SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP
9.30AM ON FRIDAY 26 JUNE 2009
IN ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Mr. Trevor Reaney; Mr. Richard Stewart; Mr. Stephen Welch; Dr. Gareth McGrath; Mr. John Stewart.**
In attendance:	**Mr. Hugh Widdis;** **Mr. Tony Logue (agenda items 6, 7 and 14);** **Mr. Simon Burrowes (agenda item 8);** **Ms Sinead Lappin (agenda item 9);** **Ms Alison Ross (agenda item 9);** **Mr. John Power (agenda item 14);** **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 12 June 2009 were approved without amendment.

4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 There were no matters arising.

5 SMG ACTION POINTS

5.1 SMG members considered the SMG action points list and undertook to forward any updates or amendments to the SMG Actions Points table to Simon Kelly prior to the next meeting.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: 3/7/09

5.2 There was some discussion on the preparation of NI Assembly Annual Report 2008/09. Gareth McGrath undertook to submit a paper on this issue to the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH
DEADLINE: 10/7/09

6 FUTURE SMG/COMMISSION BUSINESS

6.1 Tony Logue provided an overview to SMG members of agenda items for the Commission's meeting on 24 September 2009, including:

- The Clerk/ Director General's Monthly Report;
- Review of Members Financial Services Handbook;
- Corporate Identity Policy;
- Engagement Road Show;
- Separation Project – Update;
- Corporate Risk Register;

6.2 It was agreed that a briefing on current litigation cases should be provided to the Commission at its meeting in September 2009.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY/ HUGH WIDDIS
DEADLINE: 24/9/09

7 CURRENT FOI REQUESTS/ ASSEMBLY QUESTIONS

7.1 SMG noted the FOI requests and Assembly Questions received since its meeting on 12 June 2009.

8 INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

8.1 Simon Burrowes provided an overview of internal communication measures undertaken since his last update to SMG in April, including:

- A round of Clerk/ Director General's staff briefings;
- A round of Team Briefings;
- The June edition of the 'Life on the Hill' staff magazine;
- Various postmasters issued to staff;
- Three meetings of the Internal Communications Working Group (ICWG);
- Alterations to the ICWG membership;
- TUS are now represented on ICWG; and
- ICWG had provided comments on the Separation Project Communications Strategy.

8.2 Review of Staff Briefings

8.2.1 Simon Burrowes reported that at the Clerk/ Director General's request, ICWG had undertaken a review of the staff briefings process. A number of recommendations had been made, including that the briefings should be shorter, less formal and to consist of more sessions with fewer people in order to provide more time for questions. As a result of these comments, some changes were made to the format of the most recent briefing sessions.

8.2.2 Simon Burrowes said that the initial feedback to these sessions had been very positive, with staff commenting favourably upon the following issues:

- The informality of the sessions;
- The increased opportunity for questions;
- The question/suggestion box facility in the Blue Flax restaurant; and
- A briefing session being held in Annexe C.

8.2.3 Simon Burrowes said that some staff had also commented that the Clerk/ Director General's brief should be slightly shorter, or broken up with opportunity for questions between each section. Trevor Reaney agreed with this comment.

8.2.4 Trevor Reaney said that he was also giving consideration to holding an early morning Clerk/DG's briefing session for Doorkeepers.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY
DEADLINE: 30/9/09

8.3 Review of Staff Magazine and Team Briefing

8.3.1 Simon Burrowes provided an overview of plans to review the Team Briefing process and the staff magazine "Life on The Hill'.

8.3.2 He said that the review of the magazine would be undertaken using the following methods:

- A questionnaire would be placed in the September edition of the magazine;
- A brief email survey would be issued to all staff, in conjunction with the September edition; and
- Research staff would be assisting in analysing the responses to the questionnaire.

8.3.3 Simon Burrowes said that the review of the Team Briefing process would be undertaken using the following methods:

- A survey would be issued to staff via email following the October Team Briefing round;
- Hard copies would also be distributed to Doorkeepers.

8.3.4 There was some discussion on these proposals, and SMG agreed to the suggested plans for the reviews.

8.4 Other communications issues

8.4.1 Simon Burrowes reported that NI Assembly press releases are now being issued to all Secretariat staff via email. He said that a note explaining the purpose of these emails will be included in the next Core Brief.

ACTION: DAVID JOHNSTON
DEADLINE: 30/6/09

8.4.2 Simon Burrowes said that at its next meeting ICWG would be considering the matter of the issuing of a hard copy of the NI Assembly Corporate Plan to each member of the Secretariat staff. He undertook to report back to SMG after the summer on options suggested by staff.

ACTION: SIMON BURROWES
DEADLINE: 30/9/09

9 HR ISSUES

9.1 Separation Project update

9.1.1 Ali Ross provided a recap of the briefing to SMG at the Separation Project workshop the previous day. This included an overview of the agreed realistic deliverables of the Separation Project.

9.1.2 Ali Ross provided an overview of her paper on Separation Project "Project Scoping Document" (PSD). There was some discussion on the document and a number of amendments were suggested, which Ali Ross undertook to make.

