SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

THURSDAY, 16 JUNE 2011 at 10.08am
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Trevor Reaney** **Gareth McGrath** **John Stewart** **Richard Stewart** **Stephen Welch** **Hugh Widdis**
In attendance:	**Jim Beatty** **Tony Logue (Agenda items 6 and 7)** **Stella McArdle (Agenda item 9)** **Sebastian Mingout (Agenda item 13)** **Sinead McDonnell (Agenda items 14, 15 and 16)** **Brian Moreland (Agenda item 17(b))**

1 Apologies

1.1 There were no apologies

2 Declaration of Interests

2.1 No interests were declared.

3 Minutes of Previous Meetings

3.1 The Minutes of the meeting of 2 June 2011 were approved subject to some minor amendments.

4 Matters Arising

4.1 All issues within Matters Arising will be dealt with through the Action Points or discussed as substantive agenda items.

5 SMG Action Points

5.1 The Action Points were updated. Members were asked to advise Jim Beatty of further amendments.

ACTION: JIM BEATTY

6 Future Commission/SMG Business

6.1 Tony Logue joined the meeting at 10.12am and advised SMG of the business to be discussed at the Commission meeting on 28 June 2011:

- Proposals for the Roof project
- North-South Parliamentary Forum update
- Independent Financial Review Panel update
- European Strategy update
- Commission Newsletter
- Clerk/DG's Update Report
- Assembly Members (IFRS) Act – nomination for Assembly Commissioner for Standards
- Draft Equality Scheme
- Support Services Contract
- Front Ramps Access
- Clerk/DG End of Year Review

6.2 Tony Logue advised SMG of the proposed timetable for the Commission's off-site meeting on 16 and 17 June 2011.

6.3 It is planned for the Commission to visit the Dail, Dublin on 23 June 2011 for a number of meetings on topics of common interest.

7 FOI Requests/Assembly Questions

7.1 SMG noted the current FOI requests. It was agreed that the FOI requests should no longer be a standing item on the SMG agenda. Instead, they will be circulated to SMG on receipt for information.

7.2 Tony Logue updated SMG on the current Assembly Questions.

8 Core Management Groups and revised SMG Terms of Reference

8.1 John Stewart had provided a revised paper to SMG.

8.2 SMG discussed the proposal to create a Core Management Group and how it would operate. It was agreed that while the membership of some ongoing project teams and groups may not need to change, they would be embraced within the new arrangements. A director would act as a link between a group and SMG rather than a 'champion'.

8.3 SMG agreed that the proposed arrangements should proceed as outlined within the paper including the revised SMG Terms of Reference. Trevor Reaney spoke of the importance of moving forward as quickly as possible, preferably before end of the summer recess.

8.4 It was agreed that John Stewart would prepare a list of projects based on those within his paper and the existing work teams within the Assembly.

ACTION: JOHN STEWART

9 ICT in Committee Rooms

9.1 Stella McArdle joined the meeting at 10.50am and spoke to her paper on this issue.

9.2 SMG was told that currently all committees are provided with folders of papers for every meeting and this project was to consider IT solutions to remove the need for hard copies. It was accepted that this was a challenging proposal with a number of risks and constraints but it was agreed that the benefits could be considerable and wide-reaching.

9.3 SMG discussed the proposal and agreed that SMG members should be involved in piloting the technology chosen along with committee members.

9.4 The Project Initiation Document was approved. It was agreed that Trevor Reaney would ask the Commission to what extent they wish to be involved in the project.

ACTION: TREVOR REANEY

10 Business Case – Private Members Bills Drafting Service

10.1 John Stewart said that this issue had been before SMG previously and he had subsequently sought the views of other members. Procurement Unit had been contacted about a likely timetable.

10.2 SMG agreed the Business Case.

11 Front Ramps Access

11.1 Stephen Welch said that following discussions with the Historic Buildings Unit, Environment Agency, it was made clear that the construction of a single front ramp would not retain the symmetry of the building and two ramps would be required. It was unlikely that planning approval would be given for one ramp.

11.2 The projected cost for the two ramps is £300k.

11.3 As the Commission had previously indicated approval for only one ramp, it was agreed to seek their views on the way forward.

ACTION: STEPHEN WELCH

12 Accommodation Plan (Phase 2)

12.1 Stephen Welch provided floor plans and explained the planned moves which should be completed by the end of the summer recess. While there were a number of individual moves, the major move would be the transfer of Finance from Annexe C to Parliament Buildings.

