SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

FRIDAY, 14 MAY 2010 AT 9.32am
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Trevor Reaney** **Gareth McGrath** **Brendan O'Neill** **John Stewart** **Stephen Welch**
In attendance:	**Hugh Widdis** **Jim Beatty** **Tony Logue (Agenda items 6, 7,)** **Martina Dalton (Agenda item 8)** **Ashley McIlwrath (Agenda Item 15(d))**

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Richard Stewart. Brendan O'Neill deputised on behalf of Mr Stewart.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Hugh Widdis, Richard Stewart and Gareth McGrath declared interests as recipients of Childcare Allowance - Agenda Item 15(a).

Hugh Widdis declared an interest as a member of the UAHS – Agenda Item 11.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (16 April 2010)

Subject to an amendment, the minutes of the meeting of 16 April 2010 were approved.

4 MATTERS ARISING

(a) **Budgets** – it is intended to bring a paper to the Commission on 27 May and members were reminded to provide Richard Stewart with their responses in relation to any final budget reductions..

(b) **Assembly Protocol for Marking the Death of an Individual** – the Clerk/DG and the Director of Engagement have held talks with the

Speaker on the way forward and a further paper is to be drafted for the Speaker's consideration.

5 SMG ACTION POINTS

The Action points were reviewed and the list was updated.

ACTION: JIM BEATTY

6 FUTURE SMG/COMMISSION BUSINESS

The issues currently scheduled for the Commission meeting on 27 May 2010 include:

- Clerk's Key Update Report
- Review of Corporate Business Plan 2009/10
- Update on Members' Pay, Pensions and Financial Support
- Policy on Marriage Ceremonies and Wedding Receptions
- Public Attitude Survey
- Assembly Commission Budget 2010/11
- Business Continuity – Relocation Options
- Draft Language Policy
- Review of Childcare Allowance

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY
TONY LOGUE

It was agreed to refer a paper on Access to Parliament Buildings for consideration by the Commission at its meeting on 17 June 2010 (meeting subsequently postponed to 22 June)..

7 CURRENT FOI REQUESTS/ASSEMBLY QUESTIONS

These were noted.

8 DRAFT RECORDS MANAGEMENT and E-MAIL MANAGEMENT POLICY

Martina Dalton advised that the draft policy had already been agreed by the Information Management Strategy Project Board. The policy is intended to protect the interests of both the Assembly Commission and staff by establishing a framework which will control the creation, retrieval, storage, preservation or disposal of any records, in whatever form.

SMG emphasised the need for clear cross-referencing with and consideration of other policies which may impact on this policy, eg, Information Security. The need for communication and training plans to be in place before the policy was issued was also raised.
SMG agreed the draft policy.

9 DRAFT VETTING POLICY

It was agreed to defer discussion of this item to the next SMG meeting.

10 DRAFT IS SECURITY POLICY

Brendan O’Neill explained that this draft updated the 2003 draft policy. The key objectives of the policy are to secure the computer systems and the information they hold, to identify the principal users of the systems and to detail their roles and responsibilities.

SMG discussed the proposed draft policy and raised some concerns over terminology, cross-referencing and consistency with other policies and the need for communication and training plans.

Subject to some amendments and consultation with TUS, the draft IS Security policy was agreed.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART/BRENDAN O’NEILL

11 FRONT RAMP ACCESS

Stephen Welch advised SMG that while the Assembly had complied with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, especially in terms of access to the building, some issues had arisen with disabled access to the front door and groups having to separate to other doors. To overcome this problem, it has been proposed to take forward plans to install ramped access to both sides of the front portico to maintain symmetry of the front elevation.

After discussion, SMG agreed to the development of the outline scheme proposal for ramped access to tender stage.

It was also agreed that Facilities would seek advice on DDA implementation from Legal Services.

ACTION: STEPHEN WELCH

12 BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN – RELOCATION OPTIONS

Stephen Welch led the discussion on this item. A draft Business Continuity Plan, produced in conjunction with Marsh Insurance Ltd, had been presented to Directors for consideration. While the final decisions would lie with the Commission, it has yet to be decided what proposals/options will be put to the Commission in terms of the required level of contingency cover, if any, and possible locations in which this could be delivered. There were also questions over the availability of IT services and the numbers of staff required in the short term.

