SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

FRIDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2010 AT 9.35 AM
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Trevor Reaney** **Gareth McGrath** **John Stewart** **Richard Stewart** **Stephen Welch**
In attendance:	**Hugh Widdis** **Jim Beatty** **Cathy McGowan (Agenda items 6, 7)** **Georgie Campbell (Agenda items 9, 10, 16(b), 18)** **David Lynn (Agenda item 11)** **Damien Martin (Agenda item 12)**

1 APOLOGIES

No apologies were received

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (29 January 2010)

The minutes of the meeting of 29 January 2010 were approved subject to some amendments.

4 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

5 SMG ACTION POINTS

Members were asked to provide Action Points updates to Jim Beatty.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS
JIM BEATTY

6 FUTURE SMG/COMMISSION BUSINESS

The issues currently scheduled for the Commission meeting on 18 February are:

- Clerk's Monthly Report (February 2010)
- OFMDFM Committee - European Report
- Update on Members' Pay, Pensions and Financial Support
- Members Survey update
- Responses to queries raised during Question Time
- Financial Planning in the NIA
- Commission Newsletter
- SARC Membership
- Draft Charities Policy

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY
TONY LOGUE

7 CURRENT FOI REQUESTS/ASSEMBLY QUESTIONS

These were noted.

8 DRAFT LANGUAGE POLICY

The draft policy, arising from the Good Relations Strategy, was considered by SMG and a number of issues/queries were identified. It was agreed that Jim Beatty would advise Tony Logue of the discussions and a revised draft policy would be brought to a future SMG meeting.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY
TONY LOGUE
JIM BEATTY

9 CORPORATE RISKS REGISTER

The current risks were reviewed and the actions to improve controls were updated.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

10 CORPORATE BUSINESS PLANNING

The draft plan for 2010 – 2011 was reviewed and changes agreed. Georgie Campbell will amend the draft plan and circulate this to SMG for comments before it is referred to the Commission.

There was a discussion on the general approach to corporate and business planning and it was agreed to seek a paper on the issue from the Assembly's Research Service. Following further consideration of the approach to the Corporate Plan by SMG, a paper would be taken to the Commission for approval.

ACTION: GARETH MCGRATH
GEORGIE CAMPBELL

11 ACCOMMODATION ISSUES

SMG highlighted the ongoing need to make the best possible use of the limited space available within Parliament Buildings, especially in the provision of committee meeting rooms. Stephen Welch, along with David Lynn, presented a paper outlining a range of options and some were discussed. As further consultation will be necessary before final decisions can be made, it was agreed to hold a future meeting to specifically consider accommodation issues.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

12 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME

SMG considered Damien Martin's paper on the potential impact of a significant increase in the number of Executive and Private Member Bills coming before the Assembly. The workload would not be evenly spread across the committees and most areas of the Assembly would be affected. The potential requirement for additional staffing resources was highlighted.

It was agreed that this should be closely monitored and a monthly update provided to SMG.

ACTION: JOHN STEWART

13 UPDATES

(a) Performance against 2008 – 2011 Corporate Plan Targets

SMG noted the performance to date. This will be kept under review.

(b) Implementation of the Members Survey Action Plan

SMG noted the progress made to date.

14 AOB

(a) Staff Survey

The staff survey for 2010 will be available online from Wednesday, 17 February 2010. All staff should be encouraged to complete the survey and time should be made available to facilitate completion.

(b) Corporate Correspondence Service Standards

SMG agreed on the need for a consistent approach on dealing with correspondence, including acknowledgements. It was important that those who contacted the Assembly should know who was dealing with the matter and when a full reply could be expected.

It was agreed that all Directors would discuss the proposals with their Heads of Business and the issue would be brought back to a future SMG meeting.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

The meeting was adjourned at 1.20pm.

The meeting was reconvened at 3.00pm on Monday, 15 February 2010.

15 ISO WORKLOAD

Richard Stewart advised SMG of the pressures within ISO in delivering an increasing programme of work. Following discussions with Heads of Business, all outstanding work had been allocated a priority rating. SMG reviewed the priorities and, subject to some changes, agreed the workplan.

16 PROCUREMENT OFFICE WORKLOAD

Richard Stewart advised SMG of the difficulties in recruiting qualified staff with public service experience to fill vacancies within the Procurement Office. Following discussion, it was agreed that as an interim measure, suitably qualified agency staff should be recruited.

SMG reviewed and agreed, subject to some changes, the Procurement Office workplan.

17 VALUE FOR MONEY AND ECONOMIES

SMG discussed the budget allocation for 2010/11 and the pressures for public sector economies. It was agreed that although the 2010/11 budget was almost in place, there was a need now to review expenditure for this and coming years. Trevor Reaney asked Directors to begin a high level review of expenditure in order to identify potential cost reductions.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY
ALL DIRECTORS

18 UPDATES

(a) Directorates

Stephen Welch updated SMG with details of the ongoing discussions with the PSNI. It was agreed that a paper on the issue would be brought to the next SMG meeting. The Convergence and Service Delivery projects are progressing well and adverts for ushers and security staff were in newspapers last week. It was noted that front of house staff would remain within Facilities Directorate. It was noted that a shift allowance would reduce potential savings.

John Stewart advised SMG of a Directorate Business Planning Workshop to be held on 17 February 2010.

Gareth McGrath updated SMG on a range of issues including forthcoming procurement exercises. It was agreed that he would refer a paper on a recent MORI survey to a future SMG meeting.

Richard Stewart updated SMG on the outcome of the Fair Pay exercise.

ACTION: STEPHEN WELCH
GARETH MCGRATH

(b) Website Development Project

Gareth McGrath reported that this exercise was progressing well and is currently out to tender.

(c) Information Management

Gareth McGrath reported that work on this project was ongoing and satisfactory progress had been made to date.

(d) Members Pay, Pensions and Financial Support

Hugh Widdis advised that the NIA Members Bill was progressing well within the House of Lords and would be before the House again on 24 February 2010. Discussions were ongoing on how best to take this forward within the Assembly.

19 Staff Bonus Scheme Nominations

A discussion took place in relation to nominations under the Staff Bonus Scheme. This is the subject of a separate note.

20 AOB

Richard Stewart raised a number of HR issues, including filling of vacancies and extending some secondee's time within the Assembly past 31 March 2010 in exceptional circumstances.

Subject to confirmation of the Equality Commission's position, it was agreed that the current reserve lists for Clerical Officer, Clerical Supervisor and Assistant Assembly Clerk should be extended by 6 months.

21 NEXT MEETING

The next SMG meeting will take place in Room 29 at 9.30am on Friday 26 February 2010.