12.2 SMG noted the proposals.

13 Support Services Contract – Business Case

13.1 Sebastian Mingout joined the meeting at 11.45am. SMG had held an initial discussion on this issue at a previous meeting and the Business Case was now been referred for approval.

13.2 It was explained the current contract had already been extended for two years and was due to expire in March 2012. A range of options for the future contract had been identified, eg, Fixed Price, Cost Plus, etc, but whatever was chosen would have be achieved within the current CSR budgetary requirements.

13.3 Stephen Welch said that this was a high-value and iconic contract for any provider and it would be for the Commission to decide the level of service that it required within the various components of the contract. Trevor Reaney emphasised the need to consider future requirements within the context of the Spending Review reducing budgets.

13.4 SMG approved the proposal for discussion with the Commission and it was agreed that Stephen Welch would submit a paper to the Commission meeting on 28 June 2011.

ACTION: STEPHEN WELCH

14 Learning and Development – 2010/11 Review and 2011/12 Action

14.1 Sinead McDonnell and Ashley McIlwrath joined the meeting at 12.32pm and spoke to the paper on this issue.

14.2 SMG reviewed the summary of achievements made against the Corporate Learning and Development Plan 2010/11. Significant progress had been made to deliver the three Management Development Programmes for managers within the Secretariat and a large number of courses targeting compliance training, eg, Health and Safety, had been delivered. The delivery of a new Performance Management System had been delayed to April 2012.

14.3 Feedback from the MDPs had been largely positive although a Management Essentials course had been quite mixed. The role of line managers in assisting participants was emphasised and it was agreed that a member of SMG would speak to attendees on the first day of each course. A list of attendees for each course would be provided to all members of SMG.

14.4 The Bray Leino Broadskills Evaluation Report was noted.

14.5 It was explained that the five key themes had been retained for the proposed 2011/12 plan but this may change when the new PMS is introduced. The plan has been agreed by the Learning and Development Working Group and this team will monitor progress through the year. In order to keep SMG updated, it was agreed that each Learning and Development co-ordinator would meet monthly with his/her Director.

15 Carecall Report Action Plan (Revised)

15.1 Sinead McDonnell spoke to a revised paper on this issue. A paper had been before SMG previously and had been referred back for further consultation which had now concluded.

15.2 Five key objectives had been identified and an action plan drafted to meet these. It was agreed that the Carecall report and action plan should be released to all staff with the appropriate explanatory cover note.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

16 Draft Conduct Policy (Revised)

16.1 This issue had been before SMG in March 2011 and had been referred back for further research and consultation. This had now been concluded and the paper revised.

16.2 SMG considered that progress had been made but were still concerned at some of the processes as laid out in the paper, especially in relation to political activity. It was recognised that when working within a legislature, it was important that the rights of staff were balanced with the need to provide an impartial service to all MLAs.

16.3 It was agreed that any application to take part in political activities should be referred to the relevant Director for consideration. It was important for the applicant to disclose not only the degree of involvement but also the nature.

16.4 It was agreed that HR would amend the guidance and circulate to SMG members for comments prior to referral to the Commission.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART
SINEAD MCDONNELL

17 Updates

(a) Directors

Richard Stewart advised that the reallocation of 2011/12 budgets had been completed and would be circulated to SMG. A number of pressures had been identified and these must be met within available resources. Trevor Reaney asked for the revised budgets to be issued as soon as possible as it was vital that budget managers knew what had been spent to date and what was available.

Stephen Welch said that it was hoped to have the new stationery contract in place by the end of June 2011. It was intended to vacate Annexe C by the end of July and Mr Welch urged other Directors to urgently review the lists of registered files provided over the past months. It was planned to open a post office within Parliament Buildings and Sebastian Mingout had been formally appointed as a sub-postmaster.

(b) Audit Issues

Brian Moreland joined the meeting at 1.27pm. SARC had met on 1 June 2011. SARC will next meet on 27 June 2011. The programme of planned audits may need to be revised in light of staff issues. The implementation of outstanding recommendations had improved with just one recommendation currently outstanding – it was hoped that this would soon be resolved.

18 AOB

Trevor Reaney provided copies of correspondence between Michael Daly, DFP and him relating to expenditure on external consultancy. SMG agreed with the line taken in the Clerk/DG's response.

19 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday, 5 July 2011 at 2.00pm in Room 106.

The meeting adjourned at 1.53pm.