SECRETARIAT MANAGEMENT GROUP

FRIDAY, 21 JANUARY 2011 at 9.30am
ROOM 106, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

APPROVED

Present:	**Trevor Reaney** **John Stewart** **Richard Stewart** **Stephen Welch** **Hugh Widdis** **John Power (deputising for Gareth McGrath)**
Apologies:	**Gareth McGrath**
In attendance:	**Georgie Campbell** **Tony Logue (Agenda items 6 and 7)** **Damien Martin (Agenda item 8)** **Sinead McDonnell (Agenda Items 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14)**

1 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from Gareth McGrath. John Power attended as his deputy.

2 Declaration of Interests

2.1 No interests were declared.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting (7 January 2011)

3.1 The minutes of the meeting of 7 January 2011 were approved as amended.

4 Matters Arising

4.1 The Clerk/DG said that he would report on his discussions in relation to one nomination to the Staff Bonus Scheme (paragraph 20) at the next meeting of SMG.

ACTION: JIM BEATTY TO NOTE

5 SMG Action Points

5.1 Directors were asked to send updates on the list of Action Points to Jim Beatty.

ACTION: DIRECTORS

6 Future SMG/Commission Business

6.1 Tony Logue joined the meeting and told SMG that the business to be discussed at the Commission meeting on 25 January 2011 will be as follows:

- Election Planning
- Implementation of Commission Report of Financial Support and Pensions/Financial Support for Members Handbook
- Commission Newsletter
- NI Spending Review 2010
- Efficiency Reviews
- Hansard Bound Volumes
- Review of Financial Assistance for Political Parties
- Business Continuity Plan
- New Assembly ID Plan
- Security Report Update
- Clerk/DG's Quarterly Report

6.2 The Commission and the SMG Forward Work Plans were noted.

7 Current FOI Requests/Assembly Questions

7.1 The FOI requests and Assembly Questions were noted.

Stephen Welch joined the meeting at 10.04am

8 Legislative Programme

8.1 Damien Martin joined the meeting and distributed copies of a paper of 13 January 2011 which had also been submitted to the Chairperson's Liaison Group. It was noted that:

- There are 31 live Bills and of these 4 Private Members' Bills are unlikely to progress further.
- In the period to dissolution approximately 60 plenary Bill stages could be scheduled.

8.2 Damien Martin briefed SMG on steps to ensure that the Bill Office was properly resourced.

8.3 Priority will be given to the work of the Bill Office and Damien will disengage himself from other work to do this. Damien said some of the Bill Office business standards may not be achieved due to the volume of work. He will draft a note to outline the risks being carried.

ACTION: DAMIEN MARTIN

8.4 The management of plenary time is being addressed and discussions will take place with TSO in relation to printing pressures.

8.5 In response to question from the Clerk/DG, Damien said that there may be a further plenary session needed in week commencing 14 February as well as 2/3 extra sessions in the weeks prior to dissolution. The position will be kept under review.

8.6 The Clerk/DG expressed his appreciation to all those in the Clerking and Reporting Directorate and the wider Secretariat for all their efforts in relation to the processing of legislation and for their continuing work under considerable pressure. He urged those who could offer help to do so bearing in mind the expertise which is required.

9 HR Policy Development

9.1 SMG noted the ongoing work relating to the review and development of HR policies.

10 Managing Attendance Policy

10.1 Sinead McDonnell advised that HR Office considered that improvements could be made to the current Managing Attendance Policy and in particular the accuracy of records relating to sick absence. She advised that line managers had expressed the view that the current Managing Attendance process was too bureaucratic in relation to the amount of paperwork to be completed.

10.2 The paper provided key principles which might be included in a new Managing Attendance Policy and SMG ‘s views were sought on these. After some discussion on a number of the key principles, it was decided that Mrs McDonnell consider the points raised and bring a paper back to SMG for further comment before a new policy is drafted and consulted on with TUS and staff in general.

ACTION: SINEAD MCDONNELL

11 HR Management System Business Case

11.1 The Business Case was approved subject to assessing the priority in relation to other capital spend, when the final budget is known.

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12 HR Business Case for Temporary Staff

12.1 SMG gave approval to the HR Office to engage with the Procurement Office and to go to the open market for a new Master Vendor contract for the NIA. Hugh Widdis asked HR to ensure that the contract made for the better provision of specialist staff than previously.

13 ICT Server Virtualisation and SAN Provision

13.1 Richard Stewart undertook to identify the impact of the proposals on accommodation plans, in particular the roof project, and to discuss this with the Director of Facilities.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

13.3 It was agreed that this project should proceed subject to assessing the priority in relation to other capital spend when the final budget is known.

14 Updates

(a) Directors

Stephen Welch reported that:

- discussions are continuing with the PSNI regarding the Memorandum of Understanding;
- the audit of catering and cleaning had resulted in a "satisfactory" assessment;
- he hopes to have a limited post office facility in place before the new mandate. This will be managed under the Support Services contract and will be located in the gift shop area;

(b) Internal Audit Issues

The Internal Audit Activity Report was noted. Stephen Welch said that responsibility for an outstanding recommendation from the review of telephony does not lie with the Facilities Directorate. He asked that this is amended and the way forward clarified for the next meeting.

ACTION: RICHARD STEWART

(c) Financial Update/Spending Review

Ongoing discussions are taking place to resolve the budget allocation.

(d) Staffing Update

Deferred to next scheduled update.

(e) Information Management

Deferred to next meeting.

(f) Web Project

Deferred to next meeting.

(g) Health and Safety

The quarterly report will be circulated to SMG members. Future reports will be available on line.

(h) Members Survey Action Plan

This was noted.

(i) Team Briefing Feedback

This was noted.

(j) Election Planning

There was nothing further to report.

(k) Business Continuity Planning

Trevor Reaney reported that a desktop exercise involving the Gold and Silver Teams, Belfast Resilience and representatives from the PSNI, MoD, OFMdFM and the emergency services was scheduled to take place that afternoon.

15 AOB

15.1 Proposed Physical Security Measures at Parliament Buildings

Stephen Welch spoke to this "take note" paper dated 20 January 2011. He said that the paper would be considered at the Commission meeting on 25 January 2011. He will consider how any proposed actions would be communicated to TUS and staff in the future. It was suggested that he should consult with the Executive via OFMdFM.

ACTION: DIRECTOR OF FACILITIES

16 Date of Next Meeting

16.1 **Friday, 4 February 2011 at 9.30am in Room 106.**

The meeting adjourned at 12.05pm.