the organisation.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY/ RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 30/4/09

12 HANSARD DIGITAL WORKFLOW SYSTEM

12.1 Simon Burrowes provided an overview of his paper outlining proposals for a project to upgrade the current Hansard recording and workflow systems.

12.2 There was some discussion on the issue and SMG agreed in principle to the recommendations as outlined in the paper.

13 MONTHLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

13.1 SMG noted the Monthly Financial Update paper.

13.2 SMG commended the fact that the overall underspend to February 2009 was below the 5% target as set out in the Corporate Plan for 2008/11.

14 OFF SITE STORAGE

14.1 Gareth McGrath provided an overview of his paper highlighting the potential to move the majority of library storage in the basement of Parliament Buildings to an off-site location.

14.2 There was some discussion on the issue, and on the wider subject of information management in the NI Assembly. It was agreed that the use of the basement storage areas should be considered as part of the current space audit.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH

DEADLINE: ONGOING

14.3 It was further agreed that a project team should be established to manage all issues related to information management in the NI Assembly, including: storage; retention/disposal; protective marking; and electronic file management.

14.4 Gareth McGrath undertook to take this project forward. He also undertook to submit a paper outlining terms of reference for this project team to the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH
DEADLINE: 2/4/09

15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

15.1 Good Relations Strategy

15.1.1 Tony Logue provided an overview of his paper outlining proposals for the development of a Good Relations Policy and Strategy for the NI Assembly. He highlighted the recommendations to establish an internal Good Relations Working Group and a consultation workshop.

15.1.2 There was some discussion on the paper, and a number of amendments to the paper were suggested, which Tony Logue undertook to make. SMG approved the recommendations in the paper, subject to the amendments suggested, and agreed that this paper should be submitted to the next Commission meeting,

ACTION: TONY LOGUE
DEADLINE: 2/4/09

15.2 Waiting room at reception area

15.2.1 Stephen Welch reported that the waiting room at the reception area in Parliament Buildings was now complete and ready for use.

15.3 Internet access

15.3.1 Richard Stewart reported that the NI Assembly internet connection had now been upgraded.

15.3.2 He asked all Directors to remind their staff of the contents of the “Use of NI Assembly Internet Resources” policy.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: ONGOING

16 FUTURE MEETINGS

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

- Wednesday 1 April 2009 (in Training Room 1, Annexe C);
- Friday 17 April;
- Friday 1 May;
- Friday 15 May;
- Friday 29 May;
- Friday 12 June;
- Friday 24 June.