SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

WEDNESDAY 4 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);** **Mr. Brian Moreland (agenda items 8 and 9);** **Ms. Georgie Campbell (agenda items 9, 10 and 11);** **Mr Hugh Widdis (agenda items 12 to 16);** **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 21 January 2009 were approved, subject to a number of amendments.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Staff leaving Parliament Buildings at night;

3.1.1 There was some discussion on arrangements for staff leaving Parliament Buildings after 6pm. John Stewart suggested that the people carrier should be made available to drop staff at bus stops outside the estate after 6pm. John Stewart and Stephen Welch undertook to liaise on this issue and report back to the next SMG meeting.

ACTION: JOHN STEWART/ STEPHEN WELCH
DEADLINE: 18/2/09

3.2 Business area titles

3.2.1 There was some discussion on the need for consistency in office titles in the Secretariat. It was agreed that all business areas below Directorate Level should be called "service or "office".

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS TO NOTE

3.3 Consultation with staff re policy development/ SMG decisions.

3.2.1 There was some discussion on the issues of consulting with senior staff on SMG papers prior to meetings and also how to convey information on decision reached at SMG.

3.2.2 It was agreed that, with the exception of confidential or restricted material, Directors may issue all SMG papers to senior staff for consultation. It was agreed that there should be consistency in the application of this process by all Directors.

3.2.3 It was further agreed that information on whether a paper can be circulated will be included in the cover sheet template for all papers submitted to SMG.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: ONGOING

3.2.4 SMG members agreed that they would cascade information on SMG decisions to staff at team meetings.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: ONGOING

3.2.5 It was agreed that electronic versions of papers for SMG packs will also be circulated to all SMG members. This practice will be reviewed after three months.

ACTION: SIMON KELLY
DEADLINE: TO BE REVIEWED- MAY 09

3.2.6 It was agreed that SMG action points should be circulated within one working day of meeting.

ACTION: SIMON KELLY
DEADLINE: ONGOING

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: 5/2/09

4.2 There was some discussion on the proposed membership of the Member Survey Project Team. Trevor Reaney undertook to consider which Director would be the most appropriate chairperson of this group.

ACTION: SIMON KELLY
DEADLINE: 30/1/09

5 FUTURE SMG/COMMISSION BUSINESS

5.1 Tony Logue reported that the Commission meeting planned for 10 February 2009 had been cancelled. All business that would have been discussed at this meeting will now be placed on the agenda for 24 February 2009.

5.2 Tony Logue also reported that from 1 April 2009 the Commission will be moving from a fortnightly to a monthly meeting cycle. Trevor Reaney undertook to consider the scheduling of SMG meetings in light of the Commission's new meeting cycle.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY
DEADLINE: 18/2/09

5.3 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;
- Extension of temporary staffing contract;
- Information Assurance - Protective Marking.

5.4 There was some discussion on the Commission action points list. It was agreed that the Commission action points would now be included in SMG packs.

ACTION: SIMON KELLY
DEADLINE: ONGOING

6 CURRENT FOI REQUESTS

6.1 SMG noted the FOI requests received since its meeting on 21 January 2009.

6.2 There was some discussion on these requests and Tony Logue undertook to liaise with Martina Dalton and Richard Stewart re FOI request 005-09.

ACTION: TONY LOGUE/ RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 11/2/09

6.3 Tony Logue also undertook to provide an update at the next SMG meeting on the registered files to be moved to shelving in Annexe C.

ACTION: TONY LOGUE
DEADLINE: 18/2/09

7 EXTENSION OF TEMPORARY STAFF CONTRACT

7.1 Richard Stewart provided SMG with an overview of the paper on the proposed extension of temporary staff contract.

7.2 There was some discussion on the issue, and it was agreed that the contract would be extended, subject to the issue of the management fee being clarified. It was agreed that the terms of the extension agreement should also contain some recognition of the errors committed by the current contract holder in a number recent recruitment competitions.

7.3 There was some discussion on the possibility of creating guidelines for agency staff working in the NI Assembly. Richard Stewart undertook to discuss this issue further with the Director of Legal Services.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 31/3/09

8 INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE

8.1 Brian Moreland provided SMG with an update on Internal Audit issues in the NI Assembly, including:

- The most recent meeting of the Secretariat Audit and Risk Committee (SARC), on 17 December 2008;
- The report into the potential disposal of Ormiston House;
- A risk analysis for the Secretariat. Brian Moreland said that he would be contacting all Directors w/c 9 February 2009 to discuss risk scores for their business areas;

  ACTION: BRIAN MORELAND /ALL SMG MEMBERS TO NOTE
  DEADLINE: 13/2/09

- Identification of the need for a fraud risk in the Corporate Risk Register;
- The recruitment competition for the SARC chairperson and independent member;

- The information assurance review. It was agreed that the Director Of Resources would be the Senior Information Risk Owner (SIRO) for the NI Assembly;
- The recent Inter-Parliamentary Heads of Internal Audit meeting;
- Progress on the procurement of external support for the Internal Audit function.

8.2 There was some discussion on the paper on the standard procedure for the issue and treatment of internal audit reports. SMG agreed to adopt the suggested procedure, as detailed in the paper.

8.3 There was some discussion on future internal audit plans. Brian Moreland said that future plans would focus more on procedural matters than in the past, and undertook to liaise with John Stewart on this issue.