ACTION: ALI ROSS
DEADLINE: 3/07/09

9.1.3 It was agreed that any further comments by SMG comments on the PSD should be returned to Ali Ross by Wednesday 1 July 2009. The paper would then be amended and uploaded to AssISt by Friday 3 July 2009.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS/ ALI ROSS
DEADLINE: 3/07/09

9.1.4 There was some discussion on the policy screening schedule for the Separation Project, and some amendments were suggested. Sinead Lappin undertook to make these amendments and issue the updated version to SMG for consideration. All comments should then be returned to Ali Ross by Wednesday 1 July 2009.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS/ SINEAD LAPPIN/ ALI ROSS
DEADLINE: 1/07/09

9.1.5 Sinead Lappin provided an overview of her paper on the Key Steps for the Implementing the Job Evaluation Exercise.

9.1.6 There was some discussion on the document and a number of amendments were suggested, which Sinead Lappin undertook to make.

ACTION: SINEAD LAPPIN
DEADLINE: 10/07/09

9.2 Re-grading of posts

9.2.1 Sinead Lappin provided an overview of her paper on the Re-grading of Posts in the NI Assembly, and highlighted the changes to the draft paper she had presented to the previous SMG meeting. She highlighted a number of issues related to the following areas:

- The definition of job evaluation;
- Job evaluation timing and approval process;
- Review of posts; and
- Job evaluations resulting in a lower or higher grade.

9.2.2 There was some discussion on the paper. It was agreed that the Re-grading of Posts paper should be reviewed by Legal Services. The paper is to be re-circulated to SMG if any substantial amendments are made; otherwise it is to be issued to TUS for consultation.

ACTION: SINEAD LAPPIN
DEADLINE: 15/7/09

9.3 Requests for assistance with interview

9.3.1 There was some discussion on the "Requests for Assistance with Interview Preparation" circular HRC 07/09 issued to staff on 9 June 2009.

9.3.2 It was agreed that this issue should be discussed further at the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: SINEAD LAPPIN/ SIMON KELLY TO NOTE
DEADLINE: 10/7/09

10 LOG OF OUTSTANDING AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 SMG noted the proposed format of the Log of Outstanding Audit Recommendations table.

10.2 Trevor Reaney reported that the Log of Outstanding Audit recommendations table will be amended following recommendations made at the Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee (SARC) meeting on 24 June 2009.

ACTION: BRIAN MORELAND
DEADLINE: 10/7/09

11 CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

11.1 SMG noted and discussed the updated Corporate Risk Register.

11.2 A number of amendments were suggested, which Simon Kelly undertook to forward to Georgie Campbell.

ACTION: SIMON KELLY/ GEORGIE CAMPBELL
DEADLINE: 3/7/09

12 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PROJECT TEAM

12.1 This agenda item was deferred until September 2009.

13 CO-ORDINATION OF INWARD VISITS

13.1 Gareth McGrath provided an overview of the paper outlining actions aimed at improving the organisation and management of inward visits in the NI Assembly.

13.2 There was some discussion on the paper and SMG agreed the proposals.

14 EQIA OF ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

14.1 John Power provided SMG with an overview of plans to carry out an equality impact assessment (EQIA) of the Engagement Strategy, highlighting a number of issues, including:

- The background to the EQIA process;

- The seven areas identified in the initial screening of the Engagement Strategy around which public consultation should occur;
- The timetable for the EQIA; and
- Staffing resources required for the EQIA.

14.2 There was some discussion on the fact that the EQIA consultation exercise would be running during the summer holiday period. It was agreed that a public notice announcing the EQIA- to be placed in the local press in August 2009- should be run again in September 2009.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH/ JOHN POWER
DEADLINE: 3/7/09

14.3 Some amendments were suggested to the paper, which John Power undertook to make. It was agreed that EQIA of the Engagement Strategy should be taken forward on the basis recommended in the paper, subject to these amendments.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH/ JOHN POWER
DEADLINE: 31/10/09

15 RESOURCES ISSUES

15.1 Business case template

15.1.1 This agenda item was deferred until the SMG meeting on 10 July 2009.

15.2 Monthly financial update

15.3 SMG noted the monthly financial update provided by the Head of Finance, detailing the NI Assembly's financial performance to 31 May 2009.

16 PROPERTIES ISSUES

16.1 Policy for internal space management for Parliament Buildings

16.1.1 Stephen Welch provided an overview of the draft policy on the allocation of accommodation for the NI Assembly.

16.1.2 There was some discussion on the paper, and a number of amendments were suggested, which Stephen Welch undertook to make. It was agreed that the amended paper should submitted to the Commission meeting on 24 September 2009.

ACTION: STEPHEN WELCH
DEADLINE: 24/9/09

16.2 Interim Accommodation schedule update

16.2.1 Stephen Welch provided an overview of the Interim Accommodation schedule, detailing three interim accommodation options available for potential lease by the NI Assembly.

16.2.2 There was some discussion on the paper, and it was agreed that while the long-term objective was to ensure that all NI Assembly staff were working within Parliament Buildings, it was necessary to have a contingency in place should Annexe C of Dundonald House be removed from Assembly use.

16.2.3 However, it was agreed that there were no options in the current schedule which SMG believed to be appropriate at present, as they were not within a reasonable travelling distance from Parliament Buildings.

16.2.4 It was further agreed that while Annexe C remains available to the Assembly that it would remain a preferable accommodation option to those outlined in the schedule. The situation would be kept under review should any more appropriate accommodation become available within or close to the Stormont Estate.

17 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

17.1 Staff Barbecue

17.2 SMG discussed the organisation of a barbecue for all Secretariat staff on the afternoon of Friday 3 July 2009.

17.3 It was agreed that such an event should be held and Stephen Welch undertook to take forward all necessary preparations.

ACTION: STEPHN WELCH
DEADLINE: 3/07/09

18 FUTURE MEETINGS

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

- Friday 10 July;
- Friday 4 September (to be confirmed).