SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

WEDNESDAY 21 AND FRIDAY 23 JANUARY 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 (agenda items 1 to 7; 9);** **Ms. Sheila McClelland (agenda item 5);** **Mr. Frank Hallett (agenda item 5);** **Mr. Tony Logue (agenda items 6, 7 and 8);** **Ms Martina Dalton (agenda item 8);** **Ms. Georgie Campbell (agenda items 9 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 18 December 2008 were approved, subject to a number of amendments.

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: 30/1/09

5 PRINTING, PUBLISHING AND RELATED SERVICES CONTRACT

5.1 Sheila McClelland provided a background to the Printed Paper contract to SMG.

5.2 Frank Hallett, who is currently providing consultancy support on this issue, provided SMG with a presentation on his findings in relation to the current Printed Paper contract, and recommendations for the procurement of a new contract. The terms of the contract and potential forms of the contract were also outlined.

5.3 SMG noted the recommendations in the paper and thanked Frank Hallett for his presentation. It was agreed that SMG would make a decision on this issue when the group reconvened on Friday 23 January 2009.

5.4 Upon reconvening on Friday 23 January 2009, SMG discussed the recommendations in the paper. SMG agreed the recommendations re the length of the contract and the model of contract. SMG also agreed in principle to the extension of the consultancy support contract, subject to further consideration of contractual and cost implications.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH
DEADLINE: 26/1/09

5.5 It was noted that due to the potential costs associated with this contract, the Commission should be consulted as required under the Clerk/Director General's letter of delegation.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY
DEADLINE: 26/1/09

5.6 It was agreed that the tasks in order to complete the re-tendering of the Print, Publishing and Related Services contract, as outlined in Appendix A of the paper, should now be commenced.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH
DEADLINE: 23/7/09

6 FUTURE SMG/COMMISSION BUSINESS

6.1 Tony Logue provided SMG with an overview of the Commission action points list, and there was some discussion on a number of issues on the list. Tony Logue and Trevor Reaney undertook to prepare a paper outlining the implications of the proposed FOI Order, and proposals on the way forward.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY/ TONY LOGUE

6.2 Tony Logue provided an overview to SMG members of agenda items for the Commission meeting of the 27 January 2009, including:

- SMG evaluation;

- The brochure version of the NI Assembly Annual Report 2007/08;
- A demonstration of the new NI Assembly website.

7 CURRENT FOI REQUESTS

7.1 SMG noted the FOI requests received since its meeting on 18 December 2008.

8 INFORMATION ISSUES

8.1 Information Management (Publication Scheme)

8.1.1 Martina Dalton provided SMG with an overview of her paper on the proposed new Publication Scheme for the NI Assembly.

8.1.2 There was some discussion on the paper. It was agreed that Martina Dalton would provide further clarification on:

- The definition of the term “public interest”;
- What information would be released in relation to financial statements for projects and events?

ACTION: MARTINA DALTON
DEADLINE: 10/2/09

8.1.3 SMG agreed to the introduction of the new scheme, the disclosure log and the procedure for the disclosure of information, subject to the above issues being clarified. It was agreed that this paper would be submitted to the Commission at its meeting on 10 February 2009.

ACTION: TONY/LOGUE MARTINA DALTON
DEADLINE: 10/2/09

8.2 Protective Marking Policy

8.2.1 Martina Dalton provided an overview of the Protective Marking Policy paper. She said that this was an updated version of the paper submitted to SMG on 6 November 2008. It had been amended to reflect the changes suggested at that meeting.

8.2.2 There was some discussion on the paper. It was agreed that Designated FOI Officers (DFOs) in each business area would fulfil the responsibilities of the Directorate Information Risk Owner (DIRO) as outlined in the scheme. It was also agreed that on the committee side each Committee clerk will act as DIRO for their respective committee.

8.2.3 It was agreed that the Committee staff guide should make reference to this document. It was further agreed that there should be reference in the Protective Marking Policy that Committee Clerks must advise the Chairperson of the existence of this policy.

8.2.4 It was agreed that reference to disciplinary sanctions for the breaching this policy should be included in the new NI Assembly staff handbook once created, as part of the separation project.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 31/3/10

8.2.5 It was agreed that the Protective Marking policy document should also contain a paragraph referring to disciplinary sanctions for any breach of the policy.

8.2.6 It was agreed that certain audit responsibilities should be given to the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) to avoid "over-classification" of information.