ACTION: BRIAN MORELAND
DEADLINE: 28/2/09

9 NI ASSEMBLY CORPORATE RISK REGISTER (MONTHLY REVIEW)

9.1 Trevor Reaney said that SMG had undertaken to review Corporate Risk Register (CRR) monthly, and invited Georgie Campbell to provide an update of any issues related to the CRR.

9.2 There was some discussion on inserting a risk relating to fraud into the CRR, as originally agreed at the SMG meeting on 21 January 2009. It was agreed that the fraud risk would be incorporated into Risk 8- "Failure to protect the reputation of the Assembly". Georgie Campbell undertook to liaise with Richard Stewart and Brian Moreland to clarify the wording re fraud under this risk.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL/ BRIAN MORELAND/ RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 13/2/09

9.3 SMG discussed the CRR and associated deadlines and suggested a number of amendments, which Georgie Campbell undertook to make.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL
DEADLINE: 13/2/09

9.4 It was agreed that John Stewart would provide an update at the next SMG meeting on administrative preparations for the devolution of Policing and Justice.

ACTION: JOHN STEWART (SIMON KELLY FOR AGENDA)
DEADLINE: 18/2/09

10 PERFORMANCE AGAINST BUSINESS PLAN

10.1 Georgie Campbell provided SMG with an overview of the table outlining performance against the NI Assembly Business Plan for 2008/11. She reported that no significant issues of concern had arisen from the monitoring exercise.

10.2 Trevor Reaney said that a Heads of Business workshop to review the Corporate Plan for 2008/11 would take place on Friday 6 February 2009. He said that he had received comments on the draft plan from all Directors, and Georgie Campbell would incorporate these suggestions into the draft plan, which would then be discussed at the workshop.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL
DEADLINE: 4/2/09

10.3 Trevor Reaney provided SMG with an overview of the agenda for the workshop.

10.4 It was agreed that preparations could commence on the creation of Directorate Business plans for 2009/10.

11 TEAM BRIEFING FEEDBACK

11.1 Georgie Campbell provided SMG with an overview of the Team Briefing Feedback table. She highlighted that there had been a higher level of staff absences reported at the briefing sessions. However, she also said that there had been an improvement in carrying out the briefing sessions within the recommended timescale.

11.2 Georgie Campbell said that 10 “unanswered” questions had been received from staff during the team briefing sessions. These were now being dealt with, and answers would be placed on AssISt shortly.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL
DEADLINE: 13/2/09

11.3 Trevor Reaney said that all staff should be encouraged to attend their business area’s team briefing sessions.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS TO NOTE

12 RESOURCES ISSUES

12.1 Value for Money

12.1.1 Richard Stewart provided an overview of his paper on Value for Money (VFM), including the VFM action plan. There was some discussion on the action plan and a number of amendments were suggested.

12.1.2 SMG agreed to adopt the VFM action plan, subject to the amendments suggested. It was agreed that Richard Stewart would amend the paper and issue it to all SMG members for final approval.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 13/2/09

12.1.3 It was agreed that Ashley McIlwrath would provide a training programme for all contract managers in the NI Assembly.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART/ ASHLEY MCILWRATH
DEADLINE: 30/6/09

12.1.4 Trevor Reaney said that he would inform the Commission of the adoption of this action plan in his next Monthly Report.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY/ SIMON KELLY TO NOTE
DEADLINE: 24/2/09

12.2 Payment of Allowances to Assembly Secretariat staff

12.2.1 There was some discussion on the payment of allowances to Assembly Secretariat staff. It was agreed that this issue would be discussed further at the Directors' HR session on Thursday 12 February 2009. Richard Stewart undertook to provide a list of all allowances currently paid to staff, including any pending or refused requests, for consideration at this meeting.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
DEADLINE: 12/2/09

12.2.2 Any decision reached at this session would be confirmed at the SMG meeting on 18 February 2009.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY
DEADLINE: 18/2/09

13 ENGAGEMENT ISSUES

13.1 Research staffing issues

13.1.1 Gareth McGrath provided an overview on his paper on Research staffing issues.

13.1.2 SMG noted the paper.

13.2 NI Assembly website issues

13.2.1 Gareth McGrath provided an overview of his paper on the NI Assembly website redevelopment project.

13.2.2 There was some discussion on the website project initiation document and a number of amendments were suggested, which Gareth McGrath undertook to make. SMG approved the document, subject to these amendments.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH
DEADLINE: 18/2/09

13.2.3 It was agreed that SMG would act as the steering group for this project, and that a monthly report would be submitted to SMG by the website project board.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH
DEADLINE: MONTHLY (ONGOING)

14 UPDATE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

14.1 SMG noted the implementation of Review recommendations table.

14.2 It was agreed that Directors would provide any updates to the table to Simon Kelly.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: 16/2/09

15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

15.1 Staffing budgets 2009/10

15.1.1 SMG discussed staffing complements for 2009/10. Trevor Reaney said that each Director should produce a staffing complement and delegated staffing budget for 2009/10, which would then be discussed and agreed by the Clerk/ Director General.

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ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBERS
DEADLINE: 31/3/09

15.2 SMG papers on AssISt

15.2.1 It was agreed that all SMG papers that are considered appropriate for circulation- as indicated on the cover sheet- will be placed on AssISt.

ACTION: ALL SMG MEMBRS/ SIMON KELLY TO NOTE
DEADLINE: ONGOING

15.3 NIABT trip to Brussels

15.3.1 Gareth McGrath reported that representatives from the NI Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT) will be visiting Brussels in early April 2009.

16 FUTURE MEETINGS

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

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