After a discussion it was agreed that Stephen Welch would prepare a paper for the Commission on the basis of being able to hold a plenary within 48 hours of an incident and other business, eg, committee meetings, within two weeks. Plans should be based on using the minimum number of staff and should be structured on the premise of (a) no dedicated site, (b) a rented/leased site, or (c) a wholly owned site, such as Ormiston House.

It was also agreed that Stephen Welch would review the current arrangements with the Stormont Pavillion.

ACTION: STEPHEN WELCH

13 ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE ASSEMBLY

This item had been before SMG at a previous meeting and Hugh Widdis had agreed to bring an amended paper to a later meeting. In this further paper, Hugh Widdis had developed a substantial number of qualitative and quantitative measures through which the effectiveness of the Assembly could be measured.

SMG discussed the proposals and emphasised the need to use existing information and to involve Members as much as possible. It was agreed that Hugh Widdis would make a presentation to the Commission on its forthcoming Planning Day.

ACTION: HUGH WIDDIS

14 UPDATES

(a) Directorates

John Stewart informed SMG that since the beginning of March, 9 new Executive Bills had been introduced. A further 10 – 12 Bills could be introduced before the Summer Recess with a further 6 – 8 likely after Recess. A number of Committees are now working on multiple Bills. Two PMBs have been introduced recently and the Bill Office is working with Members on 7 – 9 PMBs. The Chairpersons' Liaison Group will receive an update on the legislative programme at a meeting next week. It is planned that a secondment of a Clerk from Westminster will help with pressures in the Bill Office.

Stephen Welch informed SMG that he had hoped to prepare a paper on roof repairs for consideration by the Commission but significant delays are continuing within the process. He also raised the issue of Career Breaks and the impact on business. It was agreed that the Directors would discuss the current arrangements for Career Breaks.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

Hugh Widdis informed SMG that Legal Services had received significant work in relation to Bills and HR issues. It was intended to have a temporary lawyer in place by 2 June 2010.

(b) Monthly Financial Update

This item was deferred to the next SMG meeting.

(c) Health and Safety Quarterly Report

Stephen Welch reported that Health and Safety issues continue to be well managed. The Health and Safety Sub-Committee provides a forum for representatives from across the Assembly to discuss issues and to develop measures. Representatives are required from the Engagement Directorate and the DGO and all Directors were asked to ensure that representatives attended each meeting. Plans for staff training during the Summer Recess are being drawn up. First Aider training has continued with mainly Ushers availing of the courses. Directors were asked to nominate staff across the Directorates for future training First Aider courses. To comply with Health and Safety legislation, employers are required to conduct risk assessments and to take action on hazards highlighted. Directors were asked to nominate staff within each business area to be trained as risk assessors.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

(d) Website Project Team

Gareth McGrath reported that the project was progressing well and a tender had recently been awarded to Blue Cube to take this forward.

(e) Members Survey Action Plan

SMG noted the latest update showing that satisfactory progress had been made to date on implementing the Plan.

(f) Performance Against Corporate Plan

SMG noted the report.

15 AOB

(a) Review of Childcare Policy

The Clerk/DG advised that he would take a paper to the Commission proposing a change.

(b) Staffing Complement/Recruitment Schedule

SMG noted the need to keep staffing complements under review and in line with agreed budgets, particularly in the current financial climate.

(c) Update on New Training Provider

Ashley McIlwrath advised SMG that Bray Leino Broadskill had been awarded the contract to provide training over the next four years. Directorate Learning and Development Plans were being constructed, largely based on staff PDPs and branch priorities. It was agreed that PDPs should be completed as soon as possible. A single co-ordinated plan will then be developed and it is hoped to have a central online booking system ready for September 2010. Manual bookings will be accepted until that time. SMG raised several issues, such as training supply and quality assessments.

ACTION: ALL DIRECTORS

(d) Comment Boxes

It was agreed to defer discussion on this item until the next SMG meeting when the Staff Survey will be on the agenda.

(e) SMG Submission Template

It was agreed to amend the SMG submission template to include a reference to detail the consultation prior and after submission.

ACTION: GEORGIE CAMPBELL

(f) Information Security

The Clerk/DG updated SMG on progress.

(g) Fullbright Scholarship

SMG noted the details of the Fullbright Scholarship programme and it was agreed to discuss the programme further prior to the next meeting.

ACTION: CLERK/DG AND DIRECTORS

16 NEXT MEETING

The next SMG meeting will take place in Room 29 at 9.30am on Friday, 4 June 2010.