8.2.7 It was agreed that all managers should consider the potential impact of duties arising from this policy on staff workloads.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS TO NOTE

8.2.8 It was agreed that that the corresponding ICT protective marking policy should be released at the same time as this document. An NI Assembly clear desk policy must also be issued at the same time as this policy.

8.2.9 There was some discussion on the "top secret" classification as outlined in the policy, and the furniture and associated costs required to facilitate this classification. Martina Dalton undertook to liaise with Facilities Branch and John Gibson to discuss the costs arising from this classification.

ACTION: MARTINA DALTON
DEADLINE: 30/1/09

8.2.10 It was agreed that SIROs and DIROs would meet on a regular basis to ensure consistency of approach throughout the NI Assembly.

8.2.11 SMG agreed the policy, subject to the amendments suggested. It was agreed that an amended version of the document should be circulated to SMG members for final approval.

ACTION: MARTINA DALTON
DEADLINE: 30/1/09

8.2.12 It was agreed that due to the 'novel and contentious' nature of this policy, it should be submitted to the Commission for its consideration, once final approval is given by SMG.

ACTION: TONY LOGUE/MARTINA DALTON
DEADLINE: 10/2/09

9 EVALUATION OF SMG

9.1 Georgie Campbell provided the group with an overview of the paper on the Evaluation of SMG. She said this initiative had arisen from a recommendation in the Review of the NI Assembly Secretariat. The paper asked SMG to endorse the view that evaluation of the management group was good practice, and to consider the recommendations therein.

9.2 Trevor Reaney endorsed that this was good practice, and asked for views from SMG members on the paper.

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

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL
DEADLINE: 23/1/09

9.4 SMG agree that the paper was a good step forward and it was approved by the group, subject to the amendments suggested. It was agreed that it should be submitted to the Commission at its meeting on 27 January 2009.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL
DEADLINE: 23/1/09

SMG reconvened on Friday 23 January at 9am in Room 29. All SMG members were present.

10 REVIEW OF CORPORATE PLAN 2008/11

10.1 Revised Corporate Plan 2008/11

10.1.1 Georgie Campbell provided SMG with an overview of work done to date to revise the NI Assembly Corporate Plan, and actions required to compete the process. These would include:

- A workshop for all Heads of Business (HOBs) on 6 February 2009;

- Consultation with staff and Employee Relations Group by mid February;
- Submission of a final draft to the Commission meeting on 24 February 2009;
- Approved version to be issued to Directors following Commission meeting;
- Final version to go to printers first week in March;
- Glossy version to be produced by 25 March 2009.

10.1.2 Trevor Reaney said that the structure of the revised Corporate Plan should move away from the Balanced Scorecard format, and this should also be the case for Directorate Plans.

10.1.3 Some amendments were suggested. Trevor Reaney asked Directors to provide any further comments on the draft Corporate Plan as well as dates for targets for which they are responsible to Georgie Campbell by Friday 30 January 2009.

ACTION: ALLSMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: 30/1/09

10.1.4 Trevor Reaney said that once the Directors comments were received they would be incorporated in a revised draft to be issued for discussion at the HOBs workshop.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL
DEADLINE: 6/2/09

10.2 Member Survey

10.2.1 Trevor Reaney provided SMG with an overview of plans for the Member Survey. He said that the original target date for completion was March 2010, but following consultation with the Commission, he wished to move this forward to complete prior to the summer recess 2009.

10.2.2 Georgie Campbell provided an overview of plans for the survey, including:

- Compilation of an updated list of services currently provided to Members and their staff;
- Development of a questionnaire - in conjunction with the Research Department - to be issued to Members and their staff;
- Undertaking of focus groups discussions, perhaps with the assistance of an independent facilitator;
- Preparation of Report for Commission;
- Implementation of agreed recommendations.

10.2.3 There was some discussion on the need to engage a consultant to carry out the survey, or whether it could be done in-house. It was agreed that this issue should be considered further. Consideration will also be needed in relation to how to encourage a maximum response.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS/ GEORGIE CAMPBELL
DEADLINE: 31/03/09

10.2.4 It was agreed that a Team should be established to take this project forward and that the initial meeting should take place within the next two weeks. There will be a representative from each Directorate on the team. Directors undertook to let Georgie Campbell have nominations for membership of this Project Team.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: 04/02/09

10.2.5 It was agreed that consideration should be given to ways in which Members can be involved in this project. Trevor Reaney undertook to Chair the first meeting of this Project Team.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY/ GEORGIE CAMPBELL

10.3 Risk Registers

10.3.1 Georgie Campbell said that the Head of Audit had drawn attention to the NI Audit Office Management letter which asks about the Assembly Secretariat's treatment of fraud. Georgie pointed out that there is currently no Corporate Risk in relation to fraud. She said that the Head of Audit had advised that consideration should be given to the inclusion of a risk relating to the treatment of fraud in Directorate Risk Registers (DRRs). If it is felt that this addresses the issue adequately, there may not be a need for a Corporate Risk relating to fraud.

