SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

FRIDAY, 29 JANUARY 2010 AT 9.34am
ROOM 29, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Trevor Reaney** **Gareth McGrath** **John Stewart** **Richard Stewart** **David Lynn**
In attendance:	**Hugh Widdis** **Jim Beatty** **Tony Logue (Agenda items 6, 7, 12)** **Sinead Lappin (Agenda item 8)** **Damien Martin (Agenda Item 10)** **Brian Moreland (Agenda Item 15(b))**

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Allen Witherspoon. David Lynn attended on Mr Witherspoon's behalf.

2 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (15 January 2010)

These were approved subject to a number of amendments.

4 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

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 18 February are:

- Clerk's Monthly Report (February 2010)
- OFMDFM Committee - European Report
- Commission Report on Members' pay and Financial Support
- Draft Language Policy
- Display of Art Work
- Finance Update
- SARC Membership
- Draft Charities Policy
- NIA Annual report

It was agreed that Tony Logue would provide:-

(a) an update paper to the Commission on the NI Members Assembly Bill and its progress in Westminster; the revised Handbook; preparatory work for the Independent Statutory Body; etc.

(b) SMG with a copy of the draft Language Policy paper.

ACTION POINT: TREVOR REANEY
TONY LOGUE

7 CURRENT FOI REQUESTS/ASSEMBLY QUESTIONS

These were noted. A representative of the Commission will answer questions in the Assembly at 3.30pm on Tuesday, 2 February 2010.

8 HR ISSUES

(a) Secondment Procedures

SMG considered the proposals on secondment opportunities which are largely based on the NICS model and discussed how these would operate within the Assembly. Some amendments were agreed including addressing the impact of inward secondments on the current policy for filling vacancies.

Subject to these amendments, the proposals were agreed.

(b) Learning and Development Draft Action Plan

The Action Plan was prepared following SMG's agreement on the Learning and Development Strategy in September 2009. A number of questions were raised about the role of Directorate Training Plans, the need for a cross-directorate group to provide input, responsibility for delivery of the Action Plan and the costs of delivery.

Suggestions were made for topics which could be included in the action plan, for example, evidence based policy making and project management.

It was agreed that a revised paper would be brought back to a future SMG meeting.

ACTION POINT: RICHARD STEWART
SINEAD LAPPIN

(c) Draft Vetting Policy

The draft policy was considered by SMG and a number of issues were identified, for example, the level of checks on potential and existing staff and the roles of the Head of Security and the Commission.

It was agreed that a revised paper would be brought back to a future SMG meeting.

ACTION POINT: RICHARD STEWART
SINEAD LAPPIN

(d) HR Management Information

SMG discussed the range and frequency of the proposed information and it was agreed that this type of information had significant value. Some minor changes were identified and agreed for future papers.

The paper was noted.

9 GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY POLICY

Damien Martin spoke to his paper and informed SMG of his discussions with the Clerk of Standards and Privileges, the Clerk to the Commission and the Speaker's Office.

SMG agreed that as office holders are already covered by the Code of Conduct it was not necessary to have a further policy which, in some cases, would replicate existing guidance.

10 ELECTION PLANNING

It was agreed that John Stewart would take the lead on this project. Directors were asked to provide the names of those staff who should be members of the team.

ACTION POINT: ALL DIRECTORS

11 COMMITTEE REPORT ON EUROPEAN ISSUES

Following the approval of the OFMDFM Committee report by the Assembly, SMG discussed the recommendations and how they may be implemented. It was agreed that Tony Logue would prepare a paper for the next meeting of the Commission, co-ordinating responses across the Secretariat.

ACTION POINT: TREVOR REANEY
TONY LOGUE

12 BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP

As well as demonstrating a commitment to the community and its environment, David Lynn explained the extensive range of benefits to be derived from membership of BIC.

It was agreed that the Assembly Commission would become a member and Adrian Davies would represent the Commission's interests.

12 COMPLETION OF EXPERT ENERGY SURVEYS

David Lynn explained that having the 4 surveys completed by the Carbon Trust would benefit the Assembly in a number of ways, for example, proper assessment and monitoring of energy usage. While it was difficult to be precise in quantifying savings, it was expected that these would more than justify the outlay of £11k.

It was agreed to commission the energy surveys.

13 UPDATES

13.1 Directorate Updates

(a) Hugh Widdis updated SMG on the current position regarding the NI Members Bill in Westminster. The Bill has completed the Grand

Committee Stage and discussions were continuing on possible amendments. It was agreed that, through the Commission, the NI political parties would be provided with discussion papers.

(b) David Lynn reported that it was planned to meet with TUS in the coming week and then to begin the recruitment of security staff. Also, several sites had been visited as part of the major incident plan.

(c) John Stewart briefed SMG on Assembly committee activity in relation to budget setting and a deadline set by DFP. He said that he would bring a paper to SMG on the upcoming legislative programme.

(d) Gareth McGrath informed SMG of two major events in Parliament Buildings over the coming week. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association is meeting on 4 - 5 February 2010 and the British Irish Parliamentary Association, Committee D, is meeting 4 February 2010. A change of style to the updated corporate identify guidelines is being developed.

(e) Richard Stewart advised SMG of the ongoing exchange of information systems with the Scottish Parliament. The Assembly's IS Office has obtained significant portions of the Hansard workflow application from Scotland and in return, has provided them with the current Chamber and Business Office application (AIMS). There are ongoing discussions with the National Assembly for Wales about specification of Bill Template systems.

13.2 Audit Issues

Brian Moreland updated SMG on current issues including SARC and the ongoing work surrounding the unauthorised release of information. SMG noted the levels of assurance within Audit reports and while noting that they were generally satisfactory, discussed ways to improve on this.

SMG were advised that following a recruitment exercise Eddie Kelly has joined Internal Audit as Audit Manager.

14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was agreed to reconvene this meeting within the next week to discuss the following issues:-

- Value for Money and efficiencies
- Implementation of the Members' Survey Action Plan

- Performance against 2008 – 2011 Corporate Plan Targets
- Accommodation Issues Paper

15 NEXT MEETINGS

A reconvened meeting with a limited agenda will be held next week.

The next SMG meeting will take place in Room 29 at 9.30am on Friday 12 February 2010.