10.3.2 It was agreed that this Risk would be more appropriate to the Corporate Risk register (CRR). Trevor Reaney undertook to liaise with Brian Moreland on this issue. It was further agreed that this should be discussed at the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY (SIMON KELLY FOR AGENDA)
DEADLINE: 30/1/09

10.3.3 Georgie Campbell said that Directors had previously agreed that three of the Directorate Risks (Nos. 8, 9 and 10) should be included in all Directorate Risk Registers. Of the four Directorate Risk Registers received to date, these were included in two although only one of the Risk forms was completed. It was agreed that the need for the inclusion of these Risks should be reviewed and will be discussed at the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS (SIMON KELLY FOR AGENDA)
DEADLINE: 30/1/09

10.3.4 Richard Stewart said that he would send his Directorate's completed Directorate Risk Register to Georgie Campbell by Friday 30 January 2009.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 30/1/09

10.3.5 There was a discussion about the need for a risk relating to Ormiston House in the CRR. It was agreed that this would be addressed at the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: SMG MEMBERS (SIMON KELLY FOR AGENDA)

Gareth McGrath and Stephen Welch left the meeting after this agenda item.

11 VALUE FOR MONEY

11.1 Richard Stewart provided the group with an overview of his Value for Money (VFM) paper. There was some discussion on work done to date in achieving VFM in the following areas:

- Governance;
- Corporate and business planning;
- Procurement;
- Internal Audit;
- Process efficiency.

11.2 SMG gave initial consideration to the paper, and it was agreed that the action plan attached to the paper would be considered at the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: SIMON KELLY TO PLACE ON AGENDA
DEADLINE: 30/1/09

11.3 Richard Stewart said that actions related to VFM in the revised Corporate Plan 2008/11 should be more specific.

12 HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES

12.1 Staff briefings

12.1.1 Trevor Reaney said the he was currently drafting his speaking notes for the staff briefing sessions to be held in the Long Gallery on 23 and 28 January 2008. He said he hoped to issue a draft version to all Directors by Thursday 22 January 2009.

12.1.2 There was some discussion on other issues that could be raised at the staff briefings.

12.1.3 It was agreed that an agenda should be provided to all staff in attendance, outlining the issues to be discussed at the briefings.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL/ SIMON KELLY
DEADLINE: 23/1/09

12.2 Payment of Allowances to Assembly Secretariat staff

12.2.1 Richard Stewart provided SMG with an overview of the Payment of Allowances to Assembly Secretariat staff paper.

12.2.2 SMG gave initial consideration to the paper, and it was agreed that the action plan attached to the paper should be considered in full at the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: SIMON KELLY TO PLACE ON AGENDA
DEADLINE: 30/1/09

13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13.1 **Seconded staff returning to Departments**

13.1.1 The issue of negotiations with NICS departments re the return of seconded staff to their parent departments was discussed.

13.1.2 Richard Stewart reported that representatives from the Assembly's Personnel Office have met with the Central Personnel Group from the Department of Finance and Personnel to discuss this issue.

13.1.3 SMG acknowledged the importance of a smooth handover during this process, while maintaining services to Members.

13.2 **Staff leaving Parliament Buildings at night**

13.2.1 There was some discussion on security issues re staff leaving Parliament Buildings late at night. It was agreed that, as some SMG members were not present, this issue would be discussed at the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: SIMON KELLY TO PLACE ON AGENDA
DEADLINE: 30/1/09

13.3 **Business for next SMG meeting**

13.4 It was agreed that the following issues would also be discussed at the next SMG meeting:

- Consistency of titles for business areas; and
- The process for consultation with staff re policy development and the communication of decisions made at SMG.

ACTION: SIMON KELLY TO PLACE ON AGENDA
DEADLINE: 30/1/09

14 FUTURE MEETINGS